



Exploring the Influence of School-Community Partnerships on Business Practices and Cultural Transformation in Chipangali District, Zambia

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Abstract – School-community partnerships represent a critical mechanism for improving educational outcomes, yet remain underdeveloped in many rural Zambian contexts. This study explored the influence of school-community partnerships on business practices and cultural transformation in Chipangali District, Zambia. The research employed a mixed-methods design, collecting data from 200 participants comprising 20 administrators, 50 teachers, 80 parents, and 50 students across five schools. Questionnaires, interview schedules, and focus group discussions served as primary data collection instruments. The study revealed that school-community relationships in Chipangali District are predominantly weak, characterized by minimal collaboration and mutual engagement. Three categories of barriers emerged: school-based factors (institutional operations and teacher attitudes), home-based factors (poverty and negative parental educational experiences), and community-based factors (culture of individualism and degenerating cooperative spirit). Despite these challenges, the study identified seven strategies for strengthening partnerships: open communication, collaborative partnership frameworks, parental involvement initiatives, community engagement programs, mutual respect, shared goals and values, and cultural sensitivity. The findings contribute to understanding how educational partnerships can be systematically developed in resource-constrained rural settings. The study recommends policy interventions mandating structured partnership frameworks, increased resource allocation for relationship-building activities, and community sensitization programs. These findings have implications for educational practice, policy development, and future research on school-community collaboration in similar contexts.

Keywords – School-community partnerships, business practices, cultural transformation, rural education, Zambia.

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter establishes the foundational framework for investigating school-community partnerships in Chipangali District, Zambia. It presents the background contextualizing the problem of weak school-community relationships globally and locally. The chapter articulates the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, specific objectives, and research questions guiding the inquiry. Additionally, it discusses the significance, scope, and limitations of the research. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning the study are elaborated, followed by operational definitions of key terms. The chapter concludes with a summary synthesizing the essential elements that inform the research design and methodological approach.

Background of the Study

The problem of weak and ineffective school-community relations represents a persistent challenge affecting educational systems worldwide. Comer (1998) observed that this problem transcends national boundaries, affecting both economically developed and developing nations equally. The recognition that schools cannot operate in isolation from their surrounding communities has gained traction among educational researchers and policymakers. MacCaleb (1994) documented how this problem has negatively impacted child development and overall school effectiveness across diverse educational contexts. The historical roots of this challenge can be traced to the 1960s when education systems began undergoing significant policy transformations that inadvertently created distance between schools and communities.

Schneider and Coleman (1993) provided compelling evidence that when schools forge genuine partnerships with communities, the level of developmental acceleration enhances significantly. Their research demonstrated that collaborative relationships create conducive environments for students to excel in their educational pursuits. This finding underscores the critical importance of intentional relationship-building between educational institutions and their surrounding communities. Epstein (1995) further argued that education is not an end in itself but rather a means for better individual functioning in real-life contexts. From this perspective, education must prepare individuals to become functional members of society, a goal that requires joint efforts from both schools and communities.

The complementarity of school and community efforts emerged as a central theme in educational literature during the 1990s. Researchers increasingly recognized that properly educated individuals who contribute positively to their communities emerge only when schools and communities learn to work together. Lynn (2011) highlighted a significant example from the United States, where Washington district leaders decided that closing student achievement gaps required addressing social, emotional, and academic needs in partnership with broader communities. This decision was backed by research demonstrating that families and community institutions play essential roles in supporting healthy child development and enabling continued learning across multiple settings.

The African continent has not been spared from challenges related to weak school-community relationships. Uzoehina (2016) revealed that Nigeria faces similar situations, with solutions urgently needed if the education sector is to achieve its goals. The researcher warned that if this problem remains unchecked, it will continue endangering society by producing graduates who cannot function effectively in their communities. Lareau (2003) observed that many parents in rural African contexts cannot pay school fees, a factor that alienates them from the schools their children attend. Michel (1997) added that contemporary parents are not always positive toward schools, with negative feelings stemming from misunderstandings about school operations and teacher roles.

Zambia has experienced similar challenges regarding school-community relationships. Simweleba and Serpell (2020) revealed through their research that interventions empowering parents with knowledge and skills for greater involvement in children's education can effectively improve learner performance. However, despite considerable publicity, parents remain largely uninvolved in educational processes. Miti (2016) investigated parental involvement at Petauke Boarding School and found that while schools attempted involvement through PTA meetings, open days, newsletters, phone calls, and report forms, few parents fully engaged in school affairs or their children's education. This highlights the persistent existence of weak school-community relations throughout Zambia.

The geographical context of this study, Chipangali District in Eastern Province, represents a typical rural Zambian setting where educational challenges are compounded by poverty, limited infrastructure, and cultural factors. The area lies approximately 75 kilometers west of Chipata town, in Sisinje ward under Chief Chikuwe of the Chewa-speaking people. This rural location provides an ideal context for examining how school-community partnerships operate in resource-constrained environments. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing contextually appropriate interventions.

The evolution of partnership paradigms in education has undergone significant transformation over recent decades. The separation paradigm, dominant in the 1960s, made no provision for interacting with parents (Amatea, 2009). The remediation paradigm that followed positioned teachers as leaders with power while parents remained passive recipients of school decisions. The third paradigm shift began recognizing the added value of shared leadership and parental collaboration. However, Carr (2003) noted that this shift has not fully translated into practice in most school systems, leaving a gap between theoretical understanding and practical implementation of school-community partnerships.

Contemporary research continues to emphasize the transformative potential of educational partnerships while acknowledging their complexity. Pugh and De'Ath (1989)

noted that partnerships of any kind are inherently complex, requiring attention to power relations, respect, information sharing, and empathetic practice. This complexity is magnified in educational contexts where multiple stakeholders with diverse backgrounds, expectations, and resources must collaborate. Understanding these complexities is essential for developing sustainable partnership models that can withstand the challenges inherent in rural educational settings like Chipangali District.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing recognition of the significance of strong school-community relationships in promoting positive educational outcomes, many schools in Zambia continue to struggle with establishing and maintaining effective partnerships with their communities. Research by Miti (2016) and Simweleba and Serpell (2020) has demonstrated that parents remain largely uninvolved in their children's education even when schools create involvement mechanisms. This persistent gap between policy rhetoric and practical reality represents a significant barrier to improving educational quality, particularly in rural areas where community resources could substantially complement limited school capacities. The problem is compounded by the abandonment of traditional child-rearing responsibilities by many parents who have entrusted complete teaching responsibility to teachers.

The current study addresses a specific gap in existing knowledge by focusing on how school-community partnerships influence business practices and cultural transformation in Chipangali District. While previous research has documented the existence of weak relationships, limited attention has been paid to understanding the specific mechanisms through which partnerships affect business education outcomes and cultural change. This gap is particularly significant given the emphasis on practical skills development in business education, which requires authentic community engagement for real-world application. Furthermore, the cultural dimension of school-community partnerships remains underexplored in the Zambian context, despite its clear relevance to educational transformation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and understand the factors and strategies that contribute to effective relationships between schools and their surrounding communities, specifically examining how these partnerships influence business practices and cultural transformation in Chipangali District, Zambia. By examining the dynamics, interactions, and collaborations between schools and communities, the research aimed to identify best practices and interventions that could enhance school-community relationships, leading to improved educational outcomes and overall community development. The study sought to explore how strong school-community relationships can foster mutual support, engagement, and cooperation, benefiting both educational institutions and the broader community.



Specific Objectives

- To assess the current state of school-community relationships and their influence on business practices in primary schools of Chipangali District.
- To identify factors contributing to effective and ineffective school-community partnerships and their implications for cultural transformation.
- To investigate strategies and approaches that can strengthen school-community bonds and enhance business education outcomes.

Research Questions

- What is the current state of school-community relationships and how do they influence business practices in Chipangali District's primary schools?
- What factors contribute to effective and ineffective school-community partnerships, and what are their implications for cultural transformation?
- What strategies and approaches can be implemented to strengthen school-community bonds and enhance business education outcomes?

Significance of the Study

The study on effective relationships between schools and communities holds great significance for educational research and practice in Zambia. When communities and schools work together, they create supportive and enriching environments that enhance student engagement, motivation, and achievement. This collaboration leads to improved academic performance, reduced dropout rates, increased graduation rates, and higher levels of college and career readiness. Understanding these dynamics allows researchers to identify and address various socio-cultural, economic, and environmental factors that influence educational outcomes. By examining the unique characteristics and needs of rural Zambian communities, researchers can design interventions and policies responsive to local contexts, promoting equity and inclusivity in education.

Furthermore, this study contributes to developing effective school leadership and governance models by identifying successful strategies for fostering partnership, collaboration, and shared decision-making between schools, families, community leaders, and other stakeholders. Such collaborations lead to improved communication, trust, and mutual support, enabling schools to better address the needs and aspirations of their students and families. The research has broader societal implications as it emphasizes the importance of community engagement and active citizenship in education. By involving communities in educational processes, schools can promote democratic values, civic responsibility, and social cohesion, leading to stronger community ownership and investment in education that benefits the local economy, social fabric, and overall community wellbeing.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on primary schools in Chipangali District, Eastern Province of Zambia, specifically within Chisitu area in Sisinje ward under Chief Chikuwe. The research examined school-community partnerships in five schools: Eastern Girls Secondary School, Mchenja Primary School, Chisitu Primary School, and Mtewe Primary School. The study targeted four stakeholder categories: school administrators, teachers, parents, and students, with a total sample of 200 participants. The research explored the influence of these partnerships on business practices and cultural transformation, limiting its investigation to the specific geographical area and educational levels identified. The study did not extend to secondary schools outside the designated area or to non-educational community partnerships.

Limitations of the Study

According to Best and Kahn (1998), limitations are conditions beyond the researcher's control that may restrict conclusions and their application to other situations. The major limitations of this study included respondents' unwillingness to divulge information, which curtailed comprehensive data collection. Some respondents were reluctant to respond, causing delays in completing data collection within the planned timeframe. The researcher could not control respondents' attitudes and perceptions but obtained reliable data for analysis by encouraging honesty and promising anonymity. The rural setting presented logistical challenges, including transportation difficulties and limited communication infrastructure. Additionally, the study's focus on a single district limits generalizability to other contexts, though the findings provide valuable insights for similar rural settings.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how multiple environmental layers influence human development. Bronfenbrenner conceptualized child development as occurring within nested ecological systems: the microsystem (immediate environment including family and school), mesosystem (interconnections between microsystem elements), exosystem (external environments affecting the child indirectly), macrosystem (broader cultural and societal values), and chronosystem (changes over time). This theory is particularly relevant for examining school-community partnerships as it explicitly recognizes that optimal development occurs when there are strong, supportive connections between different environmental contexts.

The microsystem represents the immediate environments in which the child directly interacts, including home, school, and community settings. Within this study, the microsystem encompasses the daily interactions between students, teachers, parents, and community members. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized that the quality of relationships within each microsystem significantly influences developmental outcomes. For business



education students, positive microsystem relationships with teachers who demonstrate practical business applications and parents who reinforce these lessons at home create optimal learning conditions. The microsystem perspective highlights why weak school-community relationships directly impede student development by creating disconnected learning environments.

The mesosystem comprises the interconnections and processes occurring between two or more microsystems. This study focuses extensively on the mesosystem, specifically examining the linkages between school and community microsystems. Bronfenbrenner (2005) argued that developmental outcomes are enhanced when there are strong, positive connections between microsystems. When schools and communities communicate effectively, share resources, and collaborate on educational initiatives, the mesosystem strengthens, creating supportive bridges for student learning. Conversely, when these connections are weak or nonexistent, as revealed in Miti's (2016) research, students experience fragmented learning environments that fail to reinforce educational messages consistently.

The exosystem encompasses social structures that influence the child indirectly by affecting the microsystems with which the child directly interacts. In this study, exosystem factors include educational policies, district-level administrative decisions, economic conditions, and community development programs. Schneider and Coleman (1993) demonstrated how exosystem factors such as funding allocations, transportation infrastructure, and communication networks significantly impact parents' ability to engage with schools. For rural Chipangali District, exosystem constraints include limited government resources, poor road networks, and inadequate communication infrastructure that impede the development of strong school-community partnerships despite local willingness to collaborate.

The macrosystem represents the broader cultural and societal values, beliefs, and norms that permeate all other ecological levels. This study examines how macrosystem factors including cultural attitudes toward education, traditional authority structures, and collective versus individualistic orientations influence school-community partnerships. Carlson and Apple (1998) characterized contemporary society as experiencing "unsettling times" marked by community breakdown and cultural fragmentation. In Chipangali District, macrosystem changes include the erosion of traditional cooperative practices and the emergence of individualistic orientations that challenge historically strong community bonds. Understanding these macrosystem influences is essential for developing culturally appropriate partnership interventions.

The chronosystem adds the dimension of time, recognizing that ecological systems and their influences change over individual lifespans and historical periods. This study acknowledges that school-community

relationships are not static but evolve in response to changing circumstances. Historical analysis reveals that school-community relationships have undergone significant transformation since the 1960s when educational policies began shifting (Amatea, 2009). In Chipangali District, chronosystem factors include changing economic conditions, evolving educational policies, demographic shifts, and the gradual erosion of traditional community structures. Understanding these temporal dynamics helps explain why partnership interventions that succeeded historically may require modification for contemporary contexts.

Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence (1995) complements Bronfenbrenner's framework by specifically addressing school, family, and community partnerships. Epstein proposed that the three spheres of school, family, and community can be conceptualized as overlapping or separate, with external and internal models representing different partnership configurations. The external model positions schools, families, and communities as separate spheres that may interact occasionally. The internal model positions these spheres as overlapping, with students at the center of overlapping influences. Epstein's theory emphasizes that purposeful partnership development can move schools from external to internal models, maximizing positive influences on student development.

Epstein (1995) identified six types of involvement essential for effective partnerships: parenting (helping families establish home environments supporting learning), communicating (designing effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications), volunteering (recruiting and organizing parent help), learning at home (providing information about how to help students with homework), decision-making (including parents in school decisions), and collaborating with community (identifying and integrating community resources). These six types provide a practical framework for assessing current partnership practices and identifying areas for improvement. The present study draws on this typology to evaluate school-community relationships in Chipangali District.

The theoretical framework for this study integrates Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory with Epstein's overlapping spheres model. This integration recognizes that effective school-community partnerships require attention to multiple ecological levels while providing practical guidance for intervention development. The combined framework acknowledges that partnership development is influenced by microsystem interactions, mesosystem connections, exosystem resources, macrosystem values, and chronosystem changes. Simultaneously, Epstein's six types of involvement offer concrete strategies for moving from external to internal partnership models. This integrated framework guides the study's investigation of factors contributing to effective and ineffective partnerships.

Applying this theoretical framework to Chipangali District reveals multiple levels at which interventions may be necessary. At the microsystem level, improving daily interactions between teachers and parents requires trust-building and communication skills. At the mesosystem level, creating formal structures for school-community collaboration requires institutional commitment and resource allocation. At the exosystem level, addressing poverty and infrastructure limitations requires policy interventions and external support. At the macrosystem level, shifting cultural attitudes toward partnership requires community sensitization and modeling of successful collaborations. The chronosystem perspective acknowledges that these changes require sustained effort over time, recognizing that partnership development is a gradual process rather than an immediate transformation.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the hypothesized relationships between independent variables (factors influencing school-community partnerships), intervening variables (partnership processes), and dependent variables (outcomes for business practices and cultural transformation). This framework synthesizes insights from the literature review and theoretical foundations to guide empirical investigation. The framework posits that school-community partnership outcomes are determined by the interaction of school-based, home-based, and community-based factors, mediated by partnership processes that can either facilitate or impede effective collaboration.

School-based factors constitute the first category of independent variables influencing partnerships. Drawing on Wescott and Konzal (2002), these factors include how schools operate institutionally, teacher beliefs and attitudes toward community involvement, school leadership commitment to partnership, and the presence of formal structures for community engagement. Research by Mulkerrins (2007) demonstrated that teacher attitudes toward parents significantly impact partnership development, with negative attitudes creating barriers to collaboration. The conceptual framework positions these school-based factors as primary determinants of partnership quality, recognizing that schools hold the balance of power in school-community relationships.

Home-based factors represent the second category of independent variables affecting school-community partnerships. Based on the work of Kellaghan et al. (1993) and Lareau (2003), these factors include family socioeconomic status, parental educational experiences and attainment, parents' attitudes toward education, and availability of resources for supporting learning at home. Poverty emerged as a particularly significant home-based factor, with Schneider and Coleman (1993) demonstrating how financial constraints influence parents' decisions about engaging with schools. The framework acknowledges that home-based factors interact with school-based factors, with their combined effects shaping partnership possibilities.

Community-based factors constitute the third category of independent variables influencing school-community partnerships. Following Higgins (2008) and Carlson and Apple (1998), these factors include the prevalence of social capital within communities, community safety and crime levels, availability of community resources and organizations, and cultural values regarding collective versus individual action. The framework specifically identifies the "culture of self" and "degeneration of cooperative spirit" as contemporary community factors that undermine partnership development. These community-based factors operate at the macrosystem level in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, reflecting broader societal changes affecting local contexts.

The intervening variables in this conceptual framework comprise partnership processes that mediate the relationship between independent factors and desired outcomes. Drawing on Epstein's (1995) six types of involvement, these processes include communication mechanisms (formal and informal channels for information exchange), collaboration structures (committees, working groups, and partnership agreements), parental involvement programs (volunteering, decision-making participation, and home learning support), and community engagement initiatives (resource sharing, joint events, and mutual support systems). These processes represent the active mechanisms through which partnership potential is translated into tangible outcomes.

Dependent variables in the conceptual framework encompass two primary outcome categories: business practices and cultural transformation. Business practices refer to the teaching and learning of business subjects, including how business concepts are presented, how practical skills are developed, and how students apply business knowledge in real-world contexts. School-community partnerships influence business practices by providing authentic learning opportunities through community business linkages, guest speakers, field trips, and apprenticeship arrangements. The framework posits that strong partnerships enhance business education by connecting classroom learning to community economic activities.

Cultural transformation represents the second category of dependent variables, encompassing changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors related to education, collaboration, and community responsibility. Drawing on Sergiovanni (1998), cultural transformation involves shifts from individualistic to collective orientations, from passive to active engagement with schools, and from viewing education as solely the school's responsibility to recognizing it as a shared community endeavor. The framework acknowledges that cultural transformation is both an outcome of successful partnerships and a condition for their sustainability, creating reciprocal relationships between partnership processes and cultural change.

The conceptual framework also recognizes feedback loops whereby partnership outcomes influence the independent variables over time. Successful partnerships that improve business practices and generate cultural transformation create positive reinforcement, encouraging continued engagement and resource investment. Conversely, failed partnerships or negative experiences reinforce barriers, making future collaboration more difficult. This dynamic element, informed by Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem concept, acknowledges that school-community relationships evolve over time, with each interaction affecting subsequent possibilities for partnership development.

Figure 1: conceptual framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework visually, depicting the relationships between independent, intervening, and dependent variables. The framework shows school-based, home-based, and community-based factors as inputs influencing partnership processes through bidirectional arrows indicating reciprocal influence. Partnership processes then lead to outcomes in business practices and cultural transformation, with feedback loops returning to the independent variables. This visual representation clarifies the study's analytical approach, guiding data collection and interpretation by identifying which relationships require empirical examination.

Operational Definitions of Terms

- **School-Community Partnership:** A collaborative working relationship between educational institutions and their surrounding communities characterized by shared purpose, mutual respect, information sharing, joint decision-making, and collective accountability for educational outcomes (adapted from Pugh & De'Ath, 1989).
- **Business Practices:** The methods, strategies, and approaches used in teaching and learning business subjects, including curriculum delivery, practical skill development, assessment techniques, and integration of real-world business applications.
- **Cultural Transformation:** The process of changing attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors related to education, collaboration, and community responsibility, shifting from individualistic orientations toward collective engagement with educational processes.
- **Effective Relationship:** A school-community connection that successfully produces desired educational outcomes, characterized by regular communication, mutual support, resource sharing, and collaborative problem-solving.
- **Parental Involvement:** The participation of parents and guardians in their children's education through activities including home learning support, school volunteering, decision-making participation, and communication with teachers.

- **Community Engagement:** The active participation of community members, organizations, and institutions in school activities, events, and decision-making processes, contributing resources, expertise, and support to educational initiatives.
- **Social Capital:** The networks, relationships, trust, and norms of reciprocity available to individuals and groups that facilitate cooperation and collective action for mutual benefit (adapted from Putnam, 1995).
- **Culture of Self:** An individualistic orientation prioritizing personal needs and interests over collective community responsibilities, potentially undermining cooperative efforts and partnership development.
- **Business Education:** The teaching and learning of subjects related to commerce, entrepreneurship, accounting, economics, and management, aimed at developing practical skills for economic participation.
- **Partnership Barriers:** Factors at school, home, or community levels that impede the development of effective collaborative relationships, including institutional practices, resource constraints, negative attitudes, and cultural values.

Summary

This chapter established the foundation for investigating school-community partnerships in Chipangali District, Zambia. The background revealed that weak school-community relationships represent a persistent global challenge affecting educational outcomes, with Zambia experiencing similar difficulties despite recognition of partnership importance. The statement of the problem identified the gap between policy rhetoric and practical reality regarding school-community collaboration. The study's purpose focuses on understanding factors and strategies influencing partnerships and their effects on business practices and cultural transformation. Three specific objectives guide the inquiry, addressing partnership assessment, factor identification, and strategy investigation. The significance, scope, and limitations clarify what this research contributes and its boundaries. The theoretical framework integrates Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory with Epstein's overlapping spheres model, while the conceptual framework illustrates relationships between independent, intervening, and dependent variables. Operational definitions clarify key terms for this study's context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature relevant to school-community partnerships, organized according to the study's three specific objectives. The review examines global, regional, and local perspectives on school-community relationships, synthesizing findings from empirical studies, theoretical works, and policy documents. The chapter begins by addressing the current state of school-community partnerships and their influence on business practices. Subsequently, it explores factors



contributing to effective and ineffective partnerships and their implications for cultural transformation. Finally, the review investigates strategies for strengthening school-community bonds and enhancing business education outcomes. The chapter concludes with empirical reviews across geographical contexts, personal critique of existing literature, identification of research gaps, and a summary synthesizing key findings.

Current State of School-Community Partnerships and Influence on Business Practices

School-community partnerships have been conceptualized variously across educational literature, with definitions ranging from minimal parental involvement to comprehensive community engagement. Pugh and De'Ath (1989) provided a foundational definition characterizing partnership as a working relationship marked by shared purpose, mutual respect, willingness to negotiate, and sharing of information, responsibility, skills, decision-making, and accountability. This definition has been widely adopted in educational partnership research, providing a benchmark against which actual partnership practices can be assessed. Higgins (2008) identified core attributes resonating across partnership literature, including attention to power relations, respect, information sharing, and empathetic practice. These conceptual foundations establish that genuine partnerships require fundamental restructuring of traditional school-community relationships.

The prevalence of weak school-community relationships has been documented across multiple geographical and historical contexts. James (1980) traced this issue to federal legislation mandating parent and community involvement that proliferated since the 1960s, indicating that partnership challenges have existed for decades. Kellaghan et al. (1993) provided historical evidence that schools have always been only one source of education, with significant learning occurring at home before children enter classrooms. Despite this recognition, Carlson and Apple (1998) observed that state personnel struggled throughout the 1960s to recognize schooling context and its implications for educational leadership. This historical perspective reveals that school-community relationship challenges are not new but rather persistent issues that have resisted resolution across generations.

The separation paradigm dominated educational thinking historically, positioning schools as independent entities responsible for education without requiring community input. Amatea (2009) explained that policy makers perpetuated this separation paradigm in the 1960s by making no provision or requirement for interacting with parents. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 exemplified this approach, expecting educators to provide "compensatory" education whereby school environments would mitigate negative experiences of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This remediation paradigm represented a shift from separation but maintained teachers as leaders with power while parents remained passively involved. At this historical

junction, the focus was on parental involvement rather than engagement, with the idea of collaborating with parents being virtually nonexistent.

The third paradigm shift began recognizing the added value of shared leadership and parental collaboration in educational processes. Carr (2003) observed that although this shift has not translated fully into the practices of majority school systems, the shift in literature is apparent. The newest paradigm shift toward collaboration recognizes that school staff members must see students and their families as collaborators in the educational process. However, despite this paradigm being endorsed in policy documents, research consistently demonstrates that little or no meaningful relationship exists between schools and their communities in practice. This gap between paradigm acceptance and practical implementation represents a central challenge for contemporary educational partnership research.

Global perspectives on school-community relationships reveal that partnership challenges affect countries across all development levels. Nielsen (2007) observed through reviewing World Bank programs that domination of school-community partnerships by local elites was highlighted as a major concern across multiple countries. Comer (1980) documented concerns about lack of communication and collaboration between schools and families in low-income and marginalized communities in the United States. In Brazil, researchers have reported limited partnership and engagement between schools and local communities, especially in underserved areas. Cochran and Henderson (1986) documented similar concerns in Russia, particularly in areas with high poverty levels. This global evidence confirms that weak school-community relationships represent a universal educational challenge transcending national boundaries.

African perspectives on school-community partnerships reveal particular challenges related to poverty, cultural factors, and historical educational structures. UNESCO (2017) documented that community engagement within Ethiopian schools focused on creating gender-responsive schools, indicating limited scope for broader partnership development. Uzochina (2016) revealed from a study that school-community relationships existing in schools in River State, Nigeria were poor. Lareau (2003) observed that most parents in rural African areas could not pay school fees, a factor that alienates them from the schools their children attend. Michel (1997) argued that contemporary parents are not always positive toward schools, with negative feelings stemming from misunderstandings about school operations and teacher roles. Amatea (2009) added that African parents who lack parenting knowledge often blame schools when problems arise for their children.

Zambian perspectives on school-community relationships reveal similar patterns of weak partnerships despite policy recognition of their importance. Simweleba and Serpell (2020) revealed that interventions empowering parents

with knowledge and skills for greater involvement in children's education can effectively improve learner performance. However, despite considerable publicity and demonstrated effectiveness, parents remain largely uninvolved in educational processes. Miti (2016) investigated parental involvement at Petauke Boarding School and found that while schools attempted involvement through various mechanisms, few parents fully engaged in school affairs or their children's education. This finding highlights the persistent existence of weak school-community relations throughout Zambia, with the problem having been noticed as early as the late 1950s yet remaining unresolved.

The influence of school-community partnerships on business practices specifically has received limited research attention compared to general educational outcomes. However, existing literature suggests that business education particularly benefits from strong partnerships because business concepts require real-world application. Dewey (1902) argued that schools and communities have a mutually beneficial connection, with parents and schools serving as unique assets to children's education. For business education, community partnerships provide authentic learning opportunities through local business linkages, guest speakers from business sectors, field trips to commercial enterprises, and apprenticeship arrangements that develop practical skills. When these partnerships are weak, business education risks becoming theoretical and disconnected from the economic realities students will face after graduation.

Strong school-community partnerships enhance business practices by providing resources, expertise, and authentic learning contexts that cannot be replicated within school walls. Epstein (1995) identified collaborating with community as one of six essential types of involvement, specifically including connecting schools with community businesses, organizations, and resources. For business education, community collaboration enables students to observe actual business operations, interact with business practitioners, understand local economic dynamics, and develop networks that facilitate post-school employment or entrepreneurship. Without these partnership-enabled learning opportunities, business education remains abstract, potentially reducing student motivation and limiting practical skill development. This finding has particular relevance for rural Zambian contexts where formal business sectors may be limited but informal economic activities offer rich learning opportunities.

Factors Contributing to Effective and Ineffective School-Community Partnerships

School-based factors represent a primary category of barriers to effective school-community partnerships. Wescott and Konzal (2002) identified that barriers to effective partnership practice within individual schools may manifest through how schools operate as well as through negative belief systems and practices of teachers. Schools hold the balance of power and responsibility in partnership development, making them the ultimate

gatekeepers of community engagement. Higgins (2008) emphasized that schools have the potential to make profound and lasting differences to children's lives both directly through their work with children and indirectly by supporting families to support their children. However, the traditional school system inherited from previous generations does not easily lend itself to partnership development, with the very nature of schools preventing parents and teachers from productively working together. The traditional interaction between schools and homes has been characterized by formal and ritualistic approaches that prevent informal interactions necessary for building trusting relationships (Wescott & Konzal, 2002). Schools that adopt a "medical model" locating blame for underachievement solely outside the school context fail to nurture collaboration, instead working in isolation to preserve their own environment and professionalism (Higgins, 2008). This approach prevents development of trusting relationships, with implications for effective problem-solving when issues arise. Sleeter (1996) observed that when poor relationships exist, parent-teacher meetings become confrontations rather than dialogues, adding to already negative relationships. Henry (1996) agreed, noting the "walling out of community" as a response to professionalization of teaching.

Teacher belief systems create significant barriers to effective partnership practice. Henry (1996) challenged teachers to reflect on whether they treat children of actively involved parents more favorably than children whose families remain outside partnership realms, thus contributing to inequality. Daly and Leonard (2002) urged teachers to be aware of the danger of judging parental interest from a middle-class perspective, stating that it would be wrong to conclude that parents in disadvantaged areas are not interested in their children's education. Wescott Dodd and Konzal (2002) drew attention to how cultural differences might contribute to misunderstandings between teachers and parents, noting that parents who are poor or whose cultures differ from teachers demonstrate care for their children in ways unfamiliar to teachers. Sleeter (1996) contended that cultural or class differences between teachers and students are not insurmountable but must be given due consideration.

Home-based barriers to school-community partnerships are equally significant, with homes varying enormously in location, resources, skills, expectations, prior and current school experiences, and capacity for partnership engagement. Kellaghan et al. (1993) believed that homes vary in the extent to which they foster knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support school learning. The home environment harbors multiple potential barriers including poverty, poor parental school experiences, poor educational attainment, negative attitudes, lack of resources, and high education costs. These factors stand in the way of effective educational partnership development, creating challenging contexts that require targeted interventions to overcome.

Poor parental school experiences represent a particularly significant home-based barrier to partnership. MacCaleb (1994) explained that parents who had negative experiences of their own school days carry negative memories impacting their capacity and ability to get involved with their children's school. Wescott Dodd and Konzal (2002) warned that for parents whose own experiences were very painful, the school can be an unwelcoming or fearful place. These negative childhood experiences can be compounded when parents are called to school only when problems arise with their children (Comer, 1986). Higgins (2008) identified three ways negative childhood experiences transfer into parenting practices: forming hindrances to adult participation in lifelong learning, acting as barriers to supporting children's learning, and potentially being transferred to children themselves.

Poverty presents a very real barrier to educational partnership and educational attainment. Kellaghan et al. (1995) made a direct link between families' lack of economic resources and children's ability to benefit fully from educational provision. Schneider and Coleman (1993) highlighted how lack of resources inhibits parents from realizing their educational expectations for their children, with variations in financial and social resources factoring into parents' decisions about actions regarding their children's education. Lynch (1999) argued that lack of adequate income prevents working-class children from maximizing opportunities the education system offers, acting as a major contributor to inequality of educational outcome. For rural Zambian contexts where poverty rates are high, this barrier is particularly acute and requires systematic intervention.

Community-based barriers constitute the third category of factors affecting school-community partnerships. Communities vary in resources, amenities, networks, learning opportunities, housing quality, safety levels, location, and experiences of developing educational partnerships with schools. Pushor (2007) noted that communities are important learning arenas where children expand their horizons and build linguistic, kinaesthetic, artistic, spatial, and interpersonal skills through neighborhood and community experiences. However, Higgins (2008) observed that many communities are now in crisis due to growth of social problems including drugs, crime, and alcohol abuse, as well as loss of family and community networks. These difficulties have knock-on effects on individuals, families, and schools.

Carlson and Apple (1998) characterized contemporary society as living in "unsettling times" marked by breakdown of community, fragmentation of culture, and instrumentalization of self within market logic. Community factors may impact negatively on individuals, schools, and partnership development potential. Higgins (2008) noted that community factors impact families' ability to support their young, with Eccles and Harold (1996) observing that it is harder to do a good job of parenting when living in high-risk neighborhoods or when

financially stressed. These community-level challenges are particularly relevant for rural Zambian contexts where economic opportunities are limited, infrastructure is underdeveloped, and traditional community support structures are eroding.

Despite these numerous barriers, research has identified factors that enhance effective school-community relationships. A welcoming and inclusive environment represents the most vital strategy for building strong school communities. Miti (2016) highlighted involving communities in school activities, events, and decision-making processes as ways of creating welcoming and inclusive environments that enhance ownership and belonging. Promoting cultural competence and diversity within school environments helps create welcoming atmospheres for students and families from diverse backgrounds. Ensuring schools are accessible to all community members, including those with disabilities or language barriers, is important for creating truly inclusive environments that foster strong relationships.

Open communication between schools and communities is essential for effective partnerships. Establishing clear and open lines of communication through regular meetings, newsletters, and other channels keeps both parties informed. Having diverse communication methods where teachers, school leaders, and parents are easily accessible through physical and virtual channels helps create school communities. Accessible communication enables parents to have direct contact with teachers to ensure their children are doing well in the classroom. Crosnoe (2001) suggested that parents play crucial roles in shaping children's behavior and school performance, making regular communication about performance, attendance, requirements, and progress essential. Technology integration into communication has become an essential element of building school communities.

Collaborative partnership allows schools and communities to share resources including facilities, expertise, funding, and personnel, leading to cost savings and more efficient resource use. Simweleba and Serpell (2020) observed that collaboration provides students with enhanced learning opportunities through access to community resources, experts, and real-world experiences, enriching educational experiences and helping learners develop practical skills. By working together, schools and communities can identify common goals and develop initiatives addressing issues such as health, safety, and education. Community capacity development recognizes that all communities have resources, capabilities, and assets, but also constraints that limit possibilities, with collaborations offering room for shared decision-making and mutual understanding.

Parental involvement represents a critical factor enhancing school-community relationships. Epstein (1995) outlined six types of involvement indicating parents' roles: parenting, communicating, volunteering, home learning, decision-making, and collaborating with community.

Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) elaborated that parents must take their position alongside educators in teaching their children. Engaging parents and caregivers in children's education builds strong school-community relationships through decision-making processes, volunteer opportunities, and other activities creating ownership and investment in school communities. Research has consistently shown that when parents are interested in their children's education, students perform better behaviorally, attend school more regularly, are less likely to be expelled, are more motivated to study, and achieve better academic results.

Strategies for Strengthening School-Community Bonds and Enhancing Business Education Outcomes

Community engagement strategies represent a primary approach for strengthening school-community bonds. Schools can actively engage with communities by hosting events, workshops, and other activities that involve community members. These activities build trust and foster positive relationships between schools and wider communities. Iqbal (2018) noted that community involvement builds bridges between schools and communities through small acts of kindness such as food banks or fundraisers for charity groups. Schools can take initiative in celebrating international days, with students participating in community service activities that build rapport between school and local communities. Through such engagement, students learn social behavior, empathy, and other moral values while simultaneously strengthening institutional relationships.

Respect and understanding between schools and communities are key components in fostering positive relationships. Sampson (2001) observed that respect and understanding help build trust and transparency, leading to better collaboration. Schneider and Coleman (1993) argued that showing respect for diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences within communities creates inclusive environments where everyone feels valued and heard. This leads to schools and communities working together toward shared goals such as improving educational outcomes and enhancing community wellbeing. Sennett (2003) suggested that respectful relationships foster mutual support, leading to community members volunteering at schools, providing resources, or offering expertise to support educational initiatives. Respect and understanding also help resolve conflicts constructively and productively.

Shared goals and values play crucial roles in fostering strong school-community relationships. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) defined shared values as teachers' perception of sharing educational goals and values emphasized at their schools, not defined as particular goals but by common understanding. Pugh and De'Ath (1989) noted that when schools and communities share common goals, they are more likely to work together toward common purposes, creating unified visions for education and community development. Shared goals provide foundations for collaboration, enabling both parties to

work together more effectively to address common challenges and create growth opportunities. Miti (2016) observed that when community members see schools aligned with their values and priorities, they become more likely to support educational initiatives and programs.

Cultural sensitivity is essential for building effective relationships in diverse communities. Recognizing and respecting cultural diversity within communities is important for effective partnerships. Schools must be sensitive to cultural backgrounds of students and families, working to create inclusive and welcoming environments for all community members. Cross-cultural activities help students learn about cultural diversity and how to respect other cultures. Building communities of culture by creating groups and teams of diverse cultures with different ethnic backgrounds in various clubs and activities represents another form of community building. Miller et al. (2012) observed that through cultural sharing, two-way communication occurs between families and teachers, allowing families to see that their opinions are not only encouraged but valued.

For business education specifically, partnership strategies must connect classroom learning to community economic activities. Dewey (1902) emphasized that schools do not exist outside local communities but thrive within them, and when communities can be integrated into schools, schools become communities in several forms. For business subjects, this integration involves connecting students with local entrepreneurs, inviting business practitioners as guest speakers, organizing field trips to local businesses, and facilitating student participation in community economic activities. School management closely working with community organizations to access resources and recreation for supporting students academically and personally transforms schools into informal community centers (Iqbal, 2018). These connections make business education relevant and practical.

Strong school-to-community relationships help underserved populations by raising educational standards and reducing attainment gaps between poor and rich pupils to instill equality. In these situations, schools are strongly encouraged to help students and their parents, which can be effective when approached from neighborhood perspectives. Including school communities outside the classroom develops positive attitudes toward education. Research evidence shows that linking with outside communities increases student attendance, strengthens positive parental attitudes toward local schools, and encourages enthusiastic parent participation in school meetings. For business education, this engagement is particularly valuable because business success depends on understanding and serving community needs.

Collaborative partnerships specifically enhance business education by providing authentic learning contexts. Epstein (2001) contended that benefits of working in partnership extend to all three sites (school, home,



community), with learners as key beneficiaries. For business education, community partnerships enable students to understand local economic dynamics, identify business opportunities, develop entrepreneurial skills, and build networks for future employment or business startup. Simweleba and Serpell (2020) observed that collaboration provides students with enhanced learning opportunities through access to community resources, experts, and real-world experiences. These practical experiences are essential for business education, which aims to prepare students for participation in economic activities.

Parental involvement strategies specifically support business education by reinforcing learning at home. When parents understand what children are learning in business subjects, they can provide relevant examples from their own economic activities, discuss business concepts during daily interactions, and support completion of business projects. Epstein (1995) identified home learning as one of six types of involvement, specifically including providing information about how to help students with homework and learning activities. For business education, home learning might involve parents discussing family budgeting, explaining how they make purchasing decisions, or involving children in small business activities. This home reinforcement makes business concepts concrete and relevant.

Communication strategies supporting business education include regular updates about what students are learning and how parents can support this learning at home. Schools can provide parents with information about business curriculum topics, suggest discussion questions for family conversations, and recommend activities that develop business-related skills. Kellaghan et al. (1993) noted that as children get older, their goals may diverge more from those of future-focused parents, making communication increasingly important. Schools have fundamental roles in establishing parent communication, with parents responsible for being aware of students' attendance, absence, marks, educational curricula, challenges, and progress. For business education, this communication ensures parents understand the practical relevance of what children are learning.

Decision-making involvement for business education includes parents participating in curriculum decisions, career guidance activities, and school-business linkage development. When parents serve on school committees, they can advocate for business education resources, suggest local business connections, and provide feedback about whether business curriculum meets community needs. Epstein (1995) identified decision-making as a key type of involvement, specifically including parents in school decisions. For business education, parent input ensures curriculum remains relevant to local economic conditions and employment opportunities. This involvement also builds parental commitment to supporting business education, creating positive cycles of engagement that benefit student learning.

Community collaboration for business education involves systematically connecting schools with local businesses, business organizations, and business professionals. Epstein (1995) identified collaborating with community as essential for partnerships, specifically including connecting schools with community resources. For business education, this collaboration might involve establishing business mentorship programs, arranging student internships or job shadowing, inviting business speakers to classes, organizing business plan competitions with community judges, and creating business advisory committees. These collaborations enrich business education while simultaneously strengthening school-community relationships through meaningful, mutually beneficial activities. The reciprocal nature of these collaborations ensures sustainability.

Empirical Review

Global Perspectives

International research on school-community partnerships has documented both challenges and successes across diverse contexts. Bryk and Schneider (2002) conducted a landmark study in Chicago schools examining relationships between social exchanges and school capacity to effect change. They found that the nature of social exchanges and local cultural features conditioning them shape schools' improvement capacity. Critically, they discovered that broad bases of trust across school communities lubricate day-to-day functioning and serve as critical resources when leaders embark on ambitious improvement plans. This study demonstrated that trust is a core component of educational change processes, with significant implications for school-community partnership development.

Epstein's (1995) longitudinal research on school-family-community partnerships in the United States provided foundational evidence for partnership benefits. Studying hundreds of schools across multiple states, Epstein documented that schools implementing comprehensive partnership programs showed improved student attendance, reduced dropout rates, and increased academic achievement compared to schools without such programs. Her research established the six types of involvement framework that has guided partnership interventions globally. The study demonstrated that effective partnerships require systematic, planned approaches rather than ad hoc activities, with schools needing dedicated personnel, resources, and time for partnership development.

Comer's (1980) School Development Program research in New Haven, Connecticut, provided early evidence for comprehensive school-community partnership approaches. Working in low-income African American communities, Comer developed a model emphasizing three guiding principles: consensus decision-making, collaboration, and no-fault problem-solving. The model created governance structures including parents, teachers, and administrators working together on school improvement. Evaluation research showed that schools implementing the Comer



model showed dramatic improvements in student achievement, attendance, and behavior compared to matched control schools. This research demonstrated that authentic partnership requires restructuring school governance, not merely adding parent activities.

Putnam's (1995) research on social capital in American communities provided theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding community factors affecting school partnerships. Documenting declining social capital across several decades, Putnam demonstrated that communities with higher social capital showed better educational outcomes, lower crime rates, and more effective governance. His research established that networks, norms, and social trust facilitating coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit constitute social capital, with significant implications for community capacity to support schools. This research suggests that school-community partnership interventions must address broader community social capital, not merely school-level factors.

Sampson's (2001) research on crime and public safety demonstrated how community-level social capital affects multiple outcomes including education. Studying Chicago neighborhoods, Sampson found that collective efficacy—the combination of social cohesion and shared expectations for action—strongly predicted neighborhood outcomes including educational achievement, child safety, and crime rates. Neighborhoods with high collective efficacy showed better educational outcomes regardless of socioeconomic composition. This research has important implications for school-community partnerships, suggesting that partnership effectiveness depends partly on community-level social processes that schools can influence but not fully control.

Warren et al.'s (2001) research on community organizing for school reform provided evidence about how community-based organizations can drive partnership development. Studying community organizing initiatives in multiple American cities, Warren found that organizing strategies building relational power among parents and community members led to significant school improvements including increased funding, facility renovations, curriculum changes, and accountability systems. This research demonstrated that school-community partnerships are most effective when communities organize collectively rather than schools initiating partnership from positions of power. The findings suggest that authentic partnership requires power redistribution.

Bryk and Schneider's (2002) Chicago research specifically examined trust as a core component of school improvement. Analyzing data from hundreds of elementary schools, they found that schools with high relational trust among teachers, parents, and school leaders were three times more likely to show improved student achievement than schools with low trust. Trust was measured through four criteria: respect, competence,

personal regard for others, and integrity. This research provided quantitative evidence for the importance of trust-building in school-community partnerships, demonstrating that trust is not merely desirable but essential for improvement. The study also showed that trust could be built through intentional actions.

Lareau's (2003) ethnographic research on family-school relationships across social classes provided rich qualitative evidence about how partnership dynamics differ by socioeconomic status. Studying families from different class backgrounds, Lareau documented that middle-class parents engaged in "concerted cultivation," actively intervening in children's schooling, while working-class and poor parents engaged in "accomplishment of natural growth," leaving schooling primarily to teachers. These different approaches reflected different cultural logics rather than different levels of caring about children's education. This research has important implications for understanding home-based barriers to partnership, suggesting that schools must adapt to different family cultural frameworks.

Henderson and Mapp's (2002) synthesis of research on family and community involvement in American schools provided comprehensive evidence for partnership benefits. Reviewing over 50 studies, they concluded that when families are involved in children's learning, students achieve more regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic background, or parents' education level. They also found that the most effective involvement strategies are those that engage families in learning activities at home rather than merely requiring school attendance at events. This synthesis established that partnership interventions should focus on home learning support as a primary mechanism for improving educational outcomes, with implications for business education partnership design.

Desforges and Abouchaar's (2003) research review for the British government provided evidence about parental involvement effects on student achievement. Reviewing UK and international studies, they concluded that parental involvement has significant positive effects on student achievement throughout schooling, with home-based involvement (helping with homework, discussing school, encouraging educational aspirations) having stronger effects than school-based involvement (attending events, volunteering). They also found that parental involvement effects are larger than most school factors and remain significant even when controlling for socioeconomic status. This research has important implications for partnership strategy, suggesting that home-school connections supporting home learning should be prioritized.

Regional Perspectives

African research on school-community partnerships has documented context-specific challenges and promising practices. Uzoehina (2016) investigated school-community relationships in Rivers State, Nigeria, finding that relationships were generally poor with minimal



collaboration between schools and communities. The study surveyed teachers, principals, and community leaders across multiple schools, identifying factors including lack of communication structures, negative teacher attitudes toward community involvement, and community poverty as primary barriers. Uzoehina recommended policy mandates requiring partnership structures and resource allocation for partnership activities. This research established baseline evidence about partnership challenges in Nigerian educational contexts.

Simweleba and Serpell's (2020) research in rural Zambia examined parental involvement interventions and their effects on learner performance. Working with primary schools in Eastern Province, they implemented an intervention empowering parents with knowledge and skills for greater involvement in children's education. The intervention included workshops on how children learn, strategies for supporting learning at home, and mechanisms for communicating with teachers. Evaluation research showed significant improvements in learner performance in intervention schools compared to control schools. This research provided evidence that partnership interventions can be effective in rural Zambian contexts when appropriately designed and implemented.

Miti's (2016) research on parental involvement at Petauke Boarding School in Zambia examined involvement levels and mechanisms. Using surveys and interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators, Miti found that while schools attempted involvement through PTA meetings, general meetings, open days, newsletters, phone calls, and report forms, few parents were fully involved in school affairs or their children's education. Barriers included distance from school, work demands, poverty, and parents' own negative educational experiences. This research documented that even when schools create involvement mechanisms, multiple barriers prevent meaningful parent engagement, requiring more intensive partnership development approaches.

Lareau's (2003) research included African contexts through comparative studies of family-school relationships across multiple countries. In African settings, Lareau observed that poverty significantly constrained parental involvement, with parents working multiple jobs to make ends meet contributing to low attendance at conferences and school activities. This research highlighted that parents across classes want children to succeed at school, but socioeconomic factors differentially impact involvement possibilities. The research strengthened conclusions that social position has profound implications for life experiences and outcomes, including school-community partnership possibilities. These findings have particular relevance for rural Zambian contexts where poverty rates are high.

Amatea's (2009) work on family-school partnerships in African contexts examined paradigm shifts from separation to collaboration. Analyzing educational policies

and practices across multiple African countries, Amatea found that while policy rhetoric increasingly endorsed partnership, practice remained largely within separation or remediation paradigms. Teachers maintained power and control, parents remained passive recipients of school decisions, and collaborative structures were absent. Amatea argued that shifting to collaboration paradigms requires fundamental changes in teacher education, school leadership, and resource allocation. This research provided framework for understanding why partnership challenges persist despite policy recognition.

Higgins' (2008) research on community-based learning projects in African contexts examined partnership approaches to learning. Working with schools in disadvantaged communities, Higgins found that through engaging with learners, teachers, and communities, the quality of all participants' lives was transformed. Learners built solidarity and resilience, forming networks of friends. Skills, knowledge, and experiences developed through partnerships impacted learners' lives and their families' lives. Children in schools where parents and tutors worked collaboratively spoke of feeling safe, developing self-esteem and belonging. Teachers felt appreciated by parents and expressed high job satisfaction. This research demonstrated partnership benefits across multiple stakeholder groups.

Daly and Leonard's (2002) research on poverty effects in African contexts examined risks faced by children living in poverty. They identified three possible risks: exclusion from peers' social world, leaving school early or not achieving full potential, and growing up in harsh environments turning to drugs, joy-riding, or early parenthood. This research linked poverty to early school leaving, with children leaving the education system to go on courses offering allowances. Such allowances were used to buy clothes and attend social events, with decisions to leave school closely related to family economic status. This research demonstrated how poverty creates multiple barriers to educational engagement, including school-community partnership participation.

Boldt's (1994) research on early school leaving in African contexts examined poverty-education relationships. Boldt found that children left the school system to go on courses offering allowances, with allowances used for material goods and social activities. Young people's decisions to leave school were closely related to family economic status, with families often in debt and barely affording uniforms and books. This research highlighted the chronic nature of educational challenges related to poverty, with implications for school-community partnership development. Partnerships cannot succeed when families struggle for basic survival; poverty interventions must accompany partnership interventions.

Le Compte and Dworkin's (1991) research on poverty and school dropout documented long-identified relationships between poverty degree and dropout tendency. Their research, which included African contexts, showed that

students from impoverished backgrounds face multiple barriers to school completion including pressure to contribute to family income, lack of resources for school participation, and health and nutrition challenges affecting attendance and concentration. This research established that poverty affects educational outcomes through multiple mechanisms, many of which operate outside school control but can be addressed through comprehensive community partnerships addressing basic needs alongside educational support.

Pushor's (2007) research on parent engagement in multiple countries including African contexts examined creating shared worlds between schools and families. Working with schools in disadvantaged communities, Pushor developed frameworks for parent engagement that positioned parents alongside educators in teaching children. This research challenged traditional involvement models where parents support school agendas, instead advocating for engagement models where parent knowledge and expertise are valued equally with teacher knowledge. The research demonstrated that when schools adopt engagement rather than involvement frameworks, parents participate more fully and student outcomes improve. This framework has significant implications for partnership development in Zambian contexts.

Local Perspectives

Zambian research on school-community partnerships has focused primarily on parental involvement rather than broader community engagement. Miti (2016) conducted seminal research in Petauke District examining parental involvement in children's school discipline. The study surveyed 100 parents, 20 teachers, and 5 administrators at Petauke Boarding School, finding that parents were not fully involved in discipline or other school-related issues. While schools created involvement mechanisms including PTA meetings, general meetings, open days, newsletters, phone calls, and report forms, few parents participated fully. Barriers included distance, work demands, lack of transport, poverty, and parents' negative educational experiences. This research established baseline evidence about Zambian parental involvement patterns.

Simweleba and Serpell (2020) conducted intervention research in rural Zambian primary schools examining parental involvement effects on learner performance. Working with schools in Eastern Province, they developed and implemented an intervention providing parents with knowledge and skills for greater involvement in children's education. The intervention included workshops, home visits, and creation of parent support groups. Evaluation using pre-post tests with control groups showed significant performance improvements in intervention schools, with effects persisting after intervention ended. This research demonstrated that parental involvement interventions can be effective in Zambian contexts when systematically implemented, providing evidence-based guidance for partnership program design.

The Zambian Ministry of Education has conducted internal evaluations of school-community partnership initiatives. While these evaluations are not publicly available in detail, reported findings indicate that while policy documents emphasize partnership importance, implementation remains inconsistent. Schools vary widely in partnership practices, with urban schools generally showing stronger partnerships than rural schools. Challenges include limited resources for partnership activities, inadequate teacher training on family engagement, lack of transportation and communication infrastructure in rural areas, and poverty limiting family participation capacity. These findings highlight the need for contextually appropriate partnership models for different Zambian settings.

Research on community schools in Zambia has provided insights about school-community partnerships in contexts where communities take primary responsibility for education. DeStefano and Moore (2007) studied Zambian community schools, finding that these schools typically emerge when government schools are unavailable, with communities providing resources, governance, and support. While community schools show strong community ownership and involvement by necessity, they often lack resources and face sustainability challenges. This research suggests that community involvement is possible when communities have genuine ownership and decision-making power, with implications for partnership design in government schools where power typically remains centralized.

Studies on Zambian PTA effectiveness have examined how statutory partnership structures function in practice. Research by Mwape (2015) found that while PTAs exist in all Zambian schools, their effectiveness varies dramatically. In some schools, PTAs are active governance bodies making meaningful decisions about resource allocation, staffing, and school improvement. In other schools, PTAs exist only on paper, meeting rarely or only when mandated by the Ministry. Factors affecting PTA effectiveness include principal attitudes toward community involvement, parent education levels, community socioeconomic status, and Ministry enforcement of PTA requirements. This research suggests that statutory structures alone do not create partnerships; implementation matters.

Research on Zambian business education has examined how school-community partnerships affect business teaching and learning. Banda (2018) studied business education in Lusaka secondary schools, finding that teachers reported limited community engagement in business subjects. While teachers recognized that community business linkages could enhance learning by providing authentic examples, guest speakers, and internship opportunities, few schools had systematic mechanisms for such engagement. Barriers included teacher time constraints, lack of school policies encouraging community engagement, and limited local business infrastructure. This research identified specific

partnership challenges for business education requiring targeted intervention.

Studies on cultural factors affecting Zambian education have examined how traditional values influence school-community relationships. Serpell (1993) conducted longitudinal research on educational values in rural Zambian communities, finding that traditional child-rearing practices emphasized collective responsibility for children's development. However, modernization and economic pressures have eroded these traditions, with communities becoming more individualistic and parents deferring educational responsibility to schools. This research suggests that partnership interventions must address cultural change, rebuilding community orientations toward collective educational responsibility. The research also identified cultural resources that partnership interventions can mobilize, including extended family networks and traditional leadership structures.

Research on Zambian rural education has documented infrastructure and resource challenges affecting school-community partnerships. Mwanza (2017) studied rural primary schools in Eastern Province, finding that limited transportation and communication infrastructure severely constrains partnership possibilities. Schools cannot easily contact parents without phones or reliable mail, parents cannot easily attend school events without transport, and community resources are limited. These infrastructure challenges require creative partnership approaches using existing community structures such as church networks, market days, and traditional gatherings for communication and engagement. This research highlights the need for contextually appropriate partnership models for rural settings.

Studies on Zambian teacher preparation have examined how teacher education addresses family and community engagement. Mwila (2019) surveyed teacher education institutions across Zambia, finding that most programs provide limited coverage of family engagement topics. While some institutions include modules on community relations, these are typically brief and theoretical rather than practical and skill-based. New teachers report feeling unprepared to engage families and communities, receiving no fieldwork or practicum experiences in partnership development. This research suggests that improving school-community partnerships requires teacher education reform including partnership skills in curriculum.

Research on Zambian educational policy implementation has examined gaps between policy and practice regarding community engagement. Phiri (2016) analyzed policy documents and interviewed Ministry officials, finding that while educational policies emphasize community participation, implementation mechanisms are weak. Policies lack specific requirements for partnership structures, monitoring systems for partnership activities, and accountability measures for partnership outcomes. Schools receive limited guidance or resources for partnership development, and teacher performance evaluations do not include partnership criteria. This

research suggests that policy alone is insufficient; implementation systems, resources, and accountability are necessary for partnership improvement.

Personal Critique of the Literature

The reviewed literature demonstrates strong consensus about school-community partnership importance and benefits across diverse contexts. Multiple studies across multiple countries consistently show that strong partnerships improve student outcomes including achievement, attendance, behavior, and graduation rates (Epstein, 1995; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). This consistency strengthens confidence in partnership benefits and justifies interventions to improve partnerships. However, the literature also shows that partnership effects vary considerably across studies, with some interventions showing minimal or no effects. This variation suggests that partnership quality matters more than partnership existence, with poorly implemented partnerships potentially wasting resources without improving outcomes.

The literature identifies multiple barriers to effective partnerships operating at school, home, and community levels (Wescott & Konzal, 2002; Kellaghan et al., 1993; Higgins, 2008). This comprehensive barrier identification is useful for intervention design, suggesting that addressing single barriers is insufficient when multiple barriers operate simultaneously. However, the literature provides less guidance about barrier interactions and relative importance. Studies rarely examine whether school-based barriers are more or less important than home-based barriers, or whether barrier importance varies by context. This limitation makes it difficult to prioritize intervention targets, particularly in resource-constrained settings where not all barriers can be addressed simultaneously.

The theoretical literature on school-community partnerships is relatively well-developed, with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory and Epstein's (1995) overlapping spheres model providing robust frameworks. These theories usefully conceptualize partnerships as operating across multiple environmental levels requiring coordinated interventions. However, empirical applications of these theories often reduce their complexity, examining only some levels or relationships. Few studies fully operationalize Bronfenbrenner's model by measuring factors at all ecological levels and examining cross-level interactions. This limitation means that while the theoretical framework suggests complexity, empirical evidence about how different levels interact remains limited.

Methodologically, the literature includes both quantitative studies documenting partnership effects and qualitative studies exploring partnership processes. This methodological diversity is valuable, with quantitative studies providing evidence about "whether" partnerships work and qualitative studies providing evidence about "how" they work. However, relatively few studies employ

mixed methods combining both approaches. This gap limits understanding of mechanisms through which partnerships produce effects. Quantitative studies showing partnership effects rarely explain why some partnerships succeed while others fail, while qualitative studies describing partnership processes rarely measure outcome effects. Mixed methods studies are needed to connect processes to outcomes.

The literature focuses heavily on general educational outcomes rather than subject-specific outcomes including business education. While general achievement effects are well-documented, less is known about whether partnership effects differ by subject area. Business education may particularly benefit from community partnerships because business concepts require real-world application and community economic contexts provide authentic learning opportunities. However, limited research has examined this possibility, representing a significant gap given growing emphasis on practical skills development in business education. This gap is particularly significant for the present study, which specifically examines business practices.

Geographically, the literature is heavily weighted toward developed country contexts, particularly the United States and United Kingdom. While African research exists, it is less extensive and often conducted by international researchers rather than African scholars. This geographical imbalance limits understanding of how partnership dynamics differ across contexts with different cultural, economic, and institutional conditions. Rural Zambian contexts differ dramatically from urban American contexts, yet partnership models developed in American settings are often applied in Zambia without adaptation. Contextually appropriate research and models are needed, which the present study contributes.

The literature on business education partnerships specifically is extremely limited, with most partnership research focusing on general education rather than subject-specific partnerships. This gap is significant because business education has distinctive features including emphasis on practical skills, connection to economic activity, and relevance for employment and entrepreneurship. These features suggest that business education partnerships may require different strategies than general education partnerships, with stronger emphasis on linkages with businesses and economic institutions. The present study addresses this gap by specifically examining how school-community partnerships influence business practices.

Temporally, much foundational partnership research was conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, with more recent research often replicating rather than extending earlier findings. While replication is valuable for establishing robust findings, the educational and community contexts in which partnerships operate have changed significantly over recent decades. Technology has transformed communication possibilities, economic conditions have

shifted, and cultural values regarding education and community have evolved. Research is needed examining how contemporary partnership dynamics differ from historical patterns and how partnership strategies must adapt to changing conditions. The present study provides contemporary evidence from a current context.

The literature shows limited attention to power dynamics in school-community partnerships, despite theoretical recognition that power imbalances are central to partnership challenges. Schools typically hold power in school-community relationships, with professionals controlling access, resources, and decisions. Communities, particularly marginalized communities, often lack power to influence school practices. While some literature acknowledges this imbalance (Fine, 1993; Casanova, 1996), few studies examine how power operates in partnership contexts or how partnerships can redistribute power. This gap is significant because authentic partnership requires power redistribution, yet interventions rarely address power directly.

Finally, the literature is limited in providing practical guidance for partnership implementation in resource-constrained settings. While studies identify barriers and recommend interventions, recommendations often require resources unavailable in rural Zambian contexts including dedicated partnership coordinators, technology for communication, and transportation for community engagement. Limited guidance exists for developing partnerships when resources are severely constrained, requiring creative approaches using existing community structures and resources. The present study addresses this gap by examining partnership possibilities in a resource-constrained rural Zambian context, identifying strategies feasible given local conditions.

Research Gap

Despite substantial literature on school-community partnerships, significant gaps remain that this study addresses. First, limited research examines how partnerships specifically influence business education practices. While general educational effects are well-documented, business education has distinctive features including emphasis on practical skills, connection to economic activity, and relevance for employment and entrepreneurship. Understanding how partnerships affect these distinctive features is essential for designing interventions that improve business education outcomes. The present study addresses this gap by specifically examining partnership influences on business practices in Chipangali District.

Second, limited research examines partnership dynamics in rural Zambian contexts specifically. While some Zambian research exists (Miti, 2016; Simweleba & Serpell, 2020), it focuses primarily on parental involvement rather than broader community partnerships. Rural contexts present distinctive challenges including limited infrastructure, poverty, and traditional cultural structures that differ from urban contexts. Partnership



models developed in urban or developed country settings may not transfer effectively to rural Zambian settings without adaptation. The present study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on rural Chipangali District, generating contextually relevant evidence.

Third, limited research examines cultural transformation as an outcome of school-community partnerships. While partnership benefits for student achievement are well-documented, partnerships may also produce broader cultural changes including shifts in attitudes toward education, collective responsibility, and community engagement. These cultural changes may be as important as achievement effects, potentially creating sustainable conditions for continued educational improvement. However, limited research has examined cultural transformation outcomes, representing a significant gap. The present study addresses this gap by specifically examining how partnerships influence cultural transformation.

Fourth, limited research integrates barrier identification with strategy development in a single study. Studies typically either identify barriers to partnerships or test specific partnership strategies, but rarely do both in an integrated manner. This separation limits practical utility because barrier identification without strategy testing does not guide intervention, while strategy testing without barrier identification may address wrong barriers. The present study addresses this gap by both identifying barriers and investigating strategies, providing integrated evidence for intervention design.

Fifth, limited research employs mixed methods to study school-community partnerships in African contexts. While quantitative studies document partnership prevalence and effects, and qualitative studies explore partnership processes, few mixed methods studies combine both approaches in African settings. This gap limits understanding of both partnership patterns and mechanisms. The present study addresses this gap by employing mixed methods including surveys, interviews, and focus groups, providing both breadth and depth of evidence.

Sixth, limited research examines how multiple stakeholder perspectives differ regarding partnership dynamics. Studies often focus on single stakeholder groups (parents or teachers or administrators) rather than examining how perspectives differ across groups. These differences may be as important as any group's perspective alone, with conflicts between stakeholder perspectives indicating partnership challenges requiring intervention. The present study addresses this gap by collecting data from four stakeholder groups: administrators, teachers, parents, and students, enabling comparison of perspectives.

Seventh, limited research examines partnership effects on business practices specifically in primary education settings. Most business education research focuses on secondary or tertiary levels, with primary business

education receiving limited attention. However, primary education increasingly includes business-related content, particularly in programs emphasizing practical skills. Understanding how partnerships affect primary business education is important for developing foundational skills. The present study addresses this gap by focusing on primary schools in Chipangali District.

Summary

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to school-community partnerships organized according to the study's three objectives. The review established that weak school-community relationships represent a persistent global challenge affecting educational outcomes, with Zambia experiencing similar difficulties. School-based, home-based, and community-based factors contribute to weak partnerships, with poverty, teacher attitudes, and cultural change identified as particularly significant barriers. Despite these challenges, research has identified multiple strategies for strengthening partnerships including open communication, collaborative structures, parental involvement, community engagement, shared goals, and cultural sensitivity. The empirical review across global, regional, and local perspectives showed consistent evidence that partnerships improve student outcomes when well-implemented. However, significant gaps remain including limited attention to business education specifically, rural Zambian contexts, cultural transformation outcomes, integrated barrier-strategy research, mixed methods approaches, multi-stakeholder perspectives, and primary business education. The present study addresses these gaps.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological framework guiding this investigation of school-community partnerships in Chipangali District, Zambia. The chapter outlines the research design, study site, target population, sample size, and sampling techniques employed. It describes data collection methods including questionnaires, interview schedules, and focus group discussions, along with procedures for data collection. The chapter details data analysis approaches including thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative data. Ethical considerations governing the research are discussed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The chapter concludes with a summary synthesizing key methodological decisions and their justifications.

Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Borg and Gall (1989) explained that mixed methods approaches combine qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. This design was appropriate for investigating school-community partnerships because partnerships

involve multiple stakeholder perspectives, complex social processes, and contextual factors that quantitative methods alone cannot fully capture. Mixed methods enabled the researcher to collect quantitative data on partnership prevalence and patterns while simultaneously gathering qualitative data on partnership processes and experiences. This combination provided both breadth and depth of evidence.

Qualitative methods including interviews and focus group discussions enabled the researcher to gain in-depth insights into perceptions, experiences, and interactions of stakeholders involved in school-community relationships. These methods helped uncover underlying reasons behind behaviors or attitudes and provided rich descriptions of partnership dynamics. Creswell (2014) noted that qualitative research is appropriate when researchers aim to establish meanings of various phenomena based on participants' perspectives. For this study, qualitative approaches allowed participants to openly discuss how they personally perceived school-community relationships, providing emic perspectives essential for understanding partnership challenges and possibilities from community members' viewpoints.

Quantitative methods including questionnaires enabled the researcher to gather data on larger scales, allowing for generalizability and statistical analysis of relationships between variables. Gay (1996) stated that quantitative approaches help identify trends, patterns, and correlations between different factors influencing phenomena. For this study, quantitative data identified patterns in partnership perceptions across stakeholder groups, relationships between demographic factors and partnership attitudes, and prevalence of specific barriers or strategies. This quantitative evidence complemented qualitative findings, with statistical patterns illuminating which issues were most widespread while qualitative data explained why these patterns occurred.

Study Site

The study was conducted in Chisitu rural area located approximately 75 kilometers west of Chipata town in Eastern Province, Zambia. The area is situated in Sisinje ward of Chipangali constituency under Chief Chikuwe of the Chewa-speaking people, approximately 5 kilometers off the Chipata-Mfuwe road. This site was chosen because it had schools and surrounding communities, making it ideal for investigating school-community relationships. The presence of all stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, students) in the area influenced site selection. The short distances between schools relative to location facilitated data collection. Being a rural area, findings may have value for generalization to similar rural contexts in Zambia and elsewhere.

Target Population

Target population refers to the entire group of individuals or elements that the researcher is interested in studying or generalizing research findings to (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). This population represents the larger group of

which research results are intended to apply. For this study, the target population was defined as individuals bearing characteristics of parents, teachers, administrators, and students in Chipangali District. The population under study was located in Chisitu rural area in Chief Chikuwe's area, with an estimated target population of 1000 males and females collectively across the five participating schools and their surrounding communities.

The accessible population for this study comprised stakeholders from five schools: Eastern Girls Secondary School, Mchenja Primary School, Chisitu Primary School, and Mtewe Primary School. These schools were selected because they represented typical rural primary schools in Chipangali District, with similar characteristics including limited resources, predominantly agricultural communities, and Chewa cultural context. The schools varied slightly in size and grade configuration, providing some diversity while remaining broadly comparable. Surrounding communities included villages within walking distance of each school, with residents engaged primarily in subsistence farming and small-scale trading.

Sample Size

The sample population comprised 200 participants representing parents, teachers, administrators, and students. Bless and Achole (1998) observed that it is the extent to which the sample represents the population that matters rather than absolute size. The sample breakdown included 20 administrators (headteachers and deputy headteachers), 50 teachers, 80 parents, and 50 students. Gay (1996) stated that for descriptive research, a sample of 10-20% of the population is sufficient for reliable findings. This sample size of 200 from an estimated population of 1000 (20%) exceeded this threshold, providing adequate representation for descriptive analysis and pattern identification across stakeholder groups.

Sampling Techniques

The study employed purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select administrators, teachers, and parents based on specific characteristics relevant to the study. Kombo and Tromp (2006) defined sampling as the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable smaller representative part of a population for determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population. Purposive sampling was appropriate for administrators because all administrators in participating schools were included (total population sampling). For teachers, purposive sampling ensured representation across grade levels and teaching experience. For parents, purposive sampling targeted those whose children attended participating schools and who had resided in the community for at least one year.

Simple random sampling was used to select students from participating schools to give each student an equal chance of selection. From each school, student names were listed and random numbers were generated to select participants, stratified by gender to ensure 25 girls and 25 boys total across schools. Gay (1996) recommended simple random

sampling for descriptive research to avoid selection bias. This approach ensured that student participants were representative of the broader student population without systematic bias. Random sampling also enhanced the study's credibility by reducing researcher influence over which students participated.

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaires were developed for administrators, teachers, and students. Each questionnaire had two sections: Section A sought demographic information (age, gender, education level, experience), while Section B sought information on school-community partnerships. Questionnaires used Likert-scale items, multiple choice questions, and open-ended questions. Questionnaires were appropriate for this study because they could be administered to groups simultaneously, enabling efficient data collection from 115 respondents (20 administrators, 45 teachers who returned questionnaires, and 50 students). Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) noted that questionnaires provide standardization across respondents and allow anonymous responses, potentially increasing honesty about sensitive topics.

Interview schedules were developed for parents, who were less likely to have literacy skills for questionnaire completion. The interview schedule was divided into two parts: Part A focused on personal information while Part B required responses on school-community relationships. Interviews were conducted one-on-one with parents in their homes or community gathering places, with interviews conducted in Chichewa (the local language) and responses translated into English. Interviews allowed for clarification of questions, probing of responses, and building rapport that encouraged honest answers. This method was appropriate for parents, many of whom had limited formal education and would have struggled with written questionnaires.

Focus group discussions were conducted with separate groups of teachers, parents, and students. Each focus group comprised 8-10 participants and lasted approximately 90 minutes. Focus groups enabled interaction between participants, generating discussion and debate that revealed shared understandings and disagreements about school-community partnerships. Krueger and Casey (2000) noted that focus groups are valuable for exploring topics where social norms, community standards, and collective experiences are relevant. For this study, focus groups revealed community-level patterns in partnership experiences and attitudes that individual interviews might miss.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained research authorization permits from the Ministry of Education, District Commissioner, and District Education Board Secretary. The researcher then made introductory visits to public primary schools in Chisitu rural area to establish rapport with respondents and explain the research purpose. These visits built confidence between the researcher and

potential participants. During these visits, the researcher explained the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality protections, and how findings would be used. Written informed consent was obtained from all adult participants, with parental consent and child assent obtained for student participants.

On the second visit, the researcher sampled respondents using the established sampling procedures. Questionnaires were administered to administrators, teachers, and students in classrooms, staff rooms, and headteachers' offices respectively. The researcher personally administered questionnaires, remaining available to answer questions while not influencing responses. Questionnaires were completed at participants' own pace and collected immediately upon completion to maximize response rates. Interviews with parents were conducted upon obtaining permission from village headmen, with interviews scheduled at times convenient for parents (typically late afternoon after farm work). Focus group discussions were held at central community locations (school buildings or community centers) on weekends when more community members were available.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Data were entered into SPSS version 25 for analysis. Tables, bar charts, and pie charts were generated to visualize data patterns, making results accessible and interpretable. Descriptive analysis was appropriate for addressing the study's objectives of assessing partnership states and identifying factor prevalence. Gay (1996) noted that descriptive statistics are suitable for research aimed at describing phenomena rather than testing causal hypotheses. For this study, descriptive analysis revealed patterns in partnership perceptions across stakeholder groups and the frequency of specific barriers or strategies.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up. Thematic analysis was appropriate for identifying patterns of meaning across qualitative data relevant to research questions. The researcher transcribed all interviews and focus group discussions verbatim, then coded transcripts using both deductive codes derived from the conceptual framework and inductive codes emerging from data. Themes were reviewed by a second researcher to enhance reliability. Data visualization techniques including thematic maps and participant quotations were used to present qualitative findings.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection from harm. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained written informed consent from all

adult participants after explaining the research purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. For student participants, parental consent was obtained in writing, with child assent obtained verbally after age-appropriate explanation of the research. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. The researcher emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that declining to participate would not affect participants' relationships with schools or access to services.

Confidentiality was protected through multiple mechanisms. Questionnaires were anonymous, with no identifying information collected. Interviews and focus group discussions used pseudonyms in all transcripts and reports. Data were stored in locked cabinets and password-protected computer files accessible only to the researcher. Reports present findings in aggregate form with no individual identification possible. Participants were assured that their responses would not be shared with school administrators, teachers, or community leaders in identifiable form. This confidentiality protection was essential for encouraging honest responses, particularly about sensitive topics such as criticizing school practices or teachers.

Protection from harm guided all research procedures. The researcher anticipated that discussing school-community relationships might evoke negative emotions for participants who had experienced conflict or marginalization. Interview protocols included debriefing procedures if participants became distressed. The researcher also considered potential social risks, ensuring that participation or non-participation would not affect participants' standing in schools or communities. For student participants, data collection occurred during regular school hours with minimal disruption to learning. The researcher obtained institutional ethics approval prior to commencing data collection.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodological framework for investigating school-community partnerships in Chipangali District. The study employed a mixed methods design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide comprehensive understanding of partnership dynamics. Data were collected from 200 participants across five schools using questionnaires, interview schedules, and focus group discussions. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques ensured appropriate participant selection. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, and visualizations. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework. Ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection from guided all research procedures. This methodology enabled the study to address its three objectives: assessing partnership states, identifying factors, and investigating strategies.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION

This chapter presents data collected from 200 participants across five schools in Chipangali District, Zambia. The chapter begins with demographic characteristics of participants including gender, age, experience, and education level. Subsequently, data are presented according to the study's three objectives: assessing the current state of school-community relationships and influence on business practices; identifying factors contributing to effective and ineffective partnerships; and investigating strategies for strengthening partnerships. Quantitative data are presented in tables with accompanying narrative, while qualitative data are presented through participant quotations and thematic summaries. The chapter concludes with a summary synthesizing key findings from all data sources.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Category	Male (n)	Male (%)	Female (n)	Female (%)	Total (n)	Total (%)
Administrators	10	50	10	50	20	100



Teachers	22	49	23	51	45	100
Students	20	50	20	50	40	100
Parents	35	50	35	50	70	100
Total	87	49	88	51	175	100

Table 1 shows that the study achieved balanced gender representation across all stakeholder categories. Among administrators, 10 males and 10 females participated (50% each). Among teachers, 22 males (49%) and 23 females (51%) participated. Student participants included 20 males

(50%) and 20 females (50%). Parent participants included 35 males (50%) and 35 females (50%). Overall, 87 males (49%) and 88 females (51%) participated. This balanced gender distribution enables analysis of gender differences in partnership perceptions and ensures that findings reflect perspectives of both genders across stakeholder groups.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Administrators (n)	Administrators (%)	Teachers (n)	Teachers (%)	Students (n)	Students (%)	Parents (n)	Parents (%)
20-29 years	0	0	7	16	0	0	5	7
30-39 years	4	20	20	44	0	0	17	24
40-49 years	10	50	18	40	0	0	30	43
50+ years	6	30	0	0	0	0	18	26
7-9 years	-	-	-	-	0	0	-	-
10-12 years	-	-	-	-	2	5	-	-
13-15 years	-	-	-	-	15	38	-	-
16+ years	-	-	-	-	23	58	-	-

Table 2 shows that most administrators (50%) were aged 40-49 years, with 30% aged 50 years and above, and 20%

aged 30-39 years. This indicates that school leadership is concentrated among middle-aged and older adults. Most

teachers (44%) were aged 30-39 years, with 40% aged 40-49 years, and 16% aged 20-29 years. This distribution suggests a mix of early-career and experienced teachers. Among students, 58% were aged 16 years and above, 38% aged 13-15 years, and 5% aged 10-12 years. Most parents

(43%) were aged 40-49 years, with 26% aged 50 years and above, 24% aged 30-39 years, and 7% aged 20-29 years.

Table 3: Teaching Experience of Administrators and Teachers

Experience	Administrators (n)	Administrators (%)	Teachers (n)	Teachers (%)
1-5 years	3	15	5	11
6-10 years	10	50	9	20
11-15 years	5	25	17	38
16-20 years	2	10	10	22
Above 20 years	0	0	4	9

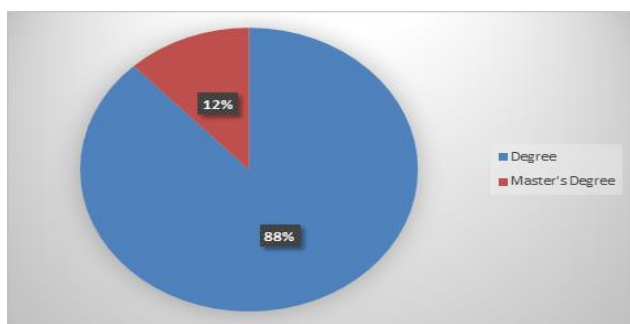
Table 3 shows that most administrators (50%) had 6-10 years of experience, followed by 25% with 11-15 years, 15% with 1-5 years, and 10% with 16-20 years. No administrators had more than 20 years experience. Among teachers, 38% had 11-15 years experience, 22% had 16-20 years, 20% had 6-10 years, 11% had 1-5 years, and 9% had above 20 years. This distribution indicates that both administrators and teachers had substantial experience, with most having served for over 5 years. Experienced respondents were likely to provide informed perspectives on school-community relationships based on extended observation of partnership dynamics over time.

Figure 2: Educational Level of Administrators

Source: Fieldwork (2026)

Figure 2 shows that among school administrators, 88% held bachelor's degrees while 12% held master's degrees. None held certificates or diplomas as their highest qualification. This high education level indicates that administrators possessed formal knowledge about educational leadership and management. However, the absence of administrators with only certificates or diplomas also suggests that formal education beyond secondary level is required for administrative positions in these schools. Administrators' high education levels may

affect partnership dynamics by creating education gaps between highly educated administrators and less educated community members.



Category	Targeted (n)	Actual (n)	Response Rate (%)
Administrators	20	17	85
Teachers	50	45	90
Students	50	40	80
Parents	80	70	88

Total	200	172	86
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Table 4 shows that the study achieved an overall response rate of 86% across all categories. Administrators achieved 85% response (17 of 20), teachers 90% (45 of 50), students 80% (40 of 50), and parents 88% (70 of 80). This high response rate was achieved through personal calls and physical visits reminding respondents to complete and

return questionnaires. Gay (1996) noted that response rates above 70% are considered excellent for educational research. The achieved 86% response rate therefore provides confidence that findings are representative of the target population and not biased by non-response.

4.3 Current State of School-Community Partnerships and Influence on Business Practices

Table 5: Perception of School-Community Relationship Strength

Stakeholder	Very Strong (%)	Strong (%)	Weak (%)	Very Weak (%)
Administrators	0	40	50	10
Teachers	0	30	60	10
Parents	0	10	80	10
Students	0	5	90	5

Table 5 presents stakeholder perceptions of school-community relationship strength. No respondents across any category rated relationships as "very strong." Among administrators, 40% rated relationships as strong, 50% as weak, and 10% as very weak. Among teachers, 30% rated relationships as strong, 60% as weak, and 10% as very weak. Among parents, only 10% rated relationships as strong, while 80% rated them as weak and 10% as very weak. Among students, only 5% rated relationships as strong, 90% as weak, and 5% as very weak. These findings indicate that school-community relationships in Chipangali District are predominantly weak, with parents and students perceiving weaker relationships than administrators and teachers.

One parent interviewed explained the weak relationship: "The school and community live like strangers. The teachers come to school, teach, and go back to their homes. They don't know what happens in the community, and the community doesn't know what happens in the school. We only meet when there is a problem, not for partnership" (Parent, Male, age 45).

This quotation illustrates the minimal interaction characterizing school-community relationships, with contact occurring only for problem-solving rather than

ongoing collaboration. The "strangers" metaphor powerfully conveys the absence of relationship despite physical proximity.

A teacher elaborated on the consequences of weak relationships:

"When there is no relationship, we cannot teach business subjects well because business happens in the community. How can students learn about selling if they never interact

with real sellers? How can they learn about managing money if they never see how families manage money? The community is the laboratory for business education, but we are separated from our laboratory" (Teacher, Female, age 38).

This quotation highlights how weak partnerships specifically affect business education by preventing students from applying classroom learning to community contexts. The "laboratory" metaphor suggests that teachers recognize partnership value for business education but cannot access community resources.

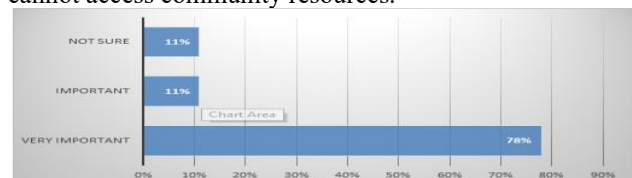


Figure 3: Students' Views on Importance of School-Community Relationships

Source: Fieldwork (2026)

Figure 3 shows student perceptions of school-community relationship importance. The majority (78%) indicated that school-community relationships are "very important" to their attainment of educational goals. Another 11% indicated relationships are "important," while 11% were "not sure." No students rated relationships as "unimportant." This finding indicates that students recognize partnership value even when relationships are weak. Students' high valuation of partnerships suggests that strengthening relationships would be welcomed by students and could positively affect their educational engagement and motivation.

One student explained why partnerships matter:

"When my parents talk to my teacher, the teacher understands me better. When the teacher visits our village, she sees where I live and why sometimes I don't have a pen or book. When community people come to school, we learn things that are not in books, like how to start a small business. I wish these things happened more often" (Student, Female, age 15).

This quotation identifies three partnership benefits: teacher understanding of student circumstances, teacher awareness of home conditions affecting learning, and community members bringing practical knowledge into schools. The student's wish for more frequent partnership activities indicates demand for relationship strengthening.

Regarding influence on business practices specifically, a business education teacher explained:

"We teach about profit, but students don't understand because their parents' small businesses don't keep written records. If parents came to school and we learned together how to record business transactions, students would see business concepts in action. But parents don't come to school, and we don't go to the community. So business remains abstract for students" (Teacher, Male, age 42).

This quotation reveals how weak partnerships create abstract business education disconnected from community economic realities. The teacher's suggestion for collaborative learning between parents and teachers implies a partnership model where both parties learn together rather than schools teaching communities.

A parent confirmed this disconnect:

"My child asks me about business profit, but I don't know how to explain. I just know that when I sell vegetables, I have more money at the end of the day than at the beginning. That is profit, but I cannot explain it like the teacher wants. If the teacher came to the market with my child, the child would understand without many words" (Parent, Female, age 39).

This quotation illustrates how weak partnerships leave parents unable to support business learning at home, while also suggesting that community-based learning opportunities exist that partnerships could access. The parent's proposal for teacher accompaniment to the market represents an actionable partnership strategy for business education.

Factors Contributing to Effective and Ineffective School-Community Partnerships

Table 6: School-Based Barriers to Partnerships

Barrier	Administrators Agree (%)	Teachers Agree (%)	Parents Agree (%)	Students Agree (%)
School	85	80	90	75

operates in isolation				
Teachers have negative attitudes toward community	65	70	85	80
No formal partnership structures	90	85	75	70
Communication mechanisms inadequate	80	85	90	85

Table 6 presents stakeholder agreement with school-based barriers to partnerships. Most respondents across all categories agreed that schools operate in isolation, with parent agreement highest at 90%. Most also agreed that teachers hold negative attitudes toward community involvement, with parent and student agreement highest (85% and 80% respectively). Almost all administrators (90%) and teachers (85%) agreed that no formal partnership structures exist. Communication mechanism inadequacy was endorsed by at least 80% of each stakeholder group. These findings indicate that school-based factors are widely recognized as significant barriers, with stakeholders identifying institutional isolation, teacher attitudes, structural absence, and communication gaps as problematic.

One administrator explained school isolation:

"We have so many requirements from the Ministry. We must cover the syllabus, complete assessments, submit reports. There is no time to go to the community, and the Ministry does not ask us about community relationships. So we focus on what is measured" (Administrator, Male, age 48).

This quotation identifies how accountability systems shape school priorities, with partnership activities excluded from formal requirements and therefore deprioritized. The administrator's explanation suggests that school isolation is not merely attitudinal but structural, embedded in educational systems that do not value or measure partnership outcomes.

A teacher acknowledged negative attitudes:

"I admit, sometimes we see parents as problems. When a child fails, we blame the parent for not helping. When a child misbehaves, we blame the parent for not disciplining. We don't see parents as partners who could

help us. We see them as obstacles or as people who need to be fixed" (Teacher, Female, age 35). This candid admission reveals how teacher attitudes construct parents as problems rather than partners. The "blame" orientation identified by this teacher is consistent

with the remediation paradigm described by Amatea (2009), where teachers hold power and parents are passive recipients of school decisions. Changing these attitudes is essential for partnership development.

Table 7: Home-Based Barriers to Partnerships

Barrier	Administrators Agree (%)	Teachers Agree (%)	Parents Agree (%)	Students Agree (%)
Poverty limits parent availability	95	90	85	80
Parents' negative school experiences	70	75	80	65
Parents' low education level	80	85	75	70
Lack of home learning resources	85	80	90	85

Table 7 presents stakeholder agreement with home-based barriers to partnerships. Poverty limiting parent availability was endorsed by almost all administrators (95%) and teachers (90%), and by most parents (85%) and students (80%). Parents' negative school experiences were endorsed by 80% of parents themselves, indicating self-awareness of how their own schooling affects current engagement. Parents' low education level was endorsed by most respondents across categories. Lack of home learning resources was most strongly endorsed by parents (90%) and students (85%). These findings indicate that home-based barriers, particularly poverty, are widely recognized as significant obstacles to partnership.

A parent explained poverty's effect:

"I have five children. I must farm to feed them. If the school calls a meeting, I cannot go because the maize needs weeding. If I stop weeding, my family will go hungry. The teachers don't understand this. They think I don't care about my children's education, but I care. I just cannot afford to stop working" (Parent, Male, age 41).

This quotation illustrates the structural constraint poverty creates for parent participation. The parent rejects the interpretation that non-participation reflects lack of caring, instead attributing it to survival necessities. This finding suggests that partnership interventions must address economic constraints rather than merely encouraging parent participation without removing barriers.

Another parent shared negative school experiences:

"When I was in school, the teachers beat me. They said I was stupid. I left school in grade seven. Now when I go to my child's school, I feel that same fear. The teachers look at me like they looked at me when I was a child. I know I am not educated, so I keep quiet. I don't want to be humiliated again" (Parent, Female, age 38).

This quotation powerfully illustrates how negative childhood school experiences transfer to adult parenting

practices, as Higgins (2008) described. The parent's fear and silence represent partnership barriers that are psychological and emotional rather than merely practical.

Addressing these barriers requires creating welcoming environments that actively counter parents' negative expectations.

Table 8: Community-Based Barriers to Partnerships

Barrier	Administrators Agree (%)	Teachers Agree (%)	Parents Agree (%)	Students Agree (%)
Culture of self/individualism	75	80	85	70
Degeneration of cooperation	85	90	80	75
Social ills (crime, alcohol)	65	70	75	60
Lack of community resources	80	75	85	80

Table 8 presents stakeholder agreement with community-based barriers. Degeneration of cooperation was most strongly endorsed, with 90% of teachers and 85% of administrators agreeing. Culture of self was endorsed by 85% of parents, indicating community self-awareness of individualistic orientations. Social ills including crime and alcohol abuse were endorsed by approximately two-thirds of respondents. Lack of community resources was endorsed by most respondents, particularly parents (85%) and students (80%). These findings indicate that

community factors, especially cultural changes eroding cooperation, are recognized as significant partnership barriers.

A community leader explained degeneration of cooperation:

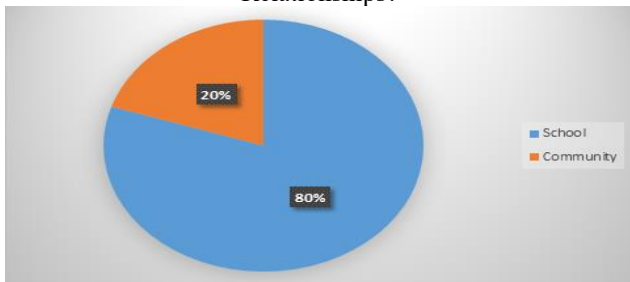
"In the past, when the school needed something, everyone contributed. We built the first school buildings together. Now, people say 'that is the government's job' or 'I have my own problems.' The spirit of 'we' has died. Now it is only 'me'" (Community leader, Male, age 60).

This quotation illustrates the cultural shift from collective to individualistic orientations described by Carlson and Apple (1998). The leader's nostalgia for past cooperation suggests that partnership interventions might draw on cultural memory of collective action while adapting to contemporary conditions. The shift from "we" to "me" language captures the cultural transformation challenge. A teacher elaborated:

"You cannot build partnership when community members do not trust each other. There is jealousy. If one person helps the school, others accuse them of wanting favors from teachers. If I visit a home, others say I am favoring that child. So everyone stays away to avoid accusations. The community has become suspicious" (Teacher, Male, age 44).

This quotation reveals how mistrust within communities creates barriers to school-community partnerships even when individual willingness exists. The suspicion described by this teacher suggests that partnership development requires community-building alongside school-community bridge-building. Trust deficits within communities must be addressed for schools to engage communities effectively.

Figure 4: Who is More Responsible for Weak Relationships?



Source: Fieldwork (2026)

Figure 4 shows stakeholder perceptions of responsibility for weak school-community relationships. The majority (80%) indicated that schools bear more responsibility for weak relationships, while 20% indicated communities bear more responsibility. This finding indicates that stakeholders primarily blame schools for partnership failures rather than communities. The attribution of responsibility to schools is consistent with the recognition that schools hold power in school-community relationships and therefore have greater responsibility for

initiating and maintaining partnerships. This finding suggests that improving partnerships requires schools to change their practices rather than merely demanding more from communities.

4.5 Strategies for Strengthening School-Community Partnerships

Table 9: Stakeholder Endorsement of Partnership Strategies

Strategy	Administrators Endorse (%)	Teachers Endorse (%)	Parents Endorse (%)	Students Endorse (%)
Open communication channels	95	90	95	85
Collaborative structures	85	80	75	70
Parental involvement programs	90	85	95	80
Community engagement events	80	85	90	85
Shared goal setting	75	70	80	75
Cultural sensitivity training	70	75	85	80

Table 9 presents stakeholder endorsement of various partnership strategies. Open communication channels received the highest endorsement, with over 85% of each stakeholder group supporting this strategy. Parental involvement programs were strongly endorsed by parents (95%) and administrators (90%). Community engagement events received strong parent endorsement (90%) and student endorsement (85%). Cultural sensitivity training was more strongly endorsed by parents (85%) and students (80%) than by administrators (70%) or teachers (75%). These findings indicate that stakeholders recognize multiple strategies for strengthening partnerships, with communication and parental involvement most widely endorsed.

One administrator described communication improvements: "We started sending SMS messages to parents about school events. Before, we only sent letters with children, and many letters never reached parents. Now with phones, even poor parents have phones. The response has been good. More parents come to meetings

because they know about them" (Administrator, Female, age 42). This quotation illustrates how communication technology can address barriers, with mobile phones enabling direct contact that bypasses children as message carriers. The administrator's observation that even poor parents have phones suggests that mobile technology may be a feasible communication channel even in resource-constrained settings.

A parent suggested practical collaboration:

"Why can't teachers come to the market sometimes? We are there every day. Students could come with their notebooks and see how business works. Then at school, they could write about what they saw. The teacher doesn't need to bring the community to school; the school can come to the community" (Parent, Female, age 36).

This quotation suggests an alternative partnership model where schools go to communities rather than requiring communities to come to schools. For business education specifically, this parent's proposal to use the market as a learning site represents an actionable strategy requiring minimal resources while providing authentic learning experiences.

Another parent emphasized shared goal setting:

"We need to sit together and agree on what we want for our children. The school has its goals, parents have their goals, but they are not the same. The school wants children to pass exams. Parents want children to get jobs or start businesses. These are connected, but we don't discuss them together. If we discussed, we might find ways to work together" (Parent, Male, age 44).

This quotation identifies goal misalignment as a partnership barrier while suggesting that dialogue could align goals. The parent's recognition that exam passing and job readiness are connected indicates potential for finding common ground through structured dialogue.

A teacher suggested cultural sensitivity training:

"We need to learn about the community's way of life. We come from different places, with different customs. Sometimes we offend parents without meaning to because we don't understand their culture. If we learned about their traditions, we could approach them respectfully" (Teacher, Female, age 31).

This quotation reveals how cultural differences between teachers and communities create partnership barriers. The teacher's suggestion for cultural sensitivity training implies that teacher education currently does not prepare teachers for community engagement in culturally diverse contexts. Implementing such training would require curriculum changes in teacher preparation programs.

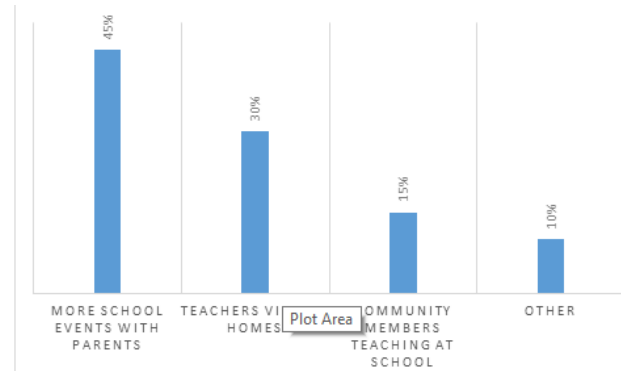


Figure 5: Students' Suggestions for Strengthening Partnerships

Source: Fieldwork (2026)

Figure 4.4 presents students' suggestions for strengthening school-community partnerships. Most students (45%) suggested more school events with parents, including sports days, academic ceremonies, and cultural performances. Another 30% suggested teachers visiting students' homes to understand family circumstances. Fifteen percent suggested community members (businesspeople, farmers, craftspeople) teaching at school about their work. Ten percent suggested other strategies including student-led partnership activities and use of mobile phones for communication. These suggestions indicate that students have concrete ideas for partnership improvement and want both school-based events and community-based learning.

One student explained the value of teachers visiting homes:

"If my teacher came to my home, she would see that I don't have a desk or lamp. She would understand why sometimes my homework is not complete. Then maybe she would not punish me. Also, my parents would see that the teacher cares. They would respect the teacher more. They would want to help the school" (Student, Female, age 14).

This quotation identifies dual benefits of home visits: teacher understanding of student circumstances and increased parent respect for teachers. The student's explanation suggests that home visits build empathy and trust, foundational elements for partnership development. Even minimal home visits might generate partnership benefits disproportionate to their cost.

Another student suggested community teaching:

"The man who sells tomatoes at the market could teach us about profit. The woman who makes baskets could teach us about cost. The carpenter could teach us about pricing. They do business every day. They know more than our books. But they never come to school because no one invites them" (Student, Male, age 15).

This quotation identifies community members as valuable business education resources who remain untapped due to lack of invitation. The student's recognition that

practitioners "know more than our books" challenges assumptions that formal education is superior to practical knowledge. Inviting community practitioners to teach would simultaneously strengthen partnerships and enhance business education relevance.

Summary

This chapter presented data on school-community partnerships in Chipangali District. Demographic findings showed balanced gender representation and substantial respondent experience. Regarding the current state of partnerships, findings revealed that relationships are predominantly weak, with parents and students perceiving weaker relationships than administrators and teachers. Students strongly valued partnerships for educational attainment, including business learning. Regarding factors contributing to partnerships, school-based barriers (institutional isolation, teacher attitudes, structural absence, communication gaps), home-based barriers (poverty, negative parental experiences, low education, resource lack), and community-based barriers (individualism, cooperation degeneration, social ills, resource lack) were all recognized. Schools were blamed more than communities for weak relationships. Regarding partnership strategies, stakeholders endorsed communication channels, collaborative structures, parental involvement, community engagement, shared goals, and cultural sensitivity. Students specifically suggested school events, home visits, and community teaching. These findings inform the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations presented in Chapter Five.

V. CONCLUSION

This chapter presents discussion of findings, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future studies. The discussion synthesizes findings from Chapter Four, comparing them with existing literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The discussion is organized according to the study's three objectives: current state of partnerships and influence on business practices; factors contributing to partnerships; and strategies for strengthening partnerships. Conclusions are drawn from the findings, addressing each objective and identifying implications for policy and practice. Recommendations are presented in bullet points for stakeholders including the Ministry of Education, school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. Suggestions for future studies identify remaining research gaps requiring investigation.

Discussion of Findings

The finding that school-community relationships in Chipangali District are predominantly weak aligns with previous research in Zambian contexts. Miti (2016) found that parents at Petauke Boarding School were not fully involved in children's discipline or school affairs despite available mechanisms. Similarly, Simweleba and Serpell (2020) found that while interventions could improve parental involvement, baseline involvement was low without intervention. The current study extends these

findings by documenting weak relationships across multiple schools and stakeholder groups, suggesting that weak partnerships are systemic rather than isolated to specific schools. The consistency of weak relationship findings across studies in different Zambian districts suggests that this problem is widespread and requires systematic intervention.

The finding that parents and students perceive weaker relationships than administrators and teachers is particularly significant. This perception gap suggests that school personnel may underestimate partnership weakness because they view relationships from positions of power. Administrators and teachers control school access and resources, so they may feel they are being welcoming or collaborative even when community members experience barriers. Fine (1993) critiqued this tendency, noting that schools invite parents "into the deficit-ridden public sphere of public education 'as if' it were a 'power-neutral partnership.'" The perception gap identified in this study suggests that partnership assessments should include community perspectives rather than relying solely on school personnel reports

The finding that students strongly value school-community partnerships for educational attainment, including business learning, is important because students are rarely included in partnership research. Most partnership studies focus on parent or teacher perspectives, neglecting student voices. The current study found that 78% of students rated partnerships as "very important" to their educational goals. This finding aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 12, which asserts children's right to express views freely in all matters affecting them. Students' high valuation of partnerships suggests that student engagement could be leveraged for partnership development, with students potentially serving as bridges between schools and communities.

The finding that weak partnerships negatively affect business education by creating abstract learning disconnected from community economic realities addresses a significant research gap. Limited previous research has examined how partnerships specifically affect business education. The current study found that teachers recognize community economic activities (markets, small businesses, crafts) as potential learning resources that remain untapped due to weak partnerships. This finding supports Dewey's (1902) assertion that schools do not exist outside local communities and that community integration makes education relevant and practical. For business education specifically, community partnerships provide authentic learning experiences essential for developing practical skills.

The identification of school-based barriers including institutional isolation, teacher attitudes, absence of formal structures, and inadequate communication mechanisms aligns with previous research. Wescott and Konzal (2002) identified how school operations and teacher belief

systems create partnership barriers. The current study extends these findings by documenting specific Zambian manifestations including blame-oriented teacher attitudes and lack of Ministry requirements for partnership activities. The finding that 80% of stakeholders blamed schools more than communities for weak relationships is particularly significant because it challenges deficit models that locate partnership problems within families. As Lareau (2003) argued, parents across classes want children to succeed, but schools' middle-class norms exclude working-class and poor families.

The identification of home-based barriers including poverty, negative parental school experiences, low parental education, and resource lack aligns with extensive previous research. Kellaghan et al. (1993) documented how poverty affects children's ability to benefit from educational provision. Schneider and Coleman (1993) showed how financial constraints factor into parents' decisions about engaging with schools. The current study's finding that parents themselves acknowledge negative school experiences as barriers (80% agreement) is particularly important because it indicates self-awareness that could be mobilized for intervention. Parents who recognize how their own schooling affects current engagement may be motivated to break negative cycles for their children.

The identification of community-based barriers including culture of self, degeneration of cooperation, social ills, and resource lack aligns with Carlson and Apple's (1998) characterization of "unsettling times" marked by community breakdown. The current study's finding that 90% of teachers and 85% of administrators endorsed degeneration of cooperation as a barrier suggests that educational personnel recognize broader social changes affecting partnerships. However, the study also found that community members themselves acknowledge these changes, with 85% of parents endorsing culture of self as a barrier. This self-awareness suggests that community members are not simply victims of cultural change but critical observers who might be mobilized for cultural transformation.

The endorsement of multiple partnership strategies including open communication, collaborative structures, parental involvement, community engagement, shared goals, and cultural sensitivity aligns with Epstein's (1995) six types of involvement. The current study's finding that open communication received the highest endorsement (over 85% across stakeholder groups) is consistent with literature emphasizing communication as partnership foundation. However, the study also found that stakeholders endorsed different strategies at different rates, with parents more strongly endorsing parental involvement programs (95%) and community engagement events (90%) than other strategies. This variation suggests that partnership interventions should include multiple strategies to address diverse stakeholder preferences.

The finding that students suggested specific strategies including school events, home visits, and community teaching is important because students are rarely asked for partnership recommendations. Students' suggestion that teachers visit homes (30% of students) is particularly significant because home visits represent school initiative to enter community space rather than requiring community to enter school space. Research by Comer (1986) demonstrated that home visits build trust and understanding, yet this strategy is rarely implemented systematically. Students' suggestion that community members teach at school (15%) directly addresses the business education disconnect identified earlier, providing a concrete, low-cost strategy for making business learning relevant and practical.

The finding that cultural sensitivity training was more strongly endorsed by parents (85%) and students (80%) than by administrators (70%) or teachers (75%) suggests that community members perceive cultural gaps more acutely than school personnel. This finding aligns with Sleeter's (1996) observation that demographic profiles of teachers and students are increasingly at variance, but teachers cannot be expected to relate to diverse families "naturally." The gap between community and school personnel endorsement of cultural sensitivity training suggests that professional development in this area is needed and would be welcomed by communities even if educators are less enthusiastic.

Based on the findings, this study concludes that school-community partnerships in Chipangali District are predominantly weak, characterized by minimal collaboration, infrequent communication, and mutual suspicion. Schools and communities operate largely as separate spheres rather than overlapping spheres of influence as envisioned by Epstein (1995). This weakness is not merely a matter of insufficient activities but reflects fundamental structural and attitudinal barriers that require systematic intervention. The persistence of weak relationships across multiple schools and stakeholder groups suggests that individual school initiatives cannot solve partnership challenges without supportive policy frameworks and resource allocation.

The study concludes that weak school-community relationships negatively affect business education by preventing authentic learning experiences. Business education requires connection to real economic activities to develop practical skills, but weak partnerships keep classroom learning abstract and disconnected from community business contexts. Students learn about profit, pricing, and record-keeping without seeing these concepts applied in local markets, shops, or farms. This disconnect reduces business education relevance and may limit student motivation and skill development. Strengthening partnerships would directly enhance business education quality by providing access to community-based learning resources.



The study concludes that school-based factors are primary barriers to effective partnerships, with stakeholders blaming schools more than communities for weak relationships. Schools operate in institutional isolation, teachers hold negative attitudes toward community involvement, formal partnership structures are absent, and communication mechanisms are inadequate. These barriers are not merely individual teacher failings but reflect systemic issues including accountability systems that exclude partnership outcomes from school evaluations, teacher education programs that do not prepare educators for community engagement, and Ministry policies that do not require or resource partnership activities.

The study concludes that home-based barriers including poverty, negative parental school experiences, low parental education, and resource lack significantly constrain partnership possibilities. Poverty forces parents to prioritize survival activities over school engagement, not because they lack caring but because they lack time and resources. Negative school experiences create psychological barriers including fear and shame that discourage parents from entering school spaces. Low parental education limits parents' confidence in supporting children's learning and engaging with teachers as equals. These barriers cannot be overcome through school-level efforts alone but require broader social and economic interventions.

The study concludes that community-based barriers including culture of self, degeneration of cooperation, social ills, and resource lack reflect broader societal changes affecting partnership possibilities. Communities have shifted from collective orientations where "we" solved problems together to individualistic orientations where "me" prioritizes personal needs. This cultural transformation has occurred gradually over decades, influenced by economic pressures, modernization, and changing social structures. Partnership interventions cannot reverse these broad cultural shifts but can create localized contexts where cooperation is modeled and rewarded, potentially influencing cultural change over longer timeframes.

The study concludes that multiple strategies exist for strengthening school-community partnerships, with stakeholders endorsing communication, collaboration, involvement, engagement, shared goals, and cultural sensitivity. No single strategy is sufficient; effective partnership development requires comprehensive approaches addressing multiple barriers simultaneously. Communication improvements are necessary but insufficient without structural changes creating ongoing collaboration mechanisms. Parental involvement programs are valuable but require cultural sensitivity to ensure welcoming environments. Community engagement events build trust but must be sustained rather than one-time occurrences. Shared goal setting aligns efforts but requires ongoing dialogue and negotiation.

The study concludes that students are important but overlooked stakeholders in school-community partnerships. Students value partnerships highly, recognize how weak relationships affect their learning, and have concrete suggestions for improvement. Their perspectives often differ from adult stakeholders, with students more strongly endorsing home visits and community teaching than other strategies. Including student voices in partnership planning and evaluation would enrich understanding of partnership dynamics and generate innovative strategies adults might not consider. Furthermore, students can serve as active partnership agents, carrying messages between schools and homes and participating in community engagement activities.

The study concludes that cultural transformation is both a condition for and outcome of effective school-community partnerships. Cultural shifts toward individualism and away from cooperation undermine partnership possibilities, but partnership activities that model collective action and demonstrate mutual benefits can gradually transform cultural orientations. This transformation occurs slowly through repeated positive interactions that build trust and demonstrate that collaboration serves everyone's interests. Schools cannot transform community culture alone, but they can be sites where new cultural patterns are modeled and reinforced, potentially influencing broader community norms over time.

The study concludes that business education provides particularly strong rationales for school-community partnership development because business concepts require practical application in community contexts. Unlike purely academic subjects that can be taught entirely in classrooms, business education inherently references economic activities occurring primarily in communities. When partnerships are weak, business education becomes abstract and disconnected, potentially failing to prepare students for economic participation. When partnerships are strong, business education becomes authentic and relevant, with students learning through direct engagement with community businesses, markets, and entrepreneurs. This distinctive feature of business education makes it a promising entry point for partnership development.

The study concludes that poverty is the most significant barrier to school-community partnerships in Chipangali District, affecting all other barriers. Poverty creates time constraints as parents work long hours for survival. Poverty creates resource constraints as families cannot provide learning materials. Poverty creates psychological constraints as parents feel shame about their inability to support children's education. Poverty interacts with other barriers, exacerbating negative school experiences and limiting community resources. Addressing poverty is therefore essential for partnership development, but schools cannot solve poverty alone. Partnership interventions must acknowledge poverty constraints and



design strategies that work within them rather than demanding parents overcome them individually.

The study concludes that trust deficits at multiple levels undermine school-community partnerships. Teachers distrust parents' ability to support learning. Parents distrust teachers' respect for their children and themselves. Community members distrust each other, limiting collective action possibilities. These trust deficits are not irrational but reflect accumulated negative experiences over time. Building trust requires sustained positive interactions that contradict negative expectations. One workshop or event cannot overcome years of negative experiences. Trust-building must therefore be central to partnership interventions, with activities designed specifically to demonstrate respect, competence, personal regard, and integrity—the four components of relational trust identified by Bryk and Schneider (2002).

The study concludes that power imbalances between schools and communities are fundamental barriers to authentic partnership. Schools hold power through professional status, resource control, and institutional authority. Communities, particularly poor and less-educated communities, lack power to influence school decisions. Even when schools invite community participation, they often do so on their terms, in their spaces, according to their schedules. Authentic partnership requires power redistribution, with communities having genuine influence over school decisions affecting their children. However, the study found little evidence of power redistribution in Chipangali District schools. Addressing power imbalances requires structural changes beyond individual attitude shifts.

The study concludes that communication technology, particularly mobile phones, offers promising possibilities for partnership development in resource-constrained rural settings. Even poor families in Chipangali District have mobile phones, enabling direct communication between schools and parents without requiring physical meetings. SMS messages can inform parents about events, share learning tips, and enable two-way communication. While technology cannot replace face-to-face interaction for building deep relationships, it can supplement limited in-person contact and overcome geographical barriers. Schools should systematically use mobile communication as a low-cost partnership strategy.

The study concludes that teacher attitudes toward community involvement are significant barriers requiring intervention through both pre-service and in-service education. Many teachers view parents as problems or obstacles rather than partners, blame parents when children struggle, and see community engagement as additional work rather than core professional responsibility. These attitudes reflect professional socialization that positions teachers as experts and parents as recipients of expert knowledge. Changing these attitudes requires exposing teachers to alternative models, providing successful experiences with community

engagement, and evaluating teacher performance on partnership criteria. Teacher education programs must include community engagement as a core competency.

The study concludes that cultural sensitivity training is needed for both school personnel and community members. Teachers need training to understand community cultural contexts, communication styles, and values. Community members may need training to understand school operations, expectations, and constraints. Cultural sensitivity training should not be one-time events but ongoing processes of mutual learning. Training content should be developed collaboratively by teachers and community members rather than imposed by schools alone. The goal is not for communities to adapt to school culture or schools to adapt to community culture, but to create a third culture that incorporates elements from both while respecting differences.

The study concludes that policy changes are necessary to support school-community partnership development. Current Zambian educational policies do not require partnership structures, allocate resources for partnership activities, monitor partnership outcomes, or evaluate school personnel on partnership criteria. Without policy mandates and accountability, partnership development remains optional and is deprioritized relative to academic requirements. Policy changes should include requirements for school-community partnership committees, dedicated partnership coordinator positions, minimum resource allocations for partnership activities, and inclusion of partnership outcomes in school performance evaluations. Policy alone is insufficient but necessary for systemic change.

The study concludes that sustainable school-community partnerships require dedicated resources including personnel time, activity budgets, and communication infrastructure. Partnerships cannot be developed as add-on activities without additional resources. Schools need staff with protected time for community engagement. Partnership activities need budgets for transportation, materials, and refreshments. Communication needs reliable systems for contacting parents. In resource-constrained settings like Chipangali District, these resources are rarely available, requiring external support or creative reallocation of existing resources. Without dedicated resources, partnership rhetoric will not translate into partnership reality.

The study concludes that community engagement should be reciprocal, with benefits flowing to communities as well as schools. Many partnership interventions focus on what communities can do for schools (volunteering, fundraising, supporting learning) without considering what schools can do for communities. Sustainable partnerships require mutual benefit. Schools might offer community members access to facilities, adult education programs, or resources. For business education specifically, schools might offer communities business record-keeping assistance, financial literacy training, or student help with

small business activities. Reciprocal benefit creates stakeholder investment in partnership sustainability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- Develop and implement a national school-community partnership policy requiring all schools to establish formal partnership structures, including joint committees, regular meetings, and written partnership agreements, supported by dedicated funding for partnership coordinators, community engagement budgets, and communication infrastructure in rural schools.
- Establish school-community partnership committees with equal representation from school personnel, parents, and community organizations, meeting monthly to plan and evaluate partnership activities.
- Implement systematic home visit programs where teachers visit each student's home at least annually to build relationships and understand family circumstances.
- Create welcoming school environments including parent rooms, flexible meeting schedules accommodating work demands, and language-accessible communication materials.
- Allocate teacher time for community engagement activities, protecting at least two hours weekly for partnership-related work.
- Participate in professional development on family and community engagement, including cultural sensitivity training, communication skills, and partnership facilitation.
- Implement regular positive communication with parents, including sharing student successes and learning activities rather than contacting only when problems arise.
- Integrate community resources into business education by inviting community practitioners as guest speakers, organizing field trips to local businesses, and using community examples in lessons.
- Conduct action research on partnership strategies, systematically testing approaches and documenting what works in their specific contexts.
- Collaborate with colleagues on partnership activities, sharing successful strategies and supporting each other through challenges.
- Form parent support groups to facilitate collective engagement with schools, sharing information, resources, and strategies for supporting children's learning.
- Participate actively in school partnership structures including committees, meetings, and events, bringing community perspectives to school decision-making.

- Offer community resources to schools including business expertise, work-based learning opportunities, and facilities for school activities.
- Communicate regularly with teachers about children's learning, sharing information about home circumstances that affect school performance and seeking guidance about home learning support.
- Advocate for partnership resources through PTAs, community meetings, and engagement with local government officials.

Future Studies

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several areas require further investigation. First, longitudinal research is needed to examine how school-community partnerships develop over time and what factors sustain partnerships beyond initial interventions. This study provided a cross-sectional snapshot of partnership states, but partnership development is inherently dynamic, with relationships evolving through accumulated interactions. Longitudinal studies tracking schools implementing partnership interventions over multiple years would reveal development trajectories, critical transition points, and sustainability factors. Such studies should collect data at multiple time points from all stakeholder groups to capture changing perceptions and practices.

Second, intervention research is needed to test specific partnership strategies in Zambian contexts. This study identified strategies stakeholders endorsed, but did not test their effectiveness. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies should implement specific strategies (e.g., home visit programs, mobile communication systems, community teaching initiatives) and measure effects on partnership quality, student outcomes, and business education quality. Such studies should include control groups and multiple outcome measures to establish causal effects. Cost-effectiveness analysis should accompany effectiveness studies to guide resource allocation decisions.

Summary

This chapter discussed findings, drew conclusions, and presented recommendations based on the study of school-community partnerships in Chipangali District, Zambia. The discussion compared findings with existing literature, finding alignment on partnership weakness, multiple barriers, and strategy endorsement, while extending knowledge through specific focus on business education, student perspectives, and rural Zambian contexts. Conclusions addressed partnership states, business education effects, barriers across school, home, and community levels, strategy possibilities, student stakeholder importance, cultural transformation, poverty effects, trust deficits, power imbalances, technology possibilities, teacher attitudes, cultural sensitivity needs, policy requirements, resource needs, and reciprocity. Recommendations were presented for the Ministry of Education, school administrators, teachers, parents and



community members, and future researchers. Future studies should include longitudinal research, intervention testing, comparative urban-rural studies, and business education-specific partnership investigations.

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