

IMPROVING THE RETENTION OF GIRLS IN SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF PILOTED
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE KAVANGO WEST REGION

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ABSTRACT

This study focusses on the current retention rate of girls in rural secondary schools that were part of the piloted schools in the then Kavango Educational Region but now fall in the Kavango West Educational Region after the split of Kavango into two regions (East and West) by the fourth Delimitation Commission in 2013. The aim of the study is to identify what the current retention rate of the girls is, the type of barriers they are faced with and how to overcome them. The key research question in this study is: Has the piloted school project in the Kavango West Educational Region helped to improve the retention of girls in secondary schools? The qualitative research approach is used as a means that would help answer this research question best through interviews, observation and document analysis. Such an approach is viewed to be the best at interaction with the participants in their natural setting to enable to understand and derive meaning from them about the level of retention rate at the three senior secondary schools that were part of the study from the piloted schools. A purposeful sampling was selected for this study of girls who had dropped and returned to schools at the three piloted secondary schools with their support teachers, school management and education officer responsible. The main findings cited to keep girls in schools are parental support and motivation, strong family backgrounds, peer pressure, hardship and self-realization, self-motivation, role model and the impact of the surrounding communities. Factors such as pregnancies among school going girls, unconducive school environments, treatment (from some parents, teachers and learners), poverty level and financial difficulties, early marriage and lack of care-takers for their infants when they want to return to schools were cited to keep girls away from schools. To enable them to remain in schools and complete their secondary education, girls needed motivation, encouragement, proper advice and educational policies that were protective and advanced girls' education.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EMIS: Education Management Information System

FAWENA: Forum for African Women Educationalists in Namibia

KGEP: Kavango Girls' Education Project

OVC: Orphan and Vulnerable Children

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

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DEDICATIONS

To Tiaan, Dado and Tile, you were not happy at all when dad could not spare his time to take you to Wimpy because of him being busy. You could not understand why dad had to wake up so early in the morning and work from his laptop and refused at times to allow you to play games on his laptop. One day when you have to read this piece of work, you will understand. I wish daddy was still alive to go through this piece of work because this would have been the only way for him to realize the level that I have reached.

DECLARATIONS

I, Johannes Hamba Karondo, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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Date: November 2018

Johannes Hamba Karondo

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The Kavango West Region is one of Namibia's fourteenth political and educational regions. It was created in 2013 when the then Kavango Region was split into two regions (Kavango East and West). It is situated in the north-eastern part of the country alongside the Kavango River sharing borders with Angola in the north, Ohangwena Region in the north-west, Oshikoto Region in the south-west, Otjozondjupa Region in the south and Kavango East Region in the east.

The educational region consists of seven circuits headed by inspectors of education which are six males and one female. The region had about 175 schools as per Fifteenth School-Day Statistics for 2016 of which six were senior secondary schools with Grade 12 being the highest Grade. The teaching staff comprised of 146 principals of which 100 were males while 46 were females, 91 heads of departments of which 46 were males while 45 were females and ordinary teachers were 1155 of which 607 were males and 548 were females with male teaching staff dominating in numbers at all levels especially at secondary level. The total number of learners as per regional enrolment of the same year (2016) in all schools in the region was 39313 with male dominating the enrolment. Male learners were 20091 while female learners were 19222: a difference of 869 in favor of male learners. At all senior secondary schools, learners in Grades 11 and 12 were 1101. Male learners were 618 while female learners were 483 with a difference of 135 in favor of male learners. As per statistics, female learners were more dominant in numbers in primary phase,

especially at upper primary phase and at the beginning of secondary phase (which is Grade 8). From Grade 9, gender disparity was quite visible with male learners dominating the regional statistics up to the end of senior secondary phase, which is Grade 12. According to UNESCO (2003), the retention of a girl-child in Sub-Saharan Africa is low compared to that of the boys. The Girls' Education Initiative in Gambia indicates that both enrolment and retention have persistently and consistently shown gender inequalities in favor of boys (Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Similarly, a UNICEF report on "the progress of nations" shows that girls end their education earlier than boys (Lone, 1996).

Felton & Haihambo-Muetudhana (2002) as well as EMIS (2008) identified the then Kavango Educational Region as having the highest drop-out rates of girls in relation to the whole country. Malome & Haihambo-Muetudhana (2002), UNESCO (2003) and Losper (2004) argue that girls dropped out of schools because of various reasons such as pregnancy and poverty, and that those that remained in schools, had low academic achievement rates. In an effort to improve and enhance retention of girls in the education stream in the then Kavango Educational Region, the Kavango Girls' Education Project (KGEP) was established with 20 pilot schools as focal centers for the project based on their high dropout rate level. The piloted schools were required to establish girls' clubs to promote awareness among girls on issues that could retain them in schools, enhance their participation in their school activities and other activities that could promote their education. Each girl-club was then also expected to set up its own goals and annual programme to run its own activities that were in line with the regional girls' programme and objectives.

The preparation of the project consisted of stakeholder workshops, data analysis, field assessment and the development of a work plan (Malone & Haihambo-

Muetudhana, 2002). The Kavango Girls' Education Project was initiated with the following objectives: to increase access and retention to quality education for girls in the then Kavango region, reduce girls' dropouts rate in schools by ensuring conducive teaching and learning environment, to improve the teaching methods that is gender sensitive for better performance of girls in schools, avoid sexual relationships among teachers and learners, and girls with "sugar daddies," to improve parental involvement, and make hostels conducive for girls (Malone & Haihambo-Muetudhana, 2002). Activities were designed to facilitate the retention of girls in schools. With the technical expertise and support of UNICEF, the girl-child project and the activities thereof, were aimed at girls as main beneficiaries. Therefore, the project focused at empowering girls with knowledge, skills and self-concept in order to bring their participation in education at par with that of boys. Through this initiative it was viewed to be the best way to enhance girls' interest in education.

Despite this initiative however, the achievement made by the project at pilot schools concerning the retention of girls in schools seemed not to be publicly known. One of the main concerns was the fact that not all girls that have been recruited in schools had gone on to finish their secondary school education. The question then remains as to why most girls still drop-out of school? What factors lead to their dropping out of school irrespective of this initiative? Do they drop out of schools because they lack interest or they do not see what education has to offer for them throughout their adult livelihood? What Grades in secondary schooling bar them from completing their schooling and why?

In view of the above concerns, this study focused on the current retention rate of girls in rural secondary schools that were part of the pilot schools which now fall in the

Kavango West Educational Region with the aim of identifying what the current rate is, the type of barriers they faced and how to overcome them.

1.2 Statement of the problem

It is the desire of every girl-child to complete her secondary education and post-secondary studies in order for her to make a contribution to the society or community where she lives in. Unfortunately, this has not been the case of the Namibian girl-child especially those in the Kavango West Educational Region where a good number of them have not completed secondary education despite Namibia introducing free-fee universal primary and secondary education as from 2013 and 2016 respectively. This illustrates that school development funds that were paid by learners and could have kept a number of them away from completing secondary education (especially those that could not afford the payment thereof), is no longer payable. Now that free-fee universal education at both primary and secondary level has been introduced, the enrolment and retention rates for both boys and especially that of girls from Grades 0 to 12 is being expected to be higher than before. To ensure that girls contribute to the national development process of the country like boys when they all become adults, girls need to be educated and complete their secondary education. Schooling brings higher economic returns to girls and women, increase their options and facilitates their participation in civic life and overall decision-making (United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, 2014).

Girls in the Kavango West Educational Region enroll in large numbers at the beginning of their school career (primary) but gradually drop-out and few complete their secondary education. This could perhaps be attributed to high number of girls

dropping out of school before they could complete their Grade 12. The Grade/s or level/s that experiences high dropout rate and specific reasons for that is currently not known.

Without the opportunity for girls to be educated, and remain in schools to complete their secondary education, there is little hope for them when they become adults to develop into useful citizens. Thus, their participation and contribution to the economy and their own social well-being would be minimal. To empower both girls and boys, equal access to education is vital because that would be the only way that would enable them all to enjoy the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of the society. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to establish the current retention rate of girls at the piloted secondary schools in the Kavango West Educational Region, the type of barriers they faced and to suggest alternative ways of overcoming them.

1.3 Questions of the study

The key research question in this study was: *Has the piloted school project in the Kavango*

West Educational Region helped to improve the retention of girls in secondary schools?

In this respect, the following sub-research questions were asked:

1. What keeps girls in schools in the Kavango West Educational Region?
2. What keeps girls away from schools in the Kavango West Educational Region?
3. What should be done to enable more girls to remain in schools until they finish their secondary education in the Kavango West Educational Region?

1.4 Significance of the study

The trend of girls being under-represented in schools did not end at the attaining of the country's independence in 1990. Apart from other regions such as the then Caprivi Region (now Zambezi) with 48, 8% of the overall girls in schools, the then Kavango Educational Region (now split into two regions: Kavango East and West) was regarded as the most extreme with just over a third in Grade 11 to 12 being girls (Felton & Haihambo-Muetudhana, 2002) citing teenage pregnancy being one of the major factors for girls' high dropout rate. Since the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Arts and Culture encourages equal access to education and gender parity, and with the national statistics of all girls in schools stand at 50, 7% at primary level and 52, 9% at secondary level (Felton & Haihambo- Muetudhana, 2002), the then Kavango Educational Region was seen to be below average. The same study also looked at the previous history of the then Kavango Educational Region right after independence where it discovered that in 1992, only one in four learners in the two final Grades of secondary school were female which could be about 25%. This made the researcher to take up the study in order to find out whether the retention rate of girls in the Kavango West Educational Region' schools has improved now in relation to the national enrolment statistics after the implementation of the Kavango girls' Education Project (KGEP).

This study will be significant in as far as it will help deepen the understanding of the policy- makers in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Arts and Culture and other stakeholders in education. The results will be much significant because it will reveal the current enrolment rate of the Kavango West Educational Region's girl-child in comparison to the national enrolment statistics. In this respect, the study will contribute to a better understanding on how that may affect these girls' future: be it

socially, economically and citizenry role as adults. Thus, girls and women will benefit a lot from the study. It is expected that the data from the study will help generate new theories and practices about this particular problem and help improve the retention of girls in schools. New policies could also be developed in favor of girls in terms of easy access to schools that would improve their school retention and completion rate, and consequently, access to tertiary education and better job markets.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The Kavango West Educational Region is one of the newest regions in the country. It had been created after the recommendations of the Delimitation Commission of 2013 that recommended that the then Kavango Region be divided into two regions. The region consists of seven (7) education circuits, namely Mpungu, Kandjimi, Nzinze, Bunya, Ncamagoro, Katji-naKatji and Ncuncuni. Since the then Kavango Educational Region was split into two regions, some of the schools that were piloted by then, now fall in the Kavango East Educational Region and as a result, such schools were not made part of the study despite the fact that some of those schools could have provided valuable information. The study limited itself to one region: the Kavango West Educational Region due to the vastness of the region and also to establish its own data as a new region on its own. Consequently, three senior secondary schools in the rural area of the Kavango West Educational Region were selected to be studied which start from Grade 8 to 12. Two of these secondary schools were in the same circuit with a reasonable distance apart from each other and with different school settings, while the other secondary school was in a different circuit of education. Such a limitation could limit data obtained from the study for

comparative purposes. Insufficient funds were also another area of limitation. For the fact that the study did not have external funding but rather the researcher's own expenses, that limited the researcher to reach all intended participants to obtain appropriate and efficient data. Another factor was that not all piloted schools were secondary schools ending with Grade 12 as the highest Grade but some were combined schools with Grade 9 or 10 being the highest and that was also one of the reason that limited the researcher to have only three (3) participating senior secondary schools in the study. Another challenge was that one of the targeted participants had changed jobs. In this case, the researcher made some arrangements with the new person in the office as a replacement, which might have created inconveniences as well as a limited responses and participation rate due to a short time stay in the position.

1.6 Definitions of terms

There are terms that were used often in the course of the study in order to explain the subject matter more clearly. These terms might have been defined completely different in other sources such as dictionaries or previous studies in comparison to other definitions given in this study. In this study, the terms below carried the meaning as given: **retention** would not only mean to retain girls in schools, but it is also linked to other variables or factors which might negatively affect the school career of girls more than that of the boys. Various factors such as school enrolment, school attendance, dropout rate, completion rate and academic achievements at the implementation of the project and thereafter were linked to retention. **Pilot schools** refer to 20 schools that were selected in the then Kavango Educational Region based on their high dropout rate among girls and where the then Kavango girls' Education

Project concentrated on with the aim of improving the retention of girls at those schools. **Learner-parent(s)** refers to learners: both boys and girls who had children or a child while they were still schooling. **Girls' clubs** refer to the girls' management committee (at each piloted school) that consisted of five to ten (5 to 10) girls who were responsible to organize meetings and other activities for the girls at their schools in relation to the conditions of the Kavango girls' Education Project. **Senior secondary Grades:** refer to Grade 10, 11 and 12 which are the highest Grade in formal education in the education system of Namibia with the latter making pathways to tertiary studies, vocational training or employment opportunities if successful.

Support teachers refer teachers that were assigned by the schools to focus on supplementary teaching and additional help to girls in girls' clubs and worked closely with girls in girls' clubs with the intention of enhancing their retention rate in schools and academic achievements.

Professional teachers are teachers that were decent and competent in their act and conduct and who offered various options for educational success of each child at their schools and they believed and regard their work was a "calling" rather than a mere occupation. Learners could rely on them for any assistance and guidance without expecting any favor in return.

1.7 Summary of the chapter

Chapter one discussed the background and the creation the Kavango West Educational Region and where it is situated. The study had a concern as to why do girls enroll in large numbers at the beginning of their school career and only few complete their secondary education with the main objective of trying to establish the

current retention rate of girls at the piloted secondary schools in the Kavango West Educational Region, the type of barriers the girls experience and to suggest alternative ways of overcoming them. This study is so significant to girls, women, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Arts and Culture and other stakeholders because it will help deepen their understanding and new theories and policies could be generated to help improve the retention of girls in schools and consequently, access to tertiary education and better job markets. The study limited itself to one region: the Kavango West Educational Region due to the vastness of the region, limited secondary schools and funding. The definitions of the terms used in the study might have different meaning in other sources or studies, but for the purpose of this study, the meaning would be the ones provided. The next chapter looks at the related literature about retention of girls in schools, factors that cause girls to drop out and strategies to retain more girls in schools.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (1993), Education for All is meant for all people in Namibia irrespective of their gender. This seemed not to be the case in the Kavango West Educational Region. From the number of girls enrolled at the beginning of their school career, few are retained and complete their secondary education. This looks very critical for the Kavango West Educational Region and the country as a whole in trying to accomplish the goal of Education for All across all schools in Namibia. This chapter focuses on the review of related literature based on the main research question, the theoretical framework that guides this study, reasons that influence girls to drop out of schools, what retains more girls in schools (and strategies to employ) and then the summary of the chapter.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study is based on Tinto's model of student retention. According to Tinto, there are three major sources of student departure: academic difficulties, the inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. In addition, Tinto indicates that the negative looking students are failure, dropout, attrition; the positive looking ones are retention, persistence (Draper, 2008).

He further argues that the students' persistence or dropout is strongly predicted by their degree of academic and social integration: their school performance, enjoying the subjects learnt or student-staff association.

On the other hand, Tinto indicates the three principles of effective retention: the institutional commitment to students whereby the programmes should be committed to the students they serve and put students' welfare ahead of other institutional goals, educational commitment of which programmes are first and foremost committed to the education of all, not just for some of their students, and social and intellectual community whereby retention programmes are committed to the development of supportive social and educational communities in which all students are integrated as competent members.

This study therefore attempted to explore why girls in the Kavango West Educational Region could not persist as guided by Tinto's retention theory but rather dropout of school before completing their secondary education. Looking at what Tinto indicates, the study looked at whether girls' dropout was caused by academic difficulties, their inability to resolve their educational goals, their failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution, degree of their school performance, enjoying the subjects learnt, student-staff association or whether they were just negative towards education because the education programmes do not address their needs and put their welfare ahead of that of the institutional goals.

2.3 Retention of girls in schools

According to UNESCO (2006), large numbers of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa enroll at the beginning of their school careers, but less complete primary education as well as their secondary education. According to some studies conducted, elimination of direct costs of schooling increase enrolment and retention of girls (UNESCO, 2004; The World Bank, 2004 and UNGEI, 2006). Thus, incentives targeting girls' basic school needs such as school fees, stationery and books are vital in this regard. When schools are located near or within the easy reach of the community, the distance girls are expected to travel is cut (Lone, 1996; Rihani, 2006; Banik & Fyles, 2014), that increases their enrolment and retention rate. Lone further indicates that the enrolment and retention rate of girls increases if all teachers and supervisors are women, and if schools maintain a flexible calendar and timetables to allow girls to have time to do some domestic chores that is expected from them.

2.4 Girls and dropping out of school

Since the low rate of girls in schools is a global concern (UNICEF, 2003), there are many causes attached to that. Poverty, early marriage, how girls are valued by their parents, low quality learning environment, local beliefs and norms, are some of the root causes of low retention rate for girls in schools, especially in secondary schools (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008; Mwanza, 2015). According to Rihani (2006); Tuwor & Sossou (2008); Banik & Fyles (2014) and Mwanza (2015), there are number of constraints that keep girls away from enrolling and staying in schools. Among such constraints are: pregnancy or early marriage, poverty, cultural issues, school fees, lack of sanitation facilities, gender based violence or sexual harassment, distance, lack of female teachers and domestic chores or household duties

Felton & Haihambo-Muetudhana (2002) also revealed that teenage pregnancy is one of the major factors contributing to girls' dropout in the then Kavango Educational Region. Losper (2004) also came up with similar findings and further revealed that poverty and gender bias were some of the biggest problems that could lead to high dropout rate girls and could prevent them from returning to schools once they have dropped out.

If girls have torn clothes or few to wear and inadequate sanitary protection, a female learner can decide to stay home, which marks the end of the girl-child's education (Lone, 1996).

Preferences to boys over girls was reported by UNICEF as one of the contributing factor to low retention of girls in schools (UNICEF, 2004) because of low risk that parents see in boys of them not dropping out of school as girls might do. As Losper (2004) indicated, Felton & Haihambo-Muetudhana (2002) also cited gender bias as a barrier that has been affecting the education of a girl-child in the then Kavango Educational Region in addition to cultural beliefs. The burden of domestic chores consume a lot of time of a girl-child that is in school (Lone, 1996), and as a result, it only does not affect the girl-child's academic performance, but can lead to absenteeism and drop-out. She further indicates that many girls stay home, not because their parents are poor, but because they do not believe that the kind of education on offer is appropriate for their daughters or because they feel their risks are too great. Such risks include: sexual harassment and raping by their fellow male learners, or teachers, or strangers on their way to or from school; and this sexual pressure and vulnerability are central to low enrolment and retention rates for girls. Furthermore, she indicates that if classes are overcrowded, poor supervision from the side of the teachers and if male learners are unruly and violent, then many girls feel

threatened and their parents fear for their safety, and that will then lead to girls being withdrawn from schools. Again, if no single-sex schools or classes are available, no separate toilets, no women teachers and if schools are too far from home or community, then female learners' attendance and dropout will be high

2.5 Strategies to retain more girls in schools

To enhance girls' education is not only the Kavango West Educational Region or Namibia's concern but rather a global issue that even prompted other countries and UNICEF's involvement. To retain girls in schools and achieve better quality education with full and equal participation of both girls and boys was regarded as a priority (UNICEF, 2003). In addition, UNICEF has a role to play in educational needs of girls through the African Girls' Education Initiative (of which Namibia is part) to achieve Education for All. Through this initiative, the overall aim was and still is to increase girls' enrolment and completion rate, and reduce their dropout and repetition rate. Since UNICEF had some background of similar cases around the globe, educating girls is regarded to be important because it has social and economic benefits for all and it is a primary means toward national development at all levels (UNICEF, 2014). Due to this importance, policies that favor and support girls' education should be redeveloped with relevant curriculum which reflects employment in labor market (Banik & Fyles 2014). The policies should focus at quality education to empower girls with knowledge and skills relevant to their daily lives, needs and circumstances. Such policies should not only concern with the recruitments of learners in schools, but also with dropouts and what to be done to retain them in schools after they have dropped out of schools. Parents, teachers, community members and girls should be sensitized, motivated and mobilized to

realize the importance of girls' education (Manion, 2012). Direct and indirect cost of school uniforms, school and examination fees, excursions, books, stationery and transport fares should be cut off (Lone, 1996). Access to education for girls should be revisited. Gender balance should be considered when employing staff members in schools with more preference to female. Single-sex schools should also be considered especially in regions where the gender disparity is high. Overcrowded classes with more than 30 learners in secondary phase should completely be avoided. Supervision of learners by teachers should be enhanced. Flexible calendar and timetables to allow girls to have time to do some domestic chores that are expected from them should be provided.

2.6 Effective retention

According to Tinto's model of student retention (as adapted by Draper, 2008), effective retention can take place if institutions, in this regard schools, are committed to have programmes that are inclusive to all genders. Both boys and girls should not feel left out in all activities which have to take place within their school environment and put their welfare ahead of all other school goals. Furthermore, the model indicates that there should be a mutual relationship between teachers and learners. Such a relationship should be that of positive in order for the learners to be positive towards all academic activities. Teachers should be supportive and committed to ensure that learners perform very well academically and that they are socially intergrated within the school environment and motivate them to perform very well and enjoy all subjects and activities taught to them.

2.7 Summary of the chapter

This chapter looked at the related literature on retention of girls in schools, factors that cause girls to drop out of schools and the effective retention strategies to retain more girls in schools. Education for All is meant for all people in Namibia irrespective of their gender. The theoretical framework that guided this study is based on Tinto's model of student retention. The main factors and constraints that keep girls away from enrolling and staying in schools are pregnancy or early marriage, poverty, cultural issues, school fees, lack of sanitation facilities, gender based violence, distance, lack of female teachers, domestic chores, low quality education and learning environment. In order to retain more girls in schools, such constraints should be eliminated and schools should be committed to have programmes that are inclusive to all genders. The next chapter looks at the research methodology and its related sub-headings.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodology and the overall key aspects and strategies that form part of it. It highlights the major educational research paradigms or approaches that are commonly used in conducting research. The chapter also looks at the importance of the research design in data collection and processing that would best help answer the research question. The study was conducted in the Kavango West Educational Region involving schools that were part of the pilot project targeting senior secondary schools that were part thereof. From those secondary schools, only three formed part of the study targeting three girls, a responsible teacher and principal or management member at each participating school illustrating the population, sample and sampling procedures. The chapter also presents the use and application of research instruments and procedures, and concludes with the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings and ethical issues.

3.2 Research approach

According to Johnson & Christensen (2008), there are three (3) major educational research paradigms or approaches (quantitative, qualitative and mixed) that are commonly used in conducting research. Quantitative research attempts to study behavior under controlled conditions and relies primarily on the collection of numerical data to predict, explain or describe such behavior or phenomenon. Qualitative research studies behavior in a natural environment and relies primarily on

the collection of non-numerical data such as words and pictures to explore, discover, construct or describe behavior or phenomenon. Mixed approached is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods or other approaches. Johnson & Christensen (2008) further state that none of the three paradigms is superior to the other but all are equal in terms of providing insights when an attempt is being made to solve a problem faced in the field of education. Each paradigm depends on the research question, the situation and the practical issues being faced by the researcher. Planning how data will be collected and be used once it has been collected, and knowing how data will be processed, helps the researcher to decide what data to collect, in what form and what can be done with it once collected which is an important part of a research design that would best help answer the research question. With the views from Johnson & Christensen (2008), the research design used by the researcher to study the research question is discussed below.

3.3 Research design

This study focused on the research question: *Has the piloted school project in the Kavango West Educational Region helped to improve the retention of girls in secondary schools?* Since quantitative data is based on precise measurement using structural and validated data collection instruments (Johnson & Christensen, 2008), such data will not be sufficient enough to present the desired results. According to Johnson & Christensen (2008), qualitative research method studies behavior in a natural environment and relies primarily on the collection of non-numerical data such as words and pictures to explore, discover, construct or describe behavior or phenomenon. Therefore, this research question was being studied using a

phenomenological design that is anchored in qualitative research approach as a means that would best help answer the research question.

A phenomenological design helped the researcher to collect data from in-depth interviews, participant observation, field notes and open-ended questions (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). An interview guide approach was used to explore the topic and asked open ended questions following the interview protocol (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This enabled the researcher to probe the participants where necessary in their natural settings to understand and derive meaning from participants about the level of retention at the participating schools. Ontology demands that the researchers understand what is given; epistemology looks at how new knowledge is added to the existing while axiology helps us appreciate what we have found and develop new knowledge from given situations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Angen, 2000; Patton, 2002). Having been in the schools and other natural settings where participants were confined physically, it could enable the researcher to collect extensive data from them in order to understand how and why retention took place at that pace.

3.4 Population

The study took place in the Kavango West Educational Region where eight (8) schools were part of the piloted ones in the then Kavango Girls' Education Project ranging from primary to secondary schools. The study then focused on girls that were at piloted secondary schools in the Kavango West Educational Region who dropped out of school and then returned to continue with their education. It also focused on teachers that were responsible for girls' education clubs, the principals of

schools or members of management where girls' education clubs were established as well as the education officer responsible for the then Kavango Girls' Education Project.

3.5 Sample and sampling procedures

From eight schools that were part of the pilot, three secondary schools were selected for the study as per characteristics needed such as being rural with high drop-out rate and low retention rate and with Grade 12 being the highest Grade. The sample had sixteen participants who were thought to provide first-hand information. Such a sample included three (3) girls from each participating school who dropped out of school at secondary level and then returned to school to continue with their education. Preference was also given to club members of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project or girls that served at any school leadership structures at their respective schools such as Learners Representative Council, who were mainly responsible for gender related issues: such girls were either in Grade 11 to 12. Each school had one teacher as a participant that was responsible for the girls' education club at the school and so were school principals or members of school management for each participating school and the education officer who was responsible for girls' education and assigned to the then Kavango Girls' Education Project in the then Kavango Educational Region. These participants were relevant to the study because they were either directly involved especially girls, and due to that, they could be able to provide first-hand information since they were directly affected by the low retention and some had that experience or they were more in contact with the girls and the problems faced as they pursued their education.

A purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique in which the researcher solicits persons with specific characteristics to participate in a research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). A purposive sampling of girls that have dropped and returned to schools at the three piloted secondary schools was selected for this study. The criteria followed and the characteristics required from the participating schools and participants were that such schools should be secondary schools offering classes up to Grade 12 and it should have been part of the piloted schools that were identified following low retention and low enrolment rate but high dropout of girls, and that such girls should either be in Grade 11 or 12 who dropped and then returned to continue with their education.

3.6 Research instruments

Johnson & Christensen (2008), indicate that instruments are measuring devices, tools or apparatus such as questionnaires, interviews or observations that are used to collect or obtain measure and analyze data on a topic of interest being studied. Below are instruments used?

3.6.1 Interviews

Interview is a data-collection method in which a researcher asks a participant questions. Face-to-face encounter is in-depth interview used to get detailed perceptions, opinions and attitudes from participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Therefore, qualitative interviews that consisted of structured interview guide were prepared to explore the topic. The researcher asked open-ended questions to each participant as prepared on an interview protocol which served as a guiding

instrument for questions during the interview. It was a face-to-face encounter where each participant was interviewed alone in a safe and conducive environment for confidentiality purposes and for an open dialogue to seek information, opinion or clarity. It was conducted that way so that participants could freely express any idea, feelings and motivations about the topic that was being studied. Where possible, follow-up questions that were unstructured were asked accordingly for more insight and clarity to collect relevant information from the participants and to understand how the project had influenced their behavior and their school environment. This enabled the researcher to probe for explanation on responses from the participants where necessary in order to understand and derive meaning from participants about the level of retention at their participating schools. That could encourage positive interactions and dialogues with participants to obtain in-depth and expansive information about the participants' knowledge, beliefs, feelings, experience, perceptions or opinions on the topic (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Extensive and adequate notes were taken and written down in a field notebook with all experiences and observations that could be encountered and observed during the interactions with the participants.

3.6.2 Field notes

According to Johnson & Christensen (2008), the researchers should record what they believe to be important in their field notes during and after their interactions with the participants. The researcher recorded all relevant information believed to be important of what was happening during the interactions with the participants. In this regard, field notes were taken during the interviews and immediately after interviews, the notes were edited and generated into verbatim transcripts (Lofland &

Lofland, 1995) to produce full ideas in the form of paragraphs. It was done this way while the interviews encounter was still fresh on the researcher's mind and to avoid forgetting important details (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

3.6.3 Observation

According to Johnson & Christensen (2008), observation involves observing all relevant phenomena. As a data collection approach, the researcher observed for anything and everything that could be relevant for the study during the interaction with the participants. The focus was more on the behaviors and non-verbal expressions as the researcher interacted and asked interview questions to the participants during the interview process. This enabled the researcher to have a direct interaction and observe participants in their natural settings. Similarly, it provided an opportunity for the researcher to probe for explanation on responses and body language, facial expressions, emotions and physical appearance showed during the interactions as this could have a deeper meaning than their verbal expressions. Consequently, the researcher could get a deeper understanding and elaborated more on the actual phenomenon or behavior of the participants and recorded relevant information that took place at that moment.

3.6.4 Documents and artifacts

Documents such as enrolment, attendance and drop-out statistics of each participating school were studied and analyzed after completing all interviews. According to Priya (2015), analyzing documents help the researcher to understand the verbal and non-verbal behavior of the participants better. As such, some of the experiences that girls went through that they could not share during the interviews in

their natural settings, could be obtained through this process and this could provide more insight on the topic. Through this, data could be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and supplement to information obtained during interviews.

3.7 Procedures

According to Johnson & Christensen (2008) procedures are step-by-step account of what the researcher and participants will do from the moment of the first meeting to the termination of their contact. Before actual data collection, a pilot study was carried out at one secondary school that was not part of the sample but had been part of the piloted schools in order to determine the smooth run or flow of the research and to note down any lack of clarity for re-wording or ambiguity. Thus, unforeseen problems could be identified and addressed before the actual study could commence. The study was carried out at three secondary schools focusing on girls, teachers, principals of schools or management members and education officers that was responsible for girls' education. The participants were interviewed and observed simultaneously while taking field notes as a means of data collection. After interviews and observations of each participating school or institution, documents were studied and analyzed, and then generated the data into verbatim transcripts. Data were analyzed according to themes or categories before the study report was written in a narrative form.

3.8 Data presentation and analysis

Data presentation and analysis is transformation process in which raw data are turned into findings or results and to offer explanations of the observed phenomenon (Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006). After completing each interview session, while information gathered were still fresh on the researcher's mind, a preliminary data of each institution was analyzed. After the completion of the whole study, all information gathered were studied and related information were grouped and presented according to themes or categories and then, the report was written in a narrative form (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

3.9 Trustworthiness and credibility

Seeing that quantitative approach focuses on reliability and validity of the data collected and its analysis, this study being qualitative in nature focused on issues of trustworthiness and its four criteria; namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the findings to other unique phenomena (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

3.10 Ethical considerations

Before the research was conducted, entry permission to schools was requested from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Arts and Culture via the regional director of education in the Kavango West Educational Region and then from the school principals as head of the schools since a research is not conducted in vacuum. Before participants partook in the study, they were forwarded with a copy of the interview guide and a covering letter explaining the purpose, procedures, their treatment and that of the information that will be obtained from them so that they

could familiarize themselves with the content of the interview. They were required to write back and provide informed consent. During their participation in the study they were treated with respect and voluntary participation was encouraged and they were also informed about the information to be obtained from them that it was to be kept confidential. The participants' time, effort and the cooperation devoted to participate and complete the study was valued by thanking them as sign of appreciation.

3.11 Summary of the chapter

In order to obtain the desired results, qualitative research approach was conducted to collect data from in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis. A phenomenological design helped the researcher to collect extensive data in the natural settings where participants were confined physically in order to understand how and why retention took place at that pace. The study focused on girls that were at piloted secondary schools in the Kavango West Educational Region who dropped out of school and then returned to continue with their education. It also included teachers that were responsible for girls' clubs, the principals of schools or members of management where girls' clubs were established as well as the education officers responsible for the girls' project. A purposive sampling of girls that have dropped and returned to schools at the three piloted secondary schools was selected for this study. After the completion of the whole study, all information gathered were studied and related information were grouped and presented according to themes or categories and the study report was written in a narrative form. The study also focused on trustworthiness and its four criteria; namely credibility transferability, dependability and confirmability of the findings for its worthiness to other unique

phenomena. Informed consent, respect for participants, voluntary participation and confidentiality of all information obtained from participants were the core values during and after the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation and discussions of data collected according to the research question. The problems that hamper the retention of girls in secondary schools are outlined and clarified to give an in-depth insight to readers under different headings and sub-headings. The data were obtained through interviews, observations, document analysis and field notes taken during site visits that included three secondary schools from the eight piloted schools in the Kavango West Educational Region after they consented to take part in the study. The three schools were from Grade 8 to Grade 12. The participants in the study were provided by the schools themselves after a letter of requesting entry permission was forwarded by indicating which participants were needed most to provide relevant information to the study since the study wanted girls that were in Grade 11 to 12 who dropped and then returned to continue with their education. It also needed teachers that were responsible for girls' education clubs at schools, school principals or members of school management at those respective schools and the education officer that was responsible for girls' education.

The first part of the chapter below deals with the presentation while the discussion will be presented later in this chapter.

4.2 Presentation of the findings

The data are presented in four phases of the responses: the responses from female learners, support teachers, school principals or members of school management and

the education officer or any officer responsible for girls' education. In all phases, the findings will be presented as per interview guide based on the three major areas of the research questions: What keeps girls in schools, what keeps girls away from schools and what should be done in order to enable more girls to remain in schools and at least complete their secondary education?

4.2.1 Phase one: Data obtained from female learners

The data presented in this phase were obtained through interviews and observations when the researcher interacted with the girls in their schools which were their natural settings by then as the research sites. It should be stressed that all participants in this phase were girls in senior secondary Grades: Grade 11 to 12. This part presents the factors that keep girls in schools, what keep them away from schools and what should be done to enhance their retention.

4.2.1.1 What keeps girls in schools?

In this study keeping girls in schools would have meant to increase girls' enrolment and completion rate, and reduce dropout and repetition rate. In addition, such retention should retain girls in schools and let them achieve better quality education with full and equal participation as boys could do in the same condition and classroom environment.

After conducting interviews with female learners, the data obtained on some factors that could keep girls in schools are presented below under some sub-headings.

4.2.1.1.1 Motivation from parents

One of the factors indicated by the girls who participated in the study was motivation from their parents as the main one. These were parents who could see and realize the importance education can play in a person's life once a child completes and get a paying job. It was said to be more visible in households where parents' educational background is strong: they could motivate their children to study hard and be like them. Some of these parents would try to do everything in their power to help supporting their children materially and academically so that they one day become successful in life after completing their education.

4.2.1.1.2 Parents' treatment after dropping out of school

Participant one at school two said *“parents do not value you as much as those that are in schools. They have to mistreat you by sending you around, do some cooking, cultivating, weeding and help with all other domestic work. If you refuse, they might not even give you food to eat. If you have to ask for money to buy groceries, they might not give you but rather say they have to keep and save money for those that are in schools and for your infant: not you who is a school dropout.”* *“Thinking of the life-style you had when you were in school: the dressing of school uniform, friendship, the support from parents, and then the life-style you find yourself in after dropping out of school, you are forced to return back to school.”*

4.2.1.1.3 Peer pressure

Peer pressure was also listed as one of the factors that could influence the retention of girls in schools. Participant one to three at school one and participants two and three at school three shared more or less the same sentiments saying that *“school life is just*

good; you meet a lot of people from different homes and make friends during your school career. Once you drop out of school, there is no one to live and associate with most of the time and life will be boring at home. Thus, friends' company is very important even though you might not be performing that good at school you just need to be there."

4.2.1.1.4 Name-callings

Participant three at school three said that name-callings such as "*home girls*" could also influence them to return to school. "*It is not good to be called a home girl because your status will go down.*"

4.2.1.1.5 Teachers

Some teachers were seen to be a source of retention, especially female ones that are at schools; they are seen to play an important role at inspiring and motivating girls "*especially when they have identified some potential in you.*" In the end, these girls develop a close relationship of trust with these teachers and they are aspired to behave and to be like them (role modelling) because of the time spent together, they would like also to become teachers and live such a lifestyle and have the materials they see from them.

4.2.1.1.6 Responsibility during adulthood

Participant one at school three indicated that social responsibility during adulthood is also one of the factors that could retain them in schools after dropping out for a year or so. "*The hard life experience while home where the child does not have anything to eat (sic) or dress*" was said to be a challenge. It was also said that "*to depend on*

someone else for support was not an easy thing, because all your needs would not be met and be satisfied as it would have been in your own case since the person might decide to assist you on his/her own time and inadequately.” It was also indicated that *“these days most of the men would like to marry ladies that have got jobs.”* It was therefore, said to be important to get back to school and complete because it will help so much to have own income when a paying job has been acquired and support the child and self even when the father does not take care or when you end the relationship with a man.

Participant three at school three also indicated that *“life-style could also be a challenge when living with unemployed parents. As a youth, you have the opportunity to change the situation around if you complete school. Once a job has been acquired, parents could still be assisted as they might be old by then to support themselves.”*

4.2.1.1.7 Hardship

Despite the fact that hardship could be viewed to have negative connotations, it was also mentioned to be a motivating factor to retain girls in schools. Almost all participants at all schools that were part of the study indicated that they were from poor family backgrounds and one of them was even an orphan. Their experience during their home-stay was difficult.

Parents have cut off the support rendered to them after they had dropped out of schools and support only those that were in schools. For those that indicated to have children, they had an extra burden of trying to see how they could look after themselves and for their infants. At the end of the day, lack of basic needs for themselves and that of their children had to influence them to return to schools to

further their education with the hope of completing their secondary education and study further at Institution of Higher Learning to guarantee themselves places in job markets in order to take care of themselves and their family members. Participant two at school three could also mention that since there was no one that was working in the family, life was difficult. She always wished to complete her secondary education in order for her to get a paying job to assist her family.

4.2.1.2 What keeps girls away from schools

The study had an interest to find out why large numbers of girls enroll at the beginning of their school careers, but less complete primary education and very few complete their secondary education. Field notes were taken from interviews, documents and artefacts were analyzed to provide the researcher more insight as to what keeps girls away from schools before they complete their education. Through this, data could be obtained as presented below.

4.2.1.2.1 Pregnancy

There were many factors cited that cause girls to drop out of school. One of the main factors mentioned was pregnancy. All the girls interviewed dropped out of school because of pregnancy. They all fell pregnant when they were in secondary schools. One participant got pregnant while in Grade 9, one indicated to have been pregnant while in Grade 11 and the rest fell pregnant when they were in Grade 10. All participants who participated in the study indicated either one or a combination of factors such as peer pressure, poverty or lack of contraceptive to have been the main causes of their pregnancies. Participant two at school two could relate that the peers had to tell her to accept a boyfriend if she wanted to have things they had possessed

and other offers they used to get when they have to come back from out-weekends. She went on to say that they could also threaten her friendship to them by telling her that if she still wanted their friendship to continue, she has to take a boyfriend. As a result, she ended up taking a boyfriend who then impregnated her about a year later. The participants further revealed that the men that were responsible for their pregnancies were mostly people from the working class, and few of them were those that dropped out of school after failing Grade 10 or 12 who lived within the same villages but unemployed. Only one participant (participant one at school two) could reveal that she was impregnated by a fellow learner at the same school who was a Grade higher than her.

4.2.1.2.2 Peer pressure

Participant one and three at school two indicated that they had friends that influenced them to drop out of school when they were pregnant. One of them could reveal that since the other friend had a stable relationship with the boyfriend, she was also told to drop out of school and stay with the boyfriend who impregnated her to “*strengthen (sic) their relationship.*” She could also reveal that this was even the way she accepted a boyfriend. She was forced into a relationship by other school mates that were closer to her. After some several attempts, she had to give in and took the proposal. “*When I refused several times, it almost cost our friendship: my friends did not want to associate themselves much with me by then. But when I just gave in, the friendship picked up again.*”

4.2.1.2.3 School environment

Despite the fact that girls would have liked to return to schools, there were different challenges that they had to face from both teachers and fellow learners. Participant two at school one said *“it was difficult, especially for the first two weeks when you just have returned back to school after dropping out for a year or more. Some might label you to have failed in all your plans and even say that you might have been dumped by the boyfriend that is why you have returned back to school.”* Participant three at school one could further said that *“if you have got a soft heart and lack courage, you can easily drop out again within the first week of returning back to school.”* All three participants at school three said that some teachers could call them *“young mothers,”* while some of the learners, especially boys, could call them *“second hands.”* Almost all participants could say that some of the girls in their classes or even at schools were not ready to make friendship or socialize with them especially those without *“kids, (sic)”* apparently for the fear of being labelled as *“second hands.”* Some girls and teachers might even go to an extent of telling them to study hard because they have got already a *“responsibility to fulfill:”* meaning that they have to study hard for the future of their children. Some learners, especially boys might even go to an extent of saying that *“we are sitting with adults here and we should respect them even if the peers saying that are older than you by age, just because you have got a child.”* All these remarks could be said by almost all participants that participated in the study to have affected their retention process negatively and they had to cope with difficulties. They could also indicate that some of their friends ended up dropping out of school because the school environment was no longer conducive for them and they never felt fit to be there.

4.2.1.2.4 Treatment while pregnant at schools

Another challenge that could also force girls to drop out of school while pregnant was the treatment and some remarks from some teachers and learners. Despite acknowledging good advices, motivation and caring spirit from some teachers and fellow learners, *“some learners would call you graduates,”* meaning you have reached a certain maturity level above others and which also could refer to loose-fitting dresses put on for pregnancies as gowns: the official attires at graduation ceremonies at academic accolades. Participant three from school one indicated that when assistance was needed from peers in the classroom, it was reported that some could be able to assist while others were not willing to do so. She further said that some could just say *“why did you look for it or merely say I did not impregnate you, call the one responsible for assistance.”* She added saying that some could tease you by saying that *“you are no longer fitting in sits or chairs and better retire and go home.”* She further revealed that *“when you are in a dining hall or when you have got something to eat, you are told to eat more because you are no longer alone.”* These types of remarks, name-calling and hate speeches were regarded by all participants as unfair discrimination and harassment, and in the process, they have to regret why they had fell pregnant. *“All these might let you feel bad and lose a sense of belonging and finally drop out of school if you are not strong.”*

4.2.1.2.5 Home treatment while pregnant

All participants indicated that when they had to leave school to go home while pregnant, it was not an easy thing because none of them at home could welcome them because pregnancy was seen like a crime. This could lead to bad relationship with parents especially fathers who were mainly responsible for their educational

support. *“They were not at easy to send you again back to school after giving birth and that would at times mean to be the end of your education career.”*

4.2.1.2.6 After giving birth

This was the stage that was said to have created the biggest problem. Since almost all participants indicated that they were from poor family backgrounds, it was difficult for them to return to school. The main reason was financial difficulties and to get a care-taker for their infants. They all had planned to return to school but parents had to make a choice of who to support between *“yourself and your child.”* Lack of financial support and means from the men that were responsible for the pregnancies especially where fathers were not working or did not want to be associated with the pregnancy right from the onset, created difficulties for these girls to return to schools. Since the participants were chiefly from poor family backgrounds and could not afford basic needs for their children, they could not leave their infants home and return to school but opted to remain home to breastfeed them for a year or so because they lacked funds to buy powder milk and other supplements to feed their infants with. Only one participant: participant three at school one could indicate that she did not have any problems to return to school after giving birth. She said she had good parents from the side of the boy that impregnated her: they took the child with them to allow her to get back to school after a year and they also offered to assist paying her school fees and some other basics. But the rest of the participants indicated that they had problems of who to leave their infants with since their biological parents, especially fathers, were not really ready to assist them as care-takers for their infants when they wanted to return to school. Participants two and three at school three further indicated that in the end, it was even a problem to be given some money to

return to school even when their parents could afford to do so and added on saying that this was done as a form of punishment for their wrong-doings and the embarrassment brought home.

4.2.1.2.7 Poverty

Almost all participants indicated to leave beyond any other means of income from their biological parents. They could indicate that throughout their education careers, their financial support came from uncles, aunts or grandparents who received the social support grants from the Ministry of Health and Social Services and Social Services. They further had indicated that despite financial difficulties of supporting their infants, they also lacked some funds to pay for their school fees when they wanted to return to schools. Those that were in Grade 12 could reveal that they were compelled to pay hostel and examination fees without any exemption. When they tried to negotiate with teachers about their status, teachers could not accept it and they could further reveal that this made them ashamed to return to the teachers that were responsible for handling the school fees to discuss the issue again. The end result was that they were forced to beg for money from extended family members to pay or if not, they had leave school as participant one from school two indicated to have happened to a friend who left school because she could not get any money to pay. She further said *“when you see others have paid and you have not, you just have to drop out of school which is a painful choice when you really wanted to continue with your education.”* When they were asked whether they were aware of the exemption policy stipulated in the Education Act and the Commencement of the education Act, Act number 16 of 2001 for full or partial exemption, all participants indicated of knowing about it but they further said that teachers did not want to

exempt even if the poor parents that cannot afford payments were brought to school to negotiate. The only piece of advice that teachers could offer to the parents is to tell them how much should they pay and when the fees should be settled.

4.2.1.2.8 Early marriage

The problem of early marriage was also listed to be one of the problem causing girls' dropouts. In exception of one participant, the rest could reveal that they committed to these relationships mainly due to poverty. Lack of money to pay for all necessary school expenses, for being orphans and staying with elderly parents, pressure of social life to acquire basic needs and to have fun could be revealed as the contributing factors to early marriages. They could also reveal that their intentions to get involved into early marriages were not to neglect their studies, but this was done to get supported through their education career by these boyfriends because their parents could not offer them with all their educational and other basic needs even when they had all the means to do so. Participant three from school three could further reveal that *"the older we are getting, the more needs we would like to acquire, and this let us to opt for boyfriends to meet some of our needs."* She further said when they fell pregnant some boyfriends did not want them to return to schools but rather suggested to them to stay home forever. She again indicated to have had a disagreement with the boyfriend when she decided to return to school and then, that ended their relationship completely. For her to return to school, she had to get back with other people's intervention and support since the boyfriend withdrew all the support he rendered when they were still together despite the fact that they had still a child together. This was said to have been a common treatment among boyfriends when girls wanted to return to schools. The main reason cited was jealousy that

these girls might opt for other boyfriends while at school after these boyfriends have invested so much in them. The same participant could reveal that she could also remember some of her friends that became victims of such actions and they never made it back to school again. Other participants could say that they did not have much of those problems with their relationships when they wanted to return to schools. Except the two participants at school two who indicated that their parents were not aware of their relationship, the rest showed that their parents knew about their relationship and their boyfriends could openly be associated with them in the presence of their parents.

4.2.1.3 What should be done to enable more girls to remain in schools and at least complete their secondary education

The girls that were part of the study could express themselves that they were also not happy with the current retention rate of girls in schools. They could cite other girls' name whom they started secondary school with (Grade 8) but dropped out of school and now living a very difficult life. At the same time, they could also reveal that in exception of the boys that failed Grade 10, most of the boys, if not all, that they started secondary school with, were still attending schools or complete their secondary education and were doing something for a living. Most of these girls said that there seemed to have been a very little opportunity for girls to get educated and remain in schools to complete their secondary education since some of their needs were not considered and valued. With that in mind, they have to suggest what should be done to enhance their retention.

4.2.1.4 What should be done to retain more girls in schools

The girls that participated in the study had to make the following suggestions. They felt that they were not empowered to enable them to remain in schools and complete their secondary education. Therefore, they suggested that they should be empowered with knowledge and skills on gender related issue by Life skills teachers at their schools and other external people with expertise as they were also part of the society who could play a significant role in their communities in term of economic and social development once they complete their education and enter the job market. They needed motivation, encouragement and proper advice especially from Life skills teachers on issues that affected their education negatively and some solutions thereof. The girls felt that the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008) did not do much for them since its introduction. They felt that the policy did not protect them against abusive language used mainly by boys. They suggested that the policy (Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy) should be enforced by the school authority and Life skills teachers to implement what is stipulated and be taught in Life skills lessons because most of the girls are not fully aware of the whole content and the benefits outlined within there for pregnant learners and learner-parents. The girls also suggested that they should be supported with programme of activities that could help enforcing girls to remain in schools. Schools should have basic life skills programmes through the Life skills teachers for girls to be sensitized on issues that affected their retention and their general well-being. They also complained of financial burdens that have affected them most when they are required to pay different fees at schools. They suggested that government should help funding the education of girls from poor family background fully especially those that were

progressing in their studies. Such funding should start at Grade 10 where learners start paying examination fees. They also appealed if government could assist girls after giving birth, with financial assistance in the form of social welfare grant to help them feed their infants and give a minimal support to those that were taking care of their infants when they have to return to schools. They also suggested for a regional support fund that should be given to all secondary schools. Such a fund should assist girls in girls' clubs to run their activities at their schools. Some girls indicated that there was a fund given to some good performing girls by the regional office under FAWENA regional committee. They said that the qualifying criteria were not clear to them and there was no transparency in the whole process. They suggested that such fund be allocated to schools and their teachers should help identifying girls who could be assisted but not the regional office since it only benefitted few individuals who might not be of needy ones. They also suggested if the government could assist girls with children to have special scholarships after Grade 12 covering their tuition, accommodation, meals and other expenses that they could incur while studying at tertiary institutions: such an initiative could motivate girls to remain in schools to complete their secondary education since some did not see a need of studying and completing Grade 12, because there was no one to pay for their tertiary studies. They added on saying that the current loans and scholarships offered by various ministries and non-governmental organizations were too competitive and not everyone could qualify to get it, and again, it was not comprehensive enough to cover all costs that a person would need while on study. Participant two at school one indicated that *“with a child home, you might again suffer most when your needs and that of the child are not met.”*

They also suggested if the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Arts and Culture could equip all schools with recreational facilities at all secondary schools that are educative and entertaining as these would help to keep them indoors at school premises and avoid boring life in the school hostels. They also revealed that contraceptives have been a problem to access since some of the girls that were part of the study lived far from the health facilities where they could obtain them. The girls therefore suggested that the introduction of contraceptives in all schools in care of Life skills teachers to all girls that were sexual active to avoid the high rate of pregnancies among school going girls.

The girls again suggested that the Ministry of Health and Social Services and Social Services and that of Gender Equality and Welfare to jointly have programmes of visiting schools for educational purposes at least twice a year. Such visits and the education thereof could help girls to change their mindsets and their current lifestyles. They urged, especially the Ministry of Health and Social Services and Social Service that it should regularly visit schools, not only when they have immunization programmes but also with some other programmes that could benefit the girls' social well-being.

4.2.2 Phase two: Responses from teachers

4.2.2.1 What keep girls in schools

4.2.2.1.1 Family background

As indicated by the girls in their responses, teachers could also provide more or less similar responses. They indicated that girls that were from highly motivated parents and better living standard household's retention was higher than those that were from

poor backgrounds due to means of survival. Teacher at school two further said that highly motivated parents, especially those with resources, would by all means try as much as they could to fund the education of their children, motivate and support them throughout so that they could get a job like them.

4.2.2.1.2 Role-modelling

Teachers could reveal that some teachers in their schools that were caring and conducted themselves professionally, were emulated by learners in many ways: be it by the way of talking, dressing or how they could do things. Some of the learners could even take up those teachers' names. They said the learners could admire them and wished to finish their schooling to become teachers like them and live such a life-style.

They again indicated that the communities in which learners lived, played an important role on the retention of girls. They went on saying that if girls found themselves in a village where there were some other girls or women who completed schools and had formal employment that could also motivated them to stay in schools and complete their secondary education and then study further in order for them to get paying jobs afterwards.

4.2.2.1.3 Teacher support

A teacher at school one mentioned those teachers who offered extra educational support and motivation to girls and those that recognized and rewarded the positive efforts of learners, were said to play an important role in retaining girls in schools. They were seen as source of wisdom, advisors, service providers and supporters in

all their educational difficulties, and as such, learners would have always wanted to be near them.

4.2.2.1.4 The girls' clubs

The teachers that participated in the study were all females. They were all aware of the objectives of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project. Some of the objectives that they cited were to increase access and retention of girls in the then Kavango Educational Region, to reduce drop-out rates of girls due to pregnancies and other factors, and to sensitize girls on gender related issues to enable them to perform better. They then had to state that these were the activities that the girls' clubs could also promote at their respective schools using different platforms such as meetings, debates, dramas, and different gatherings. But since the funds that the donors used to give ended about some years ago (2008), they said the girls' clubs activities had declined drastically. Schools were reported to be operating their girls' clubs on their own expenses following their own programmes without any external support or funding as it was the case before. One of the teachers at school three could also add on saying that the girls' clubs were not that active at during the time researcher conducted the study due to lack of assistance from the directorate of education at the regional level that used to render support. She went on to say that even regional meetings ceased: all piloted schools that belonged to the then Kavango Girls' Education Project were no longer invited to attend regional committee meetings like before. A teacher at school one could reveal that *“from my personal point of view, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Arts and Culture seemed not to see it as a need any more to promote the objectives of the project, but yet, the problem of retaining girls in schools is still a barrier.”*

All teachers could reveal that thus far, only one to two meetings were held per year to discuss few issues affecting girls and their future at their respective schools through schools' own initiatives. During these meetings, teachers could also share their experiences as ways of motivating girls. They all could indicate that if the then Kavango Girls' Education Project would not source funds and avail it to support the girls' clubs, then the girls' clubs will completely cease at all piloted schools and all activities that the Kavango Girls' Education Project initiated could just be another unsuccessful project in the education history of the region.

4.2.2.2 What keep girls away from schools

4.2.2.2.1 The overall view on retention at senior secondary level

The teachers could indicate that from their own observations as support teachers for girls' education at girls' clubs at their schools, there was still a big gap in terms of parity between boys and girls in Grade 11 and 12 whereby boys were still dominating in number at those Grades. The difference could be seen starting from Grade 10 towards Grade 12 that girls were becoming fewer than boys. One of the female teachers could indicate that she had classes to offer at these Grades and she could witness that boys were just more than girls as from Grade 10 to 12. The factors and reasons associated with such disparity that teachers could provide are listed below.

4.2.2.2.1.1 Poverty

Teachers rated poverty to be the main source of all other problems that could lead to low retention of girls in schools especially those in secondary schools where fees to contribute towards education was high. Factors such as pregnancies and early

marriage could be labelled to have its roots from poverty, said the teachers. One teacher from school two added on to say that the need for the girls to get additional items such as modern clothes and other luxury goods to enable them to look smart “*like teachers*” was said to be the contributing factors to pregnancies and early marriage. It was reported that girls had to get involved in these relationships not necessary out of love, but as a way to get “*sponsored*” in order for them to get basic needed items that they want.

4.2.2.2.1.2 Pregnancy

As girls cited in their responses, teachers also indicated that girls that were dropping out of school could mainly be associated with pregnancies linked to non- school going boyfriends. Such pregnancies could be observed as from Grade 8 when girls enter secondary school level and dominantly at Grade 9 and 10 but lower at Grade 11 and 12. Both schools could indicate a combined number of eight girls who dropped out of school by then and seven of the girls who dropped out of school were associated with pregnancies and the other one committed herself to early marriage.

All teachers indicated that there were rare circumstances where these girls were impregnated by fellow school going learners. In cases of those pregnancies, girls involved were mainly at Grade 10 and lower. Those that were in Grade 11 or 12, were mainly impregnated by non- school going male that were either working or those that were home but with better living standard because they could afford to give them the support they would need. The main reasons cited for those pregnancies were social pressure, poverty and early marriage. Each reason mentioned had been explained and presented below:

4.2.2.2.1.3 Early marriage

One of the teachers could reveal that some girls cohabit as early as Grade 8 due to social and material needs such as “*clothes, nice food and cell phones.*” As a result of living together and being supported by these boyfriends, these girls are controlled by these boyfriends and their freedoms and rights are restricted. All female teachers who participated in the study could reveal that there were girls that got married traditionally while in schools and cohabited with their partners who in turn took care of them fully with all their responsibilities and expenses for schools. In this regard, these girls had to abide to the boyfriends’ restrictions. When they are told to stay home and miss classes by these boyfriends, they have to comply to avoid misunderstanding and the cut of support rendered. This pressure from their boyfriends could not only lead to girls’ low retention, but to poor school attendance and poor academic performance by these girls even if these girls have to remain in schools and complete their education.

4.2.2.2.1.4 Social pressure

One of the teachers could reveal that there were girls who wanted to advance themselves socially by trying to show that they were in a “*class of their own and have all basic needs*” while at schools. This was seen mainly from girls who were from well-off families and those that were too materialistic. They had to follow fashion and get themselves in early relationships with peers or adult men who could afford to meet their daily basic needs and living standards “*just to have fun and buy them the items that they would need. In end, their conducts at school were not good and they had to get pregnant at the tender ages and leave schools.*”

4.2.2.2.1.5 Parenthood

One female teacher at school two said that once these girls had given birth, they automatic became parents and therefore, they had a responsibility to carry out of taking care of their infants and give them support as mothers. Since they were all not from wealthy families, she said that those who could not get people or family members to take care of their infants when they intended to get back to school, it affected their retention. She further said that the options that were reported to be taken were to stay home and breastfeed because they could not afford to buy feeds and other supplements for their infants. In addition, she said that some of the girls could reveal that they could not leave their infants in other people's care because they would not take good care of them. Thus, parenthood was cited to keep them home because once they return to schools, there could be no one to support and look after their babies.

4.2.2.2.1.6 Academic performance

One of the teachers indicated that most of the girls could not perform very well at Grade 10 final examinations as boys could do. As a result, that could also cause the number of girls to be lower as they get to Grade 11 and 12.

4.2.2.3 What should be done to retain more girls in schools

By looking at factors presented by the teachers on what keep girls in schools and what keep them away, teachers had suggested and made some recommendations to various stakeholders on what could help increase retention of girls in schools in the Kavango West Educational Region. They suggested that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, at national level should give an additional fund to the Kavango

West Educational Region that should help activating the activities of the girls' clubs and give assistance funds to girls that could not afford to pay their educational fees at secondary level. They also recommended that family planning and sex education be made core component activities to teach girls in girls' clubs to educate them on how to avoid teenage pregnancies which had been reported to be high in the then Kavango Educational Region. Consultative meetings between schools, the Kavango West Education Regional Office, and that of Gender Equality and Child Welfare should combine efforts and resources to have programmes of educating and addressing issues that are affecting girls in all areas of their livelihood while in schools.

4.2.3 Phase three

4.2.3.1 The enrolment rate of girls and boys at Grade 11 to 12

The three schools that took part in the study showed that the enrolment rate of girls at Grade 11 and 12 was still lower than that of the boys in the same Grades. This could be proven with the enrolment statistics that they provided for 2015 and 2016 at Grade 11 and 12 as per fifteenth school-day statistics. In Grade 11 (2015), boys had a combined number of two hundred and ten in total, while girls were hundred and sixty-six: a difference of forty-four in favor of boys, which was about twenty, ninety-five per cent. In Grade 12 (2015), boys had a combined number of one hundred and fifty-eight and girls were one hundred and twenty-six: a difference of thirty-two in favor of boys that was about twenty, twenty-five per cent.

In Grade 11 (2016), boys had a combined number of two hundred and fifty-two in total, while girls were one hundred and eighty-four: a difference of sixty-eight in favor of boys that was about twenty-seven per cent. In Grade 12 (2015), boys had a

combined number of one hundred and ninety-three and girls were one hundred and forty: a difference of fifty-three in favor of boys that was about twenty-seven, forty-four per cent.

4.2.3.2 What keeps girls in schools

At all the three schools, the school principals or members of school management could refer this question to support teachers for girls' clubs since they were more in contact with the girls. But one of them pointed out that motivation from all sides (from self as a learner, parents and teachers) could be one of the factors that could retain them in schools. *“When a girl is self-motivated and know what she would want to achieve after completing her schooling, and her parents and teachers also encourages her, that motivates and supports her to know, understand and realize the importance of school, she is retained in school.”* The teacher went on to mention that when the child is well supported by the parents or guardians and the school basic needs are met by the parents or guardians: fees, stationery, groceries, school uniform and other basic needs, the possibility of retaining such a child is high.

4.2.3.3 What keeps girls away from schools

Like the way girls and teachers indicated in their responses, the school principals or members of school management could also indicate that girls were dropping out of schools because of pregnancies, poverty and early marriage.

4.2.3.3.1 Pregnancies

As indicated by learners and teachers, they could also cite pregnancies to be one of the leading reasons for dropouts at their schools. As cited by teachers, the

responsible persons were outsiders that were working but there were cases of learner-to-learner pregnancies which were quite few. In cases of these pregnancies that involved a female and a male learner, in most cases, they were not from the same schools but mainly from the same villages. On the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008 to help retaining girls in schools, the responses given were that girls could not stay in schools as stipulated in the policy due to personal reasons. In most cases, they had to leave schools without informing the school authority: the school authority just realizes that they were out from schools upon inquiring from others. It was said to have been difficult to trace them after leaving schools even when the school would had wanted to retain them because of lack of contact details between the learners or their parents and the schools. They reported to have few cases of learners that left for a month or so for delivery and then got back to schools after delivery. This was only common in learners that were in Grade 10 and 12 who were sitting for the national examinations. Apart from those that were in Grade 10 and 12, in most cases, all female learners who dropped out because of pregnancies, they only reported or returned to school in January when the new academic year has to start even when they had dropped out a year ago in the same month (January). Due to the fact that these learners have got personal reasons to drop out of schools while they are aware of the policy, it puts the school authority in a difficult position to enforce it.

4.2.3.3.2 Poverty

Poverty was cited by all to be one of the biggest problems among others that affected the retention of girls in secondary schools since their basic needs were more than that

of the boys. It was said that there were some learners who were getting it difficult to pay all their school fees: the hostel, school development fund and examination fees (for those in Grade 10 and 12). It was further indicated that all the fees to be paid could be over N\$ 1000.00 if learners were in Grade 12 in a public school. As a result, such a fee was regarded to be high and very difficult to get if parents were unemployed and had two or more learners to pay for. They could reveal that they were aware of the provisions made in the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 for partially or fully exemption of learners that could not afford to pay school development fund. But they had to indicate that they were afraid to exempt learners because if one is exempted, the others could follow suit. In the end, more learners could be exempted and the schools could operate without any fund to buy basic teaching and learning materials and that could lead to poor school performance since the ministry was not providing adequate teaching and learning materials. But they have to point out that if hostel as well as examination fees are abolished, that would help retaining more learners since some drop out of schools because of these fees.

4.2.3.3.3 Early marriage

One of the participants at school one said that girls that were married while in schools, were in most cases indiscipline: they lacked respect for teachers and even for fellow learners. As a result, they were contrary to code of conduct for learners at their schools and that led to their drop outs even before disciplinary procedures were taken. Apart from that, they could also cite interferences from their roles and responsibility at home. Since they had boyfriends or husbands that they cohabitated with and for being mothers in most instances, this put them in vulnerable positions to miss schools often and lead to dropping out of the school in order for them to take

care and attend to their immediate family issues. One of the teachers could indicate that there were also some signs of lack of interest and low self-esteem with limited social interactions in the school and classroom environment in these girls, and as a result, they were difficult to retain in schools once they drop out.

4.2.3.4 What should be done to retain more girls in schools

The school principals or members of school management suggested that the girls' clubs in the Kavango West Educational Region be funded and strengthened the way the programme started because the problems that caused high dropout and low retention rates were still persisting in the region. Such support could only be minimized in areas where improvements were being observed after monitoring and evaluation on progress made had been assessed.

Poverty was cited to have been one of the biggest problems that has affected the school retention of the girls. Since schools depended on school development fund to operate, there was a need for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to fund schools with all necessary fees so that learners are not required to contribute any type of a fee to school at any level (be it examination, hostel, stationery or any other fees).

4.2.4 Phase four

4.2.4.1 Retention rate

The education officer at directorate of education at the regional office could indicate that the retention of girls in secondary schools was still lower compare to that of boys. As indicated by all the groups that participated in the study; pregnancies, poverty and early marriages were cited to be the common problems that affected the

retention of girls that the office received from the piloted schools. It was reported that the office obtains these data from schools mainly during the end of every trimester on dropout forms. It was indicated that the schools were still better sites that could provide more, better and detailed data.

4.2.4.2 The activities of the then Kavango Educational Region towards retention of girls

The regional education officer responsible could admit that the girls' activities that were taking place at the time in the regions were minimal and they were no longer under the activities of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project (KGEP) but under Forum for African Women Educationalists in Namibia (FAWENA) which was centralized with the head office in Windhoek, and at times, directed all fourteen regions on what to be done. The then Kavango Girls' Education Project had shifted all its activities to FAWENA after the donor agencies that funded the project ended its funding. As reported, the current office was operating with limited funds that were mainly obtained from basket selling that were made by the regional FAWENA group and then sold. The funds generated, which was very less, was said to be used for assisting learners, mainly girls, that were orphans and vulnerable with good record of academic performance. This initiative was reported to have started in 2011 with eleven learners (male and female) that were in Grade 11 by then. Due to its limitation, the funds could only pay for the eleven learners' school development funds and their examination fees every year from Grade 11 until they complete Grade 12. Such funds could only assist learners for two academic years based on good performance. The office could reveal that if funds could be more, it could extend such assistance to more learners. FAWENA head office in Windhoek assists

more learners across the country to pay for their school development funds, examination fees, school uniforms, toiletries and transport fares using the same criteria (of being orphans and vulnerable with good performance) but the fund does not pay for their hostel fees or any tertiary fees: the learners' parents should do such arrangements themselves.

4.2.4.3 What should be done to retain more girls in schools

The regional officer responsible for girls' activities indicated that the office had a plan to retain more girls in schools but lack of sufficient funds to carry out the initiative was the biggest barrier. To enable the office to achieve the retention rate to be at par with other regions, more funds is needed for operational purposes and for supporting the girls in their education career. It was also suggested that the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008 that allows learner-parents to be retained in schools should be re-looked at and its implementation be supported in terms monetary assistance to meet its goals of improving the prevention and management of learner pregnancy in Namibia, with the aim of decreasing the number of learner pregnancies and increasing the number of learner-parents to complete their education.

4.2.5 Summary of the findings in all phases

The findings were based on three major areas of the research questions: What keeps girls in schools, what keeps girls away from schools and what should be done in order to enable more girls to remain in school and at least complete their secondary education? The data were obtained through interviews, observations, document analysis and artefacts, and the findings could be presented as follow:

Factors cited to keep girls in schools were parental support and motivation, strong family backgrounds, peer pressure, hardship and self-realization as the girls were maturing, vision with self-motivation by the girls, role modelling from the side of the professional teachers and the impact of the surrounding communities.

There was still a big gap between boys and girls in Grade 11 and 12 in terms of enrolments and retention with boys dominating in number at those Grades and the difference could be observed starting from Grade 10 towards Grade 12.

There were many factors cited that caused girls to drop out of schools. Such factors were pregnancies among school going girls, school environments that were not conducive to girls while pregnant and after their return to schools, the treatment and some remarks from some teachers and learners, poverty and financial difficulties for girls to cater for their school needs and that of their infants, early marriage and care-takers for their infants when they wanted to return to schools.

The girls' activities that were taking place by then in the region aimed at enhancing their school retention were reported to be minimal because the girls' clubs were no longer supported by the region in terms of monetary or materially to enable the clubs to promote the objectives then Kavango Girls' Education Project because of lack of funds. The girls' clubs then were school-based and operated on their own programmes and with own expenses without any external support. The then Kavango Girls' Education Project was no longer active in the region but FAWENA took the responsibilities in the regions with the head office in Windhoek. The then Kavango regional office for FAWENA supported few learners regardless of their gender, with payment of their school development funds and examination fees for two academic years from Grade 11 through to 12 based on orphanage, vulnerability and good performance within the region, while FAWENA head office assisted more

learners across the country using the same criteria to pay for their school development funds, examination fees, school uniforms, toiletries and transport fares, but not their hostel or tertiary fees.

4.2.6 Summary of the recommendations and suggestions made in all phases

The girls that participated in the study felt that they needed to be empowered with knowledge and skills on gender related issue by the Life skills teachers at their schools and external experts in order for them to make informed choices on all issues that were affecting their lives while in schools. They needed to see that they were supported with programmes of activities that could help enforcing girls to remain in schools and that such programmes sensitize them on issues that affect their school retention and help improve their general well-being and social life. They reported that the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008 did not protect them against the abusive language and negative remarks used mainly by boys which they regarded as a barrier for their retention when they would have wanted to return to school especially within the same year. They appealed to the school authorities for protection during pregnancies when they are in school and when they have to return to schools to continue their education within the same year or later. FAWENA should seek more funds from different agencies and non-governmental organizations to help funding schools with girls' clubs for their operational purposes and supporting the girls' education activities. Funding for the education of girls who were performing well with their studies was being demanded by all girl participants as they could reveal that the current funding by FAWENA was quite minimal and assisted only a very small group from the most vulnerable girls that were in schools. The participants appealed if government could assist

school girls with financial assistance in the form of social welfare grant like the current one for Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) after giving birth to help them feed their infants and give a minimal support to those that were taking care of their infants when they have to return to schools because of their vulnerability as mothers after giving birth, and such a fund should be given to them even when they were to study after Grade 12 at Institution of Higher Learning. The school principals and members of school management appealed if the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture could fund all learners who request for exemption especially girls who cannot afford contributions that the schools request from them. They also appealed if stakeholders in education could consider giving regional support funds for orphans and vulnerable children in the care of all public secondary schools to help assisting their learners within their own guided concept of classification since public schools were viewed to have a variety of learners that were orphans and vulnerable children who were highly exposed to dropouts due to lack of financial, social and moral support. The participants could also suggest if FAWENA could extend to have special scholarships for girls that were completing Grade 12 covering all their tuition, accommodation, meals and transport fares since some girls indicated that the loans and scholarships given by various ministries and non-governmental organizations were too competitive and limited in size and scope that limited most who made it not to study further after Grade 12. The Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to equip all schools with recreational facilities that were educative at all secondary schools as these would help to keep them indoors at school premises. Girls and support teachers requested if contraceptives could be introduced in all schools in the care of Life skills or support teachers to assist all girls that were sexual active to avoid the high rate of pregnancy among school going girls. They also appealed for family

planning and sex education to be made core components at teaching girls in their clubs as well as in Life skills lessons to help reduce teenage pregnancies in schools.

4.3 DISCUSSION

4.3.1 Introduction

This part of the section presents the discussion of the study according to the sub-headings of the findings of the research questions in order to simplify and clarify it. The layout was done by presenting responses and then the discussions based on the school enrolment rate, what keep girls in schools, what keep girls away from schools and what could be done to enhance retention rate of girls in schools, and then followed by the concluding remarks after every main part. The activities of girls' clubs and FAWENA, summary of the discussions and conclusion come at the end of the discussions.

4.3.1.1 Enrolment rate

The enrolment rate is presented in a form of statistical data to show the exact differences or gaps between boys and girls at senior secondary Grades. Since some of the participants indicated that the dropouts could be observed as from Grade 10, the Grade 10 data were partly displayed also for confirmation. The last part of the presentation under enrolment is the enrolment of female and male learners for 2015 and 2016 in simple figures to show how the enrolment disparity. The teachers and school principals or members of school management were asked to share the enrolment rate at Grade 11 and 12 at their respective schools according to their

observations and as per statistics of 2015 and 2016, and the documents at disposal were also studied. The responses that were given from observations and from the Fifteenth School-Day Statistics were summarized as shown below. The teachers indicated that the enrolment rate of girls at Grade 11 and 12 was still lower than that of the boys in the same Grades. They could also add on saying that such an observation could be observed as from Grade 10. The school principals or members of school management were also required to give their own observation and statistics that were at their disposal from Grade 10 to 12. Grade 10 was added on the list to justify what the teachers had said since teachers were interviewed first before the school principals or members of school management.

As per Fifteenth School-Day Statistics for 2015 (fifteen days after the re-opening of schools in the first trimester), school one had a total of one hundred and twenty-eight learners from Grade 10 to 12 with fifty-six of them being female and seventy-two male: a difference of sixteen more in favor of male learners. School 2 had four hundred and sixty-two learners from Grade 10 to 12 with one hundred and ninety-eight of the learners being females and two hundred and sixty-four males: a difference of sixty-six more in favor of male learners. School 3 had three hundred and five learners from Grade 10 to 12 with one hundred and thirty-one of the learners being female and one hundred and seventy-four male: a difference of forty-three more in favor of male learners.

As per Fifteenth School-Day Statistics for 2016, school one had a total of one hundred and forty-four learners from Grade 10 to 12 with fifty-eight of them being female and eighty-six male: a difference of twenty-eight more in favor of male learners. School 2 had four hundred and ninety-nine learners from Grade 10 to 12 with two hundred and seventeen of the learners being females and two hundred and

eighty-two males: a difference of sixty-five more in favor of male learners. School 3 had three hundred and fifty-six learners from Grade 10 to 12 with one hundred and forty-five of the learners being female and two hundred and eleven male: a difference of sixty-six more in favor of male learners.

Since the study had an interest at Grade 11 and 12 which are the last senior secondary Grades, the study presents the total number of both female and male learners (per Grade combined) to show the gap that exists between the Grades. During the discussion of the data below until the end of the study, the data to be presented focuses only at Grade 11 and 12.

As per Fifteenth School-Day Statistics for 2015, the total number of female learners in Grade 11 at all three secondary schools combined were one hundred and sixty-six over two hundred and ten male learners: a difference of forty-four (twenty-one per cent) more in favor of male learners.

The number of female learners in Grade 12 at all three secondary schools combined were one hundred and twenty-five over one hundred and fifty-eight male learners: a difference of thirty-three (twenty-one per cent) more in favor of male learners.

As per Fifteenth School-Day Statistics for 2016, the total number of female learners in Grade 11 at all three secondary schools combined were one hundred and eighty-four over two hundred and fifty-two male learners: a difference of sixty-eight (twenty-seven per cent) more in favor of male learners.

The number of female learners in Grade 12 at all three secondary schools combined were one hundred and forty over one hundred and ninety-three male learners: a difference of fifty-three (twenty-seven, five per cent) more in favor of male learners.

In conclusion, as per Fifteenth School-Day Statistics for 2015 and 2016 the combined number of female learners in Grade 11 and 12 at all three secondary schools was two

hundred and ninety-one over three hundred and sixty-eight male learners (2015): a difference of seventy-seven (twenty-one per cent) more in favor of male learners, while 2016 has got a combined number of three hundred and twenty-four female learners in Grade 11 and 12 over four hundred and forty-five male learners: a difference of one hundred and twenty-one (twenty-seven per cent) more in favor of male learners.

As indicated by the teachers, the enrolment of female learners at senior secondary level was still lower compare to that of boys. That could be proven with the then enrolment rate of 2015 and 2016 as per Fifteenth School-Day Statistics at those three secondary schools. It was also discovered that in all Grades: 11 and 12, boys were outnumbering girls at all schools that participated in the study and none of the schools that participated in the study could show that female were more in any of those Grades. In 2015, school one had ten female learners in Grade 11 over twenty-two male learners. School two had eighty-three female learners over one hundred and four, while school three had seventy-three female learners over eighty-four of their counterparts. At Grade 12, the same year (2015), school one had eight female learners over thirteen male learners, school two had seventy-six female learners over eighty-six, while school three had forty-one female learners over fifty-nine of their counterparts.

The same trend could still be observed in 2016: at Grade 11, school one had twelve female learners over twenty male learners, school two had ninety-nine female learners over one hundred and twenty-one, while school three had seventy-three female learners over one hundred and ten of their counterparts.

At Grade 12, the same year (2016), school one had eleven female learners over twenty-two male learners, school two had seventy-five female learners over one

hundred and one, while school three had fifty-four female learners over seventy of their counterparts.

This is more or less in an agreement with what Malome & Haihombo-Muetudhana (2002) indicated that girls had been under represented especially at Senior Secondary school level in the then Kavango Educational Region which was thirty-seven, eight per cent in comparison with fifty-two, nine per cent of the girls in secondary schools nationally. Such figures show some imbalances in enrolment rate between male and female learners as well as the largest gender disparity in the country that increases progressively from primary to secondary school levels.

4.3.1.2 Motivation from parents

The findings of this research could reveal that one of the factors that played an important role in retaining girls in schools was the motivation from parents. It was discovered that parents that could see the importance of education and what education could play in a person's life once a child has to complete his or her education and get a paying job, they were likely to motivate their children to retain and complete their schools. It was also said to be more visible in households where parents' educational background was strong: when parents themselves were educated, they would also like to have their children be educated as well. Manion (2012: 234-5) indicates that mobilizing and sensitizing communities could make them develop local solutions to problems facing girls in their communities. Parents, teachers, community and girls that were sensitized, motivated and mobilized they could realize the importance of girls' education. Once they were sensitized, they became aware of what education could play in the life of a girl-child. This could let the researcher support the above- mentioned study and maintains that it was true that

educated parents with better understanding of education and its value, would not make preference of who to educate and who should not between a boy and a girl-child. All the children would be given equal opportunities to get educated without looking at the risks that were involved. It was again more convincingly when all parents: the father and mother were all educated that such an opportunity was equally given to every child irrespective of gender because of the benefits and other social responsibilities that they could realize and undertake.

4.3.1.3 Family background

As indicated by the girls in their responses, teachers could also provide more or less similar responses. They indicated that girls that were from highly motivated parents and better living standard/ homes' retention was higher than those that were from poor backgrounds due to means of survival. A teacher at school two stated that highly motivated parents, especially those with means, would try as much as they could to fund the education of their children, motivate and support them throughout so that they could get a job like them. As indicated under motivation from parents above, family background play an important role in any part of the livelihood of a child. If parents have strong educational background (when they are all educated), they would also like to have their children be educated like themselves and they would like them to get better education than that of themselves. They would also try to send them to exclusive or private schools in order for them to get better education. These types of parents would not even want their children to sit longer after dropping out from school because of pregnancies. After giving birth, such parents would want their children to return to school because of two main reasons: first they have the means to pay school fees for their children and secondly, they know, understood and

valued the importance of education and what education could play in the future life of their children. Such parents could also adhere to ministerial policy including the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008 whereby the girl that fell pregnant should return to school shortly after giving birth. With that in mind, parents would always wish the best out of their children and support them throughout their education career, and always, wish that they would have better jobs and become self-dependent in the future.

4.3.1.4 Parents' treatment after dropping out of school

One of the factors mentioned that influenced the school retention of girls was the treatment that they received from their parents when they dropped out of schools as one of the motivating factors. They said that their parents had to mistreat them by sending them around, do cooking, cultivating, weeding and help with all other domestic work. They also did not want to give them any assistance in monetary form to buy groceries or clothes. This treatment was then seen by the girls to be unfair in comparison to those that were in school: the ones that in schools were supported. They then said that thinking of the life-style they had when they were in school: the dressing of school uniform, friendship, the support from parents, and then the life-style they could find themselves in after dropping school, they were forced to get back to school in order for them to enjoy the same treatment and support that the parents could render as part of their responsibility.

By looking at the findings of the study, girls felt that parents' treatment towards them was not merely seen to have a negative impact on their lives. Despite the fact that it was seen by the researcher as a punishment to learners by denying them access to education, some of the girls said it was a motivating factor. They said when they

were punished they learnt not to make those mistakes again when they got the opportunity to go back to school. They again said that the peers, especially those that lived in the neighborhood could also learn from such a treatment. They could also reveal that when they got back to school, they had to serve as role-models with that experience they had gone through. In that way, they were discouraged from doing the same act but rather motivated to live a positive life and concentrate on their school work. It was also said that after going through the process, they were not likely to repeat it again because they had that experience.

As indicated by the girls, parents' treatment was too harsh on their daughters: they tend to forget that a person does not learn something much from such a harsh treatment and as such, corrective measures should be of being supportive (provide them with the basic needs and solve the problems). Parents should understand that children have got fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. According to the Constitution, children should not be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (article 8: 2 b), they have right to be cared (article 15: 1) and the right to education (article 20: 1). When they are denied support, told to weed or do domestic work before they were given whatever they need from parents or when the parents refuse to pay for their educational fees or when abusive words are used towards them, their rights are violated. The Education Act, (Act 16 of 2001) states that when you have been denied access to education, you have been denied your fundamental rights. As parents, it is their responsibility to treat their children with respect, humane and care. If that is not done, then they are failing to fulfil their responsibilities.

4.3.1.5 Peer pressure

Girls that were part of the study cited peer pressure as one of the factors that could keep them in schools. They could reveal that life at schools is just good because there are a lot of people to associate with that are met there who are from different homes and backgrounds. Friendship made during this time of school career was seen to be important because it could last for the rest of the life span. On the other side, they had to reveal that once dropped out of school, such a friendship would no longer exist and there would be no person or friend to live and associate with most of the time, and life would be boring at home.

Peer pressure plays an important role in a person's life especially children. Through peer pressure, a child is influenced by other peers to grow and change accordingly as per wishes of friends or group. Attributes such as attitudes, values or behavior could change in order to conform to what the group or others would want. In instances of peer pressure, a person being influence is challenged and it is difficult to refuse what others or the group would want. But it should be indicated that when children are in schools, the importance of peer pressure should be associated with academic excellence or excelling in sports and have good conduct and acceptable public behavior. That would mean that when a child should speak of peer pressure, from a positive angle, it should be connected to positive experiences that could help uplift such a child's academic, sport, social or moral values. It would not be important to return to school for a mere sake of friendship that could lead to a negative life-style. It is not in the best interest to have peers that could lead others into immoral activities such as alcohol and drug abuse and sexual relationship leading to pregnancies and school dropouts. Peer pressure that is encouraged and being looking

forward for is when children associated themselves with peers that could achieve the best out of life.

4.3.1.6 Name-callings

Others could also say that name-callings such as “*home girls*” could also influence the girls to return to school after they have dropped out schools because of the fear to be called so and for the mere sake of “not letting their status go down.”

There was a feeling from the girls that to be home rather than in school was just bad. But it is also important to note that to be associated with a school as a learner, does not only mean to have a school uniform on but rather to be attached to good academic achievements. When a child fears to stay home because of name-callings, then the expectation is that such a child does not have a vision as to why he or she should be in school. The only thing that such a girl-child has in mind is the need for companion. As a result, the academic achievements could be compromised to such an extent that the school performance would be poor even when an opportunity to return to school becomes available. What is expected from every child that have to return to school is to have a clear vision and to spend time wisely and after leaving school, the parents should be happy from the investments made in him/her.

4.3.1.7 Role-model

Teachers could reveal that some teachers in their schools that were caring and conducted themselves professionally, were emulated by learners in many ways: be it in the way of talking, dressing and even how they could do things. They said the learners could admire them and wished to finish schools to become teachers like them and live such a life-style. The teachers also indicated that the communities, in

which learners find themselves, play an important role in learners' retention. They went on to say that if girls find themselves in a village where there are some other girls or women who completed schools and are working, that could also motivate them to stay in schools and complete their secondary education and then study further in order for them to get paying jobs afterwards.

Role- modelling plays a significant part in a person's life. To be regarded as a role-model, take a lot. A role- model was seen as a symbol of wish and a mentor who understands people that were in the surroundings and behave accordingly with proper conduct. Therefore, it is always best for a teacher to maintain good code of ethics and maintain good code of conduct because of the role that teachers have to play of spending most of their times with children in their crucial years of development. Teachers should maintain their professional status at all times in order for learners to emulate their examples in their process towards development. When that is seen in teachers, learners are encouraged to be in schools since the symbol of future life and wisdom is seen in them. Otherwise, if teachers do not conduct themselves professionally, then children would not have people to look up to as role-model to enable learners to emulate desirable conducts and behaviors.

4.3.1.8 Teachers support

One of the teachers mentioned that those teachers who offered extra educational support and motivation to girls and recognized and rewarded their positive efforts were said to play an important role at retaining girls in schools. They were seen as sources of wisdom, advisors, service providers and supporters in all their educational difficulties, and as such, learners could always want to be closer to them at all times. Teachers, especially female ones were seen to play an important role at inspiring and

motivating girls to be retained in schools especially when those girls have some academic potentials in them which brought about reciprocal relationship.

As indicated by female learners, to be caring and supportive could play a significant role in a person's life. If teachers were committed to learners' issues, appreciate their effort and guide them accordingly, learners would trust them. If teachers were seen as source of wisdom whereby if learners are in need of advice, the only option they could see is a teacher, that would strengthen the relationship between the two parties. When a learner has to realize that the teacher offers support at best, that could extend their relationship even beyond the classroom environment which could allow a learner to benefit from such a wide association in terms of knowledge and best skills in life.

It should also be indicated that teachers should not only concentrate at educating learners within the scope of the subject content that they were assigned to teach, but they have to go beyond to social and moral values to enable them to educate the child as a whole. When a learner has to realize this extra support, such a learner is likely to cooperate. Such a learner could also do best even academically because he or she is likely to be happy in the school environment and see it as a safe and good place to be in and eventually, that would improve retention. As adapted from Tinto's model of effective retention, this is what Draper (2008) indicated saying that effective retention could take place if institutions were committed to learners they served and put their welfare ahead of all other school goals.

Girls wished to have more female teachers within their schools that could look after them and their needs. Lone (1996) says when the school has got more female teachers, such a school would keep or retain more girls in schools because they can easily understand them and offer support to them. This would go in-line with role-

modelling in a way that if people that are mostly seen around them are females, they then could easily associate themselves to them and openly share their problems. Tinto's model (as adapted by Draper, 2008) argues that the students' persistence or dropout is strongly predicted by their degree of academic and social integration: their school performance, enjoying the subjects learnt or student-staff association. If the teacher- learner association is good, this is seen to enhance retention.

Therefore, it is necessary that the relationship between teachers and learners should be as good as possible in a way that the degree of persistence to be retained in schools and complete their secondary education is promoted.

4.3.1.9 Social responsibility during adulthood

Some girls indicated that social responsibility during adulthood is also one of the factors that could help retaining them into school after dropping out for a year or so.

They said that hard life experienced while home where the child could not have anything to eat or dress was said to be a challenge. It was also said that to be depended from someone else for support was not an easy thing. It was therefore, said that the social responsibility during adulthood motivated them to get back to school and complete their secondary education (as that was seen to be an important thing to do) because it would help them to have own income when a paying job has been acquired and support the child and self even when the father could not take care.

If was also indicated that the life-style also could be a challenge when living with unemployed parents. As a youth, the opportunity to change the situation around was possible if you have to complete secondary education. Once a job has been acquired, parents could still be assisted as they might be old by then to support themselves.

Only one girl from the group that was interviewed could indicate that the relative of father's child had the responsibility of taking care of the infant while the rest had to indicate that they had to ask and even "beg" to have their infants been taken care off by care-takers. Some could even indicate that these care-takers were not even immediate family members but extended ones. At the same time it was also indicated that the support of self and that of the infant was a challenge since all basic needs could not be afforded. In this regard, girls could see it being important to focus on their studies as this will free them from the dependency of boyfriends for their support and that of their children. Once they have got some income, their health and that of their children could be better and the guarantee of ensuring that their children could get better education could be realized. It should also be stated that food security and clothing for their children could be guaranteed. It is also worthy to mention that when they complete school and study further, they could get a better paying job and their contributions to their social well-being and economic development of the country could be envisage.

4.3.1.10 Hardship

Despite the fact that hardship could be viewed to have negative connotations, it was also mentioned to be a motivating factor that could retain girls in schools. Girls that participated in the study indicated that they were from poor family backgrounds and one of them was even an orphan. Their experiences during their home-stay were difficult. Parents had to cut off the support rendered to them after they had dropped out of schools and they could only support those that were in schools. Those that indicated to have children had an extra burden of trying to see how to look after themselves and their infants. At the end of the day, lack of basic needs for

themselves and that of their children had to influence them to return to schools to further their education with the hope of completing their secondary education and study further at tertiary institutions to guarantee themselves places in job markets in order to take care of themselves and their family. One of them could also mention that since there was no one in the family who had a paying job, life was difficult. She had always wished to complete her secondary education in order for her to get a job in order to assist her family. Like in the case of parents' treatment after dropping out of school and social responsibility during adulthood, hardship would involve the same content. With difficult experience that girls had to go through when they drop out of schools, hardship should also be seen to have two way objectives: in the first place, it should be seen as an obstacle to retention when funds to finance learners' education is not available. In the second place, it should be seen as a motivating factor when there was determination to achieve what was set or wished for despite the circumstances surrounding the situation. Lack of basic needs for them and for their infants could let them take revenge of the situation to get back to school to study hard in order for them to try and change the situation around after completing their education. This could also be linked to peer-pressure. When they see their peers who completed their education live differently (better life than before), this could also influence them to wish to return to school so that they could follow in their footsteps.

4.3.1.11 Concluding remarks of the findings and discussions

This section presents the concluding remarks of the findings and the discussions on the factors that keep girls in schools that were shared by all participants who took part in the study. The enrolment rate of female learners at senior secondary level:

Grade 11 and 12 at the participating schools was still lower when it was compared to that of their counterparts as per Fifteenth School-Day Statistics for 2015 and 2016 at those Grades. The combined figures were two hundred and ninety-one for female learners in Grade 11 and 12 over three hundred and sixty-eight male learners (2015): a difference of seventy-seven (twenty-one per cent) more in favor of male learners, while 2016 had a combined figure of three hundred and twenty-four for female learners in Grade 11 and 12 over four hundred and forty-five male learners: a difference of two hundred and twenty-one (twenty-seven per cent) more in favor of male learners.

It was also discovered that in all Grades: 11 and 12, boys were outnumbering girls at all schools that participated in the study and none of the schools that participated in the study could show that female learners were more than their counterparts at those Grades. This was seen to be supporting the previous studies of Malome & Haihombo-Muetudhana (2002) that indicated that girls had been under represented especially at senior secondary school level in the then Kavango Educational Region in comparison to girls at senior secondary schools nationally showing some imbalances in enrolment rate between male and female learners as well as the largest gender disparity that increases progressively from primary to secondary school levels. Educated parents with better understanding of education were reported to be motivating their children to remain in school and complete their education in comparison to those with low or without any education where dropouts were associated with. Since they had a better understanding of what education could play in every child's life, such parents could not make preference of who should and who should not be educated between a boy and a girl-child. All children would be given equal opportunities to get educated. If parents had strong educational background,

they would also like to have their children to get educated like themselves and even better than that of themselves.

There were parents that treated their children harshly when they had dropped out of schools by not supporting them. That was done as a form of compensating the dropout they had caused. Such a treatment was not seen as a form of punishment by some learners, but as a motivation, because they were not likely to repeat that same mistake again. But the researcher had to see it as a punishment that violates the fundamental rights of a child to get educated and to be cared for as enshrined in the Namibian Constitution of 1990 as amended.

Peer pressure was mentioned to play an important role in a person's life especially when it was associated with positive aspects such as academic excellence, good conduct and acceptable public behavior but the researcher had to lay a comment that peer pressure could also be associated with negative aspects if it could lead to immoral activities such as alcohol and drug abuse and sexual relationship which could lead to teenage pregnancies and school dropouts.

The researcher did not see name-calling as a motivating factor in a deeper sense of motivation as indicated by the girls who were participants but as a lack of companion, and for that reason, they would wish to return to school to meet friends and socialize. It was concluded that such children that fear to stay home because of being called "home girls," were seen not to have any vision for being in a school.

It was also made clear that a role-model was seen as a mentor who understood people that were in the surroundings and behaved accordingly. Therefore, it was seen to be best for teachers to maintain good code of ethics and conduct because of the role they played and with the time spent with children that was very crucial because those were the critical years in the children's development and for that

reason children needed teachers with professional status and good conduct in order for them to emulate their examples in such a process.

Support from teachers in terms of academic, moral and social played a significant role in a learners' life. Therefore, such a support and caring spirit should be maintained to help retaining girls in schools.

The girls indicated that social responsibility during adulthood was also one of the factors that could retain them to school after dropping out of school for a year or so. Once they happened to have children, they had to realize the importance of being self-dependent and that of supporting their children on their own. When they had to get some income as mothers, their health and that of their children was secured. The guarantee of food security for themselves and that of their children, clothing and insurance of their children get better education was also envisaged. Hardship could be seen as an obstacle for retention when funds to finance learners' education was not available. In the second place, it could be seen as a motivating factor when there was determination to achieve what was set or wished for despite the circumstances surrounding the situation and some difficulties thereof.

4.3.2 The activities of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project and the girls' clubs

4.3.2.1 Introduction

This part of the section presents the discussion about the overview of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project and the girls' clubs at schools and factors that keep girls away from schools as shared by all the participants that were part of the study.

The responses are presented first followed by the discussion.

4.3.2.2 The activities of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project and the girls' clubs

The teachers who participated in the study could reveal that they were aware of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project and its objectives. Some of the objectives cited were: to increase access and retention of girls in the then Kavango Educational Region, to reduce drop-out rates of girls due to pregnancies and other factors, and to sensitize girls on gender related issues to enable them to perform better in their education. But they indicated that the project was no longer active and the girls' clubs were operating on their own without any support from the project as it was the case before. The representative at the regional office could also reveal that the then Kavango Girls' Education Project was no longer active because of funds that were not available and FAWENA which is a national project was the one taking care of the initiative with very minimal impact at regional levels.

As per the information obtained from all participants that took part in the study, it has been discovered that the then Kavango Girls' Education Project was no longer operating but FAWENA had taken over to run the activities for retaining girls in schools.

Since FAWENA was a national project, and despite the fact that there was a regional office, there was a doubt whether the impact of FAWENA would bring a remarkable change within the then Kavango Educational Region that was cited by Malome & Haihombu-Muetudhana (2002) to be the highest in terms gender disparities national wide. The responses obtained from the side of the regional office indicated that FAWENA's regional office (in the then Kavango Educational Region) could only give support to eleven learners from both Kavango East and West regions per

annum. The criteria followed for the selection were indicated to be based on good record of academic performance and such learners should be orphans and vulnerable: be it male or female. The fund used for the support was generated regionally from basket weaving, which was very less.

Such support of eleven learners from two regions could be viewed by the researcher to be a very small support that could not make any significant difference in the regions with high gender disparities. If the regional support group of FAWENA could think of getting some funds somewhere else, such an initiative could be appreciated. It should be indicated that since FAWENA's support was directed to all genders, it was still going to increase the gender disparity between male and female learners at secondary level in favor of male learners, and because of that, FAWENA did not come in to promote the objectives of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project. It was also indicated by the regional office of FAWENA that apart from their regional support, the national head office gives support to more learners on annual basis than the way the region does. But yet the researcher would still question as to why was the fund not regional based? Such a question was based on the different needs that each region might have across the country. The then Kavango Educational Region could have its own needs and how to define its needs since it had been report to be one of the highest regions in terms of gender disparity and low retention of girls in the country (Malome & Haihombo-Muetudhana, 2002). Again, the head office of FAWENA is in Windhoek: why should the head office not be based in the then Kavango Educational Region where the big gap of gender disparities is that need to be addressed?

The situations, needs and the time-frame could differ from one region to another, therefore, it is necessary to prioritize and put resources where most needed.

4.3.2.3 Pregnancy

Pregnancy was cited to be one of the main factors that caused girls to dropout from schools. According to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture's Annual Education Census, in 2015, out of 56 girls who dropped out of school at all three secondary schools, 29 of them dropped out because of pregnancies making pregnancies the highest contributing factor to dropout (fifty-one, eight per cent). In 2016, out of fifty-eight girls who dropped out of school at all three secondary schools, thirty-eight of them dropped out because of pregnancies making it again the highest contributing dropout factor (sixty-five, five per cent). The same census revealed that pregnancies could be recorded as earlier as Grade 8 and making Grade 8 to 10 taking approximately seventy-nine per cent of the pregnancies dropouts while the remaining twenty-one per cent was for Grade 11 to 12. All the girls interviewed in this study dropped out of school because of pregnancies. They all fell pregnant when they were in secondary schools. One got pregnant while in Grade 9, one indicated to have been pregnant while in Grade 11 and the rest fell pregnant when they were in Grade 10. Peer pressure and poverty were cited to be the main causes of their pregnancies. It was further revealed that the men that were responsible for their pregnancies were mostly people from the working class, and few of them were those that dropped out of school after failing Grade 10 or 12 who stayed within the same villages but unemployed. Only one girl could reveal that she was impregnated by a fellow learner. All girls revealed that they could not stay in schools until at least a month before delivery and then return back shortly after delivery depending on their health status and not to exceed twelve months as stipulated in the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008: in exception of

one, all stayed longer even over a year because of personal reasons of which poverty was the main one. Not all girls that have been recruited in schools have gone on to finish their secondary school education. The main problems cited by the girls and teachers that participated in the study were pregnancy, poverty, early marriage, as indicated by Malome & Haihombu-Muetudhana (2002), UNESCO (2003) and Losper (2004). As showed in the responses, the study could also find out that eight out of nine girls that dropped out of schools at the three secondary schools did so because of pregnancies. Despite the fact that there was a programme running of the then Kavango Girls' Education Project that focused on reducing drop-out rates of girls due to pregnancies as one of its objectives, pregnancies were still recorded among other factors to be the highest causer of dropouts among girls at those three secondary schools. It seems that the Kavango West Educational Region has got still an obligation to carry out on how to go about reducing the pregnancy rate that is affecting girls' retention rates in schools. According to the teenage pregnancy study conducted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2011, the then Kavango Educational Region was reported to have thirty-four per cent teenage pregnancy rate being the region with the highest pregnancy rate nationally. Such report could still indicate that the region's statistics was the highest in the country doubling the national average (fifteen per cent) and according to that report; it was so high for the past six years. Such a report further indicated that girls that were highly affected were among 15 to 19 years old of which the researcher could also agree with since the responses could also reveal that the Grades that are highly affected by pregnancies starts from 8 to Grade 10. If the age at Grade 8 could be estimated as per entry requirement to start primary education in the Namibian public schools which is six years and older, such age will be right and appropriate as given

in the USAID study and by the participants. The Kavango Girls' Education Project was running the activities in the then Kavango Educational Region with the objectives of increasing access and retention of girls, to reduce drop-out rates of girls due to pregnancies and other factors and to sensitize girls on gender related issues for them to perform better (Malome & Haihombu-Muetudhana, 2002). But since then, it seems that the problem of teenage pregnancy was still persisting. The researcher has to ponder as to why is the problem still persisting after investing so much time, effort and financial resources in the project. With some factors indicated and the current statistics, the problem could be either the time-frame which might have been shorter for implementation when the programme was funded, the efficiency of the programme itself to reach all targeted stakeholders or maybe because of the region's level of poverty which was reported to be the severe than all other regions (National Planning Commission, 2015). As such, the Kavango West Educational Region has been to be highly affected by this trend of pregnancies and therefore, it was seen to be necessary at seeking for assistance that should address this barrier of girls' pregnancies. If this is not done, gender disparities will still persist and make the Kavango West Educational Region being the highest region nationally with. All the pregnancies reported were not planned by these girls and therefore, it should also be indicated that none of these girls wished to be pregnant while in school. It should be stated that pregnancies will not be addressed if the main causes such as poverty, social pressure and early marriage were not addressed. Since the region has a high prevalence of gender disparities and low retention rate among girls it should be regarded as unique, and as such, there should be some systems in place on how to assist and fund the education of a girl-child in the region to help them refraining from the social activities that could lead to that. If that is not done and addressed as a

matter of urgency, the goal especially of the policy for the Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy would not be realized: pregnancies and school dropout rate could still be high leading to low retention rate. The policy should increase learner-education on sexual responsibility as stated in the policy. The public should also be addressed at different platforms concerning pregnancies since most of the pregnancies indicated could mainly be associated with people that were from a working class. Girls also indicated that they were aware of the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008 but yet, they could not do as stipulated due to personal reasons. Lack of stable homes was cited to be one of the major reasons that could cause girls not to adhere to the prescription of the pregnant policy. The policy was seen to disadvantage girls that are from poor family background and people that are from afar who happened to be in hostel prior to pregnancies. This forces girls to leave schools and stay at parents' home for at least a year or so because they could not get some proper places within or near schools to stay in which are safe during their pregnancies and shortly after giving birth to continue their education since their parents' homes are far away from schools where they attended. As stated by Lone (1996), when schools are too far from home or community, then female learners' drop-out will be high. This has been the case with these girls who fell pregnant while their homes were far from schools. It should also be stated that the policy might not be practically workable to all girls who might find themselves pregnant because of social and economic reasons. Girls that are from poor family backgrounds could see that the policy is not workable for them because of the additional needs that they would need during pregnancies. For them to stay in schools without proper dressing, groceries and sanitary needs is seen being impossible. As a result, they end up dropping even in the early stages of

pregnancies. When they have to drop out of schools, as indicated by the girls who participated in the study, they could not return the same year due to lack of basic needs for themselves and that of their infants. But when parents rendered support concerning basic needs especially those that are from well-off families, (whereby their dressing, basic food and their welfare were taken care off), the girls were likely to remain in schools and followed what was stipulated in the policy. By looking at some statistics obtained from the schools that were part of the study, the researcher could draw some of the following conclusions. The low retention of girls in secondary schools is not only based on dropping out of schools but the focus could also be shifted on to the enrolment rate of girls in this Grades that has been shown to be lower than that of boys at all the times. As mentioned earlier, there was no Grade 11 and 12 at the participating schools that could enroll more girls over boys during the Fifteenth School-Day Statistics of 2015 and 2016. It should also be indicated that the low retention rate of girls could also be associated with the failure to pass their Grade 9 and 10 examinations: the higher the Grade were becoming the difficult were the examination and the fewer the girls that could go through as it was revealed by some teachers who participated in the study. Similarly, the girls also revealed that the older the girls were becoming, the more basic items were needed and the more challenging life became that led to dropping out of schools. As per responses provided about Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008, it could be concluded that the policy was not really favorable for the retention of all girls from all walks of life in schools. The policy lacked communication and support between schools and parents in terms of guidance, protection and provision of tasks to pregnant learners by the schools as provided for by the policy. Some if not all goals provided in the policy such as to increase learner

education about sexual responsibility, to support learners when pregnancy has occurred and the promotion of continued education of pregnant learners, among others, were never confirmed to be implemented by the girls that participated in the study nor observed by the researcher.

4.3.2.4 Peer pressure

Two girls out of nine who participated in the study indicated that they had friends who influenced them to drop out of schools when they were pregnant. One of them could reveal that since the other friend had a stable relationship with the boyfriend, she was also told to drop out of school and stay with the boyfriend who impregnated her to strengthen their relationship. She further revealed that this was even the way she had accepted the boyfriend. She was forced into the relationship by other school mates that were closer to her. After some several attempts, she had to give in and took the proposal. When she refused several times, it almost cost her friendship: her friends did not want to associate themselves much with her. But when she just gave in and accepted the proposal, the friendship picked up again. As indicated early, peer pressure was an influence by other peers to accept and change accordingly to their wish. It could be associated with positive or negative outcomes. When the outcomes among friends or groups were good because of peer pressure, such outcomes could be associated with positive peer pressure. But when the results were not acceptable by the friends, groups or public such as alcohol and drug abuse, such peer pressure is associated to be negative. It is not best to have peers that could influence others to get involved into immoral activities such as alcohol and drug abuse, smoking and sexual relationship that could lead to teenage pregnancies and school dropouts. It

should be noted that each person needs friendship. Sometimes it becomes difficult to think of losing such friendship or to be excluded from activities of your interest because you are no longer part of the group. But it should be stated that the best future life depends on good conduct and association of what is good in the eyes of the public and achieve what is required to be obtained. Girls should also learn to take a stand that when they are in schools, they should focus on their studies since their whole good future depends on the best quality of education that they could acquire. If they happen to follow peer pressure which could lead to negative outcomes, that would again lead them into difficult living condition during their adulthood. Such conditions could be in many cases very hush whereby they could not be able to support themselves and their generations to come. It should also be indicated that every person is unique and so do people' interest and achievements in life differ. As children, if their right to get educated has been given as indicated in Article 20 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990) as amended, such a right should be rightly used. They should see that schools are places where they get shaped into the society by acquiring knowledge and different skills needed for job markets and for social interaction. When they are in schools, they should be able to know what is expected from them by their parents and the community as a whole. They should also learn to forecast their future lives and roles when they are to become adults. If they have to drop out of schools earlier before they complete their secondary education, they will not have any opportunity to study further at tertiary institution and once they do not have tertiary qualifications, they are likely not to have any jobs or good paying ones and they will also be limited to have money to feed themselves and their children or to pay for their children' education. They should also understand that when they are not educated, they might be poor and

remain poor and live a poor life with lack of basic health facilities and other amenities for the rest of their lives.

4.3.2.5 School environment

Despite the fact that girls would have liked to return to schools after they had dropped out, there were different challenges that they had to face from the side of both teachers and fellow learners. Some girls said that when they were pregnant and after giving birth, the treatment from some fellow learners and teachers was so bad and the school environment was not conducive. They further indicated that they felt “*bad and down*” during pregnancies because of the remarks that other fellow learners had to make. One of them could add on saying that she had to regret of why she felt pregnant. Most of her close friends abandoned her and she was socially disintegrated, unhappy and negative towards herself. This in the end affected her school performance negatively since she could no longer concentrate at her school work and enjoy the subjects she liked most and the school environment in general. She claimed to have felt bad and the end result was to drop out of school for two academic years.

It was further indicated that some fellow learners could label them to have failed in plans they had and even being labelled of having been dumped by boyfriends and regarded that being the result of their return back to school. Some girls said that some teachers could call them “*young mothers,*” while some of the learners, especially boys, could call them “*second hands.*” Some girls could said that some of the girls in their classes or even at school could not make friendship or socialize with them especially those without children apparently for the fear of being labelled as “*second hands.*” Some girls and teachers could even go to an extent of telling them

to study hard because they had already a “*responsibility to fulfill*.” meaning they had to study for the future of their children. It was also revealed that some learners, especially boys might even go to an extent of referring to them as “*adult*” that should be respected but the respect referred to was not meant in its true sense. All these remarks could be said by the girls that participated in the study to have affected their retention process and they ended up dropping out of school because the school environment was no longer conducive for them and they never felt fit to be there.

The Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008) states that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture will be responsible to establish and maintain hostels and other school facilities to the benefit of learners including the provision of amenities for pregnant learners and learner-parents. It further indicates that it shall insure that the school environments are safe and free from all forms of abuses. With reference to the policy, by the time the study was being carried out, there were no provisions made for hostel and school facilities to benefit pregnant learners in the schools especially at the schools where the study was conducted. Since all secondary schools that were studied were public schools with public hostels, if there were some facilities and amenities available, this could have been observed. As per indication from the girls that participated in the study, they regarded hostels not to be pregnant or learner-parent friendly and that their welfare and that of their infants were not provided for as it had been indicated in the policy. Their rights and dignities were not respected as stipulated in the policy.

Draper (2008) indicates that according to Tinto , there are three principles of effective retention: the institutional commitment to students whereby the programmes should be committed to the students they serve and put student welfare ahead of other institutional goals, educational commitment of which programmes are

first and foremost committed to the education of all, not just for some of their students, and social and intellectual community whereby retention programmes are committed to the development of supportive social and educational communities in which all students are integrated as competent members. By looking at one of the three principles of effective retention by Tinto' model as adapted by Draper (2008), the institutional commitment to students whereby the programmes should be committed to the students they serve and put student welfare ahead of other institutional goals, seemed not to be the case with the current situation in the secondary schools especially the ones that were part of the study. Since the pregnant girls and learner-parents' welfare was not guaranteed, high retention was seen not to be possible.

With reference to the provisions of the facilities and amenities, it should be seen as a priority to be provided for in all public secondary schools. If this is not done, then it might still cause low retention rate from the side of the girls as indicated by Lone (1996). Lone further indicates that when girls do not have adequate sanitary protection, they can decide to stay home, which marks the end of the girl-child's education. Thus, the provision of sanitation for girls, especially those that are pregnant should be given the highest priority particularly those that are in secondary schools.

As per responses, it could be stated that apart from the school environment itself, teachers and learners were also barriers to dropouts and retention. If teachers had to call these girls as "*young mothers*" or when they are told to study hard because of the responsibility they have to fulfil, such sentiments were degrading and disrespectful towards them. If teachers who were responsible for taking care and supporting them were not showing respect, the school environment became an uneasy place to be in

and girls could feel unsecure because the protection was not there. That could also give an opportunity for the learners to use abusive words like “*young mothers*” that sounds humiliating and let these girls feel as if the school was not a place for them any longer. It seemed that the rights of girls were not well protected by the policy as stipulated and thus, it was quite difficult to retain them in schools. If the school environment could not protect learners, especially a girl-child that had dropped out of school because of pregnancy, this could lead to girls not returning to school after giving birth because they could have the fear of being humiliated. When girls were no longer positive because of the negative remarks made by others in schools, they could no longer feel welcomed in the school environment and cause dropout as some could indicate. Thus, this is in-line with Tinto’s model of student retention where he indicates the three major sources of student departure which are academic difficulties, the inability of individuals to resolve their educational goals and failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life institution. He further indicates that negative looking students are failure, dropout and attrition while positive looking ones are retention, persistence. He further argues that the student’s persistence or dropout is strongly predicted by their degree of academic and social integration: their school performance, enjoying the subjects learnt or student-staff association. As per model of retention (Tinto’s model as adapted by Draper, 2008), this could be concluded that some girls that were dropping out from schools were doing so because they were not enjoying the subjects that they were taught, the poor relationship that existed between them with the teachers and their fellow learners and lack of socially integration within the school environment.

4.3.2.6 Treatment while pregnant at schools

Some girls participants indicated that while pregnant, some teachers and learners did not treat them fairly and to certain extent used some unacceptable remarks which did not let them feel happy. Despite acknowledging good advices, motivation and caring spirit from some few teachers and fellow learners, the majority could still call them “*graduates:*” meaning a certain maturity level above others and which could also refer to the large dresses put on as gowns: the official attires at graduation ceremonies. When they needed any assistance from peers, especially boys, some could be able to assist while others were not being willing to do so.

Some could just say “*why did you look for it*” or merely say “*I did not impregnate you, call the one responsible for the help you need.*” These types of remarks, name-calling and hate speeches were regarded by most of the girls as unfair discrimination and harassment, and in the process, they have to regret as to why they had fell pregnant. “*All these could let you feel bad and lose a sense of belonging,*” said one of the girls who participated in the study. As indicated under the school environment, the treatment of pregnant girls should be seen as a sensitive thing. As per model of retention (Tinto’s model as adapted by Draper, 2008), social integration and student-staff association play a significant role on learners’ retention: it retains them (when positive) or cause dropout (when negative). To be called a “*graduated*” because of the dress put on while pregnant or being labelled to have enter a different stage, is not an acceptable remark or if assistance is asked, then to be told to ask help from the one responsible, sounds offensive. When learners have got academic difficulties or inability to resolve their educational goals and they are not assisted by other learners or teachers, it is indicated in the model of retention, it predict dropout.

This could let the researcher understand that the treatment of girls while pregnant was so harsh and unacceptable because of name-calling and the use of derogatory languages. It should also be stated that the pregnant girls were vulnerable to dropout because of the remarks and name-calling that were being used over them. A sense of guilty could also be drawn from these pregnant girls: they had to regret as to why they did such a thing to be treated that way. If learners are not treated with care, this might let them feel isolated and socially not integrated and in the end, drop out of school and be home.

As indicated earlier in model of retention, two of the three major sources of student's departure which are academic difficulties and the inability of individuals to resolve their educational goals, this could be drawn as what girls experience in schools while pregnant and cause their dropout.

It would again be seen fit to indicate that the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008) does not have some punitive measures on how to deal with the teachers and learners that violate the rights of girls that are pregnant while in schools or those retained after leaving school for pregnancies or if it does have the measures, they are not implemented to safe guard the retention of these girls. It would then be deemed necessary to see that boys and teachers be sensitized about the policy and other relevant measures on how to treat the pregnant girls.

4.3.2.7 Home treatment while pregnant

Most of the girls said that when they left school to go home while pregnant, it was not an easy thing because none of them could welcome them at home. This led to bad relationship with parents, especially fathers who were chiefly responsible for the

educational support of the children. As a result, they were hesitant to send them back to school again after giving birth. The girls further indicated that some of their peers who dropped out of school with them could not make it back to school. The main reason mentioned was financial burdens for their educational needs. Their parents who should assist them to pay their educational costs rejected this responsibility and when they did assist, they did that with reservations. In the end, they were not at liberty to take the money because if they were not to perform according to the parents' expectation, the parents would not be happy and in return, they were to be blamed for wasting their money that they would have spent on something else. As a result, these girls could not make it to come back to school but rather stayed home. That was one of the reasons mentioned that could also make the number of girls in Grade 12 to be lesser than the one they could have in Grade 11 while boys in Grade 12 have to maintain more or less the same number they have had in Grade 11.

It should be indicated that parents have a role to play in the lives of their children and the ones that are under their care. Parents should promote and support the emotional, physical and intellectual development of their children from infant to adulthood. It should also be indicated that the parents that are being referred to here could be biological or guardians who are responsible for taking care and supporting of such children throughout their youth lives and educational career with all the basic needs and protection. They should provide the home environment that is conducive for their children and always be there for them through good and bad times. Whatever is done, it should be understood and addressed in a positive way within the best interest of their children.

When parents cannot afford to pay their children's fees, the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 makes provisions of partial or full exemption for those that cannot afford to do

so. Parents should not make a choice about which child to pay for and which to leave out, or if they do the payments, they should not do it with reservations. They should understand that if these girls are educated, they could also play a significant role as boys could do. When these girls are denied education, poverty at all levels is promoted. They will not be able to get any good paying job where they could earn some good income to pay for the good and quality education, health, food, clothes and shelter of their children. Since they would not have any good income, their living condition would remain poor for the rest of their lives, and because of such a condition, the circle of poverty could not easily be avoided within such families.

Parents should show love and care to all of their children and expect the best from them all at all times. Rejecting children by their parents because of pregnancies should not be seen as a solution but rather see how to take care and overcome future pregnancies. They have to understand that they will still remain parents for those children and they have got an obligation to fulfil. Parents should also understand that the girls' pregnancies could sometimes happen accidentally as it was the case of these that were part of the study: there was none of them that could admit that it happened because they themselves wanted. If parents have to react that way this would mean that they will fail in their duty as care-takers.

4.3.2.8 After giving birth

Most girls interviewed indicated that since they were from poor family backgrounds, it was difficult for them to return to school. The main reason cited was financial difficulties and to get care-takers for their infants. They all had some plans to return to school but *“parents had to make a choice of who to support between yourself and your child.”* Lack of financial support and other means from the people that were

responsible for the pregnancies created difficulties for these girls to return to schools especially where fathers were not working or did not want to be associated with the pregnancies right from the onset. Since most of the girls were from poor backgrounds, they could not leave their infants home and return to school but opted to remain home to breastfeed them for a year or so because they lacked funds to buy powder milk and other supplements to feed their infants with. Only one girl could indicate that she did not have any problems to return to school after giving birth. She to have had good parents from the side of the boyfriend that impregnated her: they took the infant with them to allow her to get back to school after a year and they also offered their assistance for paying her school fees. But the rest of the girls indicated that they had problems of who to leave their infants with since their biological parents, especially fathers, were not really ready to assist them as caretakers for their infants when they wanted to return to schools. In the end, it was even a problem to be given some money to return to school even when their parents could afford to do so. Some girls said that their parents did this as a form of punishment for their wrong actions and embarrassment brought home with the pregnancies.

When a child is born, it comes with some responsibilities. Parents need to provide food, clothing and shelter as some of the basic needs to care for their children. If a learner-parent wishes to return to school, a care-taker for the child is needed and supplement food for the infant is required. Despite the fact the mother-child bond might break when the mother is back to school, the girls indicated that this was not a very serious issue because such a bond could still be re-establish and be mended in the long run. They could indicate that what affected them most was the financial burden that they have to endure when they gave birth. They become so vulnerable that they could not have money to pay for their school fees even when they are ready

to go back to school to continue with their education. In many instances, parents refuse to offer them financial support due to the fact of dropping out of schools and wasted the money for that year.

It is therefore important for the parents to pay the educational costs of their children rather than rejecting as a responsibility. When a such a responsibility is taken, it should be done out of love, care and for the sake of their daughters but not to do it with some reservations as indicated by some girls. If these girls are assisted on conditions, this could create some other setbacks again: the girls might not want to return to schools because once they fail or drop out of schools again, their parents might still demand their money back from them or there will not be peace between them and their daughters. In the end, they would be afraid to take the money because if they were not to perform according to the expectation of their parents, the parents would not be happy and in return, they were to be blamed for wasting their money that they would have spent on something else. As a result, these girls cannot make it to come back to school but rather stay home. The Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008) made some provisions that are, according to the researcher, not adhere to especially the support for pregnant learners during and after their pregnancies. It should also be stated that the effort of supporting the pregnant girls before and after giving birth is not only the responsibility of their parents but it involves the support from others stakeholders. Support teachers (that are normally females from the school where the pregnant girl-child is) should do their part in this regard. They policy made it clear that such teachers have to monitor the progress of the girl-child, identify problems that might be experienced and address them accordingly. In case a male learner that is responsible for such a pregnancy, he should support the girl-child emotionally and

maintain her and the infant after giving birth. Bellamy (2001) states that to build a better future for all, we must ensure that every girl has not only the right but also the means to get an education and realizes her dreams. This would mean that the education of the girls should be funded in order for them to be retained in schools. Once they are in school, they should be motivated to complete their education in order for them to have a better future. If their education is not funded by parents when parents can afford to do so, it would simply mean that it is the parents who have denied their children education of which they have a right over. Once again, if parents cannot afford to pay for the education of their children, especially in public schools, there are still other alternatives on how to get their children exempted from paying different fees if they approach the schools.

4.3.2.9 Poverty

Almost all the girls who participated in the study could indicate to leave beyond any other means of income from their biological parents. They further indicated that throughout their education careers, their financial support came from uncles, aunts, grandparents or other extended family members who had jobs or who received the social support grants from the Ministry of Health and Social Services. All the girls that were in Grade 12 at all secondary schools who participated in the study said that they were compelled to pay hostel and examination fees without any exemption. When they tried to negotiate with teachers about their status, teachers could not accept it and one of the girls could even reveal that this made her ashamed to return to the teachers who were responsible to discuss the issue again and again. The end result was that they had to be forced to beg for money from extended family members to pay the required fees. When they could not succeed, they have to leave

school as one of the girl indicated that this happened to a friend of hers who left school because she could not get any money to pay. One of the Grade 12 girls could further reveal that *“when you see others have paid and you have not paid yet, you just have to drop out of school which was a painful choice to make when you really wanted to continue with your education.”*

Teachers rated poverty to be the main source of the other problems that could lead to low retention of girls in schools especially those in secondary schools where fees to contribute towards education expenses were high. Teachers said factors such as pregnancies and early marriages could be labelled to have its source from poverty.

Poverty was cited to be a contributing factor that led to some girls' dropping out from schools due to their failures of paying the required schools fees. As mentioned earlier, some of the girls could end up associating themselves with boyfriends because of the financial and material support that they could need from them. One teacher added on saying that the need to get additional items such as modern clothes and other luxury goods *“to look smart like teachers”* was said to be the contributing factors to pregnancies and early marriages. It was reported that girls had to get involved in these relationships not necessary out of love, but as a way to get *“sponsored”* in order for them to get basic needed items that they would need.

According to Lone (1996), if girls have torn clothes or few to wear a female learner can decide to stay home, which marks the end of the girl-child's education. In that regard, the issue of exempting learners, especially girls in secondary schools should be seen as a priority. As it was mentioned earlier on how some of the girls get funds to pay for their education fees, such girls could really be seen to leave in poverty. If they were to be exempted from paying their educational fees, the little money that they would get from their parents or extended family members could be used to buy

some clothes and other basic needs that they could use during their schooling. It may not sound viable to mention but yet, it should be indicated that there could have been girls also who might have dropped out of schools because they might not have had enough clothes to wear or they had torn clothes. Felton & Haihambo-Muetudhana (2002) and Losper (2004)'s findings indicated that poverty was one of the biggest problems that could lead to high dropout rate and which could prevent girls from returning to schools once they had dropped out in the then Kavango Educational Region. As indicated above, learners needed a lot of money to pay for their school fees such as hostel, excursions, tours and examination fees in case of Grade 10 and 12 learners and as a result, that might have left them with less to spend on clothes and other basic needs.

According to the study conduct in 2003/ 04 about poverty dynamics in Namibia (UNDP, 2012), it indicates that of all households in the regions, the then Kavango Region had fifty, four per cent being the highest region in terms of regional disparity of poverty while Khomas had only three, six per cent being the lowest at poverty ranking. As per Poverty and Deprivation in Namibia (2015) the then Kavango Region's head count poverty rate of 2011 stood at fifty-three per cent being the highest while Khomas Region had six, three per cent being the lowest. The same study also indicated that this poverty was seen to be at that level because of the region's unemployment rate which was higher by then which could still be the same case even now since one of the poorest constituency in the country is Kapako and all other constituencies that are falling now in the Kavango West Region were among the top twenty poorest constituencies in country.

With this study, the researcher was made to understand that the standard of living in the then Kavango Region where the Kavango West Region was delimited from, is

lower compared to that of other regions in the country. Since all the constituencies that are falling in the Kavango West Region were rated to be among the top twenty poorest constituencies, this could still be translated that the Kavango West region is the poorest region and so does it affect its inhabitant. Once most of the parents are poor, their contributions to the needs of their children will be minimal. As such, the region needs some extra support to uplift the level of education compared to other regions in the country to enable it to retain more girls in schools. Similarly, it should be made a region that have to host all programmes that are aimed at enhancing girls' education since it is highly affected by the low retention rate.

Again, the Government of the Republic of Namibia through its Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture have made provisions on how to assist learners that were from poor family background. The Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 and the commencement thereof which is still in force, made provisions of partial or full exemption for learners that could not afford to pay boarding or other fees. It is also made clear that state schools may not, in any way, prejudice a learner or discriminate against a learner on the reason that a parent has failed to pay such fees for such a learner. Since some girls indicated to have financial difficulties, this would have been an alternative way to get these girls that have indicated to have financial problems to be enrolled in schools without requiring payment from them.

As per the responses from the side of the girl participants, it was learnt that schools were not willing to exempt learners from paying the hostel and examination fees.

The school principals or management members could acknowledge the provisions made in the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 and the commencement thereof, but they could also indicate that the same document made provisions that the Education

Development Fund that is stated in the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001, could not render any assistance as stated.

Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 made it very clear that such a fund was there to assist with provision for the establishment, uplifting, upgrading and improvement of educational facilities to the benefit of socio-economically disadvantaged learners; to assist or aid bursaries to socio-economically disadvantaged learners enrolled or to be enrolled at any school or institution of higher learning; and to expand, improve, upgrade, and uplift educational programmes for the socio-economically disadvantaged learners.

But yet the school principals or management members had to state that they knew about the fact that they did not adhere to the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 and the commencement thereof whereby they could not offer exemption as stated in the Education Act. Yet, they still have to question what the government through the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture was doing from its side about assisting these learners who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

Since poverty was cited by almost all the participants in the study that it contributes to other factors such as pregnancies and early marriages, it should be seen as a matter that needs an urgent attention from all stakeholders. The government through the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should market the Education Development Fund to all schools across the country that is highly affected by the socio-economically disadvantaged learners. If that is done, the parents will then be aware of what to do to get their children in schools.

For the fact that girls cited to endure financial difficulties to pay for their education fees, this could also be expanded to the issue of schools that were far from girls' homes. If schools were near, this could not have been the case because they could

have walked from home to schools and back (Lone, 1996), and as such, that increases their enrolment and retention rate. That could also be extended that it will not only cut the distance, but also the hostel fees that they have to pay.

It will be very difficult to retain girls in schools if the funds they contribute were not eliminated. According to Lone (1996), elimination of direct costs of schooling such as school uniforms, school and examination fees, excursions, books, stationary and transport fares, that increases enrolment and retention of girls. Thus, direct and indirect cost of schooling should be cut off and the provision of incentives targeting girls' basic school needs such as school fees, stationary and books were vital in this regard if implemented.

It has been realized that the policies and recommendations made thereof are there but the implementation to reach the targeted people was still lacking. If the Education Development Fund was fully marketed to assist socio-economically disadvantaged learners including pregnant girls and learner-parents, there would have been a possibility for high retention of girls in secondary schools especially at senior secondary level where the retention was still low. As indicated in the responses of all participants, one of the main factors of all others was cited to be poverty. The researcher is in-line supporting the studies by Felton & Haihambo-Muetudhana (2002) and Losper (2004)'s findings indicating that poverty was one of the biggest problems that could lead to high dropout rate and which could prevent girls from returning to schools once they have dropped out. Therefore, there was no doubt that poverty was the main cause of pregnancies. As indicated by some girls who said to have dropped out of schools because they were not able to pay their education fees; that would not have happened if the provisions made in the Education Act were implemented. In that regard, they were denied their right to education due to their

socio-economic status. It would be necessary also to indicate that once a person does not have proper education, such a person might not get a proper job. Once a person does not have a proper job, the contribution to his or her well-being and that of the dependents or household and even that of the community and country at large will be minimal.

It is therefore worth to mention that poverty due to lack of finance or other basic needs that a girl-child needs while in school, could not allow her to remain in school and complete secondary school but rather drop out and stay home. In many instances, due to life and social pressure, such a girl-child will be forced into early marriage.

The section below presents early marriage as one of the factors that keep girls away from schools. The topic is then expanded further.

4.3.2.10 Early marriage

The problem of early marriage was also listed to be one of the problems that cause girls to drop out of schools. Girls that participated in the study could reveal that some girls in secondary schools committed to these relationships mainly due to poverty because their parents were unemployed and could not afford their basic needs as they were maturing. Lack of money to pay for all necessary school expenses and other needs, for being orphans and staying with elderly parents and pressure of social life to acquire basic needs and to have fun were revealed as the contributing factors to early marriages. They could also reveal that their intentions to get involved into early marriages were not to neglect their studies, but to get supported through their education career by these boyfriends because their parents could not offer them with all their educational and other basic needs even when they

had all the means to do so. The girls could further reveal that the older they were getting, the more needs were required, and that could let them opt for boyfriends to meet some of their needs.

But when they fell pregnant, some boyfriends did not want them to return to schools but rather suggested to them to stay home forever. One of the participants at school three indicated to have had a disagreement with the boyfriend when she decided to return to school and that led to the end of their relationship completely. For her to return to school, other people have to intervene and support her. The boyfriend withdrew all the support he rendered when they were still together despite the fact that they had still a child together. This was said to have been a common treatment among boyfriends when girls wanted to return to schools. The main reason cited was jealousy that these girls might opt for other boyfriends when they return to schools after investing so much in them. The same girl could further reveal that she could remember some of her friends that became victims of such actions and never made it back to schools again. But other girls could say that they did not have problems with their partners when they wanted to return to schools. Except the two girls that indicated that their parents were not aware of their relationships, the rest showed that their parents knew about their relationship and their boyfriends could openly associate with them.

As revealed by one of the teachers, some girls cohabited as early as Grade 8 due to social and material needs: clothes, nice food and cell phones. As a result of living together and being supported by these boyfriends, they were controlled and their freedoms and rights were restricted.

All female teachers that participated in the study could reveal that there were girls that got married traditionally while in school and cohabited with their partners who

in return took care of them fully with all their responsibilities and related school expenses. In this regard, these girls had to abide to the partners' restrictions. When they were told to stay home and miss classes on particular days, they had to comply to avoid misunderstanding and the cut off support rendered by their partners.

Early marriage was also listed to be one of the problem causing dropouts and low retention of girls in secondary schools. For the fact that the girls that are in secondary school were mostly mature and sexually active, there were those that were reported to have dropped out of schools because they were "*traditionally married*" or cohabited with boyfriends while in schools. As revealed by one of the teachers at secondary two, some girls cohabit while in Grade such as 8 due to social and material needs such as clothes, nice food and cell phones. Despite the fact that these schools had girls' clubs with some of its objectives of increasing access and retention to quality education for girls in the then Kavango Region and to reduce girls' drop-outs rate in schools; the issue of girls being involved in early marriages is still a concerned. It seemed that girls' clubs did not do much to ensure that these girls were empowered to make informed decisions concern their future when they acquire good education. It is a known fact that there are some cultural and traditional practices that could propose early marriage (Felton & Haihambo-Muetudhana, 2002), but as the cultures were now merging, there is a need to see which values and norms could be adopted that would work best in the best interest of the society. Parents and the girls should be made to understand that their contribution to socio-economic development of their country will depend on the quality of education that they might acquire. But being involved in early marriages might not reward them best as education could do.

It was revealed that some girls in secondary schools committed to these relationships mainly due to poverty. Lack of money to pay for all necessary school expenses and other needs, for being orphans and staying with elderly parents and pressure of social life to acquire basic needs and to have fun, could be revealed as the contributing factors to early marriages. They could also reveal that their intentions to get involved into early marriages were not to neglect their studies, but this was done to get supported through their education career by these boyfriends because their parents could not offer them with all their educational and other basic needs even when they had all the means to do so.

Poverty should be seen as a reality and it should be addressed as such. But it should also be made clear that girls should not get themselves involved in early marriages thinking that that would be a solution to poverty that they go through. Education should be seen as an investment that could pay best when a highly paid job is acquired. Girls should understand that education should be the first priority in the person's life while the rest have to come afterwards. When they are involved into early marriages, their education might no longer be a priority. As a result, the pressure from their boyfriends could not only lead to girls' low retention, but to poor school attendance and academic performance by these girls even if they have to remain in schools and complete their education.

4.3.2.11 Social pressure

One of the teachers could reveal that there were girls who wanted to advance themselves socially by trying to show that they were "*in a class of their own*" while in schools. This was seen mainly from girls who were from stable home backgrounds and those that were too materialistic. They have to follow fashion and

get themselves in early relationships with peers or adult men “*just to have fun.*” In end, their conduct at schools was not good and they have to get pregnant at tender ages and leave schools.

When a child socializes, he or she meets and spends some times with other people. Such socialization is a learning way in which a child learns and adopts acceptable values and norms of the society around. If a child adopts unacceptable behavior, that is not good and unwelcome.

Girls that were socializing as a result of life or social pressure would be viewed that their performance or public conduct was not acceptable. It should be stated once again that girls should see education as priority. They should be made to understand that life is a challenging journey and as a person matures, so comes the responsibilities along. Therefore, time of enjoyment should be reserved at least after completing their studies and when they are matured to make informed decisions. Girls should also understand that a school is a public institution that is governed by certain code of conduct. If they do not behave accordingly, despite of them getting pregnancies and drop out of school, their code of conduct could still lead to that. Thus, proper conduct and good discipline should be displayed at all times.

4.3.2.12 Parenthood

One female teacher said that once these girls have given birth, they automatically become parents and therefore, they have some responsibility to carried out of taking care of their children and give them support as mothers. Since all the girls at the school that she represented were not from wealthy families, she indicated that those who could not get people or family members to take care of their infants when they intended to get back to school, it affected their retention. She further went on to say

that the only option that they could take was to feeds for their babies stay home and breastfeed because they could not afford to buy and other supplements. In addition to that, she said that some of the girls, once asked, they revealed that they were not able to leave their infants in other people's care because they would not take good care of them. Thus, parenthood role was cited to keep them home because once they returned to schools, there could be no one to support and look after their infants. After giving birth, learner-parents were faced with a challenge of taking care of their infants. The infants needs to be fed, dressed, be provided with proper shelter and general care of being loved and protected, and once some of these responsibilities were not carried out, then parents could not accomplish some of their roles. Since some of the girls were not from wealthy families and so were the boys responsible for the pregnancies, the support for the infants was still minimal and this made the task of parenting very challenging.

It should also be stated that the first few months after the birth of the infant is crucial and sensitive: a person to take care should be very much responsible. For some learner-mothers, the care was within their own without any support from the fathers. Apart from one of the girls that indicated that the family of the infant's father took the responsibility, the rest indicated that they could not get people or family members to take care of their infants when they were intending to get back to schools. To a certain extent, it could be indicated that the fathers did not understand or if they did, they ignored the different roles and responsibilities that they had to play during this time. As per Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008), the father of the infant needs to support the mother of the infant morally, emotionally and financially, and he should maintain the child throughout the child's childhood. The policy further encourages fathers to have direct and regular

involvement in the care of the infant. If such responsibilities were disregarded, that could put pressures and demands only on the learner-mothers that could even force them to drop out of schools.

4.3.2.13 Care-takers

Besides financial assistance, the girls indicated to have a problem of care-takers for their infants who could look after and support them while they should return to schools. It was cited that their biological parents, especially fathers, hardly took this responsibility of taking care of their little grand-children. In the end, they have to beg for their mothers or extended family members to help supporting and caring for their infants. When they did not get any person to look after their infants, they did not have any option but to stay home and look after their infants. Only one of the girls that participated in the study indicated that she did not have a problem of a care-taker, because the boyfriends' parents decided to take care of their grandchild right after birth and she had the opportunity to return to school the next-year without any difficulties.

According to the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008), the expectant mother learners were expected to leave for maternity at least four weeks before delivery or as health condition permits and after delivery, the learner mothers were expected to return to school within a short time or depending on the health condition and the care-taker of the infant. Such care-takers could be biological parents or extended family members who should take care of the infant while the mother-parent could have returned to school.

The learner-mothers who were part of the study showed that it was not easy to get care-takers for their infants because of several reasons. Their biological parents,

especially fathers could in most cases refuse or showed minimal approval of taking those responsibilities. It was also indicated that there was little support that came from the side of the infants' fathers. The issue of support from the fathers and responsibilities of sharing parenting as indicated in the policy was not realized. In the end, it was difficult to get anyone to look after their infants. That made it difficult for the learner-mothers to return to schools to carry on with their education.

The girls that participated in the study further revealed that since they were poor to buy feeds and other supplements for their babies, they opted to stay home and breastfeed because without breastfeeding, there was nothing else that they could afford to their infants. In addition, one girl could reveal that she decided to stay home after giving birth and she never thought of getting back to school in that same year because there was no one to trust who could take proper care of her infant.

After looking at all these responses, it seems that the learner-mothers have got that will to return to school after giving birth but the biggest challenges are the caretakers and financial support to feed and dress their infants. It should be stated that the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008) cannot successfully achieve its goal of retaining learner-mothers in schools if the policy does not consider to implement funding the learner-mothers with social grants as it is done with Orphan and Vulnerable Children. It should also be understood that these learner-mothers are also vulnerable, because they do not have any income to sustain themselves and their infants. If they are supported, they are likely to return to return to schools and in the end, their school retention increased.

4.3.2.14 Academic difficulties

All teachers who participated in the study could indicated that most of the girls could not perform very well at Grade 10 final examinations as boys could do. That could also cause the number of girls to be lower as they were getting to Grade 11 and 12.

On the other hand, one of the girls that participated in the study cited some academic difficulties after Grade 10 as well as the limited employment opportunities after Grade 12 as one of the factors that could keep girls out of schools. It was said that not all academic subjects aligned in a field of study were easy for them, and for the fact that they are required to have 25 points in the best five subjects by most Institutions of Higher Learning, and with the burden of having a child, this was cited to de-motivate some of the girls to return to school after dropping out of school but rather to stay home and start a family if there was a stable boyfriend. She further indicated that some boyfriends, especially those that were not in school and unemployed, could discourage girls to return to schools. They normally had to tell girls not to return to school because there were no employment opportunities even if they happened to finish their secondary education citing some examples of themselves. It was also indicated that they feared that their girlfriends might still opt to go into new relationship and abandon them if they had to get back to schools. The only best thing that they could suggest to them was to drop out of school and stay home with them.

According to Draper (2008), as adapted from Tinto's model, there are three major sources of student departure: academic difficulties, the inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. In addition, the model indicates that the negative looking students are failure, dropout, attrition;

the positive looking ones are retention, persistence. One of the teachers indicated that more girls than boys fail their Grade 10 final examination. When they have to enroll for Grade 11, the number of girls could always be lower than that of the boys. Again, one of the learner-mothers indicated academic difficulties after Grade 10 as well as the limited employment opportunities after Grade 12 as some of the factors that could keep girls out of schools. This could be attached to one of the three major source of student departure by Tinto's model as adapted by Draper (2008) which is academic difficulties. As indicated, if the subjects are difficult and students do not like or enjoy the subjects they are learning, they could drop out of school. Since subjects are put according to field of studies where a learner is required to do six subjects of which four to five are compulsory; depending on whether one language curriculum (four compulsory) or two language curriculum (five compulsory) and then one to two additional subjects (depending on the type of the curriculum), not all the subjects could be enjoyed by all learners. Out of the compulsory ones, a learner might only like, enjoy or do well at three or four subjects. As revealed, in order for a learner to qualify to study further at most Institutions of Higher Learning, such learner would be required to have 25 points in the best five subjects including English as a language. Such a criterion was cited to be de-motivating because it could be concluded beforehand that even if Grade 12 is completed, the points required will not be met. It was also indicated that after failing to meet such a requirement, there was no hope also for employment opportunities.

By looking at all these factors and again the fees that should be invested which could exceed N\$1000.00 if hostel and examination fees were added together, and with the burden of having a child, this was cited by some of the girls as de-motivating to

return to school after they had dropped out. As indicated earlier, girls indicated that they would rather stay home and start a family if there was a stable boyfriend.

In addition, as adapted from Tinto's model, Draper (2008) indicates that the negative looking students are failure, dropout, attrition; the positive looking ones are retention, persistence, it could also be stated that some of these girls could be labelled to be negative looking students since they indicated that there were certain subjects that they could not enjoy and for the fact that they could also conclude of not seeing employment opportunities after Grade 12.

4.3.2.15 Sustainability of the programme

Schools cited many activities that used to take place when the programme was initiated. Amongst others were the establishment of girls' clubs and funding of each club that was in the pilot project, trimester programmes of activities and reporting thereof, schools visits by the project facilitators from regional office, exchange visits by the clubs, extra teaching for girls during weekends in science subjects and English by selected teachers, regular meetings within the schools between club members and other learners, and regional meetings of school principals and teachers that coordinated clubs at their schools.

After engaging participants in the study, it was revealed that none of these activities were taking place any more at their respective schools due to lack of funds and all other supports from the stakeholders that supported the initiative through the regional office. The participants, especially teachers, could indicate that a positive impact and change could be observed in the schools when the programme was funded and supported. The activeness of girls' clubs could be observed by then, but after

funding has been stopped, schools were back to where they were before the programme.

As indicated in the responses by all learners, teachers, school principals or management members and the regional representative of FAWENA, it was clear that the current activities that were run by FAWENA which took over from the then Kavango Girls' Education Initiative were very minimal. The activities such as funding of each club, schools visits by the project facilitators from regional office, exchange visits by the clubs, extra teaching during weekends to mainly girls in science subjects and English by selected teachers and regular meetings within the schools between club members and other learners and regional meetings of school principals and teachers that coordinated clubs at their schools were reported not to have taken place any longer.

As per responses, it can be stated that there were no plans put in place that could sustain the then Kavango Girls' Education Initiative after the technical and financial support that initiated the programme could come to an end. Questions could still be asked again as why did the funding of the then Kavango Girls' Education Initiative of stopped? Were its goals or objectives met? If not, why should the programme be initiated but yet ends without being properly sustained if goals or objectives were not met? Whatever the case could have been, was the policy achievements assessed and monitored as the funds withdrawal was carried out? Were there any follow-ups studies conducted to ascertain the progress made by the programme after the withdrawal of the funds? If not, the implementation of the policy would not have served a valid purpose without considering some of the posed questions. As per the findings, there was still a need of supporting the schools about implementing the activities that the schools carried out during the then Kavango Girls' Education

Initiative in order to recruit and retain more girls in schools and as such, the support was needed mostly in the area of finance.

4.3.2.16 Summary of the discussions

Based on the responses of the participants, there were many factors mentioned that keep girls away from schools. All factors mentioned by all participants at all schools and by the FAWENA office had been discussed at length and the summary thereof is presented below.

After conducting the study, it was realized that the Kavango Girls' Education Project was no longer active because of funding that has stopped and FAWENA which is a national project is the one taking care of the initiative. There were many reasons cited to have kept girls away from schools. Pregnancies were cited to be one of the main factors that caused girls to dropout of schools due to peer and social pressure. Again poverty was given as a contributing factor to all other factors such as peer pressure, social pressure, pregnancies and early marriages that could let girls drop out of schools due to financial and material needs. Lack of money to pay for the schools fees was cited to have caused learners to drop out of schools since the exemption policy stipulated in the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 was not adhere to by the school authorities. Some of the parents who could afford to pay school fees for their children were hesitant or even rejected to pay school fees for their daughters after dropping out school due to pregnancies.

The school environment was cited not to be conducive to female learners that were pregnant and those who could return back to school after giving birth, because they were mistreated, discriminated and harassed some teachers and learners. While

pregnant and after giving birth, home treatment was not good because parents rejected to render their full support and indirectly punished these girls for pregnancies. After giving birth, most girls could not return to schools because they could not get care-takers for their infants since their biological parents could not take that responsibilities that easily. Girls' failure at Grade 10 national examinations was seen to be one of the contributing factors for their low retention at senior secondary level as few of them could pass Grade 10 and proceed to Grade 11. Academic difficulties after Grade 10 as well as the limited employment opportunities after Grade 12 were also cited to keep girls out of schools due to packages of the field of studies and the 25 points required in the best five subjects by most Institutions of Higher Learning.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The conclusion is presented in two phases. The first part presents the factors that keep girls in schools and the second part presents factors that keep girls away from schools. After the conclusion, the recommendations are presented under the sub-headings followed by the closing remarks and references

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

5.2.1 What keeps girls in schools

All the participants in the study could indicate that there was still a big gap between boys and girls in Grade 11 and 12 whereby boys were still dominating in number at those Grades. Girls who returned to schools were mainly motivated by their parents, especially parents who have strong educational background and who could see and realize the importance education can play in a person's life once a child completes secondary education and study further to acquire a paying job. Harsh treatment from the side of the parents after dropping out of school influenced the retention of some girls after comparing home and school life-style. Hardship and poor living standard was also cited to motivate some girls to be retained in schools as they would wish to change it for the better. Peer pressure was also listed to influence the retention of girls in schools due to school life and friendship made while in schools. Name-

callings such as “home girls” could also influence some of the girls to return to schools after realizing that their peers or age-mates were still in schools. Some teachers at schools, especially female ones, influenced the retention of girls in schools by inspiring and motivating them moreover when they had to identify some potentials in a girl-child. The close and supportive relationship between teachers and learners help to retain girls in schools as they would at all times want to spend some times together especially when good efforts were recognized and rewarded positively. Social responsibility during adulthood was also one of the factors that could retain them in schools after dropping out of school for a year or so due to hard life experienced while home and the future responsibilities of taking care of their children and family independently since they need their own income and paying jobs. Self-realization as the girls were maturing was cited to keep girls in schools when girls had to know who they were and what they would have liked to achieve in life.

5.2.2 What keeps girls away from schools

One of the main factors mentioned that could keep girls away from schools was pregnancy which affect girls as early as Grade 9 to 10 mostly. The responsible persons for these pregnancies were mostly people from the working class, school dropped outs and in rare cases, fellow learners. Poverty, peer pressure, social pressure and lack of contraceptive were cited to be the main causes of pregnancies. Peer pressure influenced girls to drop out of schools and stay home with boyfriends especially after falling pregnant as a way of strengthening the relationship. Social pressure due to fashion and modern life style led some girls into early relationships with peers or adult men just to enjoy life and have some fun, and as a result, their

conducts at school were not good and led to dropouts. The school environment was cited not to be conducive to female learners that were pregnant and those who could return back to school after giving birth, because they were mistreated, discriminated and harassed some teachers and learners. Home treatment while pregnant was reported not to be safe and conducive because none of the parents at home could welcome the girls to be there with pregnancies and that led to bad relationships with parents especially fathers.

After giving birth, it was said to be difficult for the learner-mothers to return to school because they lacked financial support and care for their infants since most girls' parents were reported to be poor or refused to take care of their grand-children. As a result, they opted to remain home to breastfeed their infants for a year or so because they also lacked funds to buy powder milk and other supplements to feed their infants. It was also mentioned to be difficult to return to school after giving birth due to the fact that care-takers for the infants were hard to find and the biological parents of the learner-mothers could not take the responsibilities that easily. Poverty was cited to be the main problem that led to school dropouts and to other problems such as pregnancies and early marriages as some girls lacked some funds to pay for their school fees when they wanted to return to schools. Similarly, lack of financial means to pay for hostel and examination fees were also mentioned to make it difficult for the girls to return to school since no exemption was accepted as stipulated in the Education Act and the Commencement of the education Act, Act number 16 of 2001. Early marriage mainly due to poverty was also cited to be the reason that kept girls away from schools. Some girls cohabit as early as Grade 8 due to social and material needs such as clothes, nice food and cell phones. They had to

take boyfriends who could support them and supply them with basic needs, but in return, forced them to drop out of schools.

To conclude, if girls' pregnancies is not eliminated and funding of their education is not implemented, low retention rate of girls in senior secondary schools in the Kavango West Educational Region will still remain. Without the opportunity for girls to be educated, to fully participate in all academic activities and remain in schools to complete their secondary education, there was no hope from them when they become adults to become responsible citizens in the future. Thus, their participation and contribution to the economy and their social well-being and that of those of their dependents would be minimal. Therefore, retaining girls in schools whereby they have to enroll in large numbers, complete primary, secondary and post-secondary education in larger numbers would be a benefit to the nation in terms of gender equality in all sectors of life.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Introduction

Based on the views of the girls, teachers, school principals or management members, the FAWENA office and literature reviewed for this study, the researcher has to make some recommendations that could be considered to enhance retention of girls at senior secondary school Grades. The recommendations will be presented according to sub-headings for easy access to readers.

5.3.2 Girls' clubs

The findings of this study could reveal that the activities for girls' clubs that were initiated to empower them on gender related issues were no longer operational as before. The teachers could reveal that all the supports that the schools used to get when the project started ended but yet, the problems of high dropout and low retention rate at those schools were still persisting.

It is therefore recommended that there is still a need for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to source for some funds to help supporting the schools that were part of the pilot project since problems of high dropout and low retention rate are still persisting. Further interventions are needed to empower the girls with knowledge and skills on gender related issue by the experts in order for them to make informed choices on all issues that are affecting their lives. Since findings revealed that girls' clubs were no longer active at piloted schools, the Kavango West Educational Region's regional management team should make it a top priority to re-visit schools that were part of the then Kavango Girls' Education Initiative to establish its achievements, the current activities that are running at those schools and the problems that are affecting girls' retention and then develop a new regional strategic plan on what to be done and how to retain girls in schools. Such a plan should be extended to others schools that will be identified to have low retention rate of girls.

5.3.3 Parental involvement and support

Besides poverty, the girls could also indicate that their parents used to try and pay their school fees and other basic needs in difficult conditions before they were pregnant. After dropping out of school, the support was withdrawn and they had no money to finance their education. It is therefore recommended that in order for the

Kavango West Educational Region to realize the target of getting more girls' enrolment in schools and complete their secondary education at par with other regions and indeed meeting the national average, it was thought that the Kavango West Education Region's regional management team should take a leading role by influencing the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to lobby for funding and other support to enable the region to activate the programme. The regional team should also work out a programme on how to bring parents and the community as a whole on board to take part in the girls' education initiative activities. The parents should be sensitized through meetings/ workshops to understand that they all have the responsibility of sending their children to schools in all circumstances they find themselves in and take charge of their children' education. Such information should be shared during parents meeting organized by the schools but the regional office of education should send staff representatives to address such meetings on topical issues that could help retain girls in schools especially at all piloted schools or schools that would be identified to be highly affected by the high dropout and low retention rate. Parents should be updated by the school authorities with any current change in the education system that might affect their children's education: be it positive or negative as early as changes are proposed thorough parents meetings. Being the owners of the children that are in schools, they need to be enlightened in order to be aware of the roles that they could play at advancing the girl-child education. They should also be encouraged to be willing to support their daughters' education the way they could do with their sons since all can contribute to the economic and social well-being of their families and that of the nation if all complete schools and get paying jobs.

5.3.4 The role of schools

The schools have got a responsibility to play at linking the parents and the community at large with the regional directorate of education in the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Whatever changes that are brought in the ministry, the schools are responsible at sharing and informing parents and all its stakeholders about it. Through these sessions, the schools should always try to promote gender related issues towards advancing girls' education. The study therefore deem it necessary that the involvement of the community members and all other stakeholders in decision-making positions and running of the school affairs is the best way to improve the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding of the parents and the entire community in the region towards girls' education. All the policies should be communicated to the parents and all other stakeholders in order for them to have a better understanding of what is expected of them. This should be done during parents' meetings where experts in the field of gender related matters could be invited to present topics on gender issues.

It also has to be suggested that the directorate of education should still review the programme as a whole and listen to the suggestions made at schools on how the girls' clubs could be sustained. Since it was also discovered that the programme was no longer active at schools where it was piloted, it is suggested that whenever a programme is implemented, such institution responsible for the programme should commit itself to a long-term programme that could assist at bringing visible changes that could last longer with a sustainable workable plan.

To keep and retain more girls in schools, parents and teachers should take a leading role in the children's education especially that of the girls. Teachers, especially female ones, should understand their role of modeling, supporting and motivating

girls on gender related issues and what education can play in their livelihood development and personal growth. As it was the case then that all the secondary schools that participated in the study could indicate to have life skills teachers who were all female, such teachers should be empowered by the ministry to promote and support girls' initiative at the highest level at their schools. Such teachers should not only concentrating at teaching and supporting learners with skills needed in life and career guidance, but to make follow-ups on girls that are dropping due to poverty and pregnancies and source funds to retain them in schools.

The main problem mentioned by all girls that kept them away from school was poverty as the main factors where others emanated from. Most girls indicated to have difficulties to return to school after giving birth. Since they were mostly from poor families, they lacked basic needs and educational fees for hostels and schools in order for them to return to schools.

They should be made to understand that to continue education after dropping out of schools would benefit them all: the mother, father and the child. Girls and women should also understand that education would be the only tool for them to equally compete with boys and men in their livelihood. Therefore, it is suggested that the life skills teachers should play a significant role at educating girls during teaching or during girls' meetings in order for them to know their roles and expectations, and about the exemption policy of the Ministry of

Education, Arts and Culture as indicated in the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001.

To avoid the persisting low retention of girls in senior secondary Grades, all forms of school fees should completely be eliminated at all public schools. As indicated Lone (1996), elimination of direct cost of schooling increase enrolment and retention of girls. Therefore, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture

should introduce the recommendation made by many researchers of eliminating the direct and indirect cost of education for girls in secondary Grades, especially for those that are learner-parents. As stated in the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008), the learner-parents should be exempted from all fees because of the own expenses that they may incur on top of that of their children and their needs. As indicated in the same policy, the school authority should inform girls while pregnant the criteria to follow to apply for state maintenance grants in order to support themselves and their infants after giving birth. Similarly, the Education Act, Act 16 of 2001 should be implemented and be adhered to so that it could allow all learners that are eligible, especially learner-parents to apply for an exemption from school fees since payment of school fees has been cited to be the main barrier that keep them away from schools when they wanted to get back after they had dropped out.

To retain more girls in schools, the implementation of the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy (2008) should highly be considered and school hostels should be made pregnancy friendly by providing amenities to pregnant girls, and at the same time, pregnancy amongst school-going girls should be discouraged to decrease dropouts due to pregnancy and motherhood as indicated in the policy.

To enable more girls to remain in school and complete their secondary education, it is recommended that girls from Grade 8 to 12's educational needs should be funded, especially those that are from poor family background and learner-parents. Such funding should include school uniforms and all other expenses that they may incur when they are in schools to avoid them from dropping out because of lack of funds. If they are not assisted in this regard and ending up dropping from schools, then they

are being denied of their educational rights and opportunities as stated in the Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008. It should also be stated that such funding should covers all their educational expenses fully in literally terms without hidden costs. Such funding should also be extended to tertiary institutions in terms of scholarship to girls that are from poor family background and learner-parents that would meet the entry requirements to enable them to study without financial difficulties and acquire needed qualifications required in job markets after their secondary education.

The Education Sector Policy for Prevention and Management of learner pregnancy of 2008 does not protect them against the abusive language and negative remarks used by mainly boys as this was seen to be a barrier for their retention when they would have liked to return to school especially within the same year. The school authority should protect the girls during their pregnancies at schools as well as when they have to return to schools to continue with their education after giving birth within the same year or later.

5.3.5 Government as a stakeholder

According to the study conduct in 2003/ 04 about poverty dynamics in Namibia (2012), it indicates that of all households in the regions, the then Kavango Region had fifty, four per cent being the highest region in terms of regional disparity of poverty while Khomas had only three, six per cent being the lowest at poverty ranking. As per Poverty and Deprivation in Namibia (2015) the then Kavango Region's head count poverty rate of 2011 stood at fifty-three, two per cent being the highest while Khomas Region had six, three per cent being the lowest. The same study also indicated that this poverty was seen to be at that level because of the

region's unemployment rate which was higher by then which could still be the same case even now.

With this study, the researcher is made to understand that the standard of living in the Kavango West Region is the poorest compared to that of other regions in the country. Since its poverty rate is high as indicated in the study above, the region needs some supports in terms full exemption for most school going children that cannot afford to pay school fees. As indicated in the same study, education is said to be an avenue for poverty alleviation, human development and social advancement. If girls are educated, they would also stand a chance of entering reproductive economy and avoid illiterate. Similarly, their contributions the household income, regional and national economy could be meaningful. In that light, it can reduce poverty and increase the standard of living to better: therefore, it is important to exempt all school going children that cannot afford to pay school fees to enable them to complete secondary as well as tertiary education to enable them to enter the job market. In return, this will reduce the high level of unemployment as well as poverty rate.

As per responses, the current funding given by FAWENA was quite minimal and it only assists a very small group from the majority vulnerable children that were in schools. Such little funding could be as a result of relying only from limited sources to get funds from as it is the case now of the Kavango West Educational Region whereby the regional FAWENA project gets its funds solely from basket making that are sold. Such fund would be in any way less and unsustainable to meet the expectation of all needy learners especially the girl-child. It is therefore suggested that the government through relevant ministries should avail funds in order to support FAWENA at regional and national level to achieve its objectives, and the regions that are highly affected with low retention should be given more funds.

The participants could indicate that the retention of girls was highly affected by lack of fund to pay for their educational fees, to buy feeds for their infants and to get care-takers for them. It is therefore recommended that government should assist school girls after giving birth with financial assistance in the form of social welfare grant like the current one for Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) (by the Ministry of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare) to help them feed their babies and give a minimal support to those that are taking care of their infants when they have to return to schools as they could see themselves being vulnerable mothers during that time.

As indicated that there was still a challenge of financial means after girls' completion of their secondary education, it is recommended that special scholarships be given to girls that would be completing Grade 12, mainly from piloted secondary schools. Such funding should cover all their tuition, accommodation, meals and transport fares since some girls indicated that the ones given by the various ministries were too competitive and limited in size and scope, and as a result, some could not qualify for it or get any financial assistance to fund their studies even when they have met the entry requirements to tertiary institutions to enable them to study further after Grade 12. It is suggested that way since comprehensive scholarships are needed that could cover even all their extra expenses in case they have got infants or children to avoid them from dropping out of tertiary institution because of the lack of support for their children. Since they are vulnerable student-parents, their children should also be registered for welfare funds while they are on study. This scholarship is not there to disadvantage other girls in other regions and boys, but due to circumstances that surround the Kavango West Educational Region about the low retention rate of girls in secondary schools that need to be enhanced. It was also reported that girls' pregnancies were committed more by the people that were working as a result of

poverty, peer and social pressure and that is a sign that such pregnancies happened outside the school environment. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should equip all schools with recreational facilities that are educative (at all secondary schools) as these will help to keep them indoors at school premises and avoid them from engaging into social activities that could lead to pregnancies.

Some girls and teachers indicated that lack of contraceptive led to the high pregnancy rate in their schools. As a result, girls and support teachers requested if contraceptives could be introduced in all schools and mainly in secondary schools where learners were more sexually active, in the care of life skills or support teachers. Where possible, the life skills or support teacher should have a record of all girls that are sexually active to liaise with relevant stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health and Social Services to visit schools and supply the needed contraceptives at all times when needed. If that is done, there is a high possibility of reducing the high rate of pregnancies among girls in the Kavango West Educational Region. There is also appealed to all relevant stakeholders with expertise to help with teaching the girls about family planning, sex education and the use of contraceptives as core components to girls in their clubs as well as to all sexual active girls in schools. If this is done, it could help reduce or minimize teenage pregnancies that was reported to be high in the then Kavango Educational Region (Felton & Haihambo-Muetudhana, 2002) which was part of the now Kavango West Educational Region.

Since the then Kavango Educational Region was reported to have the low retention of girls but the highest in pregnant rate compared to other regions in the country, to enable the region to retain more girls in schools and to reduce the number of pregnant rate, the government and other non-governmental organization through the

Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture should source more funds for the region which should be administered within the region. It is also suggested that the region should directly host and run all programmes that are aimed at enhancing girls' education since it is the one that is highly affected.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1

Research instruments

The key research question in the study is: Has the piloted school project in the then Kavango Educational Region helped to improve the retention of girls in secondary schools? In this respect, the following sub-research questions will be asked:

School girls

1. What keeps girls in schools?

- 1.1 What motivates girls to remain in schools?
- 1.2 What motivates girls to return to school after dropping out?
- 1.3 How are girls taken or treated by fellow learners and teachers after returning to school?
- 1.4 What benefits do girls anticipate for completing secondary education?

2. What keeps girls away from school?

- 2.1 What are the problems that cause the girls to drop out of school?
- 2.2 Why do girls remain home after dropping out of school?

3. What should be done to enable more girls remain in school and at least complete their secondary education? (By the school, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and other stakeholders in education).

4. Anything else that you would like to say or add?

5. Thank you for your input and time avail.

ANNEXURE 2

Responsible/ support teachers

1. What keeps girls in schools?

- 1.1 How is the retention rate of girls at secondary Grades (11 and 12) after the implementation of the pilot project?
- 1.2 According to your observation, what motivates girls to remain in school?
- 1.3 What is your school doing to retain/keep more girls in school?
- 1.4 How do you support and motivate these girls to remain in school?
- 1.5 What is the pilot project doing to enhance retention of girls?

2. What keeps girls away from schools?

- 2.1 What problems are reported by girls that cause them to drop out of school?
- 2.2 What motivate them to come back to school after dropping out of school?
- 2.3 Why do girls remain home after dropping out of school? What demotivate/ discourage them to come back to school after dropped out of school?
- 2.4 What initiative is done by the school or other stakeholders to retain girls to school that are dropping out?

3. **What should be done to enable more to girls remain in school and at least complete their secondary education? (By the school, Ministry and other stakeholders in education).**
4. Anything else that you would like to say or add?
5. Thank you for your input and time avail.

ANNEXURE 3

School principal

1. What keeps girls in schools?

1.1 What is the current enrolment rate of the girls at Grade 11 and 12 this year compared to previous ones?

1.2 What is retention rate of girls at Grade 11 and 12 compare to previous years? Why is it the case? Those that dropped previous year/s but came back to school and what could have motivated them to do so?

1.3 Which stakeholders are playing a significant role to keep girls in school?

1.4 What are these stakeholders doing to keep girls in school?

2. What keeps girls away from schools?

2.1 Why do girls remain home after dropping out of school?

3. What initiative is done by the school or other stakeholders to retain girls to school that drop out?

4. What should be done to enable more girls remain in school and at least complete their secondary education? (By the school, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture and other stakeholders in education).

5. Anything else that you would like to say or add?

6. Thank you for your input and time availed.

ANNEXURE 4

The Education Officer responsible

1. What is the regional retention rate of girls in the then Kavango Educational Region?
2. What factors are reported to influence the retention of girls in the then Kavango Educational Region?
3. What are reported to help keep more girls in schools?
4. What are reported to keep girls away from schools?
5. What is your office that is responsible for girls' activities doing to enable to retain more girls in schools?
6. What should be done to retain more girls in schools to enable them to finish their secondary education without dropping out of school?
7. Anything else that you would like to say or add?
8. Thank you for your input and time availed.

ANNEXURE 5

P O Box 774

Rundu

4 June 2012

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
Government Office Park
Private Bag 13186
Windhoek

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Subject: **Seeking for authorization to conduct a retention study of girls in secondary schools in the Kavango Educational Region.**

I am a teacher at Bunya Secondary School pursuing post-graduate studies (Master of Education) at the University of Namibia.

My proposal titled: **improving the retention of girls in secondary schools**, was approved late last year. I am therefore, seeking your permission to conduct a qualitative study on the above-mentioned topic. The Secondary Schools that were part of the piloted schools for the Kavango Girls Education Project/ Initiative is the population where the sample of three secondary schools will be drawn from. The study intends to interview girls that are in secondary phases who dropped and retained to school, teachers responsible for girls' affairs and welfare and school principals.

Participation in the research by the schools and individuals will be voluntary. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

The fieldwork for this research is planned to start as soon as permission is granted by your office and it will be highly appreciated if a written response is given to enable me to show as a proof to the institutions that will to part in the research.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the given details.

Yours faithfully

J. H. Karondo

ANNEXURE 6

P O Box 774

Rundu

4 June 2012

The Regional Director
Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
Private Bag 2034
Rundu
Kavango Region

Subject: Seeking for authorization to conduct a retention study of girls in secondary schools in the Kavango Educational Region.

I am a teacher at Bunya Secondary School pursuing post-graduate studies (Master of Education) at the University of Namibia.

My proposal titled: **improving the retention of girls in secondary schools**, was approved late last year. I am therefore, seeking your permission to conduct a qualitative study on the above-mentioned topic. The Secondary Schools that were part of the piloted schools for the Kavango Girls Education Project/ Initiative is the population where the sample of three secondary schools will be drawn from. The study intends to interview girls that are in secondary phases who dropped and retained to school, teachers responsible for girls' affairs and welfare and school principals.

Participation in the research by the schools and individuals will be voluntary. All information to be obtained will be treated confidentially.

The fieldwork for this research is planned to start as soon as permission is granted by your office and it will be highly appreciated if a written response is given to enable me to show as a poof to the institutions that will to part in the research.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the given details.

Yours faithfully
J. H. Karondo

ANNEXURE 7

P O Box 774
Rundu
4 September 2012

Office of the School Principal
Leevi Hakusembe Secondary School Private Bag 2098
Rundu
Kavango Region

Subject: Seeking for authorization to conduct a retention study of girls in secondary schools in the Kavango Educational Region.

I am a teacher at Bunya Secondary School pursuing post-graduate studies (Master of Education) at the University of Namibia.

My proposal titled: **improving the retention of girls in secondary schools**, was approved late last year. I am therefore, seeking your permission to conduct a qualitative study on the above-mentioned topic. The Secondary Schools that were part of the piloted schools for the Kavango Girls Education Project/ Initiative is the population where the sample was drawn from of which your school has been part. The study intends to interview three girls that are in secondary phase (Grade 11-12) who dropped and retained to school (preferable if they are in leadership position at school), a teacher responsible for girls' affairs and welfare and a school principal.

Participation in the research by the schools and individuals will be voluntary. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

The fieldwork for this research is planned to start as soon as permission is granted by your office and it will be highly appreciated if a written response is given.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the given details.

Yours faithfully

J. H. Karondo

ANNEXURE 8

P O Box 774

Rundu

4 September 2012

Office of the School Principal
Kandjimi Murangi Secondary School
Rundu
Kavango Education Region

Subject: Seeking for authorization to conduct a retention study of girls in secondary schools in the Kavango Educational Region.

I am a teacher at Bunya Secondary School pursuing post-graduate studies (Master of Education) at the University of Namibia.

My proposal titled: **improving the retention of girls in secondary schools**, was approved late last year. I am therefore, seeking your permission to conduct a qualitative study on the above-mentioned topic. The Secondary Schools that were part of the piloted schools for the Kavango Girls Education Project is the population where the sample was drawn from of which your school has been part. The study intends to interview three girls that are in secondary phase (Grade 11-12) who dropped and retained to school (preferable if they are in leadership position at the school level), a teacher responsible for girls' affairs and welfare and a school principal.

Participation in the research by the schools and individuals will be voluntary. All information obtained will be treated confidentially.

The fieldwork for this research is planned to start as soon as permission is granted by your office.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the given details.

Yours faithfully

J. H. Karondo

ANNEXURE 9

P O Box 774

Rundu

4 September 2012

Office of the Circuit Inspector
Bunya Circuit
Rundu
Kavango Education Region

Subject: Seeking for authorization to conduct a retention study of girls in secondary schools in the Kavango Educational Region.

I am a teacher at Bunya Secondary School pursuing post-graduate studies (Master of Education) at the University of Namibia.

My proposal titled: **improving the retention of girls in secondary schools**, was approved late last year. I am therefore, seeking your permission to conduct a qualitative study on the above-mentioned topic. The Secondary Schools piloted for the Kavango Girls Education Project are the population where the sample was drawn from of which Bunya Secondary School in your circuit has been part. The study intends to interview three girls that are in secondary phase (Grade 11-12) who dropped and retained to school (preferable if they are in leadership position at the school level), a teacher responsible for girls' affairs and welfare and a school principal.

Participation in the research by the schools and individuals will be voluntary. All information to be obtained will be treated confidentially.

The research is planned to start as soon as permission is granted.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the given details.

Yours faithfully

J. H. Karondo

