

<b>SUMMARY OF THE DISSERATION</b>	
<b>DISSERTATION TITLE</b>	ANALYSING THE CHALLENGES OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR POLICY ON THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER PREGNANCY: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED PUBLIC RURAL SCHOOLS IN NAMIBIA.
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## **SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION**

Despite implementing the Education Sector Policy on Preventing and Managing Learner Pregnancy (ESPPMLP), Namibia has had a persistent challenge of high rates of learner pregnancy and school dropout for many years. This study aimed to investigate the factors deterring ESPPMLP implementation and explore a framework applicable to effectively implementing it. While previous studies have explored learner pregnancies and school dropouts, had not adequately clarified the issue from the perspective of policy design, policy implementation, and the influence of social settings. This study aimed to fill these gaps by examining the challenges of implementing the ESPPMLP in Namibian rural public schools through three perspectives: policy design, policy implementation, and social settings.

The study applied qualitative research methods of phenomenology and case studies, that covered 113 participants, mainly schoolteachers, adolescent learners, pregnant and learner-parents, parents, out-of-school pregnant learners, and NGO staff. While applying the purposive and criterion sampling, schools were selected based on those with a consistent record of high learner pregnancy and school dropout incidents over three academic years (2017–2019). Data was collected through individual interviews, focus group discussions, and written notes.

Findings on policy design reveal, among others, that the ESPPMLP is a flexible re-entry policy, allowing pregnant learners to return to school after childbirth. The ESPPMLP has strong political recognition that aligns with Namibia's national development agendas and strategic policies. However, it lacks measurable objectives and clear implementation guidelines. The content of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is insufficient, lacking clear explanations of the practical monitoring tools. Regarding the policy implementation perspective, the analysis shows a lack of stakeholder collaboration, the lack of authority of schoolteachers to consent on behalf of their learners without parental involvement, a lack of legal binding and reinforcement of ESPPMLP, the discontinuation of donor initiatives, and budget constraints. The identified social setting factors are such as stigma and discrimination, older men in the community as culprits of learner pregnancy, gender-based violence, cultural norms, the presence of alcohol sites near schools, and the lack of parental support for pregnant learners and young mothers.

The study concluded that policies struggle to succeed despite being well-crafted because they operate within hostile social environments, are inadequately designed and face implementation challenges. It is imperative to set policy objectives and monitor implementation to solve them. Also, mainstream programs in parallel with policies such as targeting perpetrators of learner pregnancies, educating older men about the risks associated with engaging with young girls, offering support programs for parents of learner parents, and bolstering community parenting initiatives. Also, integrating stakeholder collaboration and addressing institutional weakness in policy implementation remains key. All these elements may strengthen the policy limitations, and improve social settings and implementation within schools, thus leading to a sustainable implementation of the ESPPMLP in the Namibian context.

Future research should explore mainstreaming programs, tailored support services for pregnant and mother-learners, and provide actionable recommendations to improve policy implementation and reduce school dropout rates