



## Challenges affecting implementation of the 2020 school re – entry policy in Narok County, Kenya

**Authors:** <sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Cirindi Kirema, <sup>2</sup>Shem Mwalw'a and <sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Nduku Nzivu  
<sup>1&3</sup>The Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Website. [www.cuea.edu](http://www.cuea.edu)

<sup>2</sup>Tangaza University. Website: <https://tangaza.ac.ke/>

**Correspondence:** Elizabeth Cirindi Kirema. **E-mail:** [cirindielizabeth@gmail.com](mailto:cirindielizabeth@gmail.com)

**Cite as:** Kirema, E. C., Mwalw'a, S., & Nzivu, E. N. (2024). Challenges affecting implementation of the 2020 school re – entry policy in Narok County, Kenya. *International Journal of Social and Development Concerns*, 22(5), 64–80. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13912991>

### Chief Editor

Web:

[www.ijstd-e.org](http://www.ijstd-e.org)

Email:

[info@ijstdc.org](mailto:info@ijstdc.org)

### Editing Oversight

Imperials Consultants International Limited

**Abstract:** *The objective of the study was to determine challenges affecting effective implementation of the 2020 school re – entry policy guidelines in Narok County, Kenya. The study targeted 132 girls and mixed public secondary schools in Narok County with a sample size of 20 schools that were selected using multistage and simple random sampling techniques. A participatory approach that engaged diverse stakeholders including school principals, teachers, form three students for the year 2022, teenage mothers, expectant girls, parents and guardians, Sub County Directors of Education, Children Department Officers, County Education Gender Officer and representatives of Non – Governmental Organizations was used. The survey included 720 respondents chosen using probability and non-probability sampling procedures. The study was anchored on theoretical principles of General Systems Theory. Convergence parallel design with cross sectional and hermeneutic phenomenology strands guided the study. A Questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data while interview guides and FGD discussion guides collected qualitative data. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse quantitative data while thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The evaluation established that challenges that affect effective implementation of the re-entry policy in Narok County include unfavorable school environments, lack of psychosocial support to the affected girls, poor record keeping of drop out and re-entry rates, inconsistency in the implementation of the policy at the school level, retrogressive cultural practices, limited support from baby fathers and parents and lack of enforcement by the Ministry of Education. The evaluation makes key recommendations including freeing school environment of stigma, integration of mental and psychosocial support to the policy, strengthening record keeping, undertaking frequenting monitoring to track implementation progress and eliminating retrogressive social and cultural norms.*

**Key words:** *Challenges, Policy implementation, 2020 School re-entry guidelines, Teenage mothers, Expectant girls*

### 1.1 Background of the study

Many countries of the world have made commitments and provided mechanisms for realizing the right to education. Among them are 1948's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1966's international agreement on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the 1989's agreement on the Rights of the Child, the 1979's resolution on complete end to prejudice against women in all its manifestation, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015), Human and People's Rights Charter of Africa of 1981 and the Africa's 1990 charter for children's rights and welfare. Nations have also developed and implemented laws, policies, and programs that are in line with the international education instruments in their effort to safeguard the right to education of every student. Despite these efforts, literature shows that gaps still exist in admission, retention and completion rates. According to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report of 2020, two hundred and fifty-eight million children, adolescents, and youth accounting for 17% of school age going children do not attend school. The report also indicates that the global completion rate at the primary level is 85%, for lower secondary is 73% while for upper secondary is 49%. Out of those who enroll at the secondary school level, not all complete the full cycle to qualify for further educational training (Lewin, 2015). In Brasil, every year approximately 1.1 million adolescents become expectant and around 20% of all newborns are born to teenage mothers (Martines & Rosa, 2019). In Jamaica, 18% of live births are among adolescent girls aged 15 to 17 years. These teenagers drop out of school and they get little support from the baby fathers in bringing up the child (Kennedy, 2017; UNFPA, 2017). In Chile, one in every five women becomes a mother by age 19 years and that teenage pregnancies and motherhood are among the main reasons for not attending school (Berthelon et al., 2017, p.7).

Statistics show that regionally nearly all adolescents' girls who have ever been expectant are out of school in most Sub Saharan African (SSA) Countries (Birungi et al., 2015). The Children Global Childhood Report of 2019 noted that for every 100 boys in school in Sub-Saharan Africa 115 to 123 girls are denied the right to education. Africa is the continent with the highest rate of pregnancy worldwide, with Niger topping the list at 202 births per thousand, followed by Mali at 175, Angola at 166, Mosambique at 142, Guinea at 141, Chad at 137, Malawi at 136, and Côte d'Ivoire at 135 (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018).

In Kenya, literature shows that despite the establishment of the school re-entry policy in 1994 and the subsequent revisions in 2003, 2007 and 2015 the number of teenage mothers who return to school after deliver is low. Statistics show that in Kenya 17.7% of the adolescent who have ever been expectant 97.8% are out of school (Birungi et.al, 2015; Steitieth, 2021). Moreover, studies undertaken post COVID -19 period show that more than 330,000 adolescent girls aged 10 – 19 years got expectant in 2020 during the ten-month closure due to COVID – 19 (KNBS Economic Survey 2021). The report also indicates that out of 3,109,873 students who reported back in public secondary schools in January 2021 when school reopened, 50.1% were boys while girls accounted for 49.9% and that out of 752,933 students who sat for the 2020 KCSE examination, 50.9% were boys while girls accounted for 49.1%. Part of the reason for the variance in access to education in favour of boys has been cited as teenage pregnancy. These statistics are a reflection of ineffective implementation of the re-entry policy that is attributable to varied challenges. The objective of the evaluation was therefore to examine challenges affecting the implementation of the 2020 school re-entry policy in Narok County, Kenya.

## 1.2 Statement of the evaluation purpose

The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey of 2022 revealed that 28% of girls aged between 15 and 19 in Narok County have had a pregnancy listing the county among the top five with the highest teenage pregnancies (KDHS, 2022). The same study in 2014 showed that the percentage of adolescent girls giving birth in Narok County was 40%, far above the national average of 18%. According to the National Council for Population and Development (NCPD) survey of 2017, the transition rate of pupils from primary to secondary Education in Narok County are low. The soaring numbers of teenage mothers in the County have caused great concern to all stakeholders who have condemned rampant teenage pregnancies and parents have been implored not to forcefully marry off their expectant daughters but instead take them back to school after giving birth (Kirui, 2020; Sayagie & Maichuhie, 2020). The Narok County Anti- FGM Board Chairperson termed teenage pregnancies a national disaster (Pareiyo, 2020). Literature review shows that there are a few evaluations that have been undertaken in Narok County post COVID-19 period. None of the studies that have been undertaken focused on the challenges affecting the implementation of the school – reentry policy post COVID-19 period. This study was therefore important in bridging information and interventional gaps related to this phenomenon.

### **1.3 Objective of the study**

The objective of the study was to assess the challenges that affect effective implementation of the school re – entry policy in Narok County, Kenya

### **1.4 Review of related literature**

The effectiveness of the implementation of the school re-entry policy is hindered by a number of challenges. These challenges are school, home, community, government, health and personal related. In this section, review of theoretical framework that guided the study is discussed followed by global, regional and national empirical studies that were used to validate the study findings.

#### **1.4.1 Theoretical framework**

The main theory that study was General System Theory (GST) that was propagated by Karl Ludwing Bertalanffy in 1940 (Frye & Hemmer, 2012) and later furthered by Ross Ashby in 1964. GST provides a framework within which phenomena can be explored from a holistic perspective (Capra, 1997, as cited by Mele, et al., 2010). According to the system theory of evaluation, a result is not described solely by constituent pieces, but also by the link between those parts and their environment/contexts (Frye & Hemmer, 2012). Systems theory embraces the idea that systems should be open to ensure continued interaction with the environment. It is founded on the recognition that the issues and difficulties the society encounters are deeply interconnected, intricate, and span multiple disciplines and to solve these problems there is a need to understand the interrelated components that cause the problems (Hieronymi, 2013).

The General System theory is anchored on principles of wholeness, perspectives, and feedback, which work together in an iterative, dynamic, and circular causality process to provide a holistic picture of the phenomenon being evaluated. The rationale for the application of GST to this evaluation is its ability to unveil the existing challenges facing the implementation of the school reentry guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2020 in Narok County. The GST framework enabled the evaluator to have a wider perspective of challenges affecting the implementation of the policy, which could be school, home, health, government and individual related. For instance, although school fees might be a major barrier to re-entry, robust support from family, school, and community could help a young mother

raise the necessary funds. This was significant in ensuring that diverse solutions are proposed to address these challenges.

#### **1.4.2 Review of empirical literature**

A number of researchers have in the past examined the challenges affecting implementation of the school re-entry policies. These challenges may include but not limited to individual, school, home, organizational, community and governmental. Kennedy (2017) did a study to analyze the implementation of Jamaica's policy for the re-integration of school-aged mothers. The study assessed the prevalence of teenage pregnancies in Jamaica and the effectiveness of the policy in increasing access to secondary education for teenage mothers. The research established that failure to attend to teenage mothers' psychosocial needs, lack of financial support, lack of assistance with childcare, and absenteeism poses challenges to the implementation of the reintegration policy. Other challenges reported included mixed stakeholders' buy-in, inconsistency in the implementation and compliance across schools; lack of penalty and sanctions provisions for non-compliance; low awareness of the policy; lack of information about the policy among teenage mothers who are enrolled in schools, and lack of database and tracking system on teenage mothers performance within and out of school. The study employed mixed-method designs that utilized both qualitative and quantitative data, though the researcher failed to explicitly state which Mixed Method research design was used. This evaluation bridged this gap by utilizing convergent parallel designs, which is a Mixed-Method Research design (MMRD). The study targeted teen mothers, government officials in charge of policy implementation, school principals, guidance, and counseling teachers, and policymakers. Convenience and purpose sampling was utilized for selecting the study respondents. On sampling, the researcher failed to show the probability sampling method that was utilized to sample the respondent from whom quantitative data was collected. The current study utilized a multistage random sampling technique that incorporated systematic stratified and simple random sampling to draw a sample for quantitative data. The data were gathered using semi-structured interview guides and questionnaires, but the research does not specify the methods used for data analysis. Quantitative data for the current study was analyzed through descriptives while qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

In South Africa, Ngabasa and Shefer (2013) undertook a study whose aim was to establish policy commitments for young expectant mothers in schools. The study discovered that the successful execution of the school return to school policy is hampered by a number of issues. These include inconsistent application of policies in schools, the moral, cultural, and social stigmatization of young mothers and the lack of support from peers and instructors. and the unfavorable attitudes of the young mothers themselves. The study suggested elimination of unclear clauses from policy implementations, confronting negative attitudes toward parenting and pregnancy, providing teachers with training on supportive strategies and advice on how to deal with expectant students, and preventing the stigmatization of young mothers and judgmental attitudes. The study respondents were 15 young mothers who were sampled using convenience and snowball techniques from three (3) high schools that were located in Khayelitsha Township, which is sparingly underprivileged community with high rates of teenage expectant girls. The researchers upheld ethical principles such as securing permission from the pertinent departments of education to undertake research, seeking participants' consent to the participant the study, assuring participants' confidentiality, and anonymity, and emphasizing the right to withdraw from the study. Interviews were documented after consent from the respondents was secured and

transcribed verbatim. The researchers indicated that they used qualitative thematic analysis to analyze data. This is not clear as it fails to document the step-by-step procedures of how qualitative data were analyzed. To address this gap, the qualitative data of the current study was analyzed using the eight (8) step approach that was proposed by Moustakas 1994 as cited by Creswell, 2013. p. 193 that involves transcribing interview data, reading and memoing, bracketing, horizontalisation, clustering statements into themes, writing textual descriptions, writing structural descriptions, and developing the overall essence of the experience of stakeholders with the return to school policy.

Setwin & Rachel (2019) research sought to identify obstacles to school return to school among learners' mothers and moderation strategies established by shareholders. The study was undertaken in Masait district of copper belt province of Zambia. The current study was undertaken in Narok County in Kenya. The researchers applied a life-history theory that is based on the scientific principles of natural selections. This current study is guided by the General system theory, Liberal feminism, and critical theories. The study targeted school administrators, teachers, learner mothers, other students, and parents drawn from four (4) schools in Masaiti district of Zambia. The researchers utilized a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews for collecting the data. The researcher indicated having used SPSS to analyze data but failed to show which descriptive statistics was used. To address this gap, the current research utilized descriptive statistic of frequency and percentage to analyze quantitative data. The study found out that several obstacles hinder the effective execution of the school-retry policy, including lack of support to teenage mothers with child care, rejection of teenage mothers by parents, inferiority complex, low esteem, poverty, stigma and discrimination, failure by some parents to pay school fees for teenage mothers, inadequate counseling services in institutions and the communities. The report made various recommendations including the establishment of measures that helped for monitoring the learner mothers and alleviate the challenges that they face, stakeholders to consider offering bursaries to learners, strengthening guidance and counseling services in schools, and setting up daycare facilities in schools that would allow teenage mothers to breast their children while in school.

Wanyama and Simatwa (2011) studied opportunities and challenges in the application of school reentry policy in secondary schools in Emuhaya District in Kenya using a descriptive survey design. The study set out to investigate the obstacles that guidance and counseling teachers, head teachers, and return to school girls encountered throughout the execution of the policy. The study discovered that issues with the return to school strategy's implementation are related to head teachers, teachers, adolescent moms, and the community. Barriers faced by headteachers included lack of guidelines on policy for return to school, fear of schools being disliked, fear of having mothers in schools, inadequate space in the school, and lack of sensitization of head teachers by the MoE on the policy. Teachers of guidance and counseling faced several challenges such as insufficient training, concerns about societal perceptions of endorsing immorality, lack of knowledge about school return to school policies, apprehensions about having teenage mothers in school, worries about negative influences on other students. On the other hand, girls seeking return to school encountered obstacles including the belief that they would not be permitted back, ignorance of return to school policies, anxiety about disapproval, fear of ridicule and discrimination, low self-esteem, financial constraints, and concerns about being perceived as immoral. Community factors influencing implementation included parents not being aware of the rules for return to school policy.

## 1.5 Evaluation design and methodology

The evaluation utilized a convergent parallel design, a Mixed Methods Research Design (MMRD) with cross-sectional and hermeneutic phenomenology strands. The design enabled the evaluator to collect both quantitative and qualitative data in one phase. The targeted population comprised of 132 girls and mixed public secondary, 264 Guidance and counseling teachers, 3,300 non – guidance and counseling teachers, 300 form three students in year 2022, 264 teenage mothers and expectants girls in school, 264 teenage mothers and expectants girls out of school, 264 parents of teenage mothers and expectant girls, 8 Sub – County Directors of Education in Narok County, 36 health officers, 1 County Education gender officer and 6 Non – Governmental organisations. Stratified simple random, criterion and snowball sampling techniques were used to generate a sample size of 720 respondents (20 principals, 40 Guidance and Counseling teachers, 330 Non – guidance and Counseling teachers, 200 form 3 students in year 2022, 40 teenage mothers and expectant girls who are in school, 40 expectant girls and teenage mothers who are out of school, 40 parents, 2 Sub County Director of Education, 1 Children Department Official, 4 Health Centres Officials, 1 County Education Gender Officer and 2 representatives of NGOs. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data while interview guides and FGD discussion guides were used to collect qualitative data. Descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used to analyse quantitative data while qualitative data was analyzed by use of phenomenological data analysis approach that involves clustering statements into themes, writing a textual description that provides what the participants experienced with the return to school policy, writing a structural description that provides how the experience happened, and finality developing the overall essence of the experience of the participants with the phenomenon by combing both textural and structural descriptions. Quantitative and qualitative data was triangulated to provide the breath and in-depth undertaking of the challenges affecting the implementation of the policy.

### 1.6 Findings and discussions

The section contains presentation, interpretation and discussion of the findings on the objective of the study. The first section shows the response rate of various stakeholders who were interviewed. The overall response rate was 90% as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Response rate for the Evaluation Respondents**

Subjects	Sample	Response	%
School Principals	20	16	80%
Guidance and Counseling Teachers	40	30	75%
Teachers	330	312	95%
Form 3 students	200	160	80%
Teenage Mothers and Expectant Girls who are already in School	40	40	100%
Expectant girls and teenage mothers who are not in school	40	40	100%
Parents/Guardians of Expectant Girls and Teenage Mothers	40	40	100%
Sub County Director of Education	2	2	100%
Children Department Officer	1	1	100%
Health Officers from Health Facilities in Narok County	4	4	100%
County Education Gender Officer	1	1	100%
Representatives of Non-Governmental organisations that work to support Teenage Mothers	2	2	100%

Total Sample Size	720	648	90%
-------------------	-----	-----	-----

Source: Evaluator, 2023

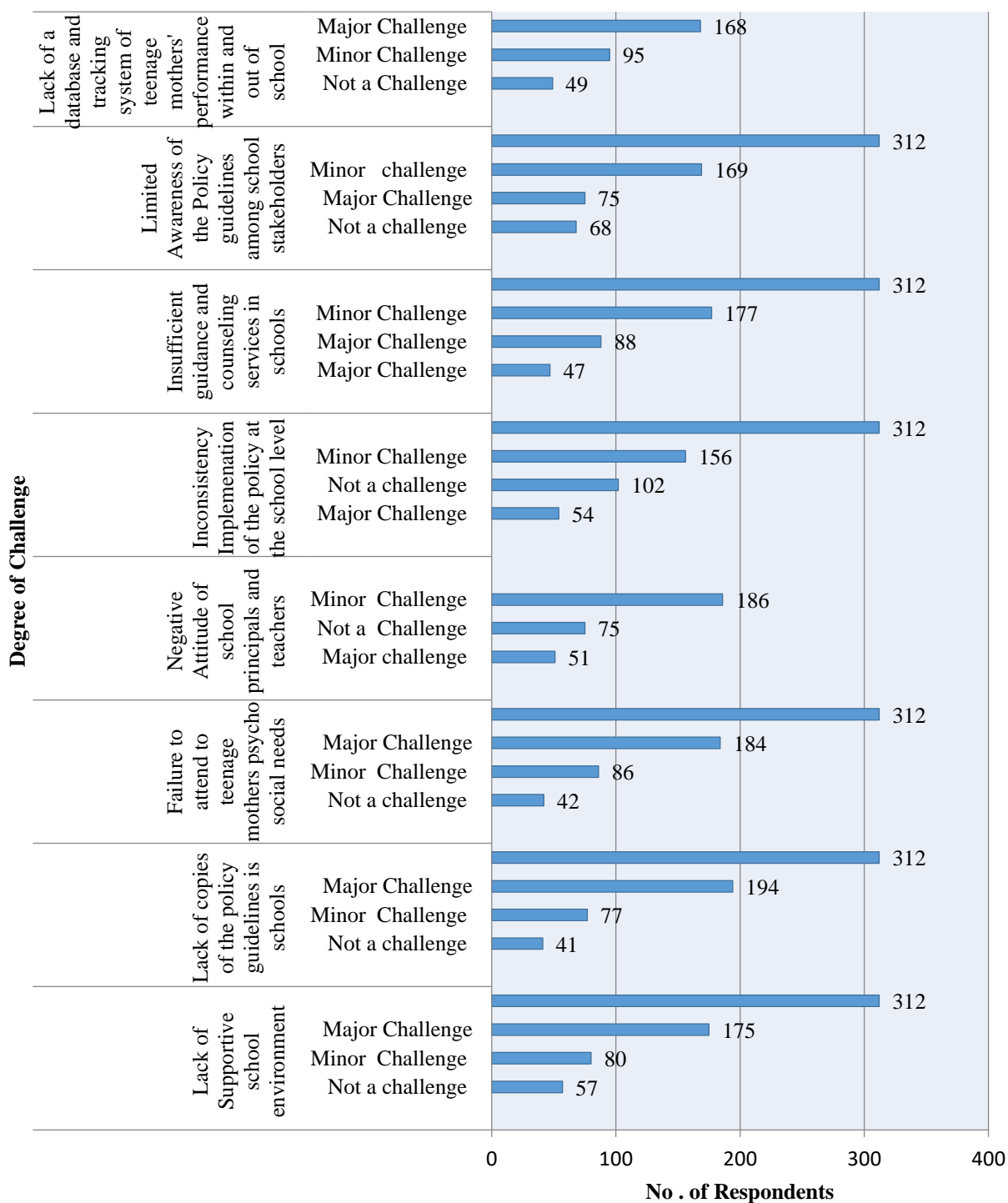
### ***Challenges that hinder Effective Implementation of the School Return to school Policy in Narok County***

The main objective of this study was to assess the challenges that affect effective implementation of the school re – entry policy in Narok County, Kenya. The questionnaire included a scale of challenges statements affecting the implementation of the reentry policy, which teachers rated on a 3-point Likert scale (1-not a challenge, 2-minor challenge, 3-major challenge). Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages. The evaluation revealed that there are a myriad of challenges that hinder effective implementation of the re-entry policy in Narok County's girls and mixed secondary schools. These challenges are school, community, family, government, health, and personal related.

#### **School Related Challenges**

The evaluation revealed that four major school-related challenges affect the effective execution of the return to school policy in Narok girls and mixed public secondary schools. These are: - the lack of a supportive school environment (supported by 56% of the teacher respondents); failure to attend to teenage mothers' psychosocial support needs (supported by 59% of teacher respondents); lack of a database and a tracking system of teenage mothers' performance within and outside the school (supported by 54% of teacher respondents) and lack of copies of the policy guidelines in schools (supported by 62% of the teacher respondent). Other challenges that were cited as minor but hinder the execution of the policy include inconsistency in the implementation of the policy within schools (supported by 50% of teacher respondents), insufficient guidance and counseling services in schools (supported by 57% of teacher respondents), limited awareness of the policy (supported by 50% of the teacher respondents) and negative attitude of principals and teachers towards teenage mothers and expectant girls (supported by 60% of the teacher respondents). These results suggest that there is a need for concerted efforts from all school stakeholders to address both major and minor challenges that hinder the effective implementation of the policy in schools. The findings are presented Figure 1

Figure 1: School Related Challenges



Source: Evaluator, 2023



### **Unfavorable School Environment**

Lack of a conducive environment as a major challenge to the execution of the return to school policy was supported by the majority (56%) of the teacher respondents and validated by qualitative data from FGD interviews. FGDs with students revealed that the unfavorable school environment was a significant challenge in the implementation of the return to school policy. A boy from one mixed school FGD noted that:

“The expectant girls and teenage mothers do not have special meals. The diet and the consumption of the scheduled foods make them go home once they are expectant. The teachers do not exempt them from some activities. They are expected to attend to all duties like any other student [Interview, Form 3 Boy, February 11, 2023]”

Several studies (Tarus, 2020; Muriithi et al., 2022; Oulo et al., 2021; Ajayi et al., 2022; Ngabasa and Shefer, 2013; Setwin & Rachel, 2019; Thwala et al., 2021; Muli, 2023; Gowon & Rotumoi, 2019) have identified an unfavorable school environment as a barrier to effective re-entry policy implementation hence validating these findings. These researches established that discrimination; stigmatization and negative attitudes towards teenage mothers and expectant girls were the most common causes of unfavorable school environments that made teenage mothers not to go back to school. The findings also corroborate with those of Wanyama and Simatwa (2011) who found that fear by the school leadership that teenage mothers and expectant girls may influence bad behavior in other students limits the implementation.

### **Lack of Psychosocial Support**

Psychosocial support focuses on facilitating the resilience of individuals, communities, and families to enable them to bounce back from the impact of a crisis (Nana Wiedemann 2009). Psychosocial refers to the unique interaction between a person's mental and social dimensions. The psychological component encompasses feelings, behaviors, and mental processes, whereas the social dimension includes connections, family and community networks, societal values, and cultural traditions. Psychosocial assistance seeks to meet both the social and psychological requirements of people of all ages. 59% teacher respondents cited the problem of lack of psychosocial support to adolescent mothers and expectant girls. Psychosocial support is a key factor in improving the mental health of teenage mothers and expectant girls. Failure to integrate psychosocial support to address mental and other life stresses that teenage mothers go through are a source of despair and lack of interest in continuing with education. These findings collaborate with those of Kennedy (2017) in Jamaica who found out that the school integration policy did not provide mechanisms for mental health support to teenage mothers but only focused on educational needs. The researcher noted that failure to provide for the psychosocial needs of the girls can lead to dropouts and even result in another pregnancy. The findings also corroborate those of Ajayi, et al., 2002; Mangeli et al., and Rutayisire, 2019 whose research showed that teenage mothers have an increased burden of responsibility, and emotional and mental distress that should be addressed in addition to economic and school-related challenges.

### **Lack of Database and Tracking System**

The challenge of a lack of a database and a tracking system of teenage mothers dropout, re-entry rate and performance within and outside the school was supported by 54% of teacher respondents. Poor record keeping and follow-up on the performance of teenage mothers within and outside the school

contribute to having no accurate data on the return to school rate. This affects information on the actual progress in meeting the policy objectives. The findings collaborate with those of Simelane et al., (2013); Mulenga and Mukaba (2018), and Muli (2023) who found out that schools had no system of following teenage mothers after they leave school due to inadequate record-keeping, lack of tagging, and lack of statistics on teenage mothers' performance and completion rates.

### **Lack of Copies of the Policy Guidelines in Schools**

This was a major challenge that was cited by 62% of the teacher respondents. In all the 16 schools where this evaluation was conducted, no school had copies of the National Guidelines for return to school in Early Learning and Basic Education guidelines that were released by the MoE in 2020. The lack of these guidelines in schools affected the level of awareness and uniformity in the implementation process. These findings collaborate with those of Imbosa (2022) who found that in Vihiga County despite teachers being knowledgeable about the return to school policy, 60% did not possess a copy of the policy at their schools. Moreover, the 40% who asserted that they had a copy of the policy failed to provide proof of its possession.

### **Limited awareness among Stakeholders about the Return to School Policy**

Related to the challenge of lack of copies of the return to school guidelines in schools is limited awareness. The majority of teachers (54%) were of the view that there is limited awareness of the policy in Mixed and girls' public secondary schools in Narok County. These findings are consisted with those under evaluation question two where the majority of teachers (30%) indicated that their level of awareness of the return to school guidelines was low. Limited awareness of the return to school policy limits its implementation affecting schoolgirls who drop out of school due to pregnancy. This means that the Ministry of Education with the support of civil society organizations should devise innovative and structured strategies for sensitizing students and the community at large on the policy. These findings were validated by qualitative data from FGDs. In an FGD with the teenage mothers, they mentioned that a lack of awareness of the policy made them miss a chance to go back to school after delivery. A teary teenage mother who revealed having dropped from form one stated that;

“No one ever told and advised me about the chance that I had of being accepted back to school. I have suffered so much as a result of dropping out of school after I got expectant. I had just joined form one and started Term 2 when this happened [Interview, Teenage mothers out of school, February 1, 2023]”

These findings collaborate with those of Muriithi, et al., (2022); Wanyama and Simatwa (2011); Thwala et al., (2021; Muli, (2023); Chewe et al., (2019); Mudenda and Mbeve (2017); Kennedy 2017 and Wekesa (2014). The researchers discovered little awareness of the policy among students, teen moms, parents, and teachers. The studies also found that there was poor sensitization of stakeholders on the policy and a lack of integration of sex education in all subjects. The findings suggested creating a strong communication strategy and launching a public education campaign on the re-entry policy.

### **Inconsistency in the Execution of the Policy within Schools**

The existence of this challenge was supported by half (50%) of teacher respondents. This challenge is caused partly by a lack of copies of the policy in schools and different levels of understanding of the policy among the school stakeholders. Inconsistency in the implementation of the policy leads to skewed

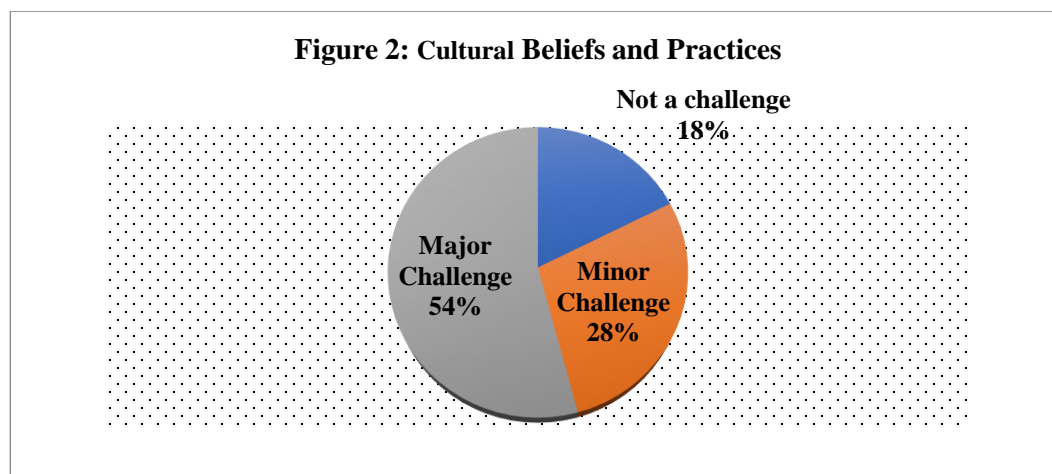
results as only students in schools where the policy is implemented benefit. These findings collaborate with those of Muriithi, G. et al., (2022) who found out that the “implementation of the return to school policy is at the will of head teachers. Other researchers (Ngabasa and Shefer (2013; Kennedy 2017; Muli 2023) also found that there were inconsistencies in the manner in which the policy was implemented in schools and that the policy lacked specific procedures or guidelines, granting head teachers the discretion to handle pregnancy-related issues, dropout cases, and readmissions in diverse ways.

### **Inadequate Guidance and Counseling**

Fifty-Seven (57%) of teachers who thought that it was a minor challenge and 28% of teachers who viewed it as a major challenge supported that this challenge exist. Guidance and counseling of school girls play a key role in preventing cases of teenage pregnancies and give hope to those affected to continue with education. Schools should have adequate teachers and time set aside for guidance and counseling. Peer counseling should also be encouraged. These findings collaborate with those of Setwin & Rachel 2019 and Muli 2023 who found that there was a lack of counseling services in schools and the community and that schools' guidance and counseling departments were understaffed.

### **Community Related Challenges**

The evaluation sought to establish community-related challenges that “affect the effective execution of the return to school policy in Narok girls and mixed public secondary schools. This was important since the identification” of these challenges would inform strategies for solutions. Results were presented in Figure 2



**Source: Evaluator, 2023**

The study found that social norms and practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early child marriages pose a challenge to the effective implementation of the re-entry policy in mixed and girls' public secondary schools in Narok County. This is evidenced by 54% of the teachers' respondents who were of the view that cultural beliefs and practices are a major challenge and 28% who viewed it as a minor challenge. The retrogressive cultural beliefs are a key hindrance to the government's efforts to the realization of girls' education rights in Narok County. Men who are mainly the custodians of the culture in the community must be sensitized on the importance of girls' child education and the need to

only embrace transformative cultural beliefs and practices. Those who are found culpable of colluding with local leadership to avert justice for girls who have been denied their educational rights should be dealt with according to the law. These findings correspond to the qualitative data from students' FGDs. The students, through FGDs, revealed that the culture and beliefs affect the school reentry of teenage mothers.

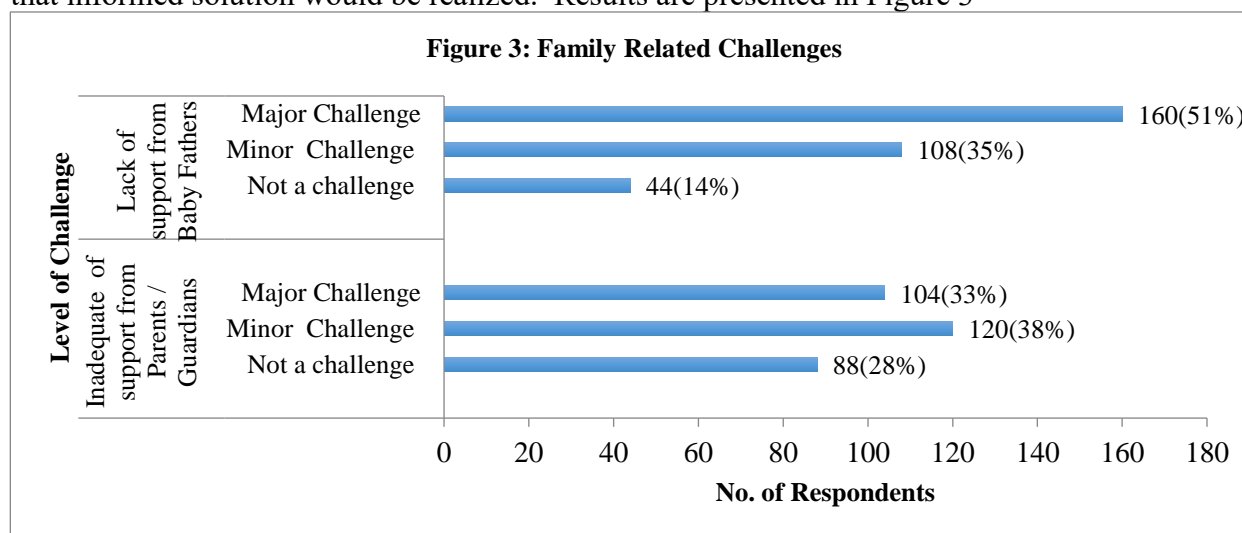
In one FGD, one student stated;

“We are told that men are fewer than women and that one needs to be booked early enough to have a husband in the future. So, if a girl gets expectant, she must go to that man as a wife” [Interview, Form 3 Girls February 7, 2023].

These findings corroborate those of Rutayisire (2019) who found out that teenage pregnancy outside wedlock is regarded as a social deviance and due to social pressure; some parents discontinue their girls’ education. The findings also correspond with those of Ngabasa and Shefer (2013) who stated that “cultural stigmatization of young mothers, shame and family disgrace make it difficult for parents to encourage their teen mothers to return to school.

### Family Related Challenges

The evaluation sought to establish family-related challenges that affect the “effective application of the return to school policy in Narok girls and mixed public secondary schools”. This was important since family support is an important factor in a Child’s life. By the identifying these challenges it is expected that informed solution would be realized. Results are presented in Figure 3



Source: Evaluator, 2023

Lack of support from baby fathers is a big issue that hinders the application of the return to school policy. This is supported by more than half (51%) of teacher respondents. Closely related to this is the inadequate support from teenage mothers' parents or their guardians, which was supported by 33% of teacher respondents. Teenage mothers and expectant girls require a lot of financial, and psychosocial support and active involvement of parents and baby fathers to facilitate their continuity with education. The

failure of baby fathers to take responsibility for bringing up the child or being available to provide moral, social, and emotional support to teenage mothers aggravates the teenage mother's situation especially if the girl is from a poor family. Lack of baby father support has other consequences including psychological torture perceived as being deceived. This situation leads the teenage mothers to struggle alone with the baby's upbringing consequently leading to despair in continuing with their studies. Adults who are responsible for teenage pregnancies must be compelled to take responsibility for bringing up the child. If the father is a minor, the parents should take up the responsibility.

Interrogation of the whereabouts of the baby fathers through the FGDs with the teenage mothers and the informant interview with the children's officer revealed that they mostly fled from the location after the reported pregnancy of the teenager. One teenage Mother FGD participant noted that...

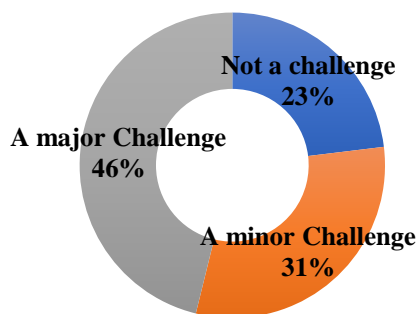
"When the baby's father heard that I am expectant, he went into exile, and we have never known where he is to date. He had promised that he would marry me if I got expectant only to run away when I became expectant. This left only my mother who has been by my side guiding me on what to do. However, her meager earnings meant that I could hardly get required material items or go back to school" (Interview, Teenage Mothers out of school, February 12, 2023).

The findings corroborate with studies of Oulo et al., (2021), (Ajayi, et al., (2022), (Kennedy 2017), Muriithi, et al., (2022), Setwin & Rachel (2019), Koech et al., (2019), and Gowon & Rotumoi (2019). These studies revealed teenage moms' failure to return to school is often attributed to a hostile home environment, a lack of childcare support, a lack of financial support and a lack of parental support. Muriithi (2023) noted that unavailability of childcare, failure to pay school fees by some parents, and rejection are challenges that result in dropping out of school.

### Government Related Challenges

Government has an obligation to ensure that the return to school policy is effectively implemented and that all the relevant stakeholders are held accountable. The evaluation sought to establish government-related challenges that affect the effective implementation of the return to school policy in Narok girls and mixed public secondary schools. By identifying these challenges, it is expected that informed solution would be realized. Results are presented in Figure 4

Figure 4: Lack of Penalties and Sactions for Non Compliance

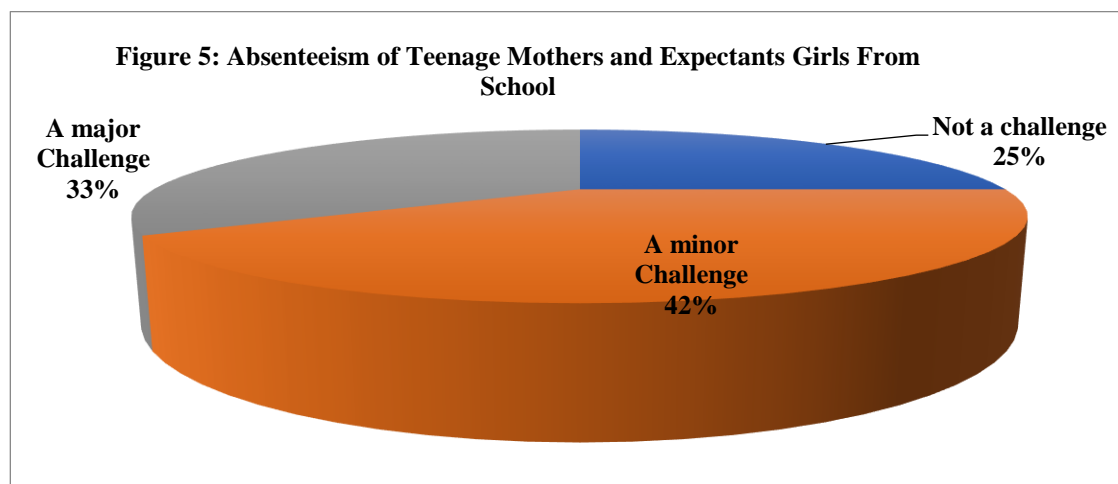


Source: Evaluator, 2023

Lack of enforcement of the policy and failure to institute strict penalties for non-compliance, lack of regular Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework that would support tracking progress and informing remedial strategies, and inadequate budgetary allocation on the policy implementation are challenges affecting the execution of the return to school policy. This is supported by 46% of teacher respondents who were of the view that the policy lacks sanctions for non-compliance hence stakeholders who fail to undertake their mandate are never accountable for their actions. The lack of accountability is exacerbated by a lack of a robust MEL framework to assess progress and inadequate resources to implement the policy. The findings validate those of Muriithi et al., (2022); Muli, (2023); Mutua et al., (2019), and Kennedy (2017). The research indicates that the re-entry policy lacks an M&E Framework and monetary support for implementation. The Ministry of Education should create an M&E structure that allows stakeholders to provide input on policy performance and enhance implementation.

### Personal Related Challenges

It is expected that teenage mothers and expected girls also take initiatives such as attending school without fail, be committed and adopts a positive attitude towards schooling. The evaluation sought to establish personal-related problems that affect the effective execution of the return to school policy in Narok girls and mixed public secondary schools. By identifying these challenges, it is expected that informed solution would be realized. Results are presented in Figure 5



**Source: Evaluator, 2023**

The evaluation found that personal problems such as absenteeism from school and low esteem of teenage mothers and expectant girls pose a challenge to the application of the return to school policy. Absenteeism from school was supported by 42% of the teacher respondents who were of the view that it is a minor challenge while 33% viewed it as a major challenge. Teenage mothers and expectant girls must be encouraged to attend school by supporting them with baby care, payment of school fees, and providing them with other material support. These findings are in agreement with several studies that confirm that teenage mothers face personal barriers such as loss of hope, low self-esteem, absenteeism, lack of time, and feelings of guilt and shame (Oulo et al., 2021; Setwin & Rachel, 2019; Koech et al.,

2019; Kennedy, 2017; Wanyama and Simatwa, 2011; Muli,). Koeach et al. (2019) found that adolescent mothers' confidence and self-worth were negatively impacted by class repetition due to absenteeism and lack of time to complete school activities.

### 1.7 Conclusion of the Evaluation

After undertaking this evaluation exercise, it was concluded that, Narok County girls and mixed public secondary schools face a myriad of challenges that hinder the effective implementation of the reentry policy. These challenges range from school, home, community, health, government, and personal-related challenges. This implies that in order to address these changes a multi stakeholders approach should be adopted.

### 1.8 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this evaluation, the following recommendations to alleviate the challenges facing the implementation of the 2020 school re-entry guidelines in secondary schools in Narok County are made. Schools and other stakeholders should strengthen the Guidance and counseling department in all public secondary schools. All school stakeholders should work towards improving the school-learning environment to ensure it is free from stigma. School community and the government should provide support to access affordable and quality youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services. The MoE should consistently conduct quarterly monitoring procedures on the implementation of the re-entry policy. The government should support teenage mothers and expectant Girls through cash transfer programs and bursaries. The MoE in collaboration with civil society organizations and other stakeholders should invest in deconstructing retrogressive social norms through human rights promotion and awareness creation.

### References

- Ahikire, J., & Madanda, A. (2011). *A survey on return to school of expectant girls in primary that allows girls to go for maternity leave and come back to school: A case of selected secondary schools in Gwanda District*. Global Journal of advanced research, 4(2), 67-68. <http://gjar.org/publishpaper/vol4issue2/d680r56.pdf>
- Beresford, M.J. (2010). An International Journal of Medicine, 103 (9), 721–724. doi: 10.1093/qjmed/hcq057
- Berthelon, M., Kruger, D., & Eberhard, J. (2017). *Estimating the effects of teen motherhood in Chile: A family fixed approach*, Estudios de Economia, 44(1), 5-32. <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=22152910001>
- Birungi, H., Undie, C.C., Mackensie, I., Kotahoire, A., Obare, F., & Macharia, P. (2015). *Educational Sector Response to Early and Unintended Pregnancies*, A review of country experiences in sub-Saharan Africa. STEP UP & UNESCO Report. [https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/departments\\_sbsr-rh/262/](https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/departments_sbsr-rh/262/)
- Caffrey, L. & Munro, E. (2017). *A systems approach to policy evaluation*. LSE Research Online, 23(4), 463-478. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/83768/>
- Frye, A.W., & Hemmer, P.A. (2012). *Programme Evaluation models and related theories*, AMEE Guide No. 67, Medical Teacher, 34(2), 288-299. <https://doi.org/10.3109/0142159X.2012.668637>
- Hieronymi, A. (2013). *Understanding System Science: A Visual and Integrative Approach*. Systems Research & Behavioural Science; (30), 580 - 595. doi: 10.1002/sres.2215

- Kennedy, D. (2017). *Jamaica's Policy for the school reintegration of school age mothers*. Centre for Universal Education, Brookings. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/dasmine-kennedy\\_final\\_20171101\\_web.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/dasmine-kennedy_final_20171101_web.pdf)
- Kirui, K. (2020, August 26<sup>th</sup>). *Narok records 5,538 teen pregnancies this year*. The star, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/rift-valley/2020-08-25-narok-records-5538-teen-pregnancies-this-year/>
- KNBS (2014). *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey*. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR308/FR308.pdf>
- Mabele, E.N. (2017). *Role of guidance and counseling strategies in the Retention of teenage mothers in primary schools in Mumias sub – county, Kenya*. A Journal of Modern Education Review, ISSN 2155-7993, USA, 7 (2), 147–153. Doi: 10.15341/jmer(2155-7993)/02.07.2017/009
- Mele, C., Pels, J., & Polese, F. (2010). *A brief review of systems theories and their managerial applications*, Institute of Operations Research Management Science, 2 (1-2), 126 – 135. [https://doi.org/10.1287/serv.2.1\\_2.126](https://doi.org/10.1287/serv.2.1_2.126)
- Muli, M.M (2023). *Effects of School Selected Factors on the Implementation of the Re-Entry Policy in Public Secondary Schools in Gatundu South Sub- County, Kiambu County, Kenya*. Journal of Education and Practice, 7(4), 14 – 39. [www.carijournals.org](http://www.carijournals.org)
- NCPD (2017). *National Adolescent and Youth Surveys (NAYS), Narok County*
- Ngabasa, S., & Shefer, T., (2013). *Policy commitments vs lived realities of young expectant women and mothers in school, Western Cape, South Africa; An international journal on sexual and reproductive health and rights*, 21 (41); 106-113 doi: 10.1016/S0968-8080 (13)41683-X
- Ngigi, S.K., Wakahiu, J., & Karanja, M. ( 2016). *Fundamentals of Research Methods in Education: A students' Handbook*; AMECEA Gaba Publications - CUEA press
- Obwoye, R.O., Koech, H., Kyalo, N., Lulu, R., Murithi, C., Nduku, C., Okere, A. (2019). *Health Related Challenges Among Expectant Teenagers Attending Narok County Hospital, Narok County, International Journal of Gastroenterology*, 3(2): 35-40. doi: 10.11648/j.ijg.20190302.12
- Parsitau, D.S. (2017). *How Girls' Education intersects with Maasai Culture in Kenya (brookings.edu)*. <https://www.brookings.edu/>
- Republic of Kenya, MoE (1994). *School Re – Entry policy guidelines*
- Republic of Kenya, MoE (2003). *Gender Policy in Education*
- Republic of Kenya (2022). *Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS)*, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Nairobi, Kenya
- Republic of Kenya (2015). *Education and Training Sector Gender Policy*; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Nairobi, Kenya: Ministry of Education.
- Republic of Kenya, MoE, 2016. *Basic Education Statistical Booklet*
- Republic of Kenya, MoE (2020). *National Guidelines for School- Retry in Early and Basic Education*
- Setwin, M.M. & Rachel, K.M. (2019). *Challenges of school return to school among learner mothers and mitigation strategies instituted by stakeholders in schools in Masaiti District, Zambia*. International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE). 6(9); 73-82. Doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.060908
- Stufflebeam, D.L & Shinkfield, A.J. (2007). *Evaluation Theory: Models and Applications*. San Francisco: Jossey - Bass.
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2003). *The CIPP Model for Evaluation*. In D. L. Stufflebeam, & T. Kellaghan, (Eds.), *The International Handbook of Educational Evaluation* (Chapter 2). Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers. <http://rssarf.ips.uw.edu.pl/ewalps/teksty/cipp-model2003.pdf>



- Taherdoost, Hamed. (2016). *Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments; How to Test the Validation of Questionnaire in Research*. International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM), HAL Id: hal-02546799. <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02546799>
- Tarus, C.B. (2020a). *De-stigmatising teenage motherhood. The return to school policy Implementation in Kenya*, An International Journal of research and Innovation in social sciences (IJRSS), 4 (2). [www.rsisinternational.org](http://www.rsisinternational.org)
- Tarus, C.B. (2020b). *The level of Awareness of Return to school Policy of Teenage Mothers in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya*, American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR), 4(2), 249-263. <https://www.ajhssr.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SH2042249263.pdf>
- UNESCO, (2017). *Early and unintended pregnancy and the education sector; Evidence and recommendation*.[http://www.ungei.org/Evidence.\\_Review\\_early\\_unintended\\_pregnancy.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/Evidence._Review_early_unintended_pregnancy.pdf)
- UNFPA (2017). *Kenya Annual Report*. <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/unfpa-annual-report-2017>
- UNFPA (2013). *Motherhood in Childhood: Facing The Challenge Of Adolescent Pregnancy: State Of The World Population*. <https://www.unfpa.org/>
- Villa, G. & Jimenes, A. (2019). *Adolescent pregnancy in Mexico: A growing problem Fueled by inequity*. <https://www.isglobal.org/en/healthisglobal/-/custom-blog-portlet/embaraso-adolescente-en-mexico-un-problema-creciente-alimentado-por-la-inequidad/5083982/9703>
- Wanyama, E. G. & Simatwa, E. M. (2011). *Prospects and challenges in the implementation of return to school policy of girls in secondary schools in Kenya: A case study of Emuhaya District*. International Research Journals, 2(8), 1373-1390. <http://www.interestjournals.org/>
- WHO.(2014,September).*Adolescent pregnancy: fact sheet*. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/>.
- Yakubu, I. & Salisu, W.J. (2018). *Determinants of adolescent pregnancy in Sub-Sahara Africa: a systematic review*. DOI 10.1186/s12978-018-0460