



# Comprehensive study on the status of girls in rural schools affecting retention and performance in Kafue District

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**Abstract-** The major concern of this study was that, despite Kafue District being economical, having Free Primary Education and a re-entry policy, some school going age children are still locked out of school whereas dropouts continue to be pervasive. The objectives of the study were to investigate the factors affecting environment, retention and performance levels in Rural Primary Schools in Kafue District; to ascertain the age and grades of pupils with high dropout rate levels in Primary Schools in Kafue District. The study also sought to establish measures that could be taken to improve Rural Primary School factors affecting environment, retention and performance levels of pupils in primary schools of Kafue District. The research is a mixed method approach- both qualitative and quantitative for data collection. The study used semi-structured interview guide for head teachers, questionnaires for teachers, focus group discussion for pupils, parents and school dropouts. It was then presented using distribution tables, bar and clustered graphs. While qualitative data was in the form of explanation as themes emerged. The findings of the study were that environment, retention and performance levels of pupils in public primary schools were low. The problems of dropout affected girls were more than boys. The first objective found that the factors that influence environment, retention and performance levels of pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District were poverty and conducive environment among others. The second objective showed that the most affected age was 14 and 15 years. The third objective showed that most pupils dropout of school at grade 7. The fourth objective showed that education tours and sensitization to parents and pupils on the importance of education is advisable. The study recommended that the government should conduct aggressive campaigns through churches to sensitise the community on the importance of education.

**Keywords-** Rural Primary Education School Dropout Pupil Retention Academic Performance Learning Environment Poverty and Education Gender Disparities in Education.

## I. Introduction

### Overview

This chapter gives a synopsis of the background to this particular study. The presentation begins with an overview of the topic under investigation from a broad perspective and then narrows it down to the Zambian context. The problem under investigation, purpose of the study, the objectives and the research questions through which the objectives are addressed are among other issues that will be covered. It also provides the significance of the study, the limitations and delimitations as well as operational definitions of terms used in the study.



## Background

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, declared that “everyone has a Right to Education.” The World Conference on Education for All (UNESCO, 2019) held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, also sparked off a new impetus towards basic education especially with its so-called vision and renewed commitment. According to the World Bank (1993), Education is a significant investment that a country prides itself into. Making and enhancing accessibility to educational services is significant in the development of a nation like Zambia. This is because education affects socio-economic behaviour such as productivity, living standards, health and demographic characteristics of any population.

The UNESCO, (2019) also reaffirmed the commitment to the Jomtien resolutions. It observed that the provision of basic education has remained elusive in many less industrialised countries. This was said to be in Africa and particularly Zambia, where deaths and migrations have displaced many households, thus denying children opportunities of going to school. The Dakar Conference of 2000 reviewed developments in achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Zambia. It set as one of the EFA goals “Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015” This was further endorsed by the so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Among other things they set targets to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The Free Basic Education Policy (Grades 1-7) was announced in February 2002 by the President of the Republic of Zambia, late Dr. Levy P. Mwanawasa. This was followed up by a circular (ME/71/126 No.3; 2002 dated 15th March, 2002) from the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education to all schools and education offices explaining what free basic education entailed (MOE, 2016). This was in an effort to improve environment, retention and performance levels of pupils in schools.

According to MOE, (2016), the annual school census for the period from 2001 to 2002, including the declaration of Free Middle Basic Education, indicated a significant growth of 7 percent in pupils’ environment, retention and performance levels. This was a sharp contrast to previous trends when environment, retention and performance levels were increasing at lower than 2 percent every year.

According to the reports accessed in the Ministry of General Education (MoGE) documents of 2010, pupils at primary school levels had shown a sustainable decrease as they progressed to high grades. Although some people in the society feel the problem is insignificant, environment, performance and low retention levels for pupils in primary schools is threatening the efforts being made to achieve the Universal Primary Education (UPE) (UNESCO, 2019). In Zambia, the number of pupils decreases to about 30 percent as they progress to the upper grades. The environment, low retention and performance levels of pupils in primary schools have been attributed to high dropout rates whose causes this study seeks to investigate.

However, a number of efforts have been made by the various governments around the world to address the issue of high dropout and retention levels for girls in schools. In



1997, the Government of Zambia in its attempt to achieve the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the broader set of initiatives to encourage more girls to start school and complete their education, policies such as the re-entry, free basic education and the education expansion program were established but prior to this, schools expelled pupils who became pregnant (Mutombu and Muenda, 2010).

In spite of the expansion of education, the introduction of the re-entry and free education policies, the gravity on the retention levels for pupils in most primary schools has remained a very big challenge. It is, therefore, against this background that this research was conducted to investigate and establish the various factors responsible for the environment, retention and performance levels of pupils in most primary schools of Kafue District.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the effort by Government to try to improve environment, retention and performance levels of pupils at primary school through the introduction of free education and the re-entry policies, just like other Districts in the Province, the poor environment, low retention and poor performance levels of pupils have persisted in recent years.

Research on reasons for pupils drop out has been reviewed to some extent and possible solutions have been discussed, but pupils' poor environment, low retention and poor performance levels have continued. However, factors influencing the environment, low retention and performance levels of pupils in some rural public primary schools of Kafue District are not yet exhaustive (Njeru, and Orodo, 2023).

If this research on factors affecting the retention levels of pupils in public primary schools specifically in some parts of Kafue District was not addressed, the poor environment, low retention and poor performance levels of pupils in public primary schools would persist and this would lead to increased illiteracy levels which would result in high poverty rate and this would in return lead to high crime levels in the District.

### **Rationale**

The purpose of the study was to Understanding the experiences of girls in rural primary school factors affecting environment, retention and performance in Kafue District.

### **Objectives**

- To investigate the factors that influence environment, retention and performance of pupils in rural primary schools in Kafue District.
- To ascertain the age of pupils with high dropout rate in rural primary schools in Kafue District.
- To ascertain the grades of pupils with high dropout rate in rural primary schools in Kafue District.
- To suggest the measures that can be taken to improve environment, retention and performance of pupils in rural primary schools.



### **Research Questions**

- What factors influence environment, retention and performance of pupils in rural primary schools in Kafue District?
- What was the age of high dropout rate for pupils in rural primary schools in Kafue District?
- What grade levels had high dropout rate for pupils in rural primary schools in Kafue District?
- What measures can be taken to improve environment, retention and performance levels of pupils in rural primary schools?

### **Significance**

The purpose of this study was to Comprehensive study on the status of girls in rural schools affecting retention and performance in Kafue District.

This particular research was of importance as it studies socioeconomic, socio-cultural, school based and pupil's characteristics, and measures to improve environment, retention and performance of pupils in rural primary schools.

The findings of the study may contribute to the advancement of knowledge about the factors that influences environment, retention and performance levels of pupils in public primary schools.

The findings of the study may help the Ministry of Education (MoE) to pay attention on factors influencing the environment, retention and performance levels of pupils. The suggested corrective measures may be adopted further to improve the environment, retention and performance levels. Further, the findings may prompt policy makers, planners, and donors to give more attention to the environment, retention and performance levels of learners in schools.

### **Delimitation**

The study was carried out in Rural Public Primary Schools in Kafue District; it only included Rural Public Primary Schools and not private primary schools because free primary education is only offered only in public primary schools which are funded by the government.

### **Limitation**

Limitations are hindrances or problems which a researcher foresees which may impede or be a detriment to the research study (Cohen, and Manion, 2024). The researcher of this study faced a challenge of collecting data from the dropouts as most of them were not found in one place. Additionally, most teachers were busy invigilating the mock examinations as well as the national examinations.

This made the researcher to go beyond the estimated period of data collection period. Answers to the questionnaires could not reflect the true picture because the researcher was a teacher. It was difficult to get a good sample of participants as the study was done before schools closed, therefore only those who were free could be interviewed. Some participants were not ready to complete the questionnaire for fear of being implicated. Interviews consumed time as organizing the focus groups took longer than planned, and therefore the administrators were somehow agitated, as more time could not be given in some cases. This affected the responses in some cases, as little time was given to



participants to express themselves adequately. However despite these limitations the interviews were successfully carried out.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by Charles Darwins (2022) Classical Liberal Theory of Equal Opportunity and Social Darwinism, The theory asserts that each person is born with a given amount of capacity, which to a large extent is inherent and cannot be substantially changed. Thus, the educational system should be designed so as to remove barriers of any nature such as economic, gender, cultural and geographical barriers (Sherman and Wood, 2022). Orodho (2024), cites liberal activists such as Horance Mann (2022) who termed education as the Great equaliser instrument which would enhance life chances. The theory demands for further going through education at primary and secondary levels to which access would be determined on the basis of individual's merit and not on social backgrounds.

Social Darwinism argues that every citizen should be given, through education, the social status to which he or she entitles him to inherited aptitude (Darwins, 2022). The theory observes that provision of formal equity and access to education, by putting everybody on the "scratch", guarantees that the ensuing run is just one.

The theory demands that opportunities be available for individuals to go through primary and secondary education and thus retention should be based on individual's merit and not social backgrounds. This way, education would at least provide equality of economic opportunity whereby all classes, races and sexes could benefit economically from excellent academic performance (Sharman and Wood, 2022).

The theory further states that social mobility can be promoted by equal opportunity of education. The roots of this theory can be traced to writers such as Rousseau (1712 – 1778) who claimed that "natural stams were born equal and personal equalities should not jeopardise social equity so long as society rewards people according to this status." William (2021).

There are many people, from poor families, in Zambia who have taken advantage of education opportunities and have proceeded to obtain better jobs and higher income than they would have otherwise done without education. Thus, education is an investment in human capital that yields economic benefits. If the Zambian Government had not provided free primary education, primary school pupils would have been denied the opportunity for advancement. There is a widespread belief that by removing economic barriers and creating more places available in primary education, the vision of equal opportunity would be implemented, where every child would have access to the kind and amount of education that suits his or her inherited capacity.

In developing countries where Inequalities of educational provision are severe, it may be desirable on equality and efficiency grounds, to pursue the goal of equal distribution of educational opportunities. Mwanakatwe notes that inequality of participation means that the benefits of education are disproportionately enjoyed by the upper income families whose children are far more likely to complete primary and secondary cycle and enroll in higher education. The financial inability of many families leads to



increased dropouts, absenteeism and repetition which lead to performance and retention in many rural primary schools.

In Zambia, the government has made primary education free and highly subsidised secondary education to create opportunities for individuals to go through primary and secondary education. Though access should be based on individuals merit and not social backgrounds, the situation in Zambia is contrary to that. Access and environment, retention and performance in primary levels of education are influenced by factors such as socio-economic school based, socio-cultural and pupil's characteristics. However, with the introduction of cost-sharing in education against the background of high poverty levels in the country, many parents may not be able to enroll and sustain their children in primary schools given the hidden costs of education. For equity considerations, unequal participation of the poor in education can worsen the status of the poor and other vulnerable groups in the country, a situation which is a true reflection of the classical liberal theory.

The classical liberal theory is relevant for the proposed study because learners should be retained in school regardless of their social, economic and cultural differences. It is against this background that this study focused on finding out factors underlying environment, retention and performance in rural public primary schools in Kafue District.

#### **Operational Definition of Terms**

Primary School: A school for children grade one to seven.

Retention: Ability of pupils to remain and progress in school until they complete their primary education cycle.

Performance: Refers to the academic achievement and progress of students within a school.

Environment: Refers to the overall atmosphere and condition that exist within a school, influencing the learning, teaching, and social interaction of students, teachers and staff.

School based factors: The conditions inherent to the school that either limit or enhance the involvement of pupils in primary education.

#### **Summary**

Chapter one discussed the background to the study from the global to local perspectives. It has highlighted the statement of the problem, research objectives and theoretical frame work which guided the study.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Overview**

This chapter provides an overview of the factors that other scholars had found to affect the retention levels of pupils. Under this study, Comprehensive study on the status of girls in rural schools affecting retention and performance from the global, African and Zambian contexts, the summary of the related literature and the researchers' critique of the literature review will be looked at.



School based factors that affect Environment, retention and Performance levels of pupils in public primary schools.

Issues considered under the school portfolio are such as teaching or learning materials, physical environmental factors, the quality of teachers, and proximity to school, irrelevant, complex, rigid and congested curriculum, language and medium of instruction among others.

When children come to school, they have their own imaginations and expectations about school. At the very least, they expect to get a desk to sit on and in a classroom (Nkinyangi, 2022). It is therefore a shock to these little ones when they come to school and find that they have to sit on stones outside somewhere under a tree, with their teacher writing on a blackboard supported by stones against the tree trunk. The initial shock is made worse by the experience of bad weather during the rainy season, within a short-time, school is no longer interesting and many children dropout (Waka, 2020).

Language and medium of instruction is another factor that influences access and retention. Learning using a foreign language or another ethnic group language which one is not familiar with is not easy especially in the early years of schooling. It demands one to learn the language before learning the content. The double task discourages one from catching up with schooling. As such pupils either perform poorly or repeat classes, a practice that usually leads to drop outs.

Poor supervision and indiscipline in schools has pushed many pupils to engaging in frustrating activities, such as smoking, drinking of beer among others. It has been observed that teachers pass time in the staffroom chatting, facebooking, gossiping or simply whiling away their time while classes remained untaught and the syllabus remained uncovered (UNICEF, 2015). The low performance of girls eventually means that education does not fetch enough benefits as an investment; parents get demoralised and see education as a waste of time and the resources that could be invested elsewhere. The quality of teachers affects retention of pupils in school.

In most of the sub-Saharan African countries, a situation exists in which teachers are not adequately trained. In-service programmes are not well established, teachers also lack adequate motivation. As a result, they under perform. The current policy is that a primary school teacher should be able to teach all the seven subjects in the primary school curriculum. However, the two years of teacher training is not adequate for the teacher trainee to acquire mastery in subject content and skills of pedagogy in all the seven subjects (UNICEF, 2015).

Teachers are not innovative and creative, are not learner friendly and do not use gender responsive approaches in teaching, remedial lessons are hardly given. Teachers have no interest and do not motivate learners (Mbilinyi, and Omari, 2018). They are harsh, dictatorial and self-centred. Learners therefore runaway from school or just decide to live a lowlife (FAWE, 2022).

This study was more concerned with the school factors and more on low retention of girls in primary schools but disregarded the factors outside the schools.



### **Pupils' Characteristics determining low retention levels**

UNESCO (2019), cites the following as some of the pupil characteristics determining low retention; academic failure, insufficient marks to advance to the next levels of instruction, age inadequacy and absenteeism or due to lack of local educational opportunities. In some countries, where performance in national examination has rendered the education system examination oriented, repetitions especially at the primary school levels are rampant. This prolongs the learner's stay in school without necessarily increasing significantly the levels of school achievement on the amount learnt by the repeaters (Theuri, 2024). Consequently, the ages of pupils in all classes is affected as was observed by Eshiwani (2024). In a study which noted that 58.3 percent of pupils in all classes surveyed had abnormal age due to repetition. This phenomenon has been linked to dropout (Theuri, 2024).

Again repetition according to researchers; Ngau (2021) and Theuri (2024) has negative psychological effects on pupils because it tends to lower pupils' self-esteem and damages peer relations. Hence it has been cited as a major cause of school dropouts. Refuting the views of its proponents who see it as an appropriate investment in pupil recovery since as it is argued children do not all acquire knowledge and or altitudes at the same rate. The causes of low completion rates in the low potential districts have been cited as wastage. In terms of dropouts, several reasons account for children dropping out of school.

According to the 1995 primary census MoEST (2023), the commonest reason for dropping out of school is lack of interest on the part of parents owing to their own illiteracy. They have a negative attitude towards education for they do not see the immediate benefits. Most of the rural districts are occupied by pastoralists whose livelihoods hinges on livestock's as a result of drought cattle rustling and generally difficult ecological conditions. An added dimension is that the nomadic way of life compels children to pull out of schools in order to accompany their parents in pursuit of pasture for their livestock.

Parkinson (2016), defined attitudes as either mental readiness or implicit predispositions that exert some general and consistent influence on a fairly large class of evaluative responses. Attitudes are reinforced by beliefs and often lead to particular forms of behaviour. Thus we can infer that our perceptions and our value system are shaped by our altitudes which start at a very early stage after birth. Dorothy (2017), suggested that at birth a child is exposed to the values and practices of the human group very early in life, and that one becomes a cultural being by learning the ways of his people.

Pupils with the problem of a lack of age in grade congruence are susceptible to dropping out of school than their counterparts whose age is in harmony with their grade according to Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE, 2021). To measure the dimensions and effects of the problem of a lack of age in grade congruence, two groups of children are identified; one group who are in the right grade at the prescribed age (for example, those children who are aged 6 and in Grade 1) and those who are not at the right grade at the prescribed age (for example, those who are



in Grade 1 at the age of 7, 8 or 10). The first group of children is 'age in grade congruent' and the second group is 'age in grade incongruent'.

Over 80 percent of the children enrolled in Grade 1 in 2007 were overage and among them 23 percent were overage by more than two years. Although we do not know what proportion of these children were overage at enrolment and what proportion are repeating from the previous year, it is clear that a large proportion of them are enrolling in school late. The lack of a proper birth registration system, improper catchment area survey by the school, people's perception of children's schooling age, and stunted growth of the children due to malnutrition are the most probable reasons for children's overage enrolment.

According to (CREATE 2021), overage enrolment increases the risk of children leaving school early due to marriage norms for older girls and family needs for older children's assistance for economic activities. It also jeopardises classroom teaching process by putting diverse ability and maturity children in the same classroom. Schools and teachers are often blamed for their low levels of performance in improving children's achievement but problems of age in grade incongruence means a challenging teaching environment. Children from 5 to 13 years old are participating in the same lesson in the same classroom with different stages and paces of learning ability, maturity and needs. In this multi-grade situation, teachers are trying to teach with a mono-grade pedagogical approach and curriculum which ultimately fails a good number of learners, thereby subtly forcing them to lose morale for classroom instruction and ultimately dropping out (CREATE, 2021).

Child age is equally of great importance in determining enrolment. The older a child gets, the more likely the child is to have started school (Nyamukapa et al, 2003). UNESCO (2019) report indicates that the age-variable for a major part explains enrolment or exclusion from education. Statistics in Zambia show that the crucial drop-out rate of children is between the ages of 10-14 years (8.1 percent, CBS, 2018) which represents the last four years of primary schooling.

There exists difference in access to education between maternal, paternal- and double orphaned households as was found by a study conducted by Nyamukapa et al (2023). The findings of this study contradicted early studies about the relation between orphanhood and education that showed that the impact on education was not significantly different. Additionally, they reckon that the general view on this topic has shifted because of changes within the safety net. In their view, this shift, especially in countries where the HIV/AIDS epidemic is more severe and advanced, has a direct negative impact on school attendance rates and causes disordered education patterns (Nyamukapa et al, 2023).

Furthermore, learners associated with progression problem are yet another pupil characteristic that influence retention of pupils in schools. Progression is basically calculated based on children's position in school grade in a calendar year. If a child studied in Grade 1 in 2007 then progression expects him or her to be in Grade 3 in 2009 after two years. If a child goes up to the next class in time they are considered to be in the good progress group without reference to age. A little less than 50 percent of



children in Grades 1, 2 and 3 fail to progress to the next appropriate grades. With the majority of the children enrolled in a Grade unable to progress to the next expected grade, most of these pupils resort to dropping out of school as they begin getting frustrated. These children who are not progressing in time are being retained, repeating or dropping out. This data indicates a serious problem, or range of problems that is occurring in the first year of education (CREATE, 2021).

Pertinent literature reviewed that gender or sex of pupils also influenced access and retention of pupils at all levels of education. Mwanza (2015), states that in Zambia, some girls fail to continue with their education due to domestic chores, early marriages or them becoming pregnant. GRZ (2018), observes that in Zambia, girls are married off by their parents when they are still very young at school-going age. This is especially true in rural areas. Cultural values and beliefs have played a key role in hindering some girls from progressing with their schooling or even from accessing it altogether. GRZ (2018) notes that attitudes and beliefs obtaining in patriarchal systems of society, in some parts of Zambia that rate men as superior to women, adversely affect how men regard women especially when it comes to equal participation in decision-making, economic empowerment and access to education.

In situations where family resources are not enough and parents have to make a choice who to send to school, the boy and not the girl is likely to be sent to school. Hartwell (2018), confirms that poor, rural families with many children often do not choose to spend the little money they have to pay school expenses for their girl-children. Many rural families and communities see schooling for a girl as a waste of resources as she will soon get married. Also, even if she was to continue with her education, it would be her husband and in-laws to benefit and not her family members (Mwanza, 2015).

Additionally, female domestic labour is a major factor that hinders girls' access to education and achievement at school. Actually, the need for female domestic labour influences decisions about whether to send a girl child to school in the first place and, once at school, how long she should stay. Generally, parents in Africa including Zambia attach a much higher value to female domestic labour than that of males as females due to patriarchal practices perform major domestic chores such as cooking, fetching for water and firewood, caring for the siblings, sick and old, and all house work to sustain households (Mwanza, 2015). As a result, girls attend school more irregularly and less intensively than the boys. This trend has continued to make headways into the education for the girl child hence making massive contributions to the low retention rate of pupils in schools. Unfortunately, our traditions have continued to support this act thereby making the situation escalate to the levels of affecting the education for the girl child. Subsequently, gender inequities with regards to school attendance, retention and completion rates continue in Zambia (GRZ, 2018).

#### **Social-economic factors that affect retention levels of pupils in public primary schools**

According to Njeru and Orodho (2023), the critical factors that are responsible for the low access and poor participation in education is poverty. High rates of poverty at household levels have made poor households either not to enroll their children in primary schools or fail to sustain an uninterrupted participation of those who are



enrolled due to inability to meet various requirements. This has resulted in adequate provision of learning facilities to the enrolled, poor quality education and high dropout rates among the poor. Some retrogressive socio-economic and cultural traditions have been singled out as a critical factor causing low pupils enrolment and participation (Njeru and Orodho, 2023).

UNESCO is of the view that poverty cannot be overcome without specific, immediate and sustained attention to enhancing access to education (UNESCO, 2019). Poverty is thus addressed in two avenues. First, inability to meet indirect costs for schooling. Second, costs such as school learning and teaching materials, uniforms, transport to and from school and food.

Several studies done in African countries have shown that children are hindered from effective participation in schooling due to inability to afford such costs.

In conformity with this situation, Mingat (2015) established that in the richest households, 76 percent of their children attend school compared to 40 percent of the poorest households. This means that children from poor households have a much lower attendance than those from richer households. Pscharapoulos (2016), cited in Chepkenei, (2024) concur with Mingat (2022) that the levels of the family income is one of the most powerful influence on primary school enrolments rates in the developing countries. (Onyango, 2000), showed that parental socioeconomic background influences their children's participation in education. This is especially so for the developing countries where children of the poor families are not provided with adequate educational materials and most are not apt to enroll in school. If enrolled, they are more likely to drop out of school than children who are from better-off families.

From the literature reviewed above, stratification has created a very huge gap between the rich and the poor, a situation that has seen a high number of the poor drop out of school than those from the rich families. The literature showed the gap in sense that it did not address the actual problems affecting those coming from the lower class on the ladder of economic wellbeing.

### **Child Labour**

There are circumstances where the microeconomic environments of some households lead to demand for children participation in economic activity of the family. In this situation children engage in work because the social economic status of those households dictates so. Children also suffer from the effects of labor as a result of internal division of work within the households.

Sending children to work can be a survival strategy employed by either parents or guardians in the course of trying to reduce risk of interruption of the income stream within the households. This is very common when households that are normally relatively prosperous, are exposed to diseases, natural disaster and outbreak of wars. According to Mutegi (2015), conversation of the rights of the child defined a child as anyone below the age of 18. Child labour is destroying a generation of children. Children who start working young never grow as they miss out on education.



The Koech Commission TIQET (2019) also found that child labor is a rampant practice that continues to keep children out of school, especially in the prevailing situation of poverty at the household levels. Children in different parts of the country are involved in activities such as fishing, picking of coffee, tea, grasshopper, “veshimu”, hawking and petty trading. In addition many school age girls are employed as house girls and child maidens in urban and rural areas. This habit contravenes the children’s rights as stated below “every child shall be protected from economic exploitation and any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with child’s education”. According to Daily Nation, May 2016 growing rural poverty has pushed many more youngsters out of their homes and although the introduction of the universal education in 2003 offered a ray of hope to thousands of children who could not afford to pay fees, it is feared that poverty and desperation has kept many out of school.

**TIQET (2019) thus concluded,**

...All these forms of labour, whether paid, interfere with children’s participation in education, either denying them access or hindering their effective participation, by causing dropout and absenteeism.

**The Size of the Family**

According to West (2016) cited in Onyango, (2019) large numbers of children in a family of limited income result in overcrowding in the home and this may in turn have a deleterious effect upon behaviour. West further adds that parents in overcrowded accommodation in poor tenements cannot protect or supervise their young children as they might wish. According to Ruther (1980), cited in Onyango, (2019) large family size is quite strongly associated with socioeconomic disadvantage. The large family size limits the parental involvement in the academic welfare of each child. This leads to low participation of the child in school activities and may eventually lead to dropout.

**Parent’s Education Levels**

Ngau (2021), reviewed on grade repetition and school dropouts in primary schools reveals that parent’s levels of education is important for children’s educational support. Peasant parents who are also poorly educated are doubly or even triply disadvantaged. While these parents try to provide the best education to their children, the priority family goal is “survival” as the family does not even have proper and adequate medical care, food and shelter. According to Onyango (2018), better educated parents appreciate the value of education more than illiterate ones. In this case, educated parents are able to assist their children progress both materially and morally.

Traagand Van der Velden’s, (2019), demonstrated that having unsupportive parents is likely to be associated with dropout from school. Based on Traag and Van der Velden’s argument, the values that parents hold go a long way to encourage learners to stay in school or to dropout. Azzam (2019) quotes a Tibetan experience where ethnic minority parents perceived values transmitted by state schooling to be strange to the people’s own values and thus of little relevance to the local people’s own culture. Azzam (2019) argues that schools should be able to meet the respective needs of the populations they serve. Studies have indicated that universalization of primary education in some countries has not adapted to meet the educational needs of a pastoral lifestyle (Chelimo, 2025).



### **Influence of demographic factors on child education**

A research by Woodhall and Psacharopoulos in Ethiopia (2014; In Mulugeta & Amanuel, 2020) found that gender is an important determinant for school enrolment. It was noted that when economic status was low or when the value of education was seen as less important for girls, the choice to send their sons to school was most prioritised. Further it was also revealed that girls were not sent to school because distance to schools (seen as more dangerous for girls) and opportunity costs of girls' time.

### **Studies conducted on factors that influence retention levels of pupils in public primary schools.**

According to a UNICEF study carried out in focus districts, the proximity and access to primary school is a predetermining factor to enrolment and retention. In some areas, distance between schools and homes is long and the educational delivery systems are often incompatible with the lifestyle of nomadic people. Limited number of schools and highly dispersed rural population, forces children to traverse difficult terrains and lack of transport makes access to schools more difficult for primary pupils. In this study, the quantitative approach that was coupled with a qualitative analysis was used. Further, the study was more concerned with access and enrolment which does not apply to the current study which investigated factors affecting the low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools of Kafue District.

Owano (2017), conducted a similar study in some public schools on factors that influence the retention of female students in primary and secondary schools whose purpose was to determine the factors that influence the retention of female students Schools in the County. It was found that the factors which influenced the retention of female students in primary and secondary schools included early marriages of the female students, the initiation rites especially the female genital mutilation, the attitudes of parents towards female students in comparison to the boy child in traditional view, the roles in the society and domestic labour. The study also investigated the government's efforts that were put in place to curb the challenges of female retention in primary and secondary schools through the provision of bursary funds. In this study, quantitative approach that was coupled with a quantitative analysis was used.

In his study, Owano (2017) suggested that parents and guardians should play their role of moulding the female students instead of leaving the burden to the already overworked teachers. Parents should visit schools to find out how their daughters progress and should spare time during the school holidays to be with their children. The parents attitudes towards the girl child should also change so that the boys should be treated like girls and their education should be the same as affirmative action. She further suggested that, the levels of punishments should be moderated so that corporal punishments and hard labour be avoided in order to minimise the female drop outs and encourage the girl child retention in schools.

However, the study sample involved only the girls who were still in school rather than involving even the victims who dropped out of school who should have given valid reasons as to why they dropped out of school. The study sample should have also included some parents who should have provided information on their attitude with



regard to educating a girl child as well as the belief they have on educating the girl child. Above all, the study was about retention challenges at the secondary levels of education unlike the current study which included both sexes, parents and it is specifically carried out at primary school levels.

Orodho (2024), in his study on access and participation in primary and secondary education in the country found that physical facilities and instructional materials are quite crucial to students' learning. FPE has stretched facilities to the limit, classrooms are congested, desks are inadequate and so are textbooks. In most cases, books, charts, maps and other teaching or learning materials are not adequate. The quality of the available learning materials is low. In some cases the materials are not learner friendly as they are full of stereotyping and at times gender biased. This affects the quality of learning and at the same time discourages learning (Mbilinyi and Omari, 2018).

The function of a school is to educate, rehabilitate as well as to inculcate the right knowledge, skills and attitude, therefore if the teacher's attitude towards the pupils are negative, for example if pupils are punished arbitrarily, scolded or even labelled, such pupils may develop negative attitude towards school or even absent themselves from the unfavourable school environment. Under such circumstances, the school personnel can be said to have failed in their function of provision of education. The study had adopted an exploratory approach, with a descriptive design. Four provinces were randomly selected, with one district purposively selected from each of the provinces.

Just like most of the studies earlier reviewed, it is evident that most these researchers concentrated much on the school based factors which makes it difficult to validate their findings. The fact that the low retention problem has continued shows that there are more gaps in the earlier studies which needs to be bridged. However, the research was more concerned with access and participation of pupils in secondary schools and his findings cannot be replicated to the current study on retentions levels of pupils in primary schools.

**Wang'ombe (2015), also conducted a study on gender disparities in the flow of students in primary schools in the country.**

The researcher used a cross sectional descriptive survey design. Best and Kahn (2023) describe a cross sectional descriptive survey design as a form of design that presents existing conditions, practices, beliefs, attitudes, opinions held, processes going on and trends for developing interpretation of meaning. The subject for the study was selected from 20 out of the 34 schools and the study sample comprised of 20 head teachers and 100 pupils bringing the total number of the sample study to 120 participants.

However, this was a comparative study as its purpose sought to find the disparities that exist in the flow of students in primary school in the District and did not in any way generate in-depth information on the factors contributing to retention levels of girls in most rural primary schools. Nevertheless this study was conducted in urban primary schools and its focus was on factors affecting the retention levels of pupils in public primary schools.



Fobih (2017), in a study in the country on social-psychological factors associated with school dropout in the district. Journal on Negro Education found that peer group exerts considerable influence on the adolescent by setting a pattern of values and behaviours for the individuals. In some districts, peer group was found to have influenced members to drop out of school to join such activities as going to the beach and lorry parks (i.e. bus or train stations) to work as carriers of baggage or packages during school hours. Fobih (2017), also found that having early sexual relations is a vital factor associated with drop out among adolescent situations. The study adopted Qualitative research methodology.

Findings from this study indicate that the dropout rate among girl was 80 percent while that of boys was 20 percent. These findings showed a high dropout rate among pupils in the community. Again, the findings of this study revealed that poor academic school, teenage pregnancy, single parenting and poverty, irresponsible parenting and peer influence were the main causes of pupils drop out.

However, the study was more concerned with effects of drop outs and not factors affecting the decline in retention levels of pupils in primary schools and the research was more qualitative than quantitative. Again, the findings of this study revealed that poor academic performance, no interest in subject matter contributes to high dropout rates, and on the contrary the current study puts its emphasis on the factors affecting the low retention levels of pupils in public primary school.

#### **Measures that could be taken to improve retention levels of pupils**

Making schools secure not only from without perimeter walls have, for example, been found to increase girls' sense of safety in many countries but also from within. Education is a key to protection when it is of good quality, but falls short when the learning environment itself fails to provide the necessary protection against violence and abuse of children. When schools are associated with sexual or physical gender violence, girls' access to education is negatively affected. Parents will naturally hesitate to send their daughters to schools that are thought to be sites of physical or sexual gender violence. Boys and girls are often susceptible to psychological and physical violence in different ways, and adolescents in particular can find themselves especially vulnerable to violations of their safety. Lack of safety and security in the school environment may be very obvious in terms of physical danger, such as beatings or rape. The abuse of girls sexually, physically and emotionally by teachers is a common problem.

Breaking the silence about violence at school is an important step towards its diagnosis and prevention. The country did this by including in the sexual harassment policy a directive stating that teachers should not be alone with pupils of the opposite sex. The launch of a two-year UN Global Study on Violence, the recommendations of the Commission on Human Security, the momentum behind the Millennium Development Goals and the ongoing Education For All movement all offer opportunities for substantive empirical research and advocacy around safety in education (United Nations Children's Fund, 2018).



When the language of instruction is different from the children's mother tongue, it is often more disabling for girls, who tend to be less exposed to social environments beyond their immediate families. In some countries, girls and boys are first taught in their local language, their mother tongue, and subsequently learn English as a second language. The proposal for Intercultural Bilingual Education to be applied to multi grade classrooms and one teacher schools for native speakers in poor rural areas has contributed to a 50 per cent increase in writing and communication abilities for girls and boys. Some studies shows that after mother tongue instruction was introduced, the effect was to greatly increase access to school, leading to higher attendance overall. To meet the consequent high demand on schooling, the special measure of double shifting was introduced (United Nations Children's Fund, 2018).

One way of reaching girls who have dropped out of school, as well as other groups such as working children and children in conflict situations, is through education centres established outside the formal school system. In some countries, learning centres encourages girls to normally confine to the home and domestic labour, to enroll in 'open primary school'. The centres perform an invaluable social as well as educational function; girls have organized field trips to neighbouring districts and even drama clubs involving local boys. The Ministry of Education has adopted the open primary school as a model for its own girls' education strategy.

In some countries, the Complementary Basic Education programme serves an estimated 3 million over age children and adolescents who are out of school. It provides basic education through a specially designed three year course, at the end of which children are eligible to join the mainstream school system. Girls or boys were the initial focus of the project due to their low enrolment rates. But the difficulty in locating them, either because they were working indoors or they married, failed to adequately address gender in the enrolment process. It has been successful in reaching excluded or 'hidden' groups of children, including orphans, children of single parents and young mothers. The project has been mainstreamed into the formal education system to cater to all overage children and adolescents who will not be eligible to enter the school system under new rules that stipulate age as a condition for entry.

Teachers are likely to be motivated by a combination of an intrinsic desire to serve their students, status in their communities, and financial compensation for their work. Our review of the literature identified only two studies that addressed financial compensation and none that considered status or intrinsic motivation. Kingdom and Teal (2019), used data from private primary schools in India to estimate the effect of teachers' union membership status (as a proxy for higher wages) on test scores. They found a union wage premium of 9.5 percent, but they also found that students performed worse in classes taught by unionised teachers.

Their analysis could not identify the mechanism for this decline, which could either reflect selection bias (if worse teachers join the union) or unionized teachers' intrinsic motivation being crowded out by the wage increase. Menezes-Filho and Pazello (2017), exploited a policy change in that increased the share of financial resources allocated to teachers' wages in order to estimate the effects of a wage increase on students' proficiency. They found that doubling teachers' wages could drastically increase test



scores, although they could not identify whether this was the result of a sorting effect, in which better teachers moved into high-wage positions, or of an incentive effect in the teachers' appreciation of the higher wages.

Similarly, payments to students (in the form of competitions with cash prizes) can motivate them to work harder. Competitions can even be designed such that the prize also motivates students who do not have a high likelihood of winning. In some rural areas, Kremer et al. (2019) found that offering girls a scholarship that paid school fees for the next two academic years (\$6.40 paid to the school directly each year) plus a grant for school-related expenses (\$12.80 paid to the girl's family) had the effect of raising test scores for all girls (not only those who were likely to qualify for the scholarship by scoring in the top 15 percent of the district on an academic exam). In addition to the increase in girls' test scores, there was suggestive evidence that boys' test scores also increased, possibly because teachers were less likely to be absent from work in the prize treatment group. Another possible channel is peer effects: the indirect influence of one student's attitude or effort on another's by association (for example, if it becomes "cool" to do well in school or if a student decided to spend more time studying because that is what her friend also does).

The main interventions that were observed in the early grade literacy and numeracy programmes were teacher training on reading or mathematics instruction; provision of teaching or learning materials; production of reading materials in the local language; and community- and homebased reading activities that increase access to reading materials for children in and out of school.

Despite the critical role of teachers in primary education, we found no rigorous evaluations of programmes that provided pre-service or in-service training to teachers, nor did we find any rigorous evaluations of programmes that offered other forms of support from supervisors or peers.

Stakeholder mobilization in the community to support the improvement programme; planning and organization to improve school management and the functioning of schools as organizations, including curriculum management, strategic planning and financial management; teacher performance, including awareness of teaching goals, focus on learning outcomes, access to efficient curriculum delivery systems and resources and provision of curriculum planning and delivery materials, school support visits and cluster-levels activities; parent involvement through a parent mobilization programme, which includes setting up home study groups monitored by parents, and developing a practical guide on how parents should support their children's learning.

### **A Critique on the Literature**

Owano (2017), conducted a similar study in some public schools on factors that influence the retention of female students in primary and secondary schools in Muhoroni division, Muhoroni District whose purpose was to determine the factors that influence the retention of female students in primary and Secondary Schools in some districts of County. The researcher used simple random sampling method to select the participating schools in the district. Simple random sampling meant that the individuals in the total population were equal and independent of chances of being selected as a



member of a sample. The study sample, however, involved only the girls who were still in school rather than involving even the victims who dropped out of school who should have given valid reasons as to why they dropped out of school. The study sample should have also included some parents who should have provided information on their attitude with regard to educating a girl child as well as the belief that they had on educating the girl child. Above all, the study was about retention challenges at the secondary levels of education whose finding cannot be generalized to the primary levels.

On the other hand, the researcher argued that some factors highlighted in the literature review had solutions that were designed to address the challenges they had imposed on the education for the pupils. For example, in 1997 the government of Zambia, in its attempt to achieve the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the broader set of initiatives to encourage more girls to start school and complete their education, policies such as the re-entry, free basic education and the education expansion programme were established (Mutombu and Muenda, 2017). Furthermore, the formulation of the free basic education policy was aimed at addressing challenges associated with socio-economic challenges. Besides this, the government of Zambia through the Ministry of Education embarked on an ambitious Education expansion programme by establishing many government and community schools around the nation as well as improving the infrastructure of the already existing schools. All this was done to address the issues of access to education and reduction of distances from pupils' homes to school which was purported to be one of the factors contributing to the retention decline of girls in schools.

Furthermore, other factors did not really show how they impact on the retention decline for pupils as there was no proper evidence and justification consolidated on the claims. Moreover, some factors could not be generalized due to the differences that existed in cultural beliefs, regional and geographical locations which did not guarantee the existence of such factors to other places of the global world. Above all, most of the literature reviewed did not show which grade levels were mostly affected by the retention decline problem.

Lastly, the earlier studies used questionnaires to collect data from participants which denied them an opportunity to probe further on the causes of low retention of pupils in schools and moreover most of them did not include the drop outs as participants in their studies who could have given the actual reasons why they dropped out of school there by influencing the retention levels of pupils in schools.

This study, therefore, explored this problem by employing other data collection methods that involved direct interaction with the pupils who dropped out of school and some parents in order to get firsthand information as opposed to getting information formulated on assumption.

### **Summary**

The Literature review given in this chapter was in most cases qualitative research design where descriptive survey design was used had shown that there are several factors that contribute to the retention decline of girls at primary levels of education. Some of these factors included culture, school factors, attitude of parents, parent



education background, socio-economic factors and sexual abuse. The literature reviewed showed that the girls are disadvantaged because of their status and nature of being which sees them being marginalized from education by their parents and eventually makes them become dropout victims.

Above all the studies above focused more on the girl child as opposed to both sexes and therefore, the findings cannot be replicated to this study.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **Overview**

This chapter describes the procedure that was used to conducting the study. The chapter describes the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments to be used, procedures for data collection and the process of data analysis.

#### **Research design**

A research design was defined as a framework of methods and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine various components of research in a reasonably logical manner so that the research problem was efficiently handled (Bogdan, & Biklen, 2018). It provided insights about how to conduct research using a particular methodology. The research design was a descriptive case study which used both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Qualitative data concerned with the features, attributes and characteristics of phenomenon that can be interpreted thematically. For example, a claim that pilots demonstrate intelligence that was visual-spatial in nature rather than verbal (Cohen and Manion 2024), Qualitative Research was primarily exploratory research. It was used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provided insights into the problem or helped to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research (Ogula, 2019). Qualitative Research was also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods included focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. The sample size was typically small, and participants were selected to fulfil a given quota.

Quantitative research was related to quantities, amounts and measurements that can be expressed in numbers and manipulated statistically. For example, an IQ scores of 120 (Strauss and Corbin 2020).

Quantitative Research was used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into usable statistics. It was used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other defined variables and generalised results from a larger sample population. Quantitative Research used measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research. - Quantitative data collection methods were much more structured than Qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data collection methods include various forms of surveys – online surveys, paper surveys,



mobile surveys and kiosk surveys, face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, longitudinal studies, website interceptors, online polls, and systematic observations (Bowen, 2019).

Qualitative and quantitative research was linked to an interpretive paradigm. Interpretive approaches to research have the intention of understanding “the world of human experience” (Cohen and Manion 2024), suggesting that “reality was socially constructed” (Mertens 2015). The interpretive researcher tends to rely upon the participants’ views of the situation being studied (Creswell 2023) and recognizes the impact on the research of their own experiences. According to Creswell, the interpretive researcher is most likely to rely on qualitative data collection methods and analysis, or a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

Qualitative and quantitative research broadly means any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss and Corbin 2020). Therefore, the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in this study is considered appropriate in situations where the researcher felt that quantitative measures could not adequately describe or interpret a situation in relation to low retention levels of students.

### **Research population**

This study drew its population from ten primary schools and the communities around Kafue Urban in Lusaka Province of Zambia. According to Kombo and Tromp (2016), population refers to a group of individuals’ objects or items from which samples are taken for measurement (for example a population of students). The targeted population for this study was all head teachers, teachers, all school pupils, dropout of school pupils in public primary schools and parents in Kitwe District.

### **Research Sample Population**

A sample is a group of people, objects, or items that are taken from a larger population for measurement. The sample should be representative of the population to ensure that we can generalise the findings from the research sample to the population as a whole. A sample is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole (Webster, 2020).

The researcher used a sample population of 120 consisting of 10 administrators, 20 teachers, 20 parents, 50 pupils and 20 dropouts school representative of the population which was picked at random for the interview, questionnaires and focus group discussions. 70 percent were female and 30 percent were male. This brought the total sample size to 120 from the 10 selected public primary schools.

### **Sampling procedure**

Sampling is a process or technique of choosing a sub-group from a population to participate in the study; it is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the selected individuals represent the large group from which they were selected (Ogula, 2015).



The study utilized purposive sampling because the researcher targeted a group of individuals believed to be reliable for the study snowball and random sampling procedures. It was also used to select the teachers and pupils in the selected schools that were interviewed and subjected to questionnaires.

### **Research instruments**

In this study the researcher used the following research instruments to obtain the needed information from the participants:

#### **Semi-structured Interview guide**

Semi-structured Interviews were used to gather focused, qualitative textual data. This method offers a balance between the flexibility of an open-ended interview and the focus of a structured ethnographic survey (Bernard, 2020).

#### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires comprised a mixture of closed and open questions. They are commonly used in business-to-business market research where there is a need to accommodate a large range of different responses from companies (Bernard, 2020). Questionnaires were used because most school administrators were not found in offices hence it could be difficult to get information - 28 - from them using interviews hence, the researcher used questionnaires in which the responses could be provided by participants on their own time.

#### **Focus group discussion**

A focus group is a small-group discussion guided by a trained leader. It is used to learn about opinions on a designated topic, and to guide future action. For example, a focus group of parents of pre-scholars meets to discuss child care needs. Parents share their views on local child care programs and on what could be done to improve them (Bowen, 2019). The researcher included this procedure due to the fact that most parents cannot read and write properly hence, there is need for someone to help them understand questions through interpretation.

#### **Document analysis**

Document analysis is a form of qualitative and quantitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic. Examining documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analysed (Bowen, 2019). Since the research was more concerned with factors influencing low retention levels and among the objectives of the study considered the grade and age with high dropout rate the researcher felt that document examinations could not be left out as it could give more and accurate information.

#### **Data collection procedures**

There are four methods which were used to collect data in this particular research and these are discussed below.



### **Semi-structured Interview guide**

Semi-structured Interviews were used to gather information from school administrators (Head teacher or Deputy Teacher) in some selected schools. Printed copies were given to administrators in some selected school and it was self-administered.

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires in this research were used to get information from teachers. Selected teachers from different schools were given questionnaires which were self-administered. They were allowed to go with the questionnaires and response in their own time within a specified period. –

### **Focus group discussion**

A focus group consists of small groups of informed people who are engaged in social processes premised upon the collection of conversations as data. The purpose of focus groups is to elicit participants' feelings, attitudes and perceptions about a particular topic through conversations (Puchta & Potter, 2018). In educational research, focus groups can be used to stimulate conversations around carefully constructed questions that are initiated by the researcher for the specific purpose of obtaining data relevant to the specified research outcomes.

In focus groups, the conversations are facilitated so that the discourse is oriented to the interpretative context established for the focus group. The collection of data usually occurs through the use of recording devices: often with a tape recorder along with notes taken by an observer (Krueger, 2018). The tape-recorded conversations are then transcribed and coded, turning the conversations into texts. The written notes that are taken together with the transcripts of the focus group conversations become the data ready for analysis. Thus conversations in educational research can be captured through focus groups.

In this research there were three focus groups. First group was for dropouts second group was for pupils who were still in schools and the last group was for parents. Selected pupils, drop outs and parents were given an opportunity to express their views on the issues of the retention levels conducted by a given leader. Questions were provided and their views were jotted down and recorded as well.

### **Document analysis**

In this research, class registers, period attendance register, progress books, report forms were examined from grade 2 up to 7 for the purpose of having in-depth information on the grade levels with the high dropout rates and the age at which there was high dropout rates.

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis as indicated by Kombo and Tromp (2019) refers to examining what has been collected in a survey or experiment and making deductions and inferences. It involves uncovering underlying structures; extracting important variables, detecting any anomalies and testing any underlying assumptions. This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Under the quantitative approach, the



responses from the participants were tabulated, coded and processed. Descriptive statistics method was used to analyze and summarized data which was collected. Descriptive statistics helped the researcher to carry out the editing. The tabulation of results was done hence frequencies and percentages were used to present the data while qualitative data was presented thematically and explanations were based on themes.

### **Reliability**

An instrument is considered valid when there is confidence that it measures what it is intended to measure in a given situation (Punch, 2018). Of the four instruments (interview guide, questionnaire, focus group discussion guide, and document analysis) used in the study, three were piloted for validity. In determining the validity of the instruments, the researcher pre-tested them in a school that was not part of the sampled schools. They were pre-tested to ensure that the questions inspired the answers the research questions intended to bring out. The instruments were fine-tuned based on their answers, comments and suggestions to achieve the purpose of the study. This was done in order to determine the clarity and relevance of the questions in eliciting information on an investigation into the factors that affected the retention level of pupils in public primary school in some selected schools in Kafue District. Kombo and Tromp (2019), described qualitative research as a form of research that involves description, and quantitative research relies on the principle of verification. Using both approaches helped the researcher collect more information which proved the data collected as reliable. Pilot testing of the instruments reduced ambiguity of items and therefore enhanced their reliability. The researcher also conducted pilot tests for the interview guide which was face to face interviews and focus group discussions. After the flaws were noted in the instruments, corrections were then made and the instruments were considered reliable to bring out the desired outcome for the study.

### **Validity**

Reliability of research instruments refers to the accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure. In other words, reliability focuses on the degree to which empirical indicators or measures of a theoretical concept are stable or consistent across two or more attempts to measure the concept (Creswell, 2019). In this study, indicators or measures of a theoretical concept in instruments were used to collect data to investigate the factors that affected the retention level of pupils in public primary school in some selected schools in Kafue District.

### **Ethical considerations**

While carrying out this study, cognizance was taken of the fact that this study would be investigating very sensitive issues that were likely to elicit hostility, insecurity or concealment of the real data required from the participants. Participants were informed of the nature of the study and allowed to choose whether to participate or not. There is wide consensus among social scientists that research involving human participants should be performed with the informed consent of the participants (Nachmias 2018). The researcher, therefore, ensured that participants that were involved did so voluntarily. Thorough explanations were given in advance in relation to benefits, rights and dangers involved with their participation. Participants were informed and assured that the information they provided would be treated as confidential. In cases where the researcher was able to identify a particular participant's information, the researcher



would not reveal it publicly. Statements on confidentiality were written on the questionnaires, and verbally communicated during interviews and questionnaire administration.

### Summary

This chapter reviewed methods used in collecting data. Procedures in data collection included document analysis, questionnaires, interview guide and focus group discussion which helped the researcher to collect useful information from different participants and relevant documents. It also presented the population sample and sampling procedures which were used to carry out the research.

## IV. Presentation of Findings

### Overview

The previous chapter provided the methodology used for collection and analysis of data for this study. This chapter presents the findings of the study.

### Factors influencing low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District

The first objective of the study was to establish factors influencing the low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District in some selected schools. Most pupils gave the following reasons as the factors that influence low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District: 50 percent indicated poverty as the most common cause in the area where pupils came from. 23 percent of the pupils indicated the cause to be early marriages and 27 percent of the pupils said they were orphans hence they lacked support as their guardians failed to provide for them.

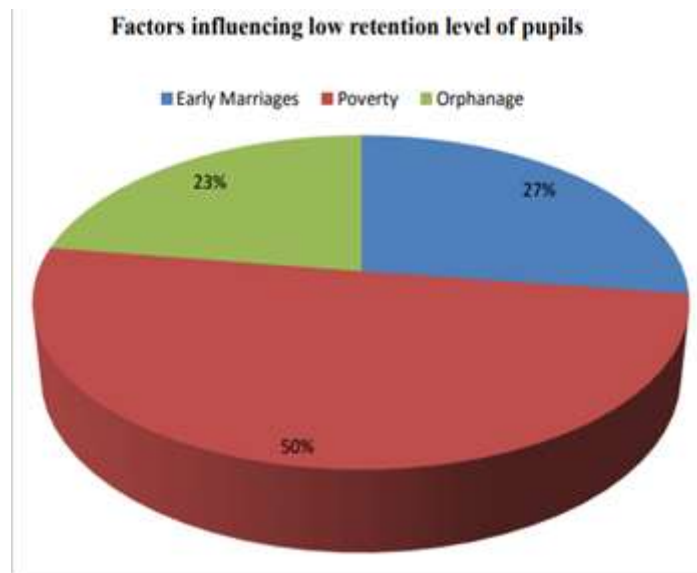


Figure 1: Responses on factors influencing low retention levels of pupils



### **Poverty**

As can be seen on previous page, poverty was the major factor, or it could be said to be the universal set of early marriages that contributed mainly to the low retention levels of pupils as they progress from grades four to seven. Most parents were not in formal employment to provide for the needs of their children for them to go to school. To illustrate on Poverty as a factor contributing to low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools of Kafue District, one pupil lamented that:

Rarely do we take breakfast before going to school and at times when we come back from school, we find nothing to eat at home hence, we decide to help our parents find food through begging or selling in the streets resulting in not attending classes.

#### **Another boy stated that:**

I become a general worker in order to help my parents economically through charcoal burning, wheel burrow pushing and selling of other items resulting in neglecting school.

### **Early marriages**

The findings also revealed the levels of early marriages as a factor contributing to low retention levels of pupils in most public primary school of Kafue District. The result shows that 27 percent of responses supported that the low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools was due to early marriages.

One teacher as a key participant stated that:

Early marriage is the most factors leading to the low retention levels of pupils in schools as they progress from grade five to seven.

#### **Another teacher revealed that:**

Some pupils stop school because they have no one to support and encourage them to attend school regularly and because of that most of them decide to get married at an early stage.

### **Orphanage**

Further, the findings showed that in most cases pupils who were orphans stop school at an early stage due to lack of motivation and support from relatives and this contributed to low retention

levels of pupils in most public primary schools of Kafue District. The result shows that 23 percent of responses supported that the low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools

was due to the fact that most pupils in the area were orphans.

One drop out girl as a key participant from focus group stated:

I dropped out of school in grade 6 because my parents died and I had no relative to support me to go to school like my parents were doing hence I decided to quit school.

Another drop out girl gave the reason why she dropped out of school as follows:

My mother died and there was no one to take care of my two siblings so I stopped school and I started working as a house girl to earn money for food.



**Another stated that:**

My parents died and I started working as baby sitter in order for me to earn money for my sisters aid one drop out.

The findings attributed to situations were as a result of parents and guardians neglecting their children progressing in school due to their busy schedule, looking for what to put on the table and forgetting their responsibilities of parenthood.

**The age of pupils with high dropout levels in public primary schools**

The second objective of the study was to ascertain the age at which most pupils drop out of school in most public primary schools in Kafue District.

The table below shows the distribution of responses from participants. The information revealed that 20 participants said that pupils drop out of school at the age of 8 to 9 while 12 said they drop out of school at the age of 10 to 11 and 28 supported that 12 to 13 years while 60 said they drop out of school at 14 to 15 years.

Table 1: Distribution of response on the drop out ages

Age	8-9	10-11	12-13	14-15
Number of participants	20	12	28	60

It can be seen that most pupils stop school at the ages between 14 and 15 years due to various reasons stated on the first objective. It is at this age at which most people attained puberty, hence becoming sexually active and chances of becoming pregnant were high. This information is translated on the chart that follows;

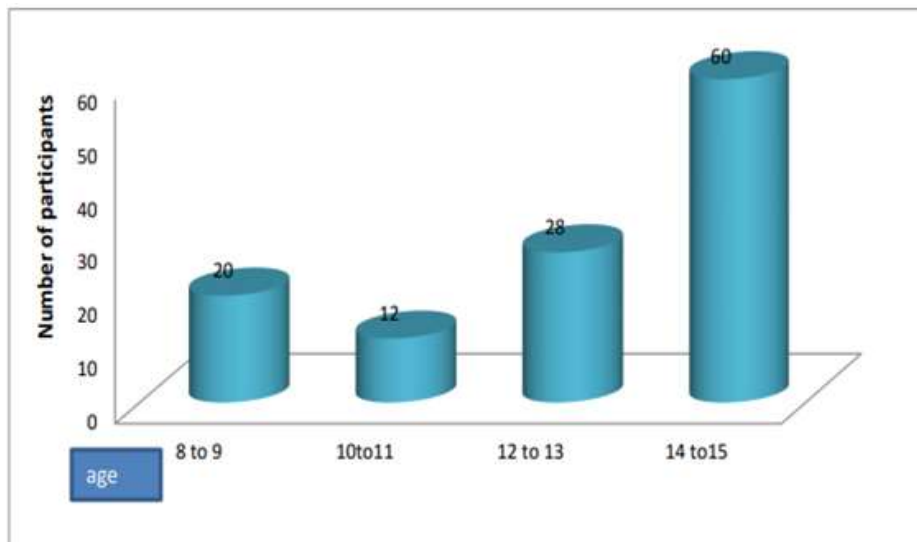


Figure 2: Response on the drop out ages

As seen above on figure 2, it is noted that 20 participants supported 8 to 9 years as the age affected with drop outs, 12 participants feel it is 10 to 11 years affected by drop



outs, better still 28 participants thought it is 12 to 13, contrary 60 participants said it is 14 and 15 due to various reasons stated in object one.

The findings in the first objective noted that, most pupils drop out of school because of early marriages, orphanage and poverty hence; most of them drop out at the age between 14 and 15. To confirm this pupil justified that:

At the age of between 12 and 15 this is when pupils attain puberty, and most of them want to control themselves and need some independence from parents and teachers. When teachers try to control them they feel adamant hence stop attending school.

### Grade levels with high dropout rate

The third objective of the study was to ascertain the grade levels at which most pupils dropped out of school in most public primary schools in Kafue District.

The distribution figure 3 below revealed the findings from 10 schools for both girls and boys. The figure shows the total enrolment for both boys and girls. The letters A to J represents the ten selected schools. The numbers 0 to 3500 represents the pupil's enrolment in the study selected schools. The colour green is the total number of enrolments in all schools for girls and boys, the red colour represents girl's enrolments, while the blue colour represent boy's enrolment in all selected schools.

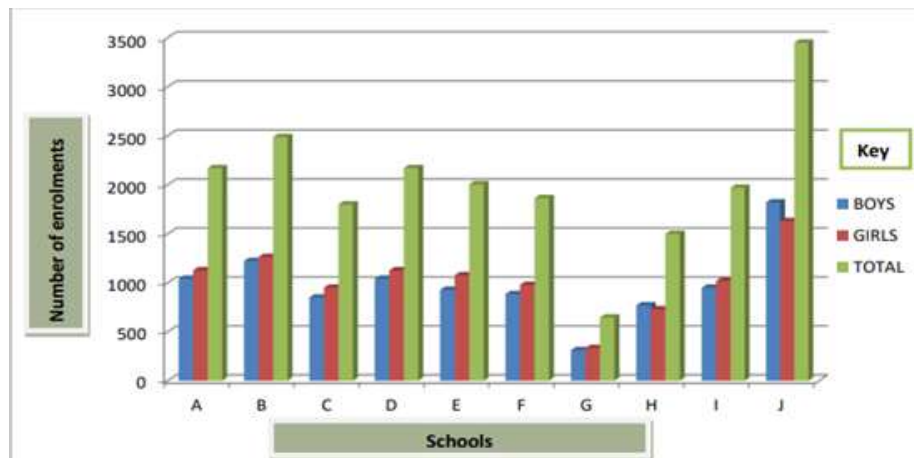


Figure 3 Distribution enrolments in 10 schools

The information on the figure above has been tabulated on the next page to show the actual enrolment numbers for both boys and girls in 10 selected Public Primary Schools of Kafue District.

It can be noted that the total enrolments for school A is 2,170, school is B, 2,487, school C is 1,800, school D is 2170, and school E is 2006. Further school F is 1864, school G is 646, school H is, 1500, school I is 1970 and the last school J is 3450.



Table 2: Distribution for enrolments for 10 schools

School	Enrolments		
	Boys	Girls	Total
A	1042	1128	2170
B	1223	1264	2487
C	1042	1128	2170
D	929	1077	2006
E	885	979	1864
F	312	334	646
G	770	730	1500
H	950	1020	1970
I	1820	1630	3450

The table on the next page shows that every year pupils were dropping out of school. For instance School A, shows that 16 pupils were dropped out of school in 2015 and the number rose steadily to 27 drop outs in 2019. School B also showed that 21 drop outs in 2015 to 55 in 2019. School C also shows that 36 pupils drop out in 2015 and the number increased to 41 in 2016, it reduces in 2017 to 31 but rose to 39 and accelerated to 44 drop outs in 2019. The total number of drop outs in 10 schools in five years reached to 1,532.

Table 3: Number of Dropouts in the 10 Study Schools (2015-2019)

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
SCHOOL	16	17	16	16	27
A	21	22	18	17	55
B	36	41	31	39	44
C	14	9	21	12	13
D	63	35	119	127	166
E	15	18	11	12	29
F	30	20			
G					35
H	30	37	22	25	40
I	9	13	18	11	22
J	23	19	17	7	20
TOTAL	257	214	317	309	435

The information above has also been processed further into the figure on the next page. Figure 4 on the next page is the column chart showing the distribution of drop outs from 2015 to 2019 in different 10 selected schools. The numbers from 0 to 180 shows the number of drop out in the selected schools, the letters A to J are the selected schools. The colours labeled represents drop out in each year. Blue represents 2015, red represents 2016, green is 2017 purple represents 2018 and the sky blue represent the year 2019.



It can be noted that the trends of drop outs increase from 2015 to 2019. For example school A, drop outs in 2015 were 16 but it increased to 27 in 2019. School B, had 21 drop outs in 2015 and in 2019 increased to 55. Further school C, had 36 drop outs in 2015 and the number increased to 44 in 2019. School D, had 14 drop outs in 2015 and 13 drop outs in 2019. The most affected school for drop outs on the figure is school E which shows 63 drop outs in 2015 but the number doubled to 166 drop outs in 2019. Schools F to J also showed that the number of drop outs increased from 2015 to 2019.

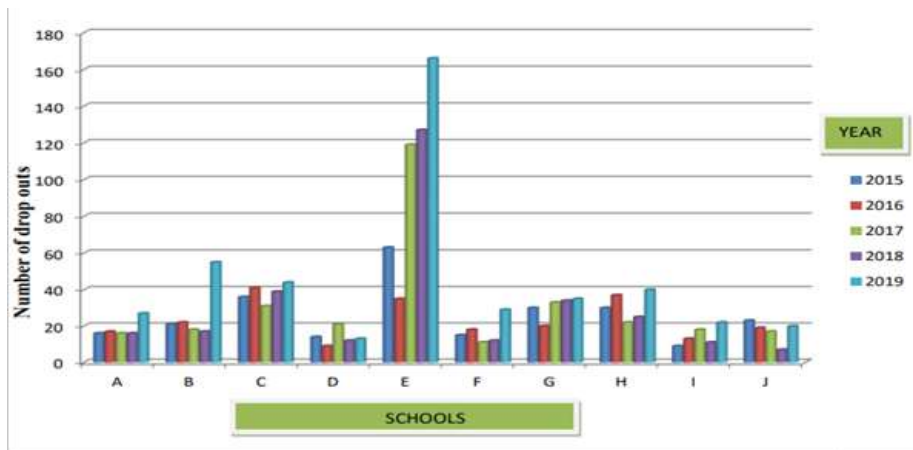


Figure 4: Number of dropout per school (2015-2019)

Focus group discussion held with pupils revealed that 100 percent knew of friends and neighbours who had dropped out of school for various reasons. Most pupils in the focus group gave the reason why most pupils stop school as follows:

Pupils misbehave in this grade and when the teachers try to control them through desired punishments, they stop school, they further said K50.00 they charge for IDs makes most vulnerable pupils to stop school since they do not have where to get the money to pay.

**Another girl stated that:**

They stop school in grade 7 because of their poor performance which stops them from proceeding to higher levels.

As may be seen from the table on the next page when pupils' progressed from grade two to seven, the number of drop outs increased. School A, the numbers increased abruptly from 3 in grade 2 to 26 in grade 7, school B from 20 in grade 5 and 6 to 51 in grade 7, and School I from 5 in grade 4 to 10 in grade 6 and to 12 in grade 7, the last school 4 in grade 5 to 14 in grade 7. It is important hence to come up with measures which can be taken to improve the low retention levels of pupils in schools to curb the situation.

Table 3: Number of drop outs in 10 schools

SCHOOL	GRADES/DROP OUTS					
	2	3	4	5	6	7



A	3	7	8	4	10	26
B	5	0	80	20	10	51
C	0	1	0	3	4	5
D	8	3	2	7	7	2
E	7	9	8	6	10	15
F	0	0	0	0	12	4
G	0	2	4	0	3	26
H	0	0	0	0	0	9
I	3	4	5	10	10	12
J	1	0	0	4	0	14
TOTAL	26	26	107	54	66	144

### Measures which can be taken to improve the low retention levels of pupils' in public primary schools

The fourth objective of the study provided the researcher an opportunity to explore measures which could be taken to improve the retention levels of pupils in public primary schools of Kafue District. In addressing this objective, qualitative data was collected from 120 participants and that all the participants were asked the same question. In trying to investigate the measures that could be used the following were the major themes that emerged: the Government, Teachers and Parents. This information was shown on the chart format below.

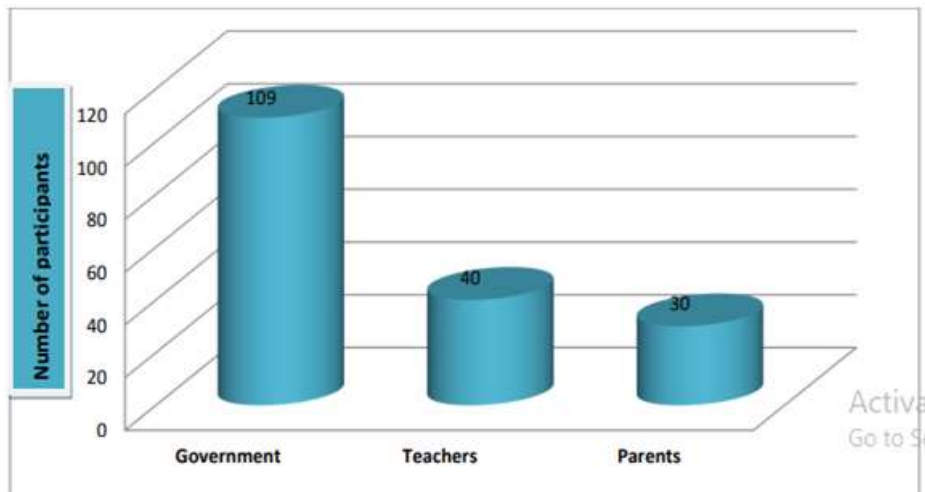


Figure 5: Measures to improve low retention levels

All the responses that came from 109 participants which included three focus group discussions supported the fact that government must do something to help retention levels of pupils in schools. 40 participants attested that teachers can play a vital role in improving the retention level of pupils and better still 30 other participants attributed to parents as key factors in improving retention level of pupils in schools.

### Government



To illustrate this, one pupil from the focus group discussion urged the government to provide all the necessities for pupils to attain school. The pupil stated:  
The government must provide school uniforms, books, pens, pencils and, food because most pupils go to school on an empty stomach and this reduces the attention of pupils in class resulting in poor performance and this leads to dropouts. The pupils further said the government must also allow pupils to go to school without uniforms.

The government should also provide food for school going children free such as, mealie meal, beans and cooking oil especially to those most vulnerable.

Another parent from the focus group discussion mentioned that:

The government must come in and start providing school shoes, uniforms, exercise books, pens, and pencils as it was in years back.

Sentiments from parents resonated with the findings as well, one particular parent was disturbed by the school requirements for the pupils to pay K50.00 for IDs and K250.00 for grade 1 enrolment forms for those starting school which was to be for developmental projects like building of school wall fence, better still schools are demanding a K50.00 for assessment fees specifically for the grade 7s yet, the government has made education free to all public primary schools. The parents further states that;

We face challenges in raising those fees hence delaying children to start school at normal age and this leads to dropout as pupils start school when they have grown.

It is evident that the government is the mother of every orphan and must take full responsibility to stop children from dropping out of school apart from re-entry policy and free primary education.

### **Teachers**

Research findings revealed how the Teachers can help improve the retention levels of pupils in public primary schools.

#### **One drop out stated that:**

Teachers should show love to every pupil whether the child is dirty, poor or rich, or whether the child is coming from a well to do family or not. He further urged teachers to make sure that there is no bullying in schools because it affects a lot of pupils which leads to dropout. Another child said teachers must try on their level best to counsel all pupils.

#### **A teacher reported that:**

Teachers must strive on their levels best to guide learners to desist from early sex to avoid teen pregnancy and early marriages and also abuse of drugs such as Genkem, glue and weed mostly by boys.

### **Parents**

The findings also revealed that parents play an important role in the education of their children. It has reviewed on how the Parents could help improve the retention levels of pupils in public primary schools. The total number of responses from all the categories of participants who supported this view was 30 out of 120 responses.



To cement that parents had roles to play in reducing retention levels pupils said: Parents must encourage their children and stop early marriages. They should also keep on sensitizing their children on the importance of education. A teacher urged parents to take keen interest in the education of their children and ensured that children were attending school regularly; she further said parents must educate their children on the importance of education in this era.

The findings were that the Government must provide school uniforms, books, pens, pencils and, food because some pupils went to school on an empty stomach and this, reduced the attention of pupils in class resulting in poor performance and led to dropouts. The pupils further said the government must also allow pupils to go to school without uniforms; this was supported by 58 responses out of 120. Teachers on the other hand, must try their level best to guide learners to desist from debt sex to avoid teen pregnancy and early marriages from 96 out of 120. Finally, parents should also take keen interest in the education of their children and make sure that children were attending school regularly; further, parents must educate the children on the importance of education in this era and this was supported by 52 out of 120 participants.

### **Summary**

Chapter four presented the research findings on an investigation into the factors affecting the retention levels of pupils in public primary school- a case of selected schools in Kafue District. Most of the issues have been discussed according to their objectives.

## **V. Discussion of Findings**

### **Overview**

The preceding chapter presented the findings regarding factors pertaining to low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District. The purpose of the study was to investigate factors affecting retention levels of pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District in some selected schools. This chapter proceeds with discussion of the key findings earlier presented.

As stated by Carole & Sutton (2024), the discussion section should bring together the main research findings and the key elements of the literature review. Similarly, this chapter discussed findings of this study under the headings drawn from the objectives and the emerging themes. The discussion relate the findings of other studies reviewed in chapter two under literature review, and what the study had brought out which was not mentioned by other authors. The discussion also related the findings to the social discipline and congruent communication theories adopted for this study and also unveiled the researcher's view on the extent to which the objectives had been answered. The researcher also interpreted the findings, and made suggestions for future research. This measure however, was meant to provide sufficient answers to the four objectives, appreciation of the depth of the problem and realisation the purpose of this study.

The objectives of this study were firstly; to investigate the factors that influence low retention levels in public primary schools in Kafue District. Secondly; to ascertain the age of pupils with high dropout levels in public primary schools in Kafue District.



Thirdly; to ascertain the grades of pupils with high dropout levels in public primary schools in Kafue District and fourthly; to suggest the measures that can be taken to improve retention levels of pupils in public primary schools.

### **Factors that influence low retention levels in public primary schools in Kafue District**

The study established the factors that influenced the retention levels in public primary schools in Kafue District. These were categories as early marriages, orphans, and poverty. These are addressed in the next subthemes 5.1.1, 5.1.2, and 5.1.3.

#### **Poverty**

The study revealed that besides early marriages and being orphaned, poverty also led to school dropout, hence low retention levels of pupils in public Primary schools in Kafue District. This study was in line with Njeru and Orodho, (2023) who asserts that high rates of poverty at household levels have made poor households either not to enroll their children in primary schools or fail to sustain an uninterrupted participation of those who are enrolled due to inability to meet various requirements. Poverty is the insufficient accesses to food, and nutrition, education, healthcare, adequate shelter, clothing, adequate income, safe water and sanitation. Despite Kafue District being a highly economic city, most parents are not in employment and those in employment; do not earn enough money to support their children with school necessities and requirements.

As illustrated in chapter four of figure 1 on the pie chart, 50 % represents poverty, which means that most children come from impoverished homes where parents are unable to provide for the family which forces most school going children to take responsibilities of their parents by providing at home through piece works like baby seating, wheelbarrow pushing and selling in the streets, neglecting school. Poverty, has led to a growing number of women and girls into prostitution. This is believed to be the outcome of the paucity of opportunities for income that are available for girls. Boys on the other hand, become general workers in order for them to help their parents economically through charcoal burning, wheel burrow pushing and selling of other items resulting in neglecting school.

#### **Early marriages**

The pie chart on figure 1, page 31 represents 27 % of children who are married off at a tender age due to many reasons such as poverty and orphanage. Early marriage is sometimes used as a way of reducing the perceived financial burden a girl places on her family. Some girls see marriage as a way of escaping challenging economic circumstances and responding to their own basic needs. There was a similar response from all the categories of participants indicating that most pupils dropout of school due to early marriages. It was discovered that often girls had so many demands which could not be met by their parents and guardians and this led them to enter into relationships with older men who give them money in exchange for sex leading to early marriages. This finding contradicts with UNICEF (2019) which gives poor supervision by teachers and indiscipline of learners as the cause of drop outs. However, these findings agree with those of Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE, 2011), which assert that over-age enrolment increases the risk of children



leaving school early due to marriage norms for older girls and family needs for older children's assistance for economic activities and those of . GRZ (2018) observes that in Zambia girls are married off by their parents when they are still very young at school-going age.

While the re-entry policy is a good policy that provides a chance for girls to complete their education after falling pregnant (MoE, 2019) some community members from Kafue District indicated that the policy encouraged teen pregnancy as girls no longer feared losing their school places. Community members further reported that girls no longer feared to temporarily dropout due to pregnancy because of the policy which allowed them to return to school. They also said there was ambiguity in terms of how many times a girl could fall pregnant and be allowed to return to school.

Sexual intercourse among young teenagers is common so many (female) children have known men at a young age. Many children at the age of 12 years are doing it. It is obvious that girls are the victims of early marriages than boys.

### **Orphanages**

As may be seen in figure 1 of chapter four, 23 % of the findings revealed that most pupils are orphans who lead to boys ending up in streets begging for food and abusing drugs such as: genkem, glue and weed. They also become robbers in order for them to earn a living. Further, due to child headed families, most boys took care of their siblings in place of going to school.

The study revealed that besides early marriages, if a pupil becomes an orphan either single or double, chances of dropping out are high. There are differences between findings of this study and those of Nyamukapaet al (2023) which showed that orphan hood had no impact on education. Orphaned Children who had lost one or both parents found themselves in a situation where they started looking after themselves or ended up in the streets. Girls were drawn into prostitution, because they were orphans and wanted to fend for themselves. They sold their bodies to sugar daddies' in exchange for very little money. Such girls did not practice prostitution openly, since it was not accepted culturally. In some cases, prostitution often took the form of seeking payments for having sex with 'boyfriends'. Girls living in such difficult circumstances were specially threatened by HIV/AIDS. It was hard for them to say 'no' to sex or to persuade men or boys to practice 'safer' sex which led to teen pregnancy and school drop outs.

### **Pupils dropout Age**

The second objective of this study was to ascertain the age of pupils with high dropout levels in public primary schools in Kafue District. The study established that between the ages of 14 years to 15 years there was high dropout rate. This information is similar to that conducted by (CREATE, 2017) on Pupils with a problem of lack of age in grade congruence were susceptible to dropping out of school than their counterparts whose age was in harmony with their grade. The study also agreed with UNESCO (2019), which showed that crucial drop-out rate of children is between the ages of 10yearsto 14years.



As can be seen on the column chart, figure 2 of chapter four, 60 participants stressed that between the age of 14 and 15 most pupils' dropout of school due to various reasons such as poverty, orphanage and marrying at a tender age.

#### **Dropout rate Grade levels**

Table 3 in chapter four indicates that in ten selected schools, in grade 7, the total number of 144 pupils drop out of school.

It is true that not all pupils who enroll in primary complete the primary cycle of education. It has been observed that most pupils as they progress to the upper grades, the retention levels decreases because most of them find themselves in bad groups which influences their behaviour and think they are old enough to control themselves. The study found out that the most affected grade levels was grade 7 due to the reasons discussed in the first objective. This result is similar to that of (CREATE, 2017) which revealed that overage enrolment increased the risk of children leaving school and mostly children from 5years to 13years old because at 13years, a child was supposed to be in grade 6 or 7. This was mainly caused by negative attitude towards education by pupils, irresponsible parents, transfers to academies and indiscipline behaviour in public primary schools.

#### **Measures to improve the retention levels of pupils.**

The study established the measures which can be taken to improve the retention levels of pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District. These were the categories: the Government, Teachers and Parents. These are addressed in the next subthemes 5.4.1, 5.4.2, and 5.4.3.

#### **Government**

The study indicated that if the government of the country took care of orphans, the concept of orphanages could have ceased to exist because the government was the mother of every child on earth. The government must ensure that teachers are motivated using different methods because when the teacher is motivated obviously the conducive environment for learners will be created. This study agrees with Mwanza, (2015) who suggested that Teachers are likely to be motivated by the combination of an intrinsic desire to serve their students, status in their communities, and financial compensation for their work

The study found that inadequacy of teachers and school facilities compromised the quality of education in the District which also contributed to the low retention levels. The study concurred with Achoka (2021) who found that making primary education free is not enough; parents, guardians and sponsors are still expected to provide facilities such as: uniforms, feeding, medical care and other statutory fees upon which some fail to provide for their children.

Till now, pupils are expected to pay K50.00 for school based assessments in some schools especially those in grade 7 which most parents cannot manage to raise and pay for their children. This may cause vulnerable children to stop attending school which may lead to drop outs. As may be seen on column chart, figure 5 of chapter four, 109 participants voiced out that the government must motivate teachers through different incentives, as this may trigger teachers to create a conducive environment which can



attract children to remain in school. Further, the government should strengthen school feedings programmes in all public primary schools to help the most vulnerable children.

### **Teachers**

The study revealed that teachers at any cost were to provide an enabling environment for learning in order for the pupils to not run away from school. This is similar to FAWE, (2022) which noted that teachers were not innovative and creative, were not learner friendly and did not use gender responsive approaches in teaching, and remedial lessons were hardly given. Teachers had no interest and did not motivate learners. They were harsh, dictatorial and self-centred. Learners therefore ran away from school or just decided to life low. However, UNESCO (2019) noted that teachers were to ensure that they gave sufficient marks to make learners advance to the next levels of instruction, and counselling for pupils to avoid absenteeism that could lead to drop out. Despite that, the researcher felt that this grouping did not vividly portray the role of teachers as causes of dropouts. Teachers strive on their level best to guide learners and ensure that they create a conducive environment for learning and help retention of children in schools. In most cases, when a child misses class for consecutive days, teachers make follow ups to find out the causes.

One participant lamented on the importance of teachers creating enabling environments for learners as follow;

Teachers must treat pupils equally despite of their background, gender, age and economical status rather than giving attention to children who come from a well to do families. Further, they should reduce harshness towards pupils.

### **Parents**

The studies conducted by Traag & Van der Velden's, (2018) research with young students demonstrated that having unsupportive parents is likely to be associated with dropout from school. This is marrying with this study that has revealed that in most situation parents did not support their children because of illiteracy, poverty and not clearly knowing the importance of education to their young ones. Still Onyango (2020), urged that better educated parents appreciate the value of education more that illiterate ones. In this case, educated parents are able to assist their children progress both materially and morally.

Better still educated or not educated, parents were supposed to strive to their best levels to see to it that a pupil attended school regularly. The researcher felt that parents were supposed to take keen interest in the education of their children through monitoring of their books, progress records, having enough time to counsel their children, interacting with grade teachers as the way of finding out how the child is fairing and this could best be done by regular visits by parents to school. It is so important that parents trusted teachers who were handling their children while they were at school.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the findings pertaining to an investigation into the factors affecting the retention levels of pupils in public primary of some selected schools in Kafue District. The findings were discussed in line with the research objectives and the themes that emerged.



## **VI. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Overview**

The foregoing chapter presented the discussions on the major findings of this study. This chapter drew a conclusion for this study and provided some recommendations based on the findings of the objectives stated in chapter one. This chapter presents the conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research. Necessary recommendations for the study were made to provide for government policy, law makers, teachers, parents and other stake holders for action with the aim of combating the scourge of low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of the study was a Comprehensive study on the status of girls in rural schools affecting retention and performance in Kafue District. Research objective one sought to examine factors that influence retention levels of pupils in public Primary Schools in Kafue District. Research objective two aimed at establishing the age with a high dropout rate for pupils in public primary schools. Research objective three sought to figure out grade levels with high dropout rate for pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District. Research objective four aimed at determining measures which could be taken to improve low retention levels of pupils in public primary schools of Kafue District.

The first objective found that the factors that influenced retention levels of pupils in public primary schools in Kafue District were early marriages, being an orphan and poverty.

The second objective was to ascertain the age of pupils with high dropout rate and was discovered that it was between 14 years and 15 years, and this was supported by 8 out of 10 administrators. At these ages, most pupils attained puberty and they became excited since they were in grade 7 which led to misbehaving, abuse of drugs and teenage pregnancy resulting into dropouts.

The third objective was to establish the grades of pupils with high dropout levels in most public primary schools in Kafue District and it was discovered that it was in grade 7 due to poor academic performance, relocation to another area due to death and divorce, abuse of drugs by both parents and pupils themselves. Others lost interest in education when they failed grade 7 examinations because they lacked encouragement from parents and the community especially if the parents were not educated.

The fourth objective was to establish measures to mitigate the challenges of drop outs in public primary schools of Kafue District. It was found that having education tours was important as it exposed pupils on the importance of education: gave sensitisation to parents and pupils on the importance of education: Government was to provide intervention through the provision of books, uniforms, shoes and other school necessities like food for vulnerable and other orphaned pupils; if possible allow pupils to go to school without uniforms and it was supported by most parents and drop outs almost at every school.



### **Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, discussions and conclusion made, the following recommendations were formulated.

- Poverty is a major cause of pupil dropout. The Government should provide soft loans to parents in order for them to help their children with school requirements.
- The government through Ministry of Education, provincial administration, the church and other NGOs should conduct aggressive campaigns to sensitize the community on the need to educate children. Parents and the entire community should be sensitizing on their role as parents in encouraging children to stay in school and the cons of drugs abuse. Counseling needs to be intensified for both parents and pupils.
- The government should boost and streamline adult education to help improve on the literacy levels among parents. This might make parents appreciate the value of education.
- The government through the Ministry of General education should intensify teaching sex education in order to enlighten pupils, especially girls, the consequences of sex abuse. There is need for constant inspection of schools to ensure that government policies are implemented.
- Teachers need to adhere to the professional ethics. There is need to reexamine the teachers conduct towards pupils in form of punishment and personal relationships. This could be done through conducting regular refresher courses.

### **Suggestions for further research**

- A comparative study can be conducted in other districts to assess how the pupil characteristic factors, social economic and cultural factors are influencing the access and retention of pupils in those districts.
- A study can be conducted on the benefits of re-entry policy and introduction of comprehensive sexuality education especially in primary schools.

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