



Beyond Abstinence: Evaluating Comprehensive Sexuality Education to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and School Dropout

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Background

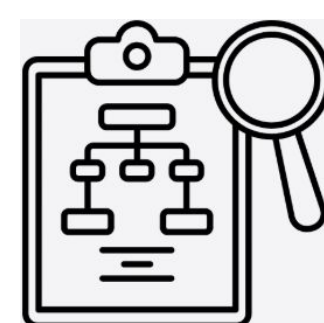
- Teenage pregnancy and school dropouts drive a cycle of poverty for young women in Zimbabwe.
- Effective CSE implementation is essential to keep girls in school and secure long-term economic growth.

Research Question

How effective abstinence-only sexual education is in Zimbabwe, and how comprehensive sexual education might better equip young people to make informed decisions that reduce teenage pregnancies and school drop-outs.

Methodology

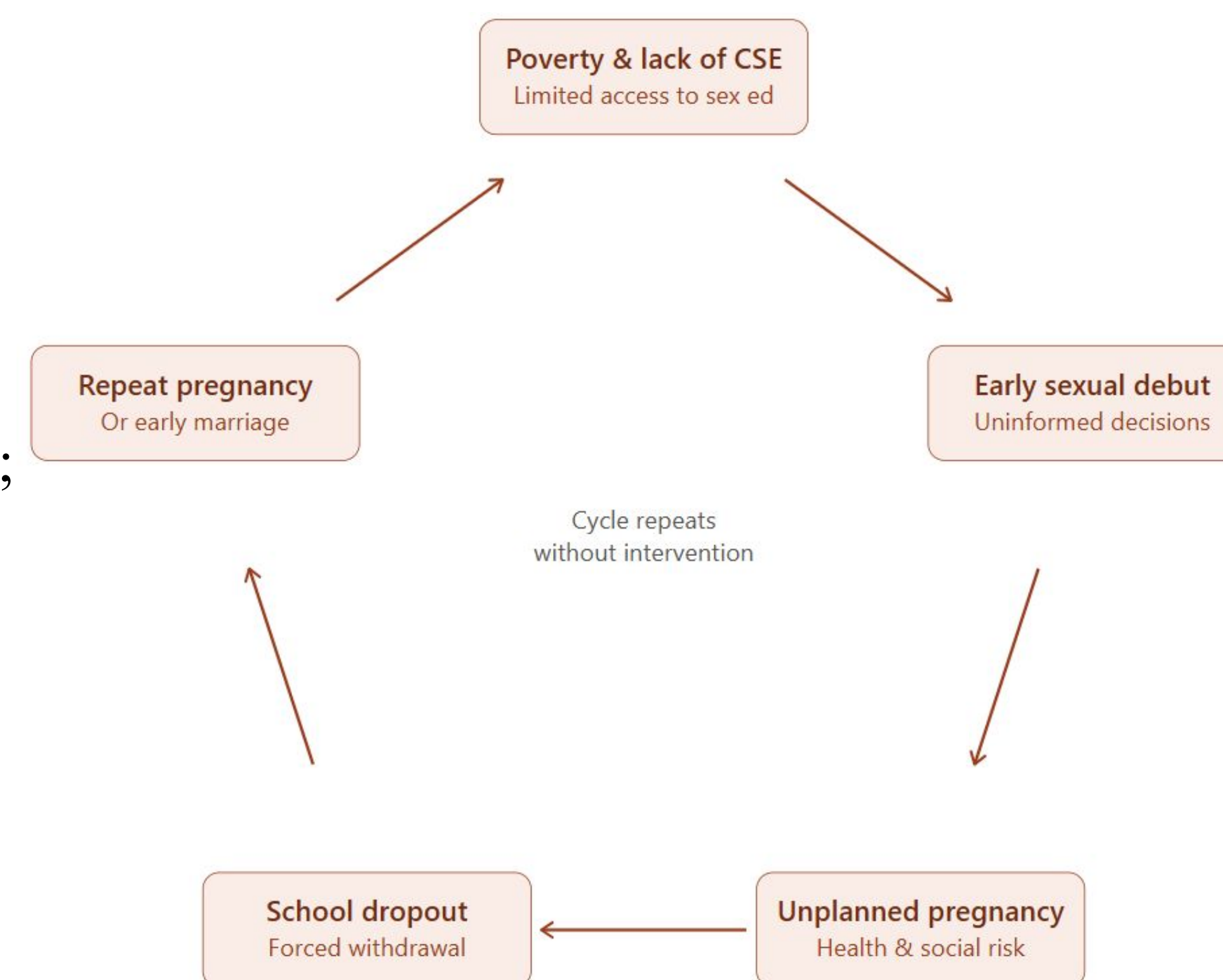
- Used the PRISMA guidelines in conducting a systematic review
- My inclusion criteria was papers from 2016 - 2026 and papers from Southern Africa.
- Searched JSTOR, Scopus, EBSCO and Web of Science for articles.



Results and Analysis

- CSE is more effective than abstinence-only education. It delays sexual debut rather than increasing activity
- Condom use dominates due to limited access to other methods; cost, distance, and stigma remain key barriers.
- Pregnancy and school dropout reinforce each other, often leading to repeat pregnancy or early marriage
- Policy adoption does not guarantee delivery; teacher discomfort, community resistance, and clinic stigma limit real-world impact
- Community moral standards vary too widely to guide policy; the literature calls for a health and education framework instead

Poverty and lack of CSE drive a self-reinforcing cycle of early sexual debut, unplanned pregnancy, and school dropout, often escalating to repeat pregnancy or early marriage.



Suggested Solution

1. Reframe CSE as complementary to, not competitive with, religious values.
2. Correct parental misconceptions through evidence-based community engagement.
3. Invest in structured teacher training and standardized delivery.
4. Expand access to contraception alongside education.
5. Actively dismantle the cultural taboo around discussing sex.
6. Close implementation with teachers, parents and young people taking part
7. Prioritize further research on faithful implementation of CSE.

Conclusion

- Comprehensive sexuality education effectively reduces teen pregnancy and school dropouts in Zimbabwe.
- Success requires overcoming cultural barriers and improving teacher delivery.

References

- **Aventin, O., et al. (2021).** Barriers and facilitators to adolescent condom use in Southern Africa: A systematic review. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1).
- **Chilambe, C., et al. (2023).** Implementing comprehensive sexuality education in Zambian schools: Community and facilitator perspectives. *Health Policy and Planning*, 38(4).

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