



## **Towards Addressing African Cultural and Christian Religion's Intolerance Towards Female Teacher And The Girl Child For Effective Teaching, Learning and Peace in Zimbabwe Primary Schools: A Case Study of Gweru District.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**The study aimed at unravelling the effect of culture and religion on the learning of the girl child and the teaching of female teachers. It also aimed at how culture and religion led to peace in primary schools. The study was qualitative and was a case study of Gweru District primary schools. The study sample was 100 female teachers and 60 girl children who were purposively sampled. The study was guided by ethnography. The instruments used were quester-views, focus group discussion schedules and interview schedules. Among the findings of the study were such issues as: African women culturally, are subservient to men, Christian religion requires women to take their husbands as masters, African females are not allowed to air their views at gatherings, African females are prone to gossip, African males are allowed to marry as many wives as they wish so there is no crime in having extra marital affairs yet women are not allowed and the issue of division of labour in the home between male and female children is leading to female children having a dislike of male tasks. Much of the findings on the girl child agree with what the female teachers had aired except the issue of bullying. The two groups recommended such strategies as: counselling sessions, training in intercultural appreciation, multicultural education, interfaith education and anti-bullying campaigns and education among other recommendations.**

**Key words:** Female Teacher, Girl child, African cultural intolerance, Christian religious intolerance, teaching, learning, peace and Primary schools.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Conflict in an organisation is inevitable (Sellman, 2003). Conflict usually arises from cultural and religious backgrounds (Moix, 2006). It jeopardises learning, teaching and peace in the schools. Culture and religion could lead to effective learning, teaching and peace if multiculturalism (Kasambira, 1998; Kimmel, 2006) and inter-faithism (Pedersen, 2006) are instituted in the education system. In Zimbabwe currently African cultural and Christian religious practices are impeding equality and equity of sexes (Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango, 2009). In 1999, the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training in Zimbabwe expressed as one of its findings that gender disparities' persisted at all levels of education (Nziramasanga Commission, 1999, p. 173). Zimbabwe has made efforts to achieve gender equality and remove gender discrimination since independence in 1980 (Zvobgo, 1982). To achieve this it has been a signatory to international gender declarations and conventions (Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani, 2012). Among the declarations and conventions Zimbabwe is a signatory to are; the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the 1979 United Nations convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDW) (Chibaya, Rembe and Wadesango, 2009) and many more. The Zimbabwean government has also produced a National Gender Policy (2004) in

which it spelt out gender discrimination of any form ought to be eliminated. This includes cultural and religious discrimination. The Constitution of Amendment Number 2 (2013) also highlights the need to eliminate discrimination stemming from culture and religion. In other countries concerns about gender disparities in education focused on student performance that is, under-achievement of girls, girl child's access at various levels of schooling and dropout rates of the girl child (Davies, 1990, p.61 cited in Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango, 2009).

The researcher has been a primary school teacher and head for twenty – two years and has realised conflicts of this nature rage unabated and consequently are affecting negatively learning, teaching and peace in the Zimbabwean primary schools. Informal discussions with other teachers also reflected that African cultural and Christian religious related conflicts are complex to resolve confirming (Moix, 2006) assertion.

The researcher's experiences also established that cultural and religious conflicts affect quite strongly the female teachers and the girl child. Informal discussions also confirmed this state of affairs. Shumba (2002) in an exploration of teacher trainee and teachers conceptions of what is child abuse in primary schools in Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe established that teachers excessively use corporal punishment, send particularly girl children to teachers' houses to do domestic activities such as fetching water, sweeping teachers' houses and washing plates. These practices might be stemming from the effect of the African culture. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (2000) Gender resource book for teachers documents discrimination of various forms towards a girl child at both school and home on grounds of African culture and Christian religion.

There are furthermore, various reported cases of female teacher abuse and girl child abuse maybe emanating from the macho attitude of males that might be promoted by the African culture and Christian religion. Girl child abuses are reported in various newspaper reports (Daily, October 27, 2012; Chronicle, November, 22, 2012). The Nziramasanga's Presidential commission Report on Education and Training (1999) reports of girl child discrimination including in the choice of certain subject areas.

### **Statement of the problem**

There is a dearth of evidence of the Christian religion and African culture affecting negatively the operations of female teachers and the girl child in Zimbabwean primary schools consequently impacting negatively on teaching, learning and peace. The main research question was "How were African culture and Christian religion affecting the operations of female primary school teachers in their teaching and girl children learning and peace in Gweru District Primary Schools?"

### **Sub- Research Questions**

The sub - questions that guided the study were:

- To what extent were the Christian religion and the African culture affecting the learning and peace of girl children in the Primary schools?
- To what extent were the African culture and the Christian religion affecting the operations of female teachers in the Primary schools?
- What could be done to ensure that the African culture could positively influence operations of female teachers and the girl child to enhance effective learning, teaching and peace in the Primary schools?
- What could be done to ensure that the Christian religion could positively influence operations of girl child and female teachers to enhance effective learning, teaching and peace in the Primary schools?

### **Purpose of study**

The study was intended to establish the effect of African culture and the Christian religion on the female teachers and the girl child in carrying out their operations of teaching, learning and peace in the primary schools.

### **Significance of study**

The study was significant to the following groups of people;

- To the teachers in that it brought an awareness of the effect of religion and culture and corrective actions could be taken.
- to the Heads of schools in that it brought to their awareness the effect of the Christian religion and African culture on female teachers and girl children so as to craft corrective actions.
- to policy makers of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education in that it brought to their awareness the effect of the Christian religion and the African culture on female teachers and the girl children and the crafting of policies that could address the negative effects of the Christian religion and the African culture.

### **Limitations of the study**

The study had some limitations. The first limitation was that the study was a case study so the data collected could not be generalised for the whole country because the study was confined to one district. Thus the strategies could not be applied to all districts in the country.

This limitation was circumvented by triangulation of sources of information and data gathering techniques. Other limitations were the use of paper questionnaires and the distance from Gweru of some schools in the sample which made the exercise to be expensive. The researcher made use of opportunities that arose from visits to student teachers posted in the district under study.

Another limitation was that one of the languages spoken in the district namely Ndebele made it difficult for the researcher to communicate directly with participants. The use of research assistants minimised the challenge.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The study was delimited to primary schools in the Gweru District of the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe.

The study focused on the effects of the Christian religion and the African culture on the operations of female teachers and the girl child specifically how these affected learning, teaching and peace and ways of eradicating their negative effects.

### **Review of Related Literature**

In reviewing literature the following reviews are made; conceptual framework, theoretical framework and reviews of empirical literature.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Culture**

Gwirayi (2010, p. 66) defines culture as "the whole way of life of a people." Gwirayi (2010) cites Pang (2007) positing that culture has three layers namely language, symbols and artefacts (means of communication, customs and practices) and interactional patterns (means of interaction) and shared values, beliefs, norms and expectations ( values driving people /

groups). Gwirayi (2010) further states that culture is not static. This means it undergoes continuous change. Culture is also viewed as falling into two categories namely material and non-material (Gwirayi, 2010). Material culture is composed of manufactured objects while non-material culture comprises people's beliefs, values and ideas. Culture has sub-cultures and counter-cultures. Sub-cultures refer to the presence of those groups of people whose way of life is both related to the general culture (mainstream culture) of the society and yet distinguishable from it (Horton and Hunt, 1984 cited in Gwirayi, 2010). Gwirayi (2010) gives examples of sub-cultures as occupational groups for example, teachers and students in primary schools. Sub-cultures which are in active opposition to the dominant culture are counter-cultures, an example is girls who venture into prostitution.

There are two forms of culture namely ideal and real culture. Ideal culture is formally approved procedures which people are supposed to follow when doing particular activities. Real culture comprises those procedures that people practice.

Culture is affected by ethnocentrism, xenocentrism and cultural relativism (Gwirayi, 2010). Ethnocentrism implies viewing and interpreting reality only in terms of one's cultural beliefs and values. Xenocentrism means looking at reality in terms of other cultural beliefs and values and having a total disregard of one's culture. Cultural relativism implies studying and appreciating other people's cultures.

Culture is from the Latin root *cultus* meaning to educate or literary to cultivate. This means exerting some control over the growth of something.

Culture is the total ways or philosophy by which a group of people lives (Matsika, 2012). This results in a way of life shared by members of a given population. Life practices are passed down from one generation to another through this process of acculturation also known as socialization.

A people's culture includes practices or symbols such as their rituals, rites, symbols, myths, artifacts, language and certain ceremonies to which they learn their identity and the wisdom of managing their lives (Matsika, 2012).

Culture is the glue that holds a community together.

## **Religion**

Aldridge (2007) cites Durkheim (1915, p. 47) defining religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."

Over the years sociologists view religion's definition as having the ability to be classified into two varieties that is the broader inclusive and the narrower the exclusive type. In the inclusive category Aldridge (2007) cite the following definitions of religion;

Lenski (1963, p. 331) defines religion as a system of beliefs about the nature of the forces shaping man's destiny, and the practices associated therewith, shared by the members of a group.

Geertz (1968, p. 4) views religion as:

*a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long –lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivation seem uniquely realistic.*

Yinger (1970, p. 7) views religion as “a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life”.

In the exclusive definitions category Aldridge (2007) cites the following definitions; Spiro (1966, p. 66) views religion as, “an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings.”

Robertson (1970) posit that religious culture is that set of beliefs and symbols (and values deriving directly therefrom) pertaining to a distinction between an empirical and super – empirical reality and a related and significant supra – empirical segment of reality; the language and symbols which are used in relation to this distinction; and the activities and institutions which are concerned with its regulation.

The above definitions reflect that religion is a set of beliefs that pertain to empirical issues and super – empirical issues that is the supernatural.

## **Gender**

Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani (2012, p. 4536) indicate the term gender is not synonymous with sex. They point out that gender is not a physiological but social concept that refers to sets of culturally defined character traits labelled as “masculine” and feminine (Peterson and Runyan, 1999, p. 257 cited in Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani, 2012). The term gender is a cultural interpretation of maleness and femaleness as masculinity and femininity. Capper (1993, p. 94) indicates that gender is socially constructed and describes the characteristics we ascribe to people because of their sex, the ways we believe they behave and characteristics we believe they have, based on our cultural expectations of what is male and what is female.

Society places different values on masculine and feminine behaviours, gender is regarded as a basis for relations of inequality between men and women (Peterson and Runyan, 1999, p. 5 cited by Gudyanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani, 2012).

Munroe (2009) as cited in Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani (2012) argues that gender roles are contingent on the socio-economic, political and cultural context and are thus usually specific to a given time and space. Gender roles are not universal but defined in different ways by different cultural norms and values. Munroe (2009) as cited in Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani (2012) also notes that gender roles are learned and vary widely within and between cultures and also argues that like culture, gender roles are historical, changeable, subject to abolition and transformation through everyday happenings as well as periodic moments of crisis.

Anderson (2009) says the distinction between gender and sex rests on the fact that constitutes the different roles, norms and meaning they assign to men and women and the behaviour, identity and symbolisms that are associated with them on account of their real or imagined sexual characteristics. These are culture specific as each culture parts importance on different gender roles and expectations.

Haslanger, S. (2012) as cited in Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani (2012) notes several dimensions of gender:

- Gender roles - men and women are assigned to distinct social roles based on perceived abilities of men and women.
- Gender norms - men and women are expected to comply with different norms of behaviours and bodily comportment.
- Gendered fruits and virtues - psychological traits are considered masculine and feminine. Masculine traits are considered to be virtues in women and vices in men.
- Hindered behaviour - this is behaviour which is acceptable for men and not for women and that is acceptable for women and not for men.
- Gender identity
- This includes all ways one must understand oneself to be a man or a woman.
- Gender symbolism
- Inanimate objects may be placed in a gendered field of representation through conventional association, imaginative protection and metaphorical thinking for example, a garage is associated with males and a kitchen with females.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study is premised on ethnography that is, cultural analysis. Ethnography means writing about people (Goldbart and Husler, 2005, p. 26).

The distinctive features of ethnography revolve around the notion that people are meaning makers and an understanding of how people, their worlds, the need to understand the particular cultural worlds in which people live and in which they both construct and utilize is necessary (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005). People are seen as collaborating in the construction and maintenance of cultural meanings which inform their actions.

The theories guiding the study are Africana Womanism and Social Pedagogy. Africana Womanism has been hailed as a theory meant to give a fuller and more realistic explanation of gender relations of men and women of Africana descent. Womanism has been coined by Walker Alice. A womanist is committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people (Mojika, 2011). Rather than supporting separatism, womanism promotes universalism. Womanism indicate the belief that woman and man were equal by nature and divinely and must operate as so (Ancient sacred text of Africa cited by Mojika (2011)). Women of African diaspora have always been equal to their male counterparts due to the fact both have been equal partners in the struggle against oppression. Womanism provides women of colour a space to create dialogue in a non threatening environment. Characterised by a number of tenets, it has been presented by Hudson-Weems as one that explains male-female relations from the context and history of African culture (Makaudze, 2014, p.128). Africana Womanism has eighteen key components namely; self-naming, self-definition, family centredness, role flexibility, adaptability, authenticity, black female sisterhood, struggling with males against oppression, male compatibility, recognition, ambition, nurturing, strengthen, respect, respect for elders, mothering and spirituality. The study was also as alluded to earlier premised on social pedagogy theory. Hatton (2003) cites The Social Pedagogy Development Network defining Social Pedagogy as an academic discipline that draws on Care theories from various related disciplines such as education, sociology, psychology and philosophy. In essence, it is concerned with the well-being, learning and growth of a child. This is underpinned by humanistic values and principles which view people as active and resourceful agents, highlights the importance of including them into the wider community and aims to tackle or prevent social problems and inequalities.

This is done through active involvement of the people concerned and getting their views despite their differences.

Petrie, Buddy, Cameron, Wigfall and Simon (2006) posit that social pedagogy emphasises team work and valuing the contribution of others in bringing up children. The child is seen as a social being, connected to others and at the same time with their own distinctive experiences and knowledge.

ThemPra (2015) advances the following aims of social pedagogy:

- It is holistic education that is education of the head (cognitive knowledge) heart, (emotional and spiritual knowledge) and hands (practical and physical skills).
- It creates a holistic well-being that is strengthening health sustaining factors.
- It enables children to grow up as self-responsible persons who take responsibility for their society and
- It promotes human welfare and prevents or eases social problems.

Conflict resolution is viewed as fulfilling the above aims of Social Pedagogy and therefore, any strategies designed should lead to the fulfilment of these aims.

ThemPra (2015) advances the following pathways as Social Pedagogy;

- Providing opportunities for learning,
- Building strong and positive authentic relationships which are non-hierarchical,
- Enabling children to empower themselves,
- Working with the head, heart and hands in everyday activities and
- Cultural impact on what is possible in practice.

Furthermore, Petrie et al., (2006) contends that social pedagogy builds on an understanding of children's rights not limited to procedural matters or legislated requirements so teachers in practice and in their training are supposed to be prepared in sharing in many aspects of the children's daily lives and activities. It therefore, means children's associative life is seen as an important resource which teachers should foster and make use of in their teaching.

Social pedagogy also emphasises the centrality of relationships and the importance of listening and communication (Petrie et al., 2006).

### **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

A multiplicity of literature attests to the effect of culture and religion on the girl child and the female teacher. Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani, (2012) carried out a study on gender inclusivity in the curriculum in Zimbabwe's Education system. The study included a content analysis of textbooks and other relevant teaching and learning materials. It also entailed in – depth interviews with teachers. The study centred on Zimbabwean secondary school English, Mathematics and History. The findings of the study were that there was prominence of male figures and silencing or overshadowing of female women is glorified, in the curriculum for example glorification of male promiscuity on grounds that it is the African culture. In African culture women are not supposed to say no their no means yes in fact, stereotypical images of men and women where major jobs like doctors and engineers, builders and lawyers are men while nurses are women.

Active and productive roles are in most cases associated with masculinity and supportive and passive roles being portrayed as women's roles. Girls in school were mainly regarded as not

equal to boy children necessitating the choice by parents of sending children to school when faced with the situation of who to progress with schooling faced with financial difficulties. Girl children, it was established in the study were assigned low status task of sweeping and arranging furniture in the classroom.

Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango (2009) investigated and analysed factors that women teachers consider as barriers to their advancement to headships positions in Zimbabwean Primary Schools. Focus group discussions and opened interviews with 13 experienced women school heads were undertaken. The findings of this study were; gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes caused low self esteem and lack of confidence. Women were found to value their family roles as overriding all other roles and there was lack of support from the home and the workplace. The above findings are all related to culture which considers women as people who are not equal to men and who can occupy positions that are meant for men. Dorsey (1996, p. 30) cited by Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango (2009) explains that "from an early age, daughters are groomed for their marriage roles of wife, mother and food provider ... and they are conditioned from an early age to believe that a woman is in the home". The other reason advanced by women teachers for not taking up promotional posts were that if they were posted far away from families their husbands might engage in promiscuous behaviour leading to marriages of second wives and being infected by HIV and AIDS. The other reason for not taking up leadership roles is that women grow up in families where women were not leaders. So women do not grow to be bold. They believe men should be leaders.

Shumba (2002) in a study of teacher conceptualisation of child abuse in schools found out that teacher trainees and teachers conceive some forms of child abuse as teachers sending pupils especially girl children to teacher's houses to do domestic activities such as fetching water, sweeping the teacher's houses and washing plates. These children are sent to do domestic chores for teachers during hours.

Nairaland Forum (2015) reports of the Apostolic Sect in Gwanda refusing their children from been immured on grounds that their religion did not believe in that. The sect withdraws its children from school during times when the healthy officials come to immunise the children. Children have suffered from the diseases they were to be immunised against disturbing their school attendance and their performance in class. The Zimbabwe Mail October 30, (2014) reports of an apostolic faith member who was fined \$100 for not sending his nine - year old daughter to school because of his apostolic religious beliefs.

Ncube and Tshabalala's (2012) study on factors contributing to the causes of work related stress in Nkayi District in Zimbabwe that female teachers were stressed because of cultural beliefs that they are considered to be lower than their male counterparts.

Mupudzi (2017) studied factors contributing to under representation of female teachers to leadership positions in primary schools in the Shurugwi District in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. The study was focused on 150 teacher and 30 primary school heads. The findings were; that the female teachers were; inhibited on social reasons of work and home responsibilities, need to maintain ties with their spouses, lack of zeal to be in headship position mainly due to fear of the unknown, due to myths, stereotypes and prejudices related to their abilities that is the women see headship as a man's job, they thought headship needed a bold and strong voice attributes women did not have, staying attached to family that is husband and children, negative labels for women who took up positions of leadership of leadership like being unfaithful to husbands and gender roles that were instituted in children at childhood



among other findings. Mupudzi (2017) Gender roles that were instituted in children at childhood played an impending role. Government policies were found to be facilitative.

Omoniyi (2013) found out that girls reported sexual bullying that is chasing, rubbing against their bodies and trying to grab buttocks, girls were a target of bullying for changes in puberty, girls were prone to being bullied, bullies came from families where there was lack of attention and warmth, poor supervision and use of physical and verbal aggression and those who are bullied by adults became bullies. Omoniyi (2013) preferred the following recommendations, anti – bullying programmes in schools, educating parents on bullying, community involvement and counselling strategies.

Girls are bullied mainly by girls. Girls use more indirect forms of bullying social and verbal threats e.g. spreading rumours excluding one from peer group.

Bullies have little empathy for their victims and show little or no remorse.

Bullies come from families where there is lack of attention and warmth towards child, poor supervision, and use of physical and verbal aggression. Often bullied by adults and will continue bullying.

Those bullied show higher levels of insecurity, anxiety, depression, loneliness, physical and mental symptoms and low self-esteem.

Those pupils who are bullied are usually socially isolated and rarely defend themselves or retaliate when confronted by students who bully them.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Paradigm**

The study was mainly qualitative. This approach is sometimes referred to as the subjective approach (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Neuman (1997) refers to it as the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm posits that social reality is obtained from people's definition of it and culture and religion shapes the definitions (Neuman, 1997). Culture can change from time to time so do social reality. This paradigm respects the common sense aspect. It is for this reason that the researcher adopted this paradigm.

### **Research design**

This study was a case study of Gweru District primary schools. This was so because the research intended to have an in-depth study of a one case. The study was guided by ethnography. Ethnography means writing about people and involves cultural analysis (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005). Since the effect of culture and religion on female teachers and the girl child was the focus of the study ethnography was found ideal.

### **Data Generation Instruments**

The data generation instruments used were; questerviews, focus group discussions schedules and in-depth interview schedules. The questerview enabled the researcher to gather data cheaply from geographically dispersed places and it is easier to construct and cheaper (Denzin, 1997). The processing information from questerviews is less complex compared to observation (White, 2005). Individual in – depth enabled participants to express unique or controversial perspectives without fear of censure (Cresswell, 2008), In – depth interviews also allowed for probing and follow – up questions (Patton, 1987). Focus group interviews

were a collective interview. In collective interviews participants, through their interaction could provide data and some insights which could not be provided be revealed through a face to face interviews with individuals. Focus groups resulted in a collective synergy, that helps to explore and clarify participant's perceptions. The focus groups also helped participants to overcome the problem of reluctance to participate / contribute.

### **Selection of participants and informants**

Gweru District has 55 primary schools. A sample of 20 primary schools was conveniently sampled. The sample consisted of 100 female teachers and 60 girl children. The female teachers and girl children were purposively chosen. Only those who showed interest in the area of study were chosen. Study was focused on 150 teachers in primary schools and 30 primary school heads. Interviews and questionnaires were used.

### **Data Collection Procedures.**

First permission was sought from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education then research assistants were trained, focus group discussions were carried out and lastly in-depth interviews were undertaken. The whole process took one and a half years. Only ten female teachers and eight girl children were subjected to in-depth interviews. The researcher stopped interviewing after discovering the interviewees were supplying same responses.

### **Data Analysis Procedures.**

The researcher followed Merriam's (2009) analysis of qualitative data procedures. These included,

- a) Organising and preparing data for analysis that is, transcribing interviews, and data, focus group notes and arranging the data into different type of sources,
- b) Reading and re-reading data to get the sense of data and listing of broad themes, these after detailed analysis followed. Data for this study were coded according to the effect of religion and culture on the female teachers and the girl child.
- c) When themes were identified the researcher read through the notes again, noting relationships among themes and pertinent features within the themes and finally
- d) There was the choice of one category and the relation of all other categories to that category.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings are presented following the sub-questions of the study which are; to what extent was culture and religion affecting of female teachers on the primary schools, to what extent was religion and culture affecting the learning and operations of girl children in primary schools and what could be done to ensure that religion and culture could positively influence the operations of female teachers and the girl child to ensure effective learning, teaching and peace in the primary schools.

### **INFLUENCE OF RELIGION AND CULTURE OF THE OPERATIONS OF FEMALE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.**

Eighty percent (80%) female teachers indicated that culture made them to be subservient to their husbands. They were not supposed to voice their opinions and were supposed to respect opinions of husbands as heads of the families. This got into schools where female teachers did not feel at home voicing their views on important issues that were related to the running of the school and presenting their views these were not in most cases respected. They sought views of man first before they presented their views. African culture tends to portray women as unintelligent. Below are some of the sentiments presented by the female teachers:

*We female teachers do not contribute much because at home our husbands dictate what is done in the families*

*I feel men have the brains to lead in discussions and how things are to be done. From youth we have been made to believe boys are better than us women, they have the brains to lead us.*

Ninety percent (90%) female teachers indicated that most religions reflected men are wives masters. Christian religion holds that men are wives masters and husbands should love their wives. As masters men are supposed to dictate what women should do. This is the kind of attitude that female teachers take into schools. They do not feel free to contribute ideas to contribute ideas of what ever nature.

Sixty percent (60%) of the female teachers indicated that these you take during gatherings are viewed as people who come from homes that do not observe culture. The African culture does not permit women to talk a lot. Those who talk a lot are taken as people who want to have control over men particularly their husbands. Men in the African culture and in the various religions are supposed to be in control of people not women. This means women should submit to men, their husbands and some. Those who talk a lot are sometimes considered as prostitutes who do not have husbands but deal with many men. Women who are given positions in the school and talk a lot are regarded as going out with those in authority who are man. These are some of extracts from the interviews with female teachers;

- Many women who feel free to talk and are promoted are women of weak morals. Other women who do not trust them and are always talking about them as women of weak morals.
- My friends who got positions tell me they are in control of those in authority and they indicate that they will not do anything to them because they will blackmail them.
- There are not many women that are in control of churches because the Christian bible encourages women to submit to men.
- Those women given positions are gossiping with those in authority spoiling relationships affecting.

Below are some sentiments expressed by female teachers regarding the effect of religion on their operations;

- We female teachers when we express our views are reminded that the bible says men are your masters. We therefore should not override men.
- I feel I should first listen to the views of men as a church goer because men are our masters.
- God declared we ought to take views of men so be it. Why should we raise our heads above our men? This is against the bible teaching.

Seventy percent (70%) of the female teachers reflected that they are prone to gossip. The gossip they undertake to spoil relationships. In the African culture women gossip is not viewed as a vice. They gossip when-ever they group. Young girls are initiated into gossip as they go to fetch water at their water holes when they witness their sisters and mothers gossip. Gossip is a source of hatred and misunderstandings. These are some of the extracts from the female teachers;

- When a man gossips the man is said to be like a woman because gossip is seen as ok for women than men.
- We women are not given the chance in our culture to contribute our mind during family gatherings so we satisfy ourselves through gossip and we believe the gossip gets our

piece of mind to the family groups. Gossip spread to our work places peace and teaching in the schools.

Eight percent (80%) of female teachers revealed that the African culture allows men to marry as many wives as they desire. The Christian religion has some biblical characters who are said to have had concubines like Solomon and his father David who took someone's wife. This they said is the reason why many man in positions are womanisers. Some women's of weak characters derive pleasure in taking other women's husbands. The man in authority who have the tendency to womanise do so with so many female teachers at the same school leading to collision of the women resulting in female teachers not assisting each other in their professional work. In the church men in-charge of the churches take other peoples wives and have love affairs with young girls with some who are under age. The female teachers cited particularly the Apostolic Faith pastors and men who even lead to some girls discontinuing school. Some teachers have love affairs with their pupils. They do this because they convince them because the African culture allows an African man allowed to marry as many wives as one wants. These are some of the extracts from the female teachers:

*Men in the African culture are permitted to marry as many wives as they so desire so they go about proposing love to every woman even married women. The women are convinced they are doing the correct thing not knowing they collide with the man's wife and other women end up not appreciating them. This affects peace at the school and the way women are motivated to teach.*

*The Apostolic church affect the lives of girls attending the church by marrying them at a young age purporting that the holy spirit had caused that so many girls school is affected. Some girls who are friends of these girls are also influencing these girls to follow their path. They are lied to that the married girls will be enjoying so they would wish to marry.*

The issue of division of tasks between the females and males was also highlighted as causing disinterest in female teachers in their teaching of tasks related to boys to girl children. The African culture ascribes such tasks as cutting wood, carving, hunting, some agricultural activities and games to bear children. Boy children are exposed to these, at school both sexes are to be taught these issues. The African culture ascribes such work as fetching water, household chores, basketry and pottery to the girl child. Female teachers because they are subjected to these from youth have skills in them. They have a lot of interest in teaching them so they mentioned. Below are some extracts from what the female teachers mentioned;

- I have interest in teaching about tasks that I was oriented to from youth and have skills. These tasks are girl child tasks. I'm not interested in exposing my children to boy tasks because I know very little about them.
- I feel what was done in schools in the past of having boys learn about boys tasks from male teachers who are skilled in these tasks and girls to be taught about the tasks they carry out at home from female teachers. The female teachers have skills I them and have interest in inculcating them.

## DISCUSSION

The findings on the influence of religion and culture on female teachers reflect that some aspects of religion and some aspects of culture negatively influence the teaching and peace building aspects. These aspects include firstly that culture make females to be subservient to males a finding that corroborates findings by Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani (2012), Mupudzi (2017) and Ncube and Tshabalala (2012).

Secondly, Christian religion says women need to be under men. This finding is new no study has ever mentioned this before.

Thirdly, women/female are not at liberty to voice their views in public gatherings. This leads them not to put across their ideas even in school staff meetings leading the staff not benefiting from otherwise brilliant views from females that could enhance learning, teaching and peace. The findings corroborate the findings of the studies by Ncube and Tshabalala (2012) and Mupudzi (2017).

Fourthly, gossip which is mainly done by women leads to poor relations and negatively affects teaching and peace. This finding seems not to have been concurred with by any other study.

Fifthly, the African culture allows men to marry or fall in love with who so ever they wish. This has led to poor relations between men's wives and those fallen in love with. This has led to rampant abuse of women. This finding corroborates the findings of the study by Mupudzi (2017).

Lastly, the issue of differentiated tasks for males and females has led to female teachers not having skills and motivation has led to female teachers not having skills and motivation to teach areas related to male tasks. This finding concurs with Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bukuvhani (2012).

#### **INFLUENCE OF RELIGION AND CULTURE ON LEARNING AND PEACE ON GIRL CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**

Seventy-two percent (72%) of girl children indicated that culture made them to submit themselves to boys and men. In school the children find it difficult to take leadership positions and decisions on what could be done in the classrooms. If they air their views are not taken seriously. Some of the girls have this to say;

*I find it hard to be a group leader where I am supposed to lead boys. At home boys are made to lead us.*

Ninety-three percent (93%) of the girl children indicated the bible indicated women are supposed to submit to their men. In the churches therefore, girl children from tender age submit to boys and men. This attitude they carry to school. This affects the way they contribute in their learning. One girl had this to say.

*I take what the bible says about women should do their men. Women need to be under their men so, I need to be under boys and men.*

Like in the case of female teachers the girl children (80%) pointed out that they are prone to gossip and it spoils relationships. In the African communities gossip is spread at wells by adult women. The girl children escort these women to the wells and to fetch firewood. The young girls are initiated into gossip. Gossip spreads into the school and causes poor relations there. One girl remarked that; *Gossip is taken as proper among girls. Gossip has caused fights.*

The girl children (75%) also pointed out the churches they are abused by prophets who prophesy that the Holy Spirit has shown them they had to get married to the old men. Furthermore in the African culture, men are permitted to marry how many girls they wish to marry. They reflected they fall prey to their teachers who woo them using money. This they reflected caused them to discontinue school after disturbing them from concentrating at school. They revealed they influence each other to engage in such activities like falling in love

teachers and older men spoiling the schooling. One girl remarked; *some of our friends cause us to fall in love with our teachers and old men because they buy a lot of things we want at school.*

The girl children (78%) reveal also that the issue of division of labour in the African culture between boys and girls lead to them not having positive attitude to boy's tasks. They learn these tasks at school and are expected to master these tasks, which are the tasks they carry out at home. In the school the curriculum seems to show that there are certain tasks which are women's work as well. They are made not to respect or have interest in learning about men's work.

The other issue highlighted by the girl child (69%) is bullying. Bullying of the girl child seems to be caused by the fact that girls should not surpass the boys in performance. When this happens the girls are ridiculed or even beaten as they go home. This intimidates the girl child from keeping on performing well at school. The girls are not encouraged to report this to teachers because if they do so, the bullying is intensified. Even if they report, the boys are not punished for that bad behaviour. After all, boys at home are allowed to beat girls but the opposite is not appreciated. One girl has this to say; *I sometimes play truancy because of being bullied on our way home after I have performed better than big boys in the class. The boys tell me not to humiliate them performing better than them.*

### DISCUSSION

The findings on the influence of religion and culture on the girl child concur mainly with the findings on female teachers. The findings corroborate the findings reflected in the similar areas that is, studies by Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani (2012) and Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango (2009).

The only issue that does not relate to influences on female teachers is the issue of bullying. Bullying lead to truancy and intimidation that leads to girl children not to perform to their maximum in class. This finding concurs with findings in the studies by Omoniyi (2013).

### WHAT TO BE DONE TO ENSURE RELIGION AND CULTURE COULD POSITIVELY INFLUENCE TEACHING, LEARNING AND PEACE.

The majority of the female teachers (85%) suggest the following ways of making religion and culture positive in relation to learning and peace counselling services, training in inter-cultural appreciation and training in ways of controlling abusive behaviour. These views concur with the recommendations by Gwirayi (2012) and Kimmel (2006).

The majority of girl children (72%) reveal the girl child suggesting ways like multi-cultural education, training on the effects of gossip. There is also need to embrace anti-bullying strategies relating to curbing bullying. These findings concur with findings and recommendations proffered by Gwirayi (2012) and Kasambira (1998).

### CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that;

- ✓ Female teachers and girl children were discriminated against based on culture and religion.
- ✓ Female teachers and girl children were influenced negatively by the discrimination in their teaching, learning and peace building.
- ✓ Female teachers and girl children were required respectful treatment so that they would be motivated in the operations

- ✓ Female teachers and girl children were subjected to such deplorable acts like abuse and bullying emanating from the effect of culture and religion.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following;

- ✓ Schools to institute multi-cultural and inter-faith education embracing danger sensitisation.
- ✓ The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to make policies to enhance gender sensitisation.
- ✓ The curriculum to be made gender sensitivity.
- ✓ The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and government to put in place measures to curb incidence of abuse of female teachers and the girl child including bullying.
- ✓ Further study could be carried out with parents and community leaders.

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