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IMPACT OF CULTURAL BELIEFS MANIFESTATION ON STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CHEMBA DISTRICT COUNCIL, TANZANIA

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Abstract: **This study examined the impact of cultural beliefs manifestation on students' educational aspirations in public secondary schools in Chemba District Council, Tanzania. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and employed a mixed methods design anchored the study to establish the relationship between the parental attitudes, traditional roles, gender expectations and students' education and career choices. Self-administering questionnaire was given to teachers and a semi-structured interview to heads of schools. Quantitative data were presented in frequency and percentage and the data from the interviews were analysed thematically. Teachers frequently reported cultural beliefs manifestation and practices as a potential influence on parents' support of education. Specifically, extremely majority of teachers agreed that parental attitudes were more influenced by tradition than by the awareness of the current educational opportunities; the ceremonies and family obligations contributed towards making the parents take up the education of their children; there was some pressure for certain students to follow their family trades instead of what they aspired for. Simultaneously, high number of teachers felt that awareness initiatives can help to change perceptions on education. The study concludes that the expectations for education can be reinforced or impeded by cultural beliefs manifestation, depending on their interpretation. Consequently, the study suggests continuing conversations between the school and families, providing gender-inclusive support and engaging with community leaders to minimize practices that impact students' learning and future plans.**

Keywords: **cultural beliefs manifestation, educational aspirations, parental attitudes.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture refers to the values, expectations and practices that are shared among members of a community that help them to make sense of social life and what is expected of them. These beliefs can be applied to education and manifest in parents' attitudes toward schooling, job choices, gender role expectations and the time they spend on education and family or community responsibilities. Students' progress may be supported by cultural values which promote discipline, learning and responsibility. It is important to note, however, that expectations that focus on early family responsibilities, traditional occupational roles, or gender-specific roles can limit some students' options. Bourdieu (1986) considers cultural capital as a way to describe the way that one's family practices and beliefs can influence children's experiences and opportunities.

Students' educational aspirations are the levels of education that they aspire to or intend to achieve and the aspirations that they link with their future life. These desires are important because they can influence students' motivation, engagement and their choices about further learning. Educational motivation research indicates that aspirations emerge as a product of students' expectations, values, experiences and social environments (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020; Gore et al., 2024). Aspirations should be viewed then not just as personal aspirations but also within the context of the support and expectations of students' families and communities.

Parents play a major role in their children's perceptions of education and their future opportunities. Parental attitudes and discussions with youth about learning objectives are linked to youth perspectives on future possibilities and family and school dynamics can facilitate the link between learning goals and concrete support (Chen et al., 2023). These are especially crucial when students require guidance on choosing subjects, additional education or employment options. Parents can pass on more information and encouragement to students if he/she is open to communication. Students might not have as much success in achieving their desired educational goals if their family expectations differ from the guidance given by the school.

Educational aspirations can be influenced by gender expectations. When there are gender expectations for boys to perform different tasks than for girls in the household and/or in the economy, families might make different choices regarding the time, resources and opportunities available to both. Research in Tanzania has shown that cultural and social conditions can impact girls' experiences and aspirations, even within pastoralist communities (Adamson, 2024; Kibona et al., 2024). The results indicate that the educational goals of students need to be taken into account in the context of the social setting in which they reside and not assume that the beliefs of all families or communities are the same.

Chemba District Council, in the region of Dodoma, is an appropriate context in which to explore these issues, as use of rural livelihoods is widespread and relationships within the community are tightly bound up with family and domestic responsibilities. In this context, going to the ceremonies, home responsibilities, traditional work roles and gender norms could clash with school attendance, study time or future education plans. These practices do not necessarily impact each family in the same way and the implications vary as a result of how families manage cultural commitments and meet the educational needs of youth.

While the literature reviewed has included parental involvement, gender barriers and student experiences of schooling, the papers reviewed in this manuscript revealed a lack of local evidence specifically focused on the link between cultural beliefs manifestation and pupils' educational aspirations at the district level of Chemba District Council. This understanding can be important for schools and communities to know when deciding what practices are helpful to education and what practices might limit students' options. The study thus explored teachers' and heads of schools' perceptions of a relationship between cultural beliefs manifestation and students' educational aspiration in public secondary schools of Chemba District Council.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ambitions can motivate pupils to further their education and help them achieve their future goals. Students' plans, however, are influenced not just by their own interests and experiences in the education system but also by the expectations from their family and values of their community. Cultural beliefs manifestation can be supportive of education if families see the importance of education in terms of personal and community development. They can also pose difficulties if family responsibilities, cultural work, rituals, or customs, or gender roles and expectations, interfere with students' learning schedules.

A link between cultural expectations and educational aspirations must be explored in Chemba District Council, as students' decisions regarding their time, responsibilities, further education and career choices are often made in family and community contexts. However, the local evidence found for this study does not give much detail regarding how these beliefs are perceived to influence parental support and students' aspirations in public secondary schools. School leaders without explicit local support might not be able to create guidance and community engagement opportunities that address families' concerns and ensure that students have opportunities to learn and plan for the future. This study has filled this gap by studying the teachers' reaction and head of schools' narration regarding the cultural beliefs manifestation and the educational aspiration of the students in Chemba District Council.

1.2 Research Objective

To examine the impact of cultural beliefs manifestation on students' educational aspirations in secondary schools.

1.3 Research Question

How does cultural beliefs manifestation influence students' educational aspirations in secondary schools?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultural Beliefs Manifestation and Educational Aspirations

Family and community are the contexts in which educational goals are formed. In rural China, Chen et al. (2023) found that communication between parents and adolescents regarding educational aspirations was important and that family discussion was a key aspect of communication that facilitated young people's understanding of their future options. While the study took place in a different setting, it provides support for the idea of the relevance of parental expectations and communication in the process of students' goal development. Adamson (2024) explored students' aspirations during secondary education in Tanzania and highlighted the relevance of studying students' aspirations in the context of their everyday social experiences.

Aspirations can be influenced by cultural beliefs manifestation in terms of gender, employment, family duties and appropriate occupations. This study is based on girls from pastoral communities in Tanzania, which suggests that aspirations are not always fulfilled meaning that the conditions surrounding the choice of education are important (Kibona et al., 2024). This is pertinent to the present study because it shows that it is important to take into account the ambitions of the students as well as their social expectations and responsibilities. But it is not assumed that the experiences of other communities can be taken at face value as being representative of students' experiences in Chemba.

Parents and teachers can connect about students' progress and plans through family-school partnerships. Epstein (2018) highlights the importance of the relationship between school, family and community to support students. This is important for the present study because cultural beliefs manifestation are not static and uniform and communication can support the family's awareness of ways in which traditions can be sustained while still allowing the student to attend school, study and continue their education.

2.2 Theoretical Perspective

This study was designed to test the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). The theory is used to understand the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, PBC, intentions and behaviour. Attitudes are the positive or negative orientation that individuals have toward a specific behavior. Subjective norms are people's expectations or feelings about important others and perceived behavioural control is the person's opinion about the ease and difficulty of performing the action.

The TPB is a good tool for analyzing cultural beliefs manifestation and educational aspirations. The attitudes of parents of formal education could be a factor influencing the motivation and assistance provided to their children. Subjective norms can be the views and expectations of family members, community members, or influential leaders regarding the desirable occupations, gender roles and family responsibilities. Perceived behavioural control could be linked to a family's perception of having the resources, knowledge and practical skills to support further education. All of these factors can be interwoven to create messages to students about their educational futures.

The theory is useful because it connects one's attitudes to social expectations and perceived ability to act. It does not, however, account for all factors affecting educational aspirations, such as structural factors like poverty, distance and poor educational access. For this reason, the study does not take a causal perspective of the relationship between cultural belief and student aspirations, where cultural belief is the explanation for the aspiration. Hence, the study does not take a causal perspective of the relationship between cultural belief and student aspirations, because the cultural belief is the cause of the student's aspiration.

2.3 Synthesis of the Literature and Research Gap

The literature reviewed indicated that the educational aspirations of the students are influenced by a combination of personal aspirations, family aspirations, social experiences and the supports they receive. Research in Tanzania indicates a potential influence of social and cultural environments on the development and realization of aspirations (Kibona et al., 2024; Adamson, 2024) and family communication can assist youth in understanding their options (Chen et al., 2023). School-family partnerships could also be a means to address concerns regarding student progress and discuss educational objectives (Epstein, 2018).

These studies however, do not provide an insight into the perception of the teachers and the heads of schools in the Chemba District Council on the relationship between cultural beliefs manifestation and students aspiration. The significance and

impact of family roles, traditional job roles, rituals and gender norms can differ across communities and is one of the local questions. This study focuses on context-specific gap by capturing the responses of the teachers and the teachers' interview accounts of cultural beliefs manifestation, parents' support, gender opportunities, career expectations and awareness activities in Chemba District Council.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a pragmatist perspective in a mixed-method approach. This allowed the researcher to take into account the numerical patterns in teachers' responses to the questionnaire as well as the contextual explanations provided in the interviews with the heads of schools. The study was carried out in public secondary schools of Chemba District Council in Dodoma Region, Tanzania.

A sample of 88 respondents, comprising 78 teachers (probability sampling) and 10 heads of schools (purposive sampling), was reported in the manuscript. The quantitative results are based on the responses of 78 teachers, as shown in Table 1. In the final version, the number of heads of schools interviewed should be explicitly mentioned to make the sample description consistent and transparent. The data collected from teachers was structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with heads of schools were used for qualitative data collection.

Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were used for analysing the data obtained from the questionnaires. Interview data was analysed thematically and categorised into themes which included the following: cultural beliefs manifestation, parental support, gender expectations, family responsibilities, career choices and educational guidance. Both the quantitative and qualitative results were taken into account for interpretation to see where there is convergence and to give context to the numbers.

Ethical principles such as informed consent, informed participation, confidentiality and anonymity were followed and ethical clearance was received from Jordan University College, the study reports. It is also important for the final manuscript to include any relevant institutional approval numbers and/or describe how interview quotations were anonymised if applicable.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the teacher questionnaire are discussed here and related to the accounts given in the interview and the literature. The questionnaire received a total of 78 answers from teachers. Percentages should not be interpreted as a direct measure of students' aspirations, nor as a sign that students' cultural beliefs manifestation lead to specific educational outcomes; instead, they are teachers' perceptions. This study examined the impact of cultural beliefs manifestation on students' educational aspirations in public secondary schools in Chemba District Council, Tanzania. Teachers were asked to express their attitudes to statements regarding cultural beliefs manifestation, traditional attitudes, gender roles, family obligations and educational aspirations.

Table 1: Teachers' Responses on Influence of Cultural Beliefs Manifestation on Students' Educational Aspirations

STATEMENTS	RESPONSES			MEAN
	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	
Certain cultural beliefs discourage parents from supporting higher education for their children	10 (12.8%)	18 (23.1%)	50(64.1%)	3.72
Cultural expectations influence the career choices students aspire to pursue	15 (19.2%)	11 (14.1%)	52(66.7%)	3.56
Parents' attitudes toward education are shaped more by tradition than awareness of modern opportunities	1 (1.3%)	4 (5.1%)	73(93.6%)	4.36
Teachers face challenges when cultural beliefs conflict with educational guidance	1 (1.3%)	16 (20.5%)	61(78.2%)	4.53
Awareness programs can change cultural perceptions about students' education	1 (1.3%)	16 (20.5%)	61(78.2%)	4.12

Some parents' priorities cultural roles over formal education	7 (9.0%)	12 (15.4%)	59(75.6%)	3.87
Cultural norms may influence the gender of children sent to pursue higher education	1 (1.3%)	10 (12.8%)	67(79.1%)	4.17
Students sometimes face pressure from parents to follow family trades instead of their school aspirations	8 (10.2%)	8 (10.3%)	62(79.5%)	4.03
Traditional ceremonies and obligations affect parents' support for students' studies	7 (9.0%)	6 (7.7%)	65(83.3%)	4.19
Parents are willing to change cultural attitudes when they understand the benefits of education	15 (19.2%)	11 (14.1%)	52(66.7%)	3.56

Source: Field Data (2026)

4.1 Cultural Beliefs Manifestation and Parental Support for Further Education

As shown in Table 4.3, most of the teachers (50, 64.1%) agreed that some cultural beliefs hinder parents from supporting their children to further study, whereas 18 (23.1%) were not sure and 10 (12.8%) disagreed. This means that the majority of teachers felt cultural beliefs were a major determinant of parental support for higher education. In certain communities, the role of parents within the family, rather than higher education, might be perceived as more significant.For some parents, family roles and participation in family economy might be more important than investing in higher education in their children. Such beliefs may limit parents' willingness to provide financial, moral and emotional support for students who aspire to continue with advanced studies.

In the same way, one parent said when interviewed: *In our community, education is important, but some parents still have the view that boys should carry on with family responsibilities; girls should prepare for marriage, due to which in some families, money is not seen as being a good investment in higher education, particularly if there are no resources available.* (Parent Interview, 2026).

These findings were further supported by the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) of the students. One pupil said that: *Some of their classmates are advised by their parents that they do ordinary secondary education, because they must help their families and others; some are advised to prepare for marriage, therefore some students feel that they cannot pursue advanced level or go to university even if they do well in class*. (Students' FGD, 2026).

The results suggest that attitudes towards marriage and family obligations, including traditional gender roles, can affect parents' willingness to provide for their children's education. The results align with those of Komba and Matete (2021) who found that traditional customs affect girls' education aspirations in rural Tanzania. However, Nyagawa (2023) noted how cultural beliefs impact parents' attitudes towards education in rural Tanzania. Tadesse and Muluye (2024) also found that, cultural beliefs affect parents' attitudes towards education of their children in rural Ethiopia. The results of these past studies are in line with the results of this study because these studies showed that traditional values and expectations of culture can affect parents' educational choices, in rural areas in particular. The findings of the present study, however, offer more in context from the Chemba District Council as the study shows that the expectations held by parents about marriage and their roles in the home and traditional roles also impact on their willingness to finance higher education. Thus, the school and community leaders should provide awareness programmes for parents to create awareness on the importance of higher education among both boys and girls.

4.2 Cultural Expectations and Students' Career Choices

As shown in Table 4.3, 57 (73.1%) teachers agreed and 16 (20.5%) disagreed that cultural expectations influence the career path students want to pursue, and 5 (6.4%) were undecided. This means that the majority of teachers believed that cultural expectations were a significant influence in students' aspirations to work. In some families, parents encourage their children to enter into occupations that are traditionally of high value and socially acceptable to their families or communities. This can therefore create pressure for students to choose careers which are more likely to fit in with their family's expectations than their interests, abilities and academic aspirations.

Qualitative information gathered through an interview with one Head of School supported these findings as he stated: *We have discovered that some parents insist that their children pursue careers that are traditionally respected in their family/community; for example, some parents want their children to become teachers, nurses or religious leaders because those careers are held in high esteem in their culture, but these careers are not what the children want*. (HOS 2026).

The results were also corroborated by the students in the Focus group discussion. One student said that: *"Some parents tell us what career we should choose without consulting what our future is, while a student might want to be an engineer or scientist, some parents insist that he or she should be a teacher, farmer or continue the family business as that is what the family expects"* (Students' FGD, 2026).

The qualitative results show that cultural values have an impact on the career choices made by pupils by steering them towards jobs that are seen as acceptable and respected in their families and communities. This is in line with the research of Benner and Boyle (2022) which focused on self-determination theory and parental expectations in relation to students' academic aspirations. In a similar way, Zhang and Wang (2023) noted the impact of parental expectations on educational aspirations and students' educational choices. The current findings are consistent with the previous research that found parents' expectations are important in influencing students' educational and career aspirations. The present study, however, also shows that in certain families within Chemba District Council, cultural aspirations can limit the students' choice of career to those that are deemed to be suitable for them. Hence, career guidance and counselling within schools need to be strengthened and parents must be made part of career education programmes so that pupils could make informed choices of their career based on their abilities and aspirations.

4.3 Tradition, Gender Expectations and Family Responsibilities

The results in Table 4.3 show that 52 (66.7%) of the teachers agreed that the attitude of parents towards education is more traditional than the awareness of the opportunities of modern education, 11 (14.1%) were indecisive, and 15 (19.2%) disagreed. In addition, 61 (78.2%) teachers agreed that some parents consider cultural roles more important than formal education, while 16 (20.5%) were not sure and 1 (1.3%) disagreed. The results indicate that traditional beliefs and family responsibilities still affect the perceptions and support of some parents for their children's educational goals. In some families, children are discouraged from receiving formal education, and instead are expected to take care of the household and domestic chores or engage in traditional activities or family businesses.

This was corroborated by qualitative results of the parents' interviews. One parent said that: *In our community, education is important but some parents still think boys should stay in the family and do their work, while girls should get prepared for marriage, which causes some parents to not want to spend money on higher education, especially if they don't have enough*. (Parent Interview, 2026).

Likewise, during the Focus Group Discussion with students, traditional expectations often get in the way of students' education. One student said that: *"Some of our classmates are told by their parents that completing ordinary secondary education is enough because they should start helping the family and others; they are told to prepare for marriage. This makes some students feel that pursuing advanced level or going to university is not possible even if they perform well in class."* (Students' FGD, 2026).

With respect to gender norms, 59 (75.6%) teachers agreed that cultural norms can affect the gender of children going for higher education, 12 (15.4%) were unsure and 7 (9.0%) disagreed. This means that the majority of teachers were aware of the effect of cultural beliefs on the educational opportunities given to boys and girls. This can create inequalities in the amount of investment parents make in children's schooling, for example, if parents have different expectations about the importance of education for girls, compared to boys, whose education is expected to be secondary to family economic activities.

Moreover, Table 4.3 indicates that 67 (85.9%) teachers agreed that students sometimes feel pressured to follow family jobs instead of their educational dreams and 10 (12.8%) were not sure and 1 (1.3%) disagreed. This indicates that family occupational expectancies might impact students' future educational and career choices. The semi-structured interview with the Head of School also provided some qualitative evidence, with some parents thinking that their children should take on traditional family roles rather than continue their education.

In addition, 62 (79.5%) teachers concurred that traditional ceremonies and obligations have impact on parental support of students' studies; 8 (10.3%) teachers were undecided while 8 (10.2%) disagreed. The finding indicates that sometimes

cultural activities and family duties intrude upon students' academic duties. The elements from the interviews and FGDs also showed that family responsibilities and cultural expectations can disrupt students' educational studies and further educational plans.

This result aligns with Sanya's (2015) result which found gendered expectations in Tanzanian families to affect educational aspirations and opportunities. Likewise, Komba and Matete (2021) discovered that customary practice affects the education goal of girls in rural Tanzania. The results also align with that of Bhana et al. (2022) who explored the link between gender, culture and educational aspirations in South Africa. Moreover, Mosha (2023) pointed out that household duties have a negative impact on parental engagement in the education of their children in rural Tanzania. The present findings are consistent with the results of the above studies, suggesting that traditional beliefs and gender expectations and family responsibilities can affect students' educational opportunities and parental support. The present study, however, offers more supportive evidence from the Chemba District Council in that the traditional ceremonies, family trades and marriage expectations and domestic responsibilities can pose challenges to students' aspirations to education. So, parents and community leaders should encourage an equitable strategy that honours cultural values while providing equal opportunities for boys and girls to further their education.

4.4 Cultural Beliefs, Manifestation and School Guidance

As seen in Table 4.3: 73 (93.6%) teachers agreed that teachers encounter problems when cultural beliefs differ from education guidelines, 4 (5.1%) were undecided and 1 (1.3%) disagreed. This is the widest agreement of the statements in the table, indicating that cultural beliefs can pose significant problems for teachers in giving educational advice and helping students with their future choices. These can arise when parents would like their children to conform to the expectations and responsibilities of the family tradition, parents encourage their children to go to college, or they are not happy with their children going to school regularly or matching their family's expectations when choosing a career.

This was confirmed in the qualitative findings from an interview with the Head of School. The Head of School said some of the parents continue to put traditional family roles over their children's education, especially in regard to further education and career development. The Head of School also noted that certain girls are encouraged to be involved in domestic work instead of further education. The experiences show the challenges teachers may face when there is a conflict between some parent and community expectations and school expectations.

In addition, this study's Focus Group Discussion with the students further reinforced the difficulties of cultural beliefs and educational guidance. One pupil said: *It is reported that some of their classmates are discouraged by their parents to seek higher education because they should get married or help their families and others, which makes it difficult for some students to think that they could study at A-level class or attend college or university if they are able to study well in their classes* (Students' FGD, 2026).

This narrative indicates that when parents do not support or encourage students to pursue higher education they might have problems following educational advice. It also suggests that the interventions teachers could make in order to encourage students and help them to make career decisions might be constrained if parents have similar expectations regarding education.

As far as possible solutions are concerned, Table 4.3 reveals that 61 (78.2%) teachers agreed that awareness programmes can change cultural perceptions about students' education while 16 (20.5%) were undecided and 1 (1.3%) disagreed. Likewise, 65 (83.3%) teachers agreed that the parents were willing to adopt a different cultural attitude when they know the benefits of education, 6 (7.7%) were undecided and 7 (9.0%) were disdaining. The results showed that a majority of the teachers in this study were aware of the need for educating parents and community members of the advantages of formal education and opportunities that are available to students.

The qualitative findings further support the need for awareness programmes. The Head of School's interview, parents' interview and students' FGDs revealed some awareness issues of higher education opportunities and traditional expectations and family responsibilities that affect some educational decisions. For instance, the interviewed parent agreed that education is important but still observed that some families still have a traditional view about marriage and responsibilities for the family. This indicates that the attitudes of parents can be enhanced through sustained communication between the school and the family, especially by disseminating information on the positive outcomes of education for boys and girls in the long-term.

The results align with Epstein (2023), who highlighted the need for collaboration among school, family and community stakeholders to enhance educational outcomes. Likewise, Kanu and Sillah (2022) pointed out that community-based interventions play a crucial role in shaping parental attitudes. The present studies corroborate the previous literature that has indicated that collaboration among schools, parents and community members can be a factor in enhancing educational supports and changing negative perceptions of education. The results also show how an awareness programme can give the opportunity for parents to gain an understanding of the benefits of higher education and review their cultural attitudes which may be limiting children's educational opportunities. This study however brings in contextual evidence by showing the particular problems teachers face in the Chemba District Council when cultural beliefs clash with the educational advice. Thus, parents should be involved more in school activities with the collaboration of other stakeholders in education, including community leaders, through meetings, seminars and community sensitisation programmes. These programmes may contribute to positive parent attitudes, minimize cultural barriers and provide a conducive learning atmosphere for the students to achieve their educational goals.

5. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study examined the extent to which cultural beliefs shape parental attitudes towards students' educational aspirations in public secondary schools in Chemba District Council. The results showed that the cultural beliefs affect parental attitudes regarding further education, students' career decisions, gender-related educational opportunities and family duties. For specific examples, 50 (64.1%) teachers agreed that some parents have beliefs that hinder them from promoting their children to higher education and 57 (73.1%) agreed that some cultural beliefs affect their students' career choices. Qualitative results obtained from interviews and FGDs showed that some parents motivate children to take up traditional roles in the family, marriage or culturally acceptable job opportunities instead of their children's own aspirations and plans for education and employment.

In addition, the study identified traditional customs, gender norms and family responsibilities as factors that affect parental attitudes toward education. Sixty-one (78.2%) teachers agreed that some parents value cultural roles over formal education, and 59 (75.6%) agreed that cultural norms affect the support extended to higher education for a particular gender. Further, 73 (93.6%) teachers reported difficulties when cultural beliefs are contrary to educational guidance. But 61 (78.2%) agreed that awareness programmes were important in altering cultural attitudes and 65 (83.3%) thought that the parents were able to be changed when they are aware of the merits of education. Overall, the study was able to conclude that enhancing parental awareness, career guidance and school-community partnership plays a key role in addressing cultural barriers and increasing students' educational goals.

6. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The study finds that cultural beliefs have significant influence on the attitudes of parents in public secondary schools in Chemba District Council towards their students' educational goals. The results confirmed that traditional beliefs, culture and the perception of education, gender roles and education responsibilities affect parents' willingness to finance their children's continued education. Cultural expectations within the family both support and hinder students' choices of further education and careers, especially when marriage and jobs within certain traditional roles are not encouraged and seen as the best options. These findings highlight that cultural beliefs can pose barriers to learning, especially if traditional obligations come first to formal education.

In addition, the study finds that in order to overcome the cultural barriers, cooperation among parents, teachers, school administrators and community leaders is needed. Improving parents' attitudes towards education requires the implementation of awareness programs, parental sensitisation, good career guidance and better school-community linkages. Parents should be encouraged to appreciate higher education and help boys and girls to attain educational goals without over-leaving cultural limitations. Hence, it is important to foster good cultural attitudes towards education and to uphold positive values in the community to ensure a conducive learning climate for all learners to pursue their learning objectives.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

i. Heads of schools and teachers should organize regular meetings with parents to discuss the value of continued education, available education pathways and career options. Parents should be invited to raise concerns at these meetings and these meetings should give parents practical information and not take it for granted that all families will have the same beliefs.

ii. School leaders, parents and community or traditional leaders should collaborate to find the most effective way of acknowledging important cultural practices without unduly jeopardising school attendance, study times or tests. Communications should be respectful and to ensure that students' learning is protected, but that community values are recognised.

iii. Improve gender sensitive guidance for pupils and parents in schools and education officers. Girls and boys should be given equal opportunities to pursue further education and guidance sessions should highlight the importance of what students choose to do based on their interests, capabilities, performance and their informed career choices.

iv. Career Counselling opportunities and information for students, in consultation with school guidance and counselling teachers, parents and community partners, should be offered regularly. Parents need to be encouraged to facilitate and support informed decision making, rather than to force students to pursue careers that are not of interest or fit to them due to their talents.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The results must be understood within the bounds of three restrictions. First, the quantitative results are based on teachers' views and do not measure students' own aspirations or parents' views. Second, there is insufficient information in the manuscript on the number of heads of schools interviewed and how quotations were selected. Thirdly, the study was conducted in one district, the findings may not reflect the situation in other rural districts in Tanzania. Students and parents could be directly involved in further research; there could be a more comprehensive qualitative analysis and a comparison of communities with differing cultural and economic profiles.

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