

# Social Challenges and Learners' Academic Performance: A Case of Selected Primary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia

Chanda Chansa Thelma

Rockview University, Lusaka, Zambia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8351325>

Published Date: 16-September-2023

---

**Abstract:** Social issues, also called social problem, a state of affairs that negatively affects the personal or social lives of individuals or the well-being of communities or larger groups within a society and about which there is usually public disagreement as to its nature, causes, or solution. Social challenges are common problems in present-day society and one that many people strive to solve. Social challenges are those conditions or behaviors that have negative consequences at the personal and work level. In addition, social challenges are issues and problems facing human beings today. Hence, the study aimed at examining the effects of social challenges on learners' academic performance in some selected primary schools of Lusaka district, Zambia. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: (a) To identify the common types of social challenges exhibited by learners in selected primary schools of Lusaka district, (b) To examine the effects of social challenges on learners' academic performance in selected primary schools of Lusaka district and (c) To offer recommendations on how best social challenges can be dealt with in selected primary schools of Lusaka district. Purposive sampling of the site was preferred to select the research area from which respondents participated in this study with a sample size of 140. The study employed both the qualitative and quantitative methods that sampled head teachers, primary teachers, pupils and community members. Interview guides were used to obtain qualitative data which was analyzed using thematic analysis while quantitative data were collected using questionnaires which were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study found out that, most exhibited social challenges in primary schools were; peer pressure, drug abuse, child abuse, economic background and media influence. The study therefore recommended that teachers should pay special attention and identify different types of social problems among their learners. Also, the study suggested that learners should be sensitized fully on how to protect themselves from social challenges, more specifically from issues of child abuse.

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Child Abuse, Effect, Learners School and Social Challenges.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Socialization is a key component of our daily lives and it often cannot be avoided. Social challenges impact many aspects of a child or adult's life. Most commonly they impact an individual's ability to initiate and maintain close relationships. When people don't develop meaningful connections with others, this can lead to loneliness, isolation, and a lack of social support. Social difficulties can also impact learning, educational attainment, work performance, and self-esteem. Coleman & Cressey (2019) says that social challenges in primary schools, have a major effect on the learners' education in terms of academic performance and also in terms of low women empowerment at national level, which caused by most of girls who drop out of school due to social challenges such as early pregnancies, despite the government implementing the re-entry policy which allows the girl child to go back to school after giving birth. However, social challenges are still increasing in primary schools and the girl child education is not improving. social problem is any condition or behavior that has negative

consequences for large numbers of people and that is generally recognized as a condition or behavior that needs to be addressed. A social issue is a problem that affects many people within a society (Adams, 2016). It is a group of common problems in present-day society and ones that many people strive to solve. It is often the consequence of factors extending beyond an individual's control. Social issues are the source of conflicting opinions on the grounds of what is perceived as morally correct or incorrect personal life or interpersonal social life decisions. Social issues are distinguished from economic issues; however, some issues (such as immigration) have both social and economic aspects.

Anti-social activities were rampant in the contemporary Zambian Society. This is evident in the deluge of social problems witnessed on regular bases (Kyra, 2009). These problems which include various factors such as social inequality, ethnicity, limited resources, corruption, poverty, criminality, and other social-economic crises pervade the length and breadth of the country. There was a wide gap between the expectations of the society and its actual manifestations. Hardly would a day go by without a record of one form of social problem or the other. Osarenren (2002) argued that societal attitudes change because society is dynamic and changes occur quite frequently. The change in the structure of the society which happens to be as a result of rapid transition from rural to urbanization and industrialization; secondly, there had been serious disruption of sense of community solidarity and of the integrity of the extended family structure; and thirdly, it was observed that delinquency is on the rise in deteriorated neighborhoods near the city centers of large cities. One may therefore surmise that delinquency is closely associated with urbanization.

From a sociological perspective, a social problem exists when there is a sizable difference between the ideals of a society and its actual achievements (Mahoney, 2008). From this perspective, social problems are created by the failure to close the gap between the way people want things to be and the way things really are. Certain social conditions are detrimental in any situation. These conditions prevent members of a society from developing and using their full potential. Those conditions like poverty, racism, unequal opportunity are, therefore, social problems in any social setting. Deviance, disturbances, crises, issues, violence, unrest and all anti-social behaviors, all of which had been categorized as social problems prevalent in every sector of the Zambian nation. The primary focus of this study was to lay emphasis on these problems with a focus on the educational sector and especially among students of Primary schools in Zambia. Student participation in anti-social behavior is on a steady rise. The alarming effect of this behavior constitutes a major challenge Teachers, Parents, Guardians, and the Government, the stake-holders in the educational sector and even among the well-meaning Zambians at large. A number of occurrences, which had become the norm, are testimony to the fact that social problems in schools came to stay. Leone & Margse (2019) says violence is rampant in schools these days. Zambia today is faced with the syndrome of youth restiveness, which is believed to be connected to the political, social and economic problems of our country. The syndrome of youth restiveness was borne out of the wounds of despair and disappointment. It is a cry of daily hurt, persistent injustice, exploitation, impoverishment, pain and anger as a result of man's inhumanity to man.

Aside youth restiveness, there were other social problems witnessed among school students. Sexual promiscuity was one of the problems associated with some school students (Kendall, 2009). The problem of sexual promiscuity was not a new phenomenon in Zambia especially among senior primary school students. Many school students are under pressure to engage in premarital sex as the popular saying in the urban society is that everybody is doing it. Sexual promiscuity among school, if unchecked, eventually culminates into sexual perversions as lesbianism, homosexuality, transgender sex and other bizarre sexual experimentation like incest, bestiality and other sexual abnormalities. Kelvin & Robert (2011) points out that one cardinal danger that sexual promiscuity portends for teenage girls is teenage pregnancy which in all cases is unwanted pregnancies. This will either result in abortion or in teenage parenting which constitutes social problems. All forms of sexual promiscuity and the negative effects constitute danger for the affected victims; it makes them become social misfits. For example, a primary school girl who gets pregnant will have to undergo series of instigation and rejections from her parents, family members, school mates and even her close friends. The approach could even lead to her withdrawal from school, a case of school dropout. Social challenges may be related to specific diagnoses such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Social Communication Disorder, Speech and Language Disorders, and Dementia. Alternatively, an individual may experience social challenges without meeting criteria for any diagnosis (Harding, 2016). People with and without a diagnosis can benefit from improving their social skills.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

In recent times, it became a common phenomenon to read, hear or witness incidences of learners' involvement in anti-social behaviors such as teenage pregnancy or parenting, child abuse, alcohol intake, drug abuse, rape, prostitution, sexual perversion, stealing, cultism, adolescent suicide, school dropout and all kinds of wanton misdemeanor. World over, the issue of learners' academic performance in schools was a concern ever since education begun. Many countries came to realize that learners are the heart of the educational process and that without good performance all innovations in education would be futile. However, in looking at a learner's academic performance, Abdullahi (2008) stressed the need for relevant authorities not only to consider learners' school environments in developing strategies to enhance academic performance but also of paramount importance was the social challenges or problems affecting learner's academic performance as it impact them negatively. Every child is an individual, developing at his or her own pace and differing in needs, abilities, interests, cultural influence, learning patterns, and behaviors, hence as children came into school, they came in with various traits and in enhancing their academic performance, they should be looked at as individuals with unique abilities, personalities and knowledge (Parsons, 2011). Sad to say that some of these social problems were unfortunately fallout of the social ills in the society. It was the society that creates severe poverty, homelessness and economic hardships. Kyra (2009) supports the assumption that social problems are created by social structures when she revealed 'that much of what goes on in society leaks into the school system, impacting students and their learning experience'. Elliot & Harwin (2014), also seconded the assumption by suggesting that norm violations were symptoms of social problems and that the source of deviance was found within the social structure. He continues, society plays a role in creating and sustaining deviance by labeling victims. This showed that anti-social behaviors expressed by students were reflective of what obtained in the larger society. It was for this reason that the study was conducted to examine the effects of social challenges on learners' academic performance in selected primary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### 1.2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of social challenges on learners' academic performance in selected primary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### 1.3. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Identify the common types of social challenges exhibited by learners in selected primary schools of Lusaka district.
- Examine the effects of social challenges on learners' academic performance in selected primary schools of Lusaka district.
- To offer recommendations on how best social challenges can be dealt with in selected primary schools of Lusaka district.

### 1.4. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the effects of social problems on learners' academic performance in primary schools. The theories that throw light on these problems were appraised below;

#### Social disorganization theory

This theory was propounded by Shaw and McKay (2019). It viewed society as a collectivity of people bound together by a set of interrelated norms and values. The theory sees deviance as a natural by-product of rapid social change especially when the pace of social change is significant to disrupt a society's normative order. In this study, social disorganization theory will provide a framework for explaining how primary school students develop deviant behaviors as a result of the rapidly changing social order of the society. The study investigates the extent to which change in society dictate social adjustment.

#### Labeling theory

Labeling theory is another theory that strengthened the importance of this study. The theory was propounded by Howard Becker (2013). Howard Becker viewed deviance as the creation of social groups and not the quality of some

act or behavior. He believed that social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction creates deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'. The deviant is one to whom the label has been successfully attached. According to Becker (2013), studying the act of the individual is unimportant because deviance is simply rule breaking behavior that is labeled deviant by persons in positions of power. He viewed those people that are likely to engage in rule breaking behavior as essentially different from members of the rule making or rule abiding society. Those persons who are prone to rule breaking behavior see themselves as morally at odds with those members of the rule abiding society.

### **Physiological or Biogenic theory**

A third theory that strengthens this study is the physiological or biogenic theory. The theory was propounded by Cesare Lombroso (2016). He attempted to explain human and social behavior by making use of genetic or biological mechanisms. The theory stipulates that individuals with certain defective pathological characteristics are predisposed to criminal or deviant activities. This links criminality or deviance with certain propensities to personalities, temperaments and particular body types or shapes. During autopsy, he discovered that certain physical stigmata were apparent, making him formulate a number of theses indicating some criminal or deviance tendencies. He attached criminality or deviance to certain physiological attributes like: head size and shape common to race and region from which the criminal belongs, asymmetry of the face, eye defects and peculiarities, excessive dimensions of the jaw and cheek bones, ears of unusual size standing out from the head as those of the chimpanzee, abnormal dentition and others. The theory provides a basis for linking deviance to some physiological constitutional defects or abnormality or cultural experiences.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The findings and recommendations of the study informed learners and helped them understand the manifestations of social problems in schools. It enlightened them on ways of managing social problems and its influence on classroom activities. The study helped them to easily identify learners who exhibit behaviors that reflect social problems. They also got equipped with the knowledge of managing students that are prone to social problems and working effectively with parents. It is hoped that the findings of the study would be beneficial to parents as it would provide them with knowledge on social problems and enable them identify and associate with their children with the intent of solving the perceived problems. The study encouraged the school authority to pay more attention to social re-orientation programmes such as sex education, health and safety awareness, HIV/AIDS awareness, drug-free initiatives and adolescent counseling programmes. relevant information on social problems in schools to take pro-active measures, which may include enacting laws that protect the rights of vulnerable learners. The study also encouraged government to work on solving the prevalent problems of social injustices, inequalities and economic challenges in the society. All the aforementioned factors adversely affect learners' academic performance and social adjustment in schools. The study created awareness on the social ills of the society and the awareness was expected to generate concerns for majority of people and stake holders in the society who in turn gear up to eradicate the prevalent social problems of the society.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Child Abuse**

A child is any person who is sixteen years or below Child abuse is any form of ill treatment of a child. This ill treatment could be physical, mental or verbal. Physical abuse any action that cause physical impairment such as battery, slapping, pinching of the skin, pulling ears, burning of the skin, biting the child. Mental abuse could be lack of love, neglect, insults, shouting at the child, name calling or ridicule. Unfortunately, it is a largely accepted fact that abused and neglected children are at higher risk for lower academic achievement. Additionally, studies show that children who have suffered from neglect exhibit lower academic achievement children who were physically abused. Mistreated children have a greater instance of exhibiting poor social skills and classroom behavior problems. Maltreatment in the first five years of life nearly triples a child's likelihood of having academic problems. These children are far likelier to drop out of school before completing high school. According to research, children with special educational needs are more than seven times more likely to suffer physical abuse and neglect. Lower academic success can cause lifelong, negative psychosocial and economic consequences

(Alderman et al, 2000). According to Adenuga, (2006), in sexually abused children, cognitive ability and memory scores as well as academic achievement are lower than their peers. Most people do not realize that child sexual abuse is one of the most significant risks facing children today. One in ten children is the victim of sexual abuse. A study of sexually abused 7-12 year-old girls showed: 39% displayed academic difficulties, 24% repeated a grade, 15% were enrolled in a remedial class, 48% reported below average grades, and over 37% displayed cognitive ability below 25%. Of the reports of abuse made by professionals to authorities, school personnel are the source of over 50%. Often the teacher is the first person the child tells. Texas law requires that all school employees participate in a training concerning prevention techniques for and recognition of sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children and free training is available. Early identification can help prevent or minimize the damage the child suffers. Multiple victimizations substantially increase the child's risk of poor academic functioning (Ilogu, 2005).

## 2.2. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is when someone keeps on saying things or doing things of a sexual kind, like touching you or making sexual remarks, and he does this even though he knows you do not want it (Kendall, 2009). It also includes a promise of a job, promotion, training and any favours in return for sexual favours. These promises may be spoken or strongly hinted. Sexual harassment also includes hints or threats that things will not go well for you if you refuse sexual demands. Osa-Edoh & Iyanmu (2012) says that sexual harassment is not only when a person demands that you go out with him or sleep with him but also when men think they have a right to touch a woman or speak to her in a way the woman does not want. Considered by the courts as a form of sex discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual behavior that interferes with a student's right to receive an equal education. Sexual assault, rape, dating violence, and other forms of sexual violence are considered extreme forms of sexual harassment and are subject to criminal prosecution. In some areas, state or local laws prohibit sexual harassment in schools. When race and sex are involved, sexual harassment is also subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits racial discrimination (Osarenren, 2002).

## 2.3. Rape

Rape is when a man/woman has unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman or girl/man or boy without her or his consent by using force and or by means of threats or intimidation. Regoli, (2009) defined rape as an act of forcing a person to have sexual intercourse against his or her own will. In Zambia, according to the penal code, rape is defined as: Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or a girl without her or with her consent by using force, threats or intimidation. A number of studies have found that being the victim of sexual assault as an adolescent is associated with depression and diminished self-esteem (Ackard et al. 2007 and Kaukinen and DeMaris 2003). However, much of the work in this area has been based on non-representative samples. Moreover, no previous study has attempted to account for the influence of difficult-to-measure community- or individual-level unobservable. We estimate the relationship between being a victim of rape as adolescent and psychological wellbeing using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Awujo, 2006). In order to account for community- and individual-level unobservable, we estimate propensity score models, as well as models that control for school and individual fixed effects. Preliminary estimates suggest that, even controlling for the influence of community and individual unobservable, being the victim of rape is associated with a substantial increase in the likelihood of suffering from the symptoms of major depression as measured by the respondent's score on the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale. In contrast, the negative relationship between being victim of rape and self-esteem appears to be largely driven by unobservable at the school and individual levels. Could the impact of being raped as an adolescent persist into adulthood? There is some evidence that being a victim of sexual assault has long-run effects on educational attainment and, through educational attainment, on socioeconomic status. Specifically, Macmillan and Hagan (2004) found that there was a "chain-like sequence in which victimization diminishes educational self-efficacy, which subsequently undermines educational performance and attainment." However, because Ibid (2004) did not adequately control for community- or individual-level heterogeneity, it is not clear whether their results are spurious or causal in nature. Our results suggest that being a victim of sexual assault as an adolescent has some short-run impact on high school grades and attitudes toward school, but has little to no impact on high school completion or college attendance. Hence, Nwokedi (2012) concludes that while rape may have important effects on psychological wellbeing in the short-run, victims do not appear to pay a price in terms of long-run human capital acquisition.



#### 2.4. Teenage Pregnancies

Pregnancy is a wonderful gift in life of a woman as she enjoys every moment of holding her own child. In addition, it brings joyful feeling and positive atmosphere among her close relatives. However, early pregnancy is considered as a pandemic and a burden to the underage child, her family and the World (Cohen, 2015). Arthur Campbell stated that, the girl who has the illegitimate child at the age of 16 suddenly has 90 percent of her life's script written for her (Nwokocha, 2007). As children grow sometimes they develop sexual feelings and emotions which they don't understand as a result they want to fulfill these alleges. The health of the mother is affected because he/she is not yet mature for reproduction. The mother may not know how to take care of the baby, hence poor health for the baby. The burden is shifted to the parents if the young couple cannot cope with costs. Chances of the girl getting married are at stake. Child dumping. Disturbance in the education of the mother (Lemert, 2011).

#### 2.5. Gender-Based Violence

Gender based violence is physical or emotional force involving men and women in which the female is usually the victim (Matza, 2014). Gender-based violence (GBV) is the most extreme expression of unequal gender relations in society and one of the most widespread violations of human rights. While GBV disproportionately affects women and girls, it also affects men and boys. These abuses take place all over the world in homes, schools, work-places and communities. But GBV is preventable and education and educational institutions can play a central role in ending GBV. This brief provides an overview of the relationship between education and GBV.1 It illustrates how education can reduce exposure to, and perpetration of GBV, but also highlights the negative impact GBV can have on lifelong learning. Schools, from primary level to higher educational institutions, vocational training and non-formal education, are important sites for normative change and have the potential to address gender inequalities and prevent GBV. A range of school-based programs have been developed that not only raise awareness about GBV, but also build the skills of students and staff to create equitable and respectful relationships (Merton, 2018). However, schools and other educational institutions do not have a universal, nor automatically positive, impact on reducing GBV. Schools can for instance also be a site of GBV. Direct exposure to school related GBV (SRGBV) includes sexualized bullying, sexual harassment, forced sexual acts in exchange for good grades or male dominance or aggressions within the in schools and other educational institutions it is important to understand that there is no single factor that can explain why some people or groups are at higher risk of GBV than others. The ecological framework clearly shows how interpersonal violence is the outcome of interaction between many factors at the societal, community, relationship and individual levels. Mills (2019), holds that schools and other educational institutions are not isolated from traditions, culture, norms, customary laws and governmental policies that exist in the country and the community, nor from individual experiences of students and staff both outside and inside schools and educational institutions. If not addressed properly, schools and other educational institutions can implicitly legitimize and reinforce harmful gender norms. Schools can normalize a violent environment both in the classroom and outside it by using authoritarian pedagogy that strengthens the unequal power balance between teachers and students, by allowing corporal punishment, and by not properly addressing sexualized bullying. Schools and higher education institutions can reinforce traditional gender norms when men and boys are expected to be strong and respond with violence, or when encouraging men to apply to male dominated sectors and women to female dominated sectors. It is therefore necessary to address gender norms at all levels and across multiple settings to prevent GBV in schools and the society at large (Osaat, 2019).

#### 2.6. Effects of Social Challenges

In a competitive world, education is a very significant tool for every person to succeed in life. Education is a must for both women and men equally as both together make an educated and healthy society. It gives many purposes to the lifelike as the development of the personal advancement, increases social status and health. Much of what goes on in society disclosures into the school method, impacting learners and their learning and knowledge experience. School systems should identify what kinds of social problems are of main anxiety, and educate students regarding ways to fight them. Parents and teachers can cooperate on plans for reducing social issues in schools (Daramola 2014). Racism is a social issue that is present in every aspect of society, from business atmospheres to schools. This problem has worked its technique into classrooms is proofed by biased peers full of prejudiced notes towards classmates of minority backgrounds. However, teachers can ban language conflicts at school, racism might continue to survive if parents don't also assist to accurate the preconception behaviors of their children in the home. Though, if learners are learning their racist views & comments from their teachers, parents will not be capable to depend on parents to assist resolve the problems. Children have its place in certain ethnic groups, are incorrectly evaluated as being slower learners when measuring up to other competitions. This is,

obviously, not true for the reason that one's learning capabilities not straightforwardly connected to their customs. Though by reason of social or even geographical aspects, learners from certain ethnic groups lack sufficient disclosure to sources of learning. It puts the learners belonging to them at risk of increasing low self-esteem. On the other hand, Students who have well educated parents and parents with high educational expectations contribute largely to students' educational attainment (Coleman, 2018; Downey 2015; Baumrind 2011). Specifically, a father's involvement in school work has positive effect on children's academic success (Alderman et al, 2000).

The number of siblings also affects academic performance. As the number of siblings increases, individual academic performance decreases (Eitzen, 2009). Parental involvement has been said to affect the social roles of children. Family interaction is one of the factors enhancing or interfering with the effectiveness of homework (Oni, 2010). Studies show that doing homework alone is not rewarding and is associated with poor academic performance. Doing homework with a parent or with family member is associated with gaining attention and better academic performance (Ossat, 2019). Within the realm of judgment is the social issue of unequal education opportunities for individuals who come from smaller backgrounds. Students who belong to this demographic risk lost out on the similar stage of educational excellence as middle to higher class learners of non-minority backgrounds. The social problem here is that the offers disproportionate opportunities and education system has inequities based on cultural affiliation and income level when in an ideal world, all learners should have exposure to an equal education. The economy plays an important part in social issues that affect learners. As children become older, they begin to notice the financial burdens that their families experience. In an economy, it can be hard for families. Subsequently, some high scholars drop out of school so that they can assist support the family financially. Students who belong to deprived families are most probable to attend public schools. These schools are not as sound prepared with technology as a private school. This then automatically lay them at a difficulty when judge against to other students who go to private schools (Payne, 2003). In other countries students belonging to migrant families may not be sound proficient with the English language. This makes an obstacle to contact students and teachers. Such students are not capable to get an accurate education.

According Oloyede (2016), substance abuse and habits have become an epidemic. Many students have the way into addictive substances, alcohol, and drugs. The use of such substances leads to trouble in the type of criminal behaviors, violence and a withdrawing interest in education. This social issue can be controlled through the supportive environment for students, both at school and home. Psychological research has demonstrated that living in poverty has a wide range of negative effects on the physical and mental health and well-being of our nation's children. Poverty impacts children within their various contexts at home, in school, and in their neighborhoods and communities. Onwuamanam (2018) narrates that poverty is linked with negative conditions such as substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition and food insecurity, inadequate child care, lack of access to health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under resourced schools which adversely impact our nation's children. The social issues can impact education positively as well as negatively. so, learners and teachers should be careful towards these social issues.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Study Design

A descriptive survey research design was used combining qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in order to attain the comprehensive results. Qualitative methods were appropriate to this investigation as it produced detailed data from a small group of participants, while exploring feelings, impressions and judgments. On the other hand, quantitative method made the use of questionnaires, surveys and experiments to gather data that is revised and tabulated in numbers, which allows the data to be characterized by use of statistical analysis.

#### 3.2. Research Site

The research was conducted at some selected primary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

#### 3.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of head teachers, pupils and pupils. The target population was 1400. The sample size involved a total of 140 respondents which included five (5) head teachers, one from each selected school. Twenty (20) primary teachers, four from each selected school. Ninety-five (95) pupils, nineteen from each selected school and twenty (20) community members. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants.

**3.4. Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed qualitatively as in-depth interviews, questionnaires and observation schedules were used as primary data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with categorizing themes from the structured interviews and questionnaires. Charts and graphs were used to analyze data. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and per the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the questionnaires were analyzed manually with a combination of soft wares; MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel.

**3.5. Ethical Issues**

Permission letter from DEBS office for Lusaka district was sought in carrying out this study. The researcher avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. Ethical considerations were strictly followed during the research to enable the effectiveness in the findings. This was to protect and respect the targeted people who were considered to be the respondents by virtue of their location, status, age and occupation.

**4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

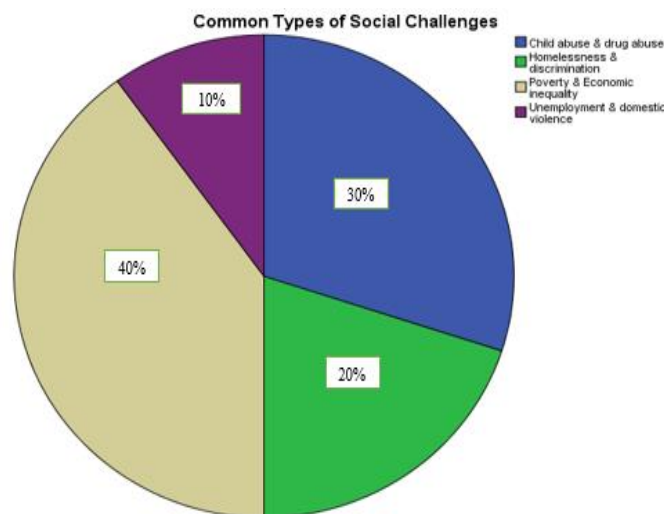
**4.1. Common Types of Social Challenges in Primary Schools**

40% of the teachers stated that the most exhibited social challenges are peer pressure, drug abuse, child abuse, economic background and media influence. 30% of the head teachers stated that the most reported cases of social problems are economic inequality and poverty. 20% of the learners said the social problems that are faced mainly are homelessness, discrimination, child labor and child abuse. 10% of community members mentioned unemployment and domestic violence as common types of social problems. The findings are presented in the table below:

**Table 1: Common Types of Social Challenges in Primary Schools**

Respondents	Social Challenges	Percentage
Head teachers	Poverty & Economic inequality	40%
Teachers	Child abuse & drug abuse	30%
Leaners	Homelessness & discrimination	20%
Community members	Unemployment & domestic violence	10%
Total		100%

Source: Author, 2023



Source: Author, 2023

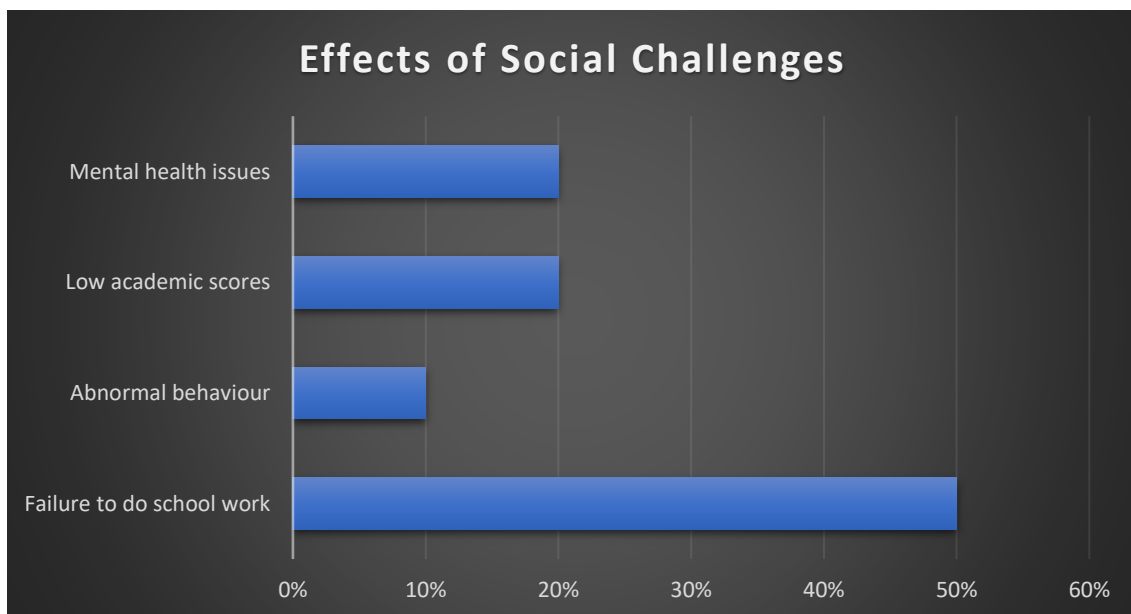
**Figure 1: Common Types of Social Challenges in Primary Schools**



Peer pressure was identified to be another type of social problems, often females may be pressured or forced by a classmate, friend or partner to engage in different activities which may adversely affect them negatively academic wise. These young ones out of fear may feel forced to engage in activities such as drug abuse without a choice. Peer pressure may also be prevalent in a different form while in relationships adolescents may be pressured by their friends to have unsafe and unprotected sex in order to please their mates. The friends may manipulate the others to have unprotected sex which leads to unintended pregnancy (Onwuamanam, 2018). Drug (Alcohol) abuse was identified to be also among the factors. During adolescence, teenagers may drink and experiment with drugs frequently with their friends at social gatherings and parties. Olayinka, (2016) says that teens, however, do not realize the impacts of alcohol and other toxic drugs have on the functioning of their brain, especially the effects of binge drinking which is consuming large amounts of alcohol during one sitting. Drinking excessively as well as experimenting drugs may lead to unwanted and unintentional pregnancy (Merton, 2014). These substances greatly affect a teens ability to logically think and carry out general thinking processes, thus increases the chances of low performance in academics. Child abuse isn't just about black eyes. While physical abuse is shocking due to the marks it leaves, not all signs of child abuse are as obvious. Ignoring children's needs, putting them in unsupervised, dangerous situations, exposing them to sexual situations, or making them feel worthless or stupid are also forms of child abuse and neglect and they can leave deep, lasting scars on kids. Regardless of the type of abuse, the result is serious emotional harm. These children subjected to hitting, paddling or other harsh disciplinary practices have reported subsequent problems with depression, fear and anger these learners frequently withdraw from school activities and disengage academically. The Society for Adolescent Medicine has found that victims of corporal punishment often develop deteriorating peer relationships, difficulty with concentration, lowered school achievement, antisocial behavior, and intense dislike of authority, somatic complaints, a tendency for school avoidance and school drop-out, and other evidence of negative high-risk adolescent behavior. This concurs with the research findings that abused learners have high truancy, have less concentration span and drop out of school is very high.

**4.2. Effects of Social Challenges on Learners' Academic Performance in Primary Schools**

50% of teachers clearly stated that, learners who are facing these identified social challenges, became difficult for them to do school work at home or to make contributions in group discussions and taking the initiative during the learning process in class. 10% of head teachers reported that the children develop abnormal behavior and fail to participate freely and actively in class. 20% of learners stated that, learners scored low in their tests, classwork and in examinations due to these identified social challenges such as peer pressure, drug abuse and child abuse. 20% of community members said that social problems cause a rise in mental health issues and lack of development.



Source: Author, 2023

Figure 2: Effects of Social Challenges on Learners' Academic Performance

**International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences**

Vol. 10, Issue 5, pp: (38-49), Month: September - October 2023, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

From the figure above, the Social Problems that learners exhibit in school have negative effect on their academic performance in class. Learners’ Social problems significantly interfere with their social adjustment. According to Becker (2013) there is no gender difference in learner’s deviant behavior. There is a growing concern about the issue of social problems among primary school learners in recent times. There is prevalence of deviance, disturbances, crises, unrest and all sorts of anti-social behaviors in the society. The learners stated that social problems complicate learners' efforts to learn. On the other hand, headteachers stated that social problems exacerbated when learners feel alienated from the school structure while teachers stated that social problems leads to diminishing interest. Community members pointed out that social problems has an effect on development and mental health issues in the sense that the stress caused by social problems in society can sometimes affect the normal functioning of one’s brain this can happen to both children and adults. In a competitive world, education is a very significant tool for every person to succeed in life. Education is a must for both women and men equally as both together make an educated and healthy society. It gives many purposes to the lifelike as the development of the personal advancement, increases social status and health. Much of what goes on in society disclosures into the school method, impacting learners and their learning and knowledge experience. School systems should identify what kinds of social problems are of main anxiety, and educate students regarding ways to fight them. Parents and teachers can cooperate on plans for reducing social issues in schools (Daramola, 2014).

**4.3. Recommendations to Social Challenges in Primary Schools**

30% of head teachers reported that, head teachers should be protected by the code and the law in order to deal with family child abusers and the government should deal with child abusers appropriately. 20% teachers stated that, teachers should pay special attention to identify different types of social problems amongst their learners. 35% of learners stated that, children should be sensitized on how to protect themselves from family abusers and issues of child abuse. 15% community members also suggested that behavioral health care services can help in dealing with social problems in schools. The table below shows responses from the respondents;

**Table 2: Recommendations to Social Challenges in Primary Schools**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Head teachers	Law intensification (code)	30%
Teachers	Special attention to learners	20%
Learners	Sensitization on social challenges	35%
Community members	Behavioral health care services	15%
Total		100%

**Source: Author, 2023**

There is indeed growing concern about the issue of social problems School learners in recent times. There is prevalence of all sorts of anti-social behaviors in the society. That is why the researcher, referred to the present Zambian generation as a generation of youth associated with social vices. How these problems affect learners have become a concern for Parents, Teachers, Authorities, Government and the general public. These problems have been found to be associated with poor academic performance and social adjustment of School learners. The review also showed that deviance, with regards to the school system, is associated with frustration and failure experienced in the school, and that some of the factors responsible for student’s deviant behaviors include factors associated with the home front, socioeconomic status of the parents and peer groups.

**5. CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the abused learners, learners abusing drugs and those facing other social challenges tend to absent themselves from class, lose concentration and focus on their social experiences. They also do not participate in class discussions or other class activities. Thus they find themselves having to repeat grades. It was also concluded that the learners facing these social problems paid more attention to their painful experiences and fail to concentrate to their school work. This affected their full participation in class. Some of them tend to sleep in class and show signs of fatigue most of the time. Another conclusion drawn from the study is that a child facing these social challenges develops bad behavior such as bullying other learners and has hatred to people surrounding them more especially those who abuse drugs. Hence, academic achievement declined due to low concentration and this lead to high pupil drop-out rates in school.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- The school authorities should embark on providing and encouraging recreational activities such as athletics, football, track and field, debating societies, scrabble and creative writing. These activities will inculcate discipline in the learners, and also keep them away from deviant and criminal attitudes.
- Teachers should be providing moral, psychological and physical support to learners and also live by example, this will help learners avoid or deal with deviant behaviours.
- The Ministry of Education and Training institutions should ensure that teachers are equipped with counselling skills.
- Parents should be enlightened to appreciate the benefits of encouraging and motivating their children to achieve a balanced academic and social life.
- Non-governmental organization should organize awareness programs, workshops and seminars with a view to educating all concerned with child upbringing and child education.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Abdullahi, M. A. (2008). **The Effects of Secondary School Students Truant Behaviour on Educational Development: Counselling Intervention.** Sokoto Education Review. Vol 10 No. 2.
- [2] Adams, J. E. (2016). **Understanding Adolescence: Current Development in Adolescence Psychology.** Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- [3] Adenuga, O. A. (2006). **Sexual Promiscuity as correlates of Poor Academic Performance among Senior Secondary School Students in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State.** OOUJES Vol. 6 No. 1. pp 151-158.
- [4] Alderman, S. Wanda, P. and Battle, J. (2000). **The Invisible Gender: Educational outcomes for African-American Females in Fathers-only versus Mothers-only Households.** Race and Society 3:165-82.
- [5] Awujo, C. G. (2006). **Youth Restiveness in the Niger Delta: Possible Solutions and Counselling Implications. Trends in Educational Studies (TRES).** Journal of the Institute of Education. University of Port Harcourt. Vol. 1 No. 2 pp. 172-177.
- [6] Becker, H. S. (2013). **Outsiders. Studies in the Sociology of Deviance.** Free Press.
- [7] Cassimjee, J. (2018). **Peer Interaction in a Natural Setting.** London: Macmillan Publishers.
- [8] Cohen, A. (2015). **Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang.** The Free Press.
- [9] Coleman, J. W. and Cressey, D. R. (2019). **Social Problems.** England: Longman, Addison Welsey Longman Inc.
- [10] Daramola, C. O. (2014). **Introduction to Sociology of Education.** Ibadan: Gloryland Publishing Company, Ibadan.
- [11] Eitzen (2009). **Social Problems:** Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- [12] Elliot, D. S. and Harwin L. (2014). **Delinquency and Dropo/ut.** Baltimore: John Hopkins University Centre for Social Organization of School.
- [13] Harding, S. (2016). **Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues.** Indiana University Press.
- [14] Ilogu, G. C. (2005). **Classroom Learning and Instruction.** Lagos: Mandate Communications Limited.
- [15] Kelvin, L. and Robert, J. (2011). **Child and Adolescence Development.** New Jersey: Houghton Niflin Company.
- [16] Kendall (2009). **Social Problems in a Diverse Society.** Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- [17] Kyra, S. (2009). **Talk to your kids about social problems affecting their school.** European Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 11, No. 4.

- [18] Lemert, E. (2011). **Social Pathology: A Systematic Approach to the Theory of Sociopathic Behaviour**. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- [19] Leone, C. M. and Margse R. (2019). **Classwork and Homework in Early Adolescence: The Ecology of Achievement**. Journal of Youth and Adolescence 18:531-48.
- [20] Mahoney, S. J. (2008). **Class work on contemporary Social problems**. Sociology Department. Virginia Commonwealth University.
- [21] Matza, D. (2014). **Delinquency and Drift**. New York: Wiley.
- [22] Merton, R. K. (2014). **Anomie and Deviant Behaviour: A Discussion and Critique**. The Free Press.
- [23] Merton, R. K. (2018). **Social Theory and Social Structure** New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- [24] Mills, C. W. (2019). **The Sociological Imagination**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [25] Nwokedi, J. N. (2012). **The Effect of G & C on Adolescent School Discipline in Ikeja Local Education District, Lagos State**. A Research Project submitted to the Department of Education Foundations, Faculty of Education Unilag.
- [26] Nwokocha, E. (2007). **“Transactional Sex in Nigerian Universities: Social and Demographic Implication”**. Unilag Sociological Review (USR). Vol. VIII.
- [27] Olayinka, M. S. (2016). **‘School problems and what the Counsellor can be about them’** Unpublished mimeograph, University of Lagos.
- [28] Oloyede, G. A. (2016). **Drugs Man and Society An Introduction to Drug Abuse Education**. Drug Resources Publication, Nigeria.
- [29] Oni, A. A. (2010). **Peer Group Pressure as a Determinant of Adolescent Social Adjustment in Nigeria schools**. Asian Pacific Journal of Educators and Education, Vol. 25, 189-202.
- [30] Onwuamanam, D. O. (2018). **Critical Issues in the Values of Adolescents: Today Implications for Counselling**. The Counsellor 8, 24-28.
- [31] Osaat, S. D. (2019). **The Relevance of Moral Education to Social and Political Development in Nigeria**. Journal of Teacher Education and Teaching Vol. 3 (1 & 3). PP. 52-63.
- [32] Osa-Edoh, G. E. and Iyanmu, F. I. (2012). **Social Life Adjustment and Academic Achievement of Adolescents in Edo State: Implication for Counselling**. Journal of Applied Sciences. Ozean Publication.
- [33] Osarenren, N (2002). **Child Development and Personality**. Lagos: Derate Nigeria Limited.
- [34] Parsons, T. (2011). **The Social System**. New York: Free Press.
- [35] Payne, M. R. (2003). **The Differential Impact of Family Characteristics on Academic Achievement of Black and White Youth**: Race and Society 6:141-62.
- [36] Regoli, R. (2009). **Delinquency in Society**. Canada: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

---

#### Author's short biography



**Chanda Chansa Thelma**, specializes in Civic Education and has taught Civic Education at university level for seven years now. Currently, she is lecturing Civic Education, Political Science, Religious Studies, Social Sciences Research Methods and Educational Research at Rockview University in Lusaka, Zambia. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Civic Education, Master of Arts in Civic Education, Bachelor of Arts Degree; Civic Education & Religious Studies, Diploma in Education and several Educational Certificates. Currently, she is a Coordinator for Open Distance Learning at Rockview University.