

## **Effect of Community Support on the Implementation of Re-Entry Policy for Teenage Mothers in Public Secondary Schools in Gatundu South Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya**

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**Abstract:** The study examined the effect of community support on re-entry policy for teenage mother-students and completion of schooling in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County. Research question that guided this study was: To what extent has community support affected the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mother-students? Opportunity theory guided this study. Mixed research design was applied in this study. The study targeted 30 public secondary schools where 421 participants comprising of class teachers, principals, and ministry of education officials, mother-students and parents/guardians to mother-student were targeted. Questionnaires, interview guide and document analysis were used to collect data. Analysis for qualitative data was done in verbatim and thematic approach while quantitative data was done using descriptive statistics where SPSS software was used for Chi-Square test and correlation analysis and results presented in charts, tables and graphs. Researcher considered some ethics by seeking permission from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and NACOSTI for data collection. The study findings revealed that community support by creating awareness about re-entry policy for teenage mother-students has improved the implementation of the re-entry policy. Early pregnancy has affected the completion rates of girls since it has made mother-students loose interest due to missing hope of community reactions when teens get pregnant. Social cultural practices such as early marriages affect the policy since teen mothers are treated like any other mother in the family. The cultural norms of the community subject the teen mothers to labeling and stereotyping hence affecting their schooling process. Recommendation was that there is need for the government and the community to establish rules and procedures governing fair allocation of these supports in order to demonstrate goodwill and support for the readmission of the girls after delivery to institutions.

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### **Introduction**

Education, according to (Komora, 2014), has long been regarded as a critical common freedom since it looks to be the road to possible transformation, harmony, and strength inside and between nations. With this idea in mind, the United Nations issued the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Its article 26 advocates for free and compulsory education, at the elementary and fundamental levels. Education, therefore, facilitates social, economic, and political transformation. Therefore, instruction is a helpful and productive tool for both people and the state. In an era where men and women have equal work possibilities, educated individuals have emerged as remarkable, capable, and self-assured entrepreneurs.

A study conducted by Mutua (2019) in Kenya asserts that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5 address girls' education globally. Both expect admittance to comprehensive and fair schooling to support long lasting learning for all and consideration on orientation to equity and the strengthening of all ladies. As a result, educational opportunities for lifelong learning that are inclusive and equitable for everyone via empowerment are prioritized. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) prioritizes empowering women to eliminate poverty through quality education, according to Tang (2015). Pathania (2017) backs up this claim by asserting that by 2030, "no one is left behind" in addressing the devastating and severe issues of inequality and exclusion.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), everyone has the right to education, where females are placed at the core of its educational efforts regardless of how poor or affluent a nation is. Following

that, despite being forced by cultural, political, or societal considerations, dismissing a young student mother from school that limits her capacities has no place (Kapasule, 2020).

Parenthood is a crucial milestone in a woman's life. Yet, adolescent motherhood is a major worry in many nations since it carries with it physical, psychological, emotional, and social challenges. As a result, healthcare personnel should offer them extra attention and care assistance (Mangeli et.al 2017). Another source says that single parents are more likely to experience stigma, despair, anxiety, and stress overall despite making significant efforts to meet their financial obligations (Stack & Meredith, 2018).

In New Zealand, early births are high around low economic backgrounds. To uplift the enrolment in school after giving birth, the government established Teen Parents Units (TPU) in 2017 to support high school students who became pregnant (Vaithianathan et.al 2021). Social services such as Health care for the babies, subsidized transport, guidance, and mentoring were among the offers settled on. However, it was noted that teen mothers struggled with maintaining engagement with school due to inflexible school policies and procedures along with inadequate childcare (Staneva& Anita, 2017).

In 2008, Jamaica recorded 72 teenage pregnancies in every 1,000 girls. The reintegration strategy in Jamaica was to save adolescent mothers who stood a chance to drop out of school and enter into dangers of segregation, maternal mortality, neediness, low fulfillment of training, and unfortunate life result (Kennedy, 2015). The Women Center of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF) drive was likewise established to save young ladies from the gamble of rehased pregnancies by 45% (Drayton & Primarck, 2000). This was to counter the Education Regulations 1980 that authorized school administrators to expel pregnant students; this denied most of them a chance to re-join after delivery (Kapasule and Kumar, 2020).

Adolescent pregnancy has been a threat in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was passed in 1990, certified in Article 11(6) that the nations would stretch out to guarantee school completion to those who fall victims of untimely motherhood. To heed the demand, nations including Malawi, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya have affirmed arrangements to affirm the re-admission of young mothers to school after delivery (Kurgat, 2016). A remote interview conducted by Human Rights Watch (2020) from several African countries shows that the school's closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic doubled the inequalities among children who were already at education exclusion risk. Girls graded high rates of early childbearing and marriage for a lack of engagement in remote learning because of poor facilitation.

Malawi was the main sub-Saharan African country to take a strong choice and pronounce free essential schooling after the Jomtien gathering in 1990. Fourteen years after the strategy was first carried out, no serious endeavor had been made to figure out what had befallen the students' determination to benefit from the strategy (Chimombo, 2009). Further, Malawi developed National Girls' Education Strategy (NGES) in 2014 for girls to access, participate, Complete, and excel in all levels of education to promote sufficient empowerment that would contribute to the country's sustainable social and economic development by 2018 (Kapasule& Kumar, 2020). The most noteworthy, under-age pregnancy rates overall have been at 141 births in 1000 which adds to poor maternal and neonatal results, and destitution described by unprotected value-based sex. These commitment factors denoted the completion of girls' schooling (Nash et.al, 2019).

In 1990, Swaziland turned into a signatory to the Dakar Framework for Action that maintains instruction for all. The activity formed the base for vulnerable, oppressed, and underprivileged children in Swaziland to explore social change through education until completion (Motsa&Morojele, 2016). At the age of 19, 45% of girls were either pregnant or with their first child, among them 4% had started childbearing at age 15 recording a high pace of pregnancy. At the onset of early motherhood, young ladies go through surprisingly profound and social outcome shame. A portion of the youthful mothers communicated vulnerability about an instructive future, demonstrated by unsupportive teachers and trouble in adjusting to parenthood and school requests. Some girls gestured help from their mothers to reconnect to school while many uncovered dismissals, particularly from their fathers (Ntinda et.al, 2016). The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy of 2011 (EDSEC) was enacted to retain expectant learners in school and assist teen mothers to re-enter school and continue with education after childbirth. Every child, irrespective of their life circumstances has the right to be re-integrated into the same institution that the girl was previously attending (Swaziland Government, 2017).

In Uganda, the pervasiveness of teen pregnancy is as high as 25%, with 27% in provincial regions and 19% in metropolitan. It is a major source of concern and a burden not only for the local community but also for the public authority, particularly as resources are required to combat the negative effects of teenage pregnancy among young school teenagers. Apart from recording low school completion rates, the underage mothers are unable to support themselves and their children's needs like nutrition, education, health care, housing and other needs. This weight prompts a persistent chain of destitution cycles (Mani et.al., 2018).

The Ministry of Education of the Kenyan government issued an order in 1994 requiring pregnant students to attend school until the child was born and then return to the same or another school. Its motivation was to safeguard youthful moms from mental and close to home damage. In addition, the policy emphasized educating the entire school community to facilitate youth reintegration. Nevertheless, strategy execution was stopped at the area and commonplace levels, leaving translation and decision-production to individual directors (Imbosa et.al, 2022). In 1996, adjustments by the Ministry of Education to strengthen the stance that the female child was not unfairly disadvantaged even after delivery were considered. Teenage mother-students were therefore urged to make adequate provisions for the care of the baby. The Care and Protection of Children Act of 2016 directed the county governments submit to the highest authority the establishment of childcare facilities to assist teen mothers. Implementation of the re-entry policy is however challenged by insufficient resources and little legitimacy (Mwenje, 2015).

The teenage mother-students are by all accounts not the only ones who benefit from the guidelines. However, a similar report uncovered that 33% of girls became mothers at 15 to 19 years age had no education. To ensure that these principles are effectively implemented, the Ministry is tasked with leading coordination among multiple agencies. Subsequently, financial possibilities are hampered, and the country's true capacity is decreased (MOE, 2020). An unfortunate connection between sensitization and comprehension of the re-entry policy sharpening and stemming the reemergence strategy was clearly demonstrated among stakeholders (Christine, 2020). In addition, there is a deficiency of educators in schools to meet students' physical, intellectual, and emotional necessities. However, brutality and destructive social practices likewise hinder reemergence execution for school culmination after conveyance (Ananda, 2019).

According to Kamau and Wambugu (2017) in Kenya, secondary education is an essential link in the preparation of human capital for development and life opportunities. However, Komora (2014) on challenges facing the education of the girl child in Kenya asserts that despite established strategies to improve education, variations persist in the Kenyan educational system in efforts to reduce unintended pregnancies. According to Omwancha (2012) in his study in Kuria District noted that after teenage pregnancy, young girls are burdened in schooling and require exceptional thought since they are more likely than boys to leave school for various reasons, including early pregnancy and marriage, customary viewpoint, violence, and exposure to various forms of harassment.

Wanyama and Simatwa (2011), in Emuhaya additionally observed that young ladies ought to profit from the re-entry strategy since they are distraught in all degrees of training regarding access, support, consummation, and execution because of early pregnancy. High schooling moms, further face, ridicule and stigma from the community instructors, and companions, for training. It was outstanding that guardians attempt to track down a spot for their girls to return to school after delivery in spite of not being familiar with the re-entry strategy.

Gatundu South Sub-County has raised an alarm about the surge in early pregnancy among schoolgirls aged 13 to 19. These girls come from low-income families, they become pregnant and discarded by males despite promises of a better life. Notwithstanding the re-entry policy provisions, the effects of teen pregnancy are serious, necessitating rescue efforts since it comes with ongoing obstacles of humiliation, shame, discrimination, and rejection from family and society. Failing to complete high school education dashes the hopes of future and dependable citizens who stay imprisoned in poverty and have little representation in social, economic, and political engagement (Ndungu, 2022). The current study aimed to close a gap in knowledge on community support on the re-entry policy on secondary school completion rates teenage mother-students in Gatundu South sub-county.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Notwithstanding the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which encourages free and compulsory education at the basic and foundational levels, there has been and continues to be uproar among governments that the execution of re-entry policy for young mothers is failing (Komora, 2014). Worldwide, it is estimated that 25% of school dropouts resulted from early pregnancy while Africa registers an annual rate of 18.8% (Worku et.al.,2021). Following the establishment of the re-entry policy in 1994 by the Kenyan government, implementation, both at district and provincial levels was suspended, leaving interpretation and decision-making to individual principals (Imbosa et.al.,2022). As a result, many secondary school students do not complete their education after giving birth, with 13,000 females dropping out each year (Wanyama & Simatwa, 2011). In Kiambu county, early pregnancy is rated at 14 percent. Similarly, an outcry on early pregnancy between 13-19 years in Gatundu South sub-county diminish the dreams among girls who miss opportunities and benefits that come along with

education due to school dropout (Njoroge, 2019). Prior studies on this policy have not adequately addressed the implementation of re-entry policy execution and consequences of school dropout for adolescent mother-students. The implementation of re-entry policy execution if not addressed, threatened the gains made so far in enhancing retention and completion by expectant learners and teen mothers in Kenya, Gatundu South Sub-County included (Human Right Watch, 2018). In Gatundu South Sub-County, it also threatened the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4, which calls for the promotion of inclusive, equitable, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Similarly, SDG number 5 which advocates for gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Therefore, this study was meant to assess the effect of community support on re-entry policy for teenage mother-students and completion of schooling in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

### **Research Question**

To what extent has community support affected the implementation of the re-entry policy and completion rate for teenage mother-students in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County?

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

H<sub>0</sub>: Community support has no statistically significant effect on re-entry policy and completion rates for teenage mother-students in Gatundu South Sub-County.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by the equality of opportunity theory as propounded by Mithaug (1996) and cited by Ferreira & Peragine (2013). The theory urges a clear and comprehensive examination of people's ideas on both right to self-determination and expression in a society whose circumstances are beyond their control. It teaches on fairness of reward to individuals' responsibility and effort with an allowance of inequalities that call for compensation. It examines society's collective responsibility to assure fair prospects of self-determination in expected outcomes such as income, wealth, human capital, education, and health that reflects the result of individual choices. The standards uplifted by the theory diminish the disparity among privileges and experience of self-assurance of children and grown-ups.

The theory, therefore, calls for policymakers and the state to increase aspirations for educational attainment for women (Peragine & Ferreira, 2015).

The study therefore aimed assess community's input in helping mother-students finish their secondary education. In addition, the policy implementers were urged to present their strategy for ensuring equal educational opportunities for all students. The theory also dictates that individuals and firms deal with each other impartially in attaining the outcome they care about (Cohen, 1989). Therefore, mother-students have all reasons and rights for readmission to attain available places after school and opportunities thereafter.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual frameworks according to Stratman and Roth (2014) are structured from a set of broad ideas and theories that enable researchers to properly identify the problem to be investigated, frame their questions and identify the suitable methods of data collection and analysis. This study puts into conceptualization that the dependent variable depends on the independent variable. The relationship between the dependent, intervening and independent variables is as illustrated in Fig 1.

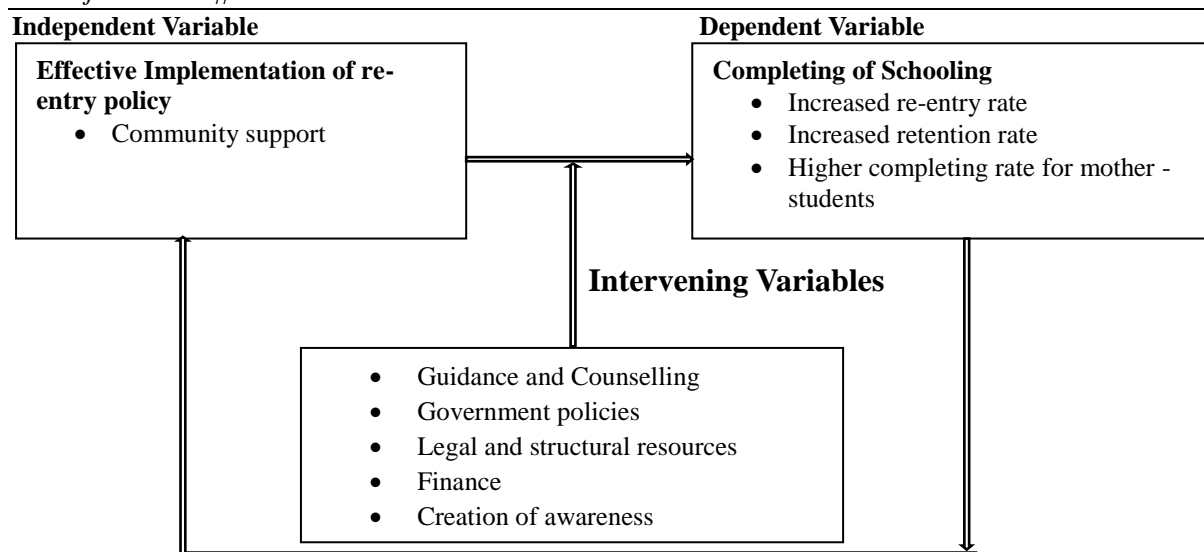


Figure 1: Interaction among the variables of the study

Effective implementation of re-entry policy as independent variables in this study especially through community support, willingness to re-join, government initiatives, school support and social-cultural practices that lead to an increased re-entry rate, increased retention rate, higher completing rate for mother-students and improved level of education and living standards (dependent variables). The success of effective implementation of re-entry policy require intervention through guidance and counseling, government policies, legal and structural resources, creation of awareness and finance to all parties involved so that mother-students can participate in education and school completion without being ridiculed. A policy requires legal support so as to give redress to those who are aggrieved. It also requires finance to facilitate the process of its implementation. Hence, this study bears an important initiative for the recommendation towards effective implementation of re-entry policy for teenage mother-students and completion of schooling in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County, Kiambu County, Kenya.

### Literature review

Emile Durkheim, the defender of the social integration theory of 1892 defines it as a principle that guides connections among individuals in the bigger society and how they communicate with each other. The minority are assimilated into the societal standard to raise a brought-together society. Social principles inside society are considered to determine the way individuals coordinate into the predominant culture of the society and consequent achievement or failure (Berkman, Glass, Brissette & Seeman, 2000). This theory offers that security that provides young mother-students with opportunity and certainty when retained in school to yield prosperity after completing their studies and progressing.

Besides, the shared perspective of individuals who live and share cultural commitments feel part of the entire society including the people who have a possibility of exclusion; teen mothers counted also and whose aggressiveness in education minimizes social conflict in the field workforce (Berkman, Glass, Brissette & Seeman, 2000). While everybody should be similarly maintained, gaps exist on how best every individual can take advantage of social fairness since individuals' preferred result at any point determine the success by legitimacy and exertion made. This theory only paints an ideal situation in society that has wide gaps from reality. The girls are a part of the community but their condition and status as victims of teenage pregnancy set them apart as a disadvantaged group that is not in harmony with the rest of the population due to the discontinuation of their education. It is likely to produce tension between the secondary school leavers and dropouts, widens the gaps on economic endeavors and produces inequalities (Linda, 2001).

### Community Support and Re-entry Policy Implementation for Mother-Students

According to Mutua et.al (2019), the World Bank established that girls are twice excluded from school due to gender and poverty. In 2013, 34 million adolescent girls did not attend lower secondary school. These girls are particularly vulnerable to poverty in low-income states because they miss out on a significant opportunity to acquire essential skills that can guarantee meaningful employment.

Amin (2008), in a study on Marriage considerations in sending girls to school in Bangladesh, applied a case study approach in qualitative research to interview female respondents aged 12-24 years. These respondents were randomly sampled from 800 household and grouped into various groups depending on their age and marital status. The study established that delayed marriages and girls being allowed to continue with their education were on the rise in Bangladesh. The community and other stakeholders in education were joining efforts to help girls complete school before marriage or rejoin school after getting pregnant. Early marriages and teenage pregnancies were the main reasons for teenage girls dropping out of school completely to focus on marriage. The study recommended intensified collaboration on efforts to educate the girl child and assist teenage mothers in rejoining school. The study randomly sampled its respondents and only administered questionnaires to gather data. The current study applied purposive sampling to get the respondents and use both questionnaires and interviews to gather data as well as document.

Bonell et.al (2003), conducted a study on the Effect of social exclusion on the risk of teenage pregnancy using document analysis from baseline research on a randomized trial of sex education in South East England. The 9,691 respondents who were purposively sampled were aged between 13-14 years. Using a baseline survey with questionnaires in all 27 schools, the study gathered sufficient data which established that girls whose education was interrupted by early pregnancy face social exclusion. This is because they do not take the effective stance on economic, social, and cultural performance that mainstream society would expect. Along with this, the government of the United Kingdom proves limited to address social and economic hurdles that risk young people embracing schooling as a priority, thus social exclusion is on the rise. The study recommended that increased awareness of sex education and its effects on teenagers should be vigorously undertaken targeting teenagers and their parents. The gap in the study is its focus on teenage pregnancy and social exclusion based on document analysis only. This study intended to specifically focus on the implementation of the re-entry policy for mother-students in Gatundu South sub-county using combined qualitative and quantitative research methods on multiple respondents.

Disputes regarding women's discrimination have been resolved through the development of national gender policies. It was formulated in 2019 to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment in Kenya in Sessional Paper 2 (the Republic of Kenya, 2019). Gender inequalities at all levels of government and among all stakeholders were first approved in 1997 and revised in 2007 in Uganda (Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development, 2007). Women's inequality and discrimination were the primary focus of Burundi's 2011 policy (Women, United Nations, 2016).

A study was carried out in Tano South Municipality (Ghana) by Haruna, Kuranchie and Addo (2022), on Educational Resilience of Teen Mothers in Ghanaian Schools: is it without Socio-Emotional Challenges? The purpose of the study was to investigate the socio-emotional challenges encountered by teen mothers in their educational journey. The study applied phenomenology in the qualitative framework. A semi-structured interview was the tool for data collection from 12 girls from senior high school. The findings indicated that teen mothers undergo mockery and stigmatization from society along with emotional challenges for instance frustration, moodiness, and sorrow. Further, the study revealed that teen mothers can go through education successfully if education sufficient support from relevant stakeholders such as students and teachers could be considered. The recommendation from the study mandated the Ministry of Education to pursue guidance and counseling programs to provide teen mothers with a conducive environment for their studies until completion. The study did not convincingly bring to light ways of curbing emotional imbalances among teen mother-students due to limited approaches since only girls were interviewed. The current study sought to scrutinize the effective implementation of the re-entry policy in the Gatundu South sub-county and involve key stakeholders with a variety of sampling methods and instruments for data collection.

Mutara (2015) researched Factors Contributing to Teenage Pregnancies in the Rural Community in Zimbabwe seeking to find out factors that are contributing to teenage pregnancies in rural communities in Zimbabwe. A qualitative research design was used. The target population comprised of women who married under 18 years, their husbands, and local leaders. Using an in-depth interview instrument, eight men and four women were the key informants during data collection. Among the factors affecting school completion for teen mothers were poor socio-background, peer pressure, and inadequate sex education. The study thus recommended the government to put full measures on law implementation empowering teenagers with sexual health reproductive education to protect the girl-child. The study included married men who are not going to be focused in current study. The sampling technique was not captured also. The study applied only qualitative design that may have not yielded adequate investigation factors contributing to early pregnancies. The current study sought to investigate ways in which early pregnancy affects the completion of schooling in the Gatundu-

South sub-county and establish ways of curbing them using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Onyango et.al. (2015), did a review on The Challenges of school re-entry among teenage mothers in primary schools in Muhoroni District, Western Kenya. A cross-sectional descriptive research design was applied and targeted 12 head teachers and 120 teachers. The respondents were selected through purposive and simple random sampling. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. After the analysis, the report indicated that women's education is viewed as "a case of watering a neighbor's tree" by people from some cultural backgrounds because a girl's parents /guardians receive less support when she marries. Similar circumstances are found in Garissa, where cultural practices harm the education of girls, whose motherhood is considered the only capacity they possess (Kisaka, 2015).

The study then recommended a review of the re-entry policy to help in curbing the cultural challenges that prevent its effective implementation. Having excluded education officials from the ministry, the study faced a deficiency of information on the issue, making it impossible to generalize. This denied the study the information on the direct role of the senior education officers in ensuring the implementation of the re-entry policy. Therefore, it was pertinent for the current study to seek possible solutions desired by the community to this issue from key implementing agencies of the re-entry policy in the Gatundu South sub-county.

Limboro (2021) conducted a qualitative study on the role of communities in marginalized girls' education in Kilifi County, which has a high rate of illiteracy and poverty, particularly among women and girls. 33 adults and 30 children (24 girls and 6 boys), were sampled. Interviews, focus group discussions, informal discussions, and community mapping was used to gather data. The study revealed that communities in Kilifi did not collaborate to support girls' education. The majority of the resources that are rarely utilized to educate girls remain under the control of men. Recommendations were made towards fund mobilization by the community in support of the mother-students' education but did not address the findings on resources being possessed and prioritized for the male gender. The data-gathering tools only focused on the funding of the education for the mother-students as the only challenge affecting them. This left out other possible-causes of poor completion rate in secondary school education for the mother-students. This study did not consider a single-reason approach but instead used open-ended questions to get varying opinions from the respondents.

Tarus an Kiptanui (2020), researched on the level of awareness of the re-entry policy of mother-students in public secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County. Stratified, simple-random, and purposive sampling as part of a mixed-method research design that combined qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. The study used a questionnaire, an interview schedule, and document analysis as its research tools. Tables, frequencies, and percentages were used to summarize the data after descriptive statistics were used to analyze it. The respondents in the study were 59 head teachers, 59 guidance and counseling teachers, and 196 students. The research showed that the re-entry policy had not been adequately established, explained, or implemented once more in schools. It was also established that 48% of teen mothers in schools experience harassment both in school and at home. Consequently, school absenteeism was found to be linked to negativity, stigma, and depression among teen mothers. Even though the re-entry policy provides for them, teachers and parents /guardians frequently give up on them because they are thought to be a failing and vulnerable group. The study recommended a review and re-enforcement of the re-entry policy with a tracking system for the girls who re-join school after delivery. The study was conducted in the larger Uasin Gishu County where other studies have also been conducted on the same topic. This study was carried out at in Gatundu sub-county level in Kiambu County to assess the support from the community on effective implementation of the re-entry policy on mother-students in public secondary schools.

A review conducted by Mackatiani et al. (2022) on perspectives on drop-out rates in secondary schools in Kenya. The study was carried out in Migori County, Kenya. Descriptive survey method was chosen to target over 75,000 populations. The sample size of 640 was drawn from principals, educators, parents, and students from secondary schools in Migori County. Data gathering in the study was done using questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 19.0 and regression analysis was applied to test the hypothesis of the study. The findings established that some families were not keen on the transition to secondary school, especially for girls due to economic hardships. The study noted that over 40% of girls dropped out of secondary school owing to early marriages and teenage pregnancies. The study also observed that the transition rate to secondary school for girls kept dwindling annually. According to the findings, the study recommended government intervention and partnership with the local community to support girl child education. The study also recommended income-generating activities to lift the living standards of poor families. The study urged schools to enable and cultivate favorable learning conditions for girls especially during and after pregnancy. The study failed to project ways of sensitizing the society on importance of protecting the young moms against future social economic and political

representation through education. Through the interaction with the respondents, the current study scrutinized better options for sensible interventions for school completion by the mother-students.

### Research methodology

This research applied mixed research design which entails gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. It combines specific, detailed insights from qualitative research as interviews and the generalizable, easily replicable data from quantitative research (such as surveys) (Cresswell, 2012). According to Mason (2006; Alrawashdeh, et.al., 2021), mixed methods offers enormous potential for generating new ways of understanding the complexities and contexts of social experience, and for enhancing capacities for social explanation and generalization. In this study mixed research design enabled the researcher to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. It enables the researcher to maximize the advantages of the study while effectively minimizing its limitations. To gather quantitative data in this study, a cross-sectional survey design was applied in describing the target population of interest since the researcher recorded the information without manipulating any variables (Creswell, 2011).

The study targeted 30 public secondary schools (Extra County schools, county schools, from both girls' and mixed schools) and 421 participants comprising of class teachers, principals, ministry of education officials, mother-students and parents/guardians to mother-student in Gatundu South Sub-County. This study used the target of 30 public secondary schools comprising of nine Girl schools and 21 mixed secondary public schools in Gatundu South Sub- County which were considered to be the core units in which the respondents were likely to be found. The researcher considered them to have the highest probability of having teenage mothers. This was arrived by the use of purposive simple sampling technique to get 10 schools from each of the three educational zones. The researcher applied the systematic sampling formula  $k=N/n$  with a desired interval of 50 to get the sample size for the class teachers who were sampled using the simple random method. Therefore,  $n = 268/5 = 53$  class teachers formed sample size in this study.

A systematic sampling formula was used ( $n=N/k$ ) where  $30/10 = 3$  as the sample interval. Therefore,  $n = 30/3 = 10$  principals for the sample size. Purposive simple random sampling was used to select 10 principals from the sampled school.

Table 1: Target Population and Sample Size Matrix

n=93

Category of Respondents	Target Population	Sample Size	Percentage	Sampling Technique
MOE officials	3	2	66.7	Purposive
Principals	30	10	33.3	Purposive sampling
Class teachers	268	53	19.8	Simple random
Parents/guardians	60	15	25.0	Purposive
Mothers-students	60	15	25.0	Purposive
<b>Total</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>93</b>		

Source: Field data, 2023

Data was collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Validity was ensured through expert judgement while reliability was authenticated using Cronbach alpha reliability test.

Data collected (quantitative) using questionnaire was coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) Version 21 where Chi-Square test and correlation analysis was used (Sundler et al. 2019). This involved presentation of statistical data in form of frequency tables whose explanation was mainly descriptive.

## Findings

### Rate of Response

The study established the total number of the respondents who actively participated in the study by answering and submitting the questionnaires and those who took part in interview, analysis of the response rate was presented in Table 2. Data was gathered from 10 girls' and mixed secondary schools from Gatundu South sub-county. There were 53 questionnaires distributed to class teachers. All questionnaire were correctly completed, sent back, and deemed appropriate for analysis which translated to a 100% response rate on questionnaire. Key respondents, that is, 10 principals and 2 ministry of education officials who participated in this study through interview also responded 100%.



All 15 mother-students who were selected participated in which translated to a 100% response rate on mother-students interview. It was anticipated that each of the girls' parents/guardian be part of the study by either face-to-face interview or by phone. However, two parents were not interviewed because one parent was unreachable on phone and the other parent declined, thus leaving 13 out of 15 parents/guardians as respondents' rate at 87.0%. Daikeler et.al (2020) opined that there is always a chance of studies being affected by lower response rate and response bias from the respondents. Therefore, the reported response rate of the study was 98.0% which represented 91 of the total sample (93) that gave the study a high degree of representativeness that was relied upon to generalize the respondents' views on the study. According to Cooper and Schindler (2011), return rates of more than 50% are acceptable for analysis and publication, more than 60% is good, more than 70% is very good, and more than 80% is exceptional (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008; Nulty, 2008). Table 2 shows the response rate.

Table 2: Response Rate

n=93

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Class Teachers		
<b>Response</b>	53 out of 53	100%
Principals		
<b>Response</b>	10 out of 10	100%
MoE officials		
<b>Response</b>	2 out of 2	100%
Parents/Guardians		
<b>Response</b>	13	87.0%
<b>Non-Response</b>	2	13.0%
<b>Sub Total</b>	15	
Mother-Students		
<b>Response</b>	15 out of 15	100%

Source: Field data, 2023

### Community Support and Re-entry Policy Implementation

This section addresses how community support affects the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mother-students in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub- County. The respondents were asked to respond by indicating the extend they agreed or disagreed with the statements regarding how community support affect the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mother-students in public secondary schools on a likert scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. Findings were presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Community Support and Re-entry Policy Implementation

n=53

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The communities follow up with the school for the early pregnancy among school girls has effect on the readmission policy.	3	5.7	4	7.5	2	3.8	17	32.1	27	50.9
Creating awareness on the influence of teen pregnancy on the future of young girls encouraged readmission mother-students.	2	3.8	6	11.3	3	5.7	7	13.2	35	66.0
The community agreed to jointly pay school fees for the dropout girls after delivery helped teen mother complete secondary education.	6	11.3	2	3.8	3	5.7	9	17.0	33	62.3

Source: Field Data, 2023

Data in Table 11 revealed that communities follow up with the school for the early pregnancy among school girls has effect on the readmission policy as majority, 27(50.9%) of the participants strongly agreed with the statement, 17(32.1%) agreed, 4(7.5%) disagreed, 3(5.7%) strongly disagreed and 2(3.8%) were neutral.

The thirty-five who were the majority which presented 66% of the class teachers' respondents strongly agreed that creating awareness on the influence of teen pregnancy on the future of young girls encouraged readmission mother-students, 7(13.2%) agreed, 6(11.3%) disagreed, 3(5.7%) were neutral and 2(3.8%) strongly disagreed. Most, 33(62.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that the community agreed to jointly pay school fees for the dropout girls after delivery helped teen mother complete secondary education and 9(17%) agreed. However, 6(11.3%) strongly disagreed, 3(5.7%) were neutral and 2(3.8%) disagreed with the statement.

The study therefore concluded that community support affects the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mother-students in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub- County through follow up with the school for the early pregnancy among school girls on the readmission policy and creating awareness that has effect on the future of young girls after teen pregnancy hence encouraged readmission of mother-students. The community also agreed jointly to pay school fees for the dropout girls after delivery. This has helped teen mother complete secondary education.

During the study, the researcher recorded views of the respondents regarding community support for mother-students' readmission after delivery:

"As a school head we have created awareness to the community in support for mother-students' readmission after delivery. This has been made possible through school PA meeting parent and in our board of members meeting. Community severally in those meetings have been told to accept and encourage their children on finishing secondary school education". (Principal 1, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023).

"In supporting mother-students' readmission after delivery, there are two times when school board members have helped me to pay school fees and I pray I will complete form four. Some of teenage mothers I know have received support from family to enable them to return to school. Sometimes we get stigmatized, ridiculed and excluded from community and school. I feel frustrated to study. Those not able to bear choose stay at home". (Student Interview 11, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).

The researcher attempted to explore the causes for girls' unwillingness to return to school after having birth.

"The majority of mother-students drop out of school owing to harsh conditions caused by stigma and rejection from the community, as well as low self-esteem that affects their morality. This implies that all stakeholders should be informed of the policy governing re-entry to school following childbirth". (MoE 1, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).

Pearson correlation between the effect of community support of the re-entry policy and completion of schooling for teenage mothers was tested and the finding is presented in Table 3

Table 4: Chi-square Test on the effect of community support on Re-entry Policy and Completion of Schooling for Mothers-Student

n=53

		Completion of Schooling for Mothers-Student			Total	Pearson Chi-square		
		Increased re-entry rate	Increased retention rate	Higher completing rate for mother - students		Chi-square	df	P-value
<b>Implementa tion of Re- entry Policy</b>	Government initiatives	53 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	53 100.0%	372.904a	6	.000
	Willingness to re-join	13 40.0%	40 60.0%	0 0.0%	53 100.0%			
	School support	52 99.5%	0 0.0%	1 0.5%	53 100.0%			
	Social-cultural practices	1 1.4%	5 45.8%	48 52.8%	53 100.0%			

Source: Field Data, 2023

#### **Correlation rules**

1. There is significance relationship when p- value is less than or equal to Alpha level =0.05
2. There is no significance correlation when p-value is greater than Alpha level=0.05

In the analysis on the effect of community support of re-entry policy and completion of schooling for mothers-student in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County where the degree of freedom (6), Chi-square value (372.904) and P-value =.000, there is a significance association between barriers to social cohesion and livelihood of the host community because the P-value =0.000 is less than the Alpha level = 0.05. effect of community support of re-entry policy indicated very strong relationship with increased re-entry rate, increased retention rate and higher completing rate for mother -students in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County, Kiambu County.

#### **Conclusions**

Community support affects the implementation of the re-entry policy for teenage mother-students in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County through follow up with the school for the early pregnancy among school girls on the readmission policy and creating awareness that has influenced on the future of young girls after teen pregnancy thereby encouraging their readmission.

Early pregnancy has affected the completion rates of girls in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County. It has made mother-students loose interest due to missing hope of community reactions when teens get pregnant. This has led to shame, stigma and rejection. Forced early marriages, lack of support from family for the mother-students make it hard for completing secondary studies as teen mother fear going back to school because of low self-esteem because of mocking and rejection from the school. This has demoralized mother-students from completing school in public secondary schools in Gatundu South Sub-County.

Many principals in public secondary schools in the Gatundu South Sub-County are hesitant to discuss re-entry because they believed that other female students would tolerate teen pregnancy hinders the implementation of the re-entry policy. Some school heads believed student-mothers are immoral and there is a high likelihood that they engage in risky sexual conduct that negatively impact on others, encouraging further early pregnancies. Therefore, school principals find it difficult to spearhead the implementation of the re-entry without being ambassadors of discouraging teen pregnancy in their respective schools. This has slackened the creation of awareness to the students and parents by the principals as key implementing agents of the re-entry policy.

#### **Recommendations**

1. Due to inadequate community support through follow up with the school for the early pregnancy among school girls on the readmission policy and creating awareness that has influence on the future of young girls, the importance of re-entry should be conveyed to the entire school community through the implementation of programs, workshops, and seminars.
2. Early pregnancy has affected the completion rates of girls in public secondary schools and in most cases no record. Schools should therefore keep current records of the drop outs and re-entry need to be kept and all those who drop out should be followed up. The school should follow up any girl who drops out of the school and keep an eye on the situation especially in the case of pregnancy and encourage the adolescent mother to go back to school once the baby is old enough to be left behind.

#### **Suggestions for further Research**

Similar research to be undertaken in other regions to have a better view for the generalization of the of the re-entry policy. The studies could provide varied findings that can help in enriching policy implementation through identifying the common challenges and best approaches in effective implementation.

With the existence of the National guidelines on re-entry policy favoring teenage mothers back to school, it is of great importance to investigate the challenges facing the execution of the policy for and the appropriate approaches for improvement.

Based on the findings of the current study, there is need to investigate social factors affecting policy implementation in public and private schools. This will provide a comparison on how policies are implemented in both institutions in order to identify the best and worst practices.

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