

## **The Effects of Chinamwali Initiation Schools on Girl Child Education. A Case of Selected Public Primary Schools of Katete District, Zambia**

by

**Monica Phiri<sup>1</sup>, Astridah Musonda<sup>2</sup>, Harrison Daka<sup>3</sup>**

*<sup>1,2</sup>Kwame Nkrumah University, and <sup>3</sup>The University of Zambia*

### **Abstract**

*Chinamwali initiation school for girls has been a subject of concern within the community in Katete district. While the Chewa people of Katete celebrate chinamwali as a transition from childhood to adulthood, some aspects of this traditional ceremony such as sex education given to the initiates are thought to have a negative impact on the education of girls. Based on these concerns, the study purposed to find out the effects of chinamwali on girl child education in selected public primary schools of Katete district, Zambia. The study adopted the descriptive research design and was guided by the Invitational Learning theory by William Watson Purkey. The population under study consisted of 8 teachers, 20 parents and 20 girls, the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS), the Chief and 2 Anamkungwi. Purposive sampling technique was used to select public primary schools and parents while random sampling technique was used to select teachers. The girls were selected using the snowball sampling technique. The researcher used questionnaire with close and open-ended questions and the interview guide. Descriptive analysis was used for the close-ended questions and thematic analysis was used for the open-ended questions and the interview guide. The results indicated that chinamwali initiation schools affected the education of primary school girls in terms of: school attendance, pupil's behaviour, pupil's participation in class, early pregnancies and marriages, school dropouts and HIV and AIDS during and after seclusion. From the findings, the researchers concluded that the training girls received during chinamwali initiation ceremony was more relevant to adulthood life but it affected*

*their academic lives negatively. The recommendations were that the girls should not be taught about adult life at a young age and that chinamwali should be done during school holidays and only for a short period of time such as a week. The government also needs to educate youths on the risks of early pregnancies, early marriages and HIV and AIDS through some traditional practices.*

**Key words:** *Initiation Schools, Formal Education, Girls Education, Seclusion*

## **Introduction**

Historically, initiation schools that entail the rites of passage of girls into womanhood were largely associated with marriage. For most African traditions, this meant that when a girl comes of age, which usually happened during her adolescent years, she would be handed over to a traditional counsellor in order to mark a transition from one phase of life to another. This was an indication that the child had graduated from childhood to adulthood. For this reason, many people in various places in the world organise rites of passage so that they prove their beliefs, skills in performing tasks, and maturity (Leis, 2011). During these initiation rituals, the initiates are taught various rules and most of these are centered on threats through myths and taboos of the society (Mkandawire, Simooya and Monde, 2017). They are also taught moral instructions and social responsibility, which they are expected to observe after the initiation ceremony.

The processes and contents offered to the initiates during initiation ceremonies are different in each society. Mostly, songs, dances, masks, various tests, making tattoos, among others, have been used as verification and a symbol of rituals. Some societies focus on fearlessness and persistence while others focus on spiritual aspects and practical knowledge (Kangwa, 2011). To the Chewa people of the Eastern province in Zambia and Katete district in particular, “this ceremony symbolises a graduation of girls from childhood to womanhood by handing them over to experienced women called ‘Anamkungwi’ or ‘Aphungu’ who put a girl in a confinement where the training takes place” (Mkandawire, Simooya and Monde, 2019:46). The girl stops going to school during the period of confinement. This absence from school impacts negatively on the girls’ education because the period of confinement is too long. The girls are confined up to four weeks or more. Usually, there is no time arranged to

ensure the recovery of what the girls lost out during the period of confinement. At the end of it all, girls are strongly advised not to talk to anyone who has not yet gone through chinamwali initiation. They are also advised not to speak in public. The silence is observed for a period of one month. This affects the girls because they do not participate in class for that period and eventually, adopt the non-participatory approach in class (Camfeed, 2007).

Phiri (2010) points out that Chinamwali initiation school is circled around respect of cultural values, sex and marriage, women role in society and family set up. Many aspects of Chinamwali have a number of negative impacts on girls' education. This, eventually, translates to increased numbers of school dropouts among the girls. These negative aspects affect the girls and compel them to want to get into marriage while they are still young. This, however, translates that chinamwali initiation school does not promote gender equality as the number of boys completing school and, eventually, getting into employment surpasses that of girls. As such, it is expected that fewer women get employed as compared to men because of the cultural practice which has negatively affected the equal provision of education. This, however, is what the study endeavoured to explore to investigate the effects of chinamwali initiation ceremony on the girl child education in public primary schools of Katete district, in Zambia.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is important to uphold the cultural values and teachings in order to transmit our traditions from the older generation to the younger generation. These teachings and ceremonies, however, should not contradict with the right of an individual and must be in line with the current societal norms. Chinamwali initiation school is one of the cultural practices which helps to teach young girls a lot of cultural values but might also be affecting the girls' access and participation in formal education. In 2018, it was reported that over 2,189 girls dropped out of school. Of this number, 1,612 girls dropped out of school due to early marriages while 365 girls fell pregnant just after coming out of the seclusion (MOE, 2011). This study explored the effects of chinamwali initiation school on girl child education through a case study on selected public primary schools of Katete District, of the Eastern Zambia. The findings might help review the curriculum and the process of Chinamwali so that the girls benefit from both education and culture.

## **Invitational Learning Theory**

This study was guided by the invitational learning theory by William Watson Purkey who first introduced invitation theory in 1978. Invitational theory is a view of professional practice that addresses the total environment and all relationships formed in educational organisations. It is a process for communicating caring and appropriate messages intended to summon forth the realisation of human potential as well as for identifying and changing those institutional and relational forces that defeat and destroy potential. Having the ability to identify forces that destroy potential, the theory was used in this study to identify environmental factors contributing to school dropout by checking the type of messages pupils receive from five components of the school, home and cultural environment (people, places, policies, processes, and programmes) comprising the school environment and influences their behaviour leading to dropping out.

Invitational education theory, believes that every person and everything in and around the school adds to, or subtracts from, the process of being a beneficial presence in the lives of human beings (pupils) depending on the type of messages they transmit to the pupil. The school environment comprises five factors namely; people, places, policies, programmes and processes. The five factors should be so intentionally inviting in order to create an environment in which each pupil is cordially summoned to develop intellectually, socially, physically, psychologically and spiritually. Invitational education suggests some practical strategies for making schools the most inviting place. The theory helped to examine how people (school staff and pupils), places (physical environment of the school), policies (school rules and regulations), Programmes (school curricula) and processes (methods used to come up with a better school) sends messages that influence pupils' decision leading to dropping out of school. A curriculum based on the tenets of invitational education positively impacts learning experiences by transmitting positive messages (Bakare-Yusuf, 2003).

Theories are important in research and teaching as they “help in illuminating concepts, facts, and ideologies that are encountered in everyday life of a researcher” (Nkhata et al., 2019:97). The invitational learning theory is critical to the creation of unintentionally inviting school environment in which learners are given the opportunity to work freely. This, in turn, helps them perceive school in much more positive ways that are helpful in preventing dropping out. Although pupils at times, come to school already exposed to

risk factors leading to dropout such as family factors, community factors and individual factors, school factors compound the existing risk factors making dropping out most likely.

### **Chinamwali Initiation Schools**

There is a diverse of rites of passage, which people celebrate around the world. Despite their diversity, all the rites of passage are done for the same reason. The rites of passage graduate individuals from their former groups and prepare them for their new life in society. The individuals who undergo initiation are prepared for their new roles in society and are bound with other individuals in that group or phase of life in society. The individuals who undergo initiation are prepared for their new roles in society and are bound with other individuals in that group or phase of life. Stardate (2003) points out that the transition from childhood to adulthood, which is also referred to as “coming of age” of girls is a very important phase in the life of everyone. Girls celebrate their transition from childhood to adulthood differently. Depending on where they come from and their culture, others celebrate the transition whilst very young while others celebrate it at an appropriate age. In much of the Chewa societies, traditional initiation rituals are still considered as very important and necessary aspects of an individuals’ growth. Most of the women in the Chewa society are initiates of Chinamwali. It is only the initiated members of Chinamwali that are considered to be adults in the Chewa society.

Kapungwe (2003) argues that girls are initiated to the Chinamwali School at the onset of their first menstruation. This is done between the ages of 10 and 18 as they go through a series of puberty initiation rites. This is a secret initiation school for the girls. A Chewa woman is required to undergo Chinamwali in order to attain a full female adult status. Chinamwali is a very important activity in the life of a Chewa woman. While it is appreciated, Chinamwali teaches good principles like cleanliness during menstruation, respect for adults and dress code for girls, practices that impact negatively to the girls are also taught. The most dominant aspect that is taught to the girls during Chinamwali initiation is sex education. This training is given to every initiate regardless of age. During the ceremony, the girls are subjected to teasing as they receive instructions. Songs and dances are commonly used to present the content of their teachings. The girls are taught instructions in manners that women must observe such as respect for adults, dress code and hygiene. The girls are also taught practical instructions in sex and childbearing (Maambo, 2007). Hence,

to some extent, this influences a girl child to practice handling a man in bed at a premature stage, therefore, promoting early marriages, teenage pregnancies and sexual transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS, syphilis and Gonorrhoea to mention but a few (Phiri 2010).

In continuation, the Chinamwali initiation ceremony is climaxed by the ritual carried out by a person called Afisi also known as 'Hyena concept'. Hyena concept is where parents employ a mystery man who is engaged to a girl child in prediction of the baby's sex during pregnancy or after birth. The Afisi takes different types of gifts called 'chigwirira mala' to the parents before and after birth of a girl child such as maize, mice (mbewa), and some manual services, in order to be recognised by the parents as a husband to the child. Therefore, Afisi is the chosen man to test the sexual skills of a young girl after initiation ceremony. However, this is one of the cultural practices that promotes early marriages in that, a girl child is prompted to have sexual activities even more after the initiation ceremony before marriage, hence, this leads to early marriages, teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (Munthali, 2007).

### **Effects of Chinamwali Initiation School on Girl Child Education.**

A research carried out by Leis (2011) reveals that initiation rituals have various effects on the initiates across the continent of Africa. Munthali (2007) contends that the training the initiates receive during initiation does not promote their education but prepares them for marriage. This shows that girls' time in the primary schools was mostly used for other duties apart from academic work. This was as a result of the traditional demands. In these societies, it was found that traditional values prevent girls from making their own independent decisions and expressing their own opinions. Some of the effects are explained below.

#### *(a) Absenteeism from School*

Absenteeism from school is one of the effects of traditional initiation rituals on the education of girls. In a study carried out by Phiri (2010) during the hibernation period, girls were reported not to be comfortable coming to school covering themselves with Khanga (a wrapper) as the boys would start mocking and teasing them. As a result, they opted to dodge school and stay home comfortably.

#### *(b) Behaviour Change*

Good academic performance for every pupil depends on behaviour and discipline. A well-behaved pupil is likely to improve his academic performance. Longwe (2003) points out that bad behaviour of pupils makes it difficult for them to learn in a classroom situation. Behaviour change is one effect of traditional rituals that affect girl's education. A study carried out by Camfeed (2007) in Katete, Zambia, indicates that Chinamwali initiation rituals caused girls to be more assertive and sometimes rude and cheeky, thinking she is old enough like any other elderly person. This is a result of the form of training and counselling received in the different initiation camps. This behaviour change among the Chewa girls is clearly seen immediately after the initiation ceremony. Munthali (2007) contends that the initiates become rude to teachers. The initiates also reject school as they view it as an institution for children. Maambo (2007) points out that the primary aim and meaning of the traditional ritual is to graduate girls from childhood to adulthood.

*(c) Participation in Class*

Leis (2011) points out that, pupil class participation is one of those most dependable instructional strategies. The strategy is dependable because it is beneficial to the learners, accepted, straightforward easy to use and mostly, successful at producing a good number of learning goals. Pupils' class participation is very important and necessary in class because it maintains pupils' focus and attention. Class participation through group discussion, pair discussion and question and answer is a way through which pupils' retention would be improved. These methods are used by teachers because of the positive results they yield. Camfeed (2007) reveals that when the initiation is over, girls are strongly advised not to talk to anyone who has not gone through the process of Chinamwali initiation rituals. In most cases, when a newly initiated girl meets anyone elderly on the road, she kneels down by the roadside to give way as a symbol of respect and maturity. This is observed by the new initiates for a period of up to four weeks. This practice makes it difficult for the new initiates to participate in class. Therefore, if a pupil does not participate in class, he or she may feel neglected and out of place and this may reduce the interest to learn (Stardate, 2003). These dilemmas affect their school attendance leading to dropout.

*(d) Early Pregnancies, Marriages and School Dropouts*

Camfeed (2007) reveals that the prevalence of early pregnancies and child

marriages is very much linked to some of the negative aspects involved in the traditional initiation ceremonies for girls known as Chinamwali. This child marriage study revealed that detailed and explicit nature of the curriculum around sex and marriage taught to the girls during “Chinamwali” is among the causes of child marriages and high incidences of teen pregnancies. This is because some of the content in the ceremonies influence girls to engage in sexual activities and, thereafter, enter into marriage. With early marriage, one is unlikely to continue with education due to the fact that they cannot harmonise education requirements and marital responsibilities. Early pregnancies that are rampant in the sub-Saharan Africa are directly correlated with the traditional initiation rituals. Many girls who go through chinamwali initiation dropout of school. Kangwa (2011) advances evidence that initiation ceremonies affect pupils’ in terms of dropping out from school. Despite the re-entry policy which allows girls to return to school after delivery, (MoGE, 2011) in Zambia, evidence shows that most of them end up dropping out of school as they get married.

*(e) HIV and AIDS in Cultural Practices*

There are various cultural initiation rites at play that have exacerbated the spread of HIV and AIDS. These initiation rituals might be concerned with birth, puberty, marriage and death (Phiri, 2010). Cultural initiation rituals in Africa especially in the sub-Saharan Africa play a significant role in peoples’ lives. To some extent, they put the initiates at a risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. As such, there is urgent need to seriously consider the cultural methodologies in use in order to look at the prominent facets of cultural practices in traditional rites of passage that cause the spread of HIV and AIDS. In Zambia, Chinamwali initiation rituals have a great potential of perpetuating the spread of HIV and AIDS primarily because of the last activity that marks the end of the initiation. Chinamwali ends with the activity called Fisi. This is an activity where a young man is allowed to have sexual intercourse with the new initiate. There is a great possibility that the Fisi (a young man) might be infected with HIV and AIDS. In the long run, a man who would marry the girl who had sexual intercourse with the Fisi would also get infected. It should be stated that this practices have been stopped by Kalonga Gawa Undi (Chief of the Chewa).



## **Strategies to Address the Challenges Caused by Chinamwali Initiation School on Girl Child Education**

Over time, modifications and integration of initiation school lessons into modern school curricular have been made in order to teach the positive values taught in these schools to young ones. One such modification has been the timing to hold initiation lessons (King, 2004). In some places, the seclusion period has been reduced and adjusted in order to suit the school calendar (Maambo, 2007). Since initiation schools usually extended over the school term, initiation lessons could be done after school and during weekends. However, Longwe (2003) argues that this would still affect the mastery of initiation lessons. Some parents in urban areas send their children to spend school holidays in rural areas so that they could be taught traditional values and practices. Other parents hire individuals to undertake the training of their children in vital lessons of initiation schools instead of subjecting them to the “bush house school” (Kibera, 2007).

Another modification has been in the area of content and methodology. Maambo’s (2007) findings point to certain modifications that should be made to initiations schools in general and Chinamwali in particular. Among these are: to deliver the knowledge and skills in an ascendant manner, whereby these are to be acquired at the right time and for the right purpose. This would involve teaching puberty girls about hygiene and self-discipline. Later on, when the girls are about to get married, they could then be taught about marriage and other practices that go with marriage life. Another alternative is to reserve initiation schools for out of school girls and that their lessons should take place just before marriage (MOE, 2011).

Alternatively, some aspects of initiation schools could be brought or integrated into the modern education system. One way is to draft the content of initiation schools into the school localised curriculum. Power Sistas (2012) advances topics that could possibly be incorporated in the learner’s lessons. These include; human values and relationships, sexual education, tribal stories, folklore, tribal songs and dances, tribal law and customs, tribal occupation and crafts and tribal knowledge. This knowledge is embedded in songs, stories, dances and other experiences in the learner’s immediate environment (King, 2004).

The traditional leaders have taken an active role to help girl child education. The Paramount Chief Kalonga Gawa Undi of the Chewa people of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique and his people have used the Kulamba

traditional ceremonies to sensitise its people through putting up themes that encourage girl education. In 2018, the theme was “Educating a Girl Child, Ending Early Marriages” while in 2019, Undi celebrated the ceremony with a similar theme, “Let’s Send Our Children to School Both Boys and Girls, Stop Child Marriages”.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive research design as the study involved the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting an existing condition. The design was used for the study as it looked at the effects of Chinamwali initiation ceremony on girl child education in selected public primary schools. A mixed methodology approach was used because both quantitative and qualitative data was collected and used.

Four primary schools where chinamwali initiation ceremony was prevalent were purposively selected and used for the study. In terms of respondents, 20 parents were purposively sampled as parents to the girls who underwent chinamwali (10 male and 10 female), and 20 girls were also purposively sampled to target only those who underwent the initiation school. The 4 teachers were randomly sampled with 2 males and 2 females. The 4 head teachers or their representatives were from the schools under study. Snowball sampling technique was used to sample district official, the chief and 2 Anamkungwi/Aphungu as this type of sampling technique focuses on cases which are rich in information because they are unusual or special in a way (Bryman, 2007). The total number of participants and respondents was 52.

Structured interview schedules were used to collect information from parents, the chief and Anamkungwi, and questionnaires were employed to collect information from pupils, teachers and school managers. The researchers first administered the self-constructed questionnaire to the respondents before interviewing the participants so as to include some issues which might have not been clear from the questionnaires. The closed-ended questions from the questionnaires were analysed using the descriptive statistics and the open-ended questions from the questionnaires as well as the interviews were analysed using the thematic data analysis method. The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the analysis of data from close-ended questions.

In order to ensure reliability and validity of information, the researcher used various instruments. These included focus group discussion, interview (triangulation) member checking, and expert knowledge in terms of those who

had undergone initiation, and the tutors who are always present during the initiation rites and the chief who is always informed of what transpires in their villages.

Authorization letters were obtained from Kwame Nkrumah University, the District Education Board Secretary, head teachers and the Chief to allow the researchers to carry out the research. For each of the respondents that took part in the study, informed consent was sought. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed as no names or addresses or any other personal identifying mark was solicited from them. Thus, there was no known risk, social or physical that had arisen from participating in the study. The researchers also ensured that respect for people and communities where they come from was guaranteed and that they had the right to withdraw from the research if they so wished.

## Findings

### *(a) How Chinamwali Initiation Ceremony Affected Girl Child Education*

Findings from respondents and participants showed that girls were affected in various ways after attending a four week or more period of seclusion. The major one rated at 80% was that the initiates' attendance to school was affected negatively. The second was initiates' participation in class which was rated at 70%. Both teachers and pupils accepted that after the initiation schools, the girls did not actively participate during lessons. Dropout of school was rated third at 65%. The respondents gave reasons of dropping out so as to marry (64%) while others due to early pregnancies (36%). The fourth at 40% was initiates' behaviour that they became truancy, cheeky and refused to be reprimanded by the teachers. On HIV and AIDS, the respondents and participants stated that it was difficult to link the effect of Chinamwali to HIV and AIDS as no one has come out in the open with regard to this. However, they stated that due to high early unwanted pregnancies, it could be linked so that some initiates could contract the virus.

### *(b) Challenges Associated with Chinamwali Initiation School*

The researchers discovered that parents and the leaders in the chiefdom take Chinamwali as compulsory. The chief representative said:

*Mwambo wa Chinamwali ndicimake ca mtundu wa a Chewa pa umunthu wacimai. Cifukwa caici, nkosaloleka kuti mwana angangopululira yai. Pa Chicewa, ndi okhawo amene acita mwambo umeneu ndikudziwika kuti ndi ofkapo. Monga m'mene*

*mwaonerapo pa cinthunzithunzi mwana akatuluka mtsimba amaonetsedwa ku anthu apamudzi mwa mwambo kuti anthu adziwe kuti mwanayo, wafikapo (chinamwali initiation ceremony is the key to womanhood of the Chewa tribe. Hence, it is not allowed as per tradition, for a girl child not to undergo the ceremony for it is only the initiated members that are considered to be adults in the Chewa society as the picture depicts).*

One of the girls agreed to the statement of the chief above as she spoke on behalf of others after being asked if it was necessary to undergo the initiation ceremony that:

*Kulowa mchinamwali ndi mwambo womwe wina aliyense waife atsikana sangafune kuti umpitile ai chifukwa mtsikana akatuluka mnyumba amaonetsa kusiyana kwakukulu ndi ife amene sitinalowe. Mwaici, timakhumbila anzathu akatuluka mchinamwali popeza amapatsidwa ulemu ndi munthu wina aliyense. Komonso olowa mnyumba akhala anthu odziwa zambiri malinga mpaumuthu wacizimai makamaka pamtundu wacicewa. (Going under initiation ceremony is a thing where any of us would not want to miss out when the time comes. Usually, there's a very big difference seen between the uninitiated and the initiated. Usually, when a girl comes out of seclusion, she is given a lot of respect by anyone in the village, but again an initiated girl knows a lot of things pertaining our tradition and culture of the Chewa people).*

One of the parent agreed that Chinamwali brings challenges on a girl's education and said:

*Chinamwali ndi mwambo womwe unakhala cikhalire koma kulingana ndi nyengo yomwe tafikamo nkotheke kuti tipeze njira yomwe ana athu angathandizidwiremo poti akafukufuku ambiri amemeza m'mene anthu akhalira m'mbuyo ndi mwambo wathuyu polingana nkuti nthawi yomwe akhala m'chinamwali ikula apa nkuti anzao akuphunzira. (Chinamwali is our culture from time immemorial which has to be celebrated but now looking the time and era in which we are in, researchers have taught us and opened up our eyes that our girls miss out a lot of time whilst in seclusion while their friends are learning).*

### *Solutions to the Challenges Caused by Chinamwali Initiation School*

The respondents indicated that the education journey of the girl child in Katete was badly affected during and after the initiation. Hence, the need to find a solution that would help in curbing the vice. In support of this, one of the Anamkungwi said:

*Mwambo wa Chinamwali ndi mwambo umene sungaletsedwe. Mwaici, njira yoyamba yomwe Ingathandize kuti umbuli ucotsedwe pakati pathu poonetsetsa kuti ana akazi apatako maphunziro, ndikuonetsetsa ife makolo kuti ana amenewa saikidwa mtsimba pokhapo nthawi ya cuti kuti mwana asaluze maphunziro osati kulekelatu ai cifukwa ndi mwambo wa makolo anth omwe udzapelekedwa ku mibandwo ndi mibandwo ndi zoonadi kutinthawi yaitali imataidwa pomwe mwana ali mtsimba kwa pafupifupi mwezi wanthunthu apa nkuti anzake akuphunzira. (Chinamwali initiation ceremony is our cultural tradition that can never be stopped. The only way to help our girls is to see to it that they are put in seclusion for initiation during holidays and not necessarily doing away with the tradition because it is a one which shall be passed from generation to generation. It's true that the time spent in seclusion is almost one full month and even more regarding how fast she is at learning the teachings while friends are learning).*

The fact that Chinamwali traditional initiation ceremony affects the initiates in terms of pupil participation in class, one of the parents had this to:

*Koma tinganene kuti, ana aziloledwa kuyankhula pomwe atuluka mchinamwali, ndiko kuti tataya mwambo wachicewa. Nzoonadi, mwana saloledwa kuyankhula pomwe wangotuluka mchinamwali mpaka nthawi yoikikai, tatha. Ndiye momwe tingathandizile kuti mwambo wathu usasukuluke, ndikuona kuti ana acikazi pomwe atha msikhu asaikidwe tsimba koma kungolangizidwa cabe malango aukhondo monga kasamalidwe ka mwele (salu) yobvala pomwe ali ku mwezi ndi zina zomwe sayenera kucita pomwe alusamba. Ulemu wa makolo, ndinso mabvalidwe aulemu. Mwana angauzidwe zonsezi ndi ambuye ake cabe popanda kumuloweka mtsimba. Tikatero ndiko kuti tingathandize kucepetsa bvuto omwe ana amakhala nalo lakusalankhula mkalasi pomwe atuluka mtsimba. (If we agree to*

*say girls should be allowed to speak immediately they are out of seclusion is a total lie and that would mean demeaning our tradition to its highest level. It's very true that a girl is never allowed to talk after seclusion until the stipulated time elapses. Hence, the best way, our tradition not to lose its meaning is never to allow school going girls be secluded during the school calendar unless on holidays. Therefore, the grandmother can teach the girl the hygienic rules on how to keep the sanitary towel during her messes, respect and dressing modesty. It is through such that girls can be assisted in reducing the problem of non-participatory in class).*

## **Discussion**

### *(a) How Chinamwali Initiation School Affects Girl Child Education.*

The responses from the participants showed that Chinamwali badly affects girl child education on school attendance in one way or the other and that, it is felt during and after the seclusion. According to the findings of the study, girls are always secluded for a period of not less than 30 days while friends were learning. This is in line with Phiri (2010) who contends that the initiates can be secluded for up to one month. Findings further showed that girls were uncomfortable going to school with tattoos on their foreheads that marked the successful graduation of the initiation as the boys would start mocking and teasing them. As a result, findings showed that girls opted to dodge school and stay home comfortably. Complementing this, girls claimed that sometimes their parents would seek permission for them to stay at home and hence, whether the girl agreed or not, she is obliged to obey.

The study further reviewed that behavioural change is another setback that was observed knowing well that good academic performance for every pupil depends on behaviour and discipline. Evidence proved that girls became more seducing and were seen not to be in good terms with classmates (uninitiated) and the teachers. Kangwa (2011) supports the findings that the secrets of womanhood introduced to them, make them feel equal to adult women. As a result, the initiated girls felt they were not supposed to be told what to do. The impact both at home and at school was highly observed and Munthali (2007) contends that the initiates become rude to teachers and eventually, rejected school as they viewed it as an institution for children.

The study also revealed that pupils' participation in class among the

initiates was affected because they were advised not to talk to uninitiated members, nor speak in public for one month after the initiation. Camfeed (2007) points out that when the initiation is over, girls are strongly advised not to talk to anyone who had not gone through the process of Chinamwali initiation rituals. The findings have shown that the practice made the girls adopt a non-participatory approach in class which negatively affected them as class participation is needed for every pupil. Maambo (2007) agrees with the findings that pupils who participate in class activities do not easily forget what they learn. It helps pupils to explore different views as well as improving pupils' power of doing things easily. Through participation, pupils remain connected to a topic and get helped in terms of combining the different ideas of the topic. This, in turn, leads to complete major changes in pupils thinking and way of doing things correctly. Findings proved that in Katete district, initiates lacked all strategies employed by teachers in ensuring the smooth delivery of lessons.

#### *(b) Challenges Associated with Chinamwali Initiation School on Girl Child Education*

From the findings, the responses from the participants on the challenges associated with Chinamwali Initiation School on girl child education were mostly similar. The respondents dwelt on the value of cultural transmission and hygiene as the key issues for the initiation of the girls. The salient issues on culture transmission had to do with the norms and values of a society. Like any other society, the Chewa people have those norms and values which are meant to be transmitted from one generation to another. The findings here were supported by Longwe (2003) who stated that in this cultural perspective, initiation was equivalent to introducing the novice to the mystical history of the tribe; in other words, the initiated learns a lot of things pertaining the culture and tradition of the Chewa people.

The study revealed that, girls were secluded for a period one month and above depending on the wishes of the family and how fast the initiate is learning mwambo. As such, in instances where an initiated girl did not show a change in behaviour after initiation, the parents would recommend for that girl to undergo another seclusion period with the hope of transforming her to the expectations of the community. From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that due to the intensive lessons the initiates undergo, the values inculcated in girls become part of them and influenced their lives hence, the failure to continue with their education as their next expectation is marriage.

Phiri (2010) supports the findings that chinamwali has given young girls practical education which have been beneficial in marriages compared to European education. Mkandawire and Daka (2018) further noted that certain cultural values and practices are preserved for the good as they help in providing identity and a sense of belonging. Any education provided to a specific group of people should reflect the good cultural values of learners in that class for purposes of multicultural education (Mkandawire, 2015). Many times, the education most Africans receive is inadequate to usher them into a productive and hopeful way of life. Some respondents indicated that the formal education the girls receive gives them little benefit of which the majority of them have ended up in marriages even after finishing schools due to lack of funds for college. The initiations are preferred by some parents as they would not want their girls to go into marriage without knowledge of the tradition of their fore fathers that enables them to be known as acceptable adults.

*(c) Solutions to the Challenges Caused by Chinamwali Initiation School*

The findings established that the best way to help the young girls improve their education is by ensuring that they are never secluded during school calendar and to see to it that the content is trimmed just to suit the school going girls. As such, girls, need to be told things suitable to them as soon as they reach puberty or when they experience the biological changes such as menstruation. The teachings hence, should base on what is supposed to be done during menstruation. Given the prospects, Chinamwali traditional initiation ceremony, much as it has its purpose, could still be encouraged to cater for the needs of the full-grown up girls ready to go into marriage unlike the younger girls in primary.

## **Conclusion**

The study established that, chinamwali traditional initiation ceremony has advantages and disadvantages depending on the tutors or owners of the initiation schools. During this era of modernisation, its role as an institution that promotes respect, courage and one's loyalty to their ethnic tribe is highly debatable. However, for those parents who have not attained higher formal education, initiation schools for their girls still serve a purpose as indicated by the respondents. They believe that traditionally, Chinamwali initiation school performs very important roles in society as it prepares the girls for adult roles (Longwe, 2003).



The study established that, chinamwali traditional initiation school is of great importance as it provides the initiates with personality and character. Second, the initiates are provided with personal hygiene especially when they are having their menses by ensuring the good use of mwele (sanitary towel), values of loyalty, good morals, self-respect and hard-work. Despite this, other respondents showed that, due to ill practices of chinamwali initiation practiced on last night before graduation where girls are subjected to have sexual intercourse with a Fisi as way of cleansing, a trend which has become the channel for diseases and deaths, which include HIV and AIDS as girls are made to sleep with people whose HIV and AIDS status they do not know. This also leads to high mortality rate caused by early pregnancies and marriages. From the findings, the researchers concluded that the training the girls received during chinamwali initiation ceremony is more relevant to adulthood life as they extend on the roles and responsibilities they have been used to throughout their young life. The worry is where academic schooling fit into this as the process of initiation appears to have a negative impact on girl child education with the negative attitude that exist regarding the importance of academic education.

Generally, chinamwali initiation ceremony brought a number of effects to girl child education in primary schools of Katete district. These include early sexual experimentation, clashing with the school calendar leading to absenteeism from school, change of pupil behaviour, limited participation in class, early pregnancies and early marriages, infection of STIs related diseases and HIV and AIDS leading to poor academic performance. The researchers recommend that parents need to be encouraged by the schools, non-governmental organisations and all stakeholders to allow their children be secluded during holidays. The ‘anamkungwi’ should be advised to teach hygiene and leave other topics to those going into marriage. Lastly, the government, traditional leaders and parents should continue sensitising the communities on the risks of early pregnancies, early marriages and HIV and AIDS as major contributing factors of dropping out of school.

## References

- Bakare-Yusuf, B. (2003). Beyond Determinism: The Phenomenology of Africa Female Existence. *Feminist Africa: Issue 2* [online] Available at: < <http://www.feministafrica.org/fa%202/bibi.html> > [Accessed on 28/07/2018]

- Bryman, A. (2007) *Qualitative Research 2 Volume IV Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- CAMFED [Campaign for Female Education] Zambia, (2007). *Strategic Plan 2007- 2010*. Zambia: Lusaka
- Choongo, W. M. (2007). *Voices from Africa*. Lusaka: Zambia.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education* 5th ed. 330 London: Routledge Falmer.
- Chiinga, A. (2006), *Celebrating LwiindiGonde Ceremony*. Lusaka: Times Printpak.
- Kangwa, J. (2011). 'Reclaiming the Value of Indigeneous Female Initiation Rites as a Strategy for HIV Prevention: A Gendered Analysis of Chisungu Initiation Among the Bemba People of Zambia.' University of Kwa- Zulu Natal, Gender and Religion.: Unpublished Dissertation . Pietermaritzburg.
- Kibera, W. and Kimokoti, A. (2007), *Fundamentals of Sociology of Education with Reference to Africa*. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.
- King, H. (2004). *The Relevance of Traditional Education*. London: Allan and Unwin Limited.
- Leis, P. (2011). 'Past Passage: Initiation Rites on the Adamawa Plateau Cameroon'. *Ethnology* , 169-188. University of Pittsburgh.
- Maambo, M. (2007), 'The Effects of Nkolola Initiation Ceremony on Women in Southern Province: A Case Study of Monze District'. Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of Zambia.
- Ministry of Education. (2005). *Southern Province Advocacy Resolutions on Factors Affecting the Education of Children and Promoting the Spread of HIV and AIDS*. Livingstone: ChangesProgramme.
- Ministry of Education (2011), *Proposed Curriculum Framework*. Lusaka: Curriculum.
- Kapungwe, A. K. (2003). 'Traditional Cultural Practices of Imparting Sex Education and the Fight Against HIV/AIDS: The Case of Initiation Ceremonies for Girls in Zambia'. *African Sociological Review* , 35-52.
- Longwe, M. (2003). 'From Chinamwali to Chilangizo: the Christianisation of Pre- Christian Chewa Initiation Rites in the Baptised Convention of Malawi'. University of Kwa Zulu Natal, *Theology in Africa Christianity*. Pietermaritzburg: Unpublished Dissertation.
- Maambo, M. (2011). 'The Effect of Nkolola Initiation Ceremony on Women in Southern Province': A Case of Monze District-University of Zambia-Master Dissertation. Lusaka. Unza Press.
- Mkandawire, S. B. and Daka, H. (2018). Cultural Preservation Literacy in Zambia: A Case Study of the Lala People of Serenje District. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Language and Social Sciences Education*, 1(1), 139-174.

- Mkandawire, S. B. (2015). The State of Affairs of Cultural Literacy in Zambia's Multicultural Education System. In A. L. Jotia and J. Dudu (Ed.), *Multicultural Education Discourses: Breaking Barriers of Exclusion in Selected African Contexts* (PP. 190-204). Windhoek, Namibia: Zebra publishing (Pty) LTD.
- Mkandawire, S. B., Simooya, M. S., & Monde, P. N. (2019). *Zambian Culture: Harnessing Cultural Literacy with a Focus on Myths and Taboos*. Lusaka: UNZA Press.
- Mkandawire, S. B., Simooya-Mudenda, S., & Monde-cheelo, P. N. (2017). *Cultural Literacy in Zambia: A Focus on Selected Myths and Taboos*. Lusaka: UNZA Press.
- Munthali, A, Zulu. E. (2007). 'The timing and Role of Initiation Rites in Preparing Young People for Adolescence and Responsible sexual and Reproductive Behaviour in Malawi'. *African Journal of Reproductive Health* , 150-167. Government Printers.
- Nkhata, B., Mkandawire, S. B., Nachiyunde, K., Phiri-Nalube, P., Kaani, B., Mulenga, I. M., Phiri, C., Chileshe, B., Sichula, N., Sikayomya, P., Munachaka, C. J., Banda, D., Mulauzi, F., Serenje-Chipindi, J., and Chipindi, F. M. (2019). Exploring Selected Theories Applicable to Educational Disciplines and Social Sciences Research. *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education*, 6 (12), pp.97-116
- Novak, J. J. Armstrong, D. E and Browne,B.(2014). *Leading for Educational Lives:Inviting and Sustaining Imaginative Acts of Hope in a Connected World*. Sense publishers, Rotterdam/Boston Oxford University Press.
- Nyondo, L. (2013). "Is Sex Education Too Early for Children?" Daily Mail, Friday, 3rd May, P.9.
- Pierre, H. (1981), *Indigenous Knowledge for Girls*. London: Longman.
- Power Sistas. (2012). *Sexual Initiation in Eastern Zambia*/powersistas.com/my-culture/sexuality-initialization- Eastern-Zambia
- Phiri, M. K. (1983). 'Some Changes in the Matrilineal Family System Among the Chewa of Malawi Since the 19th Century.' *Journal of African History* , 257-274. Cambridge University Press
- Purkey, W., & Novak, J. (2013). *Inviting School Success: A Self-concept Approach to Teaching, Learning, and Democratic Practice(3rd Ed.)*. New York: Wadsworth.
- Raisings, T. (2001). *The Bush Burnt, the Stones Remain, Female Initiation Rites in Urban Zambia*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.
- Stardate, L. (2003). *Adolescence and Transition*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company
- Zimba, M. (2015). *Initiation Ceremonies and Marriages*. Times of Zambia .