

## Assessment of Participation of the School Community in **Managing** the Primary School Pregnancy Problem in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania

### Abstract

To address the problem of primary school pregnancy in Morogoro Municipality, the study assessed the participation of the educational community. This study aimed to determine the school community's participation, particularly about the problem of primary school pregnancy. The study was conducted in the primary schools in Mwere, Mchikichini, Chamwino A, Kilakala, and Kihonda, all in the Morogoro Municipality. This study employed a qualitative technique and a multiple-case study design. The participants included teachers, parents, religious leaders, pupils, the District Education Officer (DEO), and Ward Education Officers. Eighty participants were chosen using a combination of random and purposeful sampling techniques. Data was gathered via semi-structured interviews, focus group interview guides, observation, and documentation. The results show that the majority of Morogoro municipality's school communities have been involved in **managing** the problem of primary school girls getting pregnant. The study also demonstrated the extent to which school communities helped in **managing** the problem of pregnancy among primary school girls. **Different groups participated in different ways, with government officials conducting follow-ups, terminating pregnant girls, holding community workshops, and forming various committees to handle the issue. In addition to parents and religious leaders preaching positive behavior and parenting, pupils were instructed to inform their parents or teachers if they saw female pupils acting badly or socializing with guys.** The study **revealed** that when the school community was more involved in problem-solving, it was easier to **manage** the problem. Participation must be prioritized to solve the problem of primary school pregnancy. This study suggests that rather than blaming specific pupils, the Tanzanian government should ensure that the school community's involvement is focused on **managing** school pregnancy issues. **The study's conclusion suggested that the Tanzanian government collaborate with other partners via the school community initiative to inform the public about the importance of community participation in managing problems such as the high rate of schoolgirl pregnancies and potential remedies.**

Keywords: Pregnancy, Community participation, **managing** school problems in primary schools in Tanzania

## Introduction

The study assessed the Tanzanian school community's involvement in managing the issue of pregnant primary school girls. The phrase "school community" in this study encompasses all those who reside on and off campus. As a result, it's critical to consider parents, students, government and political officials, and religious leaders. Additionally, for this study, any Tanzanian girl under the age of eighteen who becomes pregnant while attending a regular primary school public or private is regarded as a pregnant primary school girl. Early pregnancy is defined by UNICEF (2024) as the pregnancy of a teenage girl, typically between the ages of 13 and 18. Typically, the phrase describes pregnancies among females who have not attained the international standard of legal age. Pregnancies under the age of 18 are explained by this study.

Depending on the individual, the term "community" can mean several things. 2024; Webster, Merriam. It could mean something different to different people, depending on their perspective. Some may see it as a collection of individuals united by cultural, racial, or ethnic characteristics. A collection of people who live together in a specific area to support educational advancement is known as a school community.

According to the United Republic of Tanzania's constitution, the community has a major role and responsibility to ensure that all girls and boys, regardless of their social, economic, political, gender, religious, or tribal status, have access to education as a fundamental right (URT, 2005). In this case, Nyerere defines education's function as passing down society's knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next and training the next generation of citizens to actively participate in the maintenance and advancement of society (Infed.org, 2004). According to Nyerere, investing in education for both boys and girls was a deliberate move to fight against illiteracy, poverty, and disease. Accordingly, he believes that education is a tool that can assist people in leading more free lives.

Since the nation's independence in 1961, Nyerere has stressed the value of education for everybody. Through party programs, the state mobilized all community members under the auspices of local government authorities to ensure that all girls and boys aged seven were registered, sent to school, and helped to complete their education from primary to secondary school levels (Galabawa, 2005 and Maliyamkono, 2006). In this regard, efforts have been made to address the problem of girls in primary school getting pregnant and to provide a government explanation for the situation. This is meant to ensure that this specific group of Tanzanians finishes their primary education and to ensure that all children have free access to elementary education.

To find a solution, Tanzania has been **managing** the problem in several ways. The first obvious example of this devotion was the Education Policy, which was implemented starting in 1962 and prohibited racial discrimination at all educational levels. The Philosophy of Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) was developed in 1967 and has since influenced educational strategy and execution. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) movement was started in 1974 to guarantee that all school-age children receive primary education (Galabawa, 2005). Following the passage of the Education Act No. 25 of 1978 in 1978, it was subsequently modified by Article No. 10 of

1995 and updated in 2024 with its modification of 2023, which, among other things, made primary education free and required by law.

Additionally, the Tanzanian government is committed to improving access, equity, and the conditions and processes of education for both boys and girls, with a focus on using the playground as a platform for promoting justice and fairness between children of both sexes. A more relevant educational goal than raising test scores in a particular grade was to improve people's quality of life. These conferences included the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, and the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in 1990. Sub-Saharan African (SSA) nations now have a framework for education development thanks to the 2005 EFA goals. Although primary school pregnancies are now one of the biggest barriers to Tanzanian girls' education, they have had a significant impact on international aid and government legislation to guarantee that all children receive an education.

According to Human Rights Watch (2021), the suggested approach is bottom-up, or from the lower level (school community) to the upper level (central level). It goes on to say that school communities have been and still are urged to take prompt action and work together to devise strategies **to reduce and finally eliminate primary school pregnancies**. However, it is unclear how the Morogoro school community in particular should be involved in addressing this issue. Consequently, this study highlights the ways in which the Morogoro school community a representation of Tanzanian school communities has helped to resolve the problem of pregnant schoolgirls.

## Literature Review

### School Girls Pregnancies

In addition to the above-mentioned conventions that require basic education for all children, especially girls, there is the problem of pregnancy among primary school girls. This issue is a worldwide concern, even though it presents itself differently in the North and South hemispheres. For instance, it is estimated that 21 million adolescent girls in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) become pregnant each year. Adolescent pregnancy primarily affects teenage girls between the ages of 10 and 19. Despite a decline in adolescent birth rates (ABR), Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) still has double the global average in 2021, with more than 100 births per 1,000 women. Maharajaj (2022).

In 2021, there were projected to be 332,000 births among teenagers aged 10 to 14 and 6114,000 births among those aged 15 to 19 in the South African subregion. Adolescent pregnancy rates are predicted to increase further in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries since Africa has a higher proportion of youth than any other continent. Teenage pregnancies are therefore a significant educational concern and are one of the main objectives of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SSA's high ABR is caused by a variety of reasons that vary from one SSA nation to another (ibid).

The current body of knowledge regarding the reasons behind adolescent pregnancies in Sub-Saharan Africa is derived from studies carried out in certain nations and is not very thorough. However, a few studies that combined data from single-country studies have been conducted on

the factors of adolescent pregnancy. All of this study suggests a number of contributing factors, such as early marriage, religion, low educational attainment among teenagers, and a lack of communication and support from parents. Maharajaj (2022).

The scope of the issue continues to vary at the national and global levels. This is because different continents have slightly different causal factors. Pregnancy in elementary school has been associated with family history, educational attainment, and poverty. (Ngari and Waraga, 2018). They claim that children from low-income social environments are affected by a wide range of social factors, such as adolescent pregnancies, community violence, gang involvement, coercion, a high rate of substance abuse, and social pressure that increases the likelihood of a cycle of teenage pregnancy within the family.

There are also claims that schoolgirl pregnancies are caused by movies, television, indolent parents, and a lack of rigorous discipline. The findings imply that, without mentioning marriage or moral behavior, sexual content is freely displayed in media on television and in movies. According to Waraga and Ngari (2018) and Weiss (2011), sex is portrayed in the media as easy, attractive, and happy, making it seem like everyone is having sex. Adolescents frequently lack the knowledge required to make appropriate and adult decisions about their sexual activity.

Maharajaj (2022) asserts that poverty is frequently interpreted as an indicator of a country's economic health. According to empirical studies conducted in Tanzania, South Africa, and Ghana, teens who engage in forced intercourse with older men to make ends meet are more likely to be poor. Without considering the possible consequences of their actions, teenage females may purposefully get pregnant to get government assistance money intended for young moms.

Teenage pregnancies have serious health, educational, social, and economic repercussions for primary school girls worldwide, including the potential for death. It is estimated that 1.3% of unintended births among schoolgirls aged 14 to 16 resulted in primary school dropouts in 2018, endangering the advancement of education in developing countries such as Tanzania. (URT, 2019).

Tanzanian educational statistics offered another explanation for the 1,185 pregnancies among primary school girls between 2017 and 2018 (ibid). According to URT statistics from 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023, this is a serious issue. Tanzanian primary schools reported 1,185, 983, 571, and 413 incidents annually between 2018 and 2022. During the same years, the Morogoro region had 81, 101, 43, and 25 pregnancy instances. These figures demonstrate that the pregnancy issue among schoolgirls persists in the area. According to Richard (2006), at least since 2005, the government has gathered resources from all pertinent parties and stressed the significance of community members, local government leaders, civil society organizations, and parents/guardians participating in the process of resolving this issue in their local communities, including the Morogoro region's communities. To promote community involvement, the government has used a variety of tactics, such as educating parents, school committees, pupils, and the broader public. The community has also explored possible solutions to the current problem, disclosed impregnators, and taken part in the creation of policies.

Pregnancy among schoolgirls is a significant problem in Tanzania. According to the study, a rising proportion of schoolgirls are getting pregnant. The Morogoro region appears to be one of the areas where schoolgirl pregnancies are increasing. Schoolgirl pregnancies are the main cause of the gender gap in educational attainment, especially in primary school. This is because Tanzania, one of Africa's poorer countries, has laws that instantly remove girls from school the moment they become pregnant. (Watch for Human Rights, 2021). Tanzania has prohibited pregnant students and adolescent moms from attending school, depriving tens of thousands of females of an education. "Public schools across mainland Tanzania conduct mandatory pregnancy tests on female students and expel pregnant girls before they complete their mandatory education," said Human Rights Watch. According to reports, Morogoro region 2020 school officials expelled a 16-year-old girl. They simply said that she should have been dismissed from school since she was pregnant, even though she only had two months left, before her final for four examinations.

In Tanzania, 22% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 give birth before turning 18, which is an exceptionally high percentage of adolescent pregnancies. Human Rights Watch is the source of this data (ibid). According to data released by the Guttmacher Institute, a sexual and reproductive rights organization, 360,000 girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth each year, and 390,000 of them, or 57% of them, do not utilize contemporary contraception or do not have a legitimate need for it.

Additionally, unfair education act methods are being used since the community, especially the school community, has not taken a clear initiative to minimize this issue. Tanzania's Education Act and its 2002 education expulsion regulations, for instance, allow expulsion in cases where a pupil has "entered into wedlock" or "committed an offense against morality." Ministry and school administrators consider pregnancy to be a moral infraction, even though the regulations don't specifically address it. According to ibid. "Public schools did not interpret this policy uniformly," according to Human Rights Watch research from 2014 and 2017, exposing an unfair practice in which some head teachers directly assisted pregnant students and adolescent mothers who were allowed to continue attending school.

The information presented above suggests that morality toward African tribes is the driving force behind Tanzania's current deportation policy. Many African cultures discourage premarital pregnancies, and having children is usually associated with adult status (Mlawi, 2001). To keep their daughters from losing their virginity or becoming pregnant before marriage, parents in most African tribes work hard to keep the greatest amount of control over their locations.

In order to allow children to attend schools efficiently, the colonialists' introduction of a formal education system in Tanganyika interfered with and clashed with the tribal tradition of initiation. When the British began educating women in tropical Africa, they had to make a pledge to the parents that they would permit their daughters to drop out of school when they reached marriageable age, claims Mlawi (2001). Girls were married between the ages of 10 and thirteen in numerous African tribes. As a result, the girls had to be permitted to drop out of school in order to get married when they reached this age.

The age of schooling was impacted since the girls had to drop out of school before finishing their formal education. Conflicts between education and traditional customs led to the creation of expulsion rules for girls who fell pregnant while enrolled in formal schooling. This policy is unclear aside from its practices. Nonetheless, a general clause in the Education Act No. 25 of 1978 (Expulsion and Exclusion of Pupils from School) Regulations No. 130 of 1979 and its revision Education (Expulsion and Exclusion of Pupils from Schools) Regulations No. 295 of 2002 states, among other things, that "when a student has committed an offense against morality..." (Regulation 4 (1) (b)) or when a student engages in "persistent and deliberate misbehavior as to endanger the discipline or good name of the school" (Regulation 4 (1) (a)). A ministerial circular addressed to elementary school administrators states that two acts that can lead to a student's dismissal from school are pregnancy and schoolgirls impregnation (URT and Tanlii, 2024).

In the past, pregnant schoolgirls have been a divisive topic in society. The premise behind the sometimes-contradictory statements made by government officials, according to Human Rights Watch (2021), is a clear indication that the administration has found it to be a very difficult issue that calls for collaboration between the community and the government to resolve.

In order to eradicate the issue of pregnant schoolgirls, communities and the government need to establish a cooperative relationship. However, as of yet, no specific action plans have been put forth for implementing the re-entry policy once girls become pregnant. The need for this inquiry was established by these features. Morogoro Municipality must therefore plan interventions regardless of the number of cases reported in the area.

### **Pregnancy among School Girls in Morogoro and Tanzania in General**

Tanzania has long struggled with the problem of schoolgirl pregnancies. For instance, 1,185 (1.3), 983 (1.3), 571 (0.3), and 413 (0.2) pregnancy instances were reported at the primary school level in 2018 and 2022 (URT, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023). Despite this, the problem seems to be getting better overall, which may be the consequence of the efforts of multiple stakeholders.

The prevalence of pregnancy among girls in primary school varies by region. Morogoro, Pwani, Arusha, Dodoma, and Shinyanga were the most impacted areas in the four years between 2018 and 2022, in that order. In Morogoro, there were 250 cases in total; 94 were in Pwani, 178 in Arusha, 164 in Dodoma, and 145 in Shinyanga. This seems to be due to several factors, including economic and cultural ones.

Government officials have so far repeatedly stressed the need to challenge patriarchal attitudes and practices, denying that the problem is intractable. Government representatives have often supported the idea of supporting local government and promoting community involvement to address this urgent issue in their communities. The implementation of rules and the corruption of girls and boys in households about pregnancy, however, are issues.

**The goals and methods of education are shaped by the features of the society in which it is practiced, and the process itself takes place within a community.** Involving the community in identifying educational concerns enables them to discuss and suggest solutions, claims Kasimila (2003). Since education is said to be the responsibility of the people in the community, the

school community should act as the government's spokesperson on issues about education, such as schoolgirl pregnancies.

The school community should be involved in resolving educational challenges such as managing schoolgirl pregnancies for a variety of reasons. These arguments suggest that when the community participates in forming its educational plans, educational resources are collected and used more successfully. According to a different viewpoint, community involvement is essential in motivating the school community to support the management techniques for school (female pregnancy) that educational authorities have suggested.

According to Pincock's (2019) research, social relationships including friendships and community links can offer girls solidarity and support. This builds social capital that enables individuals to resist relationship and sex-related pressures. Girls felt comfortable pursuing their significant goals and turning down unwanted sexual encounters because they were surrounded by friends who shared their beliefs and had support from the larger community, including church organizations.

### **Consequences of School Girls' Pregnancies**

There are repercussions for schoolgirls who fall pregnant whilst still in their teens. Compared to peers who postpone childbearing, these repercussions include lower psychological well-being, a lower chance of finishing school, less marital stability, less stable employment, a greater reliance on welfare, higher rates of poverty, and slightly higher health risks for both the mother and the child (Richard 2006).

The high rates of school dropouts in Tanzania are mostly caused by the prevalence of schoolgirl pregnancies in the nation. Research on schoolgirl pregnancies has historically shown that early parenting hurts girls' academic performance. According to URT (2019, 2020, 2022 & 2023), the pregnancies of primary school girls increased dropout rates by 1.3%, 1.3%, 0.3%, and 0.3% between 2018 and 2022. Furthermore, compared to peers who postpone motherhood, young moms who continue their schooling after giving birth are less likely to pursue further education, which results in inferior educational success.

A girl's pregnancy brings humiliation to her family in many impoverished countries, including Tanzania. As a result of their alleged wrongdoing, some pregnant schoolgirls are expelled from both their homes and schools. Some of these girls end up on the streets as a result, supporting themselves and their children by working as bartenders or prostitutes.

Young girls biologically whose bodies are not prepared for motherhood, and who become pregnant face health hazards. In addition to being associated with baby and childhood diseases, these girls are unlikely to acquire weight because they are pregnant, which raises the death rates for mothers and children under five (Ajayi, 2006). Low birth weight babies are more likely to have undeveloped organs. Furthermore, children of adolescent mothers especially, elementary school-aged girls are more likely to have social, emotional, and other problems, such as being abused or neglected. They are also more likely to get subpar healthcare, nutrition, and social and cognitive stimulation (Human Rights Watch, 2021). As a result, individuals can perform worse academically because of their potential cognitive limitations.



The review of the literature revealed that several factors, including a lack of community awareness, ineffective community-school administration interactions, insufficient efforts to reduce schoolgirl pregnancies, a lack of readiness to implement policies permitting pregnant mothers to return to school, and a lack of community orientation towards participation in addressing schoolgirl pregnancies, affect community participation in the elimination of primary school girls' pregnancies. Furthermore, Human Rights Watch's 2021 study found that pregnancy school girls' expulsion is a widespread practice in Tanzania. **Prior research has concentrated on eliminating** this system, but community involvement has not been covered. Pregnant schoolgirls' community involvement in the educational system has not been examined in the literature or research that is currently available. **Thus, this study seeks to close this gap by investigating community participation in treating schoolgirl pregnancies in the Morogoro Region.**

### **An Overview of Related Studies on School Girl Pregnancies**

Pregnancies among schoolgirls have been the subject of numerous studies. They discuss various facets of schoolgirl pregnancies. Their goal is to identify the precise causes, effects, and issues related to schoolgirl pregnancies. Over the years, a lot of research has been conducted. For example, Makobwe (1975) examined the impact of pregnancy on the formal education system and found that huge numbers of school dropouts were caused by pregnancies. Policy implications for the process of lowering secondary school pregnancies were examined by Kassimoto (1987). Pregnancy has a significant impact on the earning process, according to the study.

Richard (2006) researched adolescent pregnancies and proposed that family planning and sex education policies be integrated into primary school curricula. This study focused a lot on sex education at all levels and teen family planning. This study did not, however, engage the school community.

In their 1998 study on adolescent pregnancies, Bayona and Muganji recommended the implementation of policies that would permit these adolescent mothers to pursue further education following childbirth. This study focused primarily on the education of teenagers who left school after becoming pregnant. Unfortunately, the school community's role in managing schoolgirl pregnancies was not the study's main focus.

Attempts to stop girls in primary school from getting pregnant have not been successful. Numerous thorough studies of programs for preventing and addressing pregnancy among girls in primary schools are available. These programs include programs for parenting teenagers, teen outreach programs, and programs for sexuality and pregnancy reduction (Frost and Forrest 1995). Although Family Life Education is available in Tanzania as well, the issue is still becoming worse. This demonstrates the need for additional research. Additionally, this study examines how the school community can help to manage primary school girls from becoming pregnant to emphasize the role that the school community plays in this issue. Additional relevant research was conducted by, among others, Kapinga (1988), Puja (1992), Ajayi (2022), Infed.org (2024), Mbongwa et al (2024), Mlawi (2001), Save the Children (2004), Study.com (2024), Tanlii (2024), UNICEF (2024), Waraga and Ngari (2018), and WHO (2014).



## The Research Gap

It is clear from the studies mentioned above that a great deal of research has been done on the subject. Nevertheless, no published research has been conducted on the prevalence of primary school pregnancies in the Morogoro Municipality. Therefore, this study's findings will attempt to close the gap in the literature.

## Methodology and Area of the Study

In the Morogoro Region's Morogoro Municipality, the study was conducted. The Coast, Dodoma, and Iringa regions are the borders of the Morogoro region, which is situated in Tanzania's eastern area. A research area inside a region as well as a region itself were chosen using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was used in the study region case to obtain five schools.

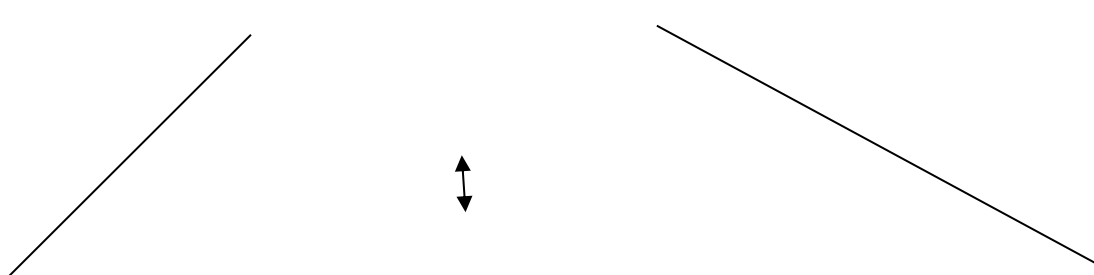
Because it is one of Tanzania's locations most impacted by the issue of pupil/student pregnancies in both primary and secondary schools, the Morogoro region was examined. Similar to this, the Morogoro municipality was chosen due to the high number of primary school girls who have been reported to become pregnant there. The researcher found it easy to gather data in the study area since the local council has an effective community structure and communication. Therefore, a large number of carefully chosen schools are situated in conveniently accessible places.

The Morogoro Municipality in the Morogoro Region's Mwere, Mchikichini, Chamwino A, Kilakala, and Kihonda Primary Schools served as the research's study locations. These specific schools were chosen for the case study because they early adopted community participation to address school-related issues, including school girls' pregnancies. Additionally, they are acknowledged as pioneers in community engagement. The case study design and qualitative technique guided the in-depth research findings.

According to Gray (2014), by allowing the use of different units of analysis, the use of several case embeddings can help alleviate the difficulties that arise in holistic case studies. Increased sensitivity and early identification of deviations from the study goals and direction are made possible by this. The goal of using a multiple-case study methodology was to provide solid results. Through qualitative data analysis, the researcher also assessed the community's participation in addressing pregnancies among girls in primary school.

A researcher identified the most effective techniques and modified the strategy to allow for flexibility during the case study data collection process, all the while incorporating more data sources. This was essential as the study needed comprehensive data to comprehend community involvement and its possible influence on schoolgirl pregnancy elimination.

To assess the school community's engagement, the researcher collected data through non-participant observations, interviews, group discussions, and documentation. The researcher then examined the relationships created by the community's input, process, output, and outcome (Fig. 1).



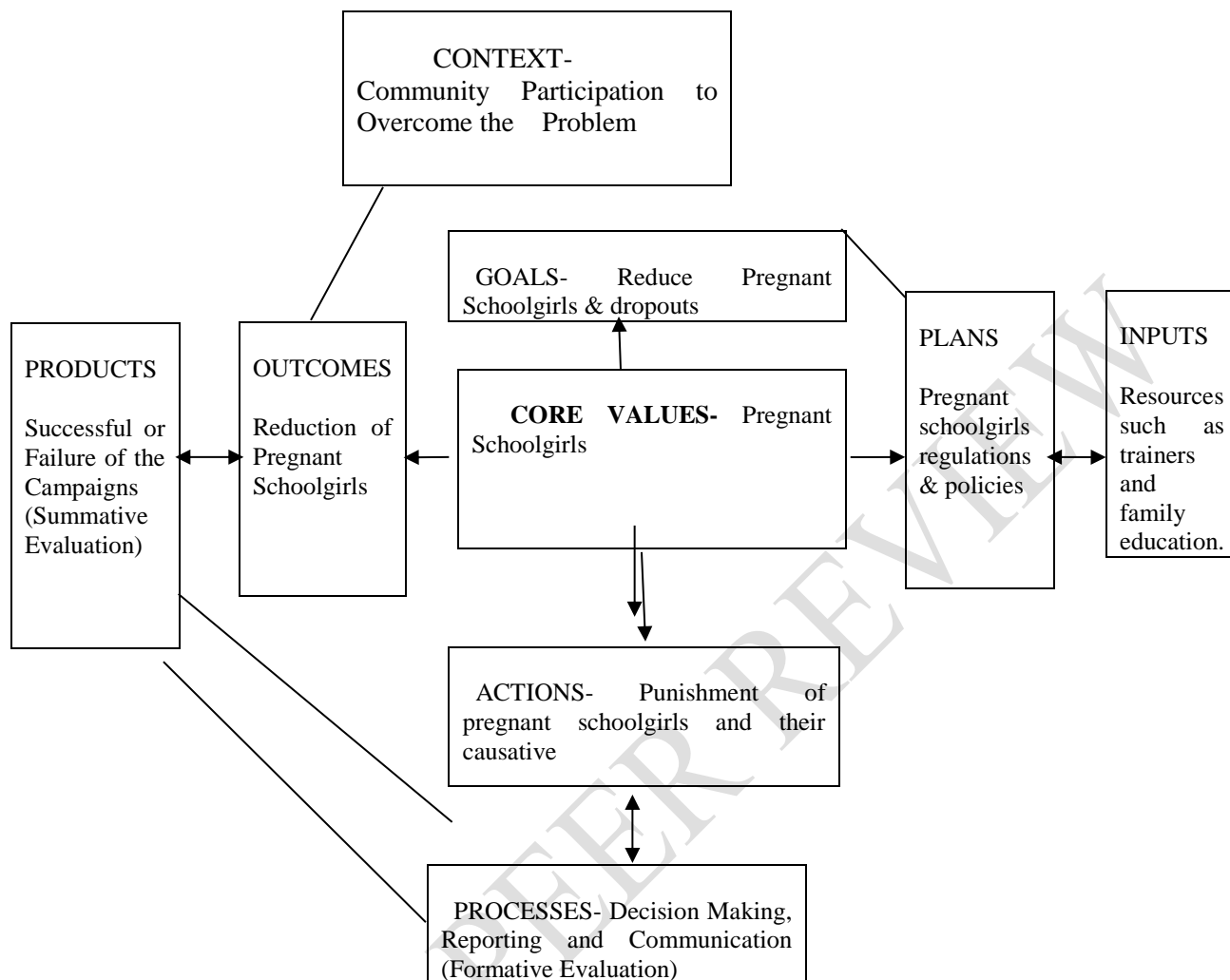


Figure 1: An Adopted CIPP Model for Pregnant Schoolgirls Management by School Community. Source: Yale University (2021) in Stufflebeam (2003: 2-8)

Each of the 80 participants in the research sample had the opportunity to use the qualitative method. The researcher used Bhandari's (2023) multistage sampling method, which selects a sample from the population using increasingly smaller groups (units) at each stage to guarantee accurate data gathering. Simple random sample techniques and selective sampling were used to get the data. For a smaller qualitative sample, forty pupils were selected, three from standard six and five from standard seven, from each school. Ten teachers were also chosen, one from each school teaching both classes standard six and seven, and both patrons and matrons included. Additionally, the sample consisted of one District Education Officer (DEO-Primary Education), five Ward Education Officers, five government officials, five religious leaders, ten parents, and five school heads from each school. The selection process was carried out using a purposive sampling technique. On the other hand, 40 pupils were chosen using a random sample procedure.

To collect information from the participants, the study included documentation, interviews, and group discussions. To ensure the validity of the research tools, the researcher carried out a pilot study in three Morogoro Municipality primary schools prior to collecting the actual data.

While some study datasets underwent numerical techniques, the majority underwent qualitative analysis employing content analysis and thematic analysis to find and display recurrent patterns. The researcher manually transcribed the qualitative data from the responses to the research questions. In several instances, the researchers closely examined the participants' responses to certain words. In the analysis, descriptive statistics were employed. Following the presentation of the responses, frequencies, and percentages were used to compare the outcomes. Extensive data analysis enhanced the results of the qualitative inquiry. Three stages of quantitative data analysis were conducted: final statistical methods, descriptive statistics analysis, and data classification.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are essential components of quantitative research. The researcher serves as the data collection tool in qualitative research. Measurement in the social sciences is not perfect, according to Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (2006), so researchers must constantly assess the metrics they employ.

### **Validity**

The degree of agreement between the explanations of the phenomena and the actual world is known as validity (McMillan and Schumacher 2006). Using a variety of data collection techniques, including document analysis, interviews, and observation, is widely acknowledged to increase credibility. The researcher is going to triangulate the data collection procedures. The ability to generalize study findings and interpret them with confidence are key components of validity. It concerns the degree of accuracy and generalizability of the findings to the population and current circumstances (Wiersma 1991).

Since the study was conducted using a qualitative research approach, several techniques were employed to guarantee the study's validity. Interviews, focus groups, and document analysis are the methods of data collecting that were employed. The chosen approaches should produce accurate results regarding the phenomena being assessed.

### **Reliability**

Wiersma (1991) defines reliability as the degree to which an instrument produces comparable results for the same person at various times, while reliability is the consistency of a measure. Its purpose is to ascertain the degree of error-free measures. The instrument is considered dependable if its error is low, and unreliable if its error is high, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2006). According to Fowler (1993), biases may result from the researcher's engagement with the subject. He also contends that consistency is a component of reliability. A variety of techniques are employed by the qualitative researcher to cross-reference facts and interpretations in order to remove the element of bias. Additionally, the researcher may employ a variety of data collection techniques, including document analysis, individual and focus group interviews, tape recording, and note-taking.

## Results and Discussion

This study set out to assess the participation of the school community in avoiding schoolgirl pregnancies in primary schools. Respondents were asked to describe the level of community involvement in Morogoro Municipality's efforts to control pregnancy practices among primary school girls. This study's goal was logically connected to Stufflebeam's (2003) opinions on evaluation, namely alternative methodologies and competition action plans. The problem-level context evaluation guided the study's assessment of the problem of schoolgirl pregnancy and its impact on their educational opportunities. Each of the 80 respondents participated in answering this question. First, the respondents were asked how the school community helps the municipal council primary schools reduce the number of pregnancies among their primary school girls.

In order to address the issue at hand, the researcher employed two of Stufflebeam's (2003) perspectives and input evaluation, specifically assigning school community members and scheduling tasks. The degree of school communities' participation in preventing the pregnancies of primary school girls was assessed. The respondents included the District Education Officer (DEO), Ward Executive Officer (WEO), parents, religious leaders, government officials, head teachers, pupils, and teachers (matrons and patrons). Table 1 displays the responses as percentages.

**Table 1: Responses on the Extent School Community Participates in Overcoming Primary Schools in Morogoro Municipality, N= 80**

CATEGORY	RESPONDENTS	
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
DEO	1	1.2
Headteachers	5	6.2
Teachers (matrons and patrons)	10	12.5
Parents	10	12.5
Ward Executive Officer	3	3.7
Religious Leaders	11	13.7
Pupils	40	50.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field data, 2024

Each respondent category's level of participation in the effort to combat the issue of pregnancies among primary school girls was examined based on Table 1.

### **DEO's Office Involvement in Overcoming the Primary School Girls' Pregnancies**

The involvement of the DEO's Office in preventing the pregnancies of the primary school girls was discovered through the interview that, the DEO's office played a role in preventing the pregnancies of Morogoro Municipality primary school girls. The study found that a variety of methods were commonly used. For instance, the DEO who was interviewed described how he used to track down primary school pupils' monthly and quarterly attendance reports. The DEO went on to say that .... I asked the head teachers to send me the attendance record, which shows who was present and who wasn't, along with the reasons why. The respondents (1.2%) stated that the DEO could determine who was pregnant by looking at the reasons for absenteeism.

The study utilized the same level of analysis proposed by Stufflebeam (2003) to other institutions involved in this issue and found that the DEO's office used to enforce rules and regulations for those suspected of making girls pregnant. The DEO explained that it was the responsibility of the head teachers, in collaboration with WEOs and parents, to determine who is driving girls to become pregnant in a way that was both effective and efficient. The DEO claims that head teachers who are unable to identify the people responsible for primary school girls becoming pregnant run the risk of losing their positions. Ten head teachers were demoted between 2014 and 2020 for not performing their duties, including not identifying pregnant pupils, according to a documentary examination. To detect the aforementioned situations and reallocate resources, it was found that the use of input valuation more especially, the analysis of the internal interactions between female teachers and female pupils was very helpful. Teachers are obligated to maintain a record of the girls' lives as one of their duties is to act as parents or guardians.

The study additionally disclosed that head teachers were instructed to terminate pregnant girls when the DEO's office obtained their names. A government notice that explains that the expulsion of pregnant schoolgirls is based on "persistent and deliberate misbehavior as to endanger the discipline and the good name of the school" (Human Rights Watch, 2021 in URT, 1978) encapsulates the authority to terminate pregnant girls.

The DEO's office was also in charge of organizing the delivery of education in the form of seminars and workshops to pupils, teachers, and community members, including education players, according to Stufflebeam's (2003) analysis on input evaluation, which focused on connecting programs and resources. Despite the methods used to address the issue, the study found that the number of pregnancy instances rose yearly. The communities appeared to be deeply ingrained in the causes. As previously said, teachers were victims since they did not address the issue appropriately. The context of product evaluation, which showed that there were numerous instances when looking over four years (2018–2022), effectively conveys this trend. Additionally, the general atmosphere is strongly reflected in the degree to which the school community participates.

### **Schools' Participation in Overcoming the Primary School Girls' Pregnancies**

To control the situation in their surroundings, it was crucial to analyze the character of school activities using Stufflebeam's (2003) input evaluation. The study found that schools were actively involved in addressing the issue of pregnancies in primary schools through the use of interviews and documentation analysis. Table 1 nevertheless demonstrates that two headteachers (40%) of five headteachers (6.2%) reported that they conducted routine prenatal checkups for girls and that medical professionals, including nurses and doctors, as well as qualified matrons, participated in the exercise. One head teacher (20%) explained that the routine exercise had two-fold advantages: First, it is used to remind girls that once they get pregnant, they will be terminated from their studies. This is important in shaping the pupils' behavior from not engaging in sexual affairs during their studies. Second, it enabled the school management to identify girls who were pregnant.

Out of the five headteachers that responded, one headteacher (20%) stated that the school established various committees to combat school pregnancy. The survey found that there were

three types of committees in schools: the general school committee, the instructors' committee, and the students' committee. It was informed that the overall school committee was responsible for harmonizing these committees. One of the respondents (10%) from a group of teachers (12.5%) described the main duties of the committees as follows: "... teachers and overall school committees provided guidance and counseling to those found pregnant after the routine exercise." Additionally, we offer assistance and therapy to pupils' boys and girls alike who have been identified as being pulled by adolescent impulses.

Out of ten teachers, five (50%) said that guidance and counseling services helped pupils manage their sexual impulses and practice safe sex by using condoms and other preventive measures. Nine pupils (22.5%) out of forty pupils (50%) who acknowledged that they had previously used condoms for sex to prevent pregnancies and to avoid HIV/AIDS infection verified the response.

The study also revealed that the school has previously held both individual and group sessions with parents. Out of all responses, five headteachers (6.2%) reported that they used to meet with all parents twice a year. They clarified that the school administration's role in the sessions is to inform parents about their children's academic progress and disciplinary records. In the past, parents also shared their experiences regarding the same topics. "A consensus is reached for the future progress of pupils and behavior control through this practice," stated one of the headteachers. Additionally, the headteacher clarified that they are accustomed to speaking with individual parents when they notice a kid exhibiting behavior that could impair her performance or result in pregnancy. The study found that this last strategy has been effective in addressing the issue of pregnancies among girls in primary school.

The study also found that, with approval from the DEO's office, school administration works with parents and WEOs to track down individuals responsible for causing primary school girls to become pregnant and bring them to court. They claimed that even though the exercise was challenging in several ways, they were able to apprehend a sizable portion of the criminals. However, when asked, precise information on those who were arrested was not given. As a result, input evaluation was viewed as being widely used in schools, and by incorporating the external environment (parents and WEOs), this model was adopted as being extremely relevant to the study.

### **Parents, Government (Ward Executive Officers), Religious Leaders, and Pupils' Involvement in Overcoming the Primary School Girls' Pregnancies**

At this stage of the assessment, the previously mentioned justification was applied. The results showed that religious leaders and parents were successful in preventing pregnancies in primary schools. For instance, five parents (50%) out of ten (12.5%) in Table 1 stated that they are accustomed to spending time with their kids and teaching them about the negative effects of having sex when they are young. One parent (10%) who responded to this study stated, "I take this extremely seriously. I used to teach my kid that having sex makes you pregnant and that it's hard to give birth safely if you get pregnant when you're young. According to another parent (10%), she constantly warns her daughter that having sex will cause her to contract HIV/AIDS and die. Because one can become pregnant through sexual activity, this method used by parents

greatly reduced the number of pregnancies among primary school girls. This response is also consistent with Waraga & Ngari (2018), who state that if a male's orgasm is not managed during sexual activity, it may result in pregnancy in a female.

Out of ten parents, three (30%) said they used to keep an eye on their daughters' whereabouts. One father (30%) in this group stated, "I don't let my daughter go for a nighttime walk. It's a rule that she should always be home by 6 p.m. unless we (my wife and I) give her permission to go to a special event. According to the respondent, he used to do that action to reduce her daughter's possibility of having romantic relationships that could lead to an untimely pregnancy. Despite this answer, the researcher observed a large number of young girls the majority of whom were in primary and secondary school dancing and consuming alcohol at night in recreational areas. Four (40%) parents of ten (12.5%) further supported this by stating that their daughters told them they got pregnant after being raped while drunk.

Because the majority of young girls were engaging in risky recreational activities, the researcher concluded that not all parents were rigorous with their kids. It has been explained that one's decision is influenced by an alcohol-related lifestyle (Save the Children, 2000). Therefore, excessive drinking causes one to lose energy, become unconscious, and make one more vulnerable to rape, which increases the risk of becoming pregnant.

Out of ten parents (12.5%), two parents (20%) also mentioned that they are accustomed to making sure their girls are occupied after school. Out of the two parents in this group, one respondent (female) (50%) said that she is accustomed to making sure her daughter completes all household chores after school. According to a second responder (male) (50%) of two parents, he is accustomed to making sure her daughter completes schoolwork and studies privately till midnight. They contended that those customs encouraged their girls to spend most of their time engaged in useful pursuits, hence reducing their likelihood of becoming pregnant.

The survey also found that parents used to instill religious beliefs in their daughters. One female parent (10%) out of 10 parents (12.5%) indicated that she has been requiring all children to pray to God before breakfast and lunch. She went on to say that they had to pray to God at night even before going to bed. She went on to say that "... She is reminded during the prayer of one of the Ten Commandments of God, which is to refrain from having sex before marriage. It seems that her children's positive behavior was influenced by the religious teachings and sources. Eleven (13.7%) of the religious leaders interviewed took part in the issue, according to additional study. Nearly all of the religious leaders interviewed (100%) believed that teaching pupils proper behavior during the religious subjects, such as not having sex before marriage, is important. Since the studies showed that the emphasis was on comparable content and levels, these teachings and sermons from various religious leaders assisted in completing duties that began at the homes of the girls.

The study found that when government officials (WEO) were involved in resolving primary school pregnancies. All three government leaders who responded (100%) stated that they are responsible for implementing laws and regulations against those who conceive primary school girls. Of the three government leaders who responded, one (33.3%) went on to say that numerous meetings were held with parents, pupils, and the community at large. In this regard, the school



community was made aware of the rules and regulations. Government officials also educate the public on the value of collaboration in influencing children's conduct. The majority of individuals have taken youngsters seriously, particularly schoolgirls who misbehave in public, it was further noted. Six parents, or 60% of this sample, responded that government officials' actions have reduced girls' misbehavior and, as a result, their chances of becoming pregnant.

According to Table 1, forty (50%) of the pupils who participated in a study regarding schoolgirls overcoming pregnancy through group discussions stated that it was very difficult for them to do so although participated differently in this case. "Men of all ages approach us and give or promise them many things, including money, but we don't agree with their promise", according to a group of twenty respondents (50%) of forty pupils. This indicates that they unwittingly contribute to solving the issue. Eight respondents (20%) out of forty pupils in a group discussion stated that they are afraid to have sex because they fear their parents, teachers, and religious leaders as they believe it to be a sin that reduces the likelihood of becoming pregnant. Additionally, the study found that boys' pupils were tasked with observing the behavior of girls' pupils. Twenty male pupils (50%) out of forty respondents (50%) in the entire sample agreed to notify their parents or teachers if they witness female pupils acting inappropriately or interacting with boys. This appears to be one of the ways pupils helped solve the issue as well. Thirty (75%) of the forty (40%) pupil respondents stated that they take part in various initiatives to prevent schoolgirl pregnancies, including school choir, ngonjera (verse dialogue), poetry, and dramas that depict the reasons behind schoolgirl pregnancies, and the consequences of getting pregnant.

Three (30%) of the seven (70%) parents agreed that their involvement of pupils in the issue of primary school-age girls becoming pregnant was in line with this response. According to these three parents, children were given instructions, and it is their responsibility to follow those instructions. As a result, they are taking part in the community's efforts to prevent schoolgirl pregnancies.

In general, the study found that the community actively participated in addressing the issue of primary school girls becoming pregnant. This circumstance validated Stufflebeam's approach to problem-solving. A critical examination of the growth, however, shows that it was slower than the growth in the number of girls attending primary schools. According to the studies, the rate of rise in primary school girls' pregnancies was adversely correlated with the rate of rise in girls' enrollment. This condition suggests that community involvement in the measures implemented has been successful to a certain degree.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Schoolgirl pregnancy has been a controversial issue. Public opinion on the issue is both in favor and against expulsion from school. Expulsion policies as a solution to the problem of schoolgirl pregnancy seem unfair. First, to the pregnant schoolgirls whose situation is often a result of a complex interplay of socio-cultural and biological factors. Secondly, to her family and the society at large that is now able to weigh the economic benefits that come up from educating girls, and thirdly, although to a lesser extent the costs of dropping out of school.

This study aimed to find out the school community participation in overcoming school girl pregnancies. The study likewise wanted to find critical solutions to the problem of school girls' pregnancies from the school community.

Despite all the views that exist about the issue of schoolgirl pregnancy, this study has shown that things are changing. There is an increasing acknowledgment school community that the solution to this problem is within the community. Parents in particular are more concerned with the issue of school girls' pregnancies. The community at large is increasingly aware of the realities surrounding the general problem. The emerging interest in democracy and human and reproductive rights is providing a positive atmosphere for the school community to bring about a more progressive policy to overcome the problem. However, there has been an intention to review the problem of schoolgirl pregnancy and the effects of the expulsion policy that exists. This is still a problem and the debate about the problem has remained endless.

In general, it may be concluded from research findings that school communities make more progress in resolving issues related to schoolgirl pregnancy the more involved they are in those efforts. Furthermore, the current issue of schoolgirl pregnancy is easier to address and participate in the more the school community is involved. The significance of the school community in understanding the extent of the problem was underlined by Stufflebeam (2003), who also noted that the community's knowledge of the problem and its solution is a useful strategy for enhancing better solutions (outcomes). Therefore, school policies and consequences may not have as much of an impact on schoolgirls' pregnancy elimination practices as the school community does.

There is a need for concerted efforts from various government institutions to fight against the problem of schoolgirl pregnancies. The school community should guarantee the provision of education to all children in its community. Pregnancy problems should not be a barrier to education and therefore the following is recommended:

The government should put in place comprehensive legislation concerning the protection of a pregnant schoolgirl. The legal interpretation of pregnancy is unclear. The Education Act, of 1978 and the Education (Expulsion and Exclusion of Pupils from Schools) regulation, indicate that pregnancy is an act against morality or an act of indiscipline. Pregnancy is also construed to mean that, medically a pregnant schoolgirl is unfit to continue with her studies. The law should make a clear distinction between acts against morality, discipline, and medical grounds. It is therefore recommended that pregnancy should not be a reason for expulsion from school but rather a temporary exclusion from school. The provision of formal education for a pregnant schoolgirl has to be streamlined and stated explicitly under the Education Act. The objective of re-admitting ex-pregnant schoolgirls should be perceived as saving ex-pregnant schoolgirls to continue with regular studies while the school community is overcoming the problem. Upon re-entry, there should be a policy where girls should be counseled on how best to adjust after delivery.

The government has pledged to carry out the suggestions made by international treaties and accords that affect teenagers' sexual and reproductive rights. Therefore, by educating pupils about ways to avoid schoolgirl pregnancy, the Ministry of Health and the school community are obligated to provide health services to all individuals of reproductive age.

Additionally, it is advised that sex education and family life education be given to both male and female pupils starting in primary school at home, at school, in the mosque, church, and in the

community at large to minimize unintended births. The stakeholders in education should make sure that family life education is taught using the right teaching approach and that it is sensitive to cultural differences. Family life education ought to include sex education.

Furthermore, to address the issue of schoolgirl pregnancies, government agencies that work with teenage girls must engage in coordinated efforts with the school community. Based on input evaluation, it is suggested that resources should be reallocated and that resources should be coordinated and integrated across all ministries according to their state. The primary coordinating office needs to be the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. To solve the issue that jeopardizes the availability of education for girls, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community Development, Gender Affairs, and Children should collaborate.

Finally, another assessment in a different area is advised because the current study only examined five primary schools in Morogoro Municipality. The report concluded by recommending that the Tanzanian government work with other partners through the school community initiative to educate the community about the value of community involvement in addressing issues like the high number of schoolgirl pregnancies and possible solutions. The results of this study cannot be considered conclusive unless further comparable studies with a bigger sample size are carried out for more inclusive school communities in different Tanzanian regions.

### **Consent and Ethic Approval**

Participants must be properly informed about the goals, procedures, and potential applications of the study, as well as the dangers associated with their involvement, according to Silverman (2010). The identity of the responders and the confidentiality of the data provided by the research participants must be upheld. Additionally, contend that there must be no coercion and that participation must be voluntary. The confidentiality and anonymity of the research sites and participants were maintained throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the results in order to assure ethical considerations in this study. Respondents' involvement was entirely voluntary. Additionally, permission was granted by the researcher from the Regional and District councils to gather data in certain elementary schools.

### **Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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