

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL

**EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHIES OF TEENAGE MOTHERHOOD: NARRATIVES OF
SIX LEARNERS AT A RURAL SECONDARY SCHOOL**

BY

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SUPERVISOR STATEMENT

This research has been submitted with/without my approval.

Prof. Pholoho Morojele

Date

DECLARATION

I, CONSTANCE GUGU KHUMALO, declare that this dissertation entitled: *Emotional Geographies of Teenage Motherhood: Narratives of Six Learners in a Rural Secondary School* is my own work, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and citations. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late mother, Lindeni Khumalo (MaZondi), who taught me valuable lessons on life. She was my pillar of strength and confidante. She left an indelible mark on my heart. “maZondi omuhle”. May your soul rest in peace.

To my two late brothers Vusi and Mbhi, may their souls also rest in peace. I know they would both appreciate my effort.

To my late daughter Sthembile, “Mummy misses you a lot”

ABSTRACT

A qualitative study was conducted at Dalisu secondary school which aimed at exploring ways in which six teenage mothers navigate and negotiate the complex demands of schooling and parenting. A qualitative research methodology within the tradition of a narrative inquiry was adopted for this study. Data generation methods used included semi-structured, individual and focus group interviews. In order to enhance the active participation of the six teenage mothers who were participants in this study, a participatory 'photo voice' method was employed. The study was conducted in a rural secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal Province, and focused on Grade 11 and Grade 12 teenage girls with one or more children. Six girls between the ages of 16 and 18 (three from Grade 11 and three from Grade 12) were purposefully selected as the participants in this study.

The study found that these school-going, teenage mothers experience a number of unique challenges, not experienced by the other girls in the school. The social stigma of being teenage mothers-at-school seems to predispose these girls to a higher risk of dropping out. The study revealed that after the necessary absence from school for the delivery of their babies, these teenage mothers had further to go to catch up on lessons missed. The study found that while teenage mothers greatly valued the opportunity of being able to return to school after delivery, their new social identities as teenage mothers presented issues such as a lack of support and acceptance by teachers and peers.

The findings revealed that, simply because of the time taken in the last months of pregnancy and delivery, teenage motherhood often requires educational sacrifices. However, despite the lack of support from the relevant bodies, these teenage mothers tried their best to overcome

these challenges and complete their education. This included negotiating their relationships with peers, parents and teachers in ways that induced support, tolerance and social acceptance. The study recommends that the stakeholders such as Principal, Teachers and SGB be sensitized about the perils of teenage motherhood. Such sensitization could take the form of workshops aimed at the education and training of stakeholders on how best to support the education of teenage mothers in the school. One such support system would be the provision of day care for the children to enable their teenage mothers to attend class.

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