

# A Framework to Return a Vulnerable Girl Child in Selected Single-Sex Public Secondary Schools, Lusaka District in Zambia

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of the study was to design a framework to return a vulnerable girl child in selected single-sex public secondary schools. The study adopted a descriptive phenomenology research design. This study, utilizing purposive stratified sampling selected a total of 32 vulnerable girls from the four selected single-sex girls' secondary schools. It then selected one Counselling and Guidance teacher from each of the four schools giving a sample size of 4 teachers who were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews with the 32 vulnerable schoolgirl participants involved in the study to complement information collected from secondary data. Data were analysed thematically. These themes were then analysed using the hermeneutical phenomenological technique of Max Van Manen's Four Life World Existential. The study findings resulted into developing a model. The proposed Christine's REVUGISS Egg Model offers practical strategies for retaining these girls in school, such as providing educational resources, enhancing parental involvement, offering food programs and sanitary supplies, delivering psychosocial support, strengthening institutional assistance, and increasing financial support. By implementing these measures, schools can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments that empower vulnerable girls to succeed academically and personally. The study recommended that schools should strive to create more inclusive and supportive environments for vulnerable girls. This can be achieved by training teachers on gender sensitivity, implementing strict anti-bullying policies, and establishing a strong and accessible guidance and counselling department within schools.*

**Key words:** vulnerable, girl child, Christine's REVUGISS Egg Model

## INTRODUCTION

From the Zambian perspective, documented reports from UNESCO as affirmed by the Zambia Statistical Agency (2018) gives a clear explanation of the state of Girl child vulnerability and education. In terms of primary school Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) for the population aged 7-13, the report

indicates 79% (81% for girls and 77% for boys) of this age group are in attendance. The secondary school NAR drops drastically to 40% (38% for girls and 42% for boys). The report further indicates that sixty-two percent of girls in the highest wealth quintile attend secondary school, as compared with 10% of those in the lowest wealth quintile. Long distances to schools, particularly in rural areas, an insufficient number of teachers and classrooms, and the costs of learning materials are barriers to education. Such statistics still paint a picture of the exclusion of girls in education, especially in public schools. This study will ascertain the NAR of girl children in the selected secondary schools and verify the reasons for low girl attendance in Lusaka. The correlates creating this bias in attendance for the girl child will be documented.

Childhood is defined as a development period between the ages of 0 to 17 years. Furthermore, a study by Bhowmik *et al.*, (2021) shows that the experiences of childhood are sharply distinct between females and males owing to both physiological and psychological developments. This distinction has an impact on their educational development as well with the girl children bearing a larger burden owing to cultural dynamics and physiological processes. This burden becomes acute for the girl child in an environment of depravity and limited support to sustain education. This depravity has thus, relegated the girl child in public schools that are burdened with overcrowding and limited facilities to attend to her personal experiences. The argument is made that in single-sex schools, and in this case in a girls' school, a vulnerable girl child would have her needs not attended to (Kohno, *et al.*, 2020).

In a United Nations report presented by Teresita (2006) states that half of the children population in the Philippines are female who become victims of commercial sexual abuse between ages 13-18 and are initiated into the sex trade as early as the age 10. The report further alludes to an overwhelming ninety-nine percent (99%) of sexually abused children being girls, i.e. 22,475 out of 22,742 victims of rape, incest, and acts of lasciviousness, from 2000-2005. In addition, such girls become victims of HIV/AIDS, STD, and teenage pregnancy, victims of illegal recruitment, especially girls from rural areas, and victims of gender stereotyping in education, child labour, prostitution among others. Experiences of the girl child alluded to in this report by Teresita (2006) can be observed in the Zambia context as well. Therefore, this study will endeavour to isolate these incidents among the eight selected girls and observe how they impact their educational attainment.

An Australian study by Agu, Lobo, Crawford and Chigwada (2016) explored barriers and enablers to accessing sexual health services, including experiences of stigma and discrimination. Within a purposive sample of sub-Saharan African, Southeast Asian, and East Asian migrants. A qualitative design was employed using key informant interviews and focus group discussions. A total of 45 people with ages ranging from 18 to 50 years, participated in focus group discussions. The study found that the common barriers and enablers to help seeking behaviors were sociocultural and religious influence, financial constraints, and knowledge dissemination to reduce stigma. Additionally, common experiences of stigma and discrimination were related to employment and the social and self-isolation of people living with HIV. Overcoming barriers to accessing sexual health services, imparting sexual health knowledge, recognizing variations within cultures, and a reduction in stigma and discrimination will simultaneously accelerate help-seeking and result in better sexual health outcomes in migrant populations. As much as the study was based on accessing sexual health services, the study draws strength from it in that the enablers of sociocultural and religious influence, financial constraints, and

knowledge dissemination to reduce stigma which also happens in the Zambian secondary schools. The study was conducted in the Zambian context amongst the vulnerable girls who were less than 20 years in the secondary schools so as to understand their lived experiences.

A cross-country study was conducted by Stern, Heijden and Dunkle (2020) on how people with disabilities experience programs to prevent intimate partner violence across four countries, Evaluation and Program Planning. In-depth interviews were conducted with 16 women and 15 men living with disabilities in Ghana, Rwanda, Tajikistan and South Africa. The data were analysed thematically and compared across the settings. Participants described experiencing disability-related stigma, discrimination, exclusion, and for women, increased vulnerability to intimate partner violence (IPV). Barriers to full participation in programs included limited accessibility, and lack of disability-specific materials, recruitment or outreach. Enablers of inclusion included recruitment and monitoring strategies aimed at people with disabilities, partnering with a local disabled people's organization, training staff in disability inclusion, and raising awareness of disability rights. The data encouragingly suggests that inclusion of women and men with disabilities in IPV prevention programs designed for the general population has beneficial outcomes. Inclusion can prevent violence, promote their wellbeing, support economic empowerment, and challenge disability-related stigma and discrimination. The study will not limit itself to one form of vulnerability but will include even the other forms which should be considered and how they can be resolved to enable the girl child attend school effectively. It is from this background that this study focused on the enablers for the vulnerable children specifically their voices in the Zambian secondary schools and did not include men in the sample like the study under review.

Different arguments have been recorded by different scholars. Firstly, the vulnerable girls have confidence in the school system and realise that its protection makes them attend school regularly (Mwanza, 2022). Meanwhile, the social constructs perpetuate discrimination and oppression of the women and girl child in society through the education system (Arinder, 2020). Ramanaiik et al., (2018) states that poverty and socioeconomic realities at the household level strongly affect conformity with discriminatory gender practices such as restricting girls' mobility. The politicians use this vulnerable situation to their advantage especially that use the popularity of the musicians to add value to the politicians on stage which is wrong et al., (Namuyamba, 2018). Scholar supports that disablers which vulnerable girls experience in secondary schools range from community to individual ones and they are all linked to the performance of these girls (Banda, 2016 and Theron, 2020). Meanwhile, the Feminist Theory which recognizes that various forms of social stratification, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, intersect and create unique experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). All these aspects of thoughts present with scholars the need to provide a better understanding of the models which can be presented to enable the vulnerable girls have access to better education system in the Zambian context.

There is also the context of linguistic vulnerability which should be realised in the education system. Nyimbili and Musonda (2023) argue that it is the role of the education policies to provide the right education system which will not exclude other learners as a result of their linguistic grouping and proficiencies which are far below the natives of such languages. Through such inclusivity processes, teaching and learning will become enjoying to the learners and teachers. Other scholars state that

vulnerability also is realised through other challenges such as poor course materials and poor delivery of course material in the Zambian schools (Manchishi, Ndhlovu, Phiri and Thomson, 2018). This results in pupils shunning certain subjects and teachers punishing them as both of these have an effect on the academic performance of pupils (Phiri and Chileshe, 2016). These are diverse vulnerabilities which are realised in the school system in the Zambian context among the many.

Agency and empowerment are central themes within Feminist Theory, emphasizing the importance of individuals' capacity to make choices and take action to shape their own lives, as well as the process of gaining control over the factors that influence their well-being (Kabeer, 1999; UNICEF, 2017). In the context of education, agency and empowerment were crucial for vulnerable girl children, as they enabled them to challenge oppressive societal structures and to pursue their goals and aspirations. By developing a sense of agency and self-efficacy, girl children navigated the challenges they faced and advocated for their rights and needs. This study examined how vulnerable girl children in single-sex public schools exercised agency and sought empowerment within their educational journeys. By exploring the strategies and resources that girls used to overcome barriers and pursue their goals, the study identified ways in which schools and communities can support girls' agency and empowerment and create more equitable and inclusive educational environments.

Scholars such as Kibachio and Muti (2018) and Munongi and Pillay (2019) have established that the situation of girl-child vulnerability in schools and other public places is on increase and deserves serious attention in many societies in the world. A study by S'lungile *et al.*, (2021) shows that more than twenty-three percent of girls aged 15 to 17 years old have been subjected to physical, emotional, and mental abuse either at school or at home. As a result of such experiences, these girls drop out of school and do not even wish to go back to the classroom. In Zambia, the cultural values, customs, traditions as well as many other socio-economic challenges being faced by the girl child have a great impact on the well-being of children in schools and more especially the girl child (Muru et al., 2018). With limited research documenting the lived experiences of vulnerable girls in schools, Chilala (2022) advocated for stronger research approaches regarding the subject using a deeper detailed approach. The scholar justifies this argument on the number of problems which young girls experience in their communities which limit their progress when it comes to completing education. Earlier studies by Banda (2015) brings out academic vulnerability while Mweemba (2017) talked about causes of girls' vulnerability in secondary schools and Chanda (2020) looked at juvenile vulnerability in Zambian schools. all these studies did not create a framework to propose how the vulnerable girls can be considered in school and society which this study problematised.

## Objective

1. Design a *framework to return* a vulnerable girl child in selected single-sex public secondary schools.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted hermeneutic phenomenology since the researcher brought with her interpretive aspects of the phenomena of the vulnerable girl child as meanings found in religion, culture, and

language. The discourse on the lived experience with the selected vulnerable girls was interpreted by the researcher to elucidate the essence of girl child vulnerability and its impact on educational attainment. Phenomenological methodology is a subset of the qualitative research paradigm and adopted a descriptive phenomenology research design.

### Population and Sample size

As alluded to above in the population of the study, the design of the study was qualitative with a Hermeneutic Phenomenological approach that focuses on a limited selected sample for an in-depth qualitative analysis. Therefore, this study, utilizing purposive stratified sampling selected a total of 32 vulnerable girls from the four selected single-sex girls' secondary schools. It then selected one Counselling and Guidance teacher from each of the four schools giving a sample size of 4 teachers. The distribution of the selected sample is indicated in the table below:

Table 3.2: Distribution of selected Sample Size

No	School	Vulnerable Girls	Counselling Teachers
1	Kabulonga Girls Secondary School	8	1
2	Lusaka Girls School	8	1
3	Munali Girls Secondary School	8	1
4	Matero Girls Secondary School	8	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>4</b>

### Data collection tools

The study used interview guides and focus group discussion guide to collect data from participants.

### Interview guide

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the 32 vulnerable schoolgirl participants involved in the study to complement information collected from secondary data, to clarify specific aspects of the data collected, and to check for consistency in participants' views and perspectives on their lived experiences. Examples of points related to participants' lived experience include their perception of teachers, and school administrators. The main goal of these semi-structured interviews, however, was to have participants state in their own words their perceptions of their lived school experience and the meaning they attach to it.

### Focus group discussion guide

The researcher used focus group discussion guide to collect collective views from the vulnerable girls in the selected sampled secondary schools. This was done by making them share their experiences on the raised topics from the schedule and the researcher guided the conversation and recorded what was being said with the consent of the participants. Cohen et al., (2018) states that focus group discussion allows participants to agree upon a piece of truth which has to be adopted after a debate within themselves. This procedure enables the researchers to collect authentic data from the participants as they always share what is correct. Using this model, the researcher engaged the vulnerable participants in the sampled schools and provided them with an avenue to share their lived experiences. In doing so, relevant data was collected from the participants



### **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected from semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The analysis consisted in identifying, examining, and recording themes- that is patterns, across data sets that are important to the description of the phenomenon associated with each research question. For the analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews, key incidents of vulnerability of the selected girls were identified and coded. These themes were then analysed using the hermeneutical phenomenological technique of Max Van Manen's *Four Life World Existential*. These are *lived body*, *lived time*, *lived space*, and *lived relations* (Rich, *et al.*, 2013). The importance of Van Manen's technique is that it supports staying true to the lived experiences of participants and achieving a level of abstraction from the data in order to uncover the essential structures and meanings of that particular lived experience. Van Manen's *Four Life Worlds Existential* offer a lens through which to explore and navigate disparate interview data and uncover the essences of lived experience, without imposing categories upon the data itself (*ibid.*). Van Manen defines hermeneutic phenomenology, as a method of abstemious reflection on the basic structures of themes. The analysis for this study will thus be based on the *Life World Existential* of Van Manen (1997) which he describes as:

**(a) Lived Body** – This refers to our physical body or bodily presence in our everyday lives, including all that we feel, reveal, conceal, and share through our lived body. We are always present in the world through our bodies; as such, it is through our lived bodies that we communicate, feel, interact, and experience the world. For this study, the physical bodies of the 32 vulnerable girls will form an essential element of interpretation in their lived experience. Their physiological dispositions and experiences will underlie their vulnerability.

**(b) Lived Time** – This can be understood as time as we experience it. This is composed of a subjective understanding of time as opposed to the more objective or “factual” time, and it refers to the ways in which we experience our world on a temporal level. The way we feel can influence how we experience time and moments, and conversely, constraints, freedoms, and demands placed by time can also affect how we feel. For this study, the time experience of the 32 selected girls will be analysed to observe its influence on their vulnerability and how they explore time to attain freedoms that would improve their well-being.

**(c) Lived Space** – This can be understood as felt space, our subjective experience of the spaces we find ourselves in. Lived space explores both the way in which the space we find ourselves in can affect the way we feel and, conversely, how the way we feel can affect the way we experience a particular space. For this study, the researcher will explore both sides of the space spectrum namely how the 32 selected girls are affected by the space they exist in either at home or school environment and how their feelings affect or influences the spaces they exist in.

**(d) Lived Human Relations** – This refers to the relations we make and/or maintain with others in our life world. Our human relations include the communications and relationships we experience with others through the spaces and interactions we share and create with them. For this study, the human relations of the 32 selected girls will be analysed in all their interactions and communications at home, schools, and play environments and how these relationships impact their vulnerability.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Framework to Retain Selected Vulnerable Girls in Secondary School**

This section presents findings on framework to retain the selected vulnerable girls in secondary schools. The framework is analysed under five (5) themes namely mechanisms for protection in school and at home information to prevent abuse educational programs for vulnerable girls' protection from sexual abuse by teachers' retention programs in school. A themed summation is presented at the end of the section.

### **Mechanisms for Protection in School and at Home**

Respondents cited that protecting vulnerable girl children at school and at home can help in retention in single sex in public secondary schools. The participants also cited that school rules, safety, dignity and integrity standards regarding the vulnerability of the girl children should be addressed. They further expressed that child abuse cases against the vulnerable girl children should be acted upon, and sensitization on safety at home and reporting protocol when feeling unsafe should be addressed as evidenced by the narration for Teacher A:

*“School rules, safety, dignity and integrity standards outlined to address vulnerabilities.”*

Additionally, Teacher B narrated that:

*“Girls are sensitized on safety at school and reporting protocol when feeling unsafe.”*

Further, Learner C5 narrated that:

*“Any reported cases against the girl child is acted upon”*

### **Information to Prevent Abuse**

Participants indicated that sensitizing the vulnerable girl children about the alcohol and drug abuse in class, peer educators from organizations visiting and sensitizing about girl child abuse, and making posters with information about girl child abuse, alcohol, and drug abuse can help in protecting them and retaining them in single sex in public secondary schools as evidenced by the following narration for Teacher A:

*“I would suggest that peer educators from organizations should be visiting and sensitize to the vulnerable girl children in public secondary schools. Their focus should be on alcohol abuse, drug abuse and child abuse.”*

Correspondingly, Teacher C stated that:

*“Posters with information about abuse and where to call if abused should be stacked on school notice boards and community bill boards.”*

Additionally, Learner D4 expressed that:

*“...Sensitization about abuse given in class for all students”.*

### **Educational Programs for Vulnerable Girls**

Majority of the respondents cited that introducing educational programs such as drama clubs, singing clubs, culture clubs, and art clubs can retain vulnerable girl children in single sex in public secondary schools. The respondents also expressed that educational program such as drama clubs, singing clubs, culture clubs, and art clubs can keep the vulnerable girl children active and chances of the being idle are slim. Participants further mentioned that encouraging the vulnerable girl children to be going for guidance and counselling sessions is one way of retaining them in single-sex public secondary schools as supported by for Teacher C who complained that:

*“There is need to ensure that all the public secondary schools come up with clubs such as drama, singing, culture and art for learning. These educational programs will keep the vulnerable girl children busy.”*

Additionally, Teacher D expressed that:

*“Guidance and counselling sessions should be encouraging pupils to explain issues affecting them. I feel if during guidance and counselling sessions we encourage them to explain issues which are affecting them, we can find were the problem is. In fact, it is one way of retaining them in schools.”*

### **Protection from Sexual Abuse by Teachers**

Participants expressed that encouraging the vulnerable girl children to report about sexual abuse, teaching them about boundaries between girls and teachers, giving them lessons on sexual abuse and reporting, and male teachers sensitized about consequences of sexual abuse can help in retaining them in single-sex public secondary schools as expressed by Teacher D:

*“What we need to do as teachers and management is to start encouraging our vulnerable girls to report any child abuse case. We have to also encourage them to speak out when such need arises, and they should be taught about boundaries between male teachers and girls.”*

Additionally, Learner A2 and Learner C5 also narrated that:

*“Our male teachers should be sensitized about consequences of sexual abuse.”* (Learner A2, 2023).

*“Girls should be given lessons on sexual abuse and reporting.”* (Learner C5, 2023).

### **Retention Programs in School**

Majority of the respondents cited that re-entry policy should be introduced to allow vulnerable children go back to school; this can help retaining them in single-sex public secondary schools. Respondents also stated that allowing vulnerable girl children to go back to school can encourage young mothers to continue their education as expressed by Teacher A:

*“Re-entry policy introduced to allow children back to school. This policy should be intensified. I know it’s there but what have observed is, we are not encouraging making*



*follow ups on girls that had gotten pregnant. We just lose them just like that. If we start tracking them as in making, follow us am sure we can retain a good number because some girls think once they fall pregnant that's it, they will never get back to school and finish their education which should not be the case."*

Additionally, Learner B3 narrated that:

*"Schools should start allowing girls who got pregnant to go back to school so that they continue with their education."*

Further, Learner D2 narrated that:

*"Schools should start allowing girls who had fallen pregnant to come back to school after giving birth. This will help them finish school. It's sad stopping school just because someone got pregnant whilst at school."*

Table 1: Summation of Retention Framework of Selected Vulnerable Girls

	<b>Retention Themes</b>	<b>Vulnerability Incidents</b>	<b>Key Incidents</b>
<b>1</b>	Mechanisms for Protection in School and at Home	<i>School rules, safety, dignity and integrity standards/ sensitized on safety/ reporting protocol/Any reported cases against the girl child is acted upon</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sensitization efforts</b></li> <li>• <b>Reporting Protocols</b></li> <li>• <b>Defined Regulations on Protection</b></li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	Information to Prevent Abuse	<i>Peer educators/ visiting and sensitize/ on alcohol abuse, drug abuse and child abuse/ Posters with information about abuse and where to call if abused/ Sensitization</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peer education &amp; Sensitization</b></li> <li>• <b>IEC Materials on Abuse</b></li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	Educational Programs for Vulnerable Girls	<i>Clubs such as drama, singing, culture and art for learning/ Guidance and counselling sessions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guidance and counselling Sessions</b></li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	Protection from Sexual Abuse by Teachers	<i>Report any child abuse case/ speak out/ taught about boundaries between male teachers and girls/ male teachers- sensitized about consequences of sexual abuse/ lessons on sexual abuse and reporting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reporting Protocols</b></li> <li>• <b>Sensitization on Sexual Abuse</b></li> <li>• <b>Guidance and Counselling Sessions</b></li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	Retention Programs in School	<i>Re-entry policy intensified/ follow ups/ allowing girls who got pregnant to go back to school/ pregnant girls to come back to school</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conducive learning environment</b></li> <li>• <b>Provision of education material</b></li> <li>• <b>Feeding program</b></li> </ul>

**Table 2: Summation of Themes Key Incidents**

	<b>Profiling Themes</b>	<b>Key Incidents</b>		<b>Disablers Themes</b>	<b>Key Incidents</b>
1	Dietary Habits and Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Malnourishment creating inferiority complex (I)</b></li> </ul>	1	Economic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Limited Finances (I)</b></li> <li>• <b>Limited School requisites (SC)</b></li> </ul>
2	Household Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Laundry (I)</b></li> <li>• <b>Catering (I)</b></li> <li>• <b>Cleaning (I)</b></li> </ul>	2	Home Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of parental care (I)</b></li> <li>• <b>Lack of basic needs (I)</b></li> <li>• <b>Child labour (SO)</b></li> </ul>
3	Economic Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Limited school requisites (SC)</b></li> <li>• <b>Limited Finances (SC)</b></li> </ul>	3	Social Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of guidance (SC)</b></li> <li>• <b>Social Insecurity (SO)</b></li> </ul>
4	Resources and Support for Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Unaffordability of school requisites (I)</b></li> </ul>	4	Educational Barriers and Support Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of educational support (SC)</b></li> </ul>
5	Emotional Vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sexual, physical &amp; Substance abuse (I)</b></li> <li>• <b>Depression (I)</b></li> </ul>	5	Attendance and Punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lack of Transport (I)</b></li> </ul>
			6	Psychological and Emotional Strain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Depression (I)</b></li> </ul>
	<b>Retention Themes</b>	<b>Key Incidents</b>		<b>Enablers Themes</b>	<b>Key Incidents</b>
1	Mechanisms for Protection in School and at Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sensitization efforts (SC)</b></li> <li>• <b>Reporting Protocols (SC)</b></li> <li>• <b>Defined Regulations on Protection (SC)</b></li> </ul>	1	Provision of Educational Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Access to educational support (SO)</b></li> </ul>
2	Information to Prevent Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peer education &amp; Sensitization (SO)</b></li> <li>• <b>IEC Materials on Abuse (SO)</b></li> </ul>	2	Parental Encouragement and Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Parental support (I)</b></li> <li>• <b>Access to financial support (I)</b></li> </ul>
3	Educational Programs for Vulnerable Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guidance and counselling Sessions (I)</b></li> </ul>	3	Provisions of Food Programs and Sanitary Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provision of sanitary &amp; nutritional support (SC)</b></li> </ul>
4	Protection from Sexual Abuse by Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reporting Protocols (SC)</b></li> <li>• <b>Sensitization on Sexual Abuse (SC)</b></li> <li>• <b>Guidance and Counselling Sessions (I)</b></li> </ul>	4	Psychosocial Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adequate Security (SO)</b></li> <li>• <b>Accommodative environment (SC)</b></li> </ul>
5	Retention Programs in School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conducive learning environment (SC)</b></li> <li>• <b>Provision of education material (SC)</b></li> <li>• <b>Feeding program (SO)</b></li> </ul>	5	Institutional Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provision of conducive learning environment (SC)</b></li> </ul>
			6	Financial Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provision of Scholarships (SO)</b></li> </ul>

Individual Level - (I)

School Level – (SC)

Social Level – (SO)

## DISCUSSION

### **Developing Christine's REVUGISS Egg Model**

In exploring the lived experience of vulnerable girl child in selected single-sex public schools of Lusaka district, the study has developed an Egg Model that synthesises identified incidents of profiling, disablers, enablers and framework. The Egg Model is being termed *Retention of Vulnerable Girls in*

*Single-Sex Schools (REVUGISS)*. REVUGISS is modelled around the identified key incidents in the four themes of the study and stratified at community or societal, school and individual levels. It is a tool intended to pinpoint elements in the lived experience of vulnerable girls that identifies the current situation (profiling), deterrents in their education attainment (disablers) and those that would override these deterrents and enhance academic performance for these girls (enablers) which then culminates into principles that will prevent vulnerability of the girl child (framework). Stakeholders such as policy makers, school administrators, communities and households can utilize REVUGISS to curb detriments to vulnerable girls and enhance their education.

### **Operation of REVUGISS Egg Model**

The Christine's REVUGISS Model illustrated below (fig 1) is designed to be read clockwise from the first quarter sector of Profile. It is segmented into three strata of Societal, School and Individual Levels. Each sector quarter builds on the preceding sector except for Profile sector. Thus, after identifying incidents in profiling vulnerable girl child, disablers are the identified. *The Retention Line* indicates a breakthrough in the experience of a vulnerable girl child to experiences of incidents that are enabling. From these enabling incidents, a protection framework can be derived that permanently prevents the vulnerable girl to slumber back into vulnerability. This framework then enables retention of the vulnerable girl into school. Thus, *The Retention Line* must be a goal for every vulnerable girl in all the three levels.

Figure 1

# Christine's REVUGISS Egg Model





The proposed REVUGISS model appreciates the realities which vulnerable girls face in schools, the available opportunity and therefore, provide practical solutions modelling how vulnerable students should be helped survive their vulnerability whilst in schools and community. REVUGISS model is self-developed arising from the data presented in the findings and realising how best Vulnerable Girl Children in Single-sex secondary schools can be retained.

### SYNTHESIS OF DISABLERS

The facts presented from the disablers range from the community to the individual learner. Scholar supports that disablers which vulnerable girls experience in secondary schools range from community to individual ones and they are all linked to the performance of these girls (Banda, 2016 and Theron, 2020). To provide guidance, enablers suggested also are ranked from the community level to school and individual level of the learners (Agu, Lobo, Crawford and Chigwada, 2016). To make these decisions work, this study provides a model through which policy makers, community members and schools should work with to enable the vulnerable girls have better school experiences in schools.

- *Societal Level* - Firstly, the society should put in place measures to ensure that the girl children and their education welfare are protected. This calls for parental engagement, building strong family ties which will enable girls to be helped academically if they are to survive the harsh realities they go through in school as being economically disadvantaged children.
- *School Level* - This should then trickle down to the school where strong protection measures should be in place. These can range from passing a bullying policy or rule and enhance local capacities in handling social and economic complaints from vulnerable girls. This strategy will help the vulnerable girls have confidence in the school system and realise that its protection makes them attend school regularly (Mwanza, 2022). At school level, the teachers should also ensure that they sensitise the pupils on the effects of emotional abuse and make them refrain from attacking other students. This can be done through improving the capacities of the guidance and counselling section so that it can handle such cases. As much as punishment is not the best solution for the abusers, it can be proposed that students guilty of bullying abusing the vulnerable girls emotionally should be excluded so as to enable the school community to have the best environment which is inclusive for all learners (Nyimbili and Nyimbili, 2023). This measure will activate the hidden abilities in the vulnerable learners to attend school willingly and perform to their best since they will be guaranteed that they are protected.
- *Individual Level* - At individual level, there is need for the vulnerable girls to be aware of their vulnerability and turn such weaknesses into strength so that they can be dependable and reliable to the community which is helping them. With the little access to education, they should have able to work extra hard and redeem themselves from their cocoon of isolation and poverty. This can be realised through effective engagement with them and build their capacity to overcome their deficiencies. They need to use their power to adapt to their school environment unlike being shy and unprogressively depressed. Such will make them become better students who will be well informed and later help other to be like them as they grow up.

The foregoing discussion can be linked to the Feminist theory through the systems and structures of power and oppression principle. The theory argued that the social constructs perpetuate discrimination and oppression of the women and girl child in society through the education system (Arinder, 2020). These constructs tend to limit women's and girl child's access to the legal, social, political and economic institutions which results into the control of accesses to rights of women and girls by designed. These constructs have come out clearly through the disablers which the vulnerable girls face in the Zambian singled sexed schools. These have demonstrated that the system provides ways in which girls can be oppressed through the education system. However, the society through its structures and stakeholders should work to make the vulnerable girls become educated and contribute to the economic development of their families and other girls. This can be done through the elimination of the negative constructs which hinder their progress.

### **SYNTHESIS OF ENABLERS**

In working on the enablers, REVUGISS has highlighted the available opportunities which should be exploited by the community, school and individuals.

- *Societal Level* - Firstly, there is need for well-coordinated community sensitisations on the ways to improve the status of the girls in the community. The sensitisation messages can range from women linked workshops to gender parity talk which should make every person realise the need to support the vulnerable girls at community level. When this is actualised, the community will take responsibility on how to help the learners become relevant and responsible citizens in the community for future development. The foregoing is in line with Ramanaik et al., (2018) who established that poverty and socioeconomic realities at the household level strongly affect conformity with discriminatory gender practices such as restricting girls' mobility. Therefore, the role of the school and community should be strengthened to enable the girls feel the need to be educated in the school system.
- *School Level* - At school level, the school guidance and counselling unit should be strengthened to ensure that pupils are protected from others who bully the vulnerable. The key messages should be providing love for others and sharing the little they have to others. Such gestures would make other pupils learn to love and give as this will make this gesture also to extend to the community thereby eliminating discrimination against the vulnerable girls. The boys would also benefit in the community since the messages would provide a positive impact at school and family level as they will learn to treat girls fairly and with just.
- *Individual Level* - At individual level, the school should be able to partner with stakeholders who advocate for girls' education and provide social and emotional support. This support should be in line with making the girls realise their potential to stand alone and make better decisions in school that improves their academic and social welfare. The foregoing is supported by Stern, Heijden and Dunkle (2020) who suggested that inclusion of women and men with disabilities in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) prevention programs designed for the general population has beneficial outcomes. Inclusion can prevent violence, promote their wellbeing, support economic empowerment, and challenge disability-related stigma and discrimination. Also, parents of the vulnerable girls should be engaged to enable them to encourage their children to feel proud for

being in school. With such collaboration, the vulnerable girls may develop a sense of pride and realise the need to be strong in school despite the hardships.

The enablers presented in the model are supported by the Feminist Theory which recognizes that various forms of social stratification, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, intersect and create unique experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality highlights the fact that individuals' experiences are not solely determined by their gender but are also shaped by other aspects of their identity and social location. The power which the girls have in the model is their ability to attend school despite the negatives which the school environment and system is providing to make them fail. It is in this capacity that (Kabeer, 1999; UNICEF, 2017) have highlighted the importance of individuals' capacity to make choices and take action to shape their own lives, as well as the process of gaining control over the factors that influence their well-being. Using the proposed enablers in the model coupled with the theory, the study advances that women need to be helped during their struggles by the schools, society and their own efforts needs to be seen and taken care of by the people who have the power to do so. This will enable the vulnerable young women realise the power in them and come up with the positive attitude which will enable them to continue to strive to excel in life despite the perceived challenges.

*Summation* - With this model, it can be seen that girls should be able to realise the enablers and go round the disablers when making decisions in communities and schools for their benefit. These decisions should start from the society, school and end at individual levels. After that, there should be an up-ward movement in protecting the vulnerable girls in single sexed schools. Girls should be given the information they need to overcome the disablers and use their potential to influence their stay in school and society at large. When this happens, there will be positive impact on how the girls should be treated and interact in schools despite the different disablers that hinder their progress. This model brings about hope on how the vulnerable girls should interact for their benefit in the secondary schools of Lusaka district.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study have significant implications for educational policies and practices in Zambia. They highlight the urgent need to address the specific needs and challenges of vulnerable girls in single-sex public schools. Policymakers and educators must prioritize initiatives that provide economic support, improve home environments, combat social pressures, remove educational barriers, and promote the mental health and well-being of vulnerable girls. The proposed Christine's REVUGISS Egg Model offers practical strategies for retaining these girls in school, such as providing educational resources, enhancing parental involvement, offering food programs and sanitary supplies, delivering psychosocial support, strengthening institutional assistance, and increasing financial support. By implementing these measures, schools can create more inclusive and supportive learning environments that empower vulnerable girls to succeed academically and personally.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) *Support Networks*: Encourage the formation of support groups for parents of vulnerable girls, providing a platform for sharing experiences, strategies, and resources to support their children's education.
- a) *Inclusive Environment*: Schools should strive to create more inclusive and supportive environments for vulnerable girls. This can be achieved by training teachers on gender sensitivity, implementing strict anti-bullying policies, and establishing a strong and accessible guidance and counselling department within schools.
- a) *Collaboration and Partnerships*: Promote partnerships between the government, educational institutions, NGOs, and the private sector to coordinate efforts and pool resources for the benefit of vulnerable girls' education. This can enhance the impact of interventions designed to address the challenges identified in the study.

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