

# The Role of School Leadership on implementing re-entry policy for adolescent mothers in Tanzania: A Systematic Review

## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** Adolescent motherhood continues to be a major impediment to girls' education in Tanzania, with thousands of them interrupting their schooling each year because of pregnancy. This interruption often leads to permanent dropout, preventing these young women from completing their education and achieving their full potential. This study aimed to identify the role of school leadership practices that either support or impede the successful reintegration of adolescent mothers into the education system in Tanzania.

**Study design:** A systematic Review.

**Duration of Study:** The systematic review took place from 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025

**Methodology:** This systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. English-language records were searched in Google Scholar using the phrase "school re-entry policy." Studies focusing on school re-entry policy were eligible for inclusion. A total of 66 records were retrieved, of which 18 met the inclusion criteria after full-text screening.

**Results:** The findings reveal that school leadership perspectives and practices encompass the provision of support and resources. However, they also highlight a lack of awareness regarding relevant policies and guidelines, negative attitudes towards the policy, and the absence of clear implementation guidelines.

**Conclusion:** The successful implementation of adolescent mother re-entry policies centers on key factors related to school leadership. School leaders must provide support and resources to foster a welcoming and encouraging environment for these students. Furthermore, awareness of the policy and positive attitudes among school heads, coupled with clear implementation guidelines, are crucial for effective and consistent re-entry programmes.

*Keywords: adolescent mothers, re-entry policy, heads of schools, school leadership systematic review*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

African governments are recognizing the importance of keeping pregnant girls and young mothers in school as a means to reduce educational inequality and prevent school dropout among marginalized adolescents (Opok, 2024). Much has been done to increase gender equality in education in recent years. Governments and international communities have followed through on promises made through various international forums to increase girls' investments in education. Again, the international community has placed a strong emphasis on gender equality in education, as evidenced by various global development goals and declarations (UNFPA, 2018, TENMET & UNICEF, 2018, McDermott et al., 2019). Organizations like WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the United Nations have committed to eliminating gender disparities in education. Key documents supporting this include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the Convention on

the Rights of the Child, CEDAW of 1985, EFA of 2000, MDGs of 2000, and SDGs of 2015 (Education Champion Network Tanzania, 2023). Moreover, the government introduced a Drop Out Early Warning System (DEWS) in early 2023 to help school management teams identify students at risk of dropping out and take proactive measures to prevent this from happening. This system aims to ensure that students can continue their education and complete their academic cycle, even after giving birth. In countries like Tanzania, the government issued the Education Circular Number 2 of the year 2021 on school re-entry for primary and secondary school students' who drop out for various reasons (URT, 2021). However, in reality it is not known how stakeholders, particularly heads of schools, implement that circular.

Despite governments propagating policies, laws, regulations, guidelines and circulars to reduce disparities in education, gender disparity in education continues to exist. One of the causes of gender disparity in education is pregnancy and child-rearing among students leading to higher rates of school dropout and difficulty in re-enrolling (McFarland et al., 2018). For example, approximately 27.4% of adolescent girls become mothers yearly, and more than 140 million are at risk of marrying as children, particularly in Latin America's rural and impoverished regions, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (Otsyula, 2023). In developing countries, about 12 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 give birth annually, while 39% and 15% of girls marry before reaching 18 and 15, respectively (World Bank, 2017; UNFPA, 2018).

In Tanzania, the literature indicates that in 2021 alone, about 2,914 of girl students dropped out of secondary school due to pregnancy (United Republic of Tanzania, 2022). Statistics further show that a total of 25,971 pregnant girls were expelled from school between 2017 and 2020 (HakiElimu, 2021). Similar evidence indicates that a total of 24,535 pregnant girls were expelled from secondary schools (URT, 2022). This alarming trend of adolescent girls dropping out of secondary school due to pregnancy necessitated the need for school re-entry initiatives. In providing opportunities for students who dropped out of school due to various reasons, the government established the re-entry initiative and facilitated the reintegration of 1,046 females into the formal education system in 2023 (URT, 2023). Heads of schools' leadership practices are important for successful re-entry policy implementation. They clearly communicate the policy to key stakeholders and manage resources allocated to their schools for the implementation of the re-entry policy. However, it remains unclear how the heads of schools' perspectives and practices facilitate or hinder the implementation of the re-entry policy at the school level.

#### *The importance of education for adolescent mothers*

Educating girls is vital for societal development. It increases their chances of living healthy, productive lives and reduces the likelihood of early marriage. Thus, raising the girl's earnings, taking part in decisions that directly impact her, and creating better lives for her family and herself can potentially lower inequality (UNESCO, 2016; Nambuga, 2022). Sahoo (2016) and UNICEF (2016) outline the importance of education for girls as reducing the number of babies women have, lowering infant and child mortality rates, lowering maternal mortality rates, protection against sexually transmitted diseases, increasing number of women with jobs and higher earnings, eliminating illiteracy, developing self-esteem and self-confidence, leading healthy and productive lives, participating in the decisions that most affect them, and build better futures for themselves and their families. It is surprising that despite evidence demonstrating how central girls' learning is to development, gender disparities in education persist in various countries including Tanzania (World Bank, 2018).

## *Challenges faced by adolescent mothers in re-entering the educational system*

Available literature indicates that adolescent mothers face challenges in re-entering educational systems. For example, in Zambia, Chiyota and Marishane (2020) indicate that girls getting pregnant in schools are not re-entering school despite the re-entry policy having been in place since 1997. The study revealed that there was a failure by policy implementers to listen to adolescent mothers' views and challenges associated with child care and financial and social support system making it hard for them to appreciate the re-enter policy rendering it to remain on the writings without significant positive impact on adolescent mothers' lives. In Kenya, Macharia and Kessio (2015) contend that despite the introduction of the re-entry policy, a significant majority of the adolescent mothers were still not attending school.

Despite international commitments to gender equality and education, adolescent mothers in Tanzania continue to face significant challenges in re-entering the formal education system (Kumwenda, 2023). While there is growing recognition of the importance of school leadership in creating inclusive and supportive learning environments, there are limited studies specifically examining the role of school leaders in facilitating the re-entry of adolescent mothers in Tanzania. This research gap necessitates a comprehensive investigation of school leadership perspectives and practices that either promote or hinder the successful reintegration of adolescent mothers into the educational system. The study sought to answer the research question: what are the school leadership perspectives and practices that facilitate or hinder the re-entry of adolescent mothers into the educational system in Tanzania?

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Re-entry policy for adolescent mothers in Tanzania**

The Tanzanian government announced in June 2021 that school dropouts, including pregnant girls, would have the chance to return to school through alternative colleges. In November 2021, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology expressed the government's intention to re-admit dropout students to formal schooling through Education Circular No. 2, 2021. Additionally, in February 2022, the ministry issued guidelines for the re-entry of students who had dropped out of primary and secondary school. The programme has revived their dreams to proceed with secondary education starting from where they dropped before pregnancy and subsequently enabled them to continue with other levels of education (MoEST, 2022). However, Issa and Temu (2023) argue that there is currently no system to track the number of teenage pregnancies and school dropouts among adolescent mothers, nor is there a mechanism to support their return to education. Additionally, there are no established procedures for schools to monitor the academic progress of teenage mothers

### **Role of School Leadership in Facilitating Re-entry**

It is argued that leadership qualities among heads of schools contribute to teachers' commitment and willingness to work harder to realise the school's common vision (Nyamubi, 2018). The re-entry policy in Tanzania stipulates that the heads of schools have to make sure that the returning students who dropped out are provided with guidance and counselling services to strengthen them psychologically (URT, 2021). Several studies highlight the roles of heads of schools in facilitating re-entry programmes. For example, studies by Changwe (2015), Chewa (2016), Simatama (2016), Muyunda (2021), Imbosa et al. (2022), Cunningham et al. (2024), Chiyota et al. (2020), and Muli (2023) argue that school leaders are key players in facilitating the successful reintegration of teen mothers into education as they disseminate information

about the re-entry policy, coordinate with various stakeholders, offer essential support services, track the progress of returning girls, and work to create a welcoming school environment.

### **School Leadership as Change Agents in Re-entry Programs**

It is argued that the heads of schools have to make arrangements to provide training for teachers to be supportive of adolescent mothers. For instance, Ogola (2021) claims that there is a need for heads of schools to make arrangements to train teachers to be qualified counselors to provide quality services to teenage mothers at school. Despite the fact that teacher counsellors played a key role in helping adolescent mothers cope, they lacked the relevant skills needed to handle issues of adolescent sexuality (Christine, 2020).

Studies indicate that the Re-entry programmes implementation face some challenges including practices, unavailability of the policy guidelines in schools, absence of clarity on the guidelines forcing heads of schools who are the implementers to use their own discretion while in other schools it is not practical to a high degree (Ogola, 2021; Muyunda, 2021). Other challenges of the implementation of the re-entry programs among adolescent mothers include a lack of sense of ownership of the policy by stakeholders responsible for implementing the policy and there are no clearly stated objectives, implementation and monitoring strategies, financial, human, and legal resources. In other studies, it was found that there is a need for a more formalized process when teen mothers are transitioning back to schools and a need for access to more resources and supports when teen mothers return to school as well as professional development on culturally responsive practices and behavior support for teachers and other building staff members (Molitor, 2020; Muli, 2023).

Some studies indicate that re-entry policies in Africa often fail to achieve their intended goals due to a lack of information dissemination (Mwanza, 2018). This lack of awareness impacts heads of schools and other stakeholders responsible for implementing the policies. Consequently, parents and adolescent mothers may have a limited understanding of the re-entry process, leading to insufficient support for adolescent mothers returning to school. However, in other situations, communities often discourage teenage mothers from returning to school. This is due to the belief that they have low morals and may negatively influence other students (HakiElimu, 2023).

It can be argued that Tanzania and other African nations have introduced programmes supporting adolescent mothers' re-entry into formal education. These programmes aim to mitigate the negative effects of teenage pregnancy on girls' education and future opportunities. Further, effective school leadership has been identified as essential in facilitating the re-entry process. Key roles include creating supportive school environments, engaging stakeholders, and ensuring adherence to programmes. Despite the existence of policies and guidelines designed to support adolescent mothers' re-entry programs in several African nations, including Tanzania, a substantial implementation gap persists. More specifically, there is limited research on the specific managerial practices and strategies school leaders employ to operationalize re-entry policies effectively.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The study was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2010). Systematic reviews are founded on the principle of a comprehensive literature search to identify the available quality literature with a replicable search strategy as completely as possible (Hirt et al., 2020). This review targeted

literature and other rigorous information search (Newman & Gough, 2020). Four main steps were adopted, including a search strategy, selection criteria, quality assessment, and data extraction.

### Search Strategy and Study Selection

In the systematic search, a strategy was developed to identify relevant studies. The information source used was Google Scholar, and the search terms included *Re-entry policy/initiatives* and *teen mothers/young mothers/maternal adolescent parents*. The search spanned studies published within the past ten years, and only studies in English were reviewed. It was believed that a decade offers a balance between capturing recent trends and accumulating sufficient evidence for a meaningful systematic review. The initial Google Scholar search yielded 18 records.

The selection criterion was based on the PRISMA statement (Moher et al., 2009), primarily mapping existing studies on re-entry policies and initiatives for adolescent mothers. To ensure a high-quality review, all duplicate records were removed. The researcher examined study abstracts to determine relevance, focusing on studies related to school-based re-entry policies or initiatives specifically designed for adolescent mothers. The review prioritized studies addressing the practices and perceptions of school heads regarding school re-entry policy. After careful evaluation, three studies in non-English languages were excluded, and ten duplicate articles were removed. A total of 18 studies met the inclusion criteria. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process.

### Data Extraction and Thematic Coding

To systematically analyze the selected studies, a coding system was employed to extract and categorize relevant data. The researcher used a coding framework developed by Bond, Buntins, Bedenlier, Zawacki-Richter, and Kerres (2020). This coding framework allowed for the identification of key themes regarding school leadership practices and perceptions related to the re-entry policy.

The coding process involved several stages including the following:

- i. Each selected study was reviewed, and relevant information was extracted into a data matrix. The extracted information included study objectives, methodology, key findings, and conclusions, with a focus on how heads of schools implement and perceive re-entry policies for adolescent mothers.
- ii. The researcher conducted an initial open coding process to identify recurring patterns in the data. Descriptive labels were assigned to sections of text that addressed similar ideas, such as *support strategies*, *challenges in implementation*, *policy awareness among school heads*, and *institutional barriers*.
- iii. After the open coding process, relationships between the identified codes were examined. Conceptually related codes were grouped into broader themes. For example, codes related to *financial constraints*, *lack of teacher training*, and *social stigma* were grouped under the theme *barriers to policy implementation*.
- iv. The final stage involved refining the themes to ensure they accurately represented the findings across all studies. Overarching themes were established based on the frequency and depth of discussion across the reviewed studies. These themes provided insights into the role of school leadership in supporting adolescent mothers' re-entry into the education system.

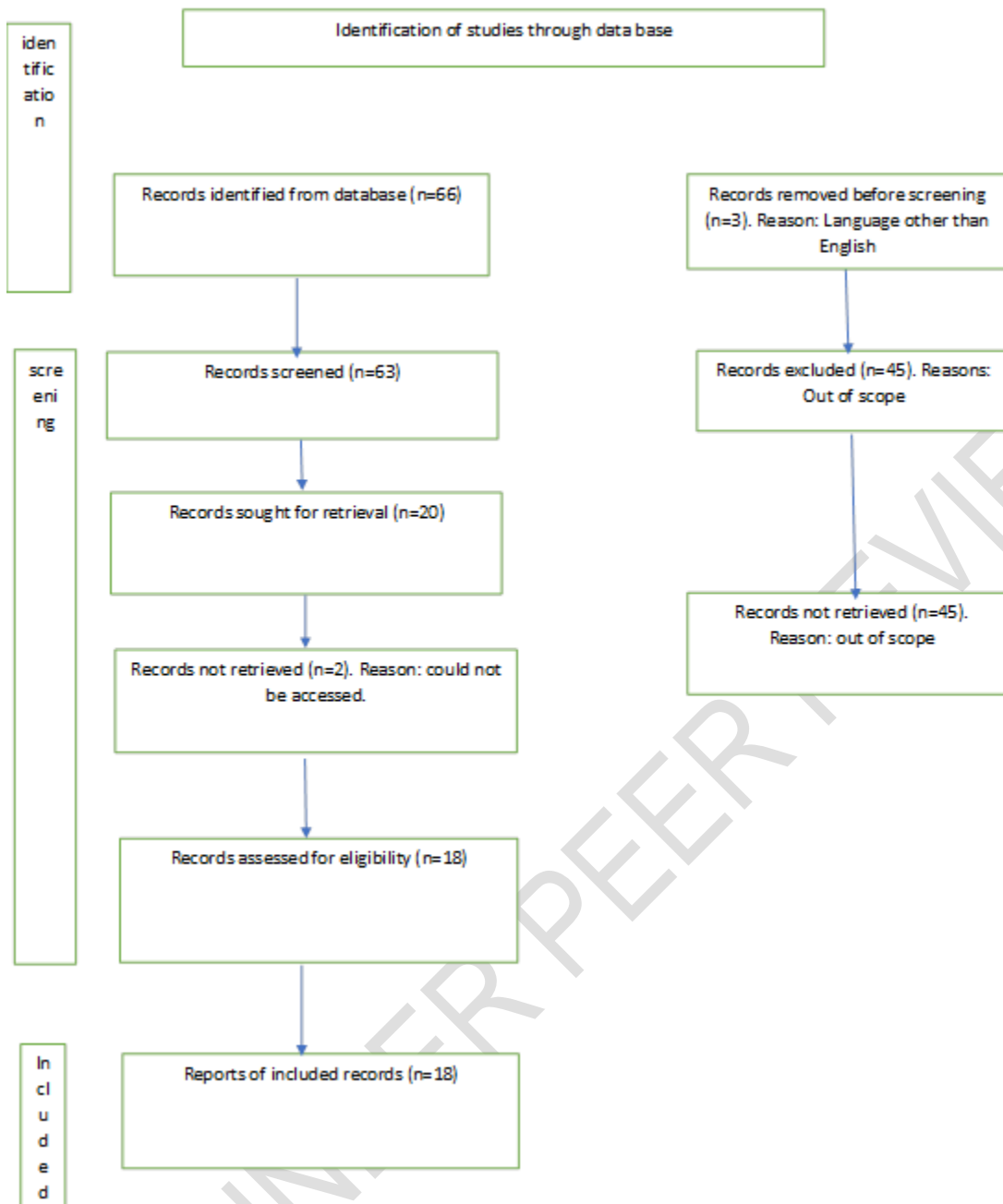
*Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria used in the review*

S/N	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
1.	Studies conducted within the past 10 years (2015 to 2024)	Studies conducted more than 10 years ago.
2.	School-based re-entry policy or initiatives specifically designed for adolescent mothers.	Re-entry policy or initiatives that are not designed for

		adolescent mothers.
3.	Studies that focus on the practices and perceptions of school heads regarding school re-entry policy.	Studies that do not focus on the practices and perceptions of school heads regarding school re-entry policy.
4.	Empirical studies (studies that involved collecting data through methods such as surveys, interviews or observations).	Non-empirical studies (e.g., editorials, opinion pieces, case reports).
5.	Studies on school re-entry policy with English language abstracts.	Studies published in languages other than English without English abstracts.

By employing a structured coding approach, the study ensured that the themes were grounded in the reviewed literature, allowing for a comprehensive synthesis of findings on school leadership in implementing re-entry policies for adolescent mothers. The summary of the steps of the review is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram



### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

This section presents the findings of the systematic review. The first part of this section briefly discusses the study characteristics, including trends and a list of the included records (See Table 2). The second part discusses the emerged themes. This systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The review process involved the study selection, data extraction, and quality assessment of the included studies. A total of 18 studies on school re-entry policy or initiatives particularly those which focused on the practices and perceptions of heads of schools on the policy in the past 10 years were analysed.

#### Descriptive Characteristics of the Included Records

The findings show that there has been an increase in publications on school re-entry policy or initiatives in the last 10 years. Based on the h-index, the top three publications on school re-entry policy are research are Zuilkowski et al. (2019) with 29 cites, Onyango et al. (2015) with 27 cites and Wedekind et al. (2015) with 20 cites. However, Kabwe (2017), Cherui et al (2019), Omariba, et al (2024), Changwe (2015) and Ogola (2021) studies had not been cited yet (See Table 2). Of the 18 records, 2(11%) were published by Taylor and Francis, dspace.unza.zm 2(11%), Wiley Online Library 1(6%), Elsevier 1 (6%), ecommons.aku.edu, dspace.unza.zm, journals.eanso.org, uospace.ug.edu.gh, hcommons.org, jems.science-line.com, ir-library.kabianga.ac.ke. Table 2 shows the number of citations for each record and their theme of focus.

**Table 2: Heads of Schools' Perspectives and Practices on Adolescent Mother Re-Entry Policy**

Author(s)	Year of publication	Number of citations	Theme of focus
Molitor	2020	0	Heads of schools see a need for a more formalized process when students are transitioning back to regular school environments.  More resources and support when students return to district school buildings.
Karimi	2015	15	Lack of financial, emotional and social support was a challenge for the young-mothers' learners in their coping with education successfully.  The stigma and discrimination continued after re-entry to formal schooling.
Kabwe	2017	0	Negative perceptions effect of the school re-entry policy is primarily that other girls might emulate the bad example of girls that get pregnant in school and become pregnant too, leading to high numbers of pregnancies in schools.
Nyariri	2021	8	The policy-making landscape needs to include the voices of stakeholders including heads of schools.
Britwum, et al	2017		The school environment framed by stakeholders including heads of schools was one of the major factors influencing retention and re-entry.  Provision of childcare facilities; (space, caregivers) and customized classroom furniture to accommodate the body of pregnant School Girls.
Cherui & Rotumoi	2019	0	Heads of schools have a negative perception and attitude towards adolescent mothers.



			Increase awareness of the policy and address the issue of perception and change in attitude towards the adolescent mothers.
Wedekind & Milingo	2019	20	The guidelines were to be distributed to schools in order to inform students and teachers about the Re-entry Policy.
Omariba, Ondieki & Mogoi	2024	0	Lack of financial support, and mentorship programs.
Barredo	2023	3	The policy is highly acceptable to scholars and school heads in terms of conceptualization, execution, monitoring, and evaluation.
Setwin & Rachel	2019	7	<p>learner-mothers faced many challenges at school little was being done to mitigate their challenges.</p> <p>The concentration by stakeholders was mainly on the girls to re-enter school but not on whether they would be able to cope as learner-mothers.</p>
Onyango et al	2015	27	<p>The existence of negative attitudes and perceptions among stakeholders including heads of schools regarding adolescent motherhood greatly undermined the re-entry of young mothers.</p> <p>The social environment prevalent in most of the schools in the study area perpetuated stigmatization and enhanced exclusion of young mothers, thus militating against the re-entry process.</p>
Baa-Poku et al	2016	8	<p>There is the absence of specific guidelines to effectively execute the provisions of the directive as a constraint on the smooth implementation of the directive.</p> <p>Lack of capacity building for key implementers, including heads of schools, of the directive and the preparation of a substantive policy with the required legal backing.</p>
Baa-Poku	2019	8	The absence of specific guidelines, capacity development and sensitization to execute the provisions of the directive is constraining the smooth implementation of the directive. The preparation of a substantive policy with the required legal backing was suggested.
Morgan, Rahinatu, Owusu, Awafo, Quartey, Aziire, Katsekor, Serwaa & Katey	2023	4	There are no necessary resources to facilitate the re-entry of adolescent mothers into the education system.
Ngaza & Mwila	2022	1	Key education stakeholders, including the heads of schools were not aware of the policy itself. The study established that the re-entry policy in Tanzania is neither well-known nor well-implemented.
Thwala, Chinedu, Okeke, Matse & Ugwuany	2022	9	There is a lack of awareness and understanding of both the policy and its guidelines among participants.
Changwe	2015	0	<p>Heads of schools had set up departments, namely guidance and counseling and gender department to help pregnancy victims in schools.</p> <p>The study also found that the negative attitude of heads of schools towards retuning school girls could be attributed to</p>

			the fact that they lacked training in handling adolescent mothers in schools. .
Zuilkowski, et al	2019	29	The policy also had the potential to enlist support for girls' continuation in school, though its implementation often fell short of its potential.
Ogola	2021	0	Implementation is not well addressed since the policy guidelines are not available in learning institutions.  The absence of clarity on the guidelines has forced the headteachers and principals, who are the implementers to use their own discretion.

Source: The researcher (2025)

The findings show that in the last 10 years, the school re-entry policy for adolescent mothers is not a popular topic in research as shown in Table 2. For example, in 2015 and 2019 only four studies were conducted in each year focusing on the practices of the heads of schools' perspectives and practices for re-entry policy, The rest of the years, either single or two studies were conducted on the same. This might be caused by the perception that adolescent pregnancy is a culturally sensitive or stigmatized issue in some societies, which can result in reluctance to openly address it or conduct research. Researchers, as such, may avoid the topic due to the social, religious, or cultural taboos surrounding adolescent motherhood. The limited studies on the topic implies the need for more empirical research. The major findings in the available studies are illustrated in the underneath sections.

### **Heads of schools' perspectives and practices on adolescent mother re-entry policy**

#### *Heads of schools giving support and resources to adolescent mothers at the school environment*

Eight (44%) records found that heads of schools were of the view that in schools there was a need for the provision of support and resources to adolescent mothers to ensure the successful implementation of the re-entry policy. The findings suggest that a supportive school environment is crucial for the success of the policy, as it creates a safe and welcoming space where adolescent mothers feel encouraged to continue their education. The support needed by adolescent mothers who return to school after birth include both emotional and practical support, such as guidance and counseling, mentoring, and childcare services, as well as material resources, such as textbooks, school supplies, and transportation. It is apparent for example that, guidance and counseling could help avoiding teenage mothers from getting into pregnancy temptation again as well as giving academic support and emotional challenges.

#### *Awareness of heads of schools on the school re-entry policy and the guidelines*

Another significant finding was that stakeholders, including heads of schools, were not fully aware of the re-entry policy and the guidelines. Five 5 (28%) records mentioned this concern. This lack of awareness can result in missed opportunities to provide targeted support and interventions to adolescent mothers, which can increase their risk of dropping out again.

#### *Heads of schools' attitude towards school re-entry policy among adolescent mothers*

The study revealed that heads of schools had a negative attitude towards the school re-entry policy among adolescent mothers. Four (22%) records mentioned the finding. This implies that some heads of school had limited understanding of how the school re-entry guideline should be implemented. Negative attitudes among heads of schools can create a hostile or unwelcoming environment for adolescent mothers, which can discourage them from continuing schooling even after returning to school after giving birth.

#### *Availability of proper guidelines on implementing school re-entry policy*

It was found that there have been no proper guidelines to guide the implementation of the school re-entry policy among adolescent mothers at the school level. Three (17%) records mentioned the finding. This indicates that heads of schools may be struggling to implement the school re-entry policy effectively due to a lack of clear direction and guidance leading to the discretion of individual heads of schools leading the readmission procedures for teenage mothers remain problematic. It was further found that there was lack of a legal framework for the school re-entry of adolescent mothers making it hard for heads of schools to re-admit them.

## **Discussion**

In the current review, four major themes emerged from the available literature. The first central theme is that school re-entry policy is hindered by lack of the provision of support and resources from heads of schools. This underscores the importance of heads of schools to create a supportive environment where adolescent mothers feel welcomed, accepted, and encouraged to continue their education. The school environment can play an important role in providing the necessary resources and support to help these adolescent mothers overcome challenges and succeed academically. Specifically, support such as guidance and counseling, mentoring, and childcare services, as well as material resources, such as textbooks, school supplies, and transportation were seen to be important. The cited by Molitor (2020); Karimi (2015); Britwum, et al., (2017); Omariba, et al., (2024); Zuilkowski, et al., (2019); and Changwe (2015), support and resources to adolescent mothers who return to school are important for them to complete the education cycle. The findings concur with HakiElimu (2023) report that financial limitations are one of the reasons for their dropout after they returned to school. Although basic education in Tanzania is fee-free, many teenage mothers still face financial challenges that prevent them from meeting their personal and school-related needs, such as purchasing study materials and covering transportation costs to attend school. The Tanzanian basic education system currently lacks specific preparations to ensure that school counselors are available and knowledgeable about the school re-entry guidelines. Additionally, there are no dedicated resources allocated for the effective implementation of these guidelines (HakiElimu, 2023).

Another key finding was the lack of awareness regarding the re-entry policy and guidelines among stakeholders, including heads of schools. This lack of awareness can lead to inconsistent implementation of the policy, which can negatively impact the experiences of adolescent mothers. As noted by Nyariro (2021), Cherui & Rotumoi (2019), Wedekind & Milingo (2019), Baa-Poku (2019), Ngaza & Mwila (2022), and Thwala et al. (2022), it is important for key stakeholders such as school heads to be familiar with the essential policies and guidelines for effective implementation at the school level. Some heads of schools were hesitant to openly address the school re-entry policy within their schools, concerned that it might be perceived as encouraging early sexual activity. The findings concur with HakiElimu (2023) report that even some teachers and heads of schools were not aware of the school re-entry guideline for teenage mothers. Therefore, it is crucial to increase awareness among school heads regarding the school re-entry policy.

The reviews identified that some heads of schools hold negative attitudes towards re-entry programs. These negative attitudes can create a hostile or unwelcoming environment for adolescent mothers, discouraging them from continuing schooling even after returning to school after childbirth. The success of school re-entry policy implementation is largely dependent on among other stakeholders, the heads of schools. The effectiveness of such a policy is often shaped by the values, beliefs, opinions, and priorities of such key stakeholders. In particular, the perspectives heads of schools play a crucial role in determining whether the policy will succeed in schools or not. As Muyunda (2021) suggests, when implementers are committed to applying their discretion, the policy objectives can be successfully achieved. It is important to address these negative attitudes and promote a positive and supportive culture among the heads of schools to facilitate the successful re-entry of adolescent mothers.

The lack of proper guidelines at the school level for implementing re-entry programs can lead to inconsistencies in implementation and may hinder the effectiveness of these programs. Several studies Molitor (2020), Wedekind & Milingo (2019), Baa-Poku et al. (2016, 2019), and Ogola (2021) indicate a lack of clear guidelines for implementing school re-entry programs at the school level. Clear guidelines can provide a framework for schools to follow, ensuring that re-entry programs are implemented effectively and consistently across different institutions. This can help to improve the outcomes for adolescent mothers and enhance the overall success of re-entry programs. However, the guidebook that shows the responsibilities of the head of schools, section 3.1.2.1.0 indicates that the heads of schools have to ensure the availability of important operational documents for the school and to read and adhere to them (URT, 2020). The absence of dedicated counselors to enforce the school re-entry guidelines suggests a lack of expertise required to offer psychological support to teenage mothers. This shortcoming may be impeding their reintegration into the formal education system.

## **Policy recommendations**

Based on the findings, it is recommended that first, resource allocation and the support systems must be strengthened. Schools need clear guidelines and dedicated funding for providing emotional and practical support to adolescent mothers, including guidance and counselling, mentoring programmes, child care services and material resources. Second, comprehensive training programmes should be implemented for heads of schools and other key stakeholders to ensure a thorough understanding of the re-entry policy and its guidelines emphasizing the importance of supportive school environment. Third, workshops and sensitization should be conducted to promote positive attitudes among school leaders towards adolescent mothers' re-entry highlighting the benefits of their continued education. Finally, The Ministry responsible for education should develop and disseminate detailed, standardized guidelines for implementing the re-entry policy at the school level, clarifying roles and responsibilities and ensuring consistent application across all institutions should be accompanied by a clear framework that protects the rights of adolescent mothers to continue with their education.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The success of adolescent mother re-entry policy depends on several key factors that are related to the heads of schools. Schools, through their leaders, need to provide support and resources to help adolescent mothers feel welcomed and encouraged to continue their education. It's essential that stakeholders, including heads of schools, are aware of the re-entry policy and guidelines to ensure consistent implementation. Positive attitudes among school heads are important for creating a supportive environment for adolescent mothers. Additionally, clear guidelines for implementing re-entry programs at school levels can help ensure consistency and effectiveness. By addressing these factors, schools can create a more inclusive environment that supports adolescent mothers' successful re-entry and completion of their education.

#### **Ethical Approval:**

**As per international standards or university standards written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).**

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Option 2:

The Author hereby declares that generative AI technologies particularly ChatGPT was used during the writing and editing of the submitted manuscript. This explanation will include the version of ChatGPT used is 3.5

ChatGPT was used to:

1. Paraphrasing
2. Summarize
3. Check grammar

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