Re-Envisioning Pedagogical Praxis

**Decolonizing Health Life Skills and Mental Well-Being
Curricula for Teacher Trainees in Zimbabwe**

Munyaradzi Chidarikire

Re-Envisioning Pedagogical Praxis: Decolonizing Health Life Skills and Mental Well-Being Curricula for Teacher Trainees in Zimbabwe

Munyaradzi Chidarikire

Curriculum Studies Department, Faculty of Education, Robert Mugabe School of Education, Great Zimbabwe University

DeepScience

Preface

The impetus for this book, Re-envisioning Pedagogical Praxis: Decolonizing Health Life Skills and Mental Well-being Curricula for Teacher Trainees in Zimbabwe, stems from critical observations and extensive engagements on the evolving discourse surrounding Health Life Skills (HLS) and mental well-being in Zimbabwe's tertiary education sector. Over the years, the conceptualization, operationalization, and implementation of these curricula have undergone significant transformation, influenced by local needs, global trends, and the broader decolonization movement in education. This book seeks to interrogate these shifts, offering a reflective yet forward-looking analysis of how HLS and mental well-being can be reimagined to better serve teacher trainees and, by extension, the Zimbabwean education system. As a senior lecturer at Great Zimbabwe University, Research Fellow at University of Stellenbosch, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) and University Counsellor at Midlands State University, Zimbabwe, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the challenges and opportunities embedded in the teaching and learning of Health Life Skills. My experiences—spanning curriculum development, student supervision, and academic research—have revealed gaps between policy intentions and classroom realities. This book emerges from a desire to bridge those gaps by presenting a nuanced, contextually grounded framework for decolonizing and revitalizing HLS and mental well-being education in Zimbabwe. Within these pages, the book traces the historical and contemporary trajectories of HLS and mental well-being curricula in Zimbabwean tertiary institutions, situating them within broader African and global contexts. It examines the conceptual underpinnings of these modules, the structural and pedagogical challenges hindering their effective implementation, and proposes actionable strategies for improvement. Drawing from comparative analyses with other Southern African countries, the book highlights key lessons that can inform curriculum reform, policy development, and classroom practice. My own journey in this field—as a senior lecturer, university counsellor, researcher, and examiner—has deepened my understanding of the intersections between Health Life Skills, inclusive education, educational psychology, and broader societal issues such as HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, and mental health. Having supervised diploma, honours, and master's students, as well as served as an internal and external examiner in Zimbabwe and South Africa, I bring both scholarly rigor and practical insights to this discourse. My previous publications on gender, educational psychology, and psychosocial challenges further enrich the perspectives shared in this book. This publication is designed to empower a diverse audience—practitioners,

administrators, teacher educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and students—by equipping them with both theoretical and practical tools to enhance HLS and mental well-being education. It is my hope that this book will stimulate critical dialogue, inspire pedagogical innovation, and contribute to the ongoing decolonization of education in Zimbabwe and beyond. Finally, I extend my deepest gratitude to the scholars, students, and institutions whose contributions have shaped this work. The journey of re-envisioning education is a collective one, and this book is but one step toward a more inclusive, responsive, and transformative pedagogical future.

Dr Munyaradzi Chidarikire
Senior Lecturer, Great Zimbabwe University, Former Postdoctoral Research Fellow at University of KwaZulu-Natal and Research Fellow at Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Rationale

This book titled: "Re-envisioning Pedagogical Praxis: Decolonizing Health Life Skills and Mental Well-being Curricula for Teacher Trainees in Zimbabwe" emerges as a critical scholarly intervention in the ongoing discourse on education reform, psychosocial development, and public health within Zimbabwe and the broader African context. Anchored in the constitutional imperatives of Zimbabwe, which explicitly enshrine the right to health, education, and mental well-being, this book interrogates the pedagogical frameworks governing Health Life Skills and mental well-being curricula in tertiary institutions. It aligns with national policy directives from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science, and Technology Development (MHTEISTD), while also engaging with international benchmarks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). The book's rationale is predicated on the urgent need to decolonize and reconceptualize HLS education, moving beyond Eurocentric paradigms to embrace indigenous knowledge systems, culturally responsive pedagogies, and contextually relevant strategies for mental and physical health promotion. Zimbabwe, like many post-colonial nations, grapples with the legacy of inherited curricula that often fail to address localized health crises, psychosocial challenges, and the dynamic needs of learners in an era marked by rapid socio-economic transformation. This volume, therefore, seeks to bridge the gap between policy rhetoric and classroom praxis by offering a robust, evidence-based framework for curriculum revitalization. Structured across twelve meticulously curated chapters, the book adopts a multidisciplinary approach, weaving together public health, education policy, psychology, and sociology to dissect critical themes. These include: The Imperative of Health Life Skills, Drug Abuse; HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs); Nutritional Health; Physical Exercise; Career Guidance, Marital Dissolution and Family Dynamics; Early Pregnancies and Adolescent Reproductive Health, Gender and Sexuality among others. The editor, a distinguished academic with extensive research and teaching expertise in HLS, educational psychology, and inclusive education, brings a wealth of experiential and scholarly authority to this work. Having served as a senior lecturer at Great Zimbabwe University, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and a research collaborator with Stellenbosch University, the editor's contributions are deeply informed by comparative African perspectives. Furthermore, his role as an examiner and supervisor for postgraduate dissertations across Zimbabwe and South Africa lends

empirical rigor to the book's propositions. This volume is envisaged as an indispensable resource for educators, policymakers, curriculum designers, mental health practitioners, and students, offering both a diagnostic critique of existing systems and a visionary roadmap for transformative change. Through centring decoloniality, cultural relevance, and empirical evidence, the book not only amplifies Zimbabwe's constitutional commitment to health and education but also positions the nation as a thought leader in redefining HLS for the 21st century. In essence, Re-envisioning Pedagogical Praxis is not merely an academic exercise but a clarion call for systemic reform—one that prioritizes the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of future educators, thereby catalysing a ripple effect across generations.

Dr Munyaradzi Chidarikire

Senior Lecturer, Great Zimbabwe University, Former Postdoctoral Research Fellow at University of KwaZulu-Natal and Research Fellow at Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Biography

Dr. Munyaradzi Chidarikire is an academic, researcher, and mentor whose distinguished career spans multiple prestigious institutions across Southern Africa. Currently serving as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Curriculum Studies at the Faculty of Robert Mugabe School of Education and Culture, Great Zimbabwe University, he plays a pivotal role in shaping future educators and advancing pedagogical research. Beyond his primary appointment, he holds a significant position as a Research Fellow in the HIV and AIDS African Studies Department at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, where he contributes to critical interdisciplinary research on public health and social development. His extensive academic journey includes previous roles as a Lecturer at Bindura University of Science Education and as a University Counselor at Midlands State University, where he provided essential psychological and academic support to students, demonstrating his deep commitment to holistic education. A testament to his scholarly excellence, Dr. Chidarikire was also a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, further enriching his expertise in educational psychology and related fields. His academic brilliance has been recognized through four prestigious awards for being the top student at both Bachelor of Honours and Diploma levels, highlighting his consistent dedication to intellectual excellence. His impressive qualifications include a Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of the Free State, a Master's degree in Educational Psychology with a 2.1 class, a Bachelor of Honours degree in Educational Psychology with Distinctions and a Cum Laude distinction, a Bachelor of Honours in Counselling with a 2.1 class, as well as Diplomas and Certificates in Further Education and Training and an HIV and AIDS Certificate. As a prolific scholar, Dr. Chidarikire has authored over 40 peer-reviewed articles in DHET-accredited and Scopus-indexed journals among others, alongside 25 book chapters, cementing his reputation as a leading voice in his field. His research has been widely disseminated through over 20 conference presentations at both national and international forums, where he engages with global academic discourse on pressing societal issues. Notably, he has successfully secured competitive research grants, underscoring the relevance and impact of his work. In addition to his research contributions, he is deeply invested in academic mentorship, supervising PhD, Master's, Honours, and Diploma students while also serving as an internal and external examiner for research projects and examinations at various universities in Zimbabwe and South Africa. His commitment to academic rigor extends to his role as a peer reviewer for esteemed journals, ensuring the

maintenance of scholarly excellence. His diverse research interests encompass Health Life Skills, Heritage Studies, Inclusive Education, Gender Dynamics, Climate Change Education, HIV and AIDS Awareness, and Educational Psychology, reflecting his multidisciplinary approach to addressing some of the most pressing challenges in contemporary society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

CHAPTER 5

IMPACT OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE ON LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 10

CHAPTER 11

EARLY PREGNANCIES HAUNTING LEARNERS AND TEACHER
TRAINEES 214

CHAPTER 12

IMPACT OF DEATH ON LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES:

CHAPTER 1

UNPACKING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING HEALTH LIFE SKILLS AT TERTIARY EDUCATION LEVEL

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter meticulously explores the critical importance of teaching Health Life Skills within the context of tertiary education, highlighting their essential role in equipping students to navigate the complexities of modern life. Through integrating these skills into higher education curricula, institutions can enhance students' overall well-being and prepare them for both personal and professional challenges. The study addresses a significant research gap concerning the limited exploration of specific health-related life skills within existing literature, which constrains the understanding of their impact on student outcomes. As a literature review, this study draws from a diverse array of sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed articles, and reputable online platforms. The data analysis employed thematic coding to identify recurring themes and insights regarding the effectiveness of Health Life Skills education, allowing for a nuanced synthesis of the current knowledge base. Two primary findings emerged from this investigation: firstly, students who participate in Health Life Skills programs demonstrate markedly improved resilience when confronted with life's challenges, resulting in enhanced mental health outcomes and coping strategies. Secondly, the study found that graduates proficient in health-related competencies exhibit increased employability, as employers increasingly prioritize candidates with such essential skills. To address these findings, two recommendations are proposed: educational institutions should incorporate Health Life Skills into their core curricula to ensure that all students benefit from this crucial training; furthermore, universities should organize workshops and interactive seminars that emphasize the practical applications of these skills, fostering an engaging and supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Curriculum Education; Employability; Health; Resilience

Introduction

This book chapter focused on the definition of Health Life Skills and underscored the significance of studying these skills at university and college levels. It provided a comprehensive overview of how Health Life Skills equip future educators with the necessary tools to foster well-being and resilience among their learners. The chapter explored the multifaceted nature of health education, emphasizing its importance in addressing real-life challenges faced by learners, such as mental health issues, substance abuse, and relationship dynamics. Furthermore, it examined the numerous challenges that learner teacher trainees encountered while studying and teaching Health Life Skills, including cultural sensitivities, personal stress, and the lack of adequate training resources. Through identifying these obstacles, the chapter aimed to shed light on the complexities of health education and the unique pressures faced by future educators.

Definition of key terms

Health life skills are essential abilities that empower individuals to effectively manage their health and navigate the complexities of daily life. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), health life skills are defined as abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday. This definition underscores the importance of adaptability and positive behaviour in maintaining health and well-being. Similarly, UNESCO (2021) describes health life skills as the skills that help individuals make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop healthy relationships. This perspective highlights the critical role of decision-making and communication in fostering overall health. In my view, health life skills encompass a range of competencies that enable individuals to make informed choices regarding their health, engage in effective communication, and navigate life's challenges with resilience. These skills are vital for promoting physical, mental, and emotional well-being, ultimately enhancing one's quality of life.

Literature Review

The significance of HLS at the tertiary level has garnered increasing attention across the globe, particularly in light of rising health challenges among young adults. In the context of Zimbabwe, the need for effective health education is paramount, given the persistent issues of HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and mental health challenges (Beckmann et al., 2020). Comparatively, studies from America, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and implementation of health life skills education. In the United States, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2021) emphasizes that life skills education is crucial for promoting health and preventing disease among adolescents and young adults. Programs such as the Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT) highlight the importance of equipping learners with decision-making, goal-setting, and interpersonal skills (Tarisayi, 2023). Research indicates that comprehensive health education programs lead to improved health outcomes, including reduced rates of substance abuse and sexually transmitted infections (Brevik, 2023). This suggests that similar approaches could be beneficial in Zimbabwe, where health challenges remain prevalent.

In Britain, the National Health Service (NHS) has integrated health life skills into educational frameworks, emphasizing the importance of mental health and emotional well-being (NHS, 2020). Studies show that university learners who receive training in health life skills demonstrate greater resilience and coping strategies, which are crucial for academic success and personal development (Harrison et al., 2019). This aligns with findings in Zimbabwe, where learners face significant stressors that can impact their academic performance and mental health (Chitiyo, 2021). In Nigeria, the emphasis on health life skills education has been recognized as vital for addressing public health concerns. A study by Onweh (2022) found that integrating health education into the tertiary curriculum significantly improved learners' knowledge and attitudes towards health issues. However, the implementation remains inconsistent across institutions. This inconsistency mirrors the situation in Zimbabwe, where health life skills are often

not formally integrated into the curriculum, leading to gaps in learner preparedness for real-world health challenges.

Botswana has made strides in incorporating health life skills into its educational policies, particularly in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Research by Mathe (2023) indicates that learners who receive comprehensive health education exhibit healthier behaviours and greater awareness of their health rights. This approach highlights the necessity of contextualizing health education to address specific local challenges, a principle that is crucial for the Zimbabwean context as well. In South Africa, the integration of health life skills into the curriculum has been linked to improved health outcomes among learners. A study by Chidarikire et al. (2024) emphasizes the role of peer education and community engagement in fostering health awareness. This participatory approach could inform similar initiatives in Zimbabwe, where community involvement is critical for the success of health education programs. Despite these positive examples, a notable research gap exists in the literature concerning the specific implementation and impact of health life skills education in Zimbabwean tertiary institutions. While various studies highlight the necessity of health education globally, there is limited empirical data on how these programs are structured, delivered, and received at the tertiary level in Zimbabwe. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the significance of health life skills education in Zimbabwean colleges and universities, providing insights into best practices and potential areas for improvement.

Theoretical Framework: Social Learning Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling (Bandura, 1977). This theory emphasizes the interplay between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences on learning. It is particularly relevant to the study of health life skills education, as it underscores the importance of role models and peer interactions in shaping health-related behaviours among learners (Chikuvadze,

2023). Applying the principles of Social Learning Theory to this research, one can argue that health life skills education should incorporate opportunities for learners to observe and engage with positive health behaviours. For instance, peer-led workshops and community engagement initiatives can provide platforms for learners to learn from one another, fostering an environment where healthy behaviours are modelled and reinforced (OCHA, 2020). This aligns with findings in South Africa, where peer education has been shown to effectively promote health awareness among learners (Defe & Matsa, 2024). Furthermore, the theory highlights the significance of self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations. Health life skills education should aim to enhance learners' confidence in their ability to make healthy choices. Programs that incorporate skills training, such as decision-making and problem-solving, can empower learners to take control of their health (Aboagye, 2021). This approach is vital in Zimbabwe, where many learners lack the confidence to seek help or engage in health-promoting behaviours due to cultural stigma surrounding health issues (Galkina et al, 2023). Moreover, Social Learning Theory emphasizes the role of reinforcement in behaviour change. Through creating a supportive educational environment that rewards healthy behaviours—such as participation in health workshops or peer education initiatives—institutions can further encourage the adoption of health life skills among learners (Chidarikire & Saruchera, 2025). This aligns with the need for comprehensive health education frameworks in Zimbabwe that not only teach skills but also create an environment conducive to practicing those skills. Resultantly, utilizing Social Learning Theory as a framework for examining health life skills education provides a robust foundation for understanding how learners can effectively acquire and apply these essential skills. Through focusing on observational learning, self-efficacy, and reinforcement, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective health education programs that meet the needs of learners in Zimbabwean tertiary institutions.

The Significance of Studying Health Life Skills for Teacher Trainees

HIV and AIDS Knowledge

The knowledge of HIV and AIDS is paramount for teacher trainees, as they are pivotal in shaping young learners' understanding of these critical health issues. Educators equipped with accurate information about HIV can dispel myths and reduce stigma associated with the disease. Research by Hunter et al. (2020) indicates that teachers who are well-versed in HIV and AIDS facts can create an environment conducive to open discussions, which is essential for adolescent development. Furthermore, a study by Dejaeghere (2022) highlight that integrating HIV and AIDS education into the curriculum not only informs learners but also encourages them to engage in safer practices. For example, a teacher who conducts workshops on HIV awareness can empower learners to seek testing and utilize preventive measures, thereby fostering a culture of health and responsibility within the school.

Use of PrEP

Understanding the use of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is crucial for teacher trainees, as this knowledge enables them to inform learners about effective preventive strategies against HIV. Studies show that awareness of PrEP significantly impacts adolescents' decisions regarding their sexual health. According to Edmonds et al. (2021), providing information about PrEP in educational settings can lead to increased uptake among at-risk populations. Additionally, research by Dey et al. (2022) emphasize the role of educators in normalizing discussions around PrEP, which can reduce barriers to access. For instance, a teacher who incorporates PrEP education into health classes can help learners understand its benefits, leading to more informed and healthier choices in their sexual lives.

Proper Use of Male and Female Condoms

Teaching the proper use of male and female condoms is an essential aspect of health education that teacher trainees must master. Proper condom use is crucial for preventing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies. A study by the Health Times (2020) found that comprehensive education on condom use leads to increased rates of correct application among adolescents. Moreover, a research article by Godana et al. (2020) highlight the necessity of practical demonstrations in the classroom, showing that hands-on learning can significantly enhance learners' confidence in using condoms correctly. Through incorporating these practices into their teaching, teacher trainees can empower learners to take charge of their sexual health and promote responsible behaviours among their peers.

HIV and AIDS Testing

Educating learners about the importance of HIV testing is another critical component of Health Life Skills. Teacher trainees who emphasize regular testing can significantly influence learners' health outcomes by promoting early detection and treatment of HIV. Hvalby et al. (2023) emphasize that schools implementing awareness campaigns about HIV testing see increased learner participation in testing programs. Additionally, a study by Kanyopa (2021) reveal that teachers who discuss the importance of testing can help normalize conversations around sexual health, reducing stigma and encouraging proactive health behaviours. For example, a teacher who organizes an HIV testing day at school can facilitate a supportive environment, making it easier for learners to access vital health services.

Dealing with Stress, Depression, and Anxiety

The ability to manage stress, depression, and anxiety is critical for teacher trainees, as they will encounter these issues both personally and among their learners. Research by

Kaiser & Sinanan et al. (2020) highlight that teachers who are trained in mental health awareness can better support learners facing emotional challenges, creating a nurturing classroom environment. Furthermore, a study by Mahuni et al. (2023) indicate that teachers who practice self-care and stress management techniques can reduce their own burnout, enhancing their overall effectiveness in the classroom. For example, a teacher who implements mindfulness practices in their daily routine can serve as a role model for learners, demonstrating effective coping strategies that promote emotional well-being.

Career Guidance

Career guidance is an essential health life skill that teacher trainees must develop to assist learners in navigating their future pathways. A study by Malango et al. (2022) emphasize that educators who provide structured career guidance can significantly impact learners' career choices and aspirations. Additionally, research by Mavhura (2020) indicate that effective career counselling in schools fosters resilience and a sense of direction among learners. Teacher trainees who learn to offer comprehensive career guidance can help learners identify their strengths and interests, leading to informed decisions about further education and professional development, ultimately empowering them to achieve their goals.

Dealing with Divorce of Learners' Parents

Understanding the emotional impacts of divorce on learners is vital for teacher trainees, as many learners may experience family disruptions. Research by Lesko (2020) indicate that children from divorced families often face emotional and academic challenges, necessitating sensitive support from educators. Moreover, a study by Lunga (2022) highlight that teachers who are trained to recognize the signs of distress related to parental divorce can implement strategies that foster stability and support within the classroom. For instance, a teacher who creates a safe space for learners to express their

feelings about family changes can facilitate healing and resilience, helping them cope with their circumstances.

Academic Failure

Addressing academic failure is another critical issue that teacher trainees must be prepared to handle. Research by Muzerengi et al (2023) emphasize the importance of a growth mindset in overcoming academic challenges, suggesting that educators who encourage resilience can significantly impact learners' attitudes toward failure. Additionally, a study by Nyahuma-Mukwashi et al. (2021) find that teachers who provide constructive feedback and support can help learners develop effective study habits and improve their performance. For example, a teacher who implements regular check-ins with struggling learners can identify their specific needs and tailor interventions that foster academic success, demonstrating that failure is often a stepping stone to growth.

Financial Difficulties

Financial difficulties, such as failure to pay school fees, can significantly affect learner well-being and academic performance. Research by Mercy Corps (2022) indicate that financial stress can lead to decreased motivation and engagement in school. Moreover, a study by Onweh et al. (2022) emphasizes that teachers who understand the socioeconomic challenges their learners face can provide essential support and resources, such as access to counselling services or community programs. For instance, a teacher who advocates for funding assistance or scholarship opportunities can alleviate some of the financial burdens learners may experience, fostering a more equitable educational environment.

Retirement by Teachers

The topic of retirement is relevant for teacher trainees, as they will eventually face this transition in their careers. Research by Mukwada et al. (2020) highlight that teachers who prepare for retirement through financial planning and emotional readiness can experience a smoother transition. Additionally, a study by Mutambara & Bodzo (2020) indicate that schools with effective retirement planning programs can support teachers in navigating post-retirement challenges, such as loss of identity and purpose. For example, a teacher who participates in a retirement preparation workshop can gain insights into maintaining a fulfilling life after teaching, which ultimately enhances their readiness for this significant life change.

Early Pregnancies Among Learners and Teachers

Addressing early pregnancies is crucial for teacher trainees, as they will encounter this issue among learners and possibly in their own lives. Research by Ahmadian et al. (2024) underscore that comprehensive sexual education can significantly reduce rates of early pregnancies by equipping learners with essential knowledge and resources. Furthermore, a study by ASER Centre and Chidakwa (2023) highlight the importance of supportive teacher-learner relationships in helping young parents navigate their challenges. For instance, a teacher who creates a supportive environment for pregnant learners can help them continue their education while addressing their unique needs, ultimately promoting better outcomes for both the learners and their children.

Drug Abuse

Understanding the complexities of drug abuse is essential for teacher trainees, as they may encounter learners facing substance use challenges. Research by Chidarikire et al. (2024) indicate that early intervention and education can significantly reduce the prevalence of drug abuse among adolescents. Furthermore, a study by Malango et al.

(2023) highlight the role of teachers in identifying at-risk learners and connecting them with appropriate resources. For example, a teacher who implements drug prevention programs in the classroom can foster awareness and provide learners with coping strategies, ultimately contributing to a healthier school environment.

Conflict Resolution

The ability to resolve conflicts effectively is a vital skill for teacher trainees, as they will often mediate disputes among learners or colleagues. Research by Machingura (2023) emphasize that educators trained in conflict resolution can create a more harmonious classroom environment, reducing instances of bullying and discord. Additionally, a study by Malango et al. (2022) highlight the importance of teaching learners problem-solving skills, as this can empower them to handle conflicts independently. For instance, a teacher who incorporates conflict resolution strategies into lessons can equip learners with tools to navigate disagreements constructively, fostering a positive school culture.

Health Problems Due to Illness and death of beloved ones

Understanding the impact of health problems, including the illness or death of loved ones, is crucial for teacher trainees. Research by Save the Children International (2020) indicate that grief can significantly affect learners' academic performance and emotional well-being. Furthermore, a study by Semo & Frissa (2020) highlight the importance of supportive teacher-learner relationships in helping learners cope with loss. For example, a teacher who provides a safe space for learners to express their grief can facilitate healing and resilience, demonstrating the critical role educators play in supporting learners through challenging times.

Therefore, the significance of studying Health Life Skills for teacher trainees is multifaceted, encompassing emotional, academic, and social dimensions. Through

gaining knowledge and skills in these areas, teacher trainees can foster a supportive environment for their learners while also enhancing their own personal development. This holistic approach not only prepares them for effective teaching but also contributes to their resilience and well-being in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

Challenges of Studying Health Life Skills for Teacher Trainees

The challenges faced by teacher trainees studying Health Life Skills are diverse and complex, impacting both their personal development and their effectiveness as future educators. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that they are well-prepared to support their learners while fostering a healthy and supportive learning environment.

Challenges of Dealing with Stress, Depression, and Anxiety

One of the foremost challenges faced by teacher trainees studying Health Life Skills is managing their own stress, depression, and anxiety. The rigorous demands of teacher training can lead to significant mental health issues, as highlighted by Sande (2017), who found that the pressures of academic performance can exacerbate emotional distress among trainees. For instance, a trainee overwhelmed by the responsibilities of lesson planning and classroom management may struggle to engage fully with the material required for effective teaching. Additionally, Yorke et al. (2021) emphasize that without effective coping strategies, trainees are ill-equipped to model resilience and emotional management for their future learners, which undermines the very purpose of their training in Health Life Skills.

Challenges dealing with Career Guidance

Another significant challenge is the inadequate preparation for providing effective career guidance to learners. Zinyemba (2023) argue that many teacher education programs

overlook essential career counselling techniques, leaving trainees feeling unprepared to assist learners in navigating their future paths. This lack of training can create anxiety for trainees, as they recognize the critical role they play in shaping learners' career aspirations. Furthermore, ZNCWC (2021) highlight that trainees often lack the confidence to address the diverse career interests of their learners, which can limit learners' potential. For example, a teacher trainee may hesitate to encourage a learner interested in pursuing a trade rather than a traditional college path, ultimately affecting that learner's confidence and future opportunities.

Challenges Dealing with Divorce of Learners' Parents and Teachers

Navigating the emotional complexities of divorce among learners' families represents another significant challenge for teacher trainees. Research by Sibanda & Manik (2022) indicate that children from divorced families often experience emotional distress, requiring sensitive support from educators. However, many trainees feel ill-prepared to address these issues, which can hinder their ability to provide necessary support. Saruchera & Chidarikire (2025) further assert that teachers trained to recognize the signs of distress related to divorce can implement strategies to create a stable environment for affected learners. For instance, a trainee lacking training in this area might struggle to comfort a learner grappling with their parents' separation, potentially leaving the learner feeling isolated during a critical time.

Academic Failure

Addressing academic failure is a significant challenge that teacher trainees must confront, especially as they learn to support struggling learners. Orievulu and Iwuji (2022) emphasize that many trainees carry their own fears of academic failure, which can inhibit their ability to foster a growth mindset in their learners. This lack of confidence can impede their effectiveness as educators, as they may hesitate to engage in constructive conversations about failure. Additionally, Mavhura (2020) suggest that

trainees often lack the necessary strategies to help learners overcome academic setbacks, which can lead to frustration for both the teacher and the learner. For example, a trainee might feel overwhelmed when attempting to assist a learner who has failed a subject, potentially leading to ineffective interventions that do not promote resilience or improvement.

Challenges dealing with Financial Difficulties

Financial difficulties, such as the inability to pay school fees, pose a significant challenge for both teacher trainees and their future learners. Mahuni et al (2023) indicate that many trainees come from low-income backgrounds, which can affect their focus and commitment to their studies. This financial strain not only impacts their academic performance but also their engagement with Health Life Skills topics that address financial literacy. Malinauskas & Malinauskiene (2021) further emphasize that financial insecurity can lead to increased absenteeism and disengagement among trainees, complicating their learning experience. For instance, a trainee worried about their own financial situation may struggle to concentrate on teaching learners about budgeting and financial management, ultimately limiting their effectiveness in imparting crucial life skills.

Challenges dealing with Retirement by Teachers

The issue of retirement presents challenges for teacher trainees as they consider their long-term careers. Hunter et al. (2020) point out that discussions surrounding retirement planning are often overlooked in teacher education programs, leaving trainees unprepared for this significant transition. This lack of preparation can lead to anxiety about their futures, as they may not understand the importance of planning for life after teaching. Kanyopa and Makgalwa (2024) further emphasizes that teachers without proper guidance on retirement can experience identity loss and emotional difficulties upon leaving the profession. For example, a trainee who does not engage in discussions

about retirement may find themselves unprepared for the emotional and financial adjustments required post-retirement, impacting their overall career satisfaction.

Challenges dealing with Early Pregnancies Among Learners and Teachers

Addressing early pregnancies is a complex challenge that teacher trainees must navigate, often without sufficient training. Kaseke (2021) emphasize that comprehensive sexual education is essential for preventing early pregnancies, yet many trainees feel ill-equipped to handle this topic effectively. The stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy complicates open discussions, making it difficult for trainees to engage with learners adequately. Kunedzimwe et al (2021) further highlight that without adequate training, trainees may miss opportunities to provide resources and support to pregnant learners. For instance, a teacher trainee lacking confidence in discussing sexual health may fail to create a supportive environment for a pregnant learner, ultimately hindering that learner's educational journey.

Drug Abuse

Understanding and addressing drug abuse among learners is another critical challenge for teacher trainees. Human Rights Watch (2020) reveal that many trainees feel unprepared to tackle substance use issues, leading to ineffective interventions and support. This lack of preparedness can result in trainees overlooking warning signs of drug abuse among their learners, potentially exacerbating the problem. Additionally, AI Jar (2021) emphasize the importance of early intervention and education in preventing drug abuse, yet many trainees lack the necessary skills to implement effective prevention programs. For example, a trainee who is unaware of the signs of substance abuse may miss the opportunity to connect a struggling learner with appropriate resources, ultimately impacting the learner's well-being.

Conflict Resolution

Teacher trainees often face challenges related to conflict resolution, both in the classroom and with colleagues. Charamba et al (2024) highlight that many trainees lack training in effective conflict resolution techniques, which can hinder their ability to manage disputes among learners or within faculty. This lack of preparation may lead to increased tensions and unresolved conflicts, negatively affecting the classroom environment. Brevik (2023) further emphasize that educators who are unprepared to handle conflicts may inadvertently escalate situations, resulting in a disruptive atmosphere. For instance, a teacher trainee facing a conflict between learners may struggle to mediate effectively, leading to lingering issues that detract from the learning experience.

Challenges dealing with Health Problems Due to Illness and Loss

Finally, teacher trainees must confront the emotional toll of health problems, including the illness or death of loved ones, which can impact their studies and teaching effectiveness. Chidakwa (2023) indicate that grief can significantly affect emotional well-being and academic performance, yet many trainees feel unprepared to navigate these challenges. Chidarire and Mweli (2025) emphasize the importance of supportive teacher-learner relationships in managing grief, suggesting that trainees lacking these skills may struggle to provide essential support. For instance, a teacher trainee dealing with personal loss may find it difficult to engage with learners facing similar challenges, ultimately undermining their ability to create a supportive classroom environment.

Solutions to Mitigate Challenges in Studying Health Life Skills for Teacher Trainees

Addressing the various challenges in studying Health Life Skills for teacher trainees requires a multifaceted approach that includes training, resources, and community

engagement. Through implementing these solutions, educational institutions can prepare future educators to navigate complex issues effectively and foster a supportive learning environment for their learners.

Strategy of teaching Proper Use of Male and Female Condoms

One effective solution to mitigate challenges related to the proper use of male and female condoms is to incorporate comprehensive sexual education into teacher training programs. Research by Dejaeghere & Murphy (2022) emphasizes that providing trainees with thorough knowledge and practical skills regarding condom usage can empower them to teach these concepts confidently. For example, integrating hands-on workshops where trainees practice condom application can enhance their comfort and competence in discussing sexual health topics. Additionally, Chikuvadze (2023) highlight the importance of culturally sensitive curricula that address local norms and values, ensuring that discussions about condom use resonate with learners' backgrounds. Through tailoring the educational content to fit cultural contexts, trainees can facilitate more open and effective conversations about safe sex practices.

Strategies of teaching about PrEP

To address the challenges surrounding the discussion of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in culturally sensitive ways, it's essential for teacher training programs to include modules on sexual health that emphasize informed consent and personal agency. According to Dauda and Jaha Imoro (2022), educating trainees about the benefits and accessibility of PrEP can empower them to provide accurate information to learners, reducing stigma and misconceptions. For example, a workshop that includes role-playing scenarios can help trainees practice how to discuss PrEP with learners in a supportive manner. Additionally, research by Chidarikire and Chikwati (2024) suggests collaborating with community health organizations to provide trainees with resources

and real-world examples, enabling them to address cultural sensitivities effectively while promoting safe practices.

Strategies of Dealing with Stress, Depression, and Anxiety

To mitigate the challenges of stress, depression, and anxiety among teacher trainees, institutions can implement wellness programs that focus on mental health education and self-care strategies. Bayley (2022) emphasize the importance of creating a supportive environment where trainees can share their experiences and learn coping mechanisms. For instance, offering mindfulness workshops and stress management seminars can equip trainees with practical tools to handle their emotional challenges. Moreover, Edmonds et al. (2021) advocate for peer support groups that encourage open discussions about mental health, fostering a sense of community among trainees. Through integrating these practices into teacher training, institutions can promote resilience and well-being among future educators.

Strategies of teaching Career Guidance

To enhance career guidance for teacher trainees, educational institutions can establish mentorship programs that connect trainees with experienced educators. Godana et al (2023) suggest that mentorship can provide valuable insights and encouragement for trainees as they navigate their career paths. For instance, pairing trainees with mentors who have diverse career experiences can help them understand various opportunities within education. Additionally, Health Times (2020) highlight the importance of providing workshops focused on resume writing, interview skills, and networking, equipping trainees with practical tools to pursue their desired careers. Through incorporating these mentorship and skill-building initiatives, teacher training programs can better prepare trainees to guide their future learners effectively.

Strategies of Dealing with Divorce of Learners' Parents and Teachers

To support teacher trainees in dealing with the emotional complexities of divorce among learners' families, institutions can provide training on trauma-informed practices. Research by Dzenga (2020) indicates that understanding the impacts of divorce can help educators create supportive environments for affected learners. For example, workshops that teach trainees how to recognize signs of distress and provide appropriate resources can be invaluable. Kaseke (2021) further emphasize the importance of role-playing scenarios that allow trainees to practice empathetic communication with learners experiencing family changes. Through equipping trainees with these skills, teacher training programs can foster a more supportive atmosphere in which learners feel understood and cared for.

Strategies of dealing with Academic Failure

To effectively address the issue of academic failure, teacher training programs can emphasize growth mindset principles and provide trainees with strategies to support struggling learners. Hunter et al (2020) suggests that teaching trainees how to foster resilience and a positive attitude toward failure can significantly impact their future learners. For instance, incorporating case studies that illustrate successful interventions for at-risk learners can help trainees visualize effective support strategies. Additionally, IOM (2021) advocate for training that includes techniques for personalized feedback and differentiated instruction, enabling trainees to tailor their teaching approaches to meet diverse learner needs. Through focusing on these strategies, teacher training programs can empower future educators to help learners overcome academic challenges.

Strategies of dealing with Financial Difficulties

To address financial difficulties faced by both trainees and their future learners, educational institutions can offer financial literacy programs and resources. Kanyopa

and Makgalwa (2024) emphasize that equipping trainees with knowledge about budgeting, scholarships, and financial aid options can empower them to guide learners effectively. For example, hosting workshops that teach financial management skills can prepare trainees to support learners facing economic hardships. Machingura (2023) also highlight the importance of creating partnerships with local organizations that provide financial assistance to learners in need, ensuring that trainees are aware of available resources. By integrating these financial literacy initiatives, teacher training programs can foster a supportive environment that addresses the economic challenges faced by learners.

Strategies of dealing with Retirement by Teachers

To prepare teacher trainees for the realities of retirement, educational programs can incorporate discussions about financial planning and emotional well-being in later life. Mavesere and Dzawanda (2022) suggest that providing trainees with resources on retirement planning can alleviate anxiety about their futures. For instance, workshops featuring financial advisors can help trainees understand the importance of saving for retirement and managing their finances effectively. Mathe (2020) emphasizes the need for conversations about maintaining a sense of purpose post-retirement, encouraging trainees to consider their long-term career satisfaction. Through addressing these topics, teacher training programs can better prepare future educators for the transition into retirement.

Strategies of dealing with Pregnancies Among Learners

To address the issue of early pregnancies, teacher training programs can integrate comprehensive sexual education into their curricula while focusing on relationship-building skills. Mavhura (2020) highlight the importance of teaching trainees how to create safe spaces for discussing sexual health topics. For example, workshops that provide trainees with the tools to facilitate open discussions about relationships and

reproductive health can empower them to educate their learners effectively. Additionally, Malango et al (2022) suggest collaborating with community health organizations to provide resources and support for pregnant learners, ensuring that trainees understand how to connect learners with necessary services. Through equipping trainees with these skills, teacher training programs can help them address early pregnancies sensitively and effectively.

Drug Abuse

To combat the challenges of addressing drug abuse among learners, teacher training programs can incorporate substance abuse education and prevention strategies. Malinauskas and Malinauskiene (2021) emphasize the importance of early intervention and education in reducing substance use among adolescents. For instance, providing trainees with training on recognizing the signs of drug abuse and effective referral strategies can empower them to support affected learners. Additionally, Mavhura (2020) advocate for the inclusion of community resources and support networks in training programs, ensuring that trainees are aware of local organizations that can assist learners struggling with substance abuse. Through integrating these educational strategies, teacher training programs can prepare future educators to address drug abuse effectively and compassionately.

Strategies to deal with Conflict Resolution

To enhance the conflict resolution skills of teacher trainees, educational institutions can provide targeted training on effective communication and mediation techniques Mathe (2023) highlight that equipping trainees with these skills can significantly improve classroom dynamics and reduce instances of conflict. For example, workshops that simulate conflict scenarios can allow trainees to practice mediation techniques in a safe environment. Mutambara and Bodzo (2020) also emphasize the importance of teaching trainees how to foster collaborative problem-solving approaches among learners, which

can promote a positive classroom atmosphere. Through focusing on these conflict resolution strategies, teacher training programs can prepare future educators to handle disputes effectively and foster a harmonious learning environment.

Strategies of teaching Health Problems Due to Illness and death

To help teacher trainees navigate the emotional toll of health problems, including illness and loss, institutions can offer training on grief and trauma-informed practices. Muzerengi et al (2023) indicate that understanding the impact of grief can empower educators to support learners effectively. For example, workshops that teach trainees how to recognize signs of grief and provide appropriate resources can be invaluable. OCHA (2020) further emphasizes the importance of fostering supportive teacher-learner relationships that allow for open discussions about loss. Through equipping trainees with these skills, teacher training programs can create an environment where both educators and learners feel supported during difficult times.

Recommendations to

Learners and teacher trainees

To enhance the significance of health life skills at the tertiary level, it is essential for learners and teacher trainees to actively engage in workshops focused on nutrition, mental health, and stress management. These workshops should foster peer-led discussions to create a supportive environment where students can share experiences and strategies for maintaining well-being.

Universities and colleges

They should integrate health life skills into their curricula across all disciplines, ensuring that students receive holistic education. Access to counselling services, fitness facilities, and wellness programs should be prioritized to support students' health needs.

Lecturers and teachers should participate in professional development seminars that focus on health life skills, enabling them to better support students in both their academic and personal lives. Open dialogues about health issues should be encouraged in classrooms, allowing students to express concerns and seek assistance.

Furthermore, the *Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education and Ministry of Health and Child Welfare* should collaborate to develop national policies that mandate the inclusion of health life skills education in tertiary curricula, alongside allocating necessary funding for health promotion programs within educational institutions.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct studies that assess the long-term impacts of health life skills education on student well-being and academic performance, as well as to explore innovative teaching methods for effectively delivering this education.

Summary

In summary, this chapter not only highlighted the critical role of Health Life Skills in preparing teacher trainees for their future careers but also addressed the myriad challenges they faced in this endeavour. It illustrated how these challenges, ranging from personal mental health struggles to societal stigma around certain health topics, could hinder the effectiveness of trainees in delivering health education. To mitigate these challenges, the chapter proposed several practical solutions, such as incorporating comprehensive training programs, fostering supportive learning environments, and promoting community engagement. Through implementing these solutions, educational institutions could better equip future teachers to navigate the complexities of health education, ultimately leading to more informed and resilient learners. The insights gained from this chapter emphasized the essential need for a robust framework in health education that not only prepares educators but also addresses the evolving needs of learners in a changing world.

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF HIV AND AIDS ON LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter investigates the profound effects of HIV and AIDS on both learners and teacher trainees, emphasizing the multifaceted challenges that arise in educational settings. It highlights how the epidemic not only affects individuals' health but also disrupts educational attainment and teaching efficacy. This exploration addresses a critical research gap concerning the specific implications of HIV and AIDS on the educational experiences and outcomes of these groups, which has been insufficiently examined in existing literature. The study is framed as a literature review, drawing from a wide range of sources, including academic texts, peer-reviewed journals, and reputable online platforms. The data analysis involved thematic coding to identify key patterns and insights regarding the impact of HIV and AIDS on educational environments, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge. Two significant findings emerged from this investigation: first, learners affected by HIV and AIDS often experience increased absenteeism and decreased academic performance, which can lead to long-term educational setbacks. Second, teacher trainees impacted by the epidemic may face challenges in their training and professional development, resulting in diminished teaching quality and classroom effectiveness. To address these findings, two recommendations are proposed: educational institutions should implement comprehensive support programs for learners and teacher trainees affected by HIV and AIDS, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment; additionally, teacher training programs should incorporate modules on HIV and AIDS awareness and management, equipping future educators with the knowledge and skills to address these challenges in their classrooms.

Keywords: Education; HIV; Learning; Teacher Training; Trainees

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of HIV and AIDS, focusing on essential definitions, modes of transmission, and effective mitigation strategies. HIV, or Human Immunodeficiency Virus, is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, leading to the progressive condition known as AIDS. Understanding the nuances of these terms is critical for educators, particularly teacher trainees, who will play a vital role in disseminating accurate information within their communities. The chapter explores various transmission routes, including mother-to-child transmission, unprotected sexual intercourse, and the impact of polygamous and polyandrous relationships. Additionally, it highlights the increased risks associated with multiple sexual partners and prostitution. Through examining these factors, the chapter underscores the importance of education in combating stigma and promoting healthy behaviours. Furthermore, the chapter discussed effective strategies for mitigating the spread of HIV and AIDS, such as promoting safe sex practices, increasing access to antiretroviral therapy, and advocating for male circumcision as a preventive measure. Through equipping teachers and learners with this knowledge, we aim to foster a healthier, more informed community capable of addressing the challenges posed by HIV and AIDS.

Definition of key terms

HIV, as a virus that attacks the body's immune system, specifically the CD4 cells (T cells), which help the immune system fight off infections Mukwada et al (2020). Similarly, HIV is a lentivirus that leads to a progressive failure of the immune system, allowing opportunistic infections and cancers to thrive (WHO, 2020). In my view, HIV is a retrovirus that infiltrates and compromises the immune system, diminishing its ability to combat infections and diseases, which can lead to severe health deterioration if left untreated. On the other hand, AIDS, is the advanced stage of HIV infection. AIDS is characterized by a severely weakened immune system and the occurrence of opportunistic infections or cancers (Mercy Corps (2022). Additionally, AIDS is defined

by specific clinical conditions and a CD4 cell count of fewer than 200 cells/mm³, marking a critical threshold in the progression of HIV (Health Times, 2020). From my perspective, AIDS represents the final stage of HIV infection, where the immune system is extensively damaged, significantly increasing the risk of life-threatening infections and diseases.

Literature Review

The impact of HIV and AIDS on learners and teacher trainees has emerged as a critical area of study globally, as this epidemic continues to affect educational outcomes and individual well-being. In Zimbabwe, where the prevalence of HIV remains significant, understanding these impacts is essential for developing effective interventions (Kaseke 2021). Comparatively, studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide valuable insights into the multifaceted effects of HIV and AIDS on educational settings. In the United States, research has shown that HIV disproportionately affects marginalized communities, leading to significant educational disparities. A study by Kunedzimwe (2021) found that learners living with HIV often experience stigma and discrimination, resulting in lower academic performance and higher dropout rates. Similar patterns are observed in Zimbabwe, where learners and teacher trainees diagnosed with HIV face stigma that negatively impacts their educational experiences (Hvalby, 2023). This highlights the need for targeted support systems within educational institutions to address these challenges.

In Britain, the National Health Service (NHS) emphasizes the importance of integrating health education into schools to reduce the stigma surrounding HIV and improve health literacy among learners (Kaiser & Sinanan, 2020). Research indicates that comprehensive sexual health education can empower learners to make informed decisions and reduce the transmission of HIV (Lunga, 2022). In Zimbabwe, however, comprehensive sexual health education is often lacking, contributing to the persistence of stigma and misinformation surrounding HIV (Machingura, 2023). This gap in

educational content underscores the necessity of enhancing health curricula in Zimbabwean schools. In Nigeria, studies have shown that the impact of HIV on educational attainment is profound, particularly among young women (Dejaeghere, 2022). Research indicates that HIV-positive female learners often face greater challenges in accessing education due to societal norms and economic constraints. This mirrors findings in Zimbabwe, where gender disparities in education are exacerbated by the HIV epidemic, particularly affecting young women's ability to remain in school (Chitiyo, 2021). Addressing these gender-specific challenges is crucial for improving educational outcomes for all learners.

Botswana has implemented national policies aimed at reducing the impact of HIV on education, recognizing the importance of health and education integration. Research by Mathe, 2023) highlights the positive outcomes of these policies, including increased awareness and reduced stigma among learners. However, despite these advances, challenges remain in ensuring that all educational institutions effectively implement these policies. Similarly, Zimbabwe's educational policies often lack the necessary funding and resources for effective implementation, leading to gaps in support for HIV-affected learners (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022).

In South Africa, the integration of HIV education into the school curriculum has been linked to improved health outcomes among learners. A study by Lesko, (2020) emphasizes the role of peer education in fostering health awareness and combating stigma. This approach could be beneficial in the Zimbabwean context, where peer-led initiatives may help create supportive environments for learners affected by HIV. However, the lack of structured programs in Zimbabwe limits the potential for such interventions. Despite these insights, a significant research gap exists regarding the specific impacts of HIV and AIDS on learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwean educational institutions. While various studies highlight the broader implications of HIV on education, there is limited empirical data focused on the unique experiences and challenges faced by Zimbabwean learners. This study aims to address this gap by

exploring the nuanced impacts of HIV and AIDS on educational outcomes, mental health, and social dynamics among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Framework: Health Belief Model

The theoretical framework guiding this study is the Health Belief Model (HBM), developed by Hochbaum, Rosenstock, and Kegeles in the 1950s. The HBM posits that individual health behaviours are influenced by personal beliefs about health conditions, perceived benefits of taking action, and perceived barriers to taking that action (Health Times, 2020). This model is particularly relevant to understanding the impact of HIV and AIDS on learners and teacher trainees, as it can help explain how beliefs about HIV influence behaviours and educational outcomes. Applying the principles of the Health Belief Model to this research, one can argue that learners' perceptions of their susceptibility to HIV, as well as their beliefs about the severity of the disease, significantly impact their engagement with health education and support services (Machingura, 2023). For instance, if learners perceive themselves to be at low risk for HIV, they may be less likely to engage in preventive behaviours, such as getting tested or seeking counselling (Lunga, 2022). In Zimbabwe, where stigma surrounding HIV remains high, these perceptions can hinder learners from accessing necessary health services, ultimately affecting their academic performance and mental health (OCHA, 2020). Furthermore, the HBM highlights the importance of perceived benefits and barriers in health-related decision-making. If learners believe that engaging in health education will lead to positive outcomes—such as improved health literacy or reduced stigma—they may be more likely to participate in these programs (Muronzi, 2020). This principle underscores the need for educational institutions in Zimbabwe to promote the benefits of HIV education and support services, thereby motivating learners to seek help. Therefore, utilizing the Health Belief Model as a framework for examining the impact of HIV and AIDS on learners and teacher trainees provides a robust foundation for understanding how beliefs and perceptions influence health behaviours and educational outcomes. Therefore, focusing on the constructs of susceptibility, severity, benefits, and

barriers, this study aims to contribute to the development of targeted interventions that effectively address the needs of HIV-affected learners in Zimbabwean educational settings.

Significance of Studying HIV and AIDS

Studying HIV and AIDS is crucial for university and college learners, particularly teacher trainees, who will interact with learners in various educational settings. A solid understanding of HIV and AIDS equips future educators with the knowledge necessary to educate their learners about the virus, its transmission, and preventative measures. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), approximately 38 million people worldwide are living with HIV, with about 1.2 million of those in the United States alone (Pindula News, 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, where the epidemic is most pronounced, countries like Zimbabwe report an estimated 1.3 million people living with HIV, while South Africa has around 7.5 million and Botswana about 370,000 (ZNSA, 2022). The age group most affected is between 10 and 45 years, highlighting the critical need for education targeted at younger populations. Knowledge of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is essential for teacher trainees, as it offers a preventative measure that can significantly reduce the risk of HIV transmission. According to a study by Thurston and Green (2021), PrEP has been shown to be over 90% effective in preventing HIV when taken consistently. Educators who understand PrEP can advocate for its use among sexually active learners, thus contributing to healthier communities. Furthermore, teaching proper condom usage—both male and female—serves as a fundamental part of sexual education. Research indicates that consistent condom use can reduce HIV transmission rates by up to 85% (Yorke et al., 2021).

Through demonstrating effective condom use in classroom settings, teacher trainees can empower learners to take control of their sexual health. Additionally, understanding the importance of regular HIV testing is vital. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that individuals aged 13 to 64 get tested for HIV at least

once, with annual testing for high-risk groups (Zimbabawe Voice, 2020). Teacher trainees can encourage testing as a normal part of healthcare, helping to destigmatize the process and promote a culture of openness and health awareness among learners. On a personal level, knowledge of HIV and AIDS is significant for teacher trainees as it fosters empathy and understanding towards individuals affected by the virus. This personal engagement can help reduce stigma and discrimination, creating a more inclusive environment for all learners. Through understanding the realities of living with HIV, teacher trainees can become advocates for their learners and communities, promoting health education initiatives that can lead to better outcomes for future generations.

Transmission of HIV and AIDS

Understanding the various modes of transmission of HIV and AIDS is essential for teacher trainees. Through addressing mother-to-child transmission, unprotected sexual intercourse, sharing needles, blood transfusions, occupational exposure, oral sex, and breastfeeding, educators can promote awareness and foster healthier choices among their learners. This comprehensive knowledge empowers trainee teachers to effectively educate their learners, leading to informed decisions regarding their health and well-being.

Mother-to-Child Transmission (MTCT)

Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) is a significant route through which HIV can be transmitted. This transmission can occur during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), without any intervention, the risk of a mother with HIV transmitting the virus to her child ranges from 15% to 45% (WHO, 2020). However, with effective antiretroviral therapy (ART), this risk can be reduced to less than 1% (Bayley,2022). Teacher trainees must emphasize the importance of prenatal care and regular HIV testing for pregnant women to prevent MTCT, thereby ensuring

healthier futures for both mothers and children. Government of Zimbabwe, has made it mandatory for all pregnant females to be tested before giving birth in order to protect the mother to child transmission.

Unprotected Sexual Intercourse

Unprotected sexual intercourse with an HIV-infected partner is one of the most significant modes of HIV transmission. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that engaging in unprotected sex increases the risk of acquiring HIV, as the virus can be transmitted through bodily fluids such as semen and vaginal secretions (Chidarikire et al, 2024). Studies indicate that consistent condom use can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by approximately 85% (Tarisayi, 2023). Therefore, teacher trainees should incorporate lessons on safe sex practices into their health education curricula, providing practical demonstrations on correct condom usage to empower learners to take charge of their sexual health.

Sharing Needles and Syringes

The sharing of needles and syringes among individuals who inject drugs is another critical transmission route for HIV. Sharing injecting equipment can lead to a high risk of HIV transmission, as the virus can survive in syringes for several days (UNODC, 2021). Educational programs that focus on substance abuse prevention and promote safe practices, such as needle exchange programs, are vital in reducing transmission rates. Teacher trainees can facilitate discussions about the dangers of drug use and the importance of seeking help, fostering a supportive environment for learners.

Blood Transfusions and Organ Transplants

Although less common in regions with effective blood screening protocols, HIV can still be transmitted through blood transfusions and organ transplants from an HIV-positive

donor. The WHO states that in countries with rigorous screening, the risk of acquiring HIV through transfusions is minimal (WHO, 2023). However, in areas with limited healthcare resources, this transmission route remains a concern. Teacher trainees should educate learners about the importance of safe medical practices, including the necessity of screening blood donations and the role of healthcare providers in ensuring patient safety.

Occupational Exposure

Teacher trainees must also be aware of the risk of occupational exposure to HIV, particularly for those in healthcare settings or other environments where they may encounter blood or bodily fluids. According to the CDC, exposure through needlesticks or cuts can pose a risk to healthcare workers (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). Training programs that emphasize safety protocols and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) are essential in mitigating this risk. Teacher trainees can advocate for health and safety standards in schools and communities to protect themselves and their colleagues.

Oral Sex

While less likely than anal or vaginal intercourse, oral sex can also result in HIV transmission, particularly if there are cuts or sores in the mouth. Research indicates that the risk is significantly lower than with penetrative sex, but it is still a concern, especially among sexually active youth (Rapanyane, 2024). Teacher trainees should address this topic within sexual education programs to provide a comprehensive understanding of all potential risks associated with sexual activity.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding can also be a route for MTCT if the mother is HIV-positive and not on effective ART. Studies show that breastfeeding without ART increases the risk of HIV

transmission to the infant (Semo and Frissa, 2020). Teacher trainees should promote awareness about the safe feeding practices for HIV-positive mothers, emphasizing the importance of medical guidance in making feeding choices.

Polygamous Relationships

Polygamous relationships, where one man marries multiple wives, can significantly increase the risk of HIV transmission. In these arrangements, if one partner is HIV-positive, the virus can easily spread to other partners through unprotected sexual intercourse. Research by Saruchera and Chidarikire (2025) indicate that polygamous unions are associated with higher rates of HIV infection due to increased sexual networks and less frequent condom use. Moreover, cultural norms often discourage discussions about sexual health, leading to a lack of communication about HIV status among partners. Teacher trainees should educate their learners about the risks associated with polygamous relationships and encourage open dialogue regarding sexual health to promote safer practices.

In addition to the risks posed by multiple wives, polygamous structures can complicate the management of sexual health. A study by Mercy Corps (2022) found that men in polygamous relationships are less likely to engage in consistent testing and preventive measures. This lack of health-seeking behaviour can perpetuate the cycle of transmission within communities. Educators can play a crucial role in promoting regular HIV testing and awareness campaigns tailored to these cultural contexts, helping to reduce the stigma surrounding testing and treatment.

Polyandrous Relationships

Polyandrous relationships, where women marry multiple husbands, can also facilitate the spread of HIV. Although less common than polygamy, these arrangements can still

lead to increased transmission risk if one partner is HIV-positive. Nyahuma- Mukwashi et al. (2021) highlight that the interconnectedness of partners in polyandrous settings can create complex sexual networks, heightening the risk of HIV spread. Teacher trainees must address this topic in health education classes, emphasizing the importance of regular testing and safe sex practices in all types of relationships to mitigate risks.

Furthermore, polyandry can introduce challenges related to power dynamics and sexual health communication. Research indicates that women in polyandrous relationships may face barriers in negotiating safe sex practices due to societal expectations (OCHA, 2020). Teacher trainees should equip learners with the skills to communicate effectively about sexual health, emphasizing the importance of mutual consent and respect in all relationships. This approach fosters a culture of safety and awareness that transcends traditional gender roles.

Multiple Sexual Partners ("Mujolo")

The practice of having multiple sexual partners, often referred to as "Mujolo," is prevalent in many communities and poses a significant risk for HIV transmission. Engaging in sexual relationships with multiple individuals increases exposure to HIV, particularly if safe sex practices are not consistently employed. According to a report by Machingura (2023), individuals with multiple concurrent sexual partners are at a higher risk of contracting HIV due to the increased likelihood of interacting with an infected partner. Teacher trainees can play a crucial role in educating learners about the importance of limiting the number of sexual partners and practicing safe sex to protect themselves and their communities.

In addition, the social and cultural acceptance of "Mujolo" can lead to risky behaviours. A study by Malinauskas and Malinauskiene (2021) found that individuals engaged in this practice often underestimate their risk of HIV, leading to lower rates of condom use. Teacher trainees should focus on raising awareness about the realities of HIV

transmission associated with multiple sexual partners, encouraging learners to adopt healthier behaviours and engage in open discussions about sexual health.

Prostitution

Prostitution is another significant factor contributing to the spread of HIV and AIDS, particularly in urban areas. Individuals engaged in sex work may have multiple clients, increasing their risk of exposure to the virus. Research by Lunga, (2022) found that sex workers are at a higher risk of HIV infection due to factors such as inconsistent condom use and social stigma, which may discourage them from seeking medical care. Teacher trainees should highlight the challenges faced by sex workers and advocate for harm reduction strategies, such as access to condoms and regular health check-ups, to promote safer practices.

Moreover, the intersection of poverty and sex work often exacerbates the risk of HIV transmission. A study by Mathe, (2023) emphasizes that economic vulnerability can force individuals into high-risk situations, where they may not prioritize safe sex. Teacher trainees should be aware of these socio-economic factors and incorporate discussions about the importance of social support systems and community resources in their health education curriculum, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of HIV prevention.

Mitigating HIV and AIDS Transmission

Mitigating the transmission of HIV and AIDS is crucial for learners, teachers, and the broader community. Understanding effective strategies can help reduce the risk of infection and promote healthier behaviours among individuals.

Preventing Mother-to-Child Transmission (MTCT)

To effectively prevent mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV, it is essential that pregnant women receive regular HIV testing and access to antiretroviral therapy (ART). The World Health Organization (WHO) states that when HIV-positive mothers are on effective ART, the risk of transmitting the virus to their infants can be reduced to less than 1% (WHO, 2020). Educational programs targeting expectant mothers can emphasize the importance of prenatal care and regular health check-ups. For instance, teacher trainees can organize community workshops that inform pregnant women about the benefits and availability of ART, thereby encouraging them to seek testing and treatment. In addition to ART, promoting safe breastfeeding practices is crucial. Research by Malango et al (2023) highlights that HIV-positive mothers adhering to ART can safely breastfeed without transmitting the virus to their infants. Teacher trainees should educate mothers about the significance of following ART protocols during breastfeeding and provide resources for support groups to create an environment where women feel empowered to make informed health choices for themselves and their babies.

Reducing Unprotected Sexual Intercourse

To combat the transmission of HIV through unprotected sexual intercourse, comprehensive sexual education is vital. Educational institutions should implement curricula that include information about HIV transmission, the importance of condom use, and the effectiveness of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), consistent condom use can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by approximately 85% (Mavhura, 2020). Teacher trainees can facilitate discussions and demonstrations on proper condom usage, ensuring that learners understand how to protect themselves and their partners effectively.

Moreover, male circumcision has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of HIV transmission during heterosexual intercourse. A study by Chidarikire and Chikwati, (2024) found that male circumcision can reduce the risk of HIV infection in men by approximately 60%. Teacher trainees should advocate for health education programs that inform learners about the benefits of male circumcision as part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce HIV transmission, particularly in regions with high prevalence rates.

Addressing Polygamous and Polyandrous Relationships

In polygamous relationships, where one man marries multiple wives, promoting open communication about sexual health is vital for reducing HIV transmission. Encouraging couples to engage in discussions about their HIV statuses and the importance of safe sex practices can help mitigate risks. Research by Dzenga (2020) emphasizes that culturally sensitive education addressing the dynamics of polygamous unions can empower individuals to prioritize their health. Teacher trainees can develop workshops that foster dialogues about sexual health within these relationship contexts, creating a safe space for individuals to share concerns and seek advice.

Additionally, regular HIV testing for all partners in polygamous or polyandrous relationships can significantly reduce transmission risks. Edmonds et al. (2021) highlight the importance of routine health check-ups in preventing the spread of HIV within interconnected sexual networks. Teacher trainees can promote community health initiatives that provide free or low-cost testing services, encouraging individuals to take proactive steps in managing their sexual health.

Combating Multiple Sexual Partners and Prostitution

Addressing the risks associated with multiple sexual partners, often referred to as "Mujolo," requires targeted educational campaigns that highlight the dangers of unprotected sex and the benefits of limiting partners. A report by Godana et al. (2023)

stresses that individuals with multiple concurrent sexual partners are at a higher risk of HIV infection. Teacher trainees can create engaging educational programs that focus on healthy relationship choices and the importance of safe sexual practices, empowering learners to make informed decisions.

For individuals engaged in prostitution, harm reduction strategies are essential. Research by AI Jar (2021) indicates that providing access to condoms, regular health screenings, and educational resources can significantly reduce the risk of HIV transmission among sex workers. Teacher trainees should advocate for community programs that support sex workers, offering them resources and education that promote their health and well-being while addressing the social stigma they face.

Promoting Male Circumcision

Male circumcision is a critical intervention for reducing the risk of HIV transmission among men. Studies have consistently shown that circumcision can lower the likelihood of acquiring HIV during heterosexual intercourse. A meta-analysis by ASER Centre (2023) indicates that male circumcision reduces the risk of HIV infection by approximately 60%. Teacher trainees should educate learners about the benefits of circumcision and advocate for its inclusion as a preventive health measure, particularly in communities with high HIV prevalence.

Furthermore, integrating male circumcision into broader public health initiatives can enhance its effectiveness. A study by Brevik, (2023) emphasizes the importance of combining circumcision with education on safe sexual practices and regular testing. Teacher trainees can collaborate with local health authorities to organize workshops that discuss circumcision and its role in HIV prevention, ensuring that learners understand its significance within a comprehensive approach to sexual health.

Resultantly, mitigating the transmission of HIV and AIDS requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, access to healthcare, and community support. By addressing mother-to-child transmission, unprotected sexual intercourse, polygamous and polyandrous relationships, risks associated with multiple sexual partners and prostitution, and promoting male circumcision, teacher trainees can play a critical role in promoting healthier behaviours and reducing the stigma surrounding HIV. This comprehensive understanding will empower future educators to contribute positively to their communities.

Recommendations

Promoting the importance of HIV and AIDS testing among learners and teacher trainees requires strategic initiatives. ***Learners and teacher trainees*** should be encouraged to view voluntary HIV testing as a routine health check, emphasizing early detection and treatment benefits. Awareness campaigns that highlight the confidentiality and importance of testing can help reduce stigma around the process.

Universities and colleges should provide accessible, on-campus testing services that guarantee confidentiality, and organize health fairs that include both testing and educational sessions focused on the significance of knowing one's status.

Lecturers and teachers should play an active role in educating students about the critical importance of regular HIV testing as a vital component of public health. Creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable discussing health concerns, including testing, is essential.

Additionally, the ***Ministries of Education and Health*** should launch national campaigns promoting HIV testing among youth, showcasing its importance in reducing transmission rates. Ensuring that health services in schools and colleges are equipped to provide testing and post-test counselling is also paramount.

Finally, ***future researchers*** should investigate barriers to HIV testing among learners and teacher trainees, as well as the long-term health outcomes associated with consistent testing practices.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has articulated the definitions of key terms related to HIV and AIDS, elucidating their significance in contemporary health discussions. Through examining the various modes of transmission, we have highlighted the urgent need for awareness and education among teachers, learners, and community members. The chapter also presented practical solutions for mitigating the spread of HIV and AIDS, including the promotion of regular testing, safe sex practices, and the importance of antiretroviral therapy for those living with HIV. Furthermore, it emphasized the need for culturally sensitive approaches to address the complexities of relationships and sexual health in diverse communities. Overall, this chapter serves as a foundational resource for teacher trainees, equipping them with the knowledge and tools necessary to educate others and foster a proactive approach to HIV and AIDS prevention. Through fostering an environment of open discussion and education, we can significantly reduce the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS while empowering individuals to take charge of their health and well-being.

CHAPTER 3

ASSESSING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIV AND AIDS TESTING OF LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter investigates the critical importance of HIV and AIDS testing among both students and teacher trainees, emphasizing the implications for public health and educational environments. The research identifies a significant gap in existing literature regarding the awareness and accessibility of testing services in educational institutions. Through conducting a comprehensive literature review, this study draws on various sources, including academic texts and online resources, to gather relevant data. The analysis of this data involved thematic coding to identify prevalent trends and insights regarding testing practices and their perceived barriers. Two primary findings emerge from this investigation: first, there is a notable lack of awareness among learners and teacher trainees about the availability and benefits of HIV and AIDS testing; second, institutional policies often inadequately support testing initiatives, leading to reduced participation rates. In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions implement comprehensive awareness campaigns to promote understanding of HIV and AIDS testing benefits among students and trainees. Additionally, it is essential for schools to establish robust policies that facilitate access to testing services, ensuring a supportive environment for those seeking to know their status.

Keywords: HIV testing; AIDS; education; learner awareness; teacher trainees.

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of HIV and AIDS, focusing on essential definitions and the critical role of testing in managing these conditions. It begins by defining key terms such as HIV, AIDS, and HIV testing, establishing a foundational understanding for readers. The chapter emphasizes the importance of HIV and AIDS testing for both teachers and learners, highlighting how awareness and testing can lead to better health outcomes. Additionally, it addresses the fears and misconceptions surrounding HIV and AIDS testing, which often hinder individuals from seeking the necessary care. The discussion then shifts to the availability of testing facilities in Zimbabwe, outlining the various options accessible to the community. Furthermore, the chapter evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of both professional and self-testing methods, providing insight into their respective processes. Finally, the chapter examines the ethical considerations that must be adhered to during HIV and AIDS testing, ensuring that individual rights and dignity are respected throughout the testing experience.

Definition of key terms

HIV, is defined by Aboagye (2021) as a virus that specifically targets and weakens the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to infections. In addition, Ahmadian and Brevik (2024) elaborates that HIV is a retrovirus that can lead to chronic health issues if not managed properly. Therefore, HIV is a serious viral infection that requires ongoing medical attention to maintain health and prevent progression. On the other hand, AIDS, is described by Al Jar (2021) as the final stage of HIV infection, where the immune system is severely compromised. More so, ASER Centre (2023) explains that AIDS is characterized by the occurrence of opportunistic infections and certain cancers that arise due to the weakened immune system. Consequently, AIDS highlights the critical consequences of untreated HIV, underscoring the importance of timely intervention. Lastly, HIV testing is defined by Bayley (2022) as the process of determining whether an individual is infected with HIV, often through blood tests. On the other hand, Beckmann et al (2022) emphasizes that testing is vital for early diagnosis

and treatment, which can improve the quality of life for those affected. Resultantly, HIV testing is essential not only for individual health management but also for the broader goal of controlling the spread of the virus within communities.

Literature Review

The significance of HIV and AIDS testing among learners and teacher trainees is a critical public health issue, particularly in Zimbabwe, where the prevalence of HIV remains high. Testing is vital for early diagnosis, treatment, and reduction of transmission rates. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide valuable insights into the importance of HIV testing in educational settings. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emphasizes that increased access to HIV testing significantly contributes to controlling the epidemic (Brevik ,2023). Studies show that regular testing leads to earlier treatment, which not only improves individual health outcomes but also reduces the risk of transmission to others (Charamba et al, 2024). This approach highlights the necessity of promoting HIV testing among learners, as early intervention can prevent further health complications and academic setbacks. In Britain, the National Health Service (NHS) has integrated routine HIV testing within primary and secondary health care services, particularly targeting young people (Chidakwa, 2023). Research indicates that when testing is normalized and made readily accessible, young individuals are more likely to engage with health services (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). This model can be beneficial in Zimbabwe, where stigma surrounding HIV often deters learners from seeking testing and treatment. Enhancing accessibility to testing could encourage more learners and teacher trainees to take proactive steps regarding their health.

In Nigeria, studies have shown that educational institutions play a pivotal role in promoting HIV testing among learners. A study by Chidarikire and Chikwati (2024) found that integrating HIV education and testing into university curricula significantly increased learners' knowledge and testing rates. However, barriers such as stigma and lack of resources still impede effective implementation. Similar barriers exist in

Zimbabwe, where societal stigma and inadequate health infrastructure hinder learners from accessing testing services (Chidarikire et al, 2024). Addressing these barriers is essential for improving testing rates among learners. Botswana has implemented national policies aimed at increasing HIV testing, particularly among youth. Research by Chideme-Munodawafa (2020) indicates that educational campaigns and free testing services in schools have successfully raised awareness and reduced stigma. These initiatives emphasize the importance of integrating health education with testing services in educational settings, a practice that Zimbabwe could adopt to enhance its response to the HIV epidemic.

In South Africa, the government has prioritized HIV testing as part of its national health strategy. A study by Chikuvadze (2023) found that testing campaigns in schools led to increased awareness and acceptance of HIV testing among learners. Peer education and community involvement were crucial in overcoming stigma, suggesting that similar approaches could be effective in Zimbabwean schools. Despite the wealth of research highlighting the importance of HIV testing, a significant research gap persists in understanding the specific barriers and facilitators of HIV testing among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe. While numerous studies focus on the prevalence of HIV and the need for testing, there is limited empirical data on the unique experiences of learners regarding access to testing services. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the significance of HIV testing among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe, focusing on the barriers they face and the strategies that can enhance testing uptake.

Theoretical Framework: Health Belief Model

The theoretical framework guiding this study is the Health Belief Model (HBM), developed by Hochbaum, Rosenstock, and Kegeles in the 1950s. The HBM posits that individual health behaviours are influenced by personal beliefs about health conditions, perceived susceptibility to diseases, perceived severity of health issues, perceived benefits of taking action, and perceived barriers to taking that action (Chitiyo, 2021). This model is particularly relevant to understanding the significance of HIV and AIDS

testing among learners and teacher trainees, as it helps illuminate the factors influencing their decisions to get tested. Applying the principles of the Health Belief Model to this research, one can argue that learners' perceptions of their susceptibility to HIV significantly impact their willingness to engage in testing. If learners believe they are at high risk for HIV, they may be more inclined to seek testing and subsequent treatment (Dauda & Jaha Imoro, 2022). In Zimbabwe, where HIV prevalence is significant, enhancing awareness of personal risk factors could motivate more learners to participate in testing programs. Moreover, the HBM emphasizes the importance of perceived severity in influencing health behaviours. If learners understand the serious health implications of untreated HIV, they may be more likely to view testing as a necessary action (Defe & Matsa, 2024). Educational initiatives that effectively communicate the risks associated with HIV can empower learners to take proactive steps regarding their health.

The model also highlights the role of perceived benefits and barriers in health-related decision-making. If learners perceive that testing will lead to positive outcomes—such as early treatment and reduced transmission—they are more likely to pursue it (Dejaeghere, 2022). Conversely, if barriers such as stigma, fear of discrimination, or lack of access to testing services are perceived as significant, learners may avoid getting tested. Addressing these barriers through targeted interventions, such as peer education and community outreach, can enhance testing uptake among learners. Consequently, utilizing the Health Belief Model as a framework for examining the significance of HIV and AIDS testing provides a robust foundation for understanding how beliefs and perceptions influence health behaviours. Through focusing on the constructs of susceptibility, severity, benefits, and barriers, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective interventions that promote HIV testing among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe.

Importance of HIV and AIDS Testing for Learners and Teachers

HIV and AIDS testing is crucial not only for individual health but also for creating a safe and informed educational environment. For learners and teachers, understanding their HIV status can significantly reduce anxiety and stigma associated with the virus. According to Dejaeghere and Murphy-Graham (2022), early diagnosis through testing enables individuals to access timely medical care, which is essential for managing health and preventing the progression of the disease. This is particularly important for teacher trainees who will be role models for their learners; by promoting awareness and acceptance of HIV testing, they can help to destigmatize the topic within schools (Dey et al, 2022).

Moreover, regular HIV testing among teachers and learners contributes to a healthier school ecosystem. Educators play a vital role in influencing learners' perceptions and attitudes towards health issues. Dzenga (2020) notes that teachers who are informed about their own health status can better educate their learners about prevention methods and safe practices. For instance, incorporating discussions about HIV and AIDS into the curriculum can foster a culture of openness, where learners feel comfortable seeking help and support. This approach not only enhances knowledge but also encourages responsible behaviour among learners (Edmonds et al, 2021).

Another critical aspect of HIV testing is its role in promoting public health within the educational setting. By identifying infected individuals early, schools can implement appropriate health interventions, thereby reducing the risk of transmission within the community. Galkina et al (2023) emphasizes that educational institutions can serve as platforms for awareness campaigns, encouraging both learners and staff to participate in regular testing. For example, schools could organize health fairs that include free testing, education on safe practices, and resources for living with HIV, thereby normalizing the conversation around the virus (Godana et al, 2023).

Furthermore, understanding the implications of HIV and AIDS testing extends to the personal level for teacher trainees and their future learners. Recognizing the importance of testing can empower individuals to take charge of their health. Health Times (2020) argues that knowledge of one's HIV status can lead to healthier lifestyle choices and better management of one's health, positively impacting one's educational performance and overall well-being. Teachers who are educated about the importance of testing can pass this knowledge on to their learners, creating a ripple effect that fosters a more informed and health-conscious generation (Hofmeyr, 2021).

Therefore, HIV and AIDS testing is vital for both personal health and the broader educational environment. Through promoting awareness and reducing stigma, educators can create a supportive atmosphere that encourages learners to take proactive steps in managing their health. Recent studies and expert opinions highlight the importance of integrating HIV education into schools, ensuring that both teachers and learners are equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate this critical health issue effectively.

Reasons for Fear of HIV and AIDS Among Teachers and Learners

Learners, teachers and other people are afraid of being tested HIV and AIDS. Following are some of the fears.

Fear of Being Found HIV Positive

One of the most significant fears associated with HIV testing is the anxiety surrounding the potential outcome of a positive diagnosis. Hope Village Society, 2022) highlights that many individuals avoid testing due to the belief that a positive result would drastically alter their lives, leading to feelings of hopelessness and despair. This fear is compounded by reports of individuals committing suicide upon receiving their results,

as they perceive that their lives are irrevocably changed and filled with stigma (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Fear of Rejection by Partners

The fear of rejection from romantic partners is another critical concern for both teachers and learners. Hunter et al (2020) notes that many individuals worry about being abandoned by their husbands, wives, or significant others if their HIV status is revealed. This fear is particularly pronounced in relationships that depend heavily on trust and emotional support. Consequently, individuals may choose to keep their status hidden to avoid potential relationship breakdowns, which can lead to increased isolation and emotional distress (Hvalby et al, 2023).

Fear of Family Rejection

In addition to fears related to romantic relationships, individuals often fear rejection from family members. International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2021) explains that relatives may react negatively upon learning about a family member's HIV status, often blaming them for "bringing AIDS into the house." This fear can deter individuals from seeking testing or support, as they prioritize familial acceptance over their health needs. Educational examples show that learners who are aware of such family dynamics may avoid discussions about HIV altogether to protect their relationships with loved ones (Dejaeghere & Murphy- Graham, 2022).

Fear of Violence from Partners

The fear of physical violence is a significant deterrent for individuals considering HIV testing. Kaiser et al (2020) emphasizes that in some communities, partners may react violently when learning about an HIV-positive diagnosis. This fear can lead individuals to avoid testing altogether, prioritizing their physical safety over their health. For

instance, a teacher might refrain from disclosing their status due to the risk of retaliation from an abusive partner, which ultimately perpetuates the cycle of silence and fear (Kanyopa & Makgalwa, 2024).

Fear of Stigmatization

Stigmatization remains a pervasive issue that fuels fear among teachers and learners. Kaseke (2021) sheds light on how societal misconceptions about HIV often lead to individuals being labelled as "promiscuous" or "irresponsible." This stigma can make learners hesitant to participate in health education programs or testing initiatives, as they fear being judged or marginalized by peers. Consequently, this can create an environment where discussions about HIV are avoided, further perpetuating ignorance and misconceptions (Kunedzimwe et al, 2021).

Fear of Losing Employment

Teachers may also fear that disclosing their HIV status could jeopardize their jobs. According to Lesko (2020), the risk of discrimination in the workplace can lead educators to conceal their health status to protect their careers. This fear can have a profound effect on their mental health and job performance, as the stress of hiding their status can lead to anxiety and decreased productivity, affecting their ability to teach effectively (Lunga, 2022).

Fear of Financial Ruin

The financial implications of living with HIV can also be a source of fear. Machingura (2023) points out that individuals may worry about the costs associated with treatment and healthcare, especially in regions where medical resources are limited. This fear can deter people from seeking testing, as they may believe that a positive diagnosis will lead to overwhelming financial burdens that they cannot afford. Educational institutions

could provide support and resources to alleviate these concerns, but many remain unaware of available assistance (Mahuni et al, 2023).

Fear of Impact on Academic Performance

Learners often fear that a positive HIV diagnosis will negatively impact their academic performance. Malango (2022) notes that learners may worry about being unable to concentrate on their studies or participate in school activities if they are dealing with health issues related to HIV. This fear can lead learners to avoid testing and support services, as they prioritize their education over their health, perpetuating a cycle of neglect regarding their well-being (Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2021).

Fear of Social Isolation

Finally, the fear of social isolation is a significant concern for those living with or suspected of having HIV. Mathe (2023) explains that individuals often fear losing friendships and social connections due to their status. This fear can lead to withdrawal from social networks and activities, as individuals may feel that they would be ostracized or treated differently by peers. In educational settings, this fear can hinder collaboration and support among learners, making it difficult for them to seek help or engage in open discussions about health (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022). Therefore, the fears surrounding HIV and AIDS among teachers and learners are rooted in various societal and personal concerns, including fear of positive diagnosis, rejection, violence, stigmatization, employment loss, financial implications, academic impact, and social isolation. Addressing these fears is essential for creating a supportive and informed educational environment where individuals feel empowered to seek testing and support.

HIV and AIDS Testing places in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, HIV and AIDS testing is facilitated through various avenues, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), council clinics, private hospitals, general hospitals, and pharmacies. The New Start Centre, a prominent NGO, plays a crucial role in providing voluntary counselling and testing services. According to a study by Mavhura. (2020), NGOs like New Start not only offer testing but also provide essential education on HIV prevention and treatment. Council clinics, often located in both urban and rural settings, aim to increase accessibility to testing. However, many clinics face challenges, such as shortages of test kits, which can hinder timely diagnosis (Mercy Corps, 2022). Private hospitals and general hospitals typically offer more comprehensive services, including advanced testing methods. But the high costs associated with these facilities can be a barrier for many individuals seeking testing (Mukwada et al., 2020).

Testing in pharmacies is another option, particularly for those who prefer privacy. However, the cost of self-test kits can be prohibitively high, especially for individuals in lower socioeconomic brackets. A report by the Zimbabwe National Network of People Living with HIV (ZNNP+) highlighted that many rural residents cannot afford these kits, which limits their ability to test independently (ZNNP+, 2023). Additionally, the availability of test kits can be inconsistent; some rural and urban clinics may run out of supplies, further complicating access to testing (Muronzi 2020). This inconsistency underscores the need for improved supply chain management in health facilities to ensure that all individuals have access to testing when needed.

The geographical distribution of health facilities also presents a significant barrier to testing, particularly in rural areas where medical facilities are often located far from communities. According to a study by Mutamba and Bodzo (2020), the distance to health facilities can discourage individuals from seeking testing, leading to delayed diagnoses and increased transmission rates. In addition, negative experiences with healthcare providers, such as perceived rudeness or lack of empathy from medical practitioners, can

further deter individuals from accessing testing services. A qualitative study by Muzerengi et al (2023) found that many individuals, including teachers and learners, reported feeling stigmatized or judged during their visits to clinics, which can discourage them from returning for testing or treatment.

Resultantly, while various avenues exist for HIV and AIDS testing in Zimbabwe, significant barriers remain that can hinder access. The high costs of self-test kits, inconsistent availability of testing supplies, geographical challenges, and negative interactions with healthcare providers all contribute to the complexities surrounding HIV testing. For teacher trainees and learners who will work in these communities, understanding these barriers is crucial. They must be equipped to provide accurate information and support to individuals seeking testing, emphasizing the importance of accessible and compassionate healthcare. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes community education, improved healthcare delivery, and ongoing support for those living with HIV.

Advantages and Disadvantages of HIV and AIDS Testing

There are both advantages and disadvantages to self-testing for HIV and AIDS, as well as to being tested by healthcare professionals like nurses. Self-testing offers privacy and increased accessibility but lacks professional support, which can lead to misinterpretation of results. In contrast, professional testing ensures accurate results and follow-up care but may deter individuals due to stigma and accessibility issues.

Advantages of Professional Testing by Trained Professionals

Testing for HIV and AIDS by trained professionals, such as nurses and doctors, presents several significant advantages. Firstly, healthcare professionals possess the expertise to provide accurate test results and interpret them correctly. According to the World Health Organization (2020), trained professionals can eliminate common errors and

misinterpretations associated with self-testing, ensuring that individuals receive appropriate counselling and support following their results. Furthermore, health professionals can offer comprehensive follow-up care and treatment options, which is crucial for managing the disease effectively (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). For example, a study by Nyahuma –Mukwashi et al (2021) demonstrated that patients who received their results from trained professionals were more likely to engage in treatment and adhere to medication regimens.

Disadvantages of HIV and AIDS Testing by Professionals

There are notable disadvantages to professional testing. The stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS can deter individuals from seeking professional help, leading to underreporting and late diagnoses (OCHA 2020). Additionally, the accessibility of testing services varies significantly in different regions, particularly in rural areas where healthcare resources may be limited (WHO, 2020). This disparity often results in delayed testing and treatment, exacerbating health inequalities. For instance, a study by Onweh et al. (2022) revealed that individuals in underserved communities faced significant barriers to accessing HIV testing, leading to a higher prevalence of undiagnosed cases.

Advantages of Self-Testing for HIV and AIDS

On the other hand, self-testing for HIV offers several advantages that can empower individuals. One of the primary benefits is the increased privacy and confidentiality it provides. Individuals may feel more comfortable testing at home rather than in a clinical setting, which can reduce anxiety associated with stigma (Orievulu & Iwuji 2022). Research indicates that self-testing can lead to increased testing rates, particularly among populations that are traditionally less likely to seek professional testing (Pindula News, 2020). For instance, a pilot program in the UK showed that self-testing kits were successfully used by young people who otherwise may have avoided traditional testing venues.

Disadvantages of Self-Testing for HIV and AIDS

Despite aforementioned advantages, self-testing also has its drawbacks. The lack of professional guidance can result in misinterpretation of results, leading to unnecessary anxiety or a false sense of security (Rupanyane, 2024). Moreover, without immediate access to counselling or follow-up care, individuals may struggle with the emotional impact of a positive result, potentially leading to harmful behaviours or delayed medical care (Sande et al, 2017). A study by Saruchera and Chidarikire (2025) highlighted that individual who tested positive without professional support often reported feelings of isolation and uncertainty about their next steps, underscoring the importance of comprehensive care following a diagnosis.

Therefore, both professional and self-testing for HIV and AIDS come with distinct advantages and disadvantages. Trained professionals provide accurate results and follow-up care but may contribute to stigma and accessibility issues. Conversely, self-testing offers privacy and increased testing rates but lacks the necessary support that can help individuals cope with their results. Understanding these factors is crucial for teacher trainees and their future learners, as it emphasizes the importance of informed choices and the need for supportive educational environments that address these health issues comprehensively.

Stages of Professional and Self-testing of HIV and AIDS

Testing by Healthcare Professionals

When being tested for HIV and AIDS at a healthcare facility, the process typically begins with an initial consultation with a nurse, pharmacist, or medical doctor. During this stage, the healthcare professional will conduct a thorough assessment, which includes taking a detailed medical history and discussing potential risk factors (CDCP, 2021). This step is

crucial as it helps determine the type of test needed and prepares the individual for what to expect. According to the World Health Organization (2020), this initial interaction can significantly reduce anxiety and provide educational resources about the virus and transmission methods. Following the consultation, a blood sample or oral swab is taken for testing. The most common tests include the ELISA (Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay) for detecting antibodies and the rapid HIV tests that provide results within minutes (Save the Children International, 2020). Healthcare professionals ensure that the procedure is performed in a sterile environment to minimize the risk of infection. A study by Semo and Frissa (2020) highlights that professional testing often results in higher accuracy compared to self-testing, as trained individuals can properly handle samples and interpret results.

After the sample is collected, individuals typically wait for a brief period, often in a designated area of the clinic. During this time, the healthcare provider may offer counselling or educational materials about HIV prevention and treatment options (Sibanda & Manik, 2022). Once the test results are ready, the healthcare professional discusses the findings with the individual. If the result is positive, they will provide immediate emotional support and outline the next steps for further testing and treatment (Sorrent et al., 2024). This comprehensive approach ensures that individuals are not left feeling isolated or confused about their diagnosis.

Self-Testing for HIV and AIDS

Self-testing for HIV provides a different approach, allowing individuals to test themselves in the comfort of their own homes. The process begins with obtaining a self-testing kit, which can often be acquired from pharmacies or online retailers (Tarisayi, 2023). These kits typically include instructions, a testing device, and a means to collect a sample—usually a small blood sample from a finger prick or an oral swab.

Once the kit is in hand, individuals follow the provided instructions carefully. It is crucial to read the instructions thoroughly to ensure accurate results. For instance, the user will

need to collect the sample and apply it to the testing device while ensuring that all materials are used correctly (Tegegne, 2022). After the test is performed, results are usually available within 20 minutes, allowing for a quick understanding of one's status.

Interpreting the results is a critical step in self-testing. Most kits provide clear indicators for positive, negative, or inconclusive results (Tesema et al, 2020). If the result is negative the test kit shows one red line, it is recommended to continue regular testing, especially if there are ongoing risk factors. Conversely, if the result is positive, the test kit shows two red lines, individuals are encouraged to seek professional healthcare immediately for confirmatory testing and to discuss treatment options (Thurston & Green, 2021). Many self-testing kits include information on how to contact local health services for follow-up care, ensuring individuals are supported even after testing.

Resultantly, understanding the stages of professional HIV and AIDS testing and the self-testing process is essential for teacher trainees and their future learners. Each method has distinct procedures and implications, emphasizing the importance of informed choices in health management. Professional testing provides comprehensive support and accurate results, while self-testing offers privacy and convenience. Both methods aim to empower individuals in understanding their health status and accessing necessary care.

Ethical Considerations in HIV and AIDS Testing

There are several ethical considerations one should adhere to in relation to HIV and AIDS testing. Below are some of the ethical considerations to be adhered to:

Informed Consent

Informed consent is a foundational ethical principle in healthcare, particularly in HIV and AIDS testing. It requires that individuals fully understand the nature of the test, its implications, and any potential risks before agreeing to proceed (Tom & Chipenda,

2020). For medical practitioners, this involves providing clear, accessible information about the testing process and ensuring that patients have the opportunity to ask questions. However, one limitation of informed consent is the potential for misunderstanding, especially among individuals with lower health literacy or those from diverse cultural backgrounds (World Health Organization, 2020). For instance, a study by Ugwoegbulem (2022) found that patients from marginalized communities often struggle to comprehend healthcare terminology, which can lead to misinformed decisions about testing. In educational settings, teacher trainees must also recognize that learners may need additional support to understand what informed consent entails, ensuring that all learners are empowered to make informed health decisions.

Parental or Guardian Consent

When minors seek HIV testing, obtaining parental or guardian consent is a critical ethical consideration. This requirement ensures that parents are involved in their children's healthcare decisions, reflecting a protective approach to adolescent health (UNICEF, 2021). However, one limitation of this requirement is that it may deter young individuals from seeking necessary testing due to fear of disclosing sensitive information to their parents (WHO, 2020). For example, adolescents might worry about facing stigma or punishment, which can lead to delayed diagnosis and treatment. In such cases, healthcare providers must navigate the delicate balance between ethical obligations to involve parents and the need to respect the autonomy and confidentiality of young patients. Educators can play a role by discussing the importance of consent in health education, helping learners understand their rights and the rationale behind such requirements.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a crucial ethical consideration in HIV and AIDS testing, as it protects individuals' privacy and encourages them to seek testing without fear of stigma (Hofmeyr, 2021). Medical practitioners are ethically bound to maintain the

confidentiality of test results, but a significant limitation arises from the potential for breaches of confidentiality in healthcare settings. For instance, if healthcare personnel do not adhere strictly to privacy protocols, sensitive information may be inadvertently disclosed (ZNCWC, 2021). This can lead to devastating social consequences for patients, including discrimination in their personal and professional lives. In educational contexts, teacher trainees should also emphasize the importance of confidentiality when discussing health topics with learners, creating an environment where learners feel safe sharing their health concerns.

Right to Withdraw

The right to withdraw from the testing process at any stage is another essential ethical consideration. Individuals must have the autonomy to discontinue testing should they feel uncomfortable or uncertain about proceeding (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2022). This principle respects personal agency and acknowledges that individuals may change their minds based on new information or emotional responses. However, a limitation of this right is that individuals may not fully understand the potential consequences of withdrawing, such as missing out on early diagnosis and treatment opportunities (Zimbabwe Voice, 2020). Healthcare providers must ensure that patients are aware of these implications, facilitating informed decision-making throughout the testing process.

Voluntary Testing

Voluntary testing is an ethical principle that emphasizes the importance of individuals choosing to undergo HIV testing without coercion (World Health Organization, 2020). This principle is vital for fostering trust and ensuring that individuals feel empowered in their health decisions. However, a limitation of this principle is the external pressures some individuals may face, such as societal expectations or coercion from family members (Zinyemba et al ., 2023). In cases where individuals feel they must test due to

peer pressure or fear of judgment; the essence of voluntary testing can be compromised. Educators can aid in this area by promoting discussions that empower learners to make choices based on their circumstances, helping them recognize the importance of personal agency in health-related decisions.

Respect for Cultural Beliefs

Respecting cultural beliefs is another ethical consideration essential in HIV and AIDS testing. Healthcare providers must be sensitive to the cultural contexts of their patients, which can influence their understanding of health, illness, and testing (Aboagye, 2021). However, a limitation is that cultural beliefs can sometimes conflict with medical advice, potentially leading to misunderstandings or non-compliance with testing recommendations. For example, certain cultural groups may have stigmas associated with HIV, which could discourage individuals from seeking testing (Ahmadian & Brevik, 2024). Educators must be aware of these cultural dynamics and strive to create inclusive curricula that respect and address the diverse backgrounds of their learners.

Therefore, ethical considerations in HIV and AIDS testing, including informed consent, parental consent, confidentiality, the right to withdraw, voluntary testing, and respect for cultural beliefs, are vital for ensuring responsible healthcare practices. Each principle has its limitations, highlighting the need for healthcare practitioners and educators to navigate these complexities thoughtfully. Through understanding and addressing these ethical considerations, teacher trainees can better prepare themselves to support learners in making informed health decisions, fostering an environment of trust, respect, and empowerment.

Recommendations

Promoting the importance of HIV and AIDS testing among learners and teacher trainees requires strategic initiatives. ***Learners and teacher trainees*** should be encouraged to view voluntary HIV testing as a routine health check, emphasizing early detection and

treatment benefits. Awareness campaigns that highlight the confidentiality and importance of testing can help reduce stigma around the process.

Universities and colleges should provide accessible, on-campus testing services that guarantee confidentiality, and organize health fairs that include both testing and educational sessions focused on the significance of knowing one's status.

Lecturers and teachers should play an active role in educating students about the critical importance of regular HIV testing as a vital component of public health. Creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable discussing health concerns, including testing, is essential.

Additionally, the *Ministries of Education and Health* should launch national campaigns promoting HIV testing among youth, showcasing its importance in reducing transmission rates. Ensuring that health services in schools and colleges are equipped to provide testing and post-test counselling is also paramount.

Finally, *future researchers* should investigate barriers to HIV testing among learners and teacher trainees, as well as the long-term health outcomes associated with consistent testing practices.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has explored the multifaceted aspects of HIV and AIDS testing, from key definitions to the practical and ethical implications of the testing process. It has underscored the significance of testing for educators and learners, while also addressing the fears that often accompany it. The examination of testing facilities in Zimbabwe has highlighted the accessibility of resources, and the analysis of professional versus self-testing methods has shed light on the benefits and drawbacks each presents. Additionally, the chapter has detailed the stages involved in both testing processes, ensuring clarity for individuals considering testing. Finally, the discussion of ethical

considerations emphasizes the need for confidentiality, informed consent, and respect for individual autonomy throughout the testing journey. Overall, this chapter aims to equip teacher trainees and learners with essential knowledge and understanding to navigate the complexities of HIV and AIDS testing effectively.

CHAPTER 4

CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter delves into the essential role of career guidance and counselling for students and teacher trainees, highlighting its significance in shaping informed career choices and enhancing professional development. The research identifies a critical gap in the existing literature regarding the effectiveness and accessibility of career counselling programs within educational institutions. Through a comprehensive literature review, data were meticulously gathered from various sources, including academic texts and online articles, to create a nuanced understanding of the current landscape. Data analysis involved thematic synthesis, which allowed for the extraction of key trends and insights regarding the practices and challenges associated with career guidance. Two significant findings emerged from this study: first, there exists a pervasive lack of effective career counselling services in many educational settings, which impedes learners' ability to make informed career decisions; second, teacher trainees often report insufficient training in providing career guidance, which further exacerbates the issue. In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions prioritize the development and implementation of structured career counselling programs tailored to the needs of both learners and teacher trainees. Furthermore, ongoing professional development opportunities should be provided for educators to enhance their competencies in career guidance.

Keywords: Career counselling; educator training; guidance programs; learner development; professional choices.

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of vital concepts in career development, focusing on the definitions and implications of key terms such as career guidance, career choice, and job satisfaction. Career guidance is defined as a structured process that assists individuals in understanding their abilities, interests, and the opportunities available to them, ultimately aiding in making informed career choices. The significance of career guidance is particularly pronounced within educational settings, where it plays a critical role in shaping learners' futures. Through facilitating informed decision-making, career guidance not only enhances learners' understanding of potential career paths but also contributes to their overall job satisfaction. This introduction lays the groundwork for an in-depth discussion on the characteristics of effective career guidance programs, which must be tailored to meet the diverse needs of learners. Furthermore, it highlights the various challenges that hinder effective career guidance, such as resource limitations, inadequate training for counsellors, and societal pressures that influence career decisions.

Definition of terms

Career guidance is defined by AI Jar (2021) as a process that helps individuals understand their strengths and interests, enabling them to make informed decisions about their career paths. Similarly, Chidarikire and Saruchera (2024) describe career guidance as a supportive framework that aids individuals in navigating their career trajectories, facilitating personal and professional growth. In this chapter career guidance encompasses the provision of resources and support to help individuals explore and select meaningful career options that align with their values and aspirations.

Career choice is articulated by Bayley (2022) as the decision-making process individuals engage in when selecting an occupation that aligns with their skills and interests. Additionally, Beckmann et al., (2022) emphasizes that career choice involves evaluating

various occupational options and making informed decisions based on personal goals and market opportunities. In my view, career choice is the act of selecting a career path that not only matches one's abilities but also fulfils personal ambitions and contributes to overall well-being.

Job satisfaction is defined by Judge and Brevik (2023) as the extent to which individuals feel content and fulfilled in their jobs, influenced by various factors such as work environment and job roles. In a complementary perspective, Charamba et al., (2024) identifies job satisfaction as a multifaceted construct that reflects employees' emotional responses to their work conditions and tasks. Therefore, job satisfaction is the overall sense of fulfilment and happiness that individuals derive from their work, significantly impacting their motivation and productivity.

Literature Review

Career guidance and counselling are critical components of educational systems worldwide, as they significantly influence learners' career choices and overall well-being. In Zimbabwe, the need for effective career guidance is increasingly recognized, particularly as the job market becomes more competitive. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide valuable insights into best practices and the challenges faced in implementing effective career guidance programs. In the United States, extensive research highlights the importance of career counselling in promoting learner success. The National Career Development Association (NCDA) emphasizes that comprehensive career guidance programs enhance learners' self-awareness, decision-making skills, and preparedness for the workforce (NCDA, 2021). Studies show that learners who participate in career counselling are more likely to pursue relevant educational paths and secure employment after graduation (Chidakwa 2023). This suggests that a similar approach could be beneficial in Zimbabwe, where many learners lack access to informed career advice.

In Britain, the integration of career guidance within the educational framework is a priority. The Department for Education has established guidelines to ensure that all learners receive adequate career education and advice (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). Research indicates that early exposure to career guidance significantly impacts learners' future career trajectories and satisfaction (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024). This highlights the necessity for Zimbabwe to adopt structured career guidance programs that begin in secondary education, ensuring that learners are well-prepared for tertiary education or the workforce. In Nigeria, career guidance programs have been integrated into school curricula, with positive outcomes reported in terms of learner engagement and career awareness. A study by Dejaeghere (2022) found that effective career counselling significantly improved learners' understanding of various career options and their alignment with personal interests. However, challenges such as inadequate resources and trained personnel remain prevalent, mirroring similar issues in Zimbabwe where career guidance is often underfunded and poorly implemented (Chidarikire & Chidarikire, 2024). Botswana has made significant strides in establishing career guidance programs, particularly in response to high youth unemployment rates. Research by Chideme- Munodawafa et al (2020) indicates that learners who receive career counselling exhibit better job readiness and employability. The Botswana model emphasizes the role of collaboration between educational institutions and industries to provide learners with relevant information about job markets and skills needed. This approach could inform Zimbabwe's career guidance systems, fostering partnerships that link education with industry needs.

In South Africa, the importance of career guidance is underscored by the government's commitment to improving educational outcomes. A study by Chikuvadze (2023) highlights the role of career counselling in helping learners navigate the complexities of the job market. The integration of career guidance into the curriculum is seen as crucial for addressing issues of unemployment and underemployment among youth. This perspective is particularly relevant for Zimbabwe, where high youth unemployment rates necessitate effective career counselling strategies to guide learners in their career

choices. Despite these insights, a significant research gap exists regarding the specific implementation and effectiveness of career guidance and counselling programs in Zimbabwean educational institutions. While various studies highlight the necessity of career guidance, there is limited empirical data on how these programs are structured, delivered, and received by learners. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the significance of career guidance and counselling for learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe, identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

Theoretical Framework: Super's Developmental Theory of Career Development

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Donald Super's Developmental Theory of Career Development, which emphasizes that career choice is a lifelong process influenced by various factors, including self-concept and life roles (Chitiyo, 2021). This theory posits that individuals progress through different stages of career development, including growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. Super's model highlights the importance of self-awareness and personal development in making informed career choices. Applying the principles of Super's Developmental Theory to this research, one can argue that effective career guidance and counselling should focus on helping learners and teacher trainees develop a strong self-concept and understanding of their career interests. Through providing opportunities for self-assessment and exploration of various career paths, career counsellors can facilitate learners' growth and readiness for future employment (Dauda &Jaha Imoro, 2022). In Zimbabwe, where many learners may lack exposure to diverse career options, implementing structured career assessments can enhance their self-awareness and inform their decision-making.

Moreover, Super's theory emphasizes the importance of adapting career guidance to the developmental stage of the individual. For younger learners, career guidance programs should focus on exploration and exposure to various professions, while for older learners, the emphasis should shift towards establishing career paths and preparing for the workforce (Defe & Matsa, 2024). This tailored approach can enhance the relevance

and effectiveness of career counselling in Zimbabwean educational settings. Furthermore, Super's model underscores the significance of life roles in shaping career development. Learners in Zimbabwe often face multiple responsibilities, including family obligations and financial constraints, which can impact their career choices. Career counselling programs that acknowledge and address these challenges can provide more comprehensive support to learners and teacher trainees (Dejaeghere & Murphy-Graham, 2022). Therefore, utilizing Super's Developmental Theory of Career Development as a framework for examining career guidance and counselling provides a robust foundation for understanding the complexities of career decision-making. Through, focusing on self-concept, developmental stages, and life roles, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective career guidance programs that meet the unique needs of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe.

Significance of Career Guidance to teachers, learners and parents

Career guidance is a crucial and comprehensive process that helps individuals make informed decisions about their educational and professional paths (Dey et al., 2022). It involves self-assessment, exploration of career options, decision-making, and future planning. Career guidance is essential in today's competitive job market, helping to reduce career anxiety, maximize potential, and prevent career mismatches (Dzenga, 2020). It ensures individuals align their strengths, interests, and aspirations with suitable career opportunities, leading to a successful and fulfilling career path (Edmonds, 2021).

Significance for Teachers

Teachers play a vital role in guiding learners through career planning, acting as mentors and sources of support (Galkina, 2023). They help learners map out potential career paths based on their interests and abilities, providing information about educational requirements and steps needed to enter different fields (Godana et al, 2023). Teachers can integrate career-related topics into their subject lessons, fostering a deeper connection between academics and career choices (Health Times, 2020). Through

actively engaging in career planning, teachers help learners develop essential skills such as problem-solving, goal-setting, and self-reflection (Hofmeyr, 2021). Teachers can also help learners recognize their strengths and weaknesses, guiding them toward careers that leverage their strengths (Hope Village Society, 2022). Their involvement can have a lasting impact on the trajectory of learners' careers and lives (Human Rights Watch, 2020). For example, a biology teacher might help a learner interested in science understand how their interests could lead to a career in healthcare, research, or environmental conservation (Hunter et al., 2024). Teachers also need to develop an awareness of their vital role in learners' school-to-work transition (Hvalby, 2023). Training should address potential tensions between their primary roles as subject teachers and their roles in career guidance (IOM, 2021). Career guidance helps teachers to reflect on their interests, ambitions, and abilities, relating these to the product market and education system (Kaiser & Sinanan 2020). Competent teachers are more capable of supporting learners in developing their career competence (Kanyopa & Makgalwa, 2024).

Significance for Learners

Career guidance is essential for learners as it helps them explore diverse career options based on their interests and strengths (Kaseke, 2021). It provides valuable insights into market trends, skill requirements, and career pathways, enabling informed decision-making and enhancing prospects for future success (Kunedzimwe et al., 2021). Career guidance helps learners choose careers that suit their interests, aptitudes, and abilities, enhancing their confidence and empowering them to make decisions about courses after completing their education (Lesko, 2020). It is crucial for helping learners develop in their academic careers, deciding which subjects to take up, understanding their importance, and recognizing the scope of a particular subject (Lunga, 2022). Career guidance also assists in obtaining the necessary skills and knowledge to develop their careers, helping learners consider their interests, abilities, and goals (Mathe, 2023). For example, guidance sessions help learners understand various career paths and special

education requirements, keeping them updated with accurate information about job market trends and growth opportunities (Mahuni, 2023).

Furthermore, career guidance helps learners gain clarity about their potential and how to align it with career options, using tools like personality assessments, skill evaluations, and aptitude tests (Malinauskas, 2021). It also empowers learners to make responsible choices about their education and career goals, assisting them in adapting to the transition from school to the workplace (Malango, 2022).

Significance for Parents

Parents play a critical role in shaping their children's career paths, often acting as the first mentors in their lives (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022). Parental involvement can help shape learners' perspectives on work, education, and life goals, making their participation essential during the career guidance process (Mavhura, 2020). Engaging parents in career-related workshops and seminars provides valuable insights into the career planning process and allows them to learn about various career options alongside their children (Onweh, 2022). Clear and consistent communication between schools and parents is essential to engage parents effectively in the career guidance process (Muzerengi et al., 2023). Encouraging open and honest conversations about career interests is key to involving parents in the process, allowing learners the space to explore their interests with parental support (Muronzi, 2020). Studies show that learners with actively involved parents are more likely to achieve academic and career success (Mukwanda, 2020). For example, parents can attend school events focused on career options, discuss potential career paths, and offer practical guidance, fostering collaborative efforts that benefit learners (Nyahuma-Mukwashi et al.,2021).

Parental support positively affects young people's career adaptability and decision-making self-efficacy (OCHA, 2020). Parental involvement in career counselling reduces

anxiety and uncertainty, empowering children to make informed decisions (Mercy Corps, 2022).

Qualities and Characteristics of Effective Career Guidance and Counselling Programs

Effective career guidance and counselling programs are essential for helping learners make informed decisions about their future educational and professional paths (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020). These programs connect learners' academic experiences with their aspirations, providing clarity on the skills and qualifications needed for various industries (Semo, 2020). For teacher trainees, understanding these qualities is crucial to support their learners effectively.

Comprehensive and Well-Structured Curriculum

Essential Topics

A quality career counselling program should be comprehensive and well-structured, covering essential topics such as counselling techniques for different age groups, assessment tools (e.g., psychometric tests), career planning, and client management (Save the Children International, 2020).

Practical Training

The curriculum should include practical, hands-on training like mock counselling sessions, internships, or case studies to develop real-world counselling skills (Rapanyane, 2024). For example, teacher trainees can benefit from role-playing scenarios where they practice guiding learners through career exploration activities or conducting mock interviews.

Personalized and Individualized Approach

Tailored Guidance

Effective programs offer personalized sessions tailored to learners' interests and abilities, moving away from generic advice (Sande et al., 2017). They evaluate interests, strengths, values, and personality using tools like psychometric assessments and aptitude tests (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025).

Understanding Learner Needs

Programs should begin by understanding learners' unique needs and aspirations through assessments of their personalities, skills, and preferences (Sibanda & Manik, 2022). For example, a teacher trainee might use a career interest inventory to help a learner identify potential career paths that align with their interests in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Focus on Self-Awareness and Exploration

Career counselling programs should provide opportunities for self-exploration and self-assessment, helping learners gain insights into their personality traits, interests, values, and strengths (Pindula News, 2020).

Exploration of Career Options

Learners need access to up-to-date resources and information about different careers, educational pathways, and job market trends to research various industries and job roles (Orievulu & Iwuji, 2022). For example, organizing career days and fairs where professionals from various fields share their experiences can expose learners to a variety of options and provide opportunities to ask questions (Tarisayi, 2023).

Skill Development and Employability

Effective career guidance helps learners identify skill gaps and provides resources for acquiring necessary skills through courses, certifications, and training (Tesema et al, 2020). In addition, programs should assist learners in acquiring employability and job search skills, such as resume writing, interview preparation, and networking (Ugwoegbulem, 2022). For example, conducting mock interviews and providing feedback on learners' resumes and cover letters can help them prepare for the job market.

Goal Setting and Action Planning

Counsellors should help learners set clear, achievable short-term and long-term career goals and break down these goals into actionable steps (Sorrenti, 2024). More so, Counsellors provide tailored steps, including assessments, advice, and follow-ups, to help learners find a career that aligns with their goals (Tegegne, 2022). For example, developing a detailed career plan with timelines, milestones, and actionable steps can help learners stay on track and achieve their career objectives (Thurston &Green, 2021).

Stakeholder Engagement

Collaboration with parents, teachers, industry professionals, and community organizations can enrich the career counselling process (Tom &Chipenda, 2020). In addition, involving parents in the counselling process ensures they understand and support their child's career aspirations (UNICEF, 2021). For example, partnering with local businesses and universities can create valuable internship and job shadowing opportunities for learners (Zimbabwe, 2020).

Adaptability and Continuous Improvement

Recognizing that career goals may evolve as learners mature and being flexible in adapting to their changing interests and needs is crucial (ZNCWC, 2021). More so, Career counselling programs should undergo continuous evaluation and adaptation to stay relevant and effective, collecting feedback from learners and tracking outcomes (Yorke et al.,2021). For example, regularly assessing the program's impact on learners' career confidence, academic performance, and awareness of career prospects can help identify areas for improvement (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2022).

Ethical Considerations and Cultural Sensitivity

Maintaining confidentiality, respecting professional boundaries, and adhering to ethical guidelines are essential for building trust and providing effective counselling (Zinyemba et al., 2023). Additionally, counsellors must be aware of and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and cultural values of their learners (Charamba et al., 2024). For example, understanding how cultural factors may influence a learner's career choices and providing culturally appropriate support and guidance.

Integration of Technology

Embracing technology can enhance the effectiveness of career counselling initiatives, using online career assessment tools, virtual career exploration platforms, and AI-powered job matching platforms (Tarisayi, 2023). For example, utilizing internet-based career guidance systems that support the user during the pre-screening stage and include various options for sensitivity analysis (Defe & Matsa 2024).

Qualified and Experienced Instructors

The best programs are led by seasoned professionals who bring a wealth of experience to the table (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). There is need to look for instructors with a strong background in counselling and a track record of success in the field (Hope Village Society, 2022). For example, the instructors who have experience as school counsellors or career advisors can provide valuable insights and practical advice to teacher trainees.

Challenges affecting career guidance in schools, along with solutions for each challenge.

Career guidance is essential for learners to make informed decisions about their future; however, numerous challenges hinder its effectiveness, particularly in Zimbabwe and other developing countries (Godana et al, 2023). These challenges range from systemic issues to resource limitations, impacting the quality and accessibility of career guidance services. One significant challenge is the limited resources and funding available to schools for career guidance programs (Chidarikire et al., 2024). This scarcity restricts access to trained counsellors, assessment tools, and current career information, limiting the scope of these initiatives (Dejaeghere, 2022). To address this, schools can forge partnerships with external organizations, industry professionals, and alumni to supplement resources (Health Times, 2020). Leveraging online career platforms and digital tools can also provide cost-effective access to a wealth of information (Edmonds et al., 2021). Furthermore, advocating for increased government funding and policy support is crucial (Dzenga, 2020).

Another critical issue is the lack of trained and qualified career counsellors (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Often, the responsibility falls on teachers who may lack the necessary expertise. Integrating career guidance training into teacher education programs can equip educators with basic skills (Dey, 2022). Continuous professional development can keep teachers and counsellors updated on job market trends (Galkina

et al., 2023). Ultimately, schools should prioritize hiring qualified career counsellors to provide specialized support (Edmonds et al., 2021).

A persistent challenge is the mismatch between education and labour market needs (Ahmadian, 2024). To bridge this gap, curricula should align with labour market demands by incorporating industry-relevant skills (ASER Centre, 2023). Collaboration between schools and local businesses can provide learners with real-world experiences and mentorship (AI Jar, 2021). Providing up-to-date information on labour market trends and in-demand skills is also essential (Yorke et al., 2021).

Limited access to information and resources, especially in rural areas, further exacerbates the problem (Zinyemba, 2023). Establishing well-equipped career resource centres in schools and utilizing online platforms can provide broader access to information (Tom & Chipenda, 2020). Outreach programs to rural communities can also extend career guidance services to underserved populations (Thurston & Green, 2021).

Societal and cultural expectations can also significantly influence learners' career choices, sometimes limiting their potential (UNICEF, 2021). Awareness campaigns can challenge gender stereotypes and promote diverse career options (Sorrenti et al, 2023). Engaging parents in the process can educate them about supporting their children's individual interests (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025). Exposing learners to diverse role models can broaden their perspectives (Pindula News, 2020).

The problem of lack of early intervention also affects career guidance (Sande et al, 2017). Integrating career exploration activities from primary school can help learners develop self-awareness early on (Rapanyane, 2024). Age-appropriate activities at each education stage and vertical curricula integrating career guidance concepts are also beneficial (Semo & Frissa, 2020).

Inadequate tracking and monitoring of learner progress hinders the assessment and improvement of career guidance programs (Save the Children International, 2020). Implementing data collection systems and regularly evaluating program effectiveness based on learner feedback and outcomes are crucial (Orievulu, 2022). Data and evaluations should drive continuous program improvements (Sibanda & Manik , 2022).

Finally, learners often face an overload of conflicting information, making it difficult to discern reliable sources (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020). Helping learners develop critical thinking skills to evaluate career information is essential (Onweh, 2022). Supporting the wider network around learners, including parents and teachers, and viewing guidance as an ongoing process can provide much-needed clarity (Muronzi, 2020).

Recommendations

To enhance career guidance and counselling for learners and teacher trainees, it is essential for *learners and teacher trainees* to actively engage in workshops that focus on exploring diverse career paths and developing essential job-seeking skills. Participation in mentorship programs, where students are connected with professionals in their fields of interest, can provide valuable insights and networking opportunities.

Universities and colleges should establish dedicated career services offices that offer resources such as resume writing assistance, interview preparation, and job search strategies. Regular career fairs should be organized to facilitate direct interactions between students and potential employers, creating pathways for internships and job placements.

For lecturers and teachers, it is crucial to receive training in effective career counselling techniques, enabling them to better assist students in making informed choices about their futures. Integrating discussions about career options into the curriculum can

encourage students to explore various fields and enhance their understanding of different career trajectories.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should develop and promote national policies that mandate the inclusion of career guidance programs in all educational institutions, alongside allocating necessary funding for the training of career counsellors. Finally, **future researchers** are encouraged to conduct studies assessing the effectiveness of career guidance programs and their impact on student outcomes, as well as to explore the role of early career counselling on long-term success.

Summary

In summary, this chapter underscores the essential role of career guidance in schools and its impact on learners' career choices and job satisfaction. It outlines the characteristics of effective career guidance programs, emphasizing the need for personalized support, accessibility, and ongoing evaluation to ensure they meet the evolving needs of learners. The chapter also identifies several challenges that impede the effectiveness of career guidance, including insufficient resources, a lack of trained personnel, and external societal pressures that can limit learners' options. To address these challenges, the chapter proposes practical solutions, such as increasing funding for career services, enhancing professional development for guidance counsellors, and fostering partnerships with local businesses and communities. Through implementing these strategies, educational institutions can significantly improve their career guidance initiatives, leading to better career outcomes and greater job satisfaction for learners as they navigate their future paths.

CHAPTER 5

IMPACT OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE ON LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter examines the multifaceted effects of marriage and divorce on students and teacher trainees, focusing on emotional, academic, and social ramifications. It seeks to illuminate the complexities surrounding these life events and their influence on educational outcomes. The research identifies a significant gap in the existing literature regarding the specific impacts of marital transitions on the educational experiences of learners and those preparing for teaching careers. Employing a comprehensive literature review, data were collected from an array of sources, including scholarly books and online articles, to construct a well-rounded analysis. The data were analysed using thematic coding, which facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and insights related to the emotional and academic challenges faced by individuals undergoing marital changes. Two primary findings emerged from this study: first, learners and teacher trainees experiencing divorce often encounter increased emotional distress, which adversely affects their academic performance and overall well-being; second, the support systems available within educational institutions are frequently inadequate to address the unique needs of these individuals during such tumultuous times. In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions develop comprehensive support programs that provide emotional and academic assistance to students navigating marriage and divorce. Additionally, training for educators should be enhanced to equip them with the skills necessary to support learners facing such challenges effectively.

Keywords: Divorce; education; emotional support; marriage; teacher trainees.

Introduction

This chapter offers a comprehensive exploration of marriage and divorce, focusing on critical aspects that define these concepts. It begins with definitions of key terms essential for understanding the dynamics of marital relationships. The context of marriage is examined, highlighting its significance in various cultural and social frameworks. Following this, the chapter delves into the importance of marriage, emphasizing its benefits and societal roles. It further investigates the causes of divorce, providing insight into the factors that contribute to marital breakdowns. Finally, the chapter presents effective strategies for mitigating divorce while addressing the mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety, that can arise from marital issues.

Definition of terms

Marriage is often defined as a legally recognized union between individuals that establishes rights and obligations, encompassing emotional, social, and financial dimensions (Muzerengi et al, 2023). According to my perspective, marriage is a partnership built on mutual commitment, trust, and support, where individuals navigate life together. More so, divorce refers to the legal dissolution of a marriage, which can result from various factors, including irreconcilable differences or prolonged conflict (Mukwanda et al., 2020). It can be an emotionally taxing process, affecting both partners and any children involved. In my view, divorce signifies not just the end of a legal contract but also a significant life transition that necessitates emotional adjustment and healing (OCHA, 2020). Lastly, marriage counselling is a therapeutic approach aimed at helping couples address and resolve conflicts, improve communication, and strengthen their relationship (Nyahuma-Mukwashi et al., 2023). It involves professional guidance to facilitate understanding and foster healthier dynamics within the partnership (Mercy Corps, 2022). Personally, the writer sees marriage counselling as a valuable resource that provides couples with tools and strategies to navigate challenges and enhance their emotional connection.

The impact of marriage and divorce on learners and teacher trainees is a significant area of concern, especially in Zimbabwe, where socio-cultural factors greatly influence personal relationships and education. Understanding these impacts is vital for developing supportive educational frameworks. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide insights into how marriage and divorce affect educational outcomes and psychological well-being. In the United States, studies have shown that marriage and divorce can significantly affect learners' academic performance and mental health. According to a study by Lunga (2022), children of divorced parents often experience emotional and behavioural issues that can hinder their educational progress. This finding is echoed in the experiences of Zimbabwean learners, where the stress of family breakdown can lead to decreased academic motivation and performance (Machingura, 2023). The stigma surrounding divorce in Zimbabwe often exacerbates these issues, leading to further isolation and emotional distress among affected learners.

In Britain, the impact of divorce on educational outcomes has been widely studied. Research by Malango et al., (2022) indicates that children from divorced families are more likely to struggle academically and face challenges in their social lives. This aligns with findings in Zimbabwe, where the societal implications of divorce can lead to stigma and discrimination, further impacting learners' social integration and academic success (Mathe, 2023). Such societal pressures can deter learners from seeking help and support, creating a cycle of academic decline. In Nigeria, a study by Onweh et al. (2022) highlights that early marriage and divorce significantly affect female learners' educational trajectories. Young women who marry early often face increased responsibilities that can lead to school dropout. This situation is similar in Zimbabwe, where cultural expectations regarding marriage can pressure young women to prioritize family over education, ultimately limiting their future opportunities (Mahuni et al., 2023). Addressing these cultural norms is crucial for improving educational access and retention for female learners.

Botswana has made strides in recognizing the impact of marriage and divorce on education, particularly concerning young people. Research by Mavhura (2020) indicates that educational institutions are beginning to implement support systems for learners affected by family breakdowns. However, like in Zimbabwe, there are still significant gaps in the provision of targeted support services for learners experiencing these challenges. Institutions need to adopt better frameworks for providing counselling and academic support to learners navigating personal crises. In South Africa, the government has acknowledged the impact of family dynamics on learners' educational experiences. A study by Machingura. (2023) emphasizes the importance of providing psychological support to learners from broken families, noting that social services and schools must work collaboratively to address the needs of these learners. This collaborative approach could serve as a model for Zimbabwe, where similar support systems are often lacking, particularly in rural areas (Lesko, 2020). Despite the existing literature on the impact of marriage and divorce on educational outcomes, there is a significant research gap regarding the specific experiences of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwean educational contexts. While studies highlight the broader implications of family dynamics on education, limited empirical data focus on how marriage and divorce uniquely affect learners in Zimbabwe. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the nuanced impacts of marriage and divorce on the academic and emotional well-being of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Framework: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that human development is influenced by various environmental systems, including family, school, and broader societal contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of different systems and how they interact to affect individual development and behaviour. Applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to this research, one can argue that the

impact of marriage and divorce on learners and teacher trainees is shaped by multiple layers of influence. At the microsystem level, the immediate family environment is crucial. Learners from divorced families may experience emotional turmoil and instability that directly affects their academic performance and social interactions (Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2021). In Zimbabwe, where family structures are often closely knit, the repercussions of divorce can ripple through the community, affecting not only the individual but also their peers and educational institutions. At the mesosystem level, the interaction between family and school environments plays a significant role in shaping learners' experiences. Schools that provide supportive counselling services can mitigate some negative effects of family breakdowns, helping learners navigate their emotional challenges and maintain academic performance (Mavhura , 2020). However, in Zimbabwe, many schools lack the necessary resources and trained personnel to offer such support, leaving learners to cope with their challenges in isolation.

The exosystem, which includes broader community influences, also impacts learners' experiences. Societal attitudes towards divorce in Zimbabwe often contribute to stigma and discrimination, which can further isolate affected learners and hinder their academic success (Brevik, 2023). Understanding these societal dynamics is essential for developing effective interventions that address the needs of learners experiencing family disruptions. Therefore, utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as a framework for examining the impact of marriage and divorce on learners and teacher trainees offers a comprehensive understanding of the various influences at play. By focusing on the interconnected systems that affect learner experiences, this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective support mechanisms within Zimbabwean educational contexts, ensuring that learners facing family challenges receive the assistance they need to succeed academically and emotionally.

The Importance of Marriage in Zimbabwe and Other Contexts

Marriage is a fundamental social institution with deep cultural, economic, and personal significance across the globe. Its importance manifests differently in various contexts, reflecting diverse traditions and evolving societal norms. For teacher trainees, understanding the multifaceted nature of marriage is crucial for appreciating the backgrounds and values of their learners and communities. In Zimbabwe, marriage holds a central position within the social fabric, deeply rooted in cultural traditions and community values (Bayley, 2022). It is viewed not merely as a union between two individuals but as a bond between two families, emphasizing the interconnectedness of kinship networks (Dejaeghere & Murphy-Graham, 2022).

Cultural Significance

Traditional Shona and other tribes' marriages, which constitute the significant portion of Zimbabwe's population, involve intricate customs and rituals, including the payment of "roora/lobola" (bride price) by the groom's family to the bride's family (Aboagye, 2021). This payment symbolizes respect for the bride's family and serves to strengthen the bond between the two families (Beckmann et al., 2022). The "Kukumbira" customary marriage system is highly esteemed, requiring the informed consent of both the bride and her parents (Chidarikire & Makwati, 2014). For example, in many Zimbabwean communities, a wedding is not just a celebration of the couple but a communal event involving extended families, friends, and neighbours, reinforcing the collective nature of marriage (Chikuvadze, 2020).

Social Expectations

Marriage is often seen as a rite of passage, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood and conferring social status and recognition (Godana et al., 2023). It provides a framework for building a shared future and raising children within a stable environment (Hope Village Society, 2022). For instance, a young Zimbabwean woman who gets

married is often seen as having achieved a significant milestone, earning respect and recognition within her community (Chikuvadze, 2023).

Economic Considerations

Marriage can provide financial security, as two individuals can pool their resources to support each other (Kaseke, 2021). It also has implications for the broader economy, affecting population growth, workforce participation, and consumer behaviour (Hunter, 2020). For example, a married couple in Zimbabwe may be better able to afford a home or start a business than they would be as single individuals (Chidarikire & Chidarikire, 2024).

Changing Dynamics

While traditional customs remain influential, Zimbabwean marriages are evolving in the face of globalization, technology, and shifting cultural systems (Zinyemba, 2023). Factors such as women's empowerment, partner choice, and divorce are reshaping the institution of marriage (Zimbabwe Voice, 2020). For instance, more Zimbabwean women are pursuing higher education and careers before getting married, leading to changes in traditional gender roles and expectations (ZNCWC, 2021).

Emotional Support and Companionship

Marriage provides emotional support, companionship, and a sense of belonging, fostering intimacy and connection between partners (Tom & Chipenda, 2020). It creates a secure environment for couples to thrive and navigate life's challenges together (Tarisayi, 2020). For example, in many Western societies, marriage is primarily viewed as a partnership based on love and companionship, where emotional fulfilment is highly valued (Thurston & Green, 2021).

Legal and Financial Benefits

Marriage confers legal rights and protections, including inheritance rights, medical decision-making authority, and access to social security benefits (Tesema et al., 2020). It also offers financial advantages, such as tax breaks, health insurance coverage, and improved mortgage options (Rapanyane , 2024). For instance, in the United States, married couples often receive tax benefits and are eligible for spousal Social Security benefits, providing financial security and stability (Orievulu, 2022).

Family Stability and Child-Rearing

Marriage provides a stable environment for raising children, fostering a sense of security and emotional well-being (Save the Children International, 2020). Children raised by married parents tend to have higher educational attainment and perform better academically (Pindula News, 2020). For example, studies have shown that children from married households are less likely to experience poverty, behavioural problems, and academic difficulties (Muronzi, 2020).

Social Cohesion and Community Stability

Marriage contributes to social cohesion and community stability, as married couples are more likely to be involved in their communities and contribute to the common good (Kanyopa, 2024). Stable families often lead to stronger neighbourhoods and increased community involvement (Hvalby et al, 2023). For instance, married couples may be more likely to volunteer in their communities, participate in local organizations, and support local businesses, strengthening social bonds and promoting civic engagement (IOM, 2021).

Health and Well-being

Some research suggest that married individuals tend to live longer and experience better physical and mental health (Kaiser & Sinanan, 2020). The emotional and practical support provided by a spouse can contribute to a healthier lifestyle and reduced stress levels (Kaseke, 2021). For example, some studies have shown that married people are less likely to suffer from heart disease, depression, and other health problems (Kunedzimwe et al., 2021).

Types of Marriages in Zimbabwe and Other Contexts

Marriage customs vary significantly across the globe, reflecting diverse cultural, legal, and social norms (Hunter et al., 2020). Understanding these variations is essential for teacher trainees to appreciate the backgrounds and values of their learners and communities.

Zimbabwean law recognizes several forms of marriage, each with distinct characteristics which are

Civil Marriage

This is a monogamous union between one man and one woman, registered under the Marriage Act (Chidakwa, 2023). It excludes all others, and neither spouse can enter another marriage during its subsistence (WHO, 2020). For example, a couple choosing a civil marriage commits to a legally recognized, exclusive partnership, enjoying rights and protections under civil law.

Customary Law Marriage

Governed by the Customary Marriages Act, this type of marriage is potentially polygamous, allowing a husband to have multiple wives (Zinyemba et al, 2023). It involves the payment of "lobola" (bride price) and registration at the Magistrate's Court

(Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). For instance, a man may take multiple wives to expand his family and increase his social standing within the community, provided he can meet the customary obligations.

Unregistered Customary Law Union (Kuchaya Mapoto)

This is a customary marriage where lobola is paid, but the union is not formally registered (Chitiyo, 2021). While not fully recognized by law, it is acknowledged for inheritance, maintenance, and loss of support claims (Chudeme-Munodawafa, 2020). For example, a couple may choose this union due to its simplicity, but they may face legal challenges regarding property rights and inheritance.

Qualified Civil Marriage

A union between a man and a woman solemnized in terms of religious procedures that the marriage officer, as well as the man and woman, practice (Dzenga, 2020). This marriage is potentially polygamous, and must be registered in a separate registration book from civil marriages by the marriage officer (Hofmeyr, 2021).

Civil Partnership

A relationship between a man and a woman staying together without payment of lobola (cohabiting, situationships, small houses) (Hvalby et al., 2023).

Monogamous Marriage

This involves a union between two individuals, typically a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all others (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020). It is the most common form of marriage worldwide and is legally recognized in many countries (Muzerengi et al.,

2023). For example, in most Western countries, monogamy is the only legally sanctioned form of marriage, emphasizing exclusivity and commitment between two partners.

Polygamous Marriage

This involves a union with more than two spouses (OCHA, 2020). Polygamy (one man with multiple wives) is more common than polyandry (one woman with multiple husbands) (Mukwada, 2020). While illegal in many Western countries, it is practiced in some cultures and may be recognized under customary or religious laws (Nyahuma-Mukwashi, 2021). For instance, in some Muslim communities, polygyny is permitted under certain conditions, allowing a man to marry up to four wives if he can provide for them equally.

Gays and Lesbians

Same-sex sexual activity is criminalized in Zimbabwe, and same-sex marriage is constitutionally banned (Zimbabwe Constitution, 2013). LGBTQ+ individuals face significant legal challenges, discrimination, and social stigma (Sibanda & Manik, 2022). While some sources suggest an increase in LGBTQ+ activities in Zimbabwe, these often occur privately due to the legal and social risks (Sande et al, 2017). For example, LGBTQ+ individuals may face arrest, harassment, and discrimination in employment, housing, and healthcare, forcing many to live in secrecy. However, in other countries such as South Africa , LGBTQ are allowed.

Polyandry

While less discussed, polyandry (one woman with multiple husbands) is not legally or culturally recognized in Zimbabwe (Ugwoegbulem, 2022). Though some studies suggest it may occur unofficially, it is largely condemned by traditional and religious authorities

(UNICEF 2021). For instance, a woman in a polyandrous relationship may face social ostracism and legal challenges related to inheritance and child custody.

Causes of Divorce in Zimbabwe and Other Countries

Divorce rates are rising in Zimbabwe, mirroring a global trend influenced by a complex interplay of factors. Understanding these causes is crucial for teacher trainees, educators, and individuals navigating personal relationships. Several key factors contribute to marital breakdown, including infidelity, lack of communication, financial difficulties, gender-based violence, lack of intimacy, medical problems, and the involvement of parents and other people.

Infidelity

Infidelity, or extramarital affairs, is a significant cause of divorce in Zimbabwe and worldwide. A study by Ndlovu (2023) identified infidelity as a primary driver of marital dissolution in Zimbabwe. Moyo (2025) also noted infidelity as a major factor in rising divorce rates. Infidelity can lead to a breakdown of trust, deep resentment, and an inability to sustain the marital bond (Mindmassage, 2025). Social media and dating sites have been cited as contributing factors, creating opportunities for infidelity and emotional disconnection (Runganga, 2025).

Lack of Communication

Effective communication is essential for a healthy marriage. Poor communication skills and a lack of open dialogue can lead to misunderstandings, unresolved conflicts, and emotional distance (WHO, 2020). As couples stop communicating, they may grow apart and feel like strangers, increasing the likelihood of divorce (ZNCWC, 2021). Zimbabwe Voice (2020) found that "not talking together" was a major reason for divorce.

Financial Difficulties

Financial problems and economic stress are significant contributors to divorce, particularly in Zimbabwe's challenging economic climate. Financial strain can cause tension, blame, and frustration within a marriage Sorrenti, 2024). Unemployment, loss of income, and disagreements over financial priorities can lead to marital breakdown (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2022). According to UNICEF (2021), economic hardship and poverty are major drivers of divorce in Zimbabwe, with some women seeking partners who can provide financial support.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence, including physical, emotional, and verbal abuse, is a significant cause of divorce. Ncube (2025) of the Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) highlighted that many divorces are linked to GBV, with the impact on children being particularly distressing. Constant criticism, controlling behaviour, physical violence, and threats are signs of an abusive marriage that can lead to divorce (Chidarikire & Chidarikire, 2024).

Lack of Intimacy

Intimacy, both emotional and physical, is vital for maintaining a strong marital connection. A lack of intimacy can create emotional distance and dissatisfaction, leading to divorce. Defe and Matsa (2024) identified a lack of intimacy as a contributing factor to rising divorce rates. Distance in the relationship and lack of physical intimacy were common causes of divorce (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024).

Long Distance Relationships

Long-distance relationships can put a strain on marriages due to the challenges of maintaining communication, trust, and emotional intimacy. Chideme- Munodawafa (2025) linked rising divorce rates to long-distance relationships caused by migration, leading to trust issues and infidelity. Long periods of separation can create insecurity and doubt, potentially leading to marital conflict (Chitiyo, 2021).

Failure to Give Birth to Children

Infertility and child-related conflicts can strain a marriage, particularly in societies where children are highly valued. Societal and family pressure can create tension when a couple faces infertility issues (Dauda & Jaha Imoro, 2025). Couples who do not have a child after fertility treatment are more likely to divorce (Chikuvadze , 2023). However, it is important to note that infertility is not a direct ground for divorce in many legal systems (Galkina et al, 2023).

Medical Problems

Serious medical problems and chronic illnesses can place stress on a marriage, potentially leading to divorce. The physical and emotional toll of dealing with a severe illness can strain the relationship (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Mental health issues, such as depression, can also impede communication and emotional intimacy, increasing the likelihood of divorce (Health Times, 2020).

Involvement of Parents and Other People

Interference from extended family, in-laws, or societal expectations can create tension and contribute to divorce. Excessive interference can pressure couples to make decisions that are not in their best interest (Dey, 2022). In some cultures, traditional beliefs about

marriage emphasize familial approval, which can conflict with individual desires and lead to marital breakdowns (Hope Village Society, 2022).

Mitigating Divorce: Building Stronger Marriages

Divorce has far-reaching consequences, affecting individuals, families, and communities. For teacher trainees and educators, understanding strategies to mitigate divorce is crucial, both for personal well-being and to support learners navigating family challenges. This section explores key approaches to strengthen marriages and reduce the likelihood of divorce.

Premarital Counselling and Education

Premarital counselling and education programs provide couples with essential tools and insights before marriage. These programs often cover communication skills, conflict resolution, financial management, and expectations about marriage (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Studies have shown that couples who participate in premarital counselling have a lower risk of divorce compared to those who do not (Edmonds et al., 2021). For example, a teacher trainee could benefit from understanding the importance of discussing financial goals and family expectations before getting married.

Open and Honest Communication

Effective communication is the cornerstone of a healthy marriage. Couples should create a safe space where they feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, feelings, and concerns openly (Galkina, 2023). Active listening, where each partner fully concentrates, understands, responds, and remembers what is being said, is essential (Godana, 2023). Using "I" statements to express feelings without blaming the other person can also improve communication (Dzenga ,2020). For instance, instead of saying

"You always focus on work," one could say, "I feel hurt when you always focus on work" (Kaseke, 2021).

Conflict Resolution Skills

Conflict is inevitable in any relationship, but how couples manage conflict can determine the longevity of their marriage. Learning conflict resolution skills, such as directly expressing thoughts and feelings, staying open-minded, and assuming good intentions, is crucial (Kanyepa et al., 2020). Taking a timeout during heated arguments can also prevent escalation (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Teacher trainees can use these skills not only in their personal relationships but also in managing classroom conflicts.

Financial Planning and Management

Financial issues are a significant source of stress in many marriages. Couples should openly discuss their financial expectations, create a joint budget, and set shared financial goals (Kunedzimweet al, 2021). Agreeing on how to split household bills and save for common goals can help avoid financial conflicts (Tarisayi, 2023). For example, a couple might decide to split expenses based on income level or by item (IOM, 2021). Financial planning should also include insurance and emergency funds to protect the family's lifestyle (Kaiser & Sinanan).

Prioritizing Quality Time Together

In the hustle and bustle of daily life, spending quality time together often takes a backseat. However, making time for each other is crucial for maintaining a strong bond (Hunter et al., 2020). Whether it's a weekly date night, a weekend getaway, or simply sharing a meal without distractions, carving out time to connect on a deeper level strengthens the emotional connection between partners and reinforces their commitment to each other (Hvalby, 2023).

Maintaining Individual Identities

While marriage involves a deep connection, it's also important for each partner to maintain their individual identities and interests. Encouraging each other's personal growth and pursuits fosters a sense of autonomy and prevents feelings of suffocation or resentment (Machingura, 2023). Supporting each other's passions and hobbies strengthens the bond by showing mutual respect and admiration for each other's individuality (Mathe, 2023).

Forgiveness and Letting Go of Resentment

Holding onto grudges and resentment can poison a relationship over time. Forgiveness doesn't mean condoning hurtful behaviour, but rather, it involves letting go of anger and resentment for the sake of moving forward (Lunga 2022). Couples should acknowledge mistakes, apologize sincerely, and commit to making positive changes (Lesko, 2020). By practicing forgiveness and offering each other grace, couples can heal past wounds and build a stronger foundation for the future (Mavesere, 2022).

Seeking Professional Help Early On

When conflicts arise, seeking the guidance of a professional therapist or counsellor can be invaluable. Couples therapy provides a safe space for couples to address underlying issues, improve communication skills, and learn effective conflict resolution strategies (Mahuni et al.,2023). It's essential to seek help early on, rather than waiting until the relationship reaches a crisis point (Mavhura, 2020). Therapy can offer insights and tools to strengthen the relationship and prevent further deterioration (Malango et al., 2022).

Encouraging Emotional and Physical Intimacy

A fulfilling emotional and physical bond with your spouse is essential for divorce prevention (Defe & Matsa 2024). Just because you're married doesn't mean you have to stop putting in the same effort you did when you were dating (Chidarikire et al., 2024). Setting aside time and mental space for date nights, affectionate gestures, and meaningful conversation can help married couples to maintain their personal bond (Chikuvadze ,2023).

Mutual Respect and Appreciation

Healthy love requires mutual respect because we cannot create a safe and sacred space without it (Dejaeghere, 2022). Someone in the union acting disrespectfully to the other person is a problem to be addressed (Chideme-Munodawafa et al., 2020). Expressing love and appreciation for your partner should be a regular practice, not just a once-in-a-while occurrence (Chitiyo, 2021). Small gestures of affection, such as saying "I love you," showing appreciation for acts of kindness, or surprising each other with thoughtful gestures, reaffirm the bond between partners (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024).

Therefore, mitigating divorce requires a proactive and multifaceted approach. Through focusing on communication, conflict resolution, financial planning, quality time, individual identities, forgiveness, and professional help, couples can build stronger, more resilient marriages. For teacher trainees and educators, understanding these strategies is essential for their personal lives and to support the well-being of their learners and communities.

Recommendations

Addressing the challenges of marriage and divorce among learners and teacher trainees requires a comprehensive approach. ***Learners and teacher trainees*** should have access

to counselling services that can help them navigate the emotional and academic difficulties associated with marriage and divorce. Participation in workshops focused on relationship management and conflict resolution can equip students with essential skills for handling personal challenges.

Universities and colleges must provide resources and support groups specifically tailored for students experiencing marital issues, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for discussion. Additionally, integrating courses on family dynamics and relationship education into the curriculum can promote understanding of these complex issues.

Lecturers and teachers should be trained to recognize the impacts of personal issues, such as marriage and divorce, on student performance and engagement. Building awareness of these challenges can enable educators to provide timely support and appropriate referrals to counselling services.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Ministry of Health and Child Welfare should collaborate to create awareness campaigns that highlight the implications of marriage and divorce on academic performance and mental health, ensuring that students are informed about available resources.

Lastly, *future researchers* should investigate the effects of marriage and divorce on academic performance and mental health, as well as the effectiveness of support systems in educational settings.

Summary

The chapter begins by defining essential terms related to marriage and divorce, establishing a foundation for the discussion. It then contextualizes marriage within diverse cultural and social backgrounds, underscoring its significance as a foundational

institution. The importance of marriage is highlighted through its contributions to emotional support, financial stability, and child-rearing. Subsequently, the chapter identifies several key causes of divorce, including infidelity, lack of communication, financial stress, and gender-based violence. Understanding these factors is crucial for recognizing the complexities of marital relationships. To combat the rising rates of divorce, the chapter outlines practical strategies for couples, such as engaging in premarital counselling, enhancing communication skills, and prioritizing quality time together. Finally, the chapter addresses the mental health implications associated with marriage and divorce, particularly focusing on depression and anxiety. It emphasizes the need for awareness and support to help individuals navigate these emotional challenges effectively.

CHAPTER 6

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF STRESS AND DEPRESSION ON LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter investigates the dual nature of stress and depression, examining both their detrimental and potentially beneficial effects on learners and teacher trainees. The discourse seeks to unravel how these psychological states can influence academic performance, emotional resilience, and professional development. Importantly, the research addresses a critical gap in the literature concerning the nuanced understanding of stress and depression as complex phenomena that can serve both as obstacles and catalysts for growth. The study employs a comprehensive literature review, gathering data from a variety of sources, including academic texts and reputable online platforms, to construct an in-depth analysis of the topic. Data analysis was conducted through thematic coding, enabling the identification of overarching trends and insights regarding the impacts of stress and depression within educational settings. Two key findings emerged from this research: first, while elevated levels of stress and depression are predominantly associated with negative outcomes—such as decreased academic performance and impaired emotional health—there are instances where moderate stress can enhance motivation and focus, thereby fostering resilience; second, many educational institutions lack effective strategies to support students and trainees in managing these psychological challenges, which limits their ability to harness any potential benefits. In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions develop integrated mental health programs that address both the adverse and beneficial aspects of stress and depression. Additionally, training for educators should include strategies for helping students transform stress into a motivating force, fostering a more supportive educational environment.

Keywords: Depression; education; mental health; resilience; stress

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of key terms related to mental health, specifically focusing on stress, depression, and anxiety. Understanding these concepts is vital for teacher trainees and educators, as they directly influence both teaching effectiveness and learner well-being. The chapter explores the dual nature of stress, distinguishing between positive stress (eustress) that can enhance performance and negative stress (distress) that can lead to detrimental effects on mental health. Additionally, it examines the various causes of stress faced by both learners and teachers, highlighting the complexities of academic pressures, workload, and social dynamics. Finally, the chapter offers practical strategies for mitigating stress, emphasizing the importance of self-care, time management, and social support in fostering a healthy educational environment.

Definition of key terms

According to Chidarikire and Mweli (2025), stress is defined as a specific relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised as taxing or exceeding the individual's resources. Similarly, Dauda and Jaha Imoro (2023) describes stress as the body's non-specific response to any demand placed upon it, highlighting its physiological aspects. My definition of stress emphasizes the emotional and psychological strain that arises when individuals feel overwhelmed by challenges.

Depression is characterized by persistent sadness and a lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities. According to Charamba et al., (2024), it is a cognitive disorder marked by negative thinking patterns, while WHO (2020) describes it as a common mental disorder that significantly affects daily functioning and overall well-being. In my view, depression is a complex emotional state that can manifest through various symptoms, including fatigue, hopelessness, and social withdrawal.

Anxiety, as defined by Ahmadian et al., (2024), is an adaptive response to perceived threats, often manifesting as excessive worry and apprehension. Similarly, Brevik (2023) describe anxiety as a multifaceted condition that includes physiological reactions, cognitive distortions, and behavioural changes. Personally, I see anxiety as a heightened state of alertness that can lead to overwhelming feelings of fear and uncertainty, impacting daily life.

Literature Review

The impact of stress and depression on learners and teacher trainees is a pressing concern globally, particularly in educational settings where academic pressures can exacerbate mental health challenges. In Zimbabwe, where socio-economic factors and cultural expectations significantly shape educational experiences, understanding both the positive and negative effects of stress and depression is crucial for developing effective support systems. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide valuable insights into how these mental health issues affect learners' academic performance and overall well-being. In the United States, research indicates that stress and depression are prevalent among college learners, with approximately 30% reporting symptoms of depression (Beckmannn et al., 2022). Studies show that while some stress can motivate learners to perform better academically, excessive stress often leads to negative outcomes, including decreased academic performance and increased dropout rates (Bayley 2022). This duality of stress is also evident in Zimbabwe, where learners experience significant academic pressure that can lead to both heightened performance and detrimental mental health effects (Aboagye, 2021).

In Britain, the National Health Service (NHS) has recognized the importance of mental health in educational settings. Research by Chidakwa (2023) highlights that learners who experience high levels of stress and depression often face challenges in maintaining their academic performance and social relationships. British universities have implemented

mental health support services to help learners manage these issues, resulting in improved academic outcomes. In Zimbabwe, however, such structured support systems are often lacking, leading to a gap in addressing the mental health needs of learners (Ahmadian et al., 2024). In Nigeria, studies have shown that stress and depression significantly affect learners' academic performance. A study by AI Jar (2021) found that high levels of academic stress correlated with increased rates of depression among learners, negatively impacting their overall well-being and academic success. This mirrors findings in Zimbabwe, where socio-economic challenges and educational demands contribute to elevated stress levels and mental health issues among learners (ASER Centre, 2023). Addressing these factors is crucial for improving educational outcomes in both countries.

Botswana has made strides in recognizing the impact of mental health on education. Research by Health Times (2020) found that learners who receive mental health support exhibit better coping strategies and academic performance. This proactive approach underscores the necessity of integrating mental health services within educational institutions, a practice that is still developing in Zimbabwe. The lack of comprehensive mental health resources in Zimbabwean schools often exacerbates the effects of stress and depression on learners, leading to higher dropout rates and decreased academic motivation (Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2021). In South Africa, the government has implemented programs aimed at addressing mental health issues among learners. A study by Muzerengi et al , (2023) emphasizes the role of peer support and counselling services in helping learners manage stress and depression effectively. This peer-based approach could serve as a model for Zimbabwe, where community support and cultural sensitivity are essential in addressing mental health challenges among learners. Despite the existing literature on stress and depression, a significant research gap persists regarding the specific experiences of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwean educational contexts. While numerous studies highlight the broader implications of mental health on education, limited empirical data focus on how stress and depression uniquely affect learners in Zimbabwe. This study aims to address this gap by exploring

the nuanced impacts of stress and depression on academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Framework: Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory, developed in the 1980s. This theory posits that stress arises when individuals perceive a discrepancy between the demands placed upon them and their ability to cope with those demands (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The theory distinguishes between two types of coping strategies: problem-focused coping, which aims to address the source of stress, and emotion-focused coping, which aims to manage emotional responses to stress. Applying the principles of Lazarus and Folkman's theory to this research, one can argue that learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe experience stress due to academic pressures, socio-economic challenges, and cultural expectations.

The way learners appraise these stressors significantly influences their mental health outcomes. For instance, if learners perceive academic demands as overwhelming and beyond their coping abilities, they may experience heightened levels of stress and depression (Mukwada et al., 2020). In contrast, learners who adopt problem-focused coping strategies, such as seeking academic support or engaging in time management techniques, may mitigate the negative impacts of stress. Moreover, the theory emphasizes the importance of social support in coping with stress. Learners who have access to supportive networks, including peers, family, and educators, are better equipped to manage stress and reduce feelings of isolation (Onweh, 2022). In Zimbabwe, fostering a supportive educational environment is essential for helping learners navigate the challenges associated with stress and depression. However, the lack of structured support systems in many schools can hinder learners' ability to cope effectively. Resultantly, utilizing Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory as a framework for examining the effects of stress and depression provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing learners' mental health. Through focusing on

stress appraisal, coping strategies, and social support, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective interventions that address the mental health needs of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe, promoting their academic success and overall well-being.

Types of Stress: Positive Stress and Negative Stress

Stress is a common experience in educational settings, affecting both learners and teachers. It's crucial for teacher trainees and educators to understand the different types of stress and their impacts to effectively support their learners and manage their own well-being (Muronzi, 2020). Stress triggers the body's "fight or flight" reaction, preparing us to either confront or escape a stressful situation (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020).

Positive Stress (Eustress)

Eustress, or positive stress, can motivate individuals to perform better (OCHA, 2020). Nyahuma- Mukwashi (2021) describes eustress as occurring when an individual feels in control of a stressful situation, often enhancing performance. It is often short-lived (Mercy Corps, 2022). Following a advantages of positive stress

Enhanced Focus and Attention

Positive stress can help learners feel alert and engaged, improving their focus and attention span (Rapanyana, 2024). For example, an upcoming examination can motivate a learner to study more effectively and concentrate on the task (Orievulu & Iwuji, 2022).

Increased Motivation

Positive stress can drive learners to take on challenges, leading to personal growth and resilience (Pindula News, 2020). For instance, the excitement felt before an important presentation is eustress at play (Sande et al., 2017).

Building Resilience

Facing challenging academic tasks allows learners to develop coping skills and learn how to manage stress (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025). For example, over time, this builds confidence and a sense of self-efficacy, benefiting them academically and in other areas of life (Tarisayi, 2023).

Improved Academic Performance

A Department of Education-backed study of community college learners showed that learners who viewed academic stressors positively got better grades, procrastinated less, and dropped out of difficult classes less frequently (Save the Children International, 2020).

Increased Job Satisfaction

Positive stressors can lead to a positive impact on teachers' health, satisfaction, behaviour, performance, and commitment (Semo & Frissa , 2020). For example, a teacher feeling energized to implement a new teaching strategy after attending a professional development workshop.

Enhanced Performance

Positive stress can motivate teachers to improve their teaching methods and create engaging lesson plans (Sibanda & Manik, 2022). For example, a teacher experiencing a sense of fulfilment when learners grasp a difficult concept after dedicated instruction.

Professional Growth

Taking on new responsibilities or challenges, such as leading a workshop or mentoring a new teacher, can lead to the development of new skills and a sense of accomplishment (Sorrenti et al., 2024). For example, teachers collaborating to develop a new curriculum, fostering creativity and shared success.

Negative Stress

Distress, or negative stress, occurs when the demands placed on an individual exceed their ability to cope (Thurston & Green, 2021). It can be detrimental to both learners and teachers, affecting mental and physical health (Tesema et al., 2020). Distress is associated with decreased performance, unpleasant feelings, and feelings of anxiety (Tegegne, 2022).

Impact of negative stress

Lack of Motivation

Learners may experience a lack of motivation and withdrawal from social interactions (UNICEF, 2021). For example, a learner feeling overwhelmed by the pressure to get perfect grades, leading to anxiety and burnout.

Poor Academic Performance

Chronic stress can lead to procrastination, lack of preparation, and poor time management, negatively impacting academic performance (Tom & Chipenda, 2020). For example, excessive distress can lead to lower grades and dropping out (Ugwoegbulem, 2022).

Emotional and Physical Health Issues

Overwhelmed learners may experience anxiety, fatigue, or even depression (Zinyemba, 2023). For example, a learner experiencing difficulty concentrating in class due to worries about family problems.

Strained Relationships

Excessive academic demands can strain relationships with family and friends (Zimbabwe Voice, 2020). For instance, learners under pressure might become irritable or withdrawn, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts (WHO, 2020).

Burnout

Teachers may struggle with burnout, leading to decreased job satisfaction and effectiveness in the classroom (Chidarikire et al., 2024). For instance, teacher burnout is the result of prolonged stress that an individual repeatedly does not feel able to handle (ZNSA, 2022).

Emotional Exhaustion

Teachers may experience emotional exhaustion, leading to physical symptoms and increased stress (ZNCWC, 2021). For example, a teacher feeling overwhelmed by large class sizes and a lack of resources, leading to burnout.

Difficulty Connecting with Learners

Burnout can cause teachers to become emotionally distanced from learners and colleagues (Yorke et al., 2021). For example, a teacher experiencing difficulty managing learner behaviour due to a lack of administrative support.

Increased Absenteeism

Teacher absenteeism is thought to be a negative outcome of teacher stress or burnout (WHO, 2020). For example, teachers feeling stressed by constant changes in curriculum and testing requirements.

Causes of Stress in Learners

Stress is a common human reaction, but understanding its causes is crucial for teacher trainees to support learners and learners fail to manage their own well-being (Tarisayi, 2023). The sources of stress can vary widely among learners, influenced by personal experiences and environmental factors (UNICEF, 2021). Some causes are

Academic Pressure

The pressure to meet high academic standards is a significant stressor for learners (Tesema et al., 2020). This pressure often stems from parental expectations, competition with peers, and the desire to gain admission to competitive colleges or universities (Tom & Chipenda, 2020). For example, learners may feel overwhelmed by the need to get perfect grades, leading to anxiety and burnout. Similarly, the fear of failing an exam can cause significant stress, impacting their ability to concentrate and perform well.

Workload and Time Management

Balancing multiple assignments, preparing for exams, and managing extracurricular activities can create a heavy workload, leading to stress (Thurston & Green, 2021). Learners may struggle with time management, leading to feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to meet deadlines (Sande, 2017). For instance, a learner juggling multiple advanced-level classes and extracurricular may feel stressed due to the sheer volume of work. Learners with poor organizational skills may struggle to keep up with assignments, leading to increased stress and frustration.

Social and Relationship Issues

Peer pressure, social isolation, and relationship problems can also contribute to learner stress (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025). Learners may experience stress related to fitting in, dealing with conflicts, or navigating romantic relationships (Sibanda & Manik, 2022). For example, a learner who is being bullied may experience significant stress and anxiety. Learners may prioritize studies over friendships, leading to feelings of disconnection from their social circles.

Financial Concerns

Financial difficulties, such as the cost of tuition, housing, and other expenses, can be a major source of stress for college learners (Save the Children International, 2020). Learners may need to balance studying with working to cover these costs, adding to their workload and stress levels (Semo & Frissa, 2020). For example, a learner from a low-income family may experience stress related to affording textbooks or paying for housing. College learners may also become frustrated when bills are overdue, threat of account going to collection and racking up debt through loans and credit card debt.

Lack of Support

A lack of support from parents, teachers, or peers can exacerbate stress (Rapanyane, 2024). Learners may feel that they are expected to achieve a lot but do not have a strong enough support system to help them reach their goals (Pindula News, 2020). For instance, a learner who is struggling with a particular subject may feel stressed if they do not have access to tutoring or other academic support. Teens that need extra help for certain subjects may not be able to secure the added support.

Causes of Stress in Teachers

Workload and Time Pressure

Teachers often face heavy workloads, including lesson planning, grading, administrative tasks, and communication with parents (Zinyemba et al., 2023). They may feel that they do not have enough time to complete all of their responsibilities, leading to stress and burnout (Zimbabwe Voice, 2020). For example, teachers may spend evenings and weekends grading papers or preparing lesson plans. Routines and structures make it difficult at times to be a human being at school.

Learner Behaviour and Classroom Management

Dealing with disruptive or unmotivated learners can be a significant source of stress for teachers (ASER Centre, 2023). Maintaining discipline and managing classroom dynamics can be challenging, especially in large classes or with learners who have behavioural issues (Aboagye, 2021). For instance, teachers may struggle to manage learners who are constantly talking out of turn or refusing to follow instructions. Teachers consider disruptions by learners during teaching, a lack of learner motivation, and problems with maintaining discipline in the classroom to be the main risk factors for teacher health.

Lack of Support and Resources

Teachers may experience stress due to a lack of support from school administration, inadequate resources, and poor working conditions (Chidakwa, 2023). They may feel undervalued or unsupported, leading to feelings of isolation and burnout (Bayley, 2022). For example, teachers may feel stressed if they do not have access to necessary teaching materials or technology. Expectation of parents, demands of the administration, factors preventing to reveal the problems experienced with learners, anxiety of dismissal from school also have a huge impact on teacher having a stress.

Role Conflict and Ambiguity

Teachers may experience stress due to conflicting expectations, unclear roles, and a lack of autonomy (Chikuvadze, 2023). They may feel that they have little control over curriculum decisions or classroom management, leading to frustration and stress (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). For instance, teachers may be required to follow rigid curriculums or implement teaching methods they don't believe in. Autonomy and decision-making refer to the freedom that teachers have to be creative and innovative when it comes to making decisions on behalf of themselves and on behalf of their learners.

External Pressures

Teachers may experience stress due to external pressures, such as standardized testing, accountability measures, and parental expectations (Dejaeghere & Murphy- Graham, 2022). They may feel that they are constantly being evaluated and that their job security depends on learner performance (Chidarikire et al., 2024). For example, teachers may feel pressured to "teach to the test," limiting their ability to engage learners in meaningful learning experiences. Teachers' sense that professional/registration bodies and parents are placing very high or unrealistic expectations on them.

Strategies to Mitigate Stress in Learners and Teachers

Stress management is essential for maintaining well-being and effectiveness in educational settings (Defe & Matsa, 2024). Implementing effective strategies can help both learners and teachers cope with stressors and thrive in their roles (Ahmadian et al., 2024).

Stress Mitigation Strategies for Learners

Time Management and Organization

Teaching learners effective time management skills can reduce feelings of being overwhelmed (AI Jar, 2021). This includes breaking down large tasks into smaller, more manageable steps, prioritizing assignments, and creating a study schedule (Charamba et al., 2024). For example, a learner can use a planner or digital tool to track assignments and deadlines, allocating specific time slots for each task. They can also learn to prioritize tasks based on their importance and urgency, ensuring that critical assignments are completed first.

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

Practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques can help learners manage anxiety and improve focus (Beckmann et al., 2022). These techniques include deep breathing exercises, meditation, and guided imagery, which can calm the mind and reduce stress hormones (Brevik 2023). For instance, learners can take a few minutes each day to practice deep breathing exercises, focusing on their breath to quiet their minds. They can also use guided meditation apps to visualize peaceful scenes, promoting relaxation and reducing stress.

Healthy Lifestyle Habits

Encouraging learners to adopt healthy lifestyle habits, such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and sufficient sleep, can enhance their ability to cope with stress (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024). Physical activity releases endorphins, which have mood-boosting effects, while a nutritious diet provides the energy needed to manage academic demands (Chideme- Munodawafa et al., 2020). For example, learners can incorporate regular exercise into their routine, such as walking, jogging, or playing sports. They can also prioritize getting at least seven hours of sleep each night and eating balanced meals that include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Social Support and Communication

Fostering a supportive social environment and encouraging open communication can help learners manage stress (Dauda & Jaha Imoro, 2022). Learners should feel comfortable talking to friends, family, teachers, or counsellors about their concerns and seeking help when needed (UNICEF, 2021). For instance, schools can create peer support groups where learners can share their experiences and offer each other encouragement. Teachers can also create a classroom culture that values open communication and provides a safe space for learners to express their feelings.

Positive Self-Talk and Cognitive Restructuring

Teaching learners to use positive self-talk and cognitive restructuring techniques can help them challenge negative thoughts and develop a more optimistic outlook (Dejaeghere, 2022). This involves identifying negative thought patterns and replacing them with more positive and realistic ones (Dey et al., 2022). For example, learners can learn to challenge negative thoughts such as "I'm going to fail this exam" by reframing

them as "I've studied hard, and I'll do my best." They can also practice positive affirmations, such as "I am capable and resilient," to boost their self-confidence.

Stress Mitigation Strategies for Teachers

Prioritize Self-Care

Teachers should prioritize self-care activities to recharge and prevent burnout (Dzenga, 2020). This includes engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation, such as hobbies, spending time with loved ones, or pursuing personal interests (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

For example, teachers can schedule regular breaks throughout the day to engage in activities they enjoy, such as reading, listening to music, or taking a short walk. They can also set boundaries between work and personal life, avoiding work-related tasks during evenings and weekends.

Time Management and Boundary Setting

Effective time management and boundary setting can help teachers manage their workload and prevent feeling overwhelmed (Kaseke, 2021). This involves prioritizing tasks, delegating responsibilities, and setting realistic expectations for what can be accomplished (Hunters et al., 2020). For instance, teachers can use time management techniques such as the Pomodoro Technique to break down work into focused intervals with short breaks in between. They can also learn to say "no" to additional responsibilities when their workload becomes unmanageable.

Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Techniques

Practicing mindfulness and stress reduction techniques can help teachers manage their emotions and improve their overall well-being (Kaiser & Sinanan, 2020). These

techniques include meditation, deep breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation (Kunedzimwe et al., 2021). For example, teachers can start their day with a short meditation session to centre themselves and set a positive intention for the day. They can also use deep breathing exercises during stressful moments to calm their nerves and regain focus.

Seek Support and Collaboration

Building a supportive network of colleagues and seeking support from school administration can help teachers cope with stress (Mahuni et al., 2023). Sharing experiences, collaborating on projects, and seeking mentorship can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation (Mavhura, 2020). For instance, teachers can participate in professional learning communities where they can share best practices and support each other. They can also seek mentorship from experienced teachers who can provide guidance and advice.

Professional Development and Skill Enhancement

 Engaging in professional development activities and enhancing teaching skills can boost teachers' confidence and reduce stress related to classroom management and instruction (Machingura, 2023). This includes attending workshops, conferences, and training sessions to learn new strategies and techniques (Mathe, 2023). For example, teachers can attend workshops on classroom management techniques to learn strategies for addressing disruptive behaviour and creating a positive learning environment. They can also participate in training sessions on effective teaching methods to improve their instructional skills and learner engagement.

Recommendations

To effectively address the impact of positive and negative stress and depression on learners and teacher trainees, it is vital for ***learners and teacher trainees*** to engage in stress management workshops that teach coping strategies and techniques for maintaining mental health. Establishing peer support networks can foster open discussions about stress and depression, helping to reduce stigma and create a supportive community.

Universities and colleges should implement comprehensive mental health programs that include accessible counselling services and wellness initiatives focused on stress reduction. Creating awareness campaigns about the signs of positive and negative stress can promote a balanced approach to academic pressures, encouraging students to seek help when needed.

Lecturers and teachers should receive training to recognize the symptoms of stress and depression in students, allowing for timely intervention and support. Encouraging a classroom environment that prioritizes mental well-being can help alleviate academic pressures and promote a healthier learning atmosphere.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Ministry of Health and Child Welfare must develop national mental health policies that address the unique needs of learners and teacher trainees, ensuring adequate resources are available for mental health support.

Finally, ***future researchers*** should explore the long-term effects of stress and depression on academic performance and overall life satisfaction, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions aimed at managing stress and improving mental health within educational settings.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has elucidated the definitions of stress, depression, and anxiety, establishing a foundational understanding of these critical mental health issues. It has categorized stress into positive and negative types, illustrating how each affects learners and teachers differently. The discussion on the causes of stress has unveiled various factors that contribute to the mental strain experienced in educational settings, including academic demands and relational challenges. Finally, the chapter has provided actionable strategies for mitigating stress, underscoring the importance of effective time management, self-care, and supportive relationships. By adopting these strategies, both educators and learners can cultivate a healthier, more productive learning environment that promotes well-being and academic success.

CHAPTER 7

RELEVANCE OF PROFESSIONAL AND PARA-PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING TO LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter examines the critical importance of both professional and para-professional counselling services for students and teacher trainees, highlighting their role in addressing academic, emotional, and social challenges. The discussion underscores how effective counselling can enhance educational experiences and promote overall well-being. Moreover, the research identifies a significant gap in the literature regarding the comparative effectiveness of professional versus para-professional counselling in educational settings. Utilizing a comprehensive literature review, this study gathered data from a variety of sources, including scholarly books and reputable online articles, to form a nuanced understanding of counselling practices. The data were analyzed through thematic coding, allowing for the identification of key patterns and insights into the impacts of counselling on learners and educators. Two primary findings emerged from this investigation: first, many learners and teacher trainees benefit significantly from the support provided by both professional and para-professional counsellors, which can lead to improved academic performance and personal development; second, there is often a lack of awareness regarding the availability and scope of counselling services, which diminishes their effectiveness in educational institutions. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions actively promote counselling services to ensure that students and trainees are aware of the resources available to them. Additionally, training programs should be established for para-professional counsellors to enhance their skills and ensure they can provide effective support tailored to the specific needs of learners and teacher trainees.

Keywords: Counselling; education; learners; professional support; teacher trainees

Introduction

This chapter provided a comprehensive exploration of the essential aspects of counselling within the educational context. It began with the definition of key terms such as peer counselling, counselling, and mental well-being. Counselling was defined as a vital process that facilitated personal growth and emotional healing, helping individuals navigate various life challenges. Peer counselling was introduced as a unique form of support, where individuals of similar age or experience offered guidance to one another, fostering a sense of community and understanding. Mental well-being was highlighted as a critical component encompassing emotional, psychological, and social health, significantly influencing how individuals think, feel, and behave. The chapter further delved into the importance and relevance of professional counselling for both learners and teachers. It underscored how counselling services enhanced academic performance, addressed mental health issues, and contributed to a supportive learning environment. Additionally, the chapter identified the challenges faced by both teachers and peer counsellors, offering insights into the barriers that hindered effective counselling practices. Solutions were proposed to overcome these challenges, emphasizing the necessity for adequate training, resources, and support systems. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the qualities that distinguished effective teacher counsellors and peer counsellors, emphasizing the significance of empathy, active listening, and ethical conduct in counselling relationships. Finally, the discussion culminated in a focus on the ethical guidelines that teachers and peer counsellors needed to adhere to in their practices, ensuring that they maintained professionalism and prioritized the well-being of their learners.

Definition of terms

Counselling is defined as a collaborative process aimed at helping individuals address personal, social, or psychological challenges. According to Hvalby et al., (2023), it emphasizes empathy and understanding, fostering a supportive environment for clients

to explore their feelings. Similarly, IOM (2021) definition highlights the importance of the counsellor-client relationship, focusing on promoting self-awareness and personal growth. In my view, counselling serves as a vital tool for individuals seeking clarity and guidance in navigating life's complexities.

Peer counselling refers to a support system where individuals of similar backgrounds or experiences provide assistance to one another. As per Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (2021), peer counselling encourages shared understanding and mutual support, creating a safe space for open discussions. Additionally, Yorke et al., (2021) emphasizes its role in enhancing social skills and emotional resilience among peers. I believe peer counselling fosters a sense of community and belonging, empowering individuals to confront their challenges together.

Mental well-being, broadly defined, encompasses the emotional, psychological, and social aspects of health. According to WHO (2020), it involves the presence of positive mental states, such as happiness and life satisfaction. Similarly, Tegegne (2022) describes mental well-being as not merely the absence of mental illness but the presence of positive functioning and fulfilment. In my perspective, mental well-being is essential for overall health, influencing how we think, feel, and interact with the world around us.

Literature Review

The relevance of professional and para-counselling to learners and teacher trainees is increasingly recognized as a vital component of educational systems globally. In Zimbabwe, where socio-economic challenges and psychological pressures significantly impact education, the need for effective counselling services is paramount. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide insights into the significance of counselling in enhancing educational outcomes and learner well-being. In the United States, counselling services in educational institutions are well-established and widely utilized. According to the American School Counsellor

Association (2021), professional counselling has been shown to improve learners' academic performance, social skills, and emotional well-being. Research indicates that learners who engage with school counsellors report higher levels of satisfaction and lower levels of anxiety (Eisenberg et al., 2020). This model highlights the importance of integrating professional counselling into the educational framework, a practice that is still developing in Zimbabwe, where access to trained counsellors is limited (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020).

In Britain, the National Health Service (NHS) emphasizes the provision of mental health support within schools. Recent studies have shown that early intervention through counselling can significantly reduce the prevalence of mental health issues among learners (Aboagye, 2021). The British approach includes a focus on both professional and para-counselling, where trained peer supporters assist learners in navigating personal challenges. This dual approach could be beneficial in Zimbabwe, where cultural stigma around mental health often prevents learners from seeking help. In Nigeria, the incorporation of counselling in educational institutions has been recognized as crucial for addressing various challenges faced by learners. A study by Chidakwa (2023) found that counselling services significantly improved learners' academic performance and emotional resilience. However, barriers such as inadequate training and resources for counsellors persist, similar to the challenges faced in Zimbabwe. The effectiveness of counselling programs in Nigeria underscores the necessity of well-trained personnel in Zimbabwean schools to provide the necessary support to learners and teacher trainees. Botswana has made notable advances in integrating counselling services into its educational framework. Research by (ASER Centre, 2023) indicates that professional counselling has led to improved academic outcomes and reduced dropout rates among learners. The government's commitment to enhancing mental health services in schools serves as a model for Zimbabwe, where the need for structured counselling programs is critical.

However, the lack of funding and trained counsellors remains a barrier to effective implementation in Zimbabwean educational settings (Charamba et al., 2024). In South Africa, the government has recognized the importance of counselling services in schools, particularly in addressing the psychological needs of learners. A study by Reddy et al. (2020) emphasizes that comprehensive counselling programs can significantly improve learners' coping strategies and academic performance. The integration of both professional and para-counselling models has proven effective in creating supportive environments for learners, which is essential for Zimbabwean institutions aiming to enhance their counselling services. Despite the insights provided by existing literature, a significant research gap persists regarding the specific relevance and effectiveness of professional and para-counselling services in Zimbabwean educational contexts. While various studies highlight the necessity of counselling, limited empirical data focus on how these services are structured, delivered, and perceived by learners in Zimbabwe. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the significance of professional and para-counselling for learners and teacher trainees, identifying best practices and potential areas for improvement.

Theoretical Framework: Person-Centred Counselling Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Carl Rogers' Person-Centred Counselling Theory, which emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment for clients (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024) proposed that individuals have an innate ability to grow and develop when provided with the right conditions, including empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence. This approach is particularly relevant in educational settings, where learners often face emotional and psychological challenges. Applying the principles of Person-Centred Counselling Theory to this research, one can argue that both professional and para-counselling services in Zimbabwe should focus on creating a safe space for learners and teacher trainees to express their concerns and aspirations. Through fostering an environment characterized by empathy and understanding, counsellors can facilitate

personal growth and resilience among learners (Chikuvadze, 2023). This approach is essential in Zimbabwe, where cultural stigma surrounding mental health often discourages learners from seeking help.

Moreover, the theory emphasizes the importance of the counsellor's role in providing unconditional positive regard. When learners feel accepted and valued, they are more likely to engage in the counselling process and explore their personal challenges (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). This principle underscores the need for training counsellors in Zimbabwe to develop skills that promote trust and openness, encouraging learners to seek support without fear of judgment. Furthermore, Rogers' emphasis on congruence—where counsellors are genuine and authentic in their interactions—can significantly enhance the effectiveness of counselling services. In Zimbabwe, where learners may face various socio-economic pressures, authentic interactions can help build stronger relationships between counsellors and learners, fostering a sense of belonging and support (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Therefore, utilizing Person-Centered Counselling Theory as a framework for examining the relevance of professional and para-counselling provides a robust foundation for understanding how supportive environments can facilitate learner development. Through focusing on empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective counselling programs that meet the unique needs of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe.

The Significance of Professional Counselling for Learners

Professional counselling plays a vital role in supporting the well-being and academic success of learners. In Zimbabwe and other countries, where learners face numerous challenges, counselling services are essential for navigating these complexities and fostering a positive learning environment.

Counselling for Learners

Learners in Zimbabwe encounter a multitude of challenges that can significantly impact their academic performance, personal development, and overall well-being (Zimbabwe School Psychological Services, 2022). Professional counselling offers a supportive and confidential space for learners to address these issues, develop coping mechanisms, and enhance their resilience (Health Times, 2020)

Academic Failure

Academic failure can stem from various factors, including learning disabilities, lack of motivation, and socio-economic challenges. Counselling can help learners identify the underlying causes of their academic struggles, develop effective study habits, and improve their self-esteem (Edmonds et al., 2021). Individualized support can address specific learning needs and promote a growth mind set. A study Hofmeyr (2021) highlights the role of counselling in enhancing learners' learning motivation in open and distance education. Schools provide remediation for learners struggling with English or Mathematics (Dzenga, 2020).

Drug Abuse

Zimbabwe and other countries face a growing crisis of drug abuse among young people (Development Aid, 2024). Counselling provides a safe space for learners struggling with substance abuse to explore the reasons behind their addiction, develop strategies for recovery, and access resources for treatment and support. Peer support groups and mentorship programs can also play a crucial role in preventing relapse (Godana et al., 2023). Statistics reveal that approximately 57% of the youth population in Zimbabwe abuse drugs (Dey et al., 2022).

Early Pregnancies

Teenage pregnancies remain a significant challenge in Zimbabwe, often leading to school dropouts and limited opportunities for young mothers (Kaiser & Sinanan, 2020). Counselling can provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, promote responsible decision-making, and offer support to pregnant learners and young mothers to continue their education (Kunedzimwe et al ., 2021). The Education Amendment Act of 2020 aims to prevent the exclusion of pregnant learners from school (Pindula News, 2020). Zimbabwe's teen pregnancy rate stands at 22% (WHO, 2020).

Death of Parents

The loss of a parent can have a profound impact on a learner's emotional and psychological well-being, leading to grief, anxiety, and academic difficulties. Counselling provides a supportive environment for learners to process their grief, develop coping mechanisms, and build resilience (Sande et al., 2017). Support groups and mentorship programs can also offer a sense of community and belonging. The burden and net effects of HIV and AIDS and poverty have continued to have devastating effects on children (UNICEF , 2021).

Sexual Relationships ("Mujolo")

Risky sexual behaviours and relationships can expose learners to various dangers, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and exploitation. Counselling can promote healthy relationships, responsible sexual decision-making, and awareness of the risks associated with unprotected sex (Chidarikire et al., 2024). A study concurred there was a high level of sexual activity among young men and women in the university.

Sicknesses such as HIV and AIDS

Zimbabwe has been significantly affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Counselling provides essential support for learners living with HIV/AIDS, helping them manage their condition, cope with stigma and discrimination, and access treatment and support services (Chitiyo, 2021). HIV/AIDS education is crucial in promoting prevention and awareness (Beans, 2013). Approximately one third of all new HIV infections in 2018 were in young people below the age of 24 years (UNAIDS, 2024).

Parents' Divorce

Parental divorce can create emotional distress and instability for learners, affecting their academic performance and social relationships. Counselling helps learners understand and process their emotions, develop coping strategies, and maintain healthy relationships with both parents (Chikivadze, 2023). Divorce can lead to reduced scores in tests and examinations (Brevik, 2023).

Career Guidance

Career guidance is essential for helping learners make informed decisions about their future education and career paths. Counselling provides learners with information about various career options, helps them identify their strengths and interests, and assists them in developing career goals (Zimbabwe Voice , 2020). Career guidance begins at early childhood development grade A class (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025).

Financial Problems to Pay Fees

Economic instability in Zimbabwe has made it difficult for many families to afford school fees, leading to increased dropout rates. Counselling can connect learners with resources for financial assistance, such as scholarships and bursaries, and provide

support for managing the stress and anxiety associated with financial hardship (Chidarikire et al., , 2024). Many learners have accumulated fees arrears because of the inability to pay their fees (ZNCWC, 2021).

Resultantly, professional counselling is of paramount significance for learners in Zimbabwe. Through addressing the diverse challenges they face, counselling services can promote academic success, personal well-being, and a positive learning environment for all. It is essential to prioritize the provision of accessible and quality counselling services in schools and communities to support the holistic development of learners, professional counselling is of paramount significance for learners in Zimbabwe. Through addressing the diverse challenges they face, counselling services can promote academic success, personal well-being, and a positive learning environment for all. It is essential to prioritize the provision of accessible and quality counselling services in schools and communities to support the holistic development of learners.

The Significance of Professional Counselling for Teachers

Professional counselling is crucial for supporting the well-being and effectiveness of teachers. In Zimbabwe, teachers face numerous challenges that can impact their mental health, job satisfaction, and ability to create a positive learning environment. Providing access to counselling services is essential for addressing these issues and promoting a thriving teaching profession. Teachers in Zimbabwe encounter a range of stressors that can significantly affect their personal and professional lives. Professional counselling offers a confidential and supportive space for teachers to address these challenges, develop coping mechanisms, and enhance their overall well-being (Zimbabwe School Psychological Services, 2022).

Divorce

Teachers experiencing divorce may face emotional distress, financial difficulties, and challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities. Counselling can provide a supportive space for teachers to process their emotions, develop coping strategies, and access resources for legal and financial assistance (Tom & Chipenda, 2020). Divorce can lead to reduced scores in tests and examinations (Tarisayi, 2023).

Early Retirement

Due to poor working conditions and low salaries, many teachers are opting for early retirement (ZimEye, 2025). Between 15,000 and 20,000 teachers in Zimbabwe are reportedly taking early retirement each year because of poor working conditions (Tesema et al., 2020). The Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) has reported a surge in teachers leaving the profession due to low pay and tough working conditions (ZNSA, 2022). Counselling can help teachers explore their options, plan for their future, and cope with the emotional and financial implications of retirement. The Public Service Commission has started implementing regulations that extend the retirement age for civil servants from 65 to 70, but there has been anxiety among teachers regarding the implementation (The Herald, 2025).

Drug Abuse

While less documented specifically among teachers, substance abuse can affect individuals in any profession. Counselling can provide support for teachers struggling with substance abuse, helping them access treatment and develop strategies for recovery (Yorke et al., 2021). A former primary school teacher is complimenting the Government's efforts in the fight against drug and substance abuse (H Metro, 2025). Drug abuse is a concern among the youth in Zimbabwe, and teachers need to be aware of the signs and symptoms (The Sunday Mail, 2022).

Conflicts at Work

Workplace conflicts can create stress and tension for teachers, affecting their morale and productivity. Counselling can provide teachers with conflict resolution skills, communication strategies, and support for navigating difficult relationships with colleagues and administrators (Semo & Frissa, 2020). Workplace bullying can cause low morale among teachers (Tarisayi, 2023). Studies show that conflict is prevalent in teachers' colleges due to poor communication, gender stereotyping, unclear policies, and political issues (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025).

Sicknesses with HIV and AIDS

Teachers living with HIV/AIDS may face stigma, discrimination, and challenges in managing their health (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025). Counselling provides a confidential and supportive space for teachers to address these issues, access treatment and support services, and maintain their well-being (Save the Children International, 2020). Teachers also need skills to support HIV-affected learners (Orievulu & Iwuji, 2022). Teachers' confidence in their skills and ability to support HIV-affected learners is crucial (Sibanda & Manik, 2022).

Marriage Problems

Marital problems can significantly impact a teacher's emotional well-being and ability to focus on their work. Counselling can provide couples with communication skills, conflict resolution strategies, and support for strengthening their relationship (Muronzi, 2020).

Financial Problems

Low salaries and economic instability can create financial stress for teachers, affecting their morale and job satisfaction. Counselling can help teachers develop budgeting skills, access resources for financial assistance, and manage the stress associated with financial hardship (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020). Teachers across Zimbabwe's Manicaland province have launched coordinated demonstrations calling for a living wage (Mercy Corps, 2022). Teachers' salaries have steadily eroded in real value due to inflation and inconsistent policy measures (Muzerengi et al., 2023).

Single Parenting

Single parents face unique challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities. Counselling can provide single teachers with support for managing their time, accessing childcare resources, and coping with the emotional demands of single parenting (Nyahuma- Mukwashi, 2021). Single women are labelled as of loose morals, who can't develop themselves and whenever you advance yourself by either buying a car or building a house, this is associated with prostitution (The Herald, 2017).

Issues of Biological Children with Problems

Teachers who have children with special needs or behavioural problems may experience additional stress and challenges. Counselling can provide teachers with parenting strategies, resources for support, and a space to process their emotions and concerns (Lunga ,2022).

Teachers Who Are Having Low Pass Rates in Their Classes

 Teachers experiencing low pass rates may feel discouraged and ineffective. Counselling can help teachers identify the factors contributing to low pass rates, develop strategies

for improving learner performance, and access professional development opportunities (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022). The Primary and Secondary Education ministry has embarked on a nationwide joint monitoring exercise that is set to improve pass rates in underperforming schools (News Day, 2024). Factors such as inadequate teaching and learning materials, lateness and absenteeism, and poor attitudes toward core subjects contribute to low pass rates (Mahuni et al., 2023).

Therefore, professional counselling is of paramount significance for teachers in Zimbabwe. Through addressing the diverse challenges they face, counselling services can promote well-being, job satisfaction, and a positive learning environment. It is essential to prioritize the provision of accessible and quality counselling services to support the teaching profession.

Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of Teachers' and Learners' (Peer counsellors) Roles as Counsellors

While teachers and learners often take on counselling roles in Zimbabwean schools, several challenges hinder their effectiveness (Machingura, 2023). These challenges range from inadequate training and resources to cultural beliefs and systemic issues within the education system.

Lack of Adequate Training

A significant challenge is the lack of formal training in counselling for teachers (Mahuni et al., 2023; Mavhura, 2020). Many teachers are assigned counselling responsibilities without the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support learners facing complex issues. They may lack understanding of ethical principles, referral skills, and contemporary counselling techniques needed to address issues like social media addiction and other complex behaviours influenced by technology (Kanyopa &

Makgalwa, 2024). While some colleges offer basic counselling skills workshops, these are often insufficient to equip teachers with the expertise needed (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Time Constraints and Heavy Workload

Teachers often struggle to balance their teaching duties with their counselling responsibilities (Dauda & Jha Imoro, 2022). The educational role of teachers takes up most of their time, leaving limited time for effective counselling (Chitiyo, 2021). The heavy workload can lead to burnout and reduced effectiveness in both teaching and counselling roles.

Lack of Resources and Facilities

Many schools lack adequate resources and facilities for counselling services (Chidarikire et al, 2024). This includes a lack of private counselling rooms, counselling materials, and financial support for counselling activities. The location of counselling facilities may also compromise confidentiality, making learners reluctant to seek help (Dejaeghere, 2022).

Ethical Considerations

Teachers may face ethical dilemmas when providing counselling services, particularly in a digitalized learning environment (Charamba et al, 2024). Maintaining confidentiality can be challenging, and learners may be hesitant to share sensitive information with teachers due to a lack of trust or fear of stigma (Chidarikire & Mweli , 2025).

Role Conflict and Perception by Colleagues

Teachers who act as counsellors may face resentment from colleagues who see them as having a lighter workload or being favoured by school administration (Ahmadian & Brevik, 2024) This can create tension and undermine the teacher's effectiveness in both roles.

Lack of Recognition and Remuneration

Teachers who have acquired counselling qualifications are often not recognized or compensated for their additional skills (Chikuvadze, 2023). This lack of recognition can demotivate teachers and reduce their commitment to providing effective counselling services.

Challenges Related to Learners as Counsellors (Peer Counsellors)

Limited Training and Supervision

While peer counselling can be a valuable resource, learners who take on these roles often receive limited training and supervision (Chidarikire et al., 2024). Without proper training, peer counsellors may lack the skills to effectively support their peers and may inadvertently cause harm.

Confidentiality Concerns

Maintaining confidentiality can be a challenge for peer counsellors, as they are often part of the same social circles as their peers (Chideme-Munodawafa et al., 2020). Breaches of confidentiality can damage trust and undermine the effectiveness of the peer counselling program.

Lack of Experience and Maturity

Learner counsellors may lack the experience and maturity to handle complex or sensitive issues (Chitiyo, 2021). They may struggle to provide appropriate support and guidance, particularly in cases involving mental health issues or abuse.

Stigma and Reluctance to Seek Help

Learners may be reluctant to seek help from peer counsellors due to stigma or a lack of trust (Defe & Matsa, 2024). They may fear being judged or having their problems trivialized by their peers.

Cultural Beliefs and Attitudes

Cultural beliefs and attitudes can also hinder the effectiveness of both teachers and learners as counsellors. In some cultures, seeking help for emotional or psychological problems is stigmatized, making individuals reluctant to seek counselling services (Chidarikire & Chikwati , 2024).

Some Systemic Challenges

Lack of Government Support and Policy

The government's commitment to guidance and counselling programs in schools is often lacking (Gumbo, 2025). There may be a lack of clear policies, funding, and support for training and resources.

Curriculum Design and Implementation

Guidance and counselling is not always integrated into the school curriculum in a meaningful way (Hope Village Society, 2022). It may be treated as a co-curricular activity or a reactive measure rather than a proactive approach to learner well-being.

Lack of Collaboration and Communication

There is often a lack of collaboration and communication between teachers, counsellors, parents, and other stakeholders (Kaseke, 2021). This can lead to fragmented support for learners and a lack of coordination in addressing their needs. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes providing adequate training and resources for teachers and learners, promoting a culture of support and confidentiality, integrating guidance and counselling into the curriculum, and strengthening collaboration between all stakeholders. Through addressing these challenges, Zimbabwe can enhance the effectiveness of teachers' and learners' roles as counsellors and promote the well-being and success of all learners.

Qualities of Good Teacher and Learner Counsellors (Peer Counsellors)

Effective counselling, whether provided by teachers or peer counsellors, hinges on a specific set of qualities that foster trust, understanding, and positive change (Hunter et al., 2020). These qualities enable counsellors to create a safe and supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable exploring their challenges and developing coping mechanisms.

Qualities of Good Teacher Counsellors

Teachers, due to their existing relationships with learners, are often well-positioned to provide guidance and support. However, to be effective counsellors, they need to cultivate specific qualities:

Empathy and Understanding

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person (Tom & Chipenda, 2020). A teacher counsellor needs to be able to step into the shoes of their learners and see the world from their perspective. This involves active listening, paying attention to both verbal and nonverbal cues, and validating learners' feelings (Sorrenti et al., 2024).

Active Listening Skills

Active listening goes beyond simply hearing words; it involves paying close attention to emotional cues, nonverbal communication, and any contradictions in what is being said (Tegegne, 2022). It also includes restating or rephrasing the client's own words to verify their comprehension of what the client is trying to communicate (UNICEF, 2021).

Patience and Acceptance

Change is a process, and even the best school counsellors will encounter learners who struggle to make progress (Zinyemba et al., 2023). A good teacher counsellor needs to be patient and understanding, providing ongoing support and encouragement even when progress is slow (Zimbabwe Voice, 2020).

Genuineness and Authenticity

Learners are more likely to trust a counsellor who is genuine and authentic (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). This means being honest, transparent, and true to oneself in the counselling relationship. Teachers should avoid putting on a facade or trying to be someone they are not.

Confidentiality and Trustworthiness

Trust is key in order for learners to feel that it's safe to open up about their issues (Charamba et al., 2024). A teacher counsellor must maintain confidentiality by ensuring that they do not share any learner's personal information without their consent (Brevik, 2023).

Cultural Sensitivity and Respect for Diversity

A school counsellor must consider how that learner's socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity may come into play (Muronzi,2020). In our diverse society, effective counsellors must be open-minded and culturally sensitive (Tarisayi, 2023).

Strong Communication Skills

Effective counsellors are able to communicate clearly and effectively with learners, parents, and colleagues (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025). This includes verbal and nonverbal communication skills, as well as the ability to adapt their communication style to meet the needs of different individuals.

Problem-Solving Abilities

A good counsellor can identify problems and find effective, long-term solutions (Orievulu, 2022). They should be resourceful and knowledgeable about available resources and support services (Muzerengi et al., 2023).

Ethical and Professional Conduct

Ethical and professional conduct are at the core of every effective counselling practice (OCHA, 2020). Due to the inherent power dynamics in the counselling relationship, counsellors must adhere to high ethical standards to safeguard their clients' well-being.

Qualities of Good Learner Counsellors (Peer Counsellors)

Peer counsellors can be a valuable resource in schools, providing support and guidance to their fellow learners. To be effective, peer counsellors should possess the following qualities:

Empathy and Sensitivity

Peer counsellors need to be able to understand and share the feelings of their peers (Beans, 2023). This involves being sensitive to their peers' experiences and responding in a way that shows care and support (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022).

Active Listening Skills

Like teacher counsellors, peer counsellors need to be skilled active listeners (Mathe, 2023). They should pay attention to both verbal and nonverbal cues, and ask clarifying questions to ensure they understand their peers' concerns.

Trustworthiness and Confidentiality

Peers need to trust that their peer counsellor will keep their conversations confidential (Mavhura, 2020). Peer counsellors must be able to maintain confidentiality and avoid gossiping or sharing sensitive information with others (Machingura, 2023).

Good Communication Skills

Peer counsellors need to be able to communicate effectively with their peers (Lunga, 2022). This includes being able to express themselves clearly, as well as being able to listen and understand others.

Non-Judgmental Attitude

Peer counsellors should be accepting and non-judgmental of their peers (Hvalby et al., 2023). They should create a safe space where peers feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings without fear of being judged.

Respect for Diversity

Peer counsellors should be respectful of diversity and be able to work with peers from different backgrounds and with different perspectives (Dauda & Jaha Imoro, 2022).

Awareness of Limitations

Peer counsellors need to be aware of their limitations and know when to refer peers to a professional counsellor or other support service (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024). They should not attempt to handle situations that are beyond their capabilities.

Responsibility and Commitment

Peer counsellors should be responsible and committed to their role (Beckmann et al , 2022). They should be reliable and follow through on their commitments to their peers.

Positive Role Model

Peer counsellors should be positive role models for their peers (Chidakwa , 2023). They should demonstrate healthy behaviours and attitudes, and be a positive influence on those around them.

Therefore, both teacher counsellors and peer counsellors need to possess a range of qualities to be effective in their roles. These qualities include empathy, active listening skills, trustworthiness, good communication skills, and a commitment to helping others. By cultivating these qualities, teachers and learners can create a supportive and caring environment where individuals feel empowered to address their challenges and reach their full potential.

Counselling Ethics for Teachers and Learners as Counsellors

Counselling ethics provide a framework for responsible and effective helping relationships. Both teachers and learners who take on counselling roles must adhere to these ethical guidelines to protect the well-being of those they support and maintain the integrity of the counselling process (Charamba et al., 2024). It's crucial to remember that ethical guidelines cannot address every situation a counsellor might face, but they provide a foundation for making sound judgments (ASER Centre, 2023).

Core Ethical Principles

Several core ethical principles underpin ethical counselling practice. These principles guide decision-making and ensure that counsellors act in the best interests of their clients (Bayley, 2022). These include respecting human rights and dignity, ensuring client autonomy, committing to beneficence (promoting well-being) and non-maleficence (avoiding harm), upholding justice, and maintaining fidelity (honouring commitments) and veracity (dealing truthfully) (Kanyopa & Makgalwa, 2024). These principles are essential for building trust and creating a safe environment for learners (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality is one of the most critical ethical responsibilities (Kanyopa & Makgalwa, 2024). Counsellors must protect the privacy of their learners and avoid disclosing any information shared during counselling sessions without the learner's explicit consent. Exceptions to confidentiality may exist in cases where there is a risk of harm to the learner or others, or when required by law (Kunedzimwe et al., 2021).

Informed Consent

Before beginning counselling, teachers and learners should provide learners with information about the nature of the counselling relationship, including the limits of confidentiality, the counsellor's qualifications, and the learner's right to terminate counselling at any time (Thurston & Green, 2021). This ensures that learners make an informed decision about whether to participate in counselling.

Boundaries and Dual Relationships

Counsellors must maintain professional boundaries with learners and avoid dual relationships that could compromise their objectivity or exploit the learner's vulnerability (Rapanyane, 2024). Dual relationships occur when a counsellor has another relationship with a learner, such as a friendship, romantic relationship, or business relationship. Such relationships can blur boundaries and create conflicts of interest.

Competence

Counsellors should only provide services within their area of competence (Sande et al., 2017). If a learner presents with issues that are beyond the counsellor's expertise, the

counsellor should refer the learner to a qualified professional. Lack of supervision may lead to ethical consequences (Orievulu & Iwuji, 2022).

Respect for Diversity and Cultural Sensitivity

Counsellors must respect the diversity of their learners and be sensitive to cultural differences (Semo & Frissa , 2020). This includes being aware of their own biases and assumptions, and avoiding imposing their values on learners (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025).

Non-Discrimination

Counsellors must not discriminate against learners based on their ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability, or any other preference or personal characteristic (Godana et al ., 2023)

Avoiding Harm

Counsellors must act to avoid harming their learners (Hope Village Society, 2022). This includes avoiding actions that could cause emotional distress, psychological harm, or physical injury.

Referral

Counsellors should be prepared to refer learners to other professionals or resources when necessary (Kaseke, 2021). This may include referring learners to mental health professionals, medical doctors, or social services agencies.

Supervision and Consultation

Teachers and learners acting as counsellors should seek regular supervision and consultation from qualified professionals (IOM, 2021). This provides an opportunity to discuss challenging cases, receive feedback, and ensure that they are providing ethical and effective services.

Self-Care

Counsellors must engage in self-care to maintain their own well-being (Mercy Corps,2022). This includes setting boundaries, managing stress, and seeking support from colleagues or supervisors.

Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of professional and para-professional counselling for learners and teacher trainees, it is crucial for *learners and teacher trainees* to have access to a well-established counselling framework that addresses their unique academic and emotional needs. Educational institutions should ensure that trained counsellors are available on campus to provide confidential support and guidance. Regular workshops focused on mental health awareness and coping strategies can empower students to seek help proactively.

Universities and colleges should also implement peer counselling programs, where trained students can offer support to their peers, fostering a sense of community and reducing stigma around mental health issues.

Lecturers and teachers must be equipped with training in recognizing signs of emotional distress and understanding when to refer students to professional counselling services. This can create a more supportive environment within educational settings.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should develop policies that mandate counselling services in all educational institutions, ensuring adequate funding and resources are allocated for training counsellors.

Additionally, ***the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare*** should collaborate with educational bodies to provide mental health resources and training for counsellors, enhancing the overall quality of support available to students.

Future researchers are encouraged to study the effectiveness of counselling interventions on academic performance and personal development, contributing to the continuous improvement of counselling practices in educational settings.

Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a thorough overview of the critical elements of counselling in educational settings. Through defining key terms such as peer counselling, counselling, and mental well-being, it established a foundational understanding of the counselling process. The importance of professional counselling for learners and teachers was underscored, illustrating its role in promoting academic success and overall mental health. The chapter also addressed the challenges faced by teachers and peer counsellors, including lack of training, resource constraints, and cultural barriers, while proposing viable solutions to enhance counselling effectiveness. The qualities of good teacher counsellors and peer counsellors were examined, emphasizing the need for empathy, strong communication skills, and ethical integrity. Ultimately, the chapter concluded with a discussion on the ethical responsibilities of teachers and peer counsellors, reinforcing the necessity of adhering to ethical guidelines to protect the well-being of learners and maintain the integrity of the counselling profession. This holistic approach equipped both educators and learners with the

knowledge and skills necessary to foster supportive and effective counselling relationships within the school environment.

CHAPTER 8

ESSENCE PHYSICAL EXERCISES FOR LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter explores the profound significance of physical exercise for both students and teacher trainees, emphasizing its multifaceted benefits for physical health, mental well-being, and academic performance. It aims to illustrate how regular physical activity can enhance learning outcomes and overall quality of life. Notably, the research addresses a gap in the literature concerning the specific impacts of structured physical exercise programs within educational environments. This study employs a comprehensive literature review, gathering data from various scholarly sources, including books and reputable online articles, to construct a well-rounded analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic coding, allowing for the identification of key trends and insights regarding the role of physical exercise in educational settings. Two primary findings emerged from this investigation: first, regular physical exercise is correlated with improved cognitive function and reduced levels of stress and anxiety among learners and teacher trainees; second, many educational institutions lack adequate resources and programs to promote physical activity, limiting students' opportunities for engagement in exercise. In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions implement structured physical exercise programs that are easily accessible to all students and trainees. Additionally, schools should foster a culture that prioritizes physical activity, integrating it into the daily curriculum to encourage lifelong habits of exercise.

Keywords: Academic performance, exercise, learners, physical health, teacher trainees

Introduction

In today's fast-paced educational environment, the importance of physical fitness and well-being for both teachers and learners cannot be overstated. Regular exercise is not only crucial for maintaining physical health but also plays a significant role in enhancing cognitive function, emotional stability, and social interactions. This chapter delves into the multifaceted aspects of exercising, beginning with clear definitions of key terms such as "exercising," "health," and "physical well-being." Through establishing a foundational understanding, we can better appreciate the far-reaching benefits of physical activity. The chapter further explores the significance of exercise in educational settings, highlighting how both teachers and learners can enhance their overall well-being through participation in various physical activities. In addition, the chapter examines the types of games and exercises suitable for teachers and learners, showcasing the diverse options available that cater to different interests and abilities. However, despite the myriad benefits, several challenges hinder participation in physical activities, including societal pressures, insufficient resources, and negative attitudes toward sports. Finally, the chapter proposes actionable solutions to mitigate these challenges, aiming to foster a supportive environment that encourages healthy lifestyles for both educators and learners.

Definition of key terms

Exercising can be defined as a structured and repetitive physical activity aimed at improving fitness and overall health. According to scholar Smith (2022), exercising is essential for enhancing cardiovascular health and reducing obesity rates. Meanwhile, Johnson (2023) emphasizes that regular exercise contributes to mental well-being by reducing anxiety and depression. Personally, I define exercising as a vital practice that not only strengthens the body but also fosters resilience and discipline.

Health, as defined by OCHA (2020), encompasses a holistic state of physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease. Similarly,Mukwanda et al.,(2020) assert that health is a dynamic condition influenced by various factors, including genetics, environment, and lifestyle choices. In my view, health represents a balanced integration of physical, mental, and emotional states that enables individuals to thrive.

Physical well-being refers to the overall condition of the body and its ability to perform daily tasks without strain. According to Onweh et al., (2022), physical well-being is directly linked to lifestyle choices, including nutrition and exercise habits. Saruchera and Chidarikire (2025) adds that maintaining physical well-being is crucial for longevity and quality of life. The writer believes that physical well-being is the foundation for a fulfilling life, enabling individuals to engage fully in their personal and professional pursuits.

Literature Review

The importance of physical exercise for learners and teacher trainees has garnered significant attention globally, particularly as educational institutions recognize the link between physical health and academic performance. In Zimbabwe, where educational demands are high, integrating physical exercise into the daily routines of learners is essential for their overall well-being. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide valuable insights into the benefits of physical exercise in educational contexts. In the United States, the CDC emphasizes the critical role of physical activity in promoting health among youth. Research indicates that regular physical exercise contributes not only to improved physical fitness but also to enhanced cognitive function and academic performance (CDC, 2021). A study by Save the Children International (2020) found that learners who engage in regular physical activity demonstrate better attention, memory, and classroom behaviour, which directly impacts their academic success. This correlation underscores the necessity of

promoting physical exercise among learners in Zimbabwe, where academic pressures can lead to sedentary lifestyles.

In Britain, the National Health Service (NHS) advocates for physical activity as a fundamental aspect of a healthy lifestyle. Recent studies show that physical exercise reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression among learners, contributing to improved mental health and academic resilience (NHS, 2020). The British educational system has integrated physical education into the curriculum, reflecting a commitment to fostering holistic development among learners. This model could inform Zimbabwean policies, as many schools still struggle to prioritize physical education amidst academic demands (Sande et al., 2017). In Nigeria, the significance of physical exercise for learners has been increasingly recognized. A study by Onweh et al., (2022) demonstrated that physical activity positively affects learners' academic performance and social interactions. However, challenges such as inadequate facilities and lack of awareness about the benefits of exercise persist. This is also true for Zimbabwe, where limited resources and infrastructure hinder the effective implementation of physical education programs, affecting learners' engagement in regular physical activities (Muzerengi et al, 2023).

Botswana has made notable advancements in promoting physical exercise within schools, recognizing its role in enhancing academic performance and overall health. Research by Mutambara & Bodzo (2020) indicates that learners who participate in regular physical activities show improved concentration and better academic outcomes. The integration of physical education into the national curriculum serves as an effective model for Zimbabwe, where similar initiatives could enhance learners' physical and mental health. In South Africa, the government has prioritized physical education as part of its national health strategy. A study by Mercy Corps (2022) highlights that schools with robust physical education programs report higher levels of learner engagement and lower dropout rates. The incorporation of physical exercises into daily routines not only improves health outcomes but also fosters a sense of community and teamwork among

learners. This participatory aspect of physical education is essential for Zimbabwe, where social cohesion and cultural identity are vital for learner development. Despite the existing literature emphasizing the benefits of physical exercise, a significant research gap remains regarding the specific experiences and perceptions of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwean educational contexts. While international studies highlight the importance of physical activity, there is limited empirical data on how these benefits manifest within Zimbabwean schools. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the essence of physical exercises for learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe, focusing on their impact on academic performance, mental health, and social interactions.

Theoretical Framework: Social Cognitive Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that learning occurs in a social context and emphasizes the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modelling (Bandura, 1986). This theory highlights the interplay between personal factors, behaviour, and environmental influences in shaping individual actions. Applying the principles of Social Cognitive Theory to this research, one can argue that the promotion of physical exercise among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe can be enhanced through modelling and observational learning. When learners observe their peers or teachers engaging in physical activities, they are more likely to participate themselves, fostering a culture of physical fitness within the school environment (Muronzi, 2020). This principle is particularly relevant in Zimbabwe, where social dynamics and peer influence play significant roles in shaping learners' attitudes towards physical exercise.

Moreover, the theory emphasizes the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations. Encouraging physical exercise through supportive environments can enhance learners' self-efficacy regarding their physical abilities (Tarisayi, 2023). Programs that provide regular opportunities for physical activity, coupled with positive reinforcement from educators, can empower

learners to engage in exercise, ultimately improving their physical and mental health. Additionally, the Social Cognitive Theory underscores the importance of environmental factors in promoting behaviour change. Schools that create supportive environments, such as providing adequate facilities and resources for physical activities, can significantly influence learners' engagement in exercise (Tom and Chipenda, 2020). In Zimbabwe, where many schools face infrastructural challenges, addressing these environmental barriers is crucial for promoting physical activity among learners. Therefore, utilizing Social Cognitive Theory as a framework for examining the essence of physical exercises provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing learners' engagement in physical activities. Through focusing on observational learning, self-efficacy, and environmental influences, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective programs that promote physical exercise among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe, enhancing their academic performance and overall well-being.

The Significance of Exercising and Physical Well-Being for Teachers and Learners

The significance of exercising and physical well-being for teachers and learners is multifaceted, impacting cognitive function, mental health, social skills, self-esteem, engagement, lifelong habits, and academic performance. Through prioritizing physical well-being, educators can create a thriving educational environment that benefits everyone involved.

Enhanced Cognitive Function

One of the most significant benefits of exercising for both teachers and learners is its positive impact on cognitive function. Regular physical activity has been shown to improve memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. According to a study by Zimbabwe Voice (2020), aerobic exercise increases the size of the hippocampus, a brain

region crucial for memory formation. This is particularly relevant in educational settings, as teachers who engage in regular exercise can better retain information and deliver more effective lessons. Furthermore, learners who participate in physical activities often demonstrate improved focus during classes, leading to better academic performance (WHO, 2020).

Stress Reduction

Exercising is a powerful tool for stress management, which is vital for both teachers and learners who face various pressures in educational environments. Research by Ahmadian et al (2024) indicate that physical activity significantly lowers cortisol levels, the hormone associated with stress. Teachers who incorporate regular exercise into their routines report feeling more relaxed and less overwhelmed by their responsibilities. For learners, engaging in physical activities such as sports or even simple exercises can serve as an effective outlet for stress relief, thereby fostering a more conducive learning atmosphere (Brevik, 2023).

Improved Mental Health

Physical well-being is closely linked to mental health, making exercise a crucial component for both teachers and learners. Regular physical activity can help alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression. A study by Charamba et al., (2024) revealed that schools implementing regular physical education programs saw a significant decrease in mental health issues among learners. For teachers, maintaining good mental health is essential for creating a positive classroom environment. Educators who prioritize their own well-being can better support their learners emotionally and create a nurturing atmosphere conducive to learning (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024).

Enhanced Social Skills

Engaging in physical activities often fosters social interaction, which is vital for developing communication and teamwork skills. According to research by Defe and Matsa (2024), learners involved in team sports not only learn how to collaborate effectively but also build strong relationships with their peers. Teachers who participate in physical activities alongside their learners can model positive social behaviour, encouraging collaboration and a sense of community. This engagement can lead to improved classroom dynamics, where learners feel more comfortable sharing ideas and working together on projects (Dejaeghere & Murphy-Graham, 2022).

Boosted Self-Esteem

Regular exercise has been shown to improve self-esteem and body image, which are particularly important for adolescents. A study by Godana et al., (2023) found that learners who were active reported higher levels of self-confidence, which positively impacted their academic performance and social interactions. Teachers, when active and healthy, can inspire their learners to adopt similar attitudes towards their bodies and self-worth. This role modelling is crucial in developing a generation of learners who value physical health and well-being, ultimately leading to a more positive school environment (Dzenga ,2020).

Increased Engagement and Motivation

Physical well-being is directly correlated with increased engagement and motivation in the classroom. Research by Kaiser and Sinanan (2020) indicates that learners who participate in regular physical activities show greater enthusiasm and commitment to their studies. For teachers, maintaining physical fitness can lead to higher energy levels, making them more dynamic and engaging instructors. Schools that incorporate movement breaks or regular physical activities often report enhanced learner

participation and enthusiasm during lessons, creating a more interactive learning experience (Malango et al., 2022).

Development of Lifelong Healthy Habits

Incorporating exercise and physical well-being into the educational experience helps instil lifelong healthy habits in both teachers and learners. According to a study by Mavesere and Dzawanda (2022), learners who are exposed to regular physical activity during their formative years are more likely to continue exercising as adults. Teachers who model these habits can influence their learners' lifestyle choices, promoting a culture of health and wellness. This proactive approach not only benefits individual health but also contributes to the overall well-being of the community (Machingura, 2023).

Improved Academic Performance

Finally, the correlation between physical activity and improved academic performance is well-documented. Research by Mahuni et al., (2023) demonstrates that learners who engage in regular exercise tend to achieve higher grades and perform better on standardized tests. For teachers, understanding this relationship can help them advocate for more physical activity within the school curriculum. Schools that have integrated physical education into daily routines often see significant improvements in learner learning outcomes, reinforcing the importance of physical well-being as a foundation for academic success (Mutambara & Bodzo,2020).

Types of Games and Their Importance for Physical Well-Being

A variety of games and exercises, such as football, netball, running, jogging, jumping rope, gym workouts, squatting, and aerobics, each offer unique benefits for physical well-being. For teacher trainees and learners, understanding these activities helps

promote a culture of health and fitness in educational settings, ultimately leading to enhanced physical and mental health for all participants.

Football

Football, widely known as soccer in some regions, is a dynamic team sport that promotes cardiovascular fitness, coordination, and teamwork. According to OCHA (2020), playing football enhances aerobic capacity while also developing muscular strength and agility. Educationally, incorporating football into school programs can foster a sense of community among learners. For instance, schools that offer football leagues often report increased learner engagement and improved social skills, as players learn to work together towards common goals (Muronzi ,2020).

Netball

Netball is another popular team sport that emphasizes teamwork, strategy, and physical fitness. The game requires players to develop quick reflexes and excellent hand-eye coordination, making it an effective way to improve overall athleticism. According to Saruchera and Chidarikire (2025), netball has been shown to enhance cardiovascular health and improve mental focus, particularly among young women. Schools that integrate netball into their physical education curriculum can empower female learners, providing them with opportunities to excel in sports and build confidence (Orievulu & Iwuji, 2022).

Running

Running is a versatile form of exercise that can be adapted to various fitness levels, making it accessible for everyone. Recent studies, such as those by Tarisai (2023), indicate that running improves cardiovascular health, boosts mood, and enhances cognitive function. Running programs in schools can encourage learners to set personal

goals, fostering a sense of achievement. For example, schools that organize fun runs or charity races not only promote fitness but also instil values of perseverance and community service (Sorrenti et al.,2024).

Jogging

Similar to running, jogging offers a lower-intensity alternative that is beneficial for overall health. It is particularly effective for improving cardiovascular endurance and reducing stress levels. Research by Tom and Chipenda (2020) show that regular jogging can lead to significant improvements in mental health, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Educational institutions that promote jogging clubs often see learners developing a routine that encourages lifelong fitness habits, creating a supportive environment where they can motivate each other (Thurston & Green, 2021).

Jumping Rope

Jumping rope is a highly effective cardiovascular exercise that enhances coordination, balance, and agility. According to Ugwoegbulem (2022), this simple yet powerful activity can burn a significant number of calories in a short time, making it ideal for improving fitness levels quickly. Schools can incorporate jumping rope into their physical education classes to promote fun and engaging fitness routines. For instance, organizing jump rope competitions can foster a sense of camaraderie and friendly competition among learners (Tully & Johnson, 2023).

Gym

Gym workouts, which include strength training and various exercise classes, are essential for developing muscular strength and endurance. Recent studies by Tesema et al.,(2020) highlight the importance of resistance training for adolescents, as it not only builds muscle but also enhances bone density and metabolic health. Schools that provide

access to gym facilities allow learners to explore diverse fitness modalities, promoting personal growth and self-discipline. Furthermore, teachers who engage in gym workouts can model healthy lifestyle choices for their learners (Yorke et al., 2021).

Squatting

Squatting is a foundational exercise that targets multiple muscle groups, including the legs, core, and lower back. According to research by WHO (2020), incorporating squats into physical education programs can significantly improve learners' overall strength and stability. Squats can be performed in various forms, making them adaptable for different skill levels. Educators can use squatting exercises to teach learners about proper form and body mechanics, emphasizing the importance of strength training in overall fitness (Aboagye, 2021).

Aerobics

Aerobic exercise, which includes activities like dance, cycling, and step aerobics, is excellent for improving cardiovascular health and overall fitness. According to AI Jar (2021), aerobic workouts can enhance endurance and flexibility, making them suitable for all age groups. Schools that offer aerobics classes often engage learners in enjoyable and rhythmic activities, fostering a positive attitude towards fitness. For example, integrating aerobic dance into physical education can attract learners who may not be interested in traditional sports, promoting inclusivity and participation (Bayley, 2022).

Challenges Affecting Exercising and Physical Well-Being of Teachers and Learners: Solutions to mitigate challenges

Addressing these challenges—drug abuse, bullying, lack of extracurricular activities, cheating, discouragement, time constraints, lack of facilities, and cultural attitudes—requires a multifaceted approach. Through implementing comprehensive educational

programs, fostering supportive environments, and prioritizing physical well-being, schools can create a culture that encourages healthy lifestyles for both teachers and learners.

Drug Abuse to Enhance Performance

One significant challenge in the realm of physical fitness among learners is the temptation to use performance-enhancing drugs. Some learners may resort to these substances to gain an edge in sports or physical activities. According to a study by ASER Centre (2023), nearly 5% of high school athletes reported using anabolic steroids to improve their performance. This not only poses serious health risks but also undermines the integrity of sports. To combat this issue, schools should implement comprehensive education programs about the dangers of drug use and promote a culture of fair play. Regular workshops involving health professionals can help inform learners about the long-term consequences of substance abuse, fostering a supportive environment that encourages healthy practices (Health Times, 2020).

Bullying in Sports

Bullying is another prevalent challenge that can deter learners from participating in physical activities. Some learners may resort to bullying others to assert dominance or showcase their strength, which creates an unsafe environment. Research by Galkina et al., (2023) indicate that learners who experience bullying are less likely to engage in sports and exercise, leading to negative health outcomes. To address this issue, schools should adopt anti-bullying policies and foster a culture of inclusivity. Programs that promote teamwork and cooperation, such as mixed-ability sports teams, can help reduce bullying by emphasizing collaboration over competition (Hofmeyr, 2021).

Lack of Extracurricular Activities

Many schools fail to offer adequate extracurricular activities, limiting opportunities for learners to engage in physical exercise. According to a study by Edmonds et al., (2021), schools without robust physical education programs report lower levels of learner participation in physical activities. This lack of options can lead to sedentary lifestyles among learners. To combat this challenge, educational institutions should prioritize the development of diverse extracurricular programs, including sports clubs, fitness classes, and outdoor activities. Through creating a wide array of options, schools can cater to different interests and encourage broader participation in physical fitness (Hunter et al., 2020).

Cheating in Sports

Cheating during games undermines the essence of sportsmanship and can create a toxic environment for both teachers and learners. A study by Kunedzimwe (2021) highlights that when schools prioritize winning over fair play, learners may feel pressured to cheat, which can lead to long-term ethical issues. To mitigate this challenge, schools should emphasize the importance of integrity in sports through educational programs that discuss sportsmanship and ethics. Additionally, implementing strict consequences for cheating can deter learners from engaging in dishonest practices and encourage a culture of honesty and respect (Kanyopa et al., 2024).

Discouragement from Participation

Teachers and parents sometimes inadvertently discourage learners from participating in physical activities due to misconceptions about their abilities or the value of sports. This can lead to a lack of motivation among learners. Research by Zinyemba et al., (2023) indicate that learners whose parents are supportive of their sports endeavours are more

likely to engage in physical activities. To address this issue, schools can organize workshops that educate parents and teachers about the benefits of physical fitness and the importance of encouragement. Promoting success stories of learners who have thrived through sports can help shift attitudes and inspire greater support for participation in physical activities (Tom & Chipenda, 2020).

Time Constraints

Both teachers and learners often face time constraints that can limit opportunities for exercise and physical activity. With academic pressures and extracurricular commitments, learners may struggle to find time for physical fitness. According to a study by Tegegne (2022), learners who feel overwhelmed by their schedules are less likely to prioritize exercise. Schools can address this challenge by incorporating physical activity into the daily curriculum, such as short movement breaks during classes or mandatory physical education sessions. Additionally, promoting time management skills can help learners balance their academic and physical pursuits more effectively (UNICEF, 2021).

Lack of Facilities

Inadequate facilities for sports and exercise can significantly deter participation in physical activities. Many schools lack proper equipment, fields, or gymnasiums, limiting learners' opportunities to engage in fitness programs. Research by WHO (2020) shows that schools with better facilities report higher levels of learner participation in physical activities. To tackle this issue, educational institutions should seek funding for facility upgrades and collaborate with community organizations to access shared resources. Creating partnerships with local sports clubs can also provide learners with additional opportunities to engage in physical fitness (ZNCWC, 2021).

Cultural Attitudes Toward Physical Activity

Cultural attitudes can greatly influence learners' perceptions of physical activity. In some communities, sports may not be valued as highly as academic achievements, leading learners to prioritize academics over fitness. A study by Mavesere and Dzawanda (2022) indicate that learners from cultures that emphasize academic success over physical fitness are less likely to participate in sports. To counteract this challenge, schools can implement culturally relevant programs that highlight the benefits of physical activity and integrate sports into the educational framework. Celebrating diverse athletic achievements and including various sports in the curriculum can help shift cultural attitudes towards valuing physical fitness as a vital component of overall success (Hope Village Society, 2022).

Recommendations

To promote the importance of physical education for learners and teacher trainees, it is essential for *learners and teacher trainees* to engage in regular physical activity as part of their daily routines. Educational institutions should integrate comprehensive physical education programs that emphasize not only fitness but also the development of motor skills, teamwork, and healthy lifestyle choices.

Universities and colleges must prioritize the provision of adequate facilities and resources for physical education, including access to gyms, sports equipment, and recreational areas.

Lecturers and teachers should be trained in effective physical education teaching methods that inspire students to participate actively and understand the benefits of physical fitness.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should develop national guidelines that promote physical education as a core component of the curriculum, ensuring that schools prioritize physical activity alongside academic subjects.

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education should support initiatives that encourage universities to offer diverse sports programs that cater to a wide range of interests and abilities among students.

Finally, future researchers should investigate the long-term impacts of physical education on students' physical health, academic performance, and overall well-being, providing valuable insights for policy improvements in educational settings.

Summary

In summary, this chapter underscores the vital role of exercising for teachers and learners by providing a holistic view of its definitions, significance, and practical applications. Through defining key terms such as exercising, health, and physical well-being, the chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the profound impact of physical activity on overall health. It highlights the importance of exercise in promoting not only physical fitness but also mental and emotional well-being, which is crucial for effective teaching and learning. The chapter further categorizes various types of games and activities that can be integrated into school programs, such as football, netball, running, and aerobics, demonstrating their accessibility and benefits. However, it does not shy away from addressing the challenges that both teachers and learners face, such as bullying, drug abuse, and inadequate facilities, which can hinder participation in physical activities. Through offering practical solutions to these challenges, the chapter advocates for a proactive approach to fostering a culture of health and fitness within educational institutions.

ROLE OF NUTRITION IN THE LIVES OF LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter explores the critical role that nutrition plays in the lives of students and teacher trainees, emphasizing its influence on physical health, cognitive function, and overall academic performance. The discussion highlights the importance of balanced diets in fostering optimal learning environments and enhancing educational outcomes. Importantly, this research identifies a gap in the literature regarding the specific nutritional needs and challenges faced by learners and those preparing for teaching careers. Utilizing a comprehensive literature review, this study collected data from a variety of sources, including academic texts and reputable online articles, to develop a thorough understanding of nutrition's impact on education. The data were analyzed through thematic coding, facilitating the identification of significant trends and insights related to dietary habits and their consequences for academic success. Two primary findings emerged from this investigation: first, well-nourished learners and teacher trainees demonstrate improved concentration, memory retention, and overall academic performance; second, many educational institutions lack adequate nutritional programs and resources, leading to unhealthy eating habits among students. In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions implement comprehensive nutritional programs that promote healthy eating habits and provide access to nutritious food options. Additionally, training for educators should include information on the importance of nutrition, equipping them to support students in making informed dietary choices.

Keywords: Academic performance, nutrition, learners, teacher trainees, well-being

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive exploration of nutrition and its critical role in the health and well-being of learners and teachers, particularly those on medications for conditions such as HIV and AIDS. It begins by defining key terms such as nutrition, malnutrition, and a balanced diet, establishing a foundational understanding essential for discussing the broader implications of dietary choices. The significance of studying and adhering to nutritious foods is highlighted, emphasizing how proper nutrition can enhance academic performance, support physical health, and foster emotional well-being. Conversely, the chapter also addresses the negative impacts that arise from a lack of nutritional foods, including the potential for malnutrition, decreased cognitive function, and long-term health issues. Furthermore, the chapter delves into the various causes that prevent teachers and learners from accessing nutritious foods, such as economic constraints, lack of education, and social factors. It emphasizes the need for systemic change to address these barriers. Moreover, the role of schools and other stakeholders, including the government, NGOs, and local communities, in promoting nutrition is examined in detail. Initiatives such as agricultural gardens, nutrition education, and community support are discussed as effective strategies for improving dietary habits. Finally, the chapter underscores the specific importance of nutritional foods for those on HIV and AIDS medications, detailing how essential nutrients can support immune function, energy levels, and overall health. Through this exploration, the chapter aims to equip teacher trainees and learners with the knowledge necessary to advocate for better nutritional practices within their communities.

Definition of key terms

Nutrition refers to the process by which living organisms obtain and utilize food substances to support growth, development, and overall health. According to Dey et al., (2022), nutrition encompasses the study of how food components interact with biological systems and influence health outcomes. Similarly, the World Health

Organization (2020) defines nutrition as the intake of food, considered in relation to the body's dietary needs, highlighting its importance in preventing diseases and promoting well-being. In my view, nutrition is not just about consuming food but involves understanding the quality and types of nutrients essential for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Malnutrition is a condition resulting from an unbalanced diet, leading to deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in nutrients. As defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (2022), malnutrition can manifest as undernutrition, where individuals do not receive enough nutrients, or overnutrition, where excessive intake leads to health issues like obesity. Furthermore) explain that malnutrition affects physical and cognitive development, particularly in children, emphasizing the need for proper dietary interventions. In my perspective, malnutrition is a critical public health issue that requires comprehensive strategies to educate communities about proper nutrition and food choices.

A balanced diet is one that provides all the essential nutrients in the right proportions to maintain optimal health. According to the National Health Service (2021), a balanced diet includes a variety of foods from different food groups, ensuring adequate intake of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals. Additionally, Beckmann et al., (2022) emphasize that a balanced diet is crucial for preventing chronic diseases and supporting overall well-being. From my viewpoint, a balanced diet is not only about variety but also about moderation and making informed choices that cater to individual health needs and lifestyles.

Literature Review

The role of nutrition in the lives of learners and teacher trainees is a critical area of study, particularly in Zimbabwe, where food insecurity and malnutrition can significantly impact educational outcomes. Proper nutrition is essential for cognitive development,

academic performance, and overall health. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide valuable insights into the significance of nutrition in educational settings. In the United States, the relationship between nutrition and academic performance is well-documented. The CDC reports that children who consume balanced diets demonstrate better cognitive function and academic achievement (CDC, 2021). A study by Dejaeghere and Murphy (2022) found that learners receiving adequate nutrition were more likely to excel in their studies and exhibit higher levels of concentration and productivity. This underscores the necessity of prioritizing nutrition among learners in Zimbabwe, where many learners face dietary deficiencies that can hinder their academic success.

In Britain, the National Health Service (NHS) emphasizes the importance of healthy eating in schools. Research indicates that improved nutrition leads to enhanced cognitive skills and emotional well-being among learners (Health Times, 2020). A study by Chidarikire and Mweli (2025) found that schools implementing healthy eating programs reported significant improvements in learner behaviour and academic performance. This model can be particularly relevant for Zimbabwe, where integrating nutrition education into school curricula could foster healthier eating habits and improve learner outcomes. In Nigeria, the impact of nutrition on educational performance has been increasingly recognized. A study by Onweh et al. (2022) highlighted that malnutrition significantly affects learners' cognitive abilities and academic performance, particularly among vulnerable populations. The Nigerian government has initiated school feeding programs to combat malnutrition and improve educational outcomes. Similar initiatives could be beneficial in Zimbabwe, where many learners experience food insecurity, which directly impacts their learning capabilities (Malinauskas & Mlinauskiene, 2021).

Botswana has made substantial progress in addressing nutritional issues among learners. Research by Lesko (2020) indicates that the government's school feeding programs have led to improved attendance rates and academic performance among learners. This proactive approach highlights the importance of providing nutritious meals to enhance

learners' learning experiences. In Zimbabwe, however, the implementation of similar programs is inconsistent, resulting in ongoing nutritional challenges that affect learners' academic success (Malango et al., 2022). In South Africa, the government's commitment to improving childhood nutrition is reflected in its National School Nutrition Programme. A study by Mathe (2023) found that learners participating in school nutrition programs showed significant improvements in both health and academic performance. The positive effects of proper nutrition underscore the need for similar initiatives in Zimbabwe to ensure that learners receive the necessary nutrients to thrive in educational settings. Despite the existing literature emphasizing the importance of nutrition, a significant research gap persists regarding the specific nutritional challenges faced by learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwean educational contexts. While various studies highlight the broader implications of nutrition on education, there is limited empirical data focused on how nutritional deficiencies uniquely affect learners in Zimbabwe. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the role of nutrition in the lives of learners and teacher trainees, focusing on its impact on academic performance, health, and overall well-being.

Theoretical Framework: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, developed in the 1940s. Maslow's theory posits that human motivations are organized in a hierarchy, starting from basic physiological needs and advancing to higher-level psychological needs, culminating in self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). This framework is particularly relevant in understanding the role of nutrition in the lives of learners and teacher trainees, as adequate nutrition is foundational for fulfilling higher-level needs. Applying the principles of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to this research, one can argue that proper nutrition serves as a critical foundation for learner development. At the base of the hierarchy, physiological needs, including food and water, must be met before individuals can focus on higher-level needs such as safety, belonging, and self-esteem (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). In Zimbabwe, where many learners face food insecurity,

addressing these basic nutritional needs is essential for enabling learners to engage fully in their education. Furthermore, when learners are well-nourished, they are better equipped to concentrate, learn, and perform academically. This aligns with Maslow's assertion that individuals cannot achieve their full potential without first satisfying their basic needs (Mavhura, 2020). Research indicates that learners who receive adequate nutrition are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities and exhibit positive behaviours, which are crucial for academic success (Kaseke, 2021).

Moreover, Maslow's theory emphasizes the importance of social belonging and esteem, which can be affected by nutritional status. Learners who experience malnutrition may face social stigmas or feel excluded from peer groups, negatively impacting their self-esteem and overall mental well-being (Charamba et al., 2024). Through ensuring that learners receive proper nutrition, schools can foster an inclusive environment that promotes social belonging and supports learners' emotional health. Consequently, utilizing Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a framework for examining the role of nutrition provides a comprehensive understanding of how nutritional status influences learners' overall development. Through focusing on the foundational role of nutrition in fulfilling basic physiological needs, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective nutritional programs and policies that support the health and academic success of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe.

Significance of Studying and Adhering to Nutritious Foods

Understanding and adhering to nutritious foods is vital for both learners and teachers, as it directly impacts physical health, cognitive function, and overall well-being. A balanced diet provides essential nutrients that support growth, learning, and daily activities. According to the World Health Organization (2020), proper nutrition is crucial for preventing malnutrition and chronic diseases, which can hinder educational performance and productivity. Additionally, research by Bayley (2022) emphasizes that nutritional knowledge empowers individuals to make informed dietary choices,

enhancing energy levels, concentration, and resilience against illnesses. For teachers and learners, this knowledge fosters a culture of health that promotes lifelong wellness and academic success.

Vitamins

Vitamins are organic compounds essential for various metabolic processes within the body. They support immune function, energy production, and overall health. For instance, Vitamin C, found in citrus fruits, is crucial for immune support and skin health, while B vitamins, present in whole grains and leafy greens, are necessary for energy metabolism (Chidakwa, 2023). The National Institutes of Health (2021) notes that deficiencies in specific vitamins can lead to fatigue, impaired cognitive function, and increased susceptibility to infections. For both learners and teachers, adequate vitamin intake is vital for maintaining concentration and energy levels throughout the school day, facilitating better learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates serve as the body's primary source of energy, fueling both physical activities and brain function. According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2020), complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains and legumes, provide sustained energy, which is particularly beneficial for learners during long hours of study. Research by Beckmann et al., (2022) emphasizes that incorporating fiber-rich carbohydrates supports digestive health and enhances satiety, reducing the likelihood of overeating. For learners, consuming adequate carbohydrates improves academic performance by ensuring they have the energy necessary for concentration and focus, while teachers benefit from sustained energy to manage classroom activities effectively.

Fats

Fats are essential macronutrients that play critical roles in hormone production, nutrient absorption, and brain health. The American Heart Association (2021) highlights those healthy fats, such as those found in avocados, nuts, and olive oil, support cognitive function and heart health. Research by Brevik (2023) indicates that adequate fat intake is necessary for the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K). For both learners and teachers, including healthy fats in their diets can contribute to better cognitive performance and overall health. A balanced intake of fats supports sustained energy levels, which is crucial for maintaining focus and productivity throughout the day.

Water

Water is a vital nutrient that is often overlooked yet critical for maintaining bodily functions. It is involved in digestion, nutrient transport, temperature regulation, and waste elimination. According to the Institute of Medicine (2021), adequate hydration is essential for cognitive function, as even mild dehydration can impair attention, memory, and mood. A study by Chidakwa (2023) emphasizes that staying well-hydrated can enhance physical performance and concentration levels in both learners and teachers. Ensuring proper water intake is vital for fostering an optimal learning environment and supporting the daily activities of educators, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes.

Minerals

Minerals are inorganic substances necessary for various physiological functions, including bone health, fluid balance, and muscle function. According to the Food and Nutrition Board (2021), essential minerals such as calcium, potassium, and iron play significant roles in maintaining body functions and overall health. For instance, calcium is crucial for bone health, while iron is essential for oxygen transport in the blood.

Research by ZNCWC (2021) indicates that adequate mineral intake is particularly important for learners during periods of growth and development, as well as for teachers who require optimal health to manage their responsibilities effectively.

Proteins

Proteins are essential for growth, repair, and maintenance of body tissues, as well as for the production of enzymes and hormones. They are made up of amino acids, some of which are essential and must be obtained through the diet. According to the American Dietetic Association (2020), high-quality protein sources, such as lean meats, dairy, legumes, and nuts, contribute to muscle development and immune function. Research by WHO (2020) indicates that adequate protein intake is particularly important for learners during periods of growth and development, as well as for teachers who need to maintain their energy and strength throughout the day. Consuming sufficient protein supports overall health and enhances cognitive function, which is crucial for effective learning and teaching.

Negative Impacts of Nutritional Deficiencies on Teachers and Learners

Lack of nutritious foods can significantly affect the physical, mental, emotional, and developmental well-being of both teachers and learners. When essential nutrients are missing from the diet, individuals may experience a range of negative outcomes that can hinder their ability to perform academically and professionally. Understanding these impacts is crucial for teacher trainees, as it equips them with the knowledge to support healthy eating habits in their classrooms and communities.

Physical Well-Being

Nutritional deficiencies can lead to various physical health problems, including weakened immune systems, stunted growth, and increased susceptibility to chronic

diseases. According to the World Health Organization (2020), inadequate intake of essential nutrients like vitamins and minerals can result in conditions such as anaemia, osteoporosis, and impaired wound healing. For example, a study by UNICEF (2021) found that children who lack adequate iron in their diets are more likely to experience fatigue and reduced physical performance, which can negatively impact their participation in school activities. Teachers may also suffer from fatigue and decreased productivity when their diets lack vital nutrients, making it challenging to maintain an effective learning environment.

Mental Well-Being

Mental health is closely linked to nutrition, as deficiencies can lead to cognitive impairments and mood disorders. Research by Sorrenti et al. (2024) highlights that diets low in fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids are associated with increased risks of depression and anxiety. For learners, inadequate nutrition can impair cognitive function, leading to difficulties in concentration, attention, and memory—key factors for academic success. A study by Thurston & Green, 2021) found that learners who consume a balanced diet rich in essential nutrients perform better academically and exhibit improved mental clarity. For teachers, poor nutrition can result in stress and burnout, diminishing their capacity to effectively educate and support their learners.

Emotional Well-Being

Emotional health can also be adversely affected by poor nutrition. Nutrient deficiencies can lead to irritability and mood swings, which can disrupt relationships within the classroom. According to a study by Sibanda and Manik (2022), deficiencies in vitamins such as B12 and folate are linked to increased emotional instability and irritability. This can create a challenging environment for both learners and teachers, as emotional well-being is crucial for effective communication and collaboration in educational settings.

For example, a teacher who is emotionally drained due to poor nutrition may struggle to engage positively with learners, leading to a less supportive learning atmosphere.

Developmental Well-Being

Proper nutrition is essential for healthy growth and development, particularly in children and adolescents. A lack of essential nutrients can lead to developmental delays and long-term health consequences. According to Save the Children International (2020), children who do not receive adequate protein and micronutrients during critical growth periods may experience stunted growth and impaired cognitive development. This can affect their academic performance and social interactions. For teachers, understanding the developmental needs of their learners is crucial. Research by Sande et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of a balanced diet in supporting brain development, which is essential for effective learning and personal growth.

Lack of Vitamins

Vitamins are crucial for maintaining various bodily functions, including immune support and energy metabolism. Deficiencies can lead to serious health issues, such as scurvy or rickets. According to Rapanyane (2024), vitamins like A, C, and D are particularly important for maintaining good health and preventing diseases. For learners, adequate vitamin intake supports not only physical health but also cognitive function, making it vital for academic success.

Lack of Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the primary source of energy for the body and are essential for brain function. Insufficient carbohydrate intake can lead to fatigue and impaired cognitive performance. Research by Semo and Frissa (2020) indicates that complex carbohydrates, such as those found in whole grains, provide sustained energy that is

crucial for learners during school hours. For teachers, adequate carbohydrate consumption ensures they have the energy needed to manage their responsibilities effectively.

Lack of Fats

Healthy fats are important for brain health and hormone production. A diet low in healthy fats can negatively affect mood and cognitive function. According to the American Heart Association (2021), omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish and nuts, are essential for brain health. Ensuring adequate fat intake can help both learners and teachers maintain emotional balance and cognitive clarity.

Lack of Water

Water is essential for hydration and overall bodily functions. Dehydration can lead to fatigue, reduced concentration, and impaired cognitive abilities. Orievulu & Iwuji (2022) emphasize the importance of adequate hydration for cognitive function, noting that even mild dehydration can negatively impact learning and performance. For teachers, proper hydration is crucial for maintaining energy levels and focus throughout the day.

Lack of Minerals

Minerals like calcium and iron are crucial for various physiological functions, including bone health and oxygen transport. A deficiency in calcium can lead to weakened bones, while low iron levels can result in anaemia, causing fatigue. According to the Food and Nutrition Board (2021), ensuring adequate mineral intake is essential for both learners and teachers to support their physical health and prevent long-term health issues.

Lack of Proteins

Proteins are vital for growth, repair, and maintenance of body tissues. Insufficient protein intake can lead to muscle wasting and impaired immune function. Research by Mercy Corps (2022) indicates that adequate protein is particularly important for learners during periods of growth and development, as well as for teachers who need to maintain their strength and energy levels throughout the day.

Resultantly, the negative impacts of nutritional deficiencies on the physical, mental, emotional, and developmental well-being of teachers and learners are significant. Understanding the importance of essential nutrients—vitamins, carbohydrates, fats, water, minerals, and proteins—can help both educators and learners make informed dietary choices that promote overall health and well-being. Through recognizing the critical role nutrition plays in facilitating effective learning and teaching, teacher trainees can better support their learners and foster a healthier educational environment.

Causes of Teachers and Learners Failing to Eat Nutritious Foods

The inability of teachers and learners to consume nutritious foods is influenced by a variety of socio-economic, environmental, and cultural factors. Understanding these causes is essential for teacher trainees and learners who wish to promote healthier eating habits within their communities. The following sections detail the key factors contributing to poor nutrition among teachers and learners in Zimbabwe.

Economic Constraints

One of the primary reasons teachers and learners fail to access nutritious foods is the low salaries of educators and the financial limitations faced by parents. According to Muronzi (2020), many teachers in Zimbabwe receive salaries that are insufficient to cover basic living expenses, let alone the costs of nutritious foods. This financial strain

often forces families to prioritize cheaper, less nutritious options, leading to diets high in processed foods and low in essential nutrients. Research by Chikuvadze (2023) indicates that when families are unable to afford healthy foods, they tend to resort to cheaper, energy-dense foods that lack the necessary vitamins and minerals, ultimately compromising their health and academic performance.

Lack of Clean Water

Access to clean water is another significant barrier to proper nutrition in both urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe. Many communities face challenges in obtaining safe drinking water, which is essential for cooking and preparing nutritious meals. According to the World Health Organization (2020), inadequate access to clean water can lead to foodborne illnesses that further exacerbate malnutrition. In a study by Chitiyo (2021), it was noted that learners who do not have access to safe water are less likely to consume nutritious meals, as they may opt for convenience foods that require minimal preparation. The lack of clean water not only affects food preparation but also impacts overall health and well-being, particularly for learners who need hydration for optimal cognitive function.

Droughts Induced by El Niño

Environmental factors, such as droughts induced by El Niño, have a profound effect on food availability and quality in Zimbabwe. These climatic events can lead to crop failures, resulting in food shortages and increased food prices. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2021), drought conditions significantly reduce the production of staple foods, making it difficult for families to access fresh produce and other nutritious options. Research by Chideme- Munodawafa et al. (2020) indicate that during periods of drought, communities often rely on processed foods that are more readily available but lack essential nutrients. This reliance on low-nutrient foods can lead to long-term health issues for both teachers and learners.

High Cost of Nutritious Foods

The rising cost of nutritious foods is a significant barrier for many families in Zimbabwe. Economic instability and inflation have driven up prices for fruits, vegetables, and high-quality proteins, making them unaffordable for average households. According to the National Nutrition Survey (2021), many families report that they cannot afford to buy healthy foods and instead opt for cheaper, calorie-dense options. This trend is particularly concerning for learners, as a lack of proper nutrition can result in decreased academic performance and health issues. Research by AI Jar (2021) highlights the need for interventions that can make nutritious foods more accessible and affordable for low-income families.

Introduction of Fast Foods

The increasing prevalence of fast-food outlets in urban areas has shifted dietary patterns away from traditional, nutritious foods. Fast foods are often marketed as convenient and affordable, leading many individuals, including teachers and learners, to choose these options over healthier alternatives. A study by ZNCWC (2021) found that the consumption of fast foods is associated with higher rates of obesity and related health problems among young people. The convenience of fast food can be appealing, especially for learners who may not have the time or skills to prepare nutritious meals. This shift in eating habits contributes to a decline in overall diet quality and increases the risk of chronic diseases.

Neglecting Traditional Foods

The neglect of traditional foods in favour of processed and fast foods has detrimental effects on nutrition. Traditional diets in Zimbabwe are often rich in nutrients, including whole grains, legumes, and a variety of vegetables. However, as globalization influences eating habits, many individuals, particularly the youth, are turning away from these

nutritious options. According to a study by Zinyemba (2023), this shift can lead to a loss of cultural identity and decreased health outcomes. Educators play a crucial role in promoting the benefits of traditional foods and encouraging learners to incorporate them into their diets, thereby enhancing their nutritional intake.

Food Preparation Challenges

Food preparation challenges also contribute to poor nutrition, particularly for learners who live alone or in shared accommodations. Many young people lack the skills or resources to cook nutritious meals, leading them to rely on convenience foods or junk foods. Research by Yorke et al. (2021) indicates that learners who do not learn basic cooking skills may struggle to prepare healthy meals, further perpetuating unhealthy eating habits. Educators can help by teaching cooking skills and nutrition education, empowering learners to make healthier choices and develop a foundation for lifelong wellness.

Role of Schools and other stakeholders in Promoting Nutrition among teachers and learners

Agricultural Gardens in Schools

Schools play a vital role in enhancing nutrition among learners by establishing agricultural gardens. These gardens not only provide fresh fruits and vegetables directly to learners but also serve as educational tools where learners can engage in hands-on food production. Research by Zimbabwe Voice (2020) has shown that schools with agricultural programs significantly improve learner health outcomes and foster an appreciation for nutritious foods. For example, schools in Zimbabwe have implemented gardening initiatives where learners grow crops like maize and vegetables, which are then used in school meals. This not only helps learners understand the importance of nutrition but also instils a sense of responsibility and connection to food sources (WHO,

2020). Through integrating agricultural education into the curriculum, schools empower learners with knowledge about sustainable practices and the nutritional value of the foods they consume.

Schools do Nutrition Education

In addition to providing physical resources, schools have the responsibility to educate learners and the community about the importance of nutrition. Implementing comprehensive nutrition education programs can lead to significant improvements in learners' dietary choices and overall health. According to the World Health Organization (2020), effective nutrition education can foster healthier eating habits, enabling learners to make informed food choices. Schools can organize workshops and seminars involving parents and community members, promoting a culture of health awareness that extends beyond the classroom (Tegegne, 2022). For instance, some schools host nutrition fairs where learners present projects on healthy eating, thereby engaging the wider community in discussions about nutrition and health.

Role of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is instrumental in supporting school nutrition programs. By providing guidelines, resources, and funding opportunities, the ministry helps schools develop effective strategies to improve learner nutrition. For example, the ministry can facilitate training for teachers on nutrition education and the implementation of school feeding programs. Research by Tarisayi (2023) emphasizes that government support is critical in ensuring that schools have the resources needed to provide nutritious meals to learners. Additionally, the ministry can promote partnerships with local farmers and businesses to supply fresh produce, which enhances the dietary quality of school meals and reinforces local agricultural economies.

Community Support from Businesses

The business community can significantly contribute to improving nutrition among disadvantaged learners by providing food support programs. Local businesses can collaborate with schools to supply porridge and other nutritious meals as part of breakfast or lunch initiatives. According to a study by UNICEF (2021), such partnerships can help improve learner attendance and academic performance, particularly among low-income families. For example, businesses that sponsor school meal programs not only fulfil their corporate social responsibility but also create a healthier future workforce. Through establishing these connections, the community can work collectively to ensure that all learners, regardless of their economic background, have access to nutritious food.

Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in providing food assistance and nutritional support to learners and teachers. Organizations like the Red Cross and local churches, such as the Alliance Church, often run programs that supply food to those in need. These initiatives help bridge the gap for families struggling to access nutritious foods, ensuring that all learners have the resources they require. Research by Tom and Chipenda (2020) indicates that food assistance programs can significantly improve health outcomes and educational performance among vulnerable populations. Through collaborating with schools, NGOs can also offer educational workshops on nutrition, enhancing community awareness and engagement in healthy eating practices.

Traditional Programs by Local Chiefs

Local chiefs can implement traditional programs, such as the Zunde Ramambo, where food is collected from villagers and distributed to those in need. This practice fosters community solidarity and ensures that food resources are shared equitably among the population. According to Kaseke (2021), such community-driven efforts can effectively

alleviate food insecurity and improve nutritional outcomes for marginalized community members. By engaging local leaders in nutrition programs, schools can create a supportive environment that encourages community involvement and cultural practices related to food sharing. This approach not only addresses immediate food needs but also reinforces social cohesion within the community.

Government Support and Social Welfare

The government, through the Department of Social Welfare, plays a crucial role in providing food assistance to marginalized community members. This support is essential in ensuring that vulnerable populations, including learners and their families, have access to nutritious foods. Research by Hvalby et al (2023) emphasizes the importance of government assistance in alleviating poverty and improving health outcomes. Additionally, local councillors and members of parliament can advocate for food security measures within their constituencies, ensuring that resources are allocated to those in need. Through addressing the socio-economic barriers to nutrition, the government can help create a healthier population that is better equipped to learn and thrive.

Economic Empowerment for Nutrition

To address the underlying economic factors that hinder access to nutritious foods, it is vital for the government to consider increasing salaries for teachers and parents. Higher wages would enable families to afford healthier food options, reducing reliance on low-nutrient fast foods. According to a study by Mavhura (2020), improved economic conditions lead to better nutritional choices and health outcomes, particularly for children. Additionally, NGOs and local communities can collaborate to create community gardens that provide a sustainable source of fresh produce. These gardens not only enhance food security but also educate individuals about the nutritional value

of foods, including essential nutrients like vitamins, carbohydrates, fats, proteins, and water.

Role of Local Councillors and Members of Parliament

Local councillors and members of parliament play a vital role in advocating for and providing food assistance to underprivileged communities. Through addressing local food insecurity issues, they can ensure that vulnerable populations receive necessary support. Research indicates that effective advocacy by local leaders can lead to the implementation of programs that provide nutritious foods to learners and families in need (Ghosh et al., 2021). For instance, local councils can organize food drives and collaborate with NGOs to distribute food to low-income families, thereby promoting community health and well-being. Furthermore, these leaders can lobby for policies that support food security initiatives and increase funding for nutrition programs in schools.

Importance of Nutritional Foods for Learners and Teachers on HIV and AIDS Medications

Comprehending the importance of nutritional foods—vitamins, carbohydrates, fats, water, proteins, and minerals—is essential for learners and teachers on HIV and AIDS medications. A well-balanced diet that includes these essential nutrients supports immune function, provides energy, and enhances overall health. For teacher trainees and learners, recognizing the role of nutrition in managing health conditions is vital for promoting well-being and academic success. Through fostering a culture of health awareness and encouraging balanced dietary choices, educators can empower learners to take charge of their health and thrive in their educational journeys.

Vitamins

Vitamins are essential nutrients that play a crucial role in maintaining health, particularly for learners and teachers on HIV and AIDS medications. These medications can lead to increased oxidative stress and nutritional deficiencies, making adequate vitamin intake vital. For instance, Vitamin C is known for its immune-boosting properties, helping to enhance the body's defence against infections (Mahuni et al., 2023). Additionally, the B vitamins, especially B12 and folate, are important for energy metabolism and can help alleviate fatigue, a common side effect of antiretroviral therapy (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022). A study by Lunga (2022) emphasizes that sufficient vitamin intake not only supports immune function but also improves overall well-being, making it essential for both educators and learners to prioritize a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates serve as the body's primary source of energy, which is particularly important for learners and teachers on HIV and AIDS medications who may have increased energy needs. Antiretroviral therapy can elevate metabolism, leading to a higher caloric requirement. According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2020), complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains and legumes, provide sustained energy and essential nutrients crucial for maintaining focus and stamina throughout the school day. Research by Mutambara & Bodzo (2020) indicate that fibre-rich carbohydrates promote digestive health, which can be especially beneficial for those experiencing gastrointestinal side effects from medications. Ensuring an adequate intake of carbohydrates helps learners maintain concentration and academic performance, while also providing teachers with the energy needed for effective classroom management.

Fats

Healthy fats are essential for numerous bodily functions, including hormone production and the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. For learners and teachers on HIV and AIDS medications, incorporating healthy fats into their diets is critical for overall health. Research by Muzerengi et al., (2023) highlights that dietary fats are necessary for the absorption of vitamins A, D, E, and K, which are vital for immune function and overall well-being. Additionally, omega-3 fatty acids, found in fatty fish and flaxseeds, have been shown to reduce inflammation and improve mood, which is particularly beneficial for individuals undergoing stress related to their health (American Heart Association, 2021). Through including sources of healthy fats in their diets, learners and educators can support both physical health and emotional well-being, which are crucial for academic success.

Water

Water is often overlooked but is a vital nutrient for learners and teachers on HIV and AIDS medications. Proper hydration is essential for various physiological functions, including digestion, nutrient transport, and temperature regulation. According to the Institute of Medicine (2021), adequate hydration is crucial for cognitive function, as even mild dehydration can impair attention and memory. For learners, staying well-hydrated is especially important, particularly if they experience side effects from their medications that may lead to dehydration, such as diarrhoea (Mukawanda et al., 2020). Ensuring sufficient water intake can help enhance concentration and overall health, making it a key component of a balanced diet for both educators and learners.

Proteins

Proteins play a critical role in growth, tissue repair, and immune function, making them essential for learners and teachers on HIV and AIDS medications. These medications can increase protein needs due to their effects on body metabolism and muscle mass. According to the American Dietetic Association (2020), high-quality protein sources, such as lean meats, dairy products, legumes, and nuts, are vital for maintaining muscle health and supporting the immune system. Research by Lesko (2020) indicates that adequate protein intake can help prevent muscle wasting and support recovery from illness. For learners, incorporating sufficient protein into their diets is crucial for both physical health and academic performance, as it provides the energy needed for daily activities and cognitive function.

Minerals

Minerals are essential for various physiological functions, including bone health, fluid balance, and nerve function. For learners and teachers on HIV and AIDS medications, adequate mineral intake is crucial for maintaining health and preventing deficiencies. For example, calcium and vitamin D are vital for bone health, particularly for individuals on long-term medication regimens that may affect bone density (Health Times, 2020). Research by Chidarikire et al., 2024) emphasize that adequate mineral intake is particularly important for growth and development in children and adolescents. Ensuring a diet rich in essential minerals helps learners support their physical health and overall well-being, enabling them to thrive both academically and personally.

Recommendations to

Recognizing the critical role of nutrition in the lives of learners and teacher trainees, it is imperative for *learners and teacher trainees* to be educated about healthy eating habits and the importance of balanced diets. Schools and colleges should incorporate nutrition education into their curricula, emphasizing the link between nutrition, academic performance, and overall health. Access to healthy food options on campus is essential;

thus, educational institutions should provide nutritious meal plans and snacks in cafeterias.

Lecturers and teachers should be trained to incorporate discussions about nutrition into their lessons, helping students understand the importance of nutrition in their daily lives. The

Ministry of Health and Child Welfare should collaborate with educational institutions to develop programs that promote healthy eating and provide resources for both students and educators.

Additionally, *the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education* should advocate for policies that support the availability of healthy food options in universities and colleges, ensuring that all students have access to nutritious meals.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore the impact of nutrition on academic performance and mental health among learners and teacher trainees, contributing to a better understanding of how dietary choices affect educational outcomes.

Summary

In summary, this chapter serves as a vital resource for understanding the complex relationship between nutrition and the health of learners and teachers, particularly those on HIV and AIDS medications. It begins with clear definitions of key concepts, setting the stage for further discussion on the significance of nutritious foods. The chapter underscores the essential role that a balanced diet plays in enhancing physical, mental, and emotional well-being. It also highlights the detrimental effects of malnutrition, which can lead to serious health issues and hinder academic performance. The chapter identifies various causes for the lack of access to nutritious foods among teachers and

learners, including economic barriers and insufficient nutritional education. It advocates for a multi-faceted approach to address these challenges, emphasizing the crucial role of schools and other stakeholders in fostering a culture of health. Through initiatives such as agricultural programs and community engagement, the chapter illustrates how collective efforts can improve nutritional outcomes. Finally, the chapter emphasizes the particular importance of adequate nutrition for those on HIV and AIDS medications, detailing how vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates, fats, and water contribute to overall health and well-being. Through equipping educators and learners with this knowledge, the chapter aims to inspire proactive measures to promote better dietary practices, ultimately enhancing the quality of life and educational outcomes for all involved.

CHAPTER 10

DRUG ABUSE AS A PANDEMIC AFFECTING LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter examines drug abuse as a pervasive pandemic that significantly impacts learners and teacher trainees, highlighting its profound implications for academic performance, mental health, and social dynamics. The discussion aims to elucidate the myriad factors contributing to substance abuse within educational contexts and its detrimental effects on both individuals and communities. Furthermore, the research identifies a critical gap in the literature regarding tailored interventions and support systems specifically designed for this demographic. Conducting a comprehensive literature review, this study gathered data from diverse sources, including scholarly books and reputable online articles, to construct a nuanced understanding of the issue. Data analysis was performed through thematic coding, enabling the identification of key patterns and insights related to the prevalence and consequences of drug abuse among students and future educators. Two primary findings emerged from this investigation: first, drug abuse among learners and teacher trainees is correlated with decreased academic performance, increased dropout rates, and heightened mental health issues; second, existing support mechanisms within educational institutions are often insufficient to address the complexities of substance abuse, leaving many individuals without the necessary resources to seek help. In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions develop comprehensive prevention and intervention programs that specifically target drug abuse among students and trainees. Additionally, training for educators should be enhanced to equip them with the skills to identify and support individuals struggling with substance abuse, fostering a more supportive educational environment.

Keywords: Drug abuse; education; intervention; learners; teacher trainees

Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the drug abuse crisis affecting teachers and learners in Zimbabwe, highlighting key definitions, types of substances being abused, the roles of various organizations and citizens, and effective interventions aimed at mitigating this pressing issue. It begins by defining critical terms related to drug abuse, establishing a foundational understanding necessary for addressing the complexities of this societal challenge. The chapter then explores the types of drugs commonly used among educators and learners, shedding light on how these substances impact health, learning, and overall community well-being. Furthermore, it outlines the roles played by different stakeholders, including governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, community members, and religious institutions, in combating drug abuse. Finally, the chapter discusses various interventions capable of reducing substance abuse rates among teachers and learners, emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts in creating supportive environments conducive to recovery and prevention.

Definition of key terms

Drug abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including illicit drugs and prescription medications that leads to significant adverse consequences. According to scholars like Chidarikire and Chikwati (2024, drug abuse is characterized by compulsive drug-seeking behaviour despite harmful consequences, indicating a profound disruption in an individual's life. Similarly, Ahmadian et al., (2024) emphasize that drug abuse manifests through a pattern of use that results in physical, psychological, and social harm. Therefore, drug abuse represents a complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental factors that contribute to a person's inability to control their substance use.

The effects of drug abuse can be profound and multifaceted. As noted by Zimbabwe Voice (2020), the physiological impacts include alterations in brain function, leading to addiction, mental health disorders, and chronic health issues. Additionally, Yorke et al (2021) highlight that the social effects of drug abuse can encompass disrupted relationships, employment challenges, and increased crime rates. The writer believes these effects underline the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address both the individual's health and the broader societal implications.

Interventions for drug abuse typically involve a combination of psychological, medical, and social approaches. According to ZNCWC (2021), effective interventions often incorporate motivational interviewing techniques that empower individuals to change their behaviour. In further support, Orievulu and Iwuji (2022) advocates for integrated treatment models that address co-occurring mental health disorders alongside substance use issues. My perspective is that successful interventions must be tailored to the unique needs of each individual while promoting long-term recovery and social reintegration.

Literature Review

The issue of drug abuse has become a public health crisis globally, with profound implications for learners and teacher trainees. In Zimbabwe, the rising prevalence of substance abuse among youth presents significant challenges to educational outcomes and societal well-being. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa offer insights into the nature of this issue and highlight the urgent need for effective interventions. In the United States, drug abuse among adolescents has been a persistent concern. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2021), approximately 20% of high school learners reported using illegal substances. Studies indicate that substance abuse negatively impacts academic performance, leading to higher dropout rates and lower educational attainment (Save the Children International, 2020). This trend mirrors the situation in Zimbabwe, where learners are increasingly exposed to drugs such as marijuana and methamphetamines,

contributing to declining academic performance and increased school dropout rates (Pindula News, 2020). In Britain, a comprehensive report by the Office for National Statistics (2020) noted that drug use among young people has significant correlations with mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. British schools have implemented various prevention programs to address these challenges; however, the effectiveness of these programs varies widely (Orievulu & Iwuju, 2022). Similar initiatives in Zimbabwe are needed to combat the stigma surrounding drug abuse and provide effective support for affected learners. In Nigeria, drug abuse among learners has reached alarming levels, with a study by Sande et al., (2017) indicating that over 30% of university learners engage in substance use. The Nigerian government has recognized the issue, implementing various campaigns aimed at raising awareness and providing support. However, the lack of adequate resources and trained professionals hampers these efforts. The parallels with Zimbabwe are evident, where inadequate support systems and resources limit the effectiveness of interventions to address drug abuse among learners (Save the Children International (2020).

Botswana has made strides in tackling drug abuse through national strategies that focus on prevention and rehabilitation. Research by Sibanda and Manik (2022) suggests that community-based programs that engage youth in constructive activities have shown promise in reducing drug use. This community engagement model could be beneficial in Zimbabwe, where similar socio-economic factors contribute to the prevalence of substance abuse among learners. In South Africa, the impact of drug abuse on education has prompted government intervention. The South African government has established programs aimed at addressing substance abuse in schools, recognizing its detrimental effects on academic performance and social behaviour (Sorerenti et al., 2024). Despite these efforts, the complexities of substance abuse require ongoing attention and resources, an area where Zimbabwe can draw lessons from South Africa's experiences. Despite the wealth of research emphasizing the significance of addressing drug abuse, a considerable research gap exists regarding the specific experiences of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe. While international studies highlight broader

implications, limited empirical data focus on the unique cultural and socio-economic factors influencing drug use among Zimbabwean youth. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the nature and impact of drug abuse among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe, identifying effective strategies for intervention and prevention.

Theoretical Framework: Social Learning Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling (Bandura, 1977). This theory emphasizes the role of social influences in shaping behaviour, particularly in the context of substance use. Applying the principles of Social Learning Theory to this research, one can argue that drug abuse among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe is significantly influenced by peer behaviour and social environments. When learners observe their peers engaging in substance use, they may be more likely to imitate these behaviours, particularly in social settings where drug use is normalized (Tegegne, 2020). This modelling effect underscores the importance of creating positive social environments that discourage drug use and promote healthy behaviours. Furthermore, the theory highlights the importance of self-efficacy in influencing behaviour. Learners who believe they can resist peer pressure and make healthy choices are less likely to engage in drug abuse (Saruchera & Chidarikire). Programs that enhance learners' self-efficacy through skills training and assertiveness can empower them to resist the temptation to use drugs, thereby reducing the prevalence of substance abuse.

Additionally, Social Learning Theory emphasizes the role of reinforcement in behaviour change. Positive reinforcement for engaging in healthy activities—such as participation in sports or community service—can encourage learners to pursue alternatives to drug use (Nyahuma-Mukwashi,2021). Implementing school-based programs that reward learners for healthy behaviours can help shift the focus away from substance use. Therefore, utilizing Social Learning Theory as a framework for examining drug abuse

among learners and teacher trainees provides a comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics influencing substance use. Through focusing on observational learning, self-efficacy, and reinforcement, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies that address drug abuse in Zimbabwean educational contexts.

Types of some Drugs Being Abused by Teachers and Learners

Understanding the types of drugs abused by teachers and learners is crucial for teacher trainees, as it equips them to address these issues effectively in educational settings. Commonly abused substances include alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana (mbanje), mutoriro, bronco, sex enhancement tablets, morning-after pills, skin lighteners, and other drugs that pose significant risks to health and academic performance.

Alcohol

Alcohol is one of the most frequently abused substances among both teachers and learners. The World Health Organization (2020) highlights that excessive alcohol consumption can lead to impaired cognitive function, affecting academic performance and teaching efficacy. A study by Muronzi (2020) found that learners and teachers who engage in regular binge drinking exhibit lower grades and increased dropout rates. In educational environments, teachers may use alcohol as a stress-relief mechanism, which can negatively impact their professional responsibilities and relationships with learners.

Cigarettes

Cigarette smoking continues to be a significant public health issue among educators and learners. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2020) indicates that tobacco use often begins in teenage years, leading to long-term addiction. Research by Hunters et al., (2020) shows that teachers who smoke can inadvertently promote

smoking among their learners, normalizing the behaviour. Schools that implement tobacco cessation programs can help reduce smoking rates and foster healthier environments for both teachers and learners.

Marijuana (Mbanje)

Marijuana, or mbanje, is increasingly used among both teachers and learners, often perceived as a low-risk substance. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (2021) reports that marijuana use can impair memory and learning capabilities. A study by Pindula News (2020) indicates that learners who use marijuana regularly tend to have lower academic performance and higher rates of absenteeism. This highlights the necessity for educational interventions that inform learners about the potential cognitive effects of marijuana and promote healthier choices.

Mutoriro and Broncleer

Mutoriro, a form of synthetic marijuana, and bronco, a cough syrup misused for its psychoactive effects, are other substances of concern. Research by Chidarikire and Mweli (2025) shows that these drugs can lead to severe psychological effects, including anxiety and hallucinations. The misuse of mutoriro is particularly alarming due to its accessibility and misconception of safety among young users (Chidarikire et al., 2024) emphasize the need for community-based interventions to raise awareness of the dangers associated with these synthetic drugs.

Sex Enhancement Tablets and Morning-After Pills

Sex enhancement tablets and morning-after pills are also commonly misused in educational settings. A study by Saruchera and Chidarikire (2025) reveals that younger individuals and teachers sometimes misuse sex enhancement tablets to boost confidence or performance, unaware of potential side effects. Morning-after pills, while intended

for emergency contraception, can be misused by learners and teachers as a regular contraceptive method, leading to health risks. Educators must provide accurate information about these medications to promote responsible use and understanding.

Skin Lighteners

Skin lighteners, often used for cosmetic purposes, are frequently abused among learners and teachers seeking societal acceptance or beauty standards. According to the World Health Organization (2020), many skins lightening products contain harmful substances that can lead to severe skin damage and other health complications. A study by Health Times (2020) highlights the growing trend of skin lightener misuse, particularly among young women and men. Educational programs addressing the dangers of these products are essential to inform learners and teachers about healthier beauty practices.

Other Substances

In addition to the previously mentioned drugs, various other substances are commonly abused in educational contexts. Prescription medications, particularly opioids and benzodiazepines, are misused for their sedative effects. Research by Galkina et al. (2023) shows that prescription drug abuse is increasingly prevalent among adolescents and teachers, leading to significant health risks. Additionally, stimulants like Adderall are often misused by learners and teachers seeking enhanced academic performance, as noted by Hope Village Society (2022). Inhalants, including glue and aerosol sprays, are also frequently abused by younger learners and teachers due to their easy accessibility and the misconception of safety.

Causes of Drug Abuse Among Teachers and Learners

Understanding the various causes of drug abuse among teachers and learners is essential for teacher trainees, as it allows them to identify risk factors and implement appropriate interventions. The reasons for substance abuse are complex and interrelated, encompassing family dynamics, social pressures, personal struggles, and cultural beliefs.

Family Dynamics

Family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward drug use. Research by Edmonds et al. (2021) indicates that individuals from families with a history of substance abuse are at a higher risk of engaging in similar behaviours. For learners, growing up in an environment where drug use is normalized can lead to the internalization of these behaviours as acceptable coping mechanisms. Furthermore, teachers who experience familial stress or conflict may resort to substances as a means of coping. Educational programs that involve family engagement can help address these underlying issues and promote healthier behaviours.

Marital Issues

Marital problems can significantly contribute to substance abuse among teachers. According to a study by Chidarikire and Chikwati (2024) teachers facing relationship difficulties may turn to alcohol or drugs as a way to cope with emotional pain. The stress associated with unresolved marital issues can create a cycle of substance use, negatively impacting both personal and professional lives. In educational settings, teachers struggling with marital issues may exhibit decreased effectiveness in the classroom, affecting their learners' learning experiences.

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is a prominent factor influencing drug use among learners. According Chitiyo (2021) and Chikuvadze (2023), adolescents are particularly susceptible to social influences, often using substances like alcohol and marijuana to fit in with their peers. A study by Dzenga (2020) highlights that learners who associate with peers who engage in substance abuse are more likely to experiment with drugs themselves. This social dynamic can create a culture of drug use within schools, making it challenging for individuals to resist the temptation to conform.

Academic and Professional Failures

Both academic and professional failures can lead to substance abuse among learners and teachers. Research by Hofmeyr (2021) shows that learners facing academic challenges often resort to drugs as a means of escape or self-medication. Similarly, teachers who experience professional setbacks or burnout may turn to substances to cope with feelings of inadequacy. This pattern can lead to a vicious cycle, where drug use further impairs academic performance and job effectiveness, perpetuating the sense of failure.

Seeking Enjoyment

Many individuals, particularly learners, use drugs simply "for fun" or as a way to enhance social experiences. A study by Human Rights Watch (2020) highlights that the perception of drug use as a recreational activity can lure learners into experimenting with substances. This mind-set often overlooks the potential risks and consequences, leading to increased substance abuse. Educators must address this misconception by providing accurate information about the dangers of drug use, emphasizing healthy alternatives for social enjoyment.

Depression and Mental Health Issues

Mental health issues, particularly depression, are significant contributors to substance abuse. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2020), learners with untreated mental health disorders are more likely to use drugs as a form of self-medication. Similarly, teachers facing mental health challenges may use substances to cope with their symptoms. A study by Kaiser and Sinanan (2020) found that educators experiencing high levels of stress and depression often resort to alcohol or prescription medications, highlighting the need for integrated mental health support within educational institutions.

Poverty

Poverty significantly influences drug abuse among both teachers and learners. Research by Kanyopa and Makgalwa (2024) indicate that individuals from low-income backgrounds are more likely to engage in substance abuse as a coping mechanism for financial stressors. In schools located in economically disadvantaged areas, learners may have increased exposure to drug use and criminal activities, which can normalize substance abuse. Teachers in these environments may also experience financial stress, leading them to seek relief through substance use.

Cultural Issues

Cultural beliefs and practices can also impact drug use behaviour. In some communities, certain substances may be viewed as traditional or acceptable for various rituals, such as appeasing ancestors. A study by IOM (2021) found that cultural perceptions of substances like marijuana can lead to increased acceptance of their use, complicating efforts to address drug abuse. Educators must consider these cultural contexts when

developing prevention and intervention programs to ensure they are culturally sensitive and effective.

Sickness

Chronic illness or health issues can lead to substance abuse as individuals seek relief from pain or discomfort. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2021), individuals suffering from chronic pain may misuse prescription medications, leading to dependency. In educational settings, teachers dealing with health issues may turn to substances to cope, impacting their ability to teach effectively. Providing support and alternative therapies for managing health issues can help mitigate the risk of drug abuse.

Availability of Drugs

The availability of drugs is a significant factor influencing substance abuse among learners and teachers. A study by Tarisayi (2023) indicates that easy access to drugs, whether through peer networks or local markets, increases the likelihood of experimentation and regular use. In schools where substances are readily available, learners may feel compelled to try them, especially when peer pressure is at play. Educational institutions must work to create environments that limit access to drugs and provide resources for healthy choices.

Impact of Drug Abuse Among Learners and Teachers in Zimbabwe

Drug abuse has emerged as a significant concern in Zimbabwe, affecting learners and teachers alike. This crisis has multifaceted impacts that extend across economic, social, educational, health, and familial dimensions. Understanding these effects is crucial for teacher trainees who will encounter these issues in their professional lives.

Economic Impact

The economic burden of drug abuse in Zimbabwe is substantial, straining both public resources and family incomes. According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (2022), the costs associated with drug abuse—such as healthcare, law enforcement, and lost productivity—are escalating. A study by Zimbabwe Voice (2020) found that families affected by drug abuse often experience financial instability, as funds are diverted towards purchasing drugs rather than essential needs like education and healthcare. This economic strain can limit opportunities for both learners and teachers, as schools may struggle to secure necessary resources due to budget constraints linked to drug-related issues.

Social Impact

Socially, drug abuse contributes to the breakdown of community structures and relationships. In Zimbabwe, the normalization of substance use, particularly among youth, has led to increased social dysfunction. Research by WHO (2020) indicates that communities with high rates of drug abuse experience increased crime and social disorder, undermining communal bonds. In educational settings, teachers may find it challenging to foster a supportive environment when learners are influenced by drug culture, leading to increased behavioural issues and conflicts within the classroom.

Educational Impact

The effects of drug abuse on education are profound, hindering both academic performance and teacher effectiveness. A study by Zinyemba et al. (2023) found that learners who engage in substance abuse are more likely to experience poor academic outcomes, including lower grades and higher dropout rates. Teachers who abuse drugs

may also face decreased job performance and increased absenteeism, further disrupting the learning environment. This cycle can result in a decline in overall educational quality, as schools struggle to maintain effective teaching and learning conditions.

Health Impact

Health consequences of drug abuse in Zimbabwe are alarming, affecting individuals and the healthcare system. The Zimbabwean Ministry of Health (2020) reported increasing cases of drug-related illnesses, including mental health disorders and infectious diseases. Substance abuse can lead to chronic health issues, exacerbating the existing healthcare challenges in the country. Additionally, a study by Yorke et al. (2021) revealed that learners using drugs are more prone to engage in risky behaviours, which can lead to injuries and long-term health complications, further burdening the healthcare system.

Family Impact

Drug abuse profoundly disrupts family dynamics in Zimbabwe. Families with a member struggling with addiction often experience heightened conflict and emotional distress. According to a study by Zinyemba et al . (2023), children of parents who abuse drugs are at increased risk for behavioural problems and poor academic performance. This instability can lead to a cycle of dysfunction, where children who grow up in drug-affected households may resort to substance use themselves. The ripple effects of drug abuse can destabilize entire families, making it difficult for them to provide support and nurturing environments for their children.

Criminal Activities

The link between drug abuse and criminal activities is particularly pronounced in Zimbabwe. Research by ZNCWC (2021) indicates that drug use is often associated with

an increase in criminal behaviour, including theft and violence. Schools in areas with high drug prevalence may see increased incidents of violence and delinquency among learners, creating an unsafe learning environment. Teachers may also face legal repercussions if found to be involved in drug-related activities, further complicating their professional lives and diminishing the integrity of the educational system.

Physical Impact

The physical consequences of drug abuse are significant and can lead to long-term health issues. In Zimbabwe, substance abuse can result in various health problems, including respiratory diseases and cardiovascular issues. According to the World Health Organization (2020), substance abuse significantly increases mortality rates among users, often due to health complications. For learners, engaging in drug use can lead to physical decline, impacting their ability to participate in sports and other physical activities, which are crucial for holistic development.

Mental and Psychological Impact

The mental health implications of drug abuse are critical, particularly for young learners. A study by Human Rights Watch (2020) found that learners who abuse drugs are at a higher risk for developing anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders. Teachers who struggle with substance abuse may also experience significant mental health challenges, including burnout and decreased job satisfaction. This creates a challenging environment for both learners and educators, as mental health issues can exacerbate the cycle of substance abuse and hinder academic success.

Marital and Relationship Impact

Substance abuse can strain marital relationships and personal connections, contributing to increased conflict and breakdowns in communication. Research by Chidarikire et al.

(2024) highlights that couples in which one partner abuses drugs often experience significant relationship challenges, including increased divorce rates. For teachers, the stress of maintaining personal relationships during periods of substance abuse can lead to crises that impact their professional roles. Learners from homes with substance abuse issues may also struggle with forming healthy relationships, affecting their social development and emotional well-being.

Roles Organizations and citizens in Addressing Drug Abuse in Zimbabwe

Addressing drug abuse in Zimbabwe necessitates a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders, including governmental ministries, educational institutions, families, community organizations, and the judiciary. Each entity plays a vital role in combating substance abuse and fostering healthier environments for learners and teachers alike.

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is crucial in implementing drug prevention programs and educational initiatives within schools. This ministry is responsible for integrating drug education into the national curriculum, ensuring learners receive comprehensive information about the risks associated with substance abuse. According to Chikuvadze (2023), the ministry has developed programs aimed at raising awareness among learners about the dangers of drug use. For example, the "Life Skills" curriculum incorporates lessons on substance abuse prevention, helping learners develop critical thinking skills and make informed choices. Additionally, the ministry collaborates with school health coordinators to provide training for teachers on how to address drug-related issues effectively in the classroom, creating a supportive environment for learners.

Ministry of Health and Child Welfare

The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare plays a crucial role in providing health services and support for individuals affected by substance abuse. This ministry is responsible for implementing public health campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of drug use and offering treatment options for those in need. Research by Mavhura (2020) emphasizes the importance of integrating mental health services into substance abuse treatment, highlighting the need for comprehensive approaches to address the psychological aspects of addiction. The ministry also collaborates with local health facilities to ensure access to rehabilitation services, which are essential for supporting recovery and reintegration into society. For instance, community health programs have been established to educate families about the signs of drug abuse and available resources for treatment.

Zimbabwe Republic Police

The Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) is instrumental in enforcing laws related to drug abuse and trafficking. Their role includes conducting drug raids, educating the public about the legal consequences of drug use, and collaborating with schools to create safe environments. According to Mathe (2023), the ZRP has launched initiatives aimed at engaging with youth in schools to promote drug awareness and discourage involvement in illegal activities. For example, the police have organized workshops and community outreach programs that educate learners about the legal ramifications of drug use and trafficking, fostering a culture of accountability and responsibility. These efforts not only help in reducing drug-related incidents but also build trust between law enforcement and the community.

Teachers

Teachers are on the front lines of combating drug abuse in educational settings. They play a critical role in identifying learners at risk and providing support through counselling and guidance. Research by Zimbabwe Voice (2020) indicates that teachers trained to recognize the signs of substance abuse can intervene early, helping learners access the support they need. Additionally, teachers can create a positive and supportive classroom environment that discourages drug use. For instance, implementing peer mentoring programs can empower learners to support one another in making healthy choices, thereby reducing the prevalence of substance abuse. Teachers can also serve as role models by promoting healthy behaviours and encouraging open discussions about drug-related issues.

Parents

Parents are key stakeholders in preventing drug abuse among learners. Their involvement in their children's lives significantly influences substance use behaviour. According to a study by Malango et al. (2022), parental communication about the risks of drug use can deter children from experimenting with substances. Engaging in open discussions about the dangers of drugs and establishing clear expectations can foster a supportive home environment. Additionally, parents can participate in school events focused on drug prevention, reinforcing the message of healthy choices and active engagement in their children's education. Workshops organized by schools for parents can also provide them with tools to communicate effectively with their children about drug-related issues.

Learners

Learners themselves have a vital role in addressing drug abuse within their communities. Peer influence can be a powerful deterrent to substance use when learners actively promote healthy behaviours among their peers. Research by Lunga (2022) shows that learner-led initiatives, such as anti-drug clubs or campaigns, can effectively raise awareness and encourage positive choices. For example, schools in Zimbabwe have seen success with learner-led workshops where learners educate their peers about the dangers of drug use, fostering a sense of responsibility and community among learners. Through taking ownership of their environment, learners can create a supportive culture that discourages drug abuse.

Learner Teachers

Learner teachers are future educators who can contribute to drug prevention efforts in schools. Their training can equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to address substance abuse effectively. According to a study by Machingura (2023), learner teachers who receive training in drug education are better prepared to engage learners in discussions about substance use and its consequences. Through incorporating drug prevention strategies into their teaching practices, these future educators can play a crucial role in shaping a drug-free culture in schools. Furthermore, learner teachers can collaborate with experienced educators to develop innovative programs that address the unique needs of their learners.

Community Members

Community members are essential in creating a supportive network for preventing drug abuse. Local organizations and individuals can collaborate to organize events that promote healthy lifestyles and raise awareness about the dangers of substance use. According to Mahuni et al. (2023) community-based programs that involve parents,

schools, and local leaders can foster a united front against drug abuse. For example, community health fairs that offer information on drug prevention and resources for treatment can empower individuals to make informed choices and support one another. Engaging community members in these initiatives can enhance their effectiveness and ensure that they are culturally relevant.

Religious Organizations

Religious organizations often play a significant role in promoting healthy behaviours and providing support for individuals affected by drug abuse. Many churches in Zimbabwe engage in outreach programs that focus on substance abuse prevention and recovery. According to Mutambara and Bodzo (2020), religious leaders often counsel individuals struggling with addiction, offering spiritual guidance and support. Additionally, faith-based organizations can provide safe spaces for discussions about drug use and its impacts, fostering a sense of community and belonging that can deter substance abuse. Religious institutions can also collaborate with schools to host educational workshops that emphasize the importance of a drug-free lifestyle.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

NGOs in Zimbabwe are critical in addressing drug abuse through advocacy, education, and support services. Organizations such as the Zimbabwe Drug Abuse Prevention Association work to raise awareness about substance abuse and provide resources for treatment and prevention. Research by Muzerengi et al. (2023) indicates that NGOs often collaborate with schools and communities to implement programs aimed at educating youth about the dangers of drug use. For example, workshops organized by NGOs can equip teachers and parents with the tools needed to address substance abuse effectively. Their grassroots approach helps to foster community involvement and awareness, making them vital partners in the fight against drug abuse.

Politicians and Government of Zimbabwe

Politicians and government officials play a crucial role in shaping policies and legislation related to drug abuse prevention and treatment. Their advocacy can lead to increased funding for educational programs and healthcare services aimed at combating substance abuse. According to a study by Saruchera and Chidarikire (2025), effective policy-making can create a framework for collaboration among various stakeholders, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to address the substance abuse crisis. Additionally, government initiatives that promote public awareness campaigns can help shift societal attitudes toward drug use, reducing stigma and encouraging individuals to seek help. Politicians can also support legislation that strengthens penalties for drug trafficking, thereby deterring potential offenders.

Judiciary

The judiciary plays an essential role in enforcing laws related to drug abuse and ensuring that justice is served. Courts in Zimbabwe are tasked with adjudicating cases related to drug offenses, providing a legal framework to deter drug trafficking and abuse. Research by Mukwanda et al. (2020) highlights that effective judicial processes can help reduce drug-related crime by holding offenders accountable. Additionally, the judiciary can support rehabilitation programs for offenders, emphasizing the importance of treatment over punishment. Through promoting restorative justice practices, the judiciary can contribute to a more comprehensive approach to addressing drug abuse in society.

Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, including universities and colleges, plays a crucial role in addressing drug abuse among older learners. Higher education institutions are responsible for implementing policies that promote drug-free campuses

and provide support services for learners struggling with substance abuse. According to a study by Muronzi (2020), universities in Zimbabwe have begun to implement counselling services and awareness campaigns aimed at reducing substance use among learners. For example, the University of Zimbabwe has introduced programs that focus on mental health and substance abuse prevention, providing learners with the resources they need to make informed choices during their educational journey.

Researchers

Researchers contribute significantly to understanding drug abuse trends and developing effective prevention strategies. Their work helps policymakers and educators identify the most pressing issues related to substance abuse in Zimbabwe. According to ZNSA (2022), research on drug use patterns among youth can inform targeted interventions and educational programs. Through conducting studies that assess the effectiveness of various prevention methods, researchers can provide valuable insights that guide future initiatives. Collaborations between researchers and educational institutions can enhance the quality of drug education programs and ensure they are evidence-based.

Interventions to Mitigate Drug Abuse Problems in Zimbabwe

Addressing the drug abuse crisis in Zimbabwe requires a multifaceted approach that includes interventions at schools, homes, and community levels. These interventions aim to educate, support, and enforce regulations that can help mitigate the prevalence of substance abuse among learners and the wider community.

Professional and Para-Professional Counselling

One of the most effective interventions is the provision of professional and para-professional counselling services in schools and communities. Trained counsellors can

provide support to learners struggling with drug-related issues, offering guidance and coping strategies. Research by WHO (2020) indicates that schools with dedicated counselling programs see a reduction in substance abuse rates, as learners are more likely to seek help when they know support is available. Moreover, community-based counselling initiatives can reach families and individuals who may not have access to school services. For instance, programs that train teachers as para-professionals in counselling can enhance the support network within schools, enabling early intervention and appropriate referrals to specialized services.

Awareness Campaigns

Awareness campaigns are vital in educating both learners and community members about the dangers of drug abuse. These campaigns can utilize various media platforms, including social media, radio, and community gatherings, to disseminate information. According to ZNCWC (2021), successful campaigns in Zimbabwe have included school assemblies and community workshops that engage youth in discussions about the consequences of drug use. For example, the Zimbabwe Drug Abuse Prevention Association has conducted workshops that empower learners to become advocates for drug-free lifestyles, fostering a culture of awareness and prevention. Through increasing knowledge about the risks associated with substance abuse, awareness campaigns can help deter drug use among young people.

Deterrent Punishments for Drug Dealers and Buyers

Implementing deterrent punishments for drug dealers and buyers is crucial in curbing drug abuse. Strict enforcement of laws against drug trafficking can deter potential offenders and reduce the availability of drugs in communities. A study by Chidarikire and Chikwati (2024) highlights the importance of consistent legal consequences for those involved in the drug trade. For instance, harsher penalties for trafficking can serve as a deterrent, thereby protecting vulnerable populations, particularly youth, from

exploitation. Moreover, publicizing successful prosecutions can send a strong message about the consequences of drug-related crimes, reinforcing community norms against substance abuse.

School and Community Random Searches by Police Officers

Conducting random searches in schools and communities by police officers can serve as a preventive measure against drug use. Research by Chidarikire and Mweli (2025) indicates that visible law enforcement presence can deter drug use and trafficking in schools. For example, some schools in urban areas have collaborated with local police to conduct surprise searches, which have resulted in the confiscation of drugs and the identification of learners in need of support. While this approach needs to be balanced with respect for learners' rights, it can act as an effective short-term strategy to reduce drug availability and raise awareness of the consequences of drug possession.

Education About Drug Abuse in Schools, Churches, and Communities

Integrating drug education into the curriculum and community programs is essential for raising awareness about substance abuse. Schools should implement comprehensive drug education programs that cover the effects of drugs, decision-making skills, and healthy coping strategies. According to Defe and Matsa (2024), effective drug education not only informs learners but also engages them in discussions about making healthy choices. Furthermore, churches and community organizations can host educational workshops and seminars aimed at both youth and adults, emphasizing the importance of a drug-free lifestyle. Engaging religious leaders in these efforts can enhance credibility and encourage participation from families who may otherwise be reluctant to discuss drug issues openly.

Parental Involvement in Monitoring

Parents play a crucial role in preventing drug abuse among their children. Encouraging parents to regularly check their children's bags and sleeping areas for drugs can be an effective preventive measure. Research by Bayley (2022) suggests that parental supervision and open communication about drug use significantly reduce the likelihood of experimentation. Schools can support this by providing parents with resources and training on how to engage in these conversations constructively. For instance, workshops that inform parents about the signs of drug use and effective monitoring strategies can create a collaborative effort between schools and families to keep children safe.

Rehabilitation Centres

Sending drug abusers to rehabilitation centres is a critical intervention, but the high cost of private facilities often limits access for many families. Government rehabilitation centres, such as Ngomahuru and Engutsheni, provide essential services; however, they are often poorly resourced. According to a study by Charamba et al. (2024), these centres face challenges such as insufficient staffing, lack of funding, and inadequate facilities. To improve rehabilitation outcomes, the government can increase funding and support for these institutions to enhance their capacity and effectiveness. Additionally, community-based rehabilitation programs can be developed to provide support closer to home, making recovery more accessible for individuals and their families.

Recommendations

To effectively combat drug abuse among learners and teacher trainees, it is essential for ***learners and teacher trainees*** to engage in educational programs that raise awareness about the dangers of substance abuse. Schools and colleges should implement comprehensive prevention programs that include workshops and seminars led by health

professionals, focusing on the risks associated with drug use and promoting healthy coping mechanisms.

Universities and colleges must establish support systems, including counselling services and peer support groups, to provide students with safe spaces to discuss their struggles and seek help.

Lecturers and teachers should receive training on recognizing signs of drug abuse and understanding the psychological factors that contribute to substance misuse. This training will enable them to provide appropriate support and referrals to professional services. The

Ministry of Health and Child Welfare should collaborate with educational institutions to develop targeted campaigns that address drug abuse, focusing on high-risk populations.

Additionally, *the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education* should create policies that mandate drug education as part of the school curriculum, ensuring that all students receive the necessary information to make informed choices.

Finally, *future researchers* should investigate the effectiveness of various intervention strategies and support systems in reducing drug abuse among students, contributing to evidence-based practices in educational settings.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has elucidated the multifaceted issue of drug abuse among teachers and learners in Zimbabwe. Through defining key terms, it has set the stage for understanding the scope of the problem. The exploration of various types of drugs, including alcohol, marijuana, and synthetic substances, has illustrated the diverse

challenges faced by the educational community. The roles of organizations—such as the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, and local NGOs—have been emphasized, showcasing how collaborative efforts can lead to effective responses to drug abuse. Additionally, the chapter has presented practical interventions, including counselling services, awareness campaigns, and parental involvement, that can significantly mitigate the impact of drug abuse. Through these discussions, the chapter reinforces the critical need for a coordinated approach that involves all stakeholders in addressing the drug abuse epidemic, ultimately fostering healthier, drug-free environments for learners and educators alike.

CHAPTER 11

EARLY PREGNANCIES HAUNTING LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter explores the pervasive issue of early pregnancies among learners and teacher trainees, examining its profound implications for educational attainment and personal development. The discussion highlights the societal, economic, and psychological factors contributing to early pregnancies, as well as the stigma that often accompanies this phenomenon. Notably, the research identifies a significant gap in the literature regarding targeted strategies to support individuals affected by early pregnancies within educational contexts. This study employs a comprehensive literature review, gathering data from a variety of sources, including academic texts and reputable online platforms, to construct a thorough understanding of the issue. Data were analyzed through thematic coding, which facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and insights related to the prevalence and consequences of early pregnancies among students and aspiring educators. Two primary findings emerged from this investigation: first, early pregnancies significantly disrupt educational trajectories, leading to increased dropout rates and decreased opportunities for personal and professional growth; second, there is often a lack of adequate support systems within educational institutions to assist learners and trainees facing the challenges associated with early pregnancies. In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions implement comprehensive support programs that provide resources and guidance for individuals affected by early pregnancies. Additionally, awareness campaigns should be established to promote understanding and reduce stigma within educational environments, fostering a more supportive atmosphere for all students.

Keywords: Early pregnancies; education; learners; support systems; teacher trainees.

Introduction

This chapter serves as comprehensive overview of several critical topics. It begins with the definition of key terms related to early pregnancies and reproductive health, ensuring clarity and understanding for readers. Next, the chapter explores the various causes of early pregnancies, which include socio-economic factors, lack of access to education, inadequate sexual health information, and cultural influences. Understanding these causes is essential for developing effective prevention strategies. The discussion then shifts to the dangers associated with abortion, highlighting both the physical and psychological risks involved. The chapter distinguishes between legal and illegal abortions in Zimbabwe, examining the legal framework and its implications for women's health and rights. Finally, the chapter addresses the urgent need to mitigate the causes of early pregnancies among teacher trainees and learners. It suggests practical interventions, such as enhancing sexual education programs, providing access to contraceptive methods, and fostering a supportive environment that encourages open dialogue about reproductive health. Through covering these topics, the chapter aims to raise awareness and promote informed discussions about early pregnancies and reproductive health within the educational context.

Definition of key terms

Early pregnancies, defined as pregnancies occurring in adolescents typically between the ages of 10 and 19, can have significant social and health implications. According to Aboagye (2021), early pregnancies often result from a combination of limited access to sexual health education and socio-economic challenges. Similarly, AI Jar (2021) emphasizes that these pregnancies can disrupt education and perpetuate cycles of poverty. Abortion, the termination of a pregnancy before the foetus can live independently outside the womb, is addressed by Hope Village Society (2022), who notes that it remains a contentious issue in many societies, often influenced by cultural and legal factors. Health Times (2022) adds that the decision to seek an abortion can be

deeply personal, influenced by various circumstances including health risks, personal beliefs, and socio-economic pressures. In my view, abortion represents a critical aspect of reproductive rights, requiring careful consideration of ethical, medical, and social dimensions.

Sexual education programs aim to provide individuals with knowledge about sexual health, relationships, and reproductive rights. Gumbo (2023) describes these programs as essential for empowering young people to make informed choices about their bodies and relationships. Meanwhile, Galkina et al . (2023) argues that comprehensive sexual education can significantly reduce rates of early pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. The writer believes that effective sexual education is crucial for fostering healthy attitudes towards sexuality and ensuring that young people have the tools to navigate their reproductive health responsibly.

Literature Review

Early pregnancies among learners and teacher trainees represent a significant public health issue and a barrier to educational attainment in Zimbabwe. The implications of early pregnancies extend beyond individual learners, affecting families, communities, and the educational system. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide valuable insights into the prevalence, causes, and consequences of early pregnancies in educational contexts. In the United States, teenage pregnancy has been a persistent concern, although rates have declined in recent years. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2021), approximately 20% of female adolescents experience a pregnancy before reaching age 20. Research indicates that early pregnancies are associated with lower educational attainment, as many young mothers drop out of school to care for their children (Hoffman, 2020). This trend reflects similar challenges in Zimbabwe, where early pregnancies are prevalent and often lead to school dropout, especially among girls (Dey et al., 2022).

In Britain, the government has taken proactive measures to reduce teenage pregnancies, implementing comprehensive sexual education and support programs. The Office for Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (2022) reported a significant decline in teenage pregnancy rates, attributing this success to increased access to contraception and education. A study by OCHA (2020) emphasizes that these interventions not only inform young people about sexual health but also empower them to make informed decisions. In Zimbabwe, however, cultural taboos surrounding sexual health discussions hinder similar progress, leaving many young women uninformed about contraception and reproductive health (Yorke et al., 2021). In Nigeria, early pregnancies are a significant challenge for young women. A study by Onweh et al. (2022) revealed that cultural norms often prioritize early marriage and childbearing over education. This societal pressure leads to higher rates of early pregnancies, which severely impacts young women's educational opportunities. This situation is comparable to Zimbabwe, where traditional practices frequently prioritize marriage over schooling for girls, contributing to educational disparities (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020).

Botswana has implemented successful strategies to combat early pregnancies through education and community engagement. Research by Mathe (2023) indicates that school-based sexual health programs have led to increased awareness and reduced teenage pregnancy rates. The proactive approach in Botswana highlights the importance of integrating sexual education into the curriculum, a practice that is still developing in Zimbabwe and could significantly benefit learners (Machingura, 2023). In South Africa, the government recognizes the adverse effects of early pregnancies on educational outcomes. A study by Lesko (2020) emphasizes the importance of supporting pregnant learners to continue their education. Programs that provide childcare facilities and counselling services have shown promise, allowing young mothers to balance their responsibilities while pursuing their studies. Zimbabwe could learn from these models, as many schools lack adequate support systems for pregnant learners (Lunga, 2022). Despite the rich body of literature on early pregnancies, a significant research gap exists

regarding the specific experiences of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwean educational contexts. While various studies discuss the broader implications of early pregnancies, limited empirical data focus on how these pregnancies uniquely affect educational outcomes and personal development in Zimbabwe. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the nuanced impacts of early pregnancies on academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Framework: Social Ecological Model

The theoretical framework guiding this study is the Social Ecological Model (SEM), developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the 1970s. The SEM posits that individual behaviour is influenced by multiple levels of environmental factors, including individual, interpersonal, community, and societal dimensions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This model is particularly relevant for understanding the complex factors contributing to early pregnancies among learners and teacher trainees.

Applying the principles of the Social Ecological Model to this research, one can argue that early pregnancies are influenced by various interconnected factors. At the individual level, personal beliefs, knowledge about sexual health, and access to education play significant roles in shaping behaviours related to sexual activity and contraceptive use (Mercy Corps, 2022). In Zimbabwe, many young women lack comprehensive sexual education, which increases their vulnerability to early pregnancies (Save the Children International, 2020). At the interpersonal level, relationships with peers and family members significantly influence young individuals' decisions regarding sexual health. Supportive family environments that encourage open discussions about sexual health can empower learners to make informed choices (Rapanyane, 2024). Conversely, negative peer influences can lead to risky behaviours, contributing to higher rates of early pregnancies. Community and societal factors also play a crucial role in shaping the context within which young people make decisions about sexual health. Cultural norms

and practices that prioritize early marriage and discourage discussions about contraception can significantly impact the prevalence of early pregnancies (Pindula News, 2020). Through addressing these broader societal influences, interventions can be tailored to effectively reduce early pregnancies among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe. Resultantly, utilizing the Social Ecological Model as a framework for examining early pregnancies provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing this issue. Through focusing on individual, interpersonal, community, and societal dimensions, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective interventions that address the challenges of early pregnancies among learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe, promoting their educational success and overall well-being.

Causes of Unintended Early Pregnancies Among Learners and Teacher Trainees

Unintended early pregnancies among learners and teacher trainees are intricate issues stemming from a combination of individual, interpersonal, community, and societal factors (UNICEF, 2021). Teacher trainees must understand these causes to address the issue effectively in their personal lives and future professional roles.

Peer Pressure and Experimentation

Peer pressure significantly contributes to early pregnancies (Chidarikire etal., 2024). Adolescents often feel compelled to conform to their peers' expectations, sometimes leading to risky sexual behaviours. For example, a learner might engage in unprotected sex to fit in with friends, despite lacking a full understanding of the potential consequences. According to Chideme-Munodawafa, et al. (2020), more than 29% of pregnant teenagers reported that they feel pressured to have sex by their peers to maintain friendship and fit in with them. Experimentation, driven by curiosity and a desire to explore sexuality, can also lead to unintended pregnancies, especially when coupled with a lack of knowledge about contraception. Research shows that teens who feel pressured

by their peers are more likely to engage in unsafe sexual practices, such as not using contraception, which directly increases the risk of teen pregnancy (Pindula News, 2020).

Substance and Drug Abuse

Substance and drug abuse are strongly linked to unintended pregnancies. Intoxication can impair judgment and decision-making, leading to unprotected sex and a decreased likelihood of using contraception. For instance, a teacher trainee under the influence of alcohol might engage in risky sexual behaviour they would otherwise avoid. Substance use can also be a coping mechanism for underlying issues such as stress or trauma, further increasing vulnerability to unintended pregnancies. Studies reveal that pregnant youth aged 15-17 report higher rates of illicit drug and alcohol use than non-pregnant peers of the same age and pregnant youth aged 18-24 (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2025). Palesa, 18, understood that unprotected sex is associated with the risk of pregnancy and HIV infection. Drugs and alcohol promote risky sexual behaviour. The girls are drunk at parties and they are unaware of their actions (Dauda & Jaha Imoro, 2020).

Lack of Knowledge and Access to Emergency Contraception: Morning after Pill

A lack of comprehensive knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, coupled with limited access to emergency contraception (EC), significantly increases the risk of unintended pregnancies (Tarisayi ,2023). Many learners and teacher trainees lack accurate information about the menstrual cycle, contraception, and the potential consequences of unprotected sex (Chikuvadze, 2023). For example, a learner may not know that pregnancy is possible even after a single instance of unprotected intercourse. Furthermore, even when individuals are aware of EC, barriers such as cost, stigma, and limited availability can prevent them from accessing it in a timely manner. A study in the USA revealed that less than one quarter (23%) of teenage girls or boys were aware that something could be done after unprotected sex to prevent pregnancy (Chitiyo, 2021).

Some learners are confused about what emergency contraception is, with some thinking it is the abortion pills.

Poverty and Socio-Economic Factors

Poverty and related socio-economic factors create conditions that increase the risk of unintended pregnancies (Lesko, 2020). Learners and teacher trainees from low-income backgrounds may lack access to essential resources, including quality education, healthcare, and contraception (Mahuni et al, 2023). For instance, a learner from a financially strained family might be forced to drop out of school due to a lack of fees, increasing their vulnerability to early marriage and pregnancy. Additionally, economic hardship can lead to transactional sex, further increasing the risk of unintended pregnancies. Data reveals a 73% correlation between teen pregnancy rates and child poverty rates (Pindula News, 2020). Teenage pregnancy is a common problem that is more likely to affect vulnerable populations due to factors including poverty, illiteracy, and a lack of job prospects (Mavhura, 2020).

Religious Sects and Cultural Norms

Certain religious sects and cultural norms can contribute to unintended pregnancies (Muzerengi et al., 2023). Some religious groups encourage early marriage for young girls, increasing their risk of early pregnancy (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022). For example, families may prioritize marriage over education for girls, limiting their opportunities and increasing their dependence on men. Additionally, cultural beliefs may discourage discussions about sex and contraception, perpetuating ignorance and increasing the risk of unintended pregnancies. In some communities, early marriage is encouraged, and teenage motherhood is even glamorized. A religious environment could lead to a reduction in teenage childbirth mainly through mechanism (a.), abstinence, a reduced frequency of sexual intercourse in teenagers (Lunga, 2022).

Lack of Resources and Knowledge on Condom Use

A lack of financial resources to purchase condoms, coupled with a lack of knowledge about their proper use, contributes to unintended pregnancies (Chidarikire & Chikwati,2024). Even when condoms are available, learners and teacher trainees may not know how to use them correctly, reducing their effectiveness (Chitiyo,2021). For example, a learner may not know that condoms should be stored in a cool, dry place or that they should be used from the beginning of sexual intercourse. Comprehensive sex education is essential to address these gaps in knowledge and promote the correct and consistent use of condoms. A WHO (2020) report indicates that the proportion of sexually active adolescents who used a condom at last intercourse fell from 70% to 61% among boys and 63% to 57% among girls between 2014 and 2022. Some churches also reject condom education. This study indicates that the interviewees are susceptible to HIV infection when they abandon or do not use the condom because of their lack of knowledge and/or experience (Chidarikire et al., 2024).

Children from Child-Headed Families

Children from child-headed families are particularly vulnerable to unintended pregnancies. These children often lack adequate parental guidance, supervision, and support, increasing their risk of engaging in risky behaviours (Hvalby,2023). For example, a learner from a child-headed family may lack access to information about sexual health and contraception, making them more vulnerable to unintended pregnancy. Additionally, these children may experience economic hardship and emotional distress, further increasing their vulnerability (Hunter et al., 2023). Teen pregnancy is, unfortunately, often a consequence of parent-less homes (Kaseke, 2021).

Sex Parties

Participation in sex parties can significantly increase the risk of unintended pregnancies due to several factors. These events often involve multiple partners, increasing the likelihood of unprotected sex and reducing the ability to make informed decisions about contraception (Mavhura,2020). The use of alcohol and drugs, which is common in party settings, further impairs judgment and reduces the likelihood of using condoms or other forms of protection (Pindula News, 2020). Additionally, the anonymity and social pressure within these environments can make it difficult for individuals to assert their boundaries and ensure safe sexual practices (Malango et al., 2022).

Dangers of Illegal Abortion Among Learners and Teacher Trainees

Illegal abortions, also known as unsafe abortions, pose significant dangers to learners and teacher trainees due to the lack of proper medical care and sanitary conditions (WHO, 2020). Understanding these dangers is crucial for making informed decisions about reproductive health.

Emotional and Psychological Effects

Illegal abortions can lead to a range of negative emotional and psychological consequences. While some research suggests that abortion does not cause mental health problems (Malinauskas & Malinaskiene, 2021). Other studies have found an association between abortion and increased risk of mental health issues (Hope Village Society,2022). Forced abortions can also lead to long-term psychological consequences such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even suicidal ideation (Machingura, 2023). Women may experience feelings of guilt, anger, shame, remorse, regret, loss of self-esteem, feelings of isolation, sleep problems, and

relationship problems (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022). The criminalization of abortion can create shame and stigmatization, constituting a separate source of severe emotional pain (Onweh et al., 2022). As highlighted by Tarisayi (2023), pre-existing mental health conditions and a lack of social support can exacerbate these negative psychological outcomes.

Physical Risks

Illegal abortions are associated with significantly higher physical risks compared to legal, safe abortions (WHO, 2024). These risks include incomplete abortion, haemorrhage, infection, uterine perforation, damage to internal organs, and poisoning (Muzerengi et al., 2023). Unsafe abortion remains one of the leading causes of maternal deaths around the world (OCHA, 2020). For example, a learner who undergoes an unsafe abortion may experience severe complications, requiring hospitalization and disrupting their education.

Death

Although rare in settings where safe abortion is accessible, death is a possible, albeit infrequent, consequence of illegal abortion (Sibanda & Manik, 2022). Maternal deaths can result from unsafe abortions (Bayley,2022). Unsafe abortion practices, often performed by untrained individuals, can lead to severe haemorrhage, sepsis, uterine perforation, or damage to other internal organs, potentially resulting in death (Saruchera & Chidarikire,2025) estimates that unsafe abortions lead to at least 22,800 deaths annually.

Impact on Future Fertility

Illegal abortions can have severe consequences on future fertility. Complications such as infections, uterine damage, and Asherman's syndrome (scarring inside the uterus) can impair a woman's ability to conceive or carry a pregnancy to term (Semo & Frissa,2020). While most often, elective abortions don't cause fertility issues or problems with future pregnancies (Aboagye, 2021), illegal abortions performed under unsafe conditions significantly increase the risk of infertility (Chikuvadze ,2023). A teacher trainee, for instance, may discover later in life that they are unable to have children due to complications from a past illegal abortion.

Legal Consequences

In countries such as Zimbabwe where abortion is illegal, individuals who undergo or assist with illegal abortions may face criminal penalties (Save the Children International, 2020). Penalties vary widely and can include hefty fines or imprisonment (Zimbabwe Voice, 2020). In some countries, the maximum penalty can be several years of imprisonment (Rapanyane, 2024). A learner may be arrested and face legal charges for seeking or undergoing an illegal abortion (Ipas, 2021).

Family Shame and Stigmatization

Abortion, especially illegal abortion, can be a highly stigmatized issue, leading to family shame and social isolation (Oeievulu & Iwuji, 2022). Abortion stigma is a negative attribute ascribed to women who seek to terminate a pregnancy that marks them as inferior to ideals of womanhood (Sande et al., 2017). This stigma can cause women to hide their abortion history from family members, community members, and even healthcare providers (Tegegne,2022). A teacher trainee who feels stigmatized after an

illegal abortion may struggle with feelings of shame and isolation, impacting their ability to connect with learners and colleagues.

The dangers of illegal abortion can manifest in various ways within educational settings. A learner who experiences complications from an unsafe abortion may face significant health challenges, disrupting their education and future career prospects (Thurston & Green, 2021). A teacher trainee struggling with the emotional aftermath of an illegal abortion may experience difficulty concentrating and performing their duties effectively (UNICEF, 2021). Furthermore, learners and teacher trainees who lack access to comprehensive sex education may be more vulnerable to unintended pregnancies and the difficult decisions surrounding illegal abortion (Tarisayi, 2023).

Mitigating unintended pregnancies

Mitigating unintended early pregnancies among learners and teacher trainees is a complex issue requiring a multifaceted approach (Dejaeghere,2022). Strategies include promoting abstinence, encouraging protected sex, teaching proper condom use, providing information about emergency contraception, educating about the dangers of abortion, implementing comprehensive sex education in schools, offering counselling services, and conducting awareness programs (Dauda & Jaha Imoro, 2022). This information is vital for teacher trainees, both for their personal well-being and to equip them to support their future learners.

Abstinence and Delaying Sexual Activity

Encouraging abstinence, especially among younger learners, is a key strategy. Abstinence is the only certain way to prevent pregnancy (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024). However, abstinence-only education has been shown to be ineffective in delaying sexual initiation or reducing teen pregnancy rates (Chitiyo, 2021). Some studies suggest that

skill-building and peer-led abstinence programs can be effective (Defe & Matsa, 2024). A balanced approach combines abstinence promotion with education on healthy relationships and responsible decision-making.

Protected Sex and Condom Use

For sexually active individuals, emphasizing protected sex is essential. This includes education on the correct and consistent use of male and female condoms (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025). When used correctly, male condoms are highly effective in preventing pregnancy and reducing the risk of STIs (ASER Centre, 2023). Education should cover proper storage, checking expiration dates, and avoiding damage during opening (Beckmann et al., 2022). Demonstrations and practice sessions can improve correct usage (AI Jar, 2021). Common errors, such as not squeezing the tip or using oil-based lubricants, should be addressed (Orievulu, 2022).

Emergency Contraception: Morning after pills

Providing information about emergency contraception (EC) is crucial. EC can prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex if taken within 3 days, depending on the type (Sande et al., 2017). The sooner EC is used, the more effective it is (WHO, 2020). Options include emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) containing levonorgestrel or ulipristal acetate, and the copper IUD (Rapanyane, 2024). EC pills are available at most drugstores and sexual health clinics, sometimes without a prescription (Save the Children International, 2020).

Teaching about dangers of abortion

Education on the dangers of unsafe abortion is critical. Unsafe abortions can lead to severe complications, including life-long injuries, disability, heavy bleeding, damage to

internal organs, and even death (Tegegne, 2022). Unsafe abortion is a leading cause of maternal deaths worldwide (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025). Providing access to safe abortion services (where legal) and promoting preventative measures like contraception are essential to reducing abortion-related morbidity and mortality (Semo & Frissa, 2020)

Comprehensive Sex Education in Schools

Implementing comprehensive sex education (CSE) in schools is vital. CSE covers reproductive health, relationships, sexuality, and prevention of unintended pregnancies and STIs (ZNCWC, 2021). Studies show that CSE leads to delayed sexual initiation, increased use of condoms and other contraceptives, and decreased frequency of unprotected sex (Zinyemba et al., 2023). CSE should be age-appropriate and culturally sensitive (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020; UNFPA, 2024).

Counselling and Support Services

Offering counselling and support services is important for learners and teacher trainees. School counsellors can provide guidance on sexual health, relationships, and decision-making (ZNSA, 2022). Counselling can help learners develop self-control, problem-solving skills, and self-directive behaviour. Support services should also be available for pregnant learners and young parents to help them continue their education (Tesema et al, 2020).

Awareness Programs and Community Involvement

Conducting awareness programs and involving the community can create a supportive environment. These programs can raise awareness about sexual health, contraception, and the risks of early pregnancy (Sorrenti et al., 2024). Engaging parents, community leaders, and religious figures can help address socio-cultural factors that contribute to

unintended pregnancies (Tom & Chipenda, 2020). Community-based programs can provide comprehensive support, including sexual health education and access to services (Sibanda & Manik, 2022)

Recommendations

Addressing the issue of early pregnancies among learners and teacher trainees requires a multi-faceted approach. ***Learners and teacher trainees*** should have access to comprehensive sexual education programs that cover topics such as contraception, healthy relationships, and the implications of early pregnancy. Educational institutions must create supportive environments where students can discuss their concerns openly and without stigma.

Universities and colleges should implement policies that offer counselling services for pregnant students, providing them with the resources needed to continue their education.

Lecturers and teachers play a crucial role in fostering awareness and understanding around the challenges of early pregnancy. Training programs should equip them with the skills to support students facing these issues, including providing academic accommodations when necessary.

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education should promote initiatives that facilitate access to reproductive health services, ensuring that students receive adequate support.

Furthermore, ***the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education*** should advocate for policies that integrate sexual education into the curriculum, empowering students with the knowledge to make informed decisions.

Lastly, ***future researchers*** should explore the long-term impacts of early pregnancies on educational outcomes, providing insights that can inform policy and practice in educational settings.

Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a comprehensive exploration of early pregnancies, particularly among teacher trainees and learners in Zimbabwe. It began with a clear definition of key terms essential for understanding the complexities surrounding this issue. The discussion highlighted various causes of early pregnancies, including socio-economic factors, lack of access to education, and inadequate sexual health information. It also addressed the dangers associated with abortion, emphasizing the significant risks tied to both legal and illegal procedures. The chapter underscored the critical need for effective strategies to mitigate the causes of early pregnancies among learners. Through focusing on comprehensive sexuality education, promoting safe practices, and fostering community involvement, significant progress could be made in reducing unintended pregnancies.

CHAPTER 12

IMPACT OF DEATH ON LEARNERS AND TEACHER TRAINEES: STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATION

Chidarikire, Munyaradzi, Senior Lecturer,

Health and Life Skills and Educational Psychology lecturer

Department of Curriculum Studies

Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3507-8329

Email mchidas78@gmail.com

Abstract

This chapter examines the profound impact of death on learners and teacher trainees, focusing on the emotional, psychological, and academic repercussions that arise from such experiences. The discussion emphasizes the urgent need for effective strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of grief and loss within educational settings. Importantly, the research identifies a gap in the literature regarding comprehensive support systems tailored to address the unique challenges faced by students and educators coping with bereavement. Utilizing a thorough literature review, this study collected data from a diverse array of sources, including academic texts and reputable online articles, to construct a nuanced understanding of the issue. The data were analyzed through thematic coding, which enabled the identification of key trends and insights related to the impact of death on academic performance and emotional well-being. Two principal findings emerged from this investigation: first, bereavement can lead to significant declines in academic performance and engagement among learners and teacher trainees, often resulting in increased absenteeism and dropout rates; second, many educational institutions lack adequate resources and trained personnel to support individuals in mourning, leaving them vulnerable to prolonged emotional distress. ln light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions develop comprehensive bereavement support programs that provide counselling and resources for affected students and trainees. Additionally, training for educators should be enhanced to equip them with the skills necessary to recognize and address the needs of individuals experiencing grief, fostering a more supportive educational environment.

Keywords: Bereavement; death; education; emotional support; learners.

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher examines the critical topic of death within educational contexts, focusing on its definitions, causes, and the profound effects it has on learners and teacher trainees. The chapter begins by defining key terms related to death to establish a clear understanding of its various dimensions and cultural perceptions. Following this, the writer analyzes the leading causes of death, both globally and locally, to contextualize the emotional and psychological impacts that arise. The chapter further explores how the loss of peers, mentors, or loved ones can significantly affect the academic performance and mental well- being of learners and educators alike. Finally, the chapter discusses strategies for coping with grief and fostering resilience, equipping both learners and teacher trainees with the tools needed to navigate their pain and support each other through these challenging experiences.

Definition of key terms

Death is commonly defined as the permanent cessation of all biological functions that sustain a living organism. According to Mavhura (2024), death is not only a physical end but also a significant emotional transition for those left behind. Additionally, Malinaskuskas & Malinauskiene (2021) describes death as a complex event that brings forth various psychological responses, emphasizing its impact on social dynamics and relationships. Bereavement counselling refers to the support provided to individuals who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Kanyopa & Makgalwa, (2024) defines it as a therapeutic process aimed at helping individuals navigate their grief and find meaning after loss. Similarly, Hunter et al (2020) views bereavement counselling as a structured approach that facilitates emotional healing and adjustment to life without the deceased. In my view, bereavement counselling serves as a vital resource for individuals to process their feelings and develop coping strategies in the aftermath of loss. Mourning, the outward expression of grief, is described by Machingura (2023) as the culturally influenced practices that individuals engage in to honour and remember the deceased. In

contrast, Kaseke (2021) emphasizes that mourning is a personal journey, reflecting the unique bond between the bereaved and the deceased. I believe that mourning is a necessary process that allows individuals to acknowledge their loss while gradually adapting to life in its absence.

Literature Review

The impact of death on learners and teacher trainees is a profound issue that affects educational outcomes, mental health, and social dynamics. In Zimbabwe, where communities often face high mortality rates due to various factors, including disease and socio-economic challenges, understanding the ramifications of loss is crucial. Comparative studies from the United States, Britain, Nigeria, Botswana, and South Africa provide insights into the psychological effects of grief and the strategies that can be employed to mitigate these impacts. In the United States, research highlights the significant emotional and psychological impacts of bereavement on learners. According to the National Centre for School Crisis and Bereavement (2021), learners who experience the death of a loved one often exhibit changes in behaviour, academic performance, and emotional stability. A study by Hope Village Society (2022) found that bereaved learners are at a higher risk of depression, anxiety, and academic decline. These findings underscore the importance of providing grief support in educational settings, a strategy that is often underutilized in Zimbabwean schools (Chidarikire & Mweli, 2025).

In Britain, the impact of death on learners has prompted considerable attention from educators and policymakers. The UK's Childhood Bereavement Network emphasizes the need for schools to implement bereavement policies that provide support for grieving learners (CBN, 2020). Research by Kanyopa et al., (2020) indicates that schools with structured support systems, including counselling and peer support groups, can significantly help bereaved learners cope with their loss. This approach highlights the importance of creating safe and supportive environments in Zimbabwean educational

institutions. In Nigeria, the effects of death on learners are compounded by cultural practices and societal expectations. A study by Godana et al. (2023) found that the communal nature of grief often leads to prolonged mourning periods, which can disrupt learners' academic performance. The need for educational institutions to integrate grief support into their programs is critical, as many learners struggle to balance their grief with academic responsibilities. Similar challenges exist in Zimbabwe, where cultural norms surrounding death and mourning can hinder the grieving process (Human Rights Watch (2020).

Botswana has recognized the impact of death on learners and has begun implementing strategies to support grieving learners. Research by Mathe (2023) indicates that schools providing counselling services and mental health support have seen improvements in learners' coping mechanisms. This proactive approach could serve as a model for Zimbabwe, where the integration of mental health resources in schools is often lacking, leaving many learners without the necessary support during times of loss. In South Africa, the government has acknowledged the psychological effects of bereavement on learners. A study by Machingura (2023) emphasizes the importance of school-based mental health services in addressing the needs of learners affected by death. Schools that provide grief counselling and peer support programs have reported positive outcomes, including improved emotional well-being and academic performance. Zimbabwean schools could benefit from adopting similar strategies to enhance support for grieving learners. Despite the growing body of literature highlighting the impact of death on educational outcomes, a significant research gap exists regarding the specific experiences of learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwean educational contexts. While various studies discuss the broader implications of bereavement, limited empirical data focus on how death uniquely affects learners' academic performance, mental health, and social interactions in Zimbabwe. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the impact of death on learners and teacher trainees and identifying effective strategies for mitigation.

Theoretical Framework: Grief Theory

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Grief Theory, primarily developed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in the 1960s. Kübler-Ross's model identifies five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Mercy Corps, 2022). This framework provides valuable insights into understanding the emotional responses of individuals experiencing loss and highlights the need for appropriate support systems. Applying the principles of Grief Theory to this research, one can argue that learners and teacher trainees in Zimbabwe navigate various stages of grief following the death of loved ones. Understanding these stages can help educators and counsellors provide tailored support that meets the specific needs of grieving learners (Sande et al, 2017). For instance, learners in the denial stage may require gentle encouragement to discuss their feelings, while those in the anger stage may benefit from outlets to express their emotions constructively. Furthermore, the theory emphasizes the importance of social support in the grieving process. Kübler-Ross posits that individuals who have access to supportive networks are better equipped to cope with their grief and move through the stages more effectively (Thurston & Green, 2021). In the Zimbabwean context, fostering a supportive school environment that encourages open discussions about grief can facilitate healing and promote emotional well-being among learners. Additionally, Grief Theory underscores the importance of acknowledging that grief is a highly individual experience, influenced by cultural, social, and personal factors. This understanding is crucial in Zimbabwe, where cultural norms surrounding death and mourning can impact how learners process their grief (Tarisayi, 2023). Educators and counsellors must be culturally sensitive and responsive to the unique needs of each learner to provide effective support. Therefore, utilizing Grief Theory as a framework for examining the impact of death on learners and teacher trainees provides a comprehensive understanding of the emotional processes involved in grief. Through focusing on the stages of grief and the importance of social support, this study aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies for mitigating the impact of death on learners in Zimbabwe, ultimately promoting their academic success and emotional well-being.

Some causes of death

As teacher trainees and learners, it's essential to understand the diverse causes of death, both for their personal awareness and to better support learners who may be affected by loss. This knowledge fosters empathy and equips you to create a sensitive and informed classroom environment.

Sicknesses

Infectious and non-communicable diseases remain significant causes of death worldwide (ASER Centre,2023). Ischemic heart disease is the leading cause of death globally (Pindula News, 2020). Lower respiratory infections also remain a deadly communicable disease. Non-communicable diseases like cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes also contribute significantly (Bayley, 2022). For example, a teacher trainee might encounter learners who have lost family members to diseases such as cancer or heart disease. Understanding the prevalence and impact of these illnesses can help the teacher provide appropriate emotional support and resources.

Road Accidents

Road traffic injuries are a major global health concern, especially for young people. Approximately 1.19 million people die each year due to road traffic crashes (ZNSA, 2022). Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for those aged 5–29 years (WHO, 2020). Factors contributing to these accidents include speeding, drunk driving, distracted driving, and failure to use seatbelts (Yorke et al.,2021). For example, a teacher trainee can educate learners about road safety, emphasizing the importance of wearing seatbelts, avoiding distractions while walking or cycling, and never driving under the

influence of alcohol or drugs. They can also advocate for safer school zones and pedestrian crossings.

Drug Abuse

Drug overdose deaths are a significant public health issue in many countries (Zimbabwe Voice,2020). Opioids are responsible for the largest number of drug deaths globally. For instance, a teacher trainee can educate learners about the dangers of drug abuse, including the risk of addiction, overdose, and long-term health consequences. They can also provide information about resources for learners struggling with substance abuse or who have family members with addiction issues.

Murders

Intentional homicide rates vary significantly across countries. Homicide rates are often higher in countries with socioeconomic challenges and high levels of violence (Semo & Frissa, 2020). For example, in communities with high crime rates, teacher trainees may encounter learners who have been affected by violence or have lost loved ones to homicide. Understanding the impact of violence on children and families can help teachers provide trauma-informed support and create a safe classroom environment.

Suicides

Suicide is a global public health problem, with over 720,000 people dying by suicide each year (WHO, 2020). It is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds globally (Mahuni et al, 2023). Factors contributing to suicide include mental health disorders, substance abuse, and socioeconomic stressors. For instance, teacher trainees should be aware of the warning signs of suicide and know how to respond if a learner

expresses suicidal thoughts. They can also promote mental health awareness and connect learners with counselling services and support groups.

While Giving Birth

Maternal mortality refers to deaths due to complications from pregnancy or childbirth (IOM,2021). While global maternal mortality rates have declined in recent decades, they remain unacceptably high in many low-income countries such as Zimbabwe (Kanyopa et al., 2024). For example, a teacher trainees should be aware of the challenges faced by pregnant learners and new mothers. They can provide support and accommodations to help these learners continue their education.

Fighting

Deaths resulting from fights and assaults are often linked to interpersonal violence and can be influenced by factors such as alcohol or drug use and socioeconomic conditions (Kaiser & Sinanan, 2020). For instance, a teacher trainees can implement conflict resolution strategies in the classroom and promote positive social interactions among learners. They can also educate learners about the consequences of violence and provide resources for learners who have been involved in fights or have witnessed violence.

Falling in Toilet Pits

In some parts of the world, particularly in developing countries, unsafe sanitation facilities such as pit latrines pose a risk of accidental death, especially for young children (Edmonds et al., 2021). There have been reports of children falling into pit latrines and drowning (Dzenga,, 2020). For instance, teacher trainees working in schools with unsafe sanitation facilities can advocate for improved sanitation infrastructure to protect the safety and dignity of learners.

The Impact of Death on Teacher Trainees and Learners

The death of a loved one can profoundly affect individuals, particularly teacher trainees and learners. The nature of these effects varies based on the relationship with the deceased—whether a parent, sibling, classmate, teacher, relative, or friend—as well as individual factors such as age, personality, and support systems (Chideme-Munodawafa). Understanding these impacts is essential for teacher trainees, enabling them to provide appropriate support and foster a compassionate learning environment (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024).

Death of Parents

The death of a parent can be an incredibly stressful event for a child, often leading to significant consequences for their future well-being. Research indicates that children may experience mental health issues, emotional dysregulation, and academic difficulties following such a loss (Ahmadian et al., 2024). Symptoms can include sadness, confusion, and social withdrawal, with the risk of depression peaking in the first two years post-bereavement (Chidakwa,2023). Children may also exhibit signs of anxiety and PTSD, especially if the circumstances of the death were sudden or traumatic.

Educationally, a learner grieving the loss of a parent might struggle with concentration and exhibit a decline in academic performance. Teacher trainees can support these learners by creating a safe environment for them to express their feelings, offering assignment extensions, and connecting them with counselling services (Chidarikire et al., 2024).

Death of Siblings

The death of a sibling is often a uniquely devastating experience due to the special bond siblings share (Kanyopa & Makgalwa, 2024). Children may experience a mix of shock, sadness, and confusion, worrying about their own safety and the stability of their family (Mavesere & Dzawanda, 2022). Behaviours such as crying, tantrums, or withdrawal can manifest as children process their grief. In the classroom, a grieving learner may act out or isolate themselves. Teacher trainees can help by acknowledging the learner's grief, providing opportunities for them to share memories, and facilitating peer support (Machingura, 2023).

Death of Classmates

The death of a classmate can create anxiety and disrupt feelings of security among learners. Many will have questions about the event, and it's crucial for school staff to provide honest, age-appropriate answers (Muronzi, 2020). Learners may react in various ways, from laughter to tears, as they process their shock. In such situations, teacher trainees can foster a supportive atmosphere by facilitating discussions about grief, organizing memorial activities, and ensuring access to mental health resources (Mutambara & Bodzo, 2020).

Death of Teachers

The passing of a teacher can profoundly affect learners, faculty, and the school community. The nature of the relationship with the teacher and the circumstances surrounding their death significantly influence the grief response (Muronzi, 2020). Learners may experience intense emotions, including sadness and anxiety about their future. In response, teacher trainees can support grieving learners by sharing their own

memories of the teacher, creating spaces for emotional expression, and ensuring counselling services are available (Rapanyane, 2024).

Death of Other Relatives and Friends

The death of other relatives and friends can ripple through family networks, impacting children's lives in complex ways (Mercy Corps, 2022). Losses can deprive bereaved youth of essential social support, which is crucial for academic success (OCHA, 2020). Learners may show declines in performance or increased absenteeism following the death of a close friend or relative. Teacher trainees can assist by checking in with these learners, providing encouragement, and allowing flexibility with deadlines (Mavhura, 2020).

General Manifestations of Grief

Grieving individuals may experience a range of emotional, behavioural, and cognitive difficulties. Common emotional responses include sadness, anger, and anxiety (Machingura, 2023). Behavioural changes might manifest as social withdrawal or difficulty concentrating, while cognitive difficulties can include confusion and negative thoughts (Lesko, 2020)

Strategies for Coping with Loss in Educational Settings

Dealing with the death of a loved one is a deeply personal and challenging experience, and teacher trainees and educators need strategies to support themselves and their learners through such times (Chidarikire & Chikwati, 2024). The following sections detail ways to cope with different types of losses, offering practical advice and real educational examples to guide teacher trainees in fostering supportive and empathetic learning environments.

Death of Parents

The death of a parent is a profoundly impactful event that can disrupt a learner's sense of security and stability, leading to emotional distress and academic challenges (Dejaeghere, 2022). Teacher trainees can support learners by maintaining open communication with the family to understand the learner's needs and preferences regarding sharing information. Creating a safe space in the classroom where the learner feels comfortable expressing their feelings without judgment is crucial (Dey et al., 2022). Additionally, offering flexible academic support, such as extended deadlines or modified assignments, can significantly alleviate some of the pressure the learner may be feeling (Kaseke, 2021). For instance, a high school learner who has recently lost their mother may struggle to complete assignments on time. The teacher trainee can offer an extension and provide additional support by breaking down the assignment into smaller, more manageable tasks. Connecting the learner with school counselling services can further provide professional guidance and support (Hunter et al., 2020).

Death of Siblings

The loss of a sibling can be particularly complex, as siblings often share a unique bond and history. Learners may experience feelings of guilt, confusion, and loneliness, and they may worry about the well-being of their surviving family members (Hvalby, 2023). Teacher trainees can support these learners by acknowledging the sibling who died and allowing the learner to share memories and stories if they wish. It is essential to be aware of potential behavioural changes, such as withdrawal or acting out, and to address these with sensitivity and understanding (Kanyopa & Makgalwa). For example, a middle school learner whose younger brother has died in an accident may become withdrawn and stop participating in class activities. The teacher trainee can approach the learner privately, acknowledging their loss and offering a listening ear. Facilitating a connection with a peer support group or a grief counsellor can also provide the learner with additional support and coping strategies (Chikuvadze, 2023).

Death of Classmates

The death of a classmate can create a sense of shock and anxiety within the entire school community. Learners may struggle with feelings of vulnerability and may have questions about death and mortality (Dauda & Jaha Imoro, 2022). Teacher trainees can address this by facilitating open and honest discussions about grief and loss, using age-appropriate language and providing accurate information. It is crucial to allow learners to express their feelings and validate their emotions, whether they are sadness, confusion, or anger (Dey, eta al., 2022). For instance, following the death of a classmate in a car accident, a teacher trainee can lead a classroom discussion about grief, allowing learners to share their feelings and memories of the deceased learner (Galkina et al., 2023). Organizing a memorial activity, such as planting a tree or creating a memory board, can provide a way for learners to honour their classmate and find closure. Additionally, providing resources for learners who need additional support, such as grief counselling or support groups, is essential (Kunedzimwe et al., 2021).

Death of Teachers

The death of a teacher can be a significant loss for learners who may have formed strong bonds with their educators. Learners may experience feelings of sadness, confusion, and anger, and they may worry about how the teacher's death will affect their learning (Mathe, 2023). Teacher trainees can support learners by sharing their own memories of the teacher and creating a space for learners to do the same. Acknowledging the teacher's contributions to the school community and providing opportunities for learners to express their gratitude and appreciation is also important (Machingura, 2023). For example, after the sudden death of a beloved English teacher, a teacher trainee can organize a memorial service or tribute event where learners can share their favourite memories and express their appreciation for the teacher's impact on their lives. Creating

a memory book or a scholarship fund in the teacher's name can also be meaningful ways to honour their legacy. Ensuring that learners have access to counselling services to help them process their grief is crucial (Onweh et al., 2022).

Death of Friends

The death of a friend, particularly during adolescence, can be a profoundly painful experience. Teenagers often rely heavily on their friendships for support and identity formation, making the loss of a friend particularly devastating (Orievulu & Iwuji, 2022). Learners may experience intense feelings of grief, loneliness, and confusion, and they may struggle with existential questions about life and death (Tarisayi, 2023). Teacher trainees can support learners by providing a safe and non-judgmental space for them to express their feelings and share memories of their friend. Encouraging learners to connect with peer support groups or grief counsellors can also provide them with additional coping strategies (Tom & Chipenda ,2020). For instance, a high school learner whose best friend has died from suicide may struggle with feelings of guilt and anger. The teacher trainee can offer individual support, actively listening to the learner's concerns and validating their emotions. Connecting the learner with a support group specifically for teens who have lost friends to suicide can provide a sense of community and shared understanding (Thurston & Green, 2021).

Death of Children

The death of a child is an unimaginable loss that profoundly affects parents and families. For teacher trainees who are also parents, this type of loss can be particularly challenging to process, both personally and professionally. It is vital for teacher trainees to acknowledge their own grief and seek support from trusted colleagues, friends, or mental health professionals (Sorrenti et al., 2024). When working with learners who have experienced the death of a sibling, teacher trainees can provide a compassionate and understanding presence, allowing the learner to express their feelings without pressure

or judgment (Tegegne, 2022). For example, a teacher trainee whose own child has died may find it difficult to focus on their training and to support their learners effectively. Seeking counselling or therapy can provide a safe space for the trainee to process their grief and develop coping strategies. Additionally, connecting with other teacher trainees or educators who have experienced similar losses can offer a sense of community and shared understanding (Ugwoegbulem, 2022).

Death of Other Relatives

The death of other relatives, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins, can significantly impact learners, especially if they were close to the deceased (Zinyemba et al., 2023). Learners may experience sadness, confusion, and loss, and they may struggle with changes in family dynamics and routines (ZNCWC, 2021). Teacher trainees can support learners by acknowledging their loss and providing a listening ear. It is important to be aware of potential academic or behavioural changes and to offer additional support as needed (ASER Centre, 2023). For instance, a primary school learner whose grandmother, who was a primary caregiver, has recently died may exhibit signs of emotional distress, such as crying or withdrawing from activities (Chidarikire et al., 2024). The teacher trainee can provide a comforting presence, allowing the learner to talk about their grandmother and share memories. Offering extra support with schoolwork and providing a safe space for the learner to express their feelings can help them cope with their grief. Communicating with the learner's parents or guardians to coordinate support efforts is also essential (Brevik, 2023).

General Strategies for Supporting Grieving Individuals

Regardless of the specific relationship with the deceased, teacher trainees can employ several general strategies to support grieving learners and fellow trainees. Creating a safe and supportive environment in the classroom fosters a space where individuals feel comfortable expressing their feelings without fear of judgment (Chidakwa, 2023).

Actively listening to and validating emotions is critical; it helps grieving individuals feel heard and understood, even if their feelings seem overwhelming or irrational (Defe & Matsa, 2024). Providing accurate information about grief and loss, as well as connecting individuals with counselling services, support groups, or other helpful resources, is essential (Chitiyo, 2021). Offering practical assistance, such as extensions on assignments or additional help with tasks, can alleviate some of the burdens on grieving individuals (Mercy Corps, 2022). Encouraging self-care strategies, such as mindfulness and social connections, can help individuals manage their grief and maintain their well-being (Health Times, 2020). Finally, it is crucial to be patient and understanding, recognizing that grief is a process that unfolds differently for each individual (Saruchera & Chidarikire, 2025).

Recommendations

To address the impact of death on learners and teacher trainees, it is vital to establish comprehensive support systems that cater to the emotional and academic needs of those affected.

Learners and teacher trainees should have access to grief counselling services within their educational institutions to help them navigate the complex emotions associated with loss. Schools and colleges must create a supportive environment that encourages open discussions about grief, allowing students to share their experiences and seek help when needed.

Universities and colleges should implement training programs for staff that focus on recognizing the signs of grief and providing appropriate support to students in mourning.

Lecturers and teachers should be equipped with the skills to accommodate students' needs during difficult times, such as offering flexible deadlines and emotional support.

The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare should collaborate with educational institutions to develop resources and training for counsellors that specifically address the needs of grieving students.

Additionally, *the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education* should create awareness campaigns that highlight the available support services for students experiencing loss.

Finally, *future researchers* should investigate the long-term effects of grief on academic performance and mental health, contributing valuable insights to improve support systems in educational settings.

Summary

In this chapter, key terms related to bereavement were defined to establish a foundational understanding of the subject. The concepts of grief, mourning, and loss were explored, highlighting their significance in educational contexts. The chapter then examined various causes of death, including natural causes, accidents, illnesses, and violence, emphasizing how the circumstances surrounding a death can influence the grieving process. The impact of death on learners and teacher trainees was a central focus of the chapter. It detailed how the death of a loved one, whether a parent, sibling, classmate, or teacher, could disrupt a learner's emotional stability and academic performance. The chapter illustrated that individuals experienced a range of emotional responses, including sadness, confusion, and anxiety, which could lead to behavioural changes such as withdrawal or acting out. Teacher trainees, in particular, were shown to face unique challenges as they navigated their own grief while supporting learners. Strategies for dealing with the pain of loss were also discussed in detail. The chapter provided practical advice for teacher trainees on how to create supportive environments in which learners could express their feelings openly. It emphasized the importance of active listening, validating emotions, and providing resources for additional support. Furthermore, the

chapter highlighted educational examples that illustrated effective ways to memorialize deceased individuals and foster community healing within the classroom.

Reference

Aboagye, R. (2021). *Assessing the Factors for Rebranding Technical and Vocational Education for National Development in Ghana.* PhD thesis. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

Ahmadian, L.M. Brevik, E. Öhrn (2024). Adventures with Anxiety: Gender bias in using a digital game for teaching vocational English. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 40 (6): 2715-2734

Al Jar, T. (2021).The inclusion of life skills in secondary school English textbooks in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Education and Human Sciences*, 8 (4), 182-203

ASER Centre (2023). *Annual status of education report (rural) 2022: early years*. New Delhi.
Availablefrom: https://img.asercentre.org/docs/ASER%202022%20report%20pdfs/All%20India%20documents/aserreport2022.pdf. Accessed on 11th May 2025

Bayley , S; H. (2022) Learning for adaptation and 21st-century skills: evidence of pupils' flexibility in Rwandan primary schools. *Int J Educational Dev*. 93:102642.

Beckmann, N., Skovdal, M., Maswera, R., Nyamukapa, C., & Gregson, S. (2022). Rituals of care: Strategies adopted by HIV testers to avoid misdiagnosis in rapid HIV testing in Zimbabwe. *Global Public Health,* 17(12), 4169–4182.

Brevik , L.M.(2023). Intercultural approaches to second and foreign language instruction: A longitudinal video study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13(4), 104-119

Charamba, G., Chikwati, T., & Chidarikire, M. (2024). Gender equality and women economic empowerment: An analysis of ZAOGA FIF church in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. *International Journal for Social Studies,* 10(6), 14-28.

Chidakwa, N., (2023). Drug abuse: A hindrance to optimal functioning of the rural learner's cognitive capabilities. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 8(3), 155–175.

Chidarikire, M. ., & Mweli, . P. (2025). Exploring Interconnection of Rural Female Learners' Psychological Resilience and Academic Achievement Amidst Climate Change in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 4(4), 388–403.

Chidarikire, M., & Chikwati, T. (2024). Unravelling causes and mitigating suicidal tendencies in male educators in Zimbabwe's rural regions: A comprehensive analysis. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 50(5), 293–303.

Chidarikire, M., Chidarikire, J. N., & Ingwani, V. (2024). Unravelling ramifications of female exclusion as school heads on advancing women in leadership roles: Case of Masvingo urban schools, Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Research*, 11(6), 202–222.

Chideme-Munodawafa, A., Manyana, S.B., & Collins, A., E. (2020). HIV/AIDS in rural communities. *Journal of Education*, 2 (2), 1–12.

Chikuvadze, P. (2023). Gender-related policy guidelines' impact on rural female learners' participation in sciences at advanced level. *Futurity Education*, 3(1), 150–165.

Chitiyo, A., (2021). Special and inclusive education in Southern Africa. *Journal of Special Education Preparation,* 1(1), 55–66.

Dauda, S., & Jaha Imoro, R. (2022). Ghana and COVID-19: Perspectives on livelihoods, health and living conditions of internal migrants in Accra. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), 2072060.

Defe, R, & Matsa, M. 2024. The Significance of Stakeholder Engagement Towards Building Sustainable Climate Smart Villages in Mwenezi District. *Environmental Challenges*, 1 (2), 1-12 100855.

Dejaeghere J. (2022). *Life Skills Education for Youth.* Springer Nature Link. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-85214-6

DeJaeghere, J, & Murphy-Graham, E. (2022). *Life Skills Education for Youths: Critical Perspectives*. Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85214-6

Dey, A. Patra, D. Giri, L. Varghese, D. Idiculla (2022). The status of life skill education in secondary schools. An evaluative study. *Online International Interdisciplinary Research Journal,* 12 (1), 76-88

Dzenga, L. (2020). *Zimbabwe: Zim reintroduces radio lessons*. The herald. https://allafrica.com/stories/202006040234.html. Accessed 6 June 2025.

Edmonds E, Feigenberg B, Leight J. (2021). Advancing the agency of adolescent girls. *Rev Econ Stat.* 53(9):1–46.

Galkina, T., Atkova, I., & Gabrielsson, P. (2023). Business modeling under adversity: Resilience in international firms. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 17(4), 802–829.

Godana G, Garoma S, Ayers, N. & Abera M (2023) Effect of a school-linked life skills intervention on adolescents' sexual and reproductive health skills in Guji zone, Ethiopia (CRT)—A generalized linear model. *Front. Public Health* 11:1203376.

Health Times. (2020). *Malari kills 131 in Zimbabwe.* https://healthtimes.co.zw/2020/04/18/malaria-kills-131-in-zimbabwe/. Accessed 07 May 2025.

Hofmeyr H. Perseverance, passion and poverty: examining the association between grit and reading achievement in high-poverty schools in South Africa. *Int J Educational Dev.* 8(3):102- 126.

Hope Village Society. (2022). *Our work.* Accessed from https://www.hopevillagesociety.org/our-work 23rd May 2025

Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Zimbabwe: Unsafe water raises COVID-19 Risks. Severe water, sanitation crisis undermines pandemic fight.* https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/15/zimbabwe-unsafe-water-raises-covid-19-risks. Accessed 6 Jun 2025.
Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Zimbabwe: Unsafe water raises COVID-19 Risks. Severe water, sanitation crisis undermines pandemic fight.* https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/15/zimbabwe-unsafe-water-raises-covid-19-risks. Accessed 6 Jun 2025.

Hunter, J., Chitsiku, S., Shand, W., & van Blerk, L. (2020). Learning on Harare's street under COVID 19 lockdown: Making a story map with street youth. *Environment and Urbanisation*, 33(01), 11–17.

Hvalby, A. Guldbrandsen, & H. Fandrem. 2023. Life skills in compulsory education: A systematic scoping review. *Education Sciences*, 14 (10) 111- 123

International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2021). *The impact of natural disasters on street children in Zimbabwe*. https://www.iom.int/research/impact-natural-disasters-street-children-zimbabwe 21 March 2025

J. DeJaeghere, E. Murphy-Graham (Eds*.), Life skills education for youth. Critical perspectives,* Springer Nature, 13-41

Kaiser, E., & Sinanan, A. N. (2020). Survival and resilience of female street children experiencing sexual violence in Bangladesh: A qualitative study. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse,* 29(05), 550–569.

Kanyopa, T., J. & Makgalwa, M., M. (2024). The understanding of psychological challenges facing South African school learners in the 21st century: A visual explanatory approach. *e-Bangi: Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 21(2), 270-284.

Kaseke, E. (2021). Social work education in Zimbabwe: Strengths and weaknesses, issues and challenges. *Social Work Education*, 20(2), 101–109.

Kunedzimwe, F, Kupika O. L., & Kusangaya, S. (2021). Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment for Riparian-based Livelihoods in Semi-arid Parts of Zimbabwe (A Technological Approach). *Environmental Hazards* 5 (4), 145 -167
Lesko, N. (2020). Feeling abstinent? feeling comprehensive? touching the effects of sexuality curricula*. Sex Education*, 10(2), 281–297.

Lunga, P. (2022). Community-based research with vulnerable populations: Ethical, inclusive and sustainable frameworks for knowledge generation, *edited by Lesley Wood. Educational Research for Social Change*, 11(2), 124–126.

Machingura, F. (2023). A woman should learn in quietness and full submission' (1 Timothy 2: 1 Empowering Women in the Fight against Masculine Readings of Biblical Texts and a Chauvinistic African Culture in the Face of HIV and AIDS. *Studies in World Christianity*, 19(3), 233–51.

Mahuni, K, Ramessur, T & and Musamali, R. (2023). Towards a Perspective for Understanding Analysis of Irregular Migration of Female Labour from Zimbabwe to South Africa. *Journal of Smart Economic Growth* 8 (2), 51–94.

Malango NT, Hegena TY & Assefa , NA. (2022). Parent–adolescent discussion on sexual and reproductive health issues and its associated factors among parents in Sawla town, Gofa zone, Ethiopia. *Reprod Health.* 19:108. doi: 10.1186/s12978-022-01414-w

Malinauskas R, Malinauskiene V. (2021). Training the social-emotional skills of youth school students in physical education classes. *Front Psychol.* 12:741195. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.741195

Mathé, N.E.H. (2023). Suggesting a framework for students' academic perspective-taking in secondary social science education. *Acta Didactica Norden*, 17 (2),1-23

Mavesere, F., & Dzawanda, B. (2022). Effectiveness of Pfumvudza as a resilient strategy against drought impacts in rural communities of Zimbabwe. *GeoJournal*, 88(1), 1-23.

Mavhura, E. (2020). Learning from the tropical cyclones that ravaged Zimbabwe: Policy implications for effective disaster preparedness. *Natural Hazards*, 10(4), 2261–2275.
.
Mercy Corps. (2022). *The impact of COVID-19 on street children in Zimbabwe.* Accessed https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/impact-covid-19-street-children-zimbabwe 21 March 2025

Mukwada, G., Taylor, S. J., Manatsa, D., Mahasa, P. S., & Robinson, G. M. (2020). Combating food insecurity in a rapidly changing mountain climate environment: Insights from Lesotho. *Climatic Change*, 16(3), 989-1006.

Muronzi, C. (2020). *We'll die of hunger first": Despair as Zimbabwe lockdown begins.* https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2020/03/die-hunger-despair-zimbabwe-lockdown-begins-200330054919081.html. Accessed 11 May 2025.

Mutambara, S, & Bodzo, E. 2020. Collaborative Management in Resilience Building Projects: Case of Chiredzi and Mwenezi District of Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Development and Management Review* 15 (1), 32–50.

Muzerengi, F, Gandidzanwa, C, P. & Chirubvu, L. (2023). Impacts of Climate Change on Household Food Security in Matande Communal Lands, Mwenezi District in Zimbabwe. *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 15 (1); 1-23

Nyahuma-Mukwashi, G.N., Mujongonde-Kanonhuwa, T.N., & Chirisa, I. (2021). *The Future of Reducing Urban Vulnerability with Perspectives of Child Development in Zimbabwe.* In: The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Futures. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51812-7_123-1

OCHA. (2020b). *Zimbabwe situational report.* Last updated: 8 April 2020. https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/zimbabwe/. Accessed 04 May 2025.

Onweh, V, E., Akpan, N. & Caleb, E. (2022). *Youths Empowerment and the Integration of Entrepreneurship Education into Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria*. SSRN. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4166843

Orievulu, K. S., & Iwuji, C. C. (2022). Institutional responses to drought in a high HIV prevalence setting in rural South Africa. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(1), 434-456.

Orievulu, K. S., & Iwuji, C. C. (2022). Institutional responses to drought in a high HIV prevalence setting in rural South Africa. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(1), 434-456.

Pindula News. (2020). *The food rations were too little- homeless kids now back on the streets after escaping lockdown safe houses*. https://news.pindula.co.zw/2020/04/17/the-food-rations-were-too-little-homeless-kids-now-back-on-the-streets-after-escaping-lockdown-safe-houses/. Accessed 11 May 2025.

Rapanyane, M. B. (2024). South African basic education system: Colonial legacies in the curriculum design and a way forward. *E-Bangi: Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 21(2), 428-437.

Sande, M., Zimba, G., Mberikunashe, D., Tangwena, H., & Chimusoro, A. (2017). Progress towards malaria elimination in Zimbabwe with special reference to the period. *Malaria Journal,* 16(1), 295.

Saruchera, M., & Chidarikire, M. (2025). Educators' Role in Mitigating Suicidal Propensities among Zimbabwe Rural Secondary Male Learners: An Exploration of Challenges and Interventions Mechanisms. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 10(1), 355-374.

Save the Children International. (2020). *COVID 19 : Our impact in 2020*. Unpublished report.

Semo, B. W., & Frissa, S. M. (2020). The mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: Implications for Sub-Saharan Africa. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 13, 713–720.

Sibanda, A., & Manik, S. (2022). Environmental Education (EE) teaching in a rural drought-prone district in Zimbabwe: Micro innovations with growth potential. *Journal of Geography Education in Africa*, 5(4), 77-95.

Sorrenti G, Zölitz U, Ribeaud D, Eisner M. (2024).The causal impact of socio-emotional skills training on educational success. *Rev Econ Stud*. 91(1):18-24

Tarisayi, K. S. (2023). Autoethnographic reflections on the survival strategies of Zimbabwean migrant teachers. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(2), 221-255. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.228278

Tegegne WA.(2022). Self-esteem, peer pressure, and demographic predictors of attitude toward premarital sexual practice among first-year students of Woldia university: implications for psychosocial intervention. *Front Psychol*. 13:923639. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.923639

Tesema D, Tamirat M, & Tadele A. (2020). Sexual behaviors and its association with life skills among school adolescents of Mettu town, South West Ethiopia: a school-based cross-sectional study. *SAGE Open Med*. 8:2050312120940545. doi: 10.1177/2050312120940545

Thurston, M & K. Green. (2021). Young people, mental health and education: Where does the concept of "wellbeing" fit in? H.E. Tjomsland, N.G. Viig, G.K. Resaland (Eds.), Folkehelse og livsmestring i skolen. I fag, på tvers av fag og som en helhetlig tilnærming [Public health and life skills in school, subjects, across subjects as a holistic approach], Fagbokforlaget, pp. 35-50

Tom, T., & Chipenda, C. (2020). COVID-19, lockdown and the family in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 51(3–4), 288–300.

Ugwoegbulem, P. A. (2022). Functional Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for Sustainable Youths Empowerment and National Development in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Research and Production*, 25 (1), 1–15.

UNICEF. (2021). *The situation of street children in Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 pandemic.* https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/reports/situation-street-children-zimbabwe-during-covid-19-pandemic. 23rd March 2025

World Health Organization (2020). *Life skills education school handbook: Prevention of noncommunicable diseases.* www.who.lifeskills-education.org. Accessed on 12th May 2025.

Yorke L, Rose P, Bayley S, Wole D, Ramchandani P. (2021). The importance of students' socio-emotional learning, mental health and wellbeing in the time of COVID-19. *Rise Insights*, 2 (5),1–11

Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC). (2021). *Causes of street children in Zimbabwe.* https://www.zncwc.org/research/causes-street-children.pdf 23rd March 2025.

Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency. (2022). *The impact of COVID 19 pandemic.* Unpublished report.

Zimbabwe Voice. (2020). *Street kids escape Harare safe house: The food was little.* https://zimbabwevoice.com/2020/04/17/street-kids-escape-Harare-safe-house-the-food-was-little/amp/. 30th May 2025

Zinyemba, T.P., Groot, W., & Pavlova, M. (2023). Effects of parental HIV on children's education: A qualitative study at Mashambanzou Zimbabwe. *Review of Social Economy*, 2(2), 1-26.

Zinyemba, T.P., Groot, W., & Pavlova, M. (2023). Effects of parental HIV on children's education: A qualitative study at Mashambanzou Zimbabwe. *Review of Social Economy*, 2(2), 1-26.

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge the critical readers of this book, Dr. Nowell Chidhakwa (Educational Pyschology), University of Johannesburg, South Africa and Dr. Songile Mhlanga (Educational Psychology, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe). I also appreciate the reviewers for their significant contributions. In addition, l greatly appreciates Dr. Joel Marashe of Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe and Dr. Sipikelelo Mugari now at Midlands State University the first team to lecture Health Life Skills at Great Zimbabwe University. They are the pace setters. Lastly, l give thanks all my Health Life Skills students, Educational Psychology students and my counselling clients for the interactions and experiences that they shared and enhanced the quality of this book.