

The Impact of Poverty on Girl Learners' Cognitive Capacity: A Case of Zimbabwe

Kudzai Chinyoka¹ and Narainsamy Naidu²

¹*Great Zimbabwe University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Foundations
E-mail: chinyokak@gmail.com*

²*Department of Psychology of Education, University of South Africa (UNISA),
College of Education
E-mail: naidun@unisa.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT In this article the impact of poverty on the cognitive development of the girl child in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe, is examined. The majority of the people in Zimbabwe have endured adversity since 1990. In addition, the number of girl children living in poverty is continually escalating and is becoming a major issue due to scarcity of resources. This negatively impacts the schooling of many girl children in Zimbabwe. Even though the Millennium Development Goal number one (1) aims at eradicating poverty and hunger by 2015, girl children continue to be faced with many psycho-social challenges that are somehow perpetuated by the rising Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL) in Zimbabwe. A qualitative approach was used with focus group discussions, interviews and observations as data collection instruments for fifteen (15) girl children and six (6) teachers in Masvingo province. The study established that girls' cognitive development is affected by household chores/child labour, financial constraints, and early marriages, lack of food, health issues and sanitary wear, long distance to and from school, stigmatisation and marginalisation. This study recommends the sustainable development of both rural and urban communities. Collaborative work is also needed among Zimbabweans and stakeholders in revisiting the root causes of poverty.