

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**POVERTY, SCHOOL - AGED PREGNANCY, PARENTHOOD AND SCHOOLING
IN THREE TOWNSHIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU- NATAL, SOUTH
AFRICA**

**A thesis by manuscripts submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a
Doctoral Degree (PhD) Social Justice Education**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Miss Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini hereby declare that the thesis titled: *Poverty, School-aged Pregnancy, Parenthood and Schooling in KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa* represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of PhD at UKZN and has not been submitted to any other institution for a degree or other qualification. This thesis does not contain any other persons' data or text copied from the internet without acknowledgement and all information used was acknowledged.

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LIST OF MANUSCRIPTS

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- Mkhathini, S. *Educating pregnant girls and mothers: Teachers' voices from two high schools in the Pinetown District in Durban, South Africa*. Unpublished manuscript. University of KwaZulu-Natal. Durban.

ABSTRACT

The thesis consists of six manuscripts, that are collectively intended to explore how poverty affects the navigation of pregnancy, parenting and schooling of school-aged girls in three underprivileged township secondary schools in Durban in the Province of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, and the way in which the girls interpret their situations. The intention was to gain a deeper insight into the effect of poor socio- economic conditions on the pregnant girls and mothers' experiences, the navigation process and what they think could be done to improve their situation.

The study was framed by the social constructionism theory to comprehend the daily life experiences of pregnant girls and mothers and the meaning they create from the situations that they face. Children's Geographies and intersectional models were further adopted to provide clear understanding of the intersection of poverty and the way in which girls challenge their situations. The study used qualitative narrative inquiry that illuminated pregnant girls' and mothers' situations and also the teachers' narratives. The research process took place in three secondary schools located in two poverty-stricken townships in Durban. Purposive sampling was used to select nine school-aged pregnant girls and mothers, two girls were from two schools and the other five girls were all from the same school. Participants' ages were between 15 to 19 years and they were in grades 10 to 12. To gather data from nine (9) participants, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews were employed. A participatory research method in the form of a mapping exercise and photo voice exercises were used for six participants to express their experiences, meanings and thoughts about their situation of negotiating parenting, pregnancy and of acquiring education in conditions of socio-economic scarcity. Teachers were also purposefully selected and were between 30 and 52 years old and had worked with pregnant girls and mothers from poverty- affected areas. Questionnaires and individual interviews were used to collect data from five teachers.

The research process took place in pregnant girls' and mothers' natural settings where incidents that formed the girls' experiences when negotiating pregnancy, parenting, acquiring education and meaning as well as coping tactics, were formulated. The socially constructed beliefs based on culture and morality reduced the girls' space for social acceptance and optimism that could bring change to the life they are living. Social values became the source

of negative interactions and reactions that pregnant girls and mothers experienced in their social circles, in their families, community and at school. That ranges from judgements to name calling - unfair treatment, rejection and loss of friendship that made girls live lives of guilt and regret. The study found that on top of well-known common disruptions that are brought about by pregnancy and parenting to all the school-aged girls, scarcity of means and poor familial relationships worsen the situation. This is because pregnant girls and mothers faced extra responsibilities and challenges that other school-aged pregnant girls and mothers with privileged economic background and favourable family relationships did not face. Namely, providing for themselves, the lack of basic needs and money, inability to access social assistance due to lack of adult guidance and knowledge that brought hardships and challenges to their schooling careers. The study maintains that the poverty that most girls experience is exacerbated by various factors that resulted from social or familial injustices and unreliable social systems. All of these impact negatively on the girls' navigation process.

Hence, poor socio-economic conditions did not only become the sole determinant of the different experiences that pregnant girls and mothers faced in their journey, but it also brought numerous challenges that complicated the girls schooling journey. In addition, penurious conditions also exposed girls to powerlessness, dependency and lowered their self-esteem. This taught them to deny themselves and their personal needs and to prioritise their children and other people's interests and this interfered with their emotional and psychosocial development. The study further found that pregnant girls and mothers were subjected to various social injustices. In addition; pregnancy and parenting resulted in various surprising reactions and interactions for school-aged girls as it disclosed realities that hurt their feelings such as, witnessing the diminution of their effectiveness in their families and being replaced by their babies.

All pregnant girls and mothers demonstrated great zeal to finish school to improve their babies and family's lives so they had to show resilience towards the odd situations that they faced to get education. This included, coming up with various strategies as their coping mechanisms which included, listening to their parents and teachers, ignoring negative reactions, making use of available assistance even if others laugh at them, and starting their days earlier and finishing them later than others. The study found out that the agency that girls demonstrated is not sufficient to take them to where they want to be but that they need

support. Although they are pregnant and are mothers, they are still young, so community and family support is considered crucial for them to negotiate the situation in a stigma-free environment. The study concluded that the community, schools and homes are the best places that could constitute this kind of environment if it were to be encouraging and less judgemental. At the school level, School Management Team (SMT) and teachers should familiarise themselves with guidelines on learner pregnancy prevention and management and they should be more willing to be proactive and sensitive to the issue of poverty among pregnant girls and mothers. Also, they should ensure that there is a policy that will be followed by the school that should be known by all the teachers. The Department of Education should enrich the curriculum in such way that it equips learners with money-making and management skills. Different Government Departments need to work collaboratively with the Department of education in order to assist pregnant girls and mothers to achieve their goals by providing relevant guidance such as the procedure to access social security.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING A STUDY OF POVERTY, SCHOOL-AGED PREGNANCY, PARENTHOOD AND SCHOOLING IN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The study consists of six manuscripts that seek to explain the influence of poverty on the negotiation of schooling, pregnancy and parenting among school-aged girls in three township secondary schools in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. It further intends to explore how school-aged girls navigate the situation by illuminating their daily lives so that their situation will be better understood and means to eliminate disturbances can be created. The study is informed by sociological theories, intersectionality and children's geographies and it adopted social constructionism to provide insight into the girls' experiences and meaning. The study used qualitative narrative inquiry and purposively selected participants were nine school-aged girls, three pregnant girls and six mothers from poor socio-economic backgrounds. They were between 15 to 19 years of age and doing grades 10 to 12. Also the five teachers who have been involved with pregnant and parenting learners for more than two years became part of the study. By including teachers, the intention was to elicit their ideas on what should be done to heighten the parenting and pregnant learners' schooling experience. A focus group, individual interviews, participatory mapping and photo voice were used to extract knowledge from the girls whilst questionnaires and individual interviews were used for teachers.

This chapter declares the geographic context of the study which is Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the provinces in South Africa. It also provides the policy context, the rationale, purpose and objectives of the study. Finally, it endeavours to demonstrate how six articles have been linked together to form one complete study.

1.2 Putting the Study in Context

1.2.1 Geographic Context of the Study

South Africa is separated into nine provinces that are Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, North-West Province, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Western Cape (Knight & Rogerson, 2018). The study was conducted in one of the provinces, KwaZulu-Natal in Durban which was granted city status in 1935. In 1996, the city became

the Durban Metropolitan Region (Durban Metro) constituted by rural and urban zones (eThekweni Municipality, 2020). The city is the largest in KwaZulu-Natal with an estimated population of 3,853,278 (eThekweni Municipality, 2017)), which is the second largest population in the country after greater Johannesburg (Stats. S.A., 2020). The city is located on the Eastern coast of South Africa and the Durban Municipality covers 2300 square km and that includes a 98 km stretch of coastal plain that incorporates major river valleys that originate to the west of the city. The areas along river valleys experience different weather conditions in each of the seasons.

FIGURE 1: MAP OF DURBAN



Sourced from: Durban Tourism (2020) [google.com/search? q=Durban+eThekweni+tourism+map+of Durban&cg.]

The three schools targeted for the study were: 1] Ndoni* High School, 2] Mkhathi* High School and 3] Ngcobo* High School (all names are pseudonyms) in Durban in the KwaZulu Natal Province. Ndoni High School is located 8 kilometres East of Clermont Central and Mkhathi High School is situated in the West, 9 kilometres from Clermont Central. Both schools are located near by the busy road surrounded by informal settlements and informal traders. Clermont Township is a proprietorship black township of about 696 hectares of land. (Mbambo, 1998). It is approximately 12 kilometres away from the Durban Metropolitan Area (DMA) inner West council, surrounded by two suburbs formerly occupied by White people. The area is demarcated into four sub-regions that form eight wards with 3775 sites. By 1994

these sites had a population of about 90 830 people (Mbambo, 1998), in the area stands a stadium of international standard. Ngcobo High School is situated in an established area 10 kilometres away from Mariannhill and the school is well structured. Mariannhill is situated on a hillside west of Durban, and was founded by Catholic missionaries who came to build a monastery complex. The place was named after the mother of Jesus (Khandlhela, 1993). The place is surrounded by semi-urban areas and industrial complexes, a hospital, a university and there is a national railway line that passes through the area that connects Durban to Johannesburg. The rural zones rely on subsistence farming and informal trading whereas urban areas have many job opportunities.

Hence, people from rural areas move to urban zones in search of work. Such places attract international and local job seeker which leads to uncontrollable population increase. This, results in overcrowding that goes with sexual immorality, unemployment, diseases and a high death rate. Areas along the rivers become cold in winter and that affects learners without warm clothes like tracksuits and jerseys. Again, since, pregnancy outside of wedlock is morally against the cultural and religious principles (Mkhwanazi et al., 2018), families living in a predominantly Catholic area have to abide by both values. That means that girls who become pregnant while still schooling are not only judged against cultural beliefs but also religious values. Consequently, girls in this context have to face intense social exclusion and an unsupportive environment.

1.2.2 Social Context of the Study

Durban is inhabited by people of different nations with the Zulu nation as the majority group and their culture and language being dominant. The different nationalities are: the Whites, the Coloureds, the Blacks and the Indians. Indians were indentured by the British to work in the sugar cane plantations since Zulu people were not willing to engage in poorly paid labour. Whilst the Whites came as traders, Blacks came to work in the port and Coloured are the products of inter-racial relationships (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).

Clermont (where Mkhathi* and Ndoni* High Schools are located) is densely populated with black people of different ethnic groups, languages and cultures. (For example, seSotho, isiXhosa and isiZulu. The area is a home of several well-known political activists who fought against apartheid. People reside in sites which are commonly known as stands, each stand is

occupied by more than 20 people including tenants, landlords and their extended families (Mbambo, 1998). Most stands have no running water; occupants share one tap and bathroom. The area is characterised by a vast number of squatter camps with a high rate of cohabitation, promiscuity, unemployment and substance abuse. As a result, schools in these areas are surrounded by shacks and have high enrolments; hence learners are overcrowded in classes except the matric classes.

Mariannahill, (where Ngcobo High school is located) is dominated by people of the Catholic religion and the people of this area are only allocated small areas where they live in undeveloped sites crowded with children. The missionaries used a land-rent free strategy to attract black people who had no land to draw them to Catholicism. The Land was offered rent free but people had to build a European-style house. Consequently, families in the developed sites, live in one house divided inside with a western design and with small fruits and vegetable gardens (Khandlhela, 1993). This society engages in both traditional and western activities. Girls participate in traditional activities namely; virginity testing (ukuhlolwa) and traditional dance (ukusina). In packed squatter camps children are living with parents and siblings with no privacy that consequently brings maximum early exposure to sexual activities. Subsequently, there is high rate of early childbearing with not enough space for the school-aged mother and her baby which makes it hard to care for the baby and to do homework. Culturally virginity ensures girls' purity and brings pride to the girl as well as to her family. Accordingly failing to keep the purity, like falling pregnant, become a shame for the girl and for her parents (Mkhwanazi, Makusha, Blackie et al., 2018; Molefe, 2016), Therefore, the girl forfeits some privileges such as being cared for and schooling and it exposes them to name calling that is specifically used for girls in a similar position (Mkhwanazi e et al., 2018).

1.2.3 Economic Context of the Study

The post-apartheid era in South Africa including Durban was characterised by restructuring developmental programmes that aimed to untangle the socioeconomic inequalities instigated by apartheid (Marx & Charlton, 2003), even though, a great deal has been done to eradicate poverty such as, subsidising water, electricity, declaring no fee schools, provision of a feeding scheme in schools and social support grants. Nevertheless, there are still evident backlogs in various aspects (ANC, 2019). The economic development of Durban relies on

manufacturing industries, sugar, food processing industries and tourism. In addition, port facilities and transportation systems enable the import and export of various commodities such as, petro –chemical products (Marx & Charlton, 2003). However, poverty and social inequality persists in the province (Jika, 2015), almost 30 per cent of KZN citizens live in extreme poverty (Stats S.A., 2020).

Hence, the two areas Clermont and Mariannhill have common elements that are poverty, a densely populated area and situated near the industrialised areas which means that there is an influx of people from within and outside the country into these areas in search of employment. When one passes through these areas you notice small corrugated iron shacks without windows and the people speak in different languages. Hence, housing rental contributes to the local economy which is also boosted by the taxi industry and various informal businesses, engagement in formal labour in the nearby industrial parks and domestic work in the nearby suburbs. The stadium and the national railway line also contribute to the areas' economy. The railway line attracts informal traders while the stadium promotes local formal businesses such as, tourism and entertainment (EThekweni Municipality, 2010). Nonetheless, poverty is entrenched and substantial and the unemployment rate is very high. Consequently, the majority of people depend on the government social grant as the only source of income. Those participants who mentioned that their parents have a second income talked about 'peace' jobs. In addition, the unemployment rate of young people who are at an employable age is very high. This become evident at midday as number of young people are moving up and down in the streets. This results in drug abuse, criminal and violent activities. Children go to school on empty stomachs and they have no educational material. One of the participants even stated that she gets the first meal of the day from school. That evidently indicates that the majority of children rely on the school feeding scheme as their basic meal (Motsa & Morojele, 2017). Some children walk long distances to schools in the cold without jerseys and those that they do have are old and torn in such a way that it is observable to other people in the street.

Although the research schools bear certain similarities, the researcher noted different socio-economic factors based on the schools' location. The township surrounded by informal settlements (imijondolo) with no running water or solidly structured houses. Participants talked about living in packed, rented one-room homes. The families are one hundred per cent

dependent on the government social security grant. Students start to take care of themselves at a young age and substance abuse is rife. In these schools, learners are provided with schooling necessities such as, uniform, shoes, stationary and they register those who depended only on school feeding schemes for weekend's provisions. In contrast, the second school is located in an area with solid structured homes and parents receive social grants as the second source of income. The school in this area makes no provision for the schooling prerequisites for the girls hence they were complaining about lots of things that are provided by the state that they were not getting that made their schooling experiences difficult such as, short skirts and lack of food and books. State social grants that are offered in schools make a huge difference in most learners' lives. However, this does not cater for girls who fall pregnant in schools without any form of support. As a result girls in this position relinquish the education opportunity which subsequently hinders South Africa in achieving goal 1, 4 and 5 of the *Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG)*.

1.3 The International Policy Context

The right to education is globally recognised as a basic human right (HRW, 2018), and acknowledged in a number of international Conventions as a “multiplier right” as it provides an avenue to recognise other human rights (UNICEF, 2018, p., 13). Hence, Governments around the world committed themselves to ensure that it is accessible to all (UNESCO, 2000). In 1994 United Nation Convention and Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing advocated for the removal of all forms of discrimination against women and girls (UNICEF, 2001). In addition, countries proposed the *Sustainable Developmental Goals [SDG]* in 2015. Their focus is on safeguarding inclusive and quality education; the substantial reduction in poverty and hunger and diminution of inequality by the year 2030 (UNDP, 2015).

Pregnancy and parenting among school-aged girls has become a major challenge and is often indicated as a major obstruction to the purging of gender disparities in education and to the attainment of every child's basic human right to education (UNICEF, 2018). In response to that, the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), among other Conventions explicitly recognised the right of pregnant and parenting school-girls to an acceptable education (UNICEF, 2018). In addition, the UNCRC on the Right of Child (CRC) together with General Comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the child' rights

during adolescence stresses the realisation of the educational rights of every child and freedom from discrimination. Furthermore the CRC monitoring committee mandated governments to provide support and guidance to school-aged pregnant girls and mothers including their babies (UNICEF, 2018). Nevertheless, in some instances, there is no integration between international and national law as well as law and practice (UNICEF, 2018). Consequently, thousands of pregnant and parenting girls worldwide are unable to access their right to education.

Since research has revealed the link between school-aged pregnancy and poverty the International Covenant on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognised that education is the primary tool by which economically and socially marginalised children are able to lift themselves out of poverty and have full participation in their communities (UNICEF, 2018). Consequently, the African Union adopted Agenda 2063 that aimed at creating a wide economic and social development strategy that aimed to invest in providing sustainable education that is free from discrepancies in all levels and non-discriminatory (Human Right Watch [HRW], 2018). Furthermore, it recommended the use of policy and practice to ensure re- entry and continuation and to address pregnancy related incongruities (HRW, 2018). Even though African Governments made human rights commitment to protect pregnant school- aged girls and mothers' education provision, it is only on paper. In practice it is still a challenge, as pregnant girls and mothers are still treated differently depending on the country they are in (HRW, 2018). In some African countries, girls are still denied education in the name of pregnancy and parenthood. Education refusal is taken as a form of punishment and education attainment as a privilege that is enjoyed by those who are able to control themselves and not fall pregnant during the schooling age (HRW, 2018).

1.4 The National Education Policy Context

In South Africa the right to education, equality and human dignity is shielded by the *Constitution* of the country. However, South Africa persistently experiences a high rate of the school-aged girls' school dropout due to pregnancy, parenting and poverty including stigma and discriminatory-related cases against pregnant girls and mothers (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013; Molefe, 2016). Therefore, in order to address the issue of school-aged pregnancy, parenting, education provision and poverty, South Africa issued a number of policies to guarantee the education provision and to alleviate poverty for all including pregnant and parenting learners. For example, the *National Education Policy Act [NEPA] 27 of 1996*

which prohibits discrimination against any learner even if she has no school fees with an attempts to deal with past inequalities. It emphasises redress on an equitable basis based on constitutional warranties. As a result, funding allocation is determined on the basis of need and proportional poverty of the area in which the school is situated. (NEPA, 1996). Moreover, the *South African Schools Act [SASA] (1996)*, requires public schools to admit learners with special needs and schools should make arrangements as far as practically possible to make facilities accessible to all learners. According to the inclusive approach to education, pregnant girls and mothers are regarded as learners with barriers (*Department of Basic Education, 2007*), and the girl may not be denied attending school even if she is pregnant – she should rather be sent to a school hospital (SASA, 1996). The country should be commended for its efforts to provide education for all including ensuring continuation of education provision even to the learners without school fees.

Nevertheless, it still has a major limitation when it comes to protecting the pregnant girls and mothers against ill- treatments and stigmatisation that they experience in schools (Andrews & Draga, 2015). *The South African Schools' Act (1996)* authorises the School Governing Bodies [SGBs] to draw up codes of conduct and to maintain discipline in school. However, the SGB is constituted by individuals who are dominated by personal and cultural values which in most cases thwart the purpose of the policy. The discourse is complex and therefore the Department of education attempted to confront the recurring issues and at the same time to comply with the *Constitution* by developing policy on prevention and management of learner pregnancy in 2007. The policy aimed to countersign the pregnant school-aged girls and mothers' right to education by ensuring non-exclusion due to pregnancy or childbirth and to provide an environment that encouraged return to and continuation of learning. The policy's directives were to ensure access to education for every pregnant girl and mother despite her pregnancy and parenting status. Moreover, the policy also confirms counselling, care and support before and after pregnancy and the right to access health and social services (Brunton, 2003).

The policy became a refuge for most of the girls' futures, considering that before its existence pregnancy meant the end of their education (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). However, the provision of the policy was not accessible to all due to the country's diversified society. The policy lacked a protection mechanism hence it exposed a space for misinterpretation

(Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). The policy was not only blamed for betting with the girls' education, but also, for exposing the pregnant girls and mothers to discrimination as the onus of the policy design was placed in the hands of the SGBs (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). The Minister of Basic Education reviewed the policy in 2018 and issued a draft inviting public comments about the contents of the policy. The revised National Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in School attempted to:

- Endorse the constitutional rights of the girls to education by ensuring that pregnancy and childbirth does not lead to exclusion from school which should provide a supportive environment for prolongation of learning;
- Ensure schools provide a stigma-free, non-discriminatory and non-judgemental environment during pregnancy and after delivery and physical and psychological health and dignity;
- Ensure retention and re-enrolment of learners, after giving birth, in an appropriate grade in the basic education system; and
- Provide comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health [SRH] services that include access to contraceptives and technologies in association with social sector partners (DBE, 2018).

South Africa as a country struggles to comply with international commitments in safeguarding quality education for all and to encourage the return and retention of the pregnant girls and mothers in schools (Molefe, 2016). The country faces challenges in its policy implementation procedures due to poor monitoring strategies that result to misinterpretation and confusion to school authorities and parents (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). The policy has been in operation for more than a decade, while the *National Education Policy Act* is more than two decades old. Yet, pregnancy, parenthood and poverty are still identified as the main contributing factors for the girls' increasing school dropout rate (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Pregnant girls and mothers are still ostracised in their communities and in schools by people who are in loco parentis (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). This makes the policy principles too lofty as it disregard the true socio- economic representation of the country. This means that girls are on their own, bombarded by a challenging school environment instead of being accepted in a supportive environment as teachers complain about numerous academic demands and lack of skills pertaining pregnant girls' conditions (Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020). The reality is that exclusion is more prevalent than support (van Zyl, van der

Merwe, & Chigeza, 2015). The policy benefits mostly those who are in better socio-economic conditions, leaving out the underprivileged, as most girls from poor economic backgrounds are not exposed to contraception and social health services are not always available to provide services to schools that are in poverty-stricken areas. The policy needs to be open-minded in recognising the country's diverse socio-economic background.

1.5 Why A Study on Pregnancy, Parenting, Poverty and Education?

The learners' right to education before and after pregnancy is safeguarded by the *Constitution of South Africa* directed by the African Charter on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees that girls who become pregnant before completing their education get an opportunity to continue with their education on the basis of their individual ability (DBE, 2018). However, the Department of Basic Education (2018) raised concerns over learner pregnancy that it has become a main social, systemic and fiscal trial that impacts negatively on the national development and on the lives of thousands of young people as it disrupts girls' schooling and leads to dropouts (Briggs, Brownell, & Roos, 2017). That obviously undermines the plans to purge gender disparities in education and it compromises the country's achievement of Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs], (DBE, 2018). Again, considering that KwaZulu – Natal has 41.8 per cent of women who suffer from hunger, and some are in higher risk of poverty and social exclusion which exposes them to vulnerability (Stats SA 2020). Accordingly, the need to understand clearly how pregnant girls and mothers 'negotiation of schooling and parenting in extreme poor socio-economic conditions is crucial since it might direct stakeholders and education officials on how to deal with the issue.

Different means have been used in trying to address the education provision of pregnant and parenting learners, but the problem persists irrespective of these efforts. Possibly, because past studies and different department officials generalise situations when suggesting approaches pertaining learner pregnancy and parenting thus become ineffective and successively end the education of a number of girls. The use of intersectionality and children's geographies uncover the intricacy and details of the realities from the girls themselves.

The Minister of Education insisted on strengthening efforts to address the issue of learner pregnancy in schools (Department of Basic Education, 2009). Moreover, Stats S.A. (2020)

reported low level of education and poor school attendance as multidimensional drivers of poverty. Hence, ignoring the importance of school-aged pregnant girls and mothers' education could impact negatively on the society and on the girls as it could keep them in poverty as it is regarded as the precursor and consequence of school aged pregnancy and parenting (Briggs et al., 2017). The study is conducted with school-aged girls who belong to a vulnerable group because of destitution and pregnancy (Stats SA, 2020), and education is one way that can help the girls to get out of their penurious situation (van Zyl et al., 2015; Nkani & Bhana, 2016). The study might provide deep insight into the effect of poverty on the girls 'negotiation of schooling, pregnancy and parenting as one of the means that can ensure educational success, assistance and improvement of the girls' schooling experience. The study therefore might be the useful guide for the country in its endeavours to achieve some of the SDGs.

The researcher viewed the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers as agents with an ability, through their voices, not only to contribute to research but also towards efforts and policies aimed at changing their life situations.

1.6 About this Study

The main objective of the study was to explore the influence of poverty, on the schooling, pregnancy and parenting of school-aged girls in deprived socio-economic contexts and how school-aged girls navigated education despite their poor socio-economic background, pregnancy and being mothers. The purpose was to get a clear insight into the issue derived from the voices of experience (Raza, 2017), and further to give guidelines for the provision of solutions that could address the matter in ways that would not interfere with pregnant girls and mothers' education.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the schooling, pregnancy and parenting experiences of impoverished school-aged girls in three township secondary schools in South Africa?
2. How does poverty influence the schooling, pregnancy and parenting experiences of school-aged girls in these contexts?
3. In what ways could school-aged pregnant girls and mothers' quality of schooling and education be ensured and enhanced?

To answer the above research questions, the study employed a qualitative research methodology and narrative inquiry. The data generation techniques that the study used were in-depth and focus group interviews, photo voice and a mapping exercise. Purposive sampling was used to select participants of the study. These were, nine pregnant girls and mothers between the ages of 15-19 years, doing grade 10 and 12, who were from three township poverty- stricken secondary schools living financially restricted lives.

1.7 Linking it all together

1.7.1 Chapter Two: Poverty, Pregnancy and Motherhood in the Schooling Trajectories: Narratives of Seven High School Girls in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

The school- aged pregnant girls and mothers from deep poverty-stricken environments experience extreme hardship in trying to meet the demands of parenting and schooling (Bhana, et al., 2010), inside and outside school spaces and places. This chapter explored the unenviable reality of the journey of the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers in order to get their education as a marginalised group in the schooling context. The chapter sought to understand various situations that the girls from poor socio-economic backgrounds encounter in their quest to attain education. The focus was on the school's environment inside and outside the classroom and different responses that the pregnant girls and mothers receive from the school community and the meaning they attach to the responses, extra duties and financial constrains they experience and the manner in which they navigate the faced conditions.

1.7.2 Chapter Three: Pregnancy, Parenting and Education: Voices of Four Underage Girls from One School in Durban, South Africa

The chapter explores the influence of pregnancy and parenting in the academic lives of underage disadvantaged girls as a distinct group in the school environment. It focused on the various relationships that the pregnant girls and mothers engage in with friends, peers and teachers in the schooling space and its effect in their experiences of school. The objective was to elucidate the positive or negative effect the relationships bring to their thoughts, emotions, and schooling experience. Studies show that young people are capable of expressing their views in creating their own inclusion and belonging in their spaces and places (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004). Hence, it is imperative to listen insightfully to pregnant and parenting girls'

views in attempting to enhance their academic lives and the complexities that exist in the school context.

1.7.3 Chapter Four: Implications of Poverty on Pregnancy, Parenting and Schooling: Experiences of Five Teenage Girls in Three Township Secondary Schools in the Pinetown District

The chapter explores ways in which various factors that facilitate poverty interconnect to interfere with school-aged pregnant girls and mothers' roles of balancing pregnancy, parenting and schooling. By detailing the pregnant girls and mothers' family and social relationships the chapter sought to elucidate how different factors intersect and expose the pregnant girls and mothers to different kind of susceptibility that leaves them bruised and hopeless. Understanding the factors could provide clear reality of the sources of the pregnant girls and mother's pains and the injustices and powerlessness that emanate from orphanhood and lack of knowledge due to unreliable family members and a social system that turns into a form of poverty. This, exposes most pregnant girls and mothers to greater vulnerability than other girls (Raza, 2017), then makes it hard for them to benefit from the offered state social assistance. Therefore, uncovering other intersecting factors that add complications to the navigation of schooling and parenting that girls experience, may allow accommodative guidance and strategies on how pregnancy, parenting and poverty could be dealt with in an inclusive manner thus improving the girls' schooling.

1.7.4 Chapter Five: Family and Friends' Interactions and Reactions: Implications of Pregnancy and Parenting on the Schooling of Nine School-Aged Girls in Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal

This chapter focused on various reactions and interactions that pregnant girls and mothers experience in their primary social circles, namely family and friends. Since, the relationships they form with them have a great impact on their lives (Mkhwanazi et al., 2017), as they endeavour to get an education under unfavourable circumstances engendered by social morality and economic conditions. The objective was to illuminate different reactions and interactions that the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers have that interfere with their desire to finish school and optimism to change their socio-economic situation. The study also sought their opinions as to what they thought could be done to bring about a better acceptance, respect and basic support. Studies on education and sexuality indicate that the

pregnant girls and mothers who get support from their families and friends have better experiences and succeed in acquiring their education with fewer disruptions (Bhana, Morrell, Shefer, Ngabaza, 2010; Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Therefore, it is important to understand the interactions and reactions that the girls get from their families and friends in order to identify the negative responses that hinder the normal endeavour to improve the situation so that they can access education with confidence.

1.7.5 Chapter Six: Pregnancy, Parenting and Schooling: Narratives of Resilience for School-Aged Girls from Three Poverty Stricken Township High Schools

This chapter explored the resilient efforts made by the pregnant girls and mothers disregarding all the heart-breaking challenges they face to fulfill the desire for education and to live a better life. The researcher listened to pregnant girls and mothers from deprived socio-economic conditions and their narratives demonstrated indomitable willpower that they showcased through resisting all challenges they faced by devising different coping strategies for each situation. School-aged girls who fall pregnant and become parents are globally perceived as a vulnerable group (Black, Bently, Papas, Oberlander et al., 2006). Hence, the intention was to gain detailed understanding of how the girls navigate multiple vulnerabilities of being pregnant and parenting in the schooling space under destitute conditions and withstanding ill-treatment and stigmatisation in the families, communities and at school. The focus was on strategies that they came up with to navigate parenting pregnancy and acquiring education under unfavorable conditions in order to get education and on the driving forces that made them overlook all the barriers.

1.7.6 Chapter Seven: Educating Pregnant Girls and Mothers: Teachers' Voices from Two High Schools in the Pinetown District in Durban, South Africa

Teachers are the main witnesses to and motivators of the pregnant girls and mothers' schooling efforts (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Therefore, engaging with them about their contextual engagement with the school-aged girls the chapter aimed to elicit their voices by depicting different efforts that teachers make to preserve pregnant girls and mothers' education. Also, to determine their views on the effectiveness of the existing support that the pregnant girls and mothers get in schools. The objective was to extract constructive opinions from the teachers on the kind of support that could be effective in helping the pregnant girls and mothers to access quality education and a better experience in the school space. Actually,

the emphasis was on what should be done to improve the pregnant girls and mothers' education despite the encountered challenges so that they can remain in school until they get an exit certificate.

1.7.7 Chapter Eight: Summary of the Study Findings

This chapter concludes the study on poverty, school-aged pregnancy, and parenthood and schooling in poverty-stricken township secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal in a South African context. The chapter contains the summary of the study findings, theoretical framework, methodological and personal reflection of the study. Finally, it provides the limitations and recommendations that role players namely, families, society, schools and the Government of South Africa could implement to improve the education access of the pregnant girls and mothers especially those from penurious environments.

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CHAPTER 2

POVERTY, PREGNANCY AND MOTHERHOOD IN THE SCHOOLING TRAJECTORIES: NARRATIVES OF SEVEN HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS IN DURBAN, KWAZULU-NATAL

ABSTRACT

For some decades, lack of education and school-aged pregnancy and parenting has been associated with poverty and education that some claim is the main instrument that can change the socio-economic status of the society. However, girls from poor socio-economic backgrounds do not get education due to innumerable hindrances that they encounter in the process. This article intends to gain an in-depth understanding of how school-aged girls navigate pregnancy, motherhood and schooling amidst penurious conditions in three township secondary schools in Durban, KwaZulu- Natal. The purposively selected participants were seven pregnant girls between 15-19 years old doing grades 10 to 12. The study was guided by the social constructionist theory and utilised qualitative narrative inquiry, individual and focus group interviews and mapping exercises to explore the dynamics of pregnancy, parenting and schooling encountered by girls living in a socio-economically deprived environment. The findings revealed that pregnant girls and mothers faced different challenges in their quest to acquire education that ranged from multiple overwhelming responsibilities and lack of basic needs to verbal attacks and exclusion. The article recommended that School Governing Bodies as policy makers and parents' representatives should be more present in schools for school-aged pregnant girls and mothers so that they can be able to understand their situation and to hear what they think could ease their situation and enable them to acquire education like all other teenage girls.

KEYWORDS: Education; experience; parenting; poverty; support; teacher

2.1 Introduction

Globally, school- aged pregnancy and parenthood causes distress to various departments and social structures (Andrew & Dillon, 2014). In the developing countries approximately 10 million pregnancies occur every year among teenagers between 15-19 years old. Approximately 777 000 girls under the age of 15 years give birth each year (WHO, 2020).

South Africa Demographic and Health Survey showed that 71 births per 1000 are by teenagers between 15 – 19 years (STATS. S. A, 2019).

The worldwide concerns over school-aged pregnancy and parenting arose because of its persistence which is perceived as undermining the various efforts made by the departments and organisations to curb its occurrence in schools (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Its escalation and persistence also causes disquietude due to the negative impact it has on the education of school-aged girls and on their futures. (Andrew et al., 2014). From as early as 1950, poor socio-economic situations have been linked to lack of education. Acquiring education is therefore considered as an important means that could be used to break the cycle of poverty among individuals and their communities (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013; Akella & Jordan. 2015; Briggs, Brownell & Roos, 2017).

Understandably, most countries have prioritised the education provision for all their citizens and made acquiring education a constitutional right, regardless of gender, age or socio-economic background (UNICEF, 2007). Countries that focus on educating a girl child are considered as making a valuable investment for their nations' prosperity. (UNICEF, 1994). In South Africa the Department of Education provided a framework for the management of pregnant learners drawn from the *South African Schools Act of 1996* which safeguarded girls' continuous learning irrespective of pregnancy and parenthood status. Again, it advocated the creation of a supportive environment that would ensure that the girls stay at school during pregnancy and return after giving birth (DBE, 2018). It was commendable for the South African Government to consider the importance of girls' education and for bringing hope to those girls who have big dreams for their lives.

However, regardless of the provided policies, research shows that in South Africa, exclusion and unfair treatment of pregnant girls and mothers lingers in the learning space (Molefe, 2016; Du Preez, Botha & Manyathi, 2019; Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020). In 2010 and 2012 pregnant learners were prevented from writing their examinations in Limpopo (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). Again, in 2013 pregnant girls exclusion incidents were reported in two Free State schools and cases were resolved in the Constitutional Court (Andrews & Draga, 2013). Inappropriately, exclusion of pregnant girls continues affronting the *Constitution* and infringing girls' rights to education. The continuous discrimination of pregnant girls and

mothers in schools holds back South Africa in achieving its international goals. The manner in which the issue of school-aged pregnancy and parenting is dealt with in most African countries hinders the progress of the continent as it forces girls into an everlasting state of male dependency (Motsa, 2018).

School-aged girls are still developing psychologically and emotionally (McNeely, Mia, DrPH & Blanchard, 2009). So, apart from all social injustices that they suffer in the schooling spaces, they are also overwhelmed by physical changes, responsibilities of parenting, demands of schooling process and the reactions from family and communities which are commonly hostile. All those become too much to bear for the girls and this ends up disturbing their normal access to education (Udjo, 2013). Certainly, for the school-aged girls who are from poor socio-economic backgrounds- the challenges multiply. Since, pregnancy and giving birth adds more costs (Molefe, 2016), to their restricted financial circumstances. Certainly, dealing with financial constrains complicates pregnancy, parenting and schooling progress among school-aged girls (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013).

The policy provisions are less accommodative to pregnant girls and mothers from impoverished environments who deal with lack of supporting materials that deprives them effectively from receiving free access to education. Literature reveals that keeping girls in school is one of the greatest mechanisms that can be used to prevent them from falling pregnant and this can delay a second pregnancy (DBE, 2018), and can help to break the cycle of poverty (Sarantaki & Koutelekos, 2007), which regrettably girls from poverty stricken environment get trapped in due to the unfavourable socio-economic conditions they face.

The study aims to gain in-depth understanding of how school-aged girls navigate pregnancy, motherhood and schooling amidst penurious conditions. Focusing on the causes and consequences of pregnancy, parenting and the disruptions they bring to girls' education without hearing from them leaves a gap in the knowledge about the girls' actual experiences and how they negotiate various circumstances in the school environment. By revealing what girls face in the schooling environment and the coping mechanisms they develop to get education, the study may become a guide for school officials on what to do to improve the schooling experience for girls with multiple barriers like poverty, parenting and pregnancy so that they can access education with fewer challenges.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The paper used the concept of social constructionism to gain an in-depth understanding of how the girls navigate pregnancy, motherhood and schooling in the midst of poverty. Social constructionism advocates the notion that individuals' present experience of self as an autonomous and psychological person is constructed in and by social realities (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). It is also based on social relations therefore it upholds the role of the individual in the social construction of realities (Gergen, 1991). The reactions that the girls get from their social circles have an influence on the manner in which they view themselves, their capabilities and on decision-making about dealing with parenting, schooling and economic challenges. The more support that the girls get from their social relationships, the better the schooling experience is and that results in positive outcomes and performances (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), and it encourages them to cope with discriminatory acts while lack of support complicates the process and results in major disruptions and in dropping out (Gyan, 2013). In essence, positive attention provided by teachers and support staff and the assistance that the family members give should motivate the girls as it should foster inclusion (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004). On the other hand, the negative comments and gossip can promote seclusion and can exacerbate struggles in the schooling space (Molefe, 2016).

Furthermore, social constructionism emphasises that meaning is socially constructed through coordination of people in their various encounters hence it is fluid and dynamic (Wang, 2016). The frequent reception, treatment and roles that girls have to play as mothers and learners at schools and in their homes determine their experiences and interpretations of the situation. Unquestionably, pregnant girls and mothers are received in dissimilar ways at school by their peers, teachers and support staff that range from overwhelming welcome to finger pointing and name calling (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). This results in distinct experiences and views about the issue. Obviously, schools are of social significance to the girls' everyday life (Collins & Coleman, 2008), as it brings hope for the girls who are caught in severe socio-economic conditions. Therefore, the favourable environment they create does not only improve their schooling experience but it also helps them to overcome encountered hindrances in their development (Mampane, 2014). Listening to and engaging with the girls via conversation provided detailed meaning of the dynamics that girls face in their quest to balance parenting and schooling demands with limited resources.

2.3 Research Methodology

2.3.1 Geographical and socio-economic context of the study

The research process took place in Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, positioned on the Eastern coast of South Africa (Marx & Charlton, 2003). The targeted research sites were three schools, two situated in Clermont which is approximately 12 kilometres from the Durban Metropolitan Area and one school is in Mariannhill in the hillside west of Durban. All three schools are located in densely populated areas and are encircled by informal settlements and one school is in a semi-urban area (Mbambo, 1998; Khandlhela, 1993). Families are living in over-crowded small shacks with their children. Both areas are poverty-stricken and dominated by substance abuse and by sexual licentiousness. There is a high rate of unemployment and teenage childbearing. Both places are situated near industrialised areas which are the source of employment for the communities while others rely on housing rentals, the taxi industry and on various informal businesses and domestic work.

2.3.2 The Study methodology and data generation methods

This paper adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate how school-aged girls navigate pregnancy, motherhood and schooling amidst destitution. Qualitative research techniques, individual and focus group interviews and a mapping exercise were used to gather data. A qualitative approach attempts to understand groups or individuals in their natural setting and the meaning they create out of their experiences (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012). Also, a qualitative method was useful in inquiring about the participants' standpoint on meaning, experiences and perspectives (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2016). The qualitative research interviews involved interactions between the participants and the researcher, involving face-to-face engagement that permitted the participants to freely express meaning and perceptions about their experiences (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This, enables the researcher to understand participants' subjective interpretations of their lives (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The participants' observations provided a detailed and in-depth understanding of the girls' experiences of pregnancy and schooling under stringent circumstances as it allowed observation in the girls' natural setting which is the schooling place (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Recording the field notes provided the study with rich contextual authentic information (Creswell & Poth, 2018), observed from participants and the researcher noted what had been omitted during the interviews (Creswell & Creswell 2018). This gave a clear picture of various situations that the girls encounter in the school

environment. Focus group interviews enabled the researcher through interactions and discussions to examine the girls' perceptions about different situations they face, and their coping mechanism they develop to deal with situations in the school environment as parents with inferior socio-economic status (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The participatory mapping allowed for the investigation of the attitudes and perspectives of participants in their natural environment (Kindon, Pain & Kesby., 2010).

The study sought to gain a comprehensive insight into how school-aged girls navigate pregnancy, motherhood and schooling in penurious conditions. Accordingly, using individual interviews, focus group interviews, participatory mapping; participants' observations and field notes became fruitful in illuminating the depth of different situations faced daily by the girls and in determining the different means they use as coping mechanism (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participatory mapping offered considerable illustrations that promoted a clarified understanding of the conditions that the girls had to deal with in order to get education. The study utilised individual and focus group interviews as data generation methods to gain in-depth insight into the realities of pregnancy and parenting in the schooling space without basic necessities (Hesser-Bibber & Leavy, 2011). The study used different qualitative research data generation techniques to ensure the reliability of the data generated (Nieuwehuis, 2007), like the use of a voice- recorder, mapping and field notes. Interviews were conducted on the school premises, recorded and later played back to ensure the accuracy of the interview (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The school premises were used as the research site for both focus group and in-depth interviews. The focus group interview consisted of three mothers and one pregnant girl. Two group interviews took place, the first session was constituted by 2 mothers who were grouped according to the ages of their babies for example, 3 years and 3months and the mother of the infant and the pregnant girl. The second session of the interview consisted of all four girls. They shared their experiences the discussions became more informative and motivating unlike the individual interviews where they had to narrate what they already know. For the mapping exercise, participants were asked to make sketches of places and objects that had a particular meaning, either good or bad about the situations they have to deal with. Focus groups and individual interviews as well as participatory mapping were conducted in isiZulu which eliminated the language barrier. This offered participants the opportunity to answer

questions and to give descriptions for the mapping exercises with ease. The mapping allowed maximum engagement for participants and empowered them as they continued with it in their own time without the researcher being present and this gave them time to reflect (Lerat, 2013). The researcher engaged with participants and recorded observed behaviour in the fieldwork while they were discussing the experiences in the classroom and the whole school as the qualitative approach allowed naturalistic engagement during the data collection process (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012). The narratives of school-aged pregnant girls and mothers on the realities of pregnancy, parenting and attaining education in destitute situations and how they deal with it every day became the basic source of knowledge for this article.

2.3.3 The Study participants

The school-aged girls who agreed to participate in the research process were seven girls doing grade 10 to 12, between 15 - 19 years old. Six participants were from two schools, and one from one school. Two girls were in a late stage of their pregnancies; five girls were mothers of one week infants to three years old babies. All participants were purposively selected, they had to be either pregnant or have a baby and still schooling in the poverty-stricken township's secondary school and live in an impoverished socio-economic environment. Three girls had no parents, they were living with relatives or grandmothers and four (4) had unemployed parents who relied on peace jobs.

2.3.4 Data analysis procedures

Audiotaped interview responses were carefully revisited several times (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Data was then translated from isiZulu into English. Interview transcripts were also read and reread to ensure familiarity with the data and to identify inherent recurring patterns and concepts (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Repeated concepts were categorised into themes, and connections in categories were noted (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Generated data from audio-taped narratives, written narratives, field notes and mapping exercises were synthesised to provide the findings of the study (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Various themes that emerged during the analysis process were coded, sorted and interpreted to create meaning from the gathered data.

2.3.5 Ethical Considerations

All necessary ethical considerations were followed. Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu- Natal was granted, and permission from the Department of Education, schools and parents was obtained. The researcher explained the research procedures to the participants and stated the objective of the research. Ethical conduct was ensured consistently throughout the research process. Participants' anonymity, privacy and confidentiality were maintained. They were also made aware of voluntary of participation.

2.4 Findings and Discussions

2.4.1 At school we try to adapt and to fulfill our duties...

The findings indicated that pregnancy, parenting and schooling demanded transitions and adaptations which were hard to face with restricted resources. This made parenting and attaining an education a strenuous exercise for the school-aged girls. Yet they tried their best to fulfil their duties of being parents, learners and children in their homes. But, some of the experiences of parenting were still new to them so they were still processing the idea -which they found to be difficult. Narratives below illustrate this:

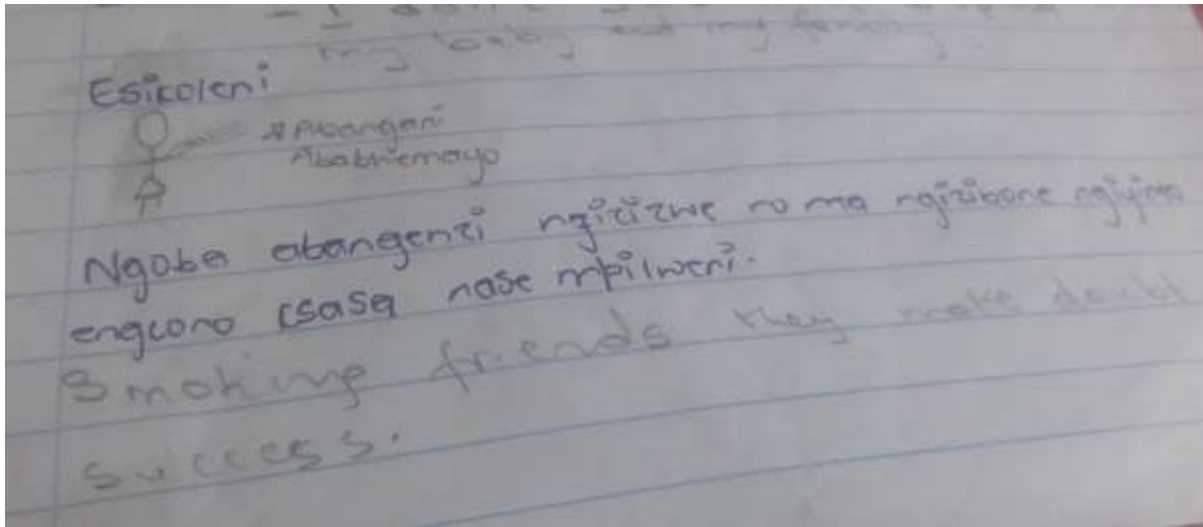
It is difficult for me to do my homework because I do all the house chores , attend to my children until they fall asleep, then I will start doing my schoolwork. By that time it will be late and I will be tired and sleepy. In the morning I cook porridge for my children before I go to school unlike my friends they have a helper in their house. Unfortunately my grandparents cannot afford one.

(Hle, 18 –years old mother of 2 babies: Mome Secondary; individual interview).

I do know how you do it Hle! Me I am still getting used to being a mother and its responsibilities, it's hard. I had to go back to school to write a test. I was still in pain the operation was sore. I was supposed to study but I could not. At home we are many (and) they help. They want me to pass because they have expectations for me since they failed themselves; their hopes are on me (laughing). But listening to your story makes me realise that it is doable.

(Zakhe, 17- years old mother- 2 weeks infant: Siyaya Secondary; focus group interview)

Simo depicted in her mapping the fear and doubt that was aroused about her future because of some activities that occurred at school.



I feel very afraid and discouraged when my friends smoke at school because they make me think that I won't be able to succeed and be what I want in life. After smoking they do funny things that make me think that they will trick me to it and add more problems in my life. Because I cannot risk adding other expenses in the situation I am in right now. I am struggling to get tiny things I need for myself and the baby.

(Simo, 16- years old mother of 2-week-old infant: Ovong Secondary; mapping exercise)

My baby does not disturb me as he lives with his fathers 'family. I get time to do my schoolwork. I do it at night when everyone is asleep. I cannot start early because of the noise at home and in the neighbourhood (surrounding shacks)

(Nesi, 16 –years old mother of three months baby: Zinto Secondary; focus group interview)

The responses revealed that pregnancy, parenting and poverty restricted girls' normal experience of the learning environment. For example, Simo's narration reveals that, on top of the stigmatisation and discrimination that they endured in the school (Molefe, 2016), they were also bothered by other factors that happened within the school premises. Other learners' behaviour like 'smoking' caused the girls to feel vulnerable especially because they did not only think it was inappropriate but also that it might be a risk to their schooling journey. Consequently, that caused the development of fear and uncertainty about their education and

their dreams. Possibly, because they believed that school would be the place that could help them to get a new life, they became too worried about getting an education (Bhana et al. 2010).

As, they were obsessed about changing their situation so they expected the school to be that perfect place where they would learn, get positive advice and motivation. So, if these expectations were not met, they became more vulnerable as they began to lose hope and this affected their normal access to the school place and to attaining education unlike other teenagers who were free to explore fearlessly. It is evident therefore that an insecure and unhealthy schooling environment hinders learners' achievement (Mampane (2014), since places and spaces that young people occupy have an influence in their lives (Barker & Weller, 2003). Principals and teachers need to be more vigilant in ensuring that schools are cleared from all forms of toxic substances that might interfere with learners' education since poverty worked in multiple ways to expose teenagers to wellness threats (Murphey & Redd, 2014).

The findings further showed that the girls were from bigger families so most of their family members were willing to help, thus making it easier for them to carry on with their education (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Letsaolo, 2009). Some girls had the idea that their parents were obligated to help them since they did not make it in their life. Which is certainly not a wise thought because, as they were responsible for their future and they have to shape it not their parents. Even though, some families because of their destitution had unrealistic expectations from the girls. This was bound to overwhelm them at the same time affecting their education. Zakhe narrated,

“They want me to pass because they have expectations for me since they failed themselves; their hopes are on me.”

This comment made it evident that destitute family conditions were demanding on the pregnant girls and mothers as they carried responsibilities of family development and to fulfil family dreams as well as their own dreams. The parents and families probably knew the importance of education in the individual and family development so they had all their hope on Zakhe and expected her to do well at school. Such expectations did not only disregard the girl's reality as a new young mother but it also had an effect on her emotionally, which was inclined to produce the opposite outcome. However, the advantage that the girls had of being

many at home was exactly what they mentioned as the cause of deficiency of money that their families experienced (Lambani, 2015). Even though, the girls got help with babysitting but they still had to do house chores and spend time with their babies after a long day of school and homework (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). Since, those who looked after their babies wanted to take a break when they arrived home (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). They also had to start the next day earlier before everyone, doing chores before going to school (Motsa & Morojele, 2016). This indicated that parenting and schooling in penurious conditions was more demanding because the girls' parents did not have money to pay for housekeepers (Bhana et al.2010). Narratives further revealed that girls who did not stay with their children did not experience any pressure caused by parenting so it did not interfere with their schoolwork. Instead, the disruptions came from the surroundings (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), as living in shacks made them witness and hear disturbing occurrences (Murphey & Redd, 2014). That signposted that if girls could get necessary assistance with their babies, parenting (Bhana et al., 2010), would not be an obstacle in their journey of schooling. Some studies show that pregnancy and parenting does not end a girls' education but poverty and living in an economically depressed environment does (Macleod & Tracey, 2010).

Moreover, the narratives made it clear that some girls did not have enough time for their schoolwork (Motsa & Morojele, 2017), due to other responsibilities and the apprehensive situations that engulfed them.

Zakhe commented:

“I had to go back to school to write tests. I was still in pain”.

Even though other studies show that early pregnancy and parenting has nothing to do with interrupting a girls' future and finances (Furstenberg, 2008), the excerpt showed that pregnancy and parenting in poor socio-economic conditions did expose girls to agonizing conditions that they were unprepared for, and this disturbed them in acquiring their education. Since, they did not have either favourable economic conditions to enable them to take care of their health or knowledge about their rights that are enshrined in the MPMLP of 2007 that permits them to return to school when they are physically fit, and lack having to face other responsibilities that took away the schoolwork time and compromised their schooling progress. However, the close affinity (Gergen, 2009), between the girls and their family members was realised through the process of relating (Gergen, 2009), that enabled the

girls to face their challenges and to continue with their schooling. The comment indicated the need for the enrichment of Life Orientation that is more detailed in order to teach learners about matters that are about them and the disadvantages and delicacies of engaging in early sexual relationships. Also, families and caregivers have to be there for them and be willing to support and guide them to get available social security and to motivate them to prioritise their health which is important for their development, and to access education with fewer challenges so that their education can be a normal schooling experience as it is for most other learners.

2.4.2 At school we are reminded that we are mothers

The findings showed that pregnant girls and mothers were received in different ways by other learners. Some learners accepted and supported them but in some instance they had to tolerate verbal attacks that ranged from negative comments to name calling and being reminded that they were mothers so their opinions were unacceptable. Therefore, they had to learn to defend themselves either verbally or by reporting to the teachers, while those who could not cope decided to quit school (Ngabaza & Shefer. 2013).

The following narrative illustrates this:

At school they were surprised when they heard that I am pregnant because I do not talk a lot but they later accepted and become supportive. They understand that it was a mistake that can happen to anyone.

(Namhla, 15- years old pregnant girl: Ovong Secondary; focus group interview)

It's not easy but you learn to survive, like, when you suggest something they would say it is because you know big things because you fell pregnant unlike them who are still virgins (abakalali). It hurts because I see myself as a child like them. They call us names and remind us that we are mothers; so we should not be at school. I reported to the teacher, after that it stopped but sometimes I just ignore them.

(Zama, 17 years old mother of 18 month old baby: Siyaya Secondary; individual interview)

They are happy that I am back and they are supportive. They are more willing to give me the schoolwork that I missed. When I returned to school I was in pain, some were

offering to dish food for me from the kitchen. The attention they gave me was surprising unlike before.

(Nesi, 16 –years old mother of three months old baby: Zinto Secondary; individual interview)

The responses revealed that pregnant girls and mothers did not get pure acceptance. This is because, even though other learners accepted and supported them but most participants talked about negative remarks that were passed by fellow learners (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). The responses indicated that for pregnant girls and mothers, education did not come cheap. Sadly, the victimisation of pregnant girls and mothers in schools is as persistent as teenage pregnancy itself, which is not good for them since school is a focal place for interaction (Collins & Coleman, 2008), and one way towards the girls' (Motsa, 2018), development and that of their destitute families (Murphy & Redd, 2014). So, such interactions might lead to discouragement for them and hinder their schooling progress since fear of humiliation has been found to force girls (Motsa, 2018), out of school (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013).

The responses further revealed that the girls' right to education was disregarded. Probably because societies have associated school-aged pregnancy and parenting with immorality (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), and perceived it as a sign of promiscuity consequently girls who fell pregnant were considered loose girls (Motsa, 2018). Therefore those girls who found themselves in the situation were seen as intruders who do not belong in their learning space. Accordingly, pregnant girls and mothers are exposed to unfair treatment and different kind of continuous humiliation and undermining from anyone including their peers. Unfortunately, some girls tended to legitimise and embrace ill-treatment buying as appropriate for their guilt, while others decided to fight for their educational rights (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). Zama's narrative attests to the fact that some teachers do protect pregnant girls and mothers if they report incidents of discrimination. But most girls preferred not to report incidents of exclusion because they experienced officiousness and were overlooked. Sadly, most young people avoid talking to people who can help them, so they remain tied to their silence (Ritcher, Norris & Ginsburg, 2007).

This means that communities need to be more considerate and should review the socially constructed perceptions attaching to the issue due to the sensitivity and diversity of its

reasons and its effect on a number of young girls' lives, education and futures. Also, the participants' responses indicated that pregnancy and parenting is expected from learners with specific character traits, like those who are loud and talkative, but not from the quiet and reserved ones. Consequently, girls who fell pregnant with unexpected personalities experienced difficulties in the school environment since their pregnancies were hardly accepted and this complicated their progress (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). Because of shyness they often failed to withstand the mocking or to defend themselves or to plead for help. As a result of this their pregnancy led to the end of their educational journey (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). This goes back to enriching Life Orientation with informative content that will leave no gaps including a consideration of adolescents' development and characters.

Nesi's excitement over the attention she received gave a clear indication that some girls fall pregnant in order to gain recognition and to prove their womanhood (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013), which might be the reason for its persistence. Namhla's response demonstrated the shortfalls in sex education that leaves young people with insufficient knowledge about sexuality and reproductive health (Krebbekx, 2019). However, teenagers during their adolescent stage do things without thinking about the consequences (Macleod, 2003).

Namhla commented that,

"They understand that pregnancy was a mistake that can happen to anyone."

This excerpt displays the fact that young people struggle to put into practice what they learn in the Comprehensive Sex Education classes (Krebbekx, 2019). Also in some instances, during CSE lessons victimisation of pregnant and parenting girls was perpetuated (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), which is cause for concern about the confidence that can be placed on CSE (Krebbekx, 2019). This indicated the need for Life Orientation lessons to go beyond imparting knowledge but to inculcate enthusiasm for useful information rather than pleasurable information and for it to incorporate concepts and practice.

Narratives further reveal that not all learners were mean to pregnant girls and mothers in schools. Some girls indicated that they were blown away by the warmth and care that they were receiving from their classmates. That indicated that some learners were receptive and happy when their schoolmates returned to school after giving birth and became more willing to help with the schoolwork. Admittedly, what these learners did indicate is that some girls

were cared for irrespective of their conditions as they were even willing to dish food for them. This might have been borne out of recognising that the girls came from penurious backgrounds where food might have been scarce at times. On the other hand this indicated that other learners understood the negative impact of hunger on the learning process and therefore their support was crucial for the girls (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), with limited basic needs in order to get education in a normal state despite the repressive situation of shortage. Clearly, the learners' actions bring hope to all pregnant girls and other girls who will be in the same situation (Mkhathini, 2020). Again the action demonstrated the gradual shift from being judgmental to sympathetic from other learners thus demonstrated that the pregnant girls and mothers' reception at school could be better if the schools and community would approach it in a more considerate manner.

2.4.3 Our teachers want the best for us ...

The findings revealed that teachers assumed a parental role when it came to the school- aged pregnant girls and mothers, mostly because they wanted the best for them and indeed to help them eventually come out of their destitution through education (Motsa, 2017). If they found out that they were pregnant they shouted at them and made them aware of how disappointed they were. But, after the confrontation, they provided good advice and guidance like caring parents would do. Impressively, girls understood the teachers' frustrations and admitted their mistake.

The narratives below illustrate this:

When my teachers heard that I was pregnant they shouted at me, (and) mentioned that I disappointed them. I apologised and told them that it was a mistake. I remember the other day we had a trip, I told my teacher that I have no lunch for the trip she bought food for me. I can say they are helpful.

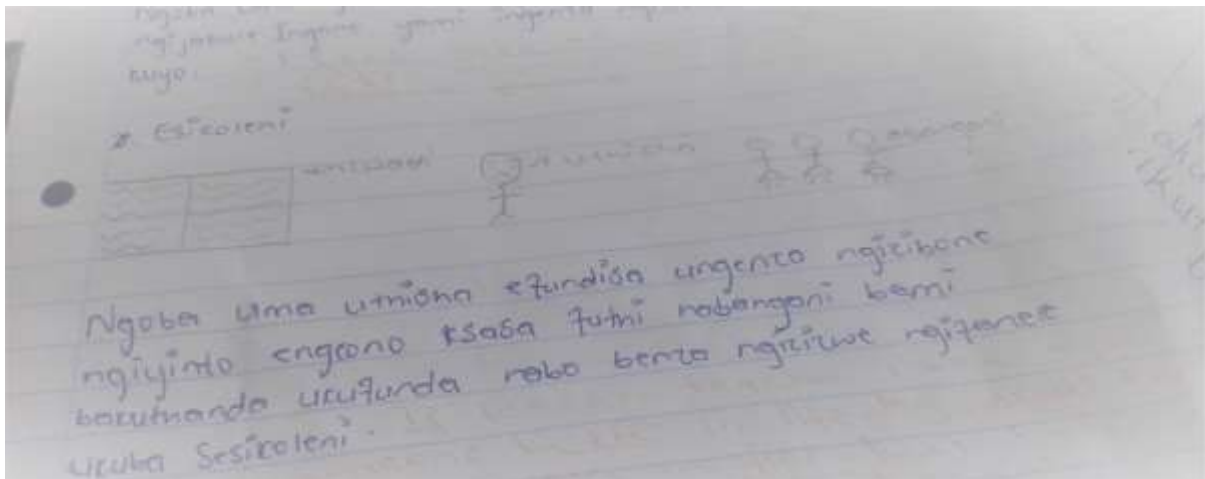
(Zakhe, 17- years old mother of 12-month-old baby: Siyaya Secondary; focus group interview)

My teachers encouraged me to come back to school and not to give up. One of my teachers even mentioned that I should repeat the grade; because she knows that I am a clever child (smiling), I will make it. So they were happy when I returned. They are

nice. But there is one teacher who likes to ask questions about the baby's father and comments about my body, she makes me feel uncomfortable.

(Kuhle, 18 year old mother of 3 year old child: Siyaya Secondary; individual interview)

Simo depicted in her mapping the hope and the comfort that her books and teachers bring in her life.



My teachers and my books make me feel comfortable at school because they make me see myself having a successful life in the future.

(Simo, 16-year-old mother of 2 week old infant: Ovong Secondary; mapping exercise)

Zama presented this drawing that displayed the liberty she felt around her teachers at school.



'I feel free at school; I am able to talk to the teachers anytime if I have a problem either at school or at home. But when I found that I was pregnant I left school. Haa! They laugh at you mfana, so I didn't want other children to see me I knew they were going to comments and I was afraid that teachers would shout at me.

(Zama, 17 years old mother of 18-month-old baby: Siyaya Secondary; mapping exercise)

The responses revealed that school meant a lot to pregnant girls and mothers. Mainly, because it became an uncommon setting for them as there were positive things that took place and people with different worldview like, teachers and their books. Simo narrated with a smile in the focus group;

"My teachers and my books make me feel comfortable at school because they make me see myself having a successful life in the future."

The comment made it clear, that to socio-economic deprived pregnant girls and mothers, the school context brought hope and broadened their life world, and it became a re-dreaming space for them. The interaction between teachers and pregnant girls and mothers formed a relationship that carried new conceptions and made them realise that their existing lifestyle could be changed which accords well with social constructionism as it puts the emphasis on the individual's view of the world based on relationships and not on external realities (Gergen, 2009). That accordingly, indicated that teachers played a vital role in shaping learners' life (Panday et al., 2009), and noticeably they have a positive impact on their development and emotional experiences (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), through their guidance and support (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012), that could help girls to remodel their future (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). So those teachers who work with children from impoverished backgrounds have that responsibility of creating a suitable atmosphere in which they can fulfil their dreams (Mampane, 2014). Teachers should ensure that girls are taught in a positive environment with sufficient resources that will assist them to put aside the challenges they face and be able to realise their goals.

The findings further revealed that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers were happy with the way their teachers talk to them. Because of that, they respected and appreciated the relationship they had with them. This is because, teachers did not discriminate against them instead, and apart from academic knowledge that they imparted to them they also supported them in many other ways (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Such as, giving advice and words of

encouragement ((Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), that girls held on to as they brought hope to them and they also provided financial support that gave them a relieving moment to forget about their destitute lives and that subsequently created trust between them (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). For this reason, they valued them and did not personalise their shouting and reprimanding comments but, they embraced them and promised not to repeat the same mistake and to do better.

Kuhle narrated with a smile:

“, my teacher encouraged me to come back to school ... she knows I will make it because I am a clever child.”

The extract showed that to some girls their teachers became parents that most girls never had, as they took the trouble to know- them and their capabilities and encourage them not to give up. Obviously, the girls did not hear adult affectionate voices as they were living on their own so when they looked at their teachers they saw people whom they could count on in paving the way to a bright future Zakhe' commented about the financial help that her teacher provided which makes one realise that there are teachers who go beyond their duties to make a difference in the society by ensuring that learners including pregnant girls and mothers with unfavourable socio-economic conditions get quality education (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). It is commendable that teachers showed love and care towards pregnant girls and mothers (Bhana et al., 2010), possibly, because as adults they viewed them as their daughters and they wanted to see them succeeding and being emotionally well (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), despite their present situation. Consequently, girls noted and became excited with any positive gesture that teachers made. Nesi stated that her teachers were happy that she was back at school, while Zama, mentioned that she was free to talk to her teachers about any problem even with things she experienced at home. The responses evidently indicated that teachers were willing to help (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), but they did not know how as they were unskilled (Mutshaeni, Manwadu & Mashau, 2015). This showed that if the Department of Education could equip teachers, by developing them on how to support pregnant girls and mothers like, channelling them on to the right protocol according to the girls respective challenges for example those who lack basic needs and how to deal with them in the classroom situation and best ways to approach the situation. Certainly, this could have a positive effect on both girls' education attainment and on the schooling experience.

Moreover, narratives indicated that what satisfied girls about their teachers was centred on emotional and social aspects (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), other than on the academic aspect and on being treated as learners with special needs (DBE, 2007), in accordance with the provisions of the policy guidelines. In their narratives no one talked about the recovering (catch up) of the missed work when they were absent (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). That showed that the girls seemed to miss the main reason for their engagement with teachers which was grounded on teaching and learning (Brunton, 2003). Considering the grades that the girls were in and their situation it was worrying that they were not aware of the things that concerned their conditions (Brunton, 2003). That indicated that a lot needs to be done to conscientise learners about their constitutional rights, responsibilities and policies.

The findings further revealed that pregnant girls and mothers interpreted the relationship with their teachers in different ways. Possibly, because teachers had different characters and manners in which they dealt with them in schools. Some teachers showed care and understanding towards them and their situations while others displayed carelessness and insensitivity.

As quoted earlier Kuhle stated:

” there is one teacher who likes to ask questions about the baby’s father and comments about my body, She makes me feel uncomfortable.”

The extract indicated that teachers handled the issue of pregnancy and parenting in schools in their own ways influenced by individual beliefs (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). This made it hard for them to treat girls who were pregnant or parenting with respect and dignity (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). For example, Kuhle complained about the teacher who asked her personal questions which she found intrusive and made her felt uncomfortable. To teenagers their privacy is significant including pregnant girls and mothers (McNeely et al., 2009). This made them felt unhappy if their space was invaded. The response showed that teachers needed to be conscious that even though pregnant girls and mothers were children who grew up before their eyes but they were still teenagers on their way to adulthood (McNeely et al., 2009). So, if they were tempted to ask intrusive questions, they should remember the student’s constitutional right to privacy (RSA, 1996). Also, narratives indicated that some girls were afraid of their teachers and preferred to hide their pregnancy from them by leaving school (van Zyl, et al., 2015).

Zama narrated:

“when I found out that I was pregnant I left school, I was afraid that teachers would shout at me.”

Also, three of the girls mentioned that they left school because they were afraid of the teachers (Gyan, 2013). This showed regrettably that some girls saw teacher’s impressions of them as being more important than their education. This indicated the need for teachers to be more open and flexible in handling the issue of school-aged pregnancy and parenting so that their response is not a hindrance to the girls’ schooling progress (Mkhathini, 2020).

2.4.4 School Governing Bodies and Support Staff understand our situation...

The findings revealed that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers were happy with the school governing bodies and support staff, to the extent that, they appreciated the manner in which they interacted with them and the reactions they got from them especially the kitchen ladies simply because of the understanding they showed towards their situation and for knowing their family struggles. As a result, they considered them as their caretakers since they gave them as much food as they wanted (usamo) and reserved food for them, advising them to take leftovers home for supper. This made their schooling experience enjoyable. The narratives below illustrate this:

Governing Body members encourage us to work hard. They want us to have that eagerness to achieve in order to change our family situations. They also warn us to avoid falling pregnant. But, there is one SGB member who is very harsh, she talks bad about us young girls at parents meetings, saying that we fall pregnant and that gives a bad image to the school.

(Hle, 19 –years old mother of two- 3 year old and 18 month old baby: Ovong Secondary; focus group interview)

I do not know the SGB of our school. The support staff is nice to us. They treat us well, one of the cleaners knows my father -he always asks about my parents. He calls my father by his name (laughing). If I am absent at school he ask my father and report to my teachers. I fight a lot at school the, teachers asked why. One of the support staff who knows my family situation explained to them.

(Zakhe, 17- year old mother of 12 month old baby: Siyaya Secondary; focus group interview)

The kitchen ladies were nice to me before I fell pregnant. But, after pregnancy, when I come for food they would say food is not ready, when I return they would say food is finished. But, they were not doing it before pregnancy. They would point at me showing each other gossiping about me, I do not like it.

(Nesi, 16 –years old mother of three month baby: Zinto Secondary; focus group interview)

The findings further revealed that the SGB did not consider pregnant girls and mothers to be important. This is because participants in all three schools mentioned that they did not know them. Those who appeared at school only motivated all learners and encouraged them to avoid falling pregnant. In other words, those who had already fallen pregnant were made to feel out of place (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004), Surprisingly, SGBs in schools have the parental responsibilities in partnership with education support services (RSA, SASA, 1996), in other words, they are considered as proficient people who know what is going on in the community and they should be concerned about the wellbeing of all children irrespective of the conditions. Again, the SGBs were supposed to ensure the creation of an appropriate environment for the realisation of learners' right to education including pregnant girls and mothers and not to hinder policy implementation (DBE, 2018), by cultivating exclusion. Significantly, their presence in the girls' progress towards acquiring education cannot be overstated considering the socio-economic location of the schools that is affected by critical social factors such as child-headed families as social and environmental influences have a big role to play in the individual's life (Mampane, 2014).

This demonstrated the demand for the DBE to consider reviewing their responsibilities and to check if the policies are properly communicated to the SGB and to ensure that they support them during implementation process. The use of blasphemous words and blaming girls for pulling down the image of the school and proposing expulsion against girls showed that in schools the policy is misinterpreted and that exposes girls to further discrimination (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). The opposition to school-aged pregnancy and parenting is based on moral grounds of social and cultural beliefs (Mutshaeni et al., 2015). Yet, in the SASA (1996) SGBs are trusted with the responsibility of helping schools to uphold the provisions of the

Constitution of South Africa. That includes ensuring that girls are provided with non-discriminatory and quality education (DBE, 2007).

The responses made it clear that pregnant girls and mothers long for compassion. This is because they were passing through transition in their lives that demanded sacrifices and adjustments which became very demanding (Akella & Jordan, 2015). After all, they are still children and they needed recognition and love like all other children (McNeely et al., 2015). Therefore, the care that the support staff gave provided the pregnant girls and mothers with the desired attention as they became their mediators between their families and teachers and they understood their family situations. Their reactions to the support staff 'efforts indicated that teenagers appreciate the little kindness that adults show to them. This alerted adults who engage with teenagers to the fact that the little care they give can make a difference especially for the economically deprived school-aged pregnant girls and mothers because they were in desperate need of support and acceptance and wished that the mistake they made be considered as one of the faults that all children of their age could commit (Ingram, 2014). The appreciation and enjoyment of companionship was displayed by the laughter while narrating about their interactions. In contrast, girls took note of tiny things that adults did to them just because they were younger especially when they were in a compromised state as it attracted negative attention and escalated susceptibility (Molefe, 2016), like gossiping.

As Nesi narrated earlier:

“they would point at me showing each other gossiping about me, I do not like it.”

Girls like Nesi became frustrated if they did not get food from the kitchen ladies because it is their only meal for the day. Also it hurts them if adults changed from what they normally did especially the kitchen ladies. Probably, because they have associated them with their providers as they were giving them food that enabled them to face the next day (Juma, et al., 2013). Amazingly, discrimination of pregnant girls and mothers is explicitly prohibited (DBE., 2007), nonetheless, pregnant girls were still victims of bias and stigmatisation in the schooling space (van Zyl, et al., 2015), This indicated the need for the School Management Team to train the support staff about the constitutional rights of each citizen and to encourage learners to come forward and report any unfair treatment that occurs in the school premises so that it could be easy for them to eliminate exclusion in the schools.

2.5 Chapter Summary

The findings of the study revealed that pregnant girls and mothers faced different challenges in their quest to acquire education that range from multiple overwhelming responsibilities, lack of basic needs to verbal attacks and exclusion. Consequently, girls responded in different ways with some girls defended themselves while others felt ashamed and quit school. Also, the study found that poor socio-economic conditions hinder the normal access to education and they create awkward school experience for the girls who are in this situation. The study concluded that teachers do protect girls if they report ill treatment that they experience. Furthermore, the paper concluded that teachers supported pregnant girls and mothers but some girls preferred to leave school before anyone found out because of self-guilt and preconceived fear of teachers and other learners. The article further concluded that the unobtrusive SGB causes girls to feel the pinch of poverty as they become financially dependent on their friends. Since SGBs have a responsibility of ensuring equality in education provision for all learners in schools. Finally, the study found out that most girls depend on the school feeding scheme for school lunch and those without parents showed one hundred per cent dependency on the school food and for school basic requirements.

2.5.1 Recommendations

The paper therefore made the following recommendations:

- In schools teachers should come up with practical awareness programmes more often that could supplement the Life Orientation programme and inform teenagers more about decision-making. Also, they should draw up a formal plan that could help girls to catch up on missed work that will be conducted and supervised by teachers;
- School Governing Bodies as the policy makers and parents' representatives should be more present in schools for all learners especially, for pregnant girls and mothers as they are in desperate need of adult guidance. SGBs should listen to them and see where they could offer support to ease their situation;
- The Department of Education should consider providing an enriched curriculum that will accommodate the diverse nature of societies in the country such as including simplified constitutional provisions.

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CHAPTER 3

PREGNANCY, PARENTING AND EDUCATION: VOICES OF FOUR UNDERAGE GIRLS FROM ONE SCHOOL IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA

ABSTRACT

The South African Schools' Act provides regulations that curb the discrimination against pregnant and parenting learners. Despite all the provisions of the regulation's underage pregnant girls and mothers still encounter challenges that restrain them from experiencing academic lives freely like all other learners in schools. This paper explores the implications of pregnancy and parenting in the academic lives of four pregnant and parenting underage girls in the Pinetown District in Durban, South Africa. The study was framed by the Children's' Geographies paradigm and utilised qualitative narrative inquiry with in-depth, focus group interviews and participatory research photo voice as data generation techniques. The findings revealed that pregnant girls and mothers love and enjoy everything about school even though they face different challenges such as, neglect, stigmatisation and all forms of injustice that interferes with their academic lives. The study recommends the need for school processes to be inclusive of pregnant girls and mothers but, at the same time, there is a need to enlighten learners and teachers about pregnancy and this might promote acceptance and support.

KEYWORDS: Experiences; underage girls; pregnancy; schooling; support

3.1 Introduction

Underage pregnancy and parenting have become worldwide issues mainly for school-going teenagers (Wilson-Mitchel, Bennet & Stennet, 2014). About 11 per cent of births internationally involve girls who are between 15 to 16 years old (Govender, Naidoo & Tylor, 2019). Approximately 16 million girls in this age group fall pregnant and about one million teenagers under the age of 15 years old give birth every year (Laidas, 2018).

In South Africa, underage pregnancies and parenting has been surprisingly persistent, regardless of the abounding sexual information and emphasis on this in education and in support structures (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). In 2004, the Department of Basic Education in South Africa reported 20 000 pregnant learners and 223 of them were from primary schools (Mashaba, 2015).

There are various conceptions about the escalation of underage pregnancy and parenting in South African schools. One factor is parents' avoidance to educate their children about sexuality (Lambani, 2015), another is restricted knowledge about contraceptive use and there is the factor of poverty (Majozi, Ige & Tshabalala, 2017), although, some are unsubstantiated like child support grants (Udjo, 2013). It is commendable that the pregnant girls and mothers' right to education is regulated by the Bill of Rights, secured by the *South African School Act no 84* which allows pregnant girls and mothers to carry on with their schooling irrespective of their situation (Republic of South Africa, 1996). To add to this, the country endorsed a number of policies to accommodate learners that fall pregnant and become mothers. For example, the *National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy fg(2018)*, that intended to afford pregnant girls and mothers the right to education which is non-discriminatory, non-exclusionary and stigma-free. South Africa adopted the *Sustainable Developmental Goals* which among other goals is the reduction of inequality and quality education provision (UNPD, 2015).

Irrespective of policies' provisions, pregnant girls and mothers in schools are still experiencing injustices due to absurdities in policies and implementation (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). Despite all the provisions of the regulations the underage pregnant girls and mothers still encounter challenges, such as, negative remarks and discrimination that deters them from accessing education like all other learners as they are in an unpredictable and vulnerable state of pregnancy (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Matlala, Nolte & Temane, 2014), which is often demanding and scary for them (Malahlela, 2012). The difficulties multiply enormously with pregnancy. As the pregnancy becomes heavier, the challenges increase for the underage girl who is trying to adjust to navigating pregnancy, parenting and the schooling process. Underage pregnancies and parenting in schools has been surprisingly persistent in the country, regardless of the abounding sexual information and emphasis on education and support (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). The reality is that pregnant girls and mothers' wretchedness ranges from insulting peer comments to teacher attitudes to school expulsion (Ngabaza et al., 2013; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). So, the underage pregnant and parenting girls have to tolerate all this unjust treatment in order to remain in school. Consequently, those who are unable to endure this become stressed, and their school performances drop while others prefer to leave school (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013; Majozi et al., 2017). In the developed countries nearly 34 per cent of underage girls fall pregnant (Andrew & Dillon,

2014), also, pregnancy and parenting is considered to be the cause of the interruption in girls' schooling (Andrew & Dillon, 2014; Gyan, 2013).

However, South African research focuses on the causes of pregnancy, strategies to curb pregnancy in schools and support without hearing from the concerned group. Few pay attention to what pregnant girls and mothers feel about what pregnancy and parenting is doing to their academic lives. The article should therefore offer deep insight into how underage pregnant girls and mothers feel about their daily school lives and what could be done to alleviate challenges, to enable equal access and just treatment. Through talking to underage pregnant girls and mothers, hearing their views on what they expect from people around them and institutions, this study could give direction to stakeholders on what can be done to enable fair access and to eliminate existing discrepancies.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

The paper drew from Children's Geographies theory to investigate the implications of pregnancy and parenting in the academic lives of the underage pregnant girls and mothers in one South African high school. Children's Geographies is concerned with the spaces and places of children's lives (Barker & Weller, 2003). Whilst place is an invariable part of spaces that give the resources and the frames of reference offered by a particular place (Agnew, 2011), space is where social life occurs (Elden, 2004; Lefebvre, 2009). Children's Geographies proponents regard space and places as ideological landscapes represented by power relations and complex hierarchies (McConaghy, (2006), as well as a site where social relationships are produced (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012), Children's Geographies does not only emphasise the significance of school space and place in young people's daily lives, but it also recognises its impact in shaping their social identities (Collins & Coleman, 2008).

Underage pregnant girls and mothers are in a transitional stage (Macleod & Tracey, 2010; McNeely, DrPH & Blanchard, 2009), so they learn from the given environment and form relationships (Duckworth, Allen & Williams, 2012). They develop positive attributes through learning and experiencing (McNeely et al., 2009). Hence, both positive and negative experiences and responses they receive in the school spaces, become part of their growth, taxonomy and identity.

Children's Geographies further focus on complexes of exclusion, belonging and inclusion in the spaces and places of young people (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004). In addition, the paradigm centres on spatial diversity of children's experiences with compound realities. The school spaces and places offer different experiences for each underage pregnant girl and mother that guides them to make distinct decisions about the value of education irrespective of the trials encountered in the school context. Moreover, Children's Geographies is concerned with young people's exclusion from equal sharing in the society's activities and spaces (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004). Schools are central places where most young people spend their time (Collins & Coleman, 2008). Indeed, underage pregnant girls and mothers stay at school for the greater part of the day, yet they are denied full participation in and sharing of resources and this creates inferiority, makes them feel less part of school society and takes away the complete enjoyment of the schooling space. Consequently, they have to create a means to foster inclusion (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004), by ignoring negative comments in order to be accepted by their schoolmates.

3.3 Research Methodology

3.3.1 Geographical and socio-economic context of the study

The targeted school is in a semi-rural area which is approximately 25 kilometres away from Pinetown in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The area is predominantly inhabited by IsiZulu speaking people under both the traditional and modern political leadership. Nonetheless, there are a few other ethnic groups as it is surrounded by some affluent suburbs which provide domestic jobs for many. The socio-economic status is diverse; other families live decent and disciplined family lives with stable finances, while others live in unstable households surviving through financial dependency. The area is divided into sections according to different socio-economic statuses, ranging from decent homes with family stability to Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses and corrugated iron huts. Families living in (temporary homes) corrugated iron huts, tents and RDP houses are subject to a high rate of unemployment, dominant alcohol consumption, sexual licentiousness and a high rate of teenage pregnancy.

3.3.2 The Study methodology and data generation methods

The study utilised semi-structured interviews, a focus group, individual interviews, participant observation and photo voice as qualitative research techniques to generate data

which produced meaningful insight into the implications of pregnancy and parenting in the academic lives of the underage pregnant girls and mothers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This paper is intended to unpack the detailed implications of pregnancy and parenting in the academic lives of underage impoverished girls. The use of semi-structured interviews and participant observation provided opportunities to provide insight into the effect of pregnancy on the academic lives of underage girls; how they feel about their encounter with the schooling context. To gain in-depth insight into their pregnancies and academic live experiences, the study used focus group discussions and individual interviews as data gathering instruments.

The study utilised various methods of data gathering techniques to ensure reliability of the data generated (Nieuwehuis, 2007), such as the use of both a voice- recorder and a camera. Interviews were recorded and later played back to ensure that the transcription of the interview was not distorted (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The research site was the school premises for the focus group, the in-depth interviews and the photo voice exercise. The researcher discussed with participants the taking of photos and suggested the use of their cell phones for that purpose. The researcher also clarified that after the individual interviews were concluded they would have to go to school and take photos that would relate to their narratives. The interviews were conducted in isiZulu which allowed participants to express themselves freely without any language hindrances. Participants were given one week to take photos of places that connected with the influence of pregnancy in their experience of it in an academic context. After pictures were taken, participants engaged in a group discussion concerning these photographs stating what each photo meant to each one of them and to their schooling encounter. According to Young & Barret (2001) utilising photographs provides the participants with the opportunity to elucidate their experiences and this creates a platform for conversation. Participants explained their physical and social actualities through the photo shoot (Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2012).

3.3.3 The Study participants

The participants of the study were four pregnant and parenting high school girls, between the ages 15-16 years old, doing grade 10 and 12. All four participants were purposively selected with the help of the principal and teachers; they were either in their late stage of pregnancy, still at school, or at home for a delivery break and would return to school after giving birth.

3.3.4 Data analysis procedures

Thematic and content analysis techniques were used to analyse data. These were guided by research questions and the whole process of data analysis was in accordance with the overall threshold of the study (Tylor- Powel & Renner, 2003). Generated data were interpreted, transcribed from isiZulu into English and classified into themes. Individual and focus group transcripts were arranged into categories and themes, and connections in categories were noted (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). All generated data including participants' audio-taped and written narratives, images and notes were analysed to identify repeated themes (Neuman, 2011). Various themes that emerged during the analysis process were coded, sorted and interpreted to create meaning from the gathered data.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study explored a sensitive topic that involved underage girls' education and reproductive health rights. Thus, all necessary ethical considerations were followed accordingly. Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal was granted, and permission from the Department of Education, from the school principal, and from parents was obtained. The principal appointed a Life Orientation teacher to help with the participant's selection. Keen participants were given written informed consent that made them aware of the freedom to withdraw at any time from the interview. The researcher ensured that the participant's confidentiality and anonymity was safeguarded by using pseudonyms during interviews. Both group interviews and individual interviews were conducted in the school premises in the secure classroom to avoid interruptions and eavesdropping. Participants shared their stories voluntarily and were free not to respond to questions if they did not feel comfortable to answer them. The researcher explained the research procedures to the participants.

3.4 Findings and Discussions

3.4.1 School is our happy place ...

The findings revealed that the underage pregnant girls and mothers liked being at school to the extent that, they considered school as their happy place. This is because, they valued the friendships they had at school and found it as a relief from their family and daily worries. Moreover, school to them was taken as a place where they feel a sense of belonging and they

appreciated and valued the different teachings they got from the school. The narratives below illustrate this:

One thing I like by being at school is to be with my friends and talk about a lot of things (with a smile). One day my friend asked me how it is like to be pregnant and that to me felt good because it showed how much she cares about me.

(Zinto, 15 years old and pregnant: individual interviews)

What I like about school is that we do lots of things that bring joy in my life, like being with my friends, talking about many things and we laugh a lot (laughing). During break time we sit together in the classroom and eat. We talk about sensitive things and make jokes. Some days I would come to school knowing very well that I left things bad at home, but when I arrive here I forget about everything. All the talks and laughter with friends takes my mind away from bad things and (this) refreshes my mind.

(Phumla, 16 years old mother of 2 months old baby: individual interviews)

I like school because I get a chance to be with my friends. At home they shout at me, my brothers do not talk to me because I fell pregnant. Being with friends makes me happy and makes school enjoyable (sigh). We spend time together talking and having fun. My friends make me feel important because they understand me and we trust each other. When I am with them I forget about sad things and everything that I often think about.

(Asiphe, 16 years old mother of 4 months old baby: individual interviews)

When I am at school I feel good, I like everything about it, more especially, being with friends and the food that we get. I hate holidays because we do not come to school if we are closed I miss being at school, chatting with friends makes me feels good... because we usually talk about girl stuff (laughing). The food we eat at school is very nice; our school cooks make us mouth-watering food.

(Ziphe, 15 years old and pregnant: group interviews)

Ziphe further provided this picture to depict not only the food but also their feelings about the food.



The above narratives made it evident that school has lots to offer pregnant girls and mothers. That is because the girls in their comments made it clear that they find school to be a source of comfort and a hiding shelter, a place where they socialise and make friendships. As Ziphe talked about how she felt at school, one could see a big smile and the face lighting up.

Ziphe stated earlier in her comment:

“When I am at school I feel good, I like everything about it, more especially, being with friends and the food that we get”.

The comment self affirms that from the pregnant and parenting girls’ perspectives there was no place like school for them. Such feelings as expressed by the underage pregnant girls and mothers created hope not only for them but also for all other girls who are in or may find themselves in a similar condition. Even though the responsibilities and the experiences they already have had might be so overwhelming (Motsa & Morojele, 2016), but there is a place where they can be at peace and away from their stresses and worries. This kind of peace and joy was also based on the type of relationships they had with other learners in the school who were not either pregnant or young, she talked about her friends which proved the social relationships they had as mothers. The findings indicated that the pregnant girls and mothers enjoyed being at school, especially with their close friends. They enjoyed every conversation they engaged in with them. Friends provided them with the attention and care that they longed for and which, for some of them, no one bothers to give (Van Zyl, Van der Merwe &

Chigeza, 2015; Molefe, 2016). At school, underage pregnant girls and mothers engaged in therapeutic talks as they got to freely share their personal affairs with friends who were interested in hearing them. The smile that Aphe had as she presented the picture was more life affirming and for a moment, indeed they could forget about their lives' struggles and be able to *'talk about girl stuff'*. The picture below gives evidence of this:



The relationships they shared with their friends made them treasure schooling experiences from within and outside the classroom. This confirms that school is the best place where relationships are constituted (Collins & Coleman, 2008). The positive encounter that the pregnant girls and mothers experienced within the school context gave them comfort and this makes them view the school as a safety haven (Motsa, 2017). From the smiles on Aphe's and Ziphe's faces while describing how talking to friends at school made them feel, it was clear that they were always looking forward to it. The environment that is created by friends has become an exceptional tactic to keep pregnant girls who return after giving birth to remain in school (Human Right Watch, 2018). It is commendable that, these relationships were not only with the same gender - girls, but as evidenced by the picture, the boys were also a part of these relationships. Such relationships could be harnessed towards creating gender equitable spaces in the school context, in ways that could not only encourage the boys to be more caring towards their friends, the girls, but also life-affirming for both boys and girls as they share their life struggles without the long-standing gender divide (Elliot, 2015). Clearly, engaging with friends at school has become a source of contentment to underage pregnant girls and mothers as they got an opportunity to discuss personal matters and were listened to. It would therefore be fair and advisable for all role players to support underage pregnant girls

and mothers to continue with schooling so that they could not lose out on these joyful and fruitful moments like all other teenagers.

From the narratives it is also evident that school for some of the pregnant girls and mothers has become a place where they were assured of a meal - “a soup kitchen”. As Ziphe says “*and I like food*”, the words not only express the poverty experienced by the girl but also the need for the government of South Africa to at least ensure that such schools should always have food to give to pregnant girls and mothers. It is hard to imagine the feeling of being hungry, poor, and pregnant or being a young mother and stressed (Motsa, 2018), wondering where your next meal will be coming from (Motsa & Morojele, 2016). School for girls, apart from assisting them to achieve their future goals, it also provided them with relief from unpleasant daily thoughts. Certainly, all the positive experiences that the pregnant girls and mothers mentioned, for example, the tasty food they got and the friendships they made brought fun to their academic life, and this became their source of strength, despite all the odds they encountered. All of this makes one applaud the guidelines on management and prevention of learner pregnancy [MPMLP] of 2007 for the hope that it brought to pregnant girls and mothers. Because in the past pregnancy meant an end to girls’ education and underage mothers were excluded from schooling in South Africa (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), like most of other African countries where pregnancy and parenting amounts to the end of girls’ education (Human Right Watch, 2018). The laws and policies that are imposed expose the pregnant girls and mothers to hardships; some countries like Tanzania and Sierra Leone even expel pregnant girls from school and deny them education (HRW, 2018). The findings showed the effect and value of social relationships that underage pregnant girls and mothers have in their social circles, thus indicating the need for schools and families to focus on developing their social skills by establishing healthy and rewarding relationships centred on effective communication and cooperation (McNeely et al., 2009). Since that could indeed be useful in the girls’ developmental stage, as they have a lot on their plates, that includes pursuit of self-improvement, decision-making, problem-solving approaches and dealing with peer pressure (McNeely et al., 2009). Healthy social relationships could help them to influence each other in positive ways thus avoiding stress-related suicide and substance abuse

3.4.2 We are mocked ...

According to Children’s Geographies scholars, space and places are not only physical surfaces but are a crucial means of organising and distributing of resources to people (Pain et

al., 2001 cited in Barker & Weller, 2003). Findings show, however, that as much as the pregnant underage girls and mothers enjoyed most of the things at school, there were things that they did not like about school that brought dissatisfaction in their academic lives. Those were based on the treatment they got in the learning spaces from some of the learners and some teachers. The impertinence and judgemental attitudes from other learners and the actions and attitudes of some teachers towards them, at times made them believe that they were unworthy of being at school. They also think that the school system considered non-pregnant learners to be more important and their right to education to be more valued than theirs. Below participants narrate the agony they encounter at school:

I don't like it when the teacher explains something only to the row where there is a learner s/he likes and avoids coming to explain to your row just because you are pregnant. I really don't understand because we are all here to learn, and we all have dreams. It's real frustrating (annoyed). I also don't understand if friends gossip about you.

(Phumla, 16 years old mother of 2 months old baby: individual interviews)

What I don't like about school is that sometimes other learners undermine you. They think that if you are pregnant you don't deserve either to be at school or to learn. Some learners tease you; it hurts because we all deserve to learn. I also don't like to be rude to people.

(Asiphe, 16 years old mother of 4 months baby: individual interviews)

The above responses undoubtedly indicated that pregnant underage girls and mothers faced some challenges in their academic lives. From this we learn that teachers' practices and attitudes affected pregnant learners and mothers' encounter with the academic space (Ngabaza et al., 2013). Probably, because customarily, their condition was considered to be a taboo it became associated with immorality (Bhana, Morrel, Shefer. & Ngabaza, 2010; Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), hence it exposed them to marginalisation and to scornful attitudes (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). Asiphe complained about being undermined and teased by peers (van Zyl et al., 2015).

Asiphe reported that:

'Sometimes other learners undermine you. They think that if you are pregnant, you don't deserve either to be at school or to learn. Some learners tease you; it hurts''.

The above excerpt indicates that pregnant girls and mothers really faced difficult moments at school that hurt their feelings thus affected their academic lives. The underage pregnant girls and mothers shared different experiences about the school which agrees with what was mentioned earlier about Children's Geographies that young people experiences differ depending on the time and the situation (Barker & Weller, 2003). In addition, the responses showed that pregnant girls and mothers in some cases felt unwelcomed at school.

Asiphe states:

'They think that if you are pregnant you don't deserve either to be at school or to learn.'

These words did not only discourage and take away the self-esteem of underage pregnant girls and mothers (Molefe, 2016), but they also expressed an urgent demand for the Department of Education to consider having an inclusive policy that will focus on the girls' protection in line with the *South Africa School Act (1996)* and the *National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools [NPPMLPS] (2018)*. Another way could be to help teachers to deconstruct their views on underage pregnancy parenting and schooling as being socially constructed through customs and culture (Wang, 2016), in ways that could help them look deeper into the reasons behind the girls' early debut to motherhood and to learn from them rather than to ridicule them and to be a hindrance to their brighter future by impeding them from getting education.

The findings concur with other studies by revealing that school for underage pregnant girls and mothers was sometimes a frustrating place mostly, because they were discriminated against by some teachers preferring other learners over them while other learners tease them and do various unethical practices that isolated them from other learners (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Pregnant girls and mothers were convinced that they were not respected which put them in a narrow position. They felt that their classmates forgot that they also have feelings, that their personality traits needed to be considered and that there were things that they did not like to be done to them. This put them on the spot as Asiphe, commented: *"I don't like to be rude to people"*.

This indicates that they are trying hard to maintain a good name for themselves as they take on feelings of guilt (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), and they were more concerned about breaking school rules and regulations (Motsa, 2017). This revealed how much they intended to be

responsible and to abide by the school rules and regulations despite the treatment they got in the school. Significantly, education to underage pregnant girls and mothers had to come with a cost of accepting subordination and being regarded as second-class learners. Unfortunately, injustices like these drag back the efforts of the Department of Education and its policies as well as the country in its commitment to achieve some of the SDGs.

The above comments from the participants made it clear that underage pregnant girls and mothers were relegated to a lower status at school. Sadly, all the injustices and gossip from people that the girls loved created misunderstanding and a loss of trust. Phumla, stated in her narrative that she did not understand why friends gossip about her. This means that equipping teenagers with decision and choice-making skills will be of use for them in not seeking unhealthy relationships. Currently, the country is overwhelmed by incidents of gender-based violence and homicides (Saferpaces, 2020), which I believe emanates from compromises made for such relationships that young women bear at a very young age, therefore, such skills will be useful.

3.4.3 We are afraid ...

Children's Geographies centres on how teenagers create forms of belonging and inclusion that sometimes contribute to socio-spatial exclusion of other young people (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2004). The findings reveal that some of the pregnant girls and mothers' schooling experiences were characterised by fear, which prohibited free access to their academic life (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). All the denigrations that the girls were exposed to in the school space were not good for their development since fear can lead to deterioration (Tylor, 1997).

The narratives below illustrate:

Other learners here at school usually stand in groups in the corridors. When you pass with your big tummy or if they know that you are a mother, they attack you verbally or laugh at you. It happened to me few weeks ago, they were all standing there as always one boy shouted and they all joined him, they were looking at me calling me (umakaSpakupaku), I was so afraid it was like I was at school for the first time and my classroom looked very far (covering her eyes) They were saying whatever they wanted I could not hear all of them I was hearing the noise and Spakupaku's mother

they were very loud, I almost fell the way they were shouting I lost my step (looking ashamed).

(Zinto, 15 years old and pregnant: individual interviews)

Ay! (Inhaling) That is the worst moment especially when you are late. I arrived late at school the other day because I did not sleep well my baby was restless at night. They were shouting saying that I was late because I rushed things of this world. Everyone was staring at me until I get inside the classroom. I was so afraid; I did not want to come out during break time.

(Phumla, 16 years old mother of 2 months old baby: individual interviews)

Yeah! It's awkward, it's like they were waiting for you. Huh, one day I saw them standing like that and I joined them... they laughed at me and I laughed too, making noise. At times though, I would not be in the mood and I make things easy for myself (frowning) I just ignore them but it is not easy because they say hurtful things (saying with sad face).

(Ziphe, 15 years old and pregnant: focus group interviews)

Ziphe provided this picture to further illustrate what they went through:



Participants' narratives reveal that there were bad episodes they encountered in the school environment. Undoubtedly, because school -to them- sometimes became a place where they

were showered with abusive words by anyone and they have no one to protect them which had created fear even to walk in the school corridors (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013; Van Zyl et al., 2015). This is because of the stares each time the pregnant girls and mothers were seen in the school.

As Phumla said, “*they stare at you until you get inside the classroom*” the fear and pain were evident in her eyes. That justifies the findings of studies that indicate that most teachers complain about passiveness of the pregnant girls and mothers in their classes (Bhana et al., 2010; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2016). Clearly, it is in fact rare, if not impossible for someone to be active in a place which she associates it with dread and humiliation. The pregnant girls and mothers’ comments made it clear that other learners consider them as intruders that deserve to be attacked or bullied anyhow. In consequence, pregnant girls and mothers experience unequal sharing of schooling space as they feel excluded and have to compromise their interests and personalities. Oddly enough, the *Measures on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy [MPMLP] (2007)* provides regulations that prevent the discrimination against pregnant learners (DBE, 2007), and similar regulations are enshrined in the *Constitution (RSA, 1996)*. The pregnant and parenting girls’ right to non-discriminatory education is infringed, regardless of the policies that were in place envisaged to cater for their situation. The provisions were unreachable to underage pregnant girls and mothers in the schooling space since there was nobody monitoring its implementation in the schools. Consequently, the pregnant girls and mothers have no option but to adapt, by being always being prepared each day for impertinent words and comments from other learners and withstand discomfort in order to get their education. It goes without saying that, introducing ideal policies without monitoring and ensuring effective implementation does not only make the policy empty rhetoric but it also exposes pregnant girls and mothers to unjust treatment from peers that interferes with their encounter with the schooling space.

3.4.4 Without Education we are nothing ...

Despite all the pain and abhorring the treatment they receive in their quest for education, the underage pregnant girls and mothers did recognise the value of education in their lives. They are certainly aware that without education they cannot go very far. So school brought hope that one day their dreams of living a better life for themselves, their babies and families

would be realised, hence they needed to hold fast to education. The narratives below illustrate this:

I was thinking the other day ... that bringing a human being in this world means I have to take learning seriously. I want my child to have the best life and also improve my family's standard of living (with a serious face)

(Phumla, 16 years old mother of 2 months old baby: focus group interviews)

One of my neighbour's daughters is useless and all she does is roam the streets with no prospect for a bright future. That has made me realise that without education you become nothing. I have then decided to commit myself during learning time because there is a lot I want to achieve in life.

(Zinto, 15 years old and pregnant: individual interviews)

When I got my second baby things became worse for us since we were struggling financially as a family. My babies would lack things, the other day my baby had no milk and she cried all day, seeing her cry like that was unbearable (face sadden) on that day I asked myself if that was what I wanted for my children? That was when I remembered that I have big dreams about my future so I believed that studying will help me achieve all the dreams and make me live the kind of life that I want together with my children. As a result, we can laugh and play here but when it comes to my schoolwork I do not joke because learning is important to me and I am aware that it is the reason that brought us all here.

(Asiphe, 16 years old mother of 4 months old baby: focus group interviews)

The responses revealed that pregnant girls and mothers were aware of the importance of acquiring education in their lives. This is because all the pregnant girls and mothers in their narratives insisted that they were serious about getting education. This made one realised that learning and making it in life through education was the central goal for all the pregnant girls and mothers' schooling. As exemplified by Phumla, the pregnant girls and mothers were aware that they have “brought human beings in this world” so it is “important for them to take learning serious.” This is probably because they were cognisant of the responsibilities that already lie ahead for them; responsibilities that they can only fulfil through attaining the best education - that amounts to caring for their children (van Zyl et al., 2015). Considering,

pregnant girls and mothers' socio-economic situation and responsibilities at hand, it was promising that they knew that school was the vehicle to their envisioned future for them and their families and the way out of poverty for most of them (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Indeed, pregnant girls and mothers needed to take a stand, in using the opportunity to do away with stereotyping that pregnancy and motherhood forces underage girls to continue economic dependency and to become a pathway to poverty (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013). The sincerity of the girls' willingness to take responsibility for what they have done was manifested by facial expressions in their narratives. Notably, it was surprising the manner in which pregnancy and parenting grooms them to be insightful young women (Mchunu, Peltzer, Tutshana & Seutlwadi, 2012). Before pregnancy they had become overwhelmed by peer influences and calls for experimentation due to the teenage phase (Govender et al., 2019). After they became pregnant their eyes were opened and they saw what had been invisible to them and became responsible and anxious to start afresh in life (Nkani & Bhana, 2016).

3.5 Chapter Summary

The importance of education is emphasised in most societies and its unquestionable results make the pregnant girls and mothers realise that it is essential in their lives. Therefore, underage pregnant girls and mothers go to school with an intention to acquire education so that they can improve the lives of their babies and their families. Moreover, they are aware of the responsibility ahead of them, that education is the only tool that they can use to build their future (Bhana et al., 2010), regardless of the mistake they have made. The findings reveal that the schooling experience is unique to each underage pregnant girl and mother hence it is experienced in various ways. Participants in their responses admit that they enjoy being at school inside and outside the classroom and the relationships they form on the premises. They remember these even during holidays and believe that it makes for great academic experiences (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). Effective encounters with the academic environment give girls a sense of belonging. They see school as a safe haven and as a place of hope. Furthermore, they take school as a multipurpose institution where they can make friends, get food from their soup kitchen and drown all their daily family sorrows. All participants in their responses concede that though they enjoy everything happening at school, learning is portrayed as the common paramount aim of every pregnant and parenting girl. Underage pregnant girls emphasise the love they have for school and every occurrence in it. However, they describe unpleasant scenarios they encounter that compromise their attempts to navigate

the challenge of balancing the demands of pregnancy and academic life and this affects their schooling process. Participants mentioned challenges they face such as, gossiping friends and biased teachers. They feel ‘othered’ as if they don’t deserve to be at school, their intention of being at school is not valued and their friendship is not valued by their friends. Lastly, the girls indicated that they take pride in their academic lives and consider school as the vehicle that can take them to their ideal future.

3.5.1 Recommendations

Below are the recommendations that the study suggests in order to heighten experiences of underage girls who find themselves pregnant and become parents in the schooling place and space. The South African *Constitution* stipulates in the Bill of Rights the right to education for every child and all forms of discrimination are unconstitutional in South Africa (RSA, 1996). Hence pregnant girls at school and mothers who return after giving birth need to be encouraged and should be provided with favourable academic surroundings that will be conducive and motivating. Moreover, they need to be respected, recognised and supported by the school community therefore:

- Understanding pregnancy will be convenient and effective to everyone involved in the teaching and learning environment;
- Subjects like Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Life Orientations should be lavished with detailed information about the topics such as constitutional contents, hormonal changes and decision-making;
- The Department of Education should ensure that regulations and acts stipulated are fully operational at all levels;
- Department of Social Welfare and Department of Education could join forces to work together to provide counselling for underage pregnant girls, to assist them to understand their state and the frustrations of their peers and everyone involved in their situation; and
- Through counselling underage pregnant girls and mothers, they should be able to face the reaction of the school community to their situation (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; HRW, 2018).

Studies on reproductive health and education indicate that teachers want to help but they don’t know how as they are functioning without policies at the school level (Bhana et al., 2010; Mutshaeni, Manwadu, & Mashau, 2015). Therefore, teacher training could be useful in

equipping teachers with information on how to deal with underage pregnant girls and mothers and to be able to prepare other learners with pregnant learners in class on how to support and accept them instead of judging and teasing them.

3.9 References

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CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS OF POVERTY ON PREGNANCY, PARENTING AND SCHOOLING: EXPERIENCES OF FIVE TEENAGE GIRLS IN THREE TOWNSHIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE PINETOWN DISTRICT IN KWAZULU-NATAL

ABSTRACT

International and local studies perceive poverty as the precursor and the outcome of teenage pregnancy and parenting that yields severe education interruptions and school dropouts among girls. This qualitative study seeks to explore in depth how different factors that generate poverty intersect to affect the navigation process of pregnancy, parenting and schooling among teenage girls in three township secondary schools in the Pinetown District in Durban, in the Province of KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who were five girls, either pregnant or mothers living in poor socio-economic environments, between 16-19 years old, doing grade 10 and 12. The paper was framed by social constructionism and intersectionality paradigms and utilised semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group interviews and participatory mapping to extract detailed information from the participants. The findings revealed that teenage pregnant girls and mothers experience challenges in negotiating parenting, pregnancy and in attaining education because of various situations that interconnect to cause disadvantageous conditions that exposed girls to hardships that bruised them and that caused regret. The study proposed the placing of counsellors in each school, giving attention to various factors that intersect and interfere with the girls' education. Coaching of learners about money-making and money management strategies at an early age can be useful.

KEYWORDS: Poverty; money; injustice; needs; power; teenagers

4.1 Introduction

Teenage pregnancy and parenthood happens in all societies although the rate varies in each country. Nevertheless, research shows that teenage pregnancy and parenthood is rife in less educated and underprivileged communities (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Letsaolo, 2009). In South Africa in 2017, 11, 3 per cent of girls between 15 -19 years of age were recorded as being pregnant in schools (Maqhina, 2019). The rate increased with the age between 2018

and 2019, 2 per cent of girls between 15 – 17 years gave birth and the percentage was found high in the poorly resourced schools (Maqhina, 2019).

Even though the rate and reasons for teenage pregnancy and parenthood differs, the concerns are consistently similar across the globe (Sarantaki & Koutelekos, 2007). For most of these pregnant girls the future is one of long-lasting poverty, state dependency and perpetuation of low levels of education and social exclusion (Akella & Jordan, 2015; Molefe, 2016). Certainly, education is considered crucial to the development of teenagers as they are getting ready for the world of work and life (Panday et al., 2009), and it is a tool that can reduce the chances of teenage pregnancy, parenthood and it can break the cycle of poverty (Kim, 2016; Nkani & Bhana, 2016), in the life of pregnant girls and their families. Again, continuous school enrolment for mothers and pregnant girls is related to positive life outcomes- which results in a life of productivity and the improved socio-economic standing of a mother (Bhana, Morrell, Shefer & Ngabaza, 2010). However, studies indicate that girls face challenges in trying to negotiate schooling, pregnancy and parenting as they become overwhelmed by the situation and the new accumulated roles (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2018; Briggs, Brownell & Roos, 2017).

Balancing childcare with the demands of schooling emerged as the most challenging aspects of being a teenage mother (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). For this reason, pregnancy and parenting is known for interrupting the leap from education to employment (Bhana et al., 2010, Gyan, 2013). To deal with teenage pregnancy and parenting across socio-economic statuses, the Department of Education provided policies that afforded girls with the opportunity to continue with their education despite their situations (DBE, 2007). In addition, the Government of South Africa in the *Constitution* enshrines the right to social security with the *Social Assistance Act* as the legislative mechanism to ensure the eligible access to social securities (Mukundi, 2009). Consequently, various social assistance programmes have been introduced with the aim of lightening the effect of poverty among vulnerable groups by introducing school feeding schemes. In Rwanda no fee schools were declared in poverty stricken areas that ensured equal access to education (Black, Bentley, Papas et al., 2006; Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2018). These provisions became very helpful in saving most girls' education and in securing a better life for the girls and their babies. Also, it became a great achievement for the country as the policies became a significant ticket not only to

prevent subsequent births but also to be the hoped-for change in the economic status of the disadvantaged girls (Bhana *et al.*, 2010).

Social Sciences studies indicate that availability of parental and financial support is the sole decider if pregnant girls and mothers will continue with schooling or dropout after giving birth (McGaha- Garnett, 2007; Child Trends Databank, 2018). Moreover, the presence of family financial support plays an important role in shaping a positive and successful outcome in the experience of teenage pregnant girls and mothers (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). Pregnant girls and mothers from poor socio-economic environments face challenges in trying to navigate acquiring education and parenting (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019}. As they are affected by other social factors that increase their vulnerability (Raza, 2017), such as, in being orphans or living in child-headed families that results in shaky family structures and this leads to deficiency of resources, lack of financial and childcare support, that concurrently creates endless disruptions and, in most cases, leads to an end of pregnant girls and mothers' schooling journey (van Zyl, Van der Merwe & Chigeza, 2015; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). The social perception based on teenage pregnancy and parenting as a moral threat to the community (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), and the constraints caused by poverty make families blame girls for bringing shame on them and adding costs to the family budget (Molefe, 2016). That further exposes girls to neglect, judgements, ruthlessness and rejection in their social circles and in their families. Consequently, pregnant girls and mothers develop lack of trust, and they fear seeking help (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). The teenagers who are in these situations experience psychological, emotional distress, poor cognitive development that results in poor education outcomes (Molefe 2016). These different factors combine to cause financial constraints and intersect to interfere with the navigation process of parenting, pregnancy and in acquiring education for the girls.

Discrimination in the community, an unsupportive environment and unfair treatment in families (Molefe, 2016), make it hard for the girls to continue with education like all other girls. Since they have to take care of the baby with hardly any parenting skills and adult guidance which adds to their pressure and stress (van Zyl, et al., 2015). This results in constant absenteeism, poor performance and school dropouts (Molefe, 2016). Moreover, the lack of support structures like concerned caregivers or adults worsens the situation (Nkani & Bhana, 2016), because it limits access to available state social assistance due to absence of

knowledge, documentation and awareness (Panday et al., 2009; Raza, 2017). This restricts pregnant girls and mothers from getting support that could help them to get basic needs like food and school requirements (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), and to be able to focus in the class and to assume parenting roles at home. Undoubtedly, destitute socio-economic conditions have a negative effect on the girls' life choices as it deprives them of the privilege of delaying pregnancy, and it takes away their voice in the relationship (Hallman, 2004). Studies show that teenage pregnancy and parenting may result in poverty due to facilitating factors such as expulsion, lack of materials and exclusion (Ojwang & Maggwa, 1991). In other words, if the facilitating factors could be proficiently attended to, teenage pregnancy and parenting might be less disruptive, and this might stop the ending of some girls' education. However, to those girls whose poverty is mediated by unrecognised factors (Raza, 2017), the offered assistance may become of less use and therefore unable to save their education. In consequence they remain trapped in the same socio-economic status (Akella & Jordan, 2015). Henceforth, understanding the intersection of various factors that facilitate destitute situations and that interfere with girls' navigation process of parenting, pregnancy and schooling might help in the re-thinking and re-evaluating of strategies (Raza, 2017). In addition, to formulate new ideas and policies could help to deal with learner- pregnancy and parenting in a more sensitive and inclusive manner.

This study seeks to elucidate how different factors that facilitate poverty intersect to affect the navigation process of pregnancy, parenting and schooling among teenage girls. Most studies focus on the controversy of pregnancy, parenting and poverty -few provide in-depth comprehension about the actual practicality of the issue. Accordingly, by letting girls to narrate their everyday experiences and hearing their views, the study intends to draw a more comprehensive insight into how diverse factors that create poverty intersect to affect girls' negotiation of pregnancy, parenting and schooling trajectories. As one of the ways of identifying existing gaps and of providing direction on how to offer efficient and sustainable mechanisms to deal with problems. That might reduce disturbances and enable a positive experience in the navigation process of parenting, pregnancy and schooling among teenage girls.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was approached from the theoretical perspectives of social constructionism and intersectionality to understand how the intersection of various factors that result in poverty affect the navigation of pregnancy, parenting and acquiring education among teenage girls. Social constructionism upholds the view that meaning is a construction then individual meaning makes it the product of the prevailing social and symbolic practices (Gergen, 2009). Socially constructed meaning is therefore realised in the collaborative acts of people in their relationships (Gergen, 2009). That is to say, pregnant girls and mothers' experiences of poverty and its implications on their schooling and parenting are not only predicated on their immediate society but the very same society has a huge influence of how they experience these.

Indeed, it was found that the responses from social system workers provide security accordingly their collaborative positive relationship with the girls guarantees maximum support. That is valuable in the navigation process especially for the girls encompassed with multiple vulnerabilities such as pregnancy, being parents, having no parents and still being at school (Black et al., 2006). On the other hand, intersectionality considers the vulnerability that is caused by social inequalities (Van Herk, 2011), and it explains that social aspects such as age amplify individuals' vulnerabilities and yield distinct consequences and experiences for one group as distinct from others (Cole, 2009; Stewart & Christa, 2004). According to Hopkins (2019), intersectionality is about relational inequalities hence it looks at how specific forms of inequality are mutually constitutive. Intersectionality therefore acknowledges that the girls' experiences of pregnancy and parenting is not affected, compounded by and also intersect with other variables such as poverty (Banerjee 2016), and these in turn are influenced by other factors which are beyond the girls' control.

4.3 Research Methodology

4.3.1 Geographical and socio-economic context of the study

The research took place in Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, located on the Eastern coast of South Africa (Marx & Charlton, 2003). The study sites were three schools, two schools stationed in Clermont which is about 12 kilometres from the Durban Metropolitan Area and one school was in Mariannahill positioned on a hillside west of Durban. These three schools are built in highly populated areas and are encircled by informal settlements and one

school is in a semi-urban area (Khandlhela, 1993; Mbambo, 1998). Most families stay together with children in small shacks. Both areas are afflicted by poverty, substance abuse and sexual licentiousness. There is also a high rate of unemployment and teenage pregnancy. Both places are situated near the industrialised areas which provide employment for the communities. Finance is generated from housing rentals, the taxi industry and various informal businesses and from domestic work.

4.3.2 The Study methodology and data generation methods

The study adopted qualitative research approaches in order to explore ways in which various factors that produce poverty intersect with and interfere with teenage girls' navigation of pregnancy, parenting and education attainment. A qualitative approach was used to investigate human experiences through interviews (Ranjit, 2014). Its descriptive and analytic nature enabled the gathering of in-depth knowledge about the intersection of different factors that cause poverty and that compromise girls' trajectories of parenting, pregnancy and schooling, through listening, discussion and observation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Individual interviews permitted face-to-face interaction that allowed probing and observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). This provided in depth knowledge of how these factors lead to economic deficiency and how they interfere with the navigation process of their schooling and parenting (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Discussions that occurred during focus group interviews revealed different views and meanings that girls ascribed to their situation hence allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of parenting, poverty and pursuit of education through observation and by taking of field notes (Ranjit, 2014). Engaging in conversations and listening during focus group interview revealed dimension of understanding (Creswell & Clark, 2011), as it extracted different views from all the girls (Ranjit, 2014), by their sharing of how they see the situation and how conditions that intersect each other cause them to lack skills and complicate their parenting roles and their schooling process, pregnancy and parenting (Raza, 2017). Participant observation allowed for active participation that provided access to thorough observation (Cohen et al. 2018). The taking of field notes provided the study with rich contextual data as it permitted recording of firsthand information (Creswell & Clark, 2011), from what is observed and heard from participants (Baxter & Jack, 2011). Participatory mapping permitted maximum exploration of attitudes and perspectives of participants in their environment (Kendon, Pain & Kesby 2010).

The study intended to gain in-depth understanding of how various factors that produce a penurious situation intersect to interfere with the balancing of pregnancy, parenting and schooling progress of girls. Utilising individual, focus group interviews, participant's observation, field notes and mapping exercise illuminated in detail the reality of the different interconnecting factors that produce the impoverishment that interferes with the girls' parenting roles and in their acquiring of education. The mapping exercise provided detailed information about participants' views, attitudes and their financial condition, responsibilities, challenges and injustices they face in their homes (Kindon et al., 2010). To gain an in-depth insight into the interference of poverty in the navigation of schooling, pregnancy and parenting experiences, focus group discussions and individual interviews were utilised as data collection techniques (Baxter & Jack, 2011). Several methods of data gathering were utilised to ensure reliability of the data generated such as, the use of a voice-recorder, mapping, and field notes (Nieuwehuis, 2007). Interviews were recorded and later played back to ensure that the transcriptions were not distorted (Baxter & Jack, 2011). The research site was the school premises for both focus group and in-depth interviews and for mapping exercises girls were requested to do this in their free time and in a natural context (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012). Participants were requested to draw places, people or objects at school and at home that they associate with their financial condition, schooling and parenting and to provide reasons for the drawing and for the meanings they created. All interviews and the mapping exercise were conducted in isiZulu which allowed participants to express their views freely while answering questions and in giving descriptions for the mapping exercise. The study relied on what teenage pregnant girls and mothers narrated about their everyday encounters and actions in order to gain an insight into their daily experiences. The mapping exercise empowered participants as they carried on with the interview and identified places in their own time and defined connections that had meaning for them (Kindon et al., 2010). This enriched the study with first-hand data. The researcher engaged with participants and recorded and observed their behaviour in the fieldwork while they were discussing experiences in their social spheres. The qualitative approach allowed for naturalistic engagement during data collection (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012). The study relied on what teenage pregnant girls and mothers narrated about their everyday encounters and actions in order to gain knowledge of their daily experiences.

4.3.3 The Study participants

The participants were five teenage pregnant girls and mothers from three township high schools situated in a poor socio-economic environment in Durban in the Pinetown District. Participants of the study were between 16 -19 years of age and three were doing grade 10, one was in grade 11 and one was doing grade 12. All participants were purposively selected with the help of the school principals and Life Orientation teachers. They were either pregnant or teenage mothers living in poor socio-economic areas and still at school.

4.3.4 Data analysis procedures

The study utilised thematic and content analysis techniques to analyse generated data which were guided by research questions of the study. The whole process was undertaken within the study framework and research questions (Cohen et al., 2018). The recorded data were then translated from isiZulu into English, interpreted, transcribed and classified into themes. Individual and focus group transcriptions were arranged into categories and themes, connections in categories were noted (Cohen et al., 2018). Generated data from audiotaped recordings, field notes, written narratives and drawings were analysed to produce repeated themes (Neuman, 2011). The themes that emerged during the analysis procedure were coded, organised and interpreted to make sense of the gathered data.

4.3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study explored subtle phenomena that dealt with teenage girls' fertility, delicate family conditions and financial deficiency that interfere with their schooling journey. Consequently, all necessary ethical considerations were followed. Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu- Natal was granted, permission from the Department of Education and permission from the schools and parents were obtained. The principals appointed Life Orientation teachers to help with participant's selection. Participants who were willing to participate were given written informed consent forms that made them aware of the freedom to withdraw at any time from the interview. The researcher ensured the participants' confidentiality and anonymity by using pseudonyms during interviews. Both group interviews and individual interviews were conducted in the school premises in a secure classroom to avoid interruptions and eavesdropping. Participants shared their stories voluntarily and were free not to respond to questions if they did not feel comfortable to answer them.

4.4 Findings and Discussions

4.4.1 Uncaring relatives....

The findings revealed that to some pregnant girls and mothers' penurious situations did not emanate from lack of money, instead, it was a consequence of injustices committed by uncaring relatives that their late parents had endured. That brought vulnerability and exposed girls to the worst life scenarios such as, lack of money, food and other basic needs that pushed girls to humiliation. Participants explain below:

My father left a tavern and a house but they do nothing for me, if I ask for anything they say I must go and look for a job, I am old because I decided to fall pregnant. No one knows about my situation. Now I have no one to look after my baby. So, I have to take him early in the morning to his grandmother's house and I fetch him in the afternoon, it's not easy.

(Lindi, 16- years old pregnant girls: Mali Secondary; individual interview)

Our father was doing everything for us. As we are living here he owned this place and people are renting to one of our brothers (the firstborn). But, he does not give us anything; if we need something we have to beg. Even at school I look at other kids buying.

(Sazi, 16 – years old mother – 3 weeks infant: Mali Secondary; individual interview)

Zine described the life of begging she lived at her home and at school.

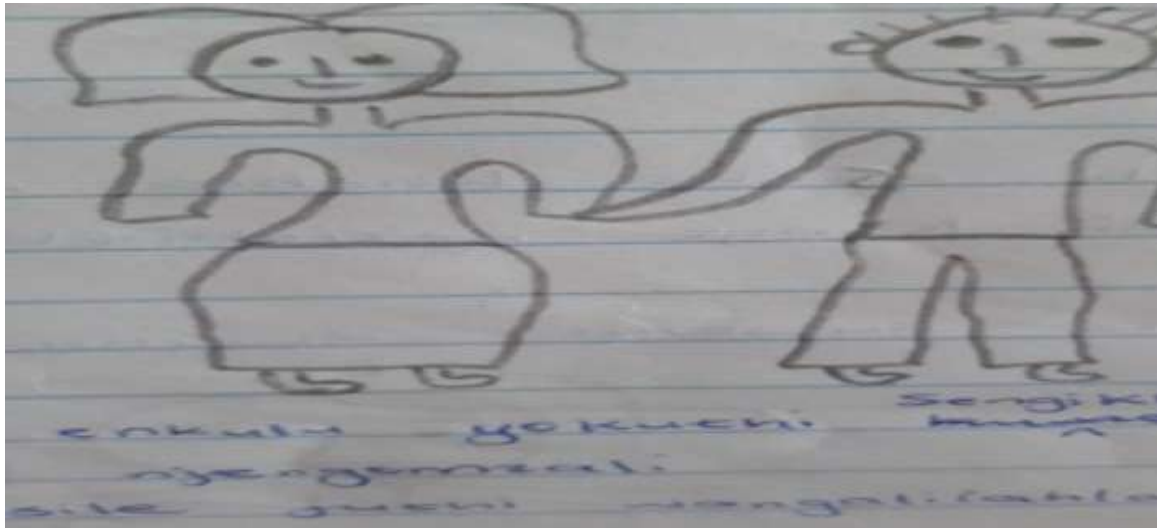


Sometimes one of our tenants buys things for me if she is able to. But in all I can say I rely on hand out (donation) from people especially, friends for everything including

uniform and all the school necessities. Although it is not easy because some of them take advantage of the situation but I tolerate them because they help me. My grandfather also receives our foster care money but he does not want to do anything for me. It's very annoying. I need money but I do not have anyone to call. It means I have to date someone who has money.

(Zine, 17- years old mother- 3 months old baby: Mali Secondary; mapping exercise)

Zam presented the drawing that demonstrated the trust she had developed for her baby's father after being rejected by her uncle and aunt who were her lawful guardians.



“At home no one cares about me if I try to talk to my aunt and uncle (bab’ncane) both of them ignore me and focus on their children. I always feel left out. My baby’s father brings hope to me, he encourages me to work hard so that I can succeed in life and be an independent person and forget about the bad things that happen.”

(Zam, 16- years old mother-1 year old baby: Bonke Secondary; mapping exercise)

The above narratives made it evident that the inheritance that was left for the girls by their parents did not benefit them. This is because their guardians disregarded them and their basic interests. They should have been protected, cared for emotionally and financially (McNeely, DrPH & Blanchard, 2009; Mkhwanazi, Makusha, Blackie, Manderson, Hall & Huijbregth, 2018), as their biological parents had done. In consequence, pregnant girls and mothers lived a life of suffering after the death of their parents which was a peculiar lifestyle for them as

they were used to a stable financial situation. Obviously, their caregivers felt that looking after them was burdensome (Juma, Alaii, Van den Borne, Bartholomew & Askew, 2013), so girls had to take care of themselves very early in life (Motsa & Morojele, 2016). They were still at a young age and they did not have any stable source of financial support which compromised their economic situation. Because of this they struggled to get what they needed since no one was willing to give them any help. This is because once they became mothers; they were considered as independent adults who could provide for themselves. Yet such irresponsibility did not only deny the defenceless child a normal life but it also affected their development (Omang, 2002). Furthermore, the unfair attitude that caregivers showed was accompanied by neglect. They did not bother to fulfil their legal responsibilities but instead they became judgemental towards the girls and saw them as children who did not deserve any financial or emotional support either from them or from their inheritance. Surely, this was not a good thing because neglect aggravated the manifestation of an unfriendly attitude that was evident through social interaction at a later stage (Omang, 2002). Socio-economic hardships beset these young people (Raza, 2017), and it was clear that what caregivers did was unjust and should have been monitored by the Department of Social Welfare with the help of the community members.

The responses further indicated that pregnant girls and mothers were living with wrecked family relationships. That caused tension since family background makes a large impact on people's achievements (Banerjee, 2016), and on their capacity to deal with pregnancy, and to balance parenting and schooling effectively. Children from underprivileged backgrounds faced various challenges that derailed them from their education journey (Banerjee, 2016). Nevertheless, it becomes more upsetting if they were deprived of education by avoidable situations like family injustices. Because, these were adults whom girls knew and trusted therefore the betrayal was unexpected thus it worsened the situation and created an unsupportive environment for the girls (Banerjee, 2016). Surely, finding someone who would show an affectionate attitude and be willing to talk to the girls, encouraged them to express how they felt, share their adversities, find out where they could be helped (Raza, 2017), and what they needed for school, for their babies and for themselves would be a noble thing to do because it could save their education and from restricted economic conditions that tended to drag them into a lifetime of poverty. Moreover, the responses made it clear that the unjust situations that pregnant girls and mothers faced in their families complicated their lives. This

was due to the tension and mistrust that was created which destroyed the guardian- child relationship and empathy between them (van Zyl et al., 2015; Molefe, 2016), and this made caregivers withhold financial and emotional care which girls were desperately in need of, because of their age and the condition they were in.

Zine, as reported above, complained that:

“I need money but I do not have anyone to call. It means I have to date someone who has money”.

The comment corroborates the findings of other studies that uncaring parents or caregivers and orphanhood are the risk factors that dragged girls into poverty (Juma, et al., 2013; Banerjee, 2016). It also, affected their relationship with their babies because some had to separate with them and let them live with their boyfriends’ families since they could not provide or care for them. Assisting by removing all kinds of obstacles (UNICEF, 2007), would be commendable as it could benefit pregnant girls, mothers, their babies and the whole of society. Surely, support is important for each girl more especially for those who fell pregnant under deprived socio-economic conditions for them to continue with their education irrespective of age, reason of pregnancy or financial status (Ingram, 2014), as it is important for them to move away from state dependency (Chevalier & Viitanen, 2003), and start to contribute in the economy of the country. According to the DBE (2018), teenage pregnancy has innumerable impacts on the country’s socio-economic systems. So, providing assistance could be beneficial for the country and could enable girls to break the chain of the injustices they suffer in families (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Studies show that education is the one tool that can help teenage girls to change the situation and it can assist in realising other rights they struggle to access (van Zyl et al. 2015; Hubbard, 2009). However, girls who suffered injustices often became overwhelmed by various social factors that interconnected and produced their destitute conditions and this impeded their capacity to face unfavourable situations. As a result, they struggled to do their schoolwork because of hunger, responsibilities and thought. In addition, they have to endure degradation and mocking in the school premises caused by lack of necessities for these reasons some quit and thus remain living a life of deprivation, in an illiterate and helpless condition (Nkani & Bhana, 2016).

The findings further indicated that parental loss, neglect and unkind caregivers exposed pregnant girls and mothers to various kinds of vulnerability such as living in fear and being

too trusting. Narratives revealed that some of the girls who had no one that showed any affectionate care for them had to rely on hand-outs which demanded demeaning compromises like enduring unhealthy relationships and engaging in transactional relationships. So, girls who had supportive baby' daddies tended to lean on them obsessively as they were their main providers and offered longed for attention which was worrying because if something went wrong in the relationship it would be a major setback and it would produce emotional distress (Masuku, 1998). This is a clear indication that pregnant girls and mothers from penurious backgrounds had too much to deal with other than parenting and schooling by comparison with their peers from privileged backgrounds that were pregnant and also in a quest to acquire education (Mkhathini, 2020). Therefore, this indicated the importance of understanding and acknowledgement of the intersecting factors (Raza, 2017), that institute their situation by stakeholders. Possibly, knowing the detailed conditions of the issue could determine how it might be changed (Torre et al., 2017), as it is vital to help teenagers including pregnant and parenting girls since they are an investment of the nation (UNICEF, 1994; DBE, 2018). As the intersectionality paradigm suggests, the provision of resources (Raza, 2017), in order to accommodate their situation and to provide professional help could assist in untangling of the encountered psychosocial issues. This calls for collaboration between the Department of Social Welfare and the Department of Education in guaranteeing that learners who had no parents are recorded and are properly supported.

4.4.2 Unreliable social services ...

The findings revealed that pregnant girls and mothers lived destitute lives because of the unreliable social services in their areas. Possible, because the social service workers that were assigned to work with them and the community leaders failed to fulfil their duties according to girls' expectations as they failed to protect them and to prioritise their welfare. Pregnant girls and mothers were not getting any state funding that they were eligible to receive. So, they pinned their hopes on social service workers believing that they would help them to access funding which unfortunately did not happen. Instead, they showed no concern for their case, nor were they prepared to listen to them. Because of this girl were unable to provide basic life necessities for themselves or for their babies due to lack of money. This caused confusion, brought difficulties and disappointment and it took away hope from them. The Participants narrated below:

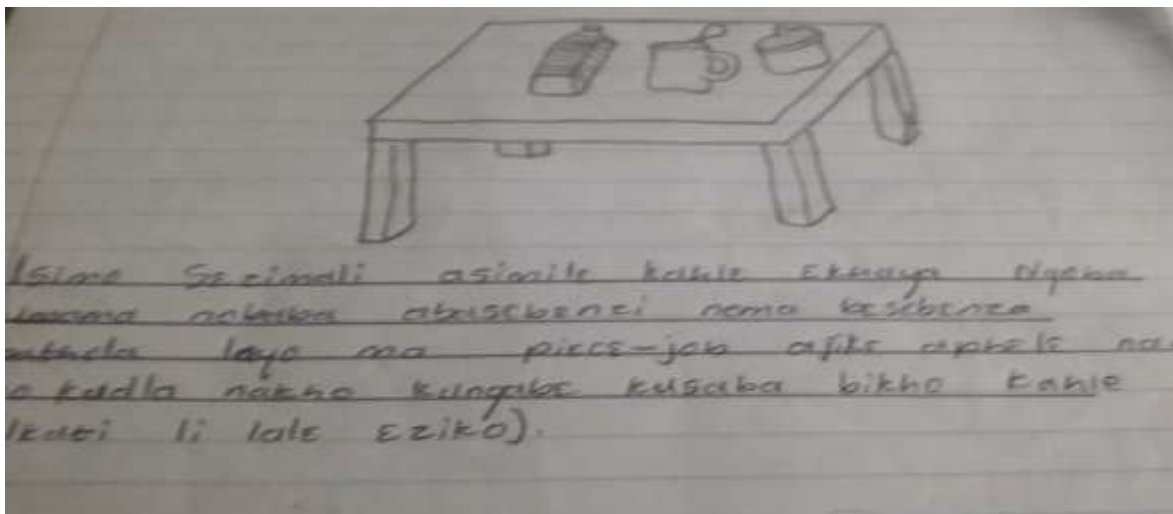
I do not know what my social worker does, she does not check –up on us to hear how we are doing. Like seeing if the foster care money helps us to get what we need or not and see what we lack.

(Zam, 16- years old mother-1 year old baby: Bonke Secondary; focus group interview)

I told the social worker that, yes someone receives my foster care money but we don't get anything from it. But she is not helping; she only talks to me if she wants me to fill in the forms, which I do not know what it is for (saying with frustration) because I lack everything. Even at school I always lack essential things. It is shameful.

(Lindi, 16- years old pregnant girls: Mali Secondary; individual interview)

Noma depicted in her mapping exercise lack and hunger she endured in her home



Our social worker doesn't speak to me she only communicates with my grandfather. I think she believe what he says that I am a bad child. So she shows no care and she does not help us to get what we need. We lack money sometimes we stay with no food to eat (ikali lilala eziko). To be honest, it's difficult for me sometimes I go to school hungry. I want to look beautiful and buy at school because other learners laugh at me when I eat food from the school kitchen Sometimes I think of leaving school. We have no one to help. All that affects me because I think about it a lot even in class and I am unable to take care of my baby.

(Noma, 19- years old mother- 18 months baby: Mome Secondary; mapping exercise)

The narratives revealed that pregnant girls and mothers put blame on their social workers for the life they lived. Probably, because they lacked basic needs even though there was a foster care grant that was issued to help them with school and personal requirements. Nonetheless, it landed in the wrong hands that prevented girls from receiving the assistance they were eligible to receive. This is because, the girls did not have anyone who was keen to show understanding for their situation. Hence, they relied on social service workers hoping that they would care and empathise with them by ensuring that they either get the social security money or receive surviving necessities. Local studies revealed that social assistance is helpful and has a positive impact on the well-being and development of a child (Coetzee, 2013), as it benefits them with improved nutrition, health and education-related costs (Coetzee, 2013; Ngubane & Maharaj, 2018). Understandably, to those girls who were in the situation of being deprived it could create unmendable gaps for them since it was the only source of provision they had. Surprisingly, South African policy makers and communities were mindful of the issue that beneficiaries of social assistance misused it (Goldblatt, 2003; Lesenya, 2015). Nevertheless, nothing visible has been done to protect the victims who depended solely on this kind of support to get a meal for the next day (Motsa & Morojele, 2016), and to attain education. The passive and negative feedback from the social workers deprived the girls of their minor personal needs (van Zyl, 2015), like roll-on deodorant which is essential for every woman, especially adolescents and it is normally helpful in boosting self- confidence (Akella & Jordan, 2015), during peer engagement. Noticeably, lacking necessities like these would have a negative impact on their schooling as it limited freedom in the school space and classroom participation since it attracted negative comments from peers (Omang, 2002). Moreover, the responses indicated that the girls were convinced that the situation that they were in was not going to change since no one was eager to honestly support them (van Zyl et al, 2015). Yet, they were overwhelmed by multiple vulnerabilities namely pregnancy, parenting, orphanhood, rejection and living in uncomfortable households and child-headed homes (Chigona & Chetty, 2008), that made it hard for them to navigate the situation on their own because it demanded unwavering support from adults. This resulted in severe scarcity of required resources.

Most participants complained about not having things they needed for school and about going to school without food and their inability to care for their babies. The actions of Zine's social worker and social leader needed to be discouraged because it could destroy emotional and psychological wellbeing of a girl-child. This could add to the social ills that could result from unfortunate reactions of teenagers to the situation (Kirby, 2007; McNeely et al., 2009). The social worker's behaviour subsequently occasioned girls to lose faith in social service workers and in the social welfare system. That is because; social workers became unhelpful and did not do anything different from the other adults that girls engaged with. This brought hopelessness as they associated this with the dishonesty that they have experienced. This calls for the Department of Social Welfare to revise their monitoring systems to see if they were efficient enough in ensuring that the issued social protection benefits were useful in bringing security to those who were in need and to ensure that there were consequences for those workers who involved themselves in malpractice and misappropriation, In addition, The Department of Education should ensure that schools have specialists who can work with the social workers to help girls who experience these kinds of vulnerability and for them to have adults whom they could trust to create the environment that would convince girls that they were cared for at school.

The responses revealed that social workers did not prioritise pregnant girls and mothers' best interests by not ensuring that children were taken care of (Mkhwanazi et al., 2018). Instead, they worked against the girls' ability to deal with their situation by negotiating with those who misappropriated social assistance funds and who excluded the girls. What the social workers did was an insensitive practice that aggravated the girls' situation and forced them to endure a life of extreme poverty. They did not get any money from anyone to cater for their financial needs and in consequence they slept and went to school on empty stomachs, lacked essential things and felt ashamed. Thus, made it evident that the social worker's attitude and actions compromised the girls' well-being which impacted negatively on the steering process of pregnancy, parenting and attaining education since it diverted their concentration from their schoolwork.

As Noma stated earlier in her narrative,

'All that affects me because I think about it a lot even in class and I am unable to take care of my baby'.

This comment highlighted the fact that the situation occupied this girl's thoughts which was not good for her because by brooding over her circumstances this might result in toxic stress (Mkhwanazi et al., 2018), and might affect her role as a mother and her school performance. Social Welfare should be about compassion, caring and assisting to develop a sense of belonging and about build personal strength that would foster empowerment for the communities (Visser, 2012a:11). Probably, that was the reason why girls were so upset because the stepping in of social workers brought hope to them. They did not expect to be with an empty plate, without clothes and be the laughingstock for other children in the presence and knowledge of a trusted figure. Notably, the social workers commitment to their work ethics and integrity was essential because deviating from this could lead to disillusionment as Noma mentioned in her narrative that she often considered dropping out of school because the condition she faced. Again, Zam and Lindi in their narratives brought the same complaint that their social workers did not care about their welfare. Lindi narrated,

“My social worker is not helping; she only talks to me if she wants me to fill in the forms, which I do not know what it is for. “

The comment arouses concern since according to National Association of Social Work [NASW] ‘standards teenage stage is considered the most important phase in the human being’s development hence it needed to occur in a supportive and harm free environment (Bailey, 2003). Moreover, their sense of well-being is influenced by the experiences accrued during milestone developmental phases (Bailey, 2003). Knowing this, made it clear that honesty and morality cannot be overemphasised when it comes to the Social Welfare workers and community leaders in their practice while providing protection and support to teenagers including pregnant girls and mothers. This showed the need for the Department of Social Welfare to review their procedures in order to deliver and achieve what was intended. In addition, the Government of South Africa needs to work tirelessly to rectify social imbalances by giving guidance and support (Torre et al., 2017), to community leaders who are appointed to perform different social duties in the communities. They should collaboratively ensure that the well-being of neglected pregnant girls and mothers is prioritised.

4.4.3 The lack of knowledge and power...

The findings indicated that pregnant girls and mothers lacked knowledge and power to challenge the situation as their right of being cared for was violated and that exposed them to a miserable life. They faced shortages at home and at school to an extent that they went to sleep on an empty stomach which was against the *Bill of Rights and Children's Act* as both guaranteed every South African child access to food, social security and education (RSA, 1996). The situation complicated teenagers' pregnancy, parenting and educational attainment journey. The Participants narrated below:

Actually, it's not easy to get help; I have accepted that people don't listen to a child. I tried to get help but no one listened. I told myself that there is nothing I can do. At home they said I should forget about going to school and look after the baby.

(Zam, 16- years old mother- 18 months baby: Mome Secondary; individual interview)

People think that everything is going well and I get everything I need because they know my family's financial condition. I think no one would believe me if I tell them that I sometimes sleep without any food and I don't have school necessities. They know my father and they are afraid of him. Right now I don't know what to do but I do need help because I want to finish school and be able to provide for my child.

(Noma, 19- years old mother- 18 months baby: Mome Secondary; individual interview)

The responses indicated that having financially powerful caregivers sometimes created a difficult situation for the girls. This is because it became hard for them to get help since people had false belief about their lives. It was assumed that they had everything they needed whilst in fact they struggled to get food to eat. The girls had no capacity to reveal their real lives to people possible because no one would believe them because of the situation they were in which was associated with immorality (Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020), and people would be afraid of their caregivers' reaction. Therefore, the secret life that girls lived exposed them to multiple susceptibilities that included living fake lives which manifested in various ways (van Zyl et al, 2015). Because of this, they were denied provisions that other girls got whose poor conditions were well known and understood. Moreover, the position of being powerless forced the girls into extreme poverty since it closed the door on any form of help

from anyone that could have made a difference in their lives and in the lives of their babies. Teenagers were locked into silence (Bhana et al., 2010), therefore, they did not have anyone to talk to or to gain information from that they needed to contend against those who misused the Government social assistance in their names and claim back what was lawfully theirs from their relatives that could have eased their situation. Instead, they found themselves in a compromising conditions where they had to internalise different hardships in life like being ignored by adults and despising themselves by believing that having necessities is not for them. Sadly, accepting situations like these brought low self-esteem to young people who were still developing (Molefe, 2016). This evidently indicated the need for the teenage girls to learn to stand up for themselves and to speak out following the notion that they should talk persistently until they found someone who would listen and help them. According to Raza (2017) a high level of trust assists in dealing with and easing situations like vulnerability in young people. That further showed the need for the Life Orientation teachers to be more approachable and willing to provide welcoming conditions that will enable girls to open up to them about any situation including family challenges and be keen to give proper guidance to the girls.

The responses indicated that powerlessness and lack of knowledge brought frustration and poverty for the pregnant girls and mothers. Even if they were aware that they were also entitled to benefits they had no means to change the situation. The girls' lives were determined by powerful adults who were given authority over them and they were unable to take decisions for themselves or to contest the situation. Even personal decisions were taken for them like, to return to school or not that created scars to them as it exacerbated their situation. The pain was evident in the girls' narratives and facial expressions during interviews that were accompanied by anger, frustration and a sense of helplessness (van Zyl et al., 2015). Zine commented,

“There is nothing I can do if he does not want to share the money with us. It's very frustrating.”

Probably because these factors brought lots of suffering this made them realised how powerless they were to face the situation which included lack of money. That brought difficulties which prevented them from living a normal life and from being able to carry on with their schooling and parenting roles as they were lacking essential things that they required for taking care of their babies and for their schooling. The response clearly showed

the extent of the power dominance and authority that governed their lives (Collins & Coleman, 2008), and that this can escalate and be misused to rob the defenceless. Limited power and knowledge impeded girls from trusting that they would be able to escape from the situation because of their age and parenting status. Certainly, power inequality based on ageism in relationships made girls victims of deep-rooted disparities, that was difficult to untangle as a result of them being entrenched in societies (Gergen, 2009), despite being very detrimental to the victims (teenage girls and mothers). Accordingly, that brought lifetime costs to the girls' futures as they could be stuck forever in poverty with their children without education. This clearly demonstrated the detriment of being powerless, less informed and voiceless in ones' social circles. This triggered the need for the enriched curriculum in schools that would equip learners with information which will prepare teenagers for the unexpected challenges of many realities in life.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This study concluded that teenage mothers and pregnant girls struggle to balance pregnancy, parenting and getting education, since apart from responsibilities of child-care and schoolwork they also have to deal with the lack of resources- that creates more complications in the parenting and schooling progress unlike other pregnant girls and mothers from privileged socio-economic families. The study further found out that most teenage girls and mothers' penurious situations are not caused by lack of money in their homes but by the injustices and powerlessness that girls face because of their age and having no caring adults. The study therefore considered powerlessness, lack of knowledge, neglect and orphan-hood as factors that created girls' poverty and intersected to exacerbate the girls' negotiation of the process of pregnancy, parenting and schooling. This caused distinct challenges for the girls who are in these situations that are different from the girls who are also afflicted with poverty but who are living with their caring parents. In addition, unpredicted circumstances and thoughts that pregnant girls and mothers experience shift their focus from their schoolwork, and this affects their performances. The study found that these factors become detrimental to the girls as they have a psychological and an emotional effect. That causes girls to develop anger thus fail to pay attention to their education and to their parental duties as they strongly believe that no one is willing to listen to them or to understand their situation. Moreover, the study found that poverty brought shame and exposed girls to humiliating conditions in the school space.

4.5.1 Recommendations

The study thus came up with the following recommendations that could be used to change pregnant girls and mothers' situations.

- Schools and families should ensure that lines of communications are always open (Ingram, 2014), so that young people will be able to talk to them about anything. Also, instilling basic safety and life tips at an early age like standing up for themselves and speaking out persistently until they are heard could be helpful.
- Developing a LO curriculum in a simplified way by adding subjects like business studies that will be efficient and accommodative to the economic standing of the society they are working for. Communities should work together using different available social platforms to provide information about reckless sexual behaviour and its consequences.
- The Department of Education and Social Welfare should work together in ensuring that teenagers who are orphans are properly protected and benefit from government social securities.
- Finally, introducing school-based counsellors that will talk to teenagers who are experiencing difficult times in their homes would be useful. Again, schools need to keep records of all learners who have no one to take care of them (Motsa & Morojele, 2016), so that provisions could be made for them according to their basic needs.

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CHAPTER 5
FAMILY AND FRIENDS' INTERACTIONS AND REACTIONS: IMPLICATIONS
OF PREGNANCY AND PARENTING ON THE EDUCATION OF NINE
SCHOOL-AGED GIRLS IN PINETOWN, KWAZULU-NATAL

ABSTRACT

In South Africa the rights of school-aged pregnant girls and mothers are safeguarded by a number of policies drawn from the Constitution that guarantees their right to education. Nonetheless, pregnant girls and mothers from underprivileged backgrounds encounter mixed reactions from their families and friends which interfere with their schooling progress. This study aimed to investigate in detail the reactions and interactions that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers experience with their families and with their friends and to find ways to normalise their situation so that they can acquire education with confidence in three poverty-stricken township schools in the Pinetown District in Durban in the Province of KwaZulu – Natal, South Africa. Participants were nine purposively selected pregnant girls and mothers, between 15-19 years old, doing grades 9 to 12. The study was framed by social constructionism theory and used qualitative narrative inquiry, in-depth interviews, focus group interviews and a participatory mapping exercise to illuminate different reactions and interactions experienced by pregnant girls and mothers in their social circles. The findings revealed that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers experience financial challenges and exclusions in their social spheres because of pregnancy and parenting. The paper recommended that the Department of Health and Social Welfare should work together with the Department of Education to educate parents with the simple ways to deal with pregnancy if it occurs in the family.

KEYWORDS Education attainment; exclusion; parenting; poverty; pregnancy; support

5.1 Introduction

Internationally, school- aged girls who fall pregnant and become mothers while they are still at school bring alarm to policy-makers in various departments particularly the Department of Education, South Africa is no exception (Gyan, 2013; DBE, 2018). South Africa has recorded a rise in pregnancies and births from girls between 10 to 19 years of age. In 2019 the Minister

of Education announced an alarming escalation of 121 099 deliveries by teenagers between 15-19 years, recorded by the Department of Health' districts information systems (Maqhina, 2019).

There is mounting concern for the outcomes that pregnancy and parenting brings to the schooling process of the girls (Andrew & Dillon, 2014). According to demographic studies in the developed countries school -aged pregnancy results in lower educational attainment and it escalates the level of poverty. In developing countries, the situation is much worse (Nkani & Bhana, 2016; Andrew et al., 2014). School-aged girls who find themselves pregnant and become mothers are encompassed by penurious conditions and they encounter hardships in negotiating parenting and education demands (Bhana, Morrell, Shefer, & Ngabaza, 2010). Even though financial constraints become a critical barrier that hinders pregnant girls and mothers from attaining education (Gyan, 2013), studies indicate that it is possible for pregnant girls and mothers to complete school successfully regardless of their penurious situation if they are supported (Bhana et al., 2010). Lack of support makes it hard and sometimes impossible for the pregnant girls and mothers to adjust to the situation (Ritcher, Norris & Ginsburg, 2007).

School-aged pregnant girls and mothers from impoverished backgrounds have to face dual challenges since, apart from penurious conditions they endure; they have also to deal with practices inside and outside school that have a negative effect on their schooling process. Since, education is considered worldwide as the human right that everyone should enjoy irrespective of any socio-economic or health status (UNICEF, 2007), the United Nations mandated all its members to eliminate discrimination and obstacles which curb school-aged pregnant girls and mothers to access education (UNICEF, 2007). Consequently, South Africa as the signatory of the organisation, made provision in the *Constitution* to afford every South African child a right to quality, non-discriminatory and equitable education. Also, the right to his or her dignity being respected and protected (RSA.1996).

However, school-aged pregnancies and parenting are perceived negatively with judgements in communities and families of school-aged girls (van Zyl, Van der Merwe & Chigeza, 2015). This makes it hard for the girls to cope and some prefer to isolate themselves. Accordingly, they avoid public services like clinics and school fearful of being labelled and

judged (Nkani & Bhana, 2016), which becomes damaging to their pregnancies and to their futures. Positively, they are young and inexperienced so they need information that will help them to take care of their pregnancies and babies. Stigmatisation that the pregnant girls and mothers experience does not only cause a risk to their health and to their babies, but it also impedes them in their attempts to access education. Since, the stigma and judgements extend to the families, some have become reticent to help them because of the shame they believe they have brought on the community and on the family. In consequence, pregnant girls and mothers endure isolation and they lack the support that is crucial in their state for them to continue with their education (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013).

The situation dulls the enthusiasm of pregnant girls and mothers from penurious backgrounds to pursue education as they have to face the shortage of necessities on top of all the injustices. As a result, the conditions force them out of school. From a moral stand-point concerning school-aged pregnancy and parenting Ngabaza & Shefer, (2013) legitimise the exclusion of school-aged pregnant girls and mothers by pointing out that they are in their families and around friends and this makes it a less socially exclusive act. Yet, it damages a number of pregnant girls and mothers' self-esteem (van Zyl et al., 2015), and their education attainment process as it restricts them from getting the health care and support, they deserve. Also, several studies point out that most pregnant girls and mothers leave school because of financial challenges and the stigmatisation they experience (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013; van Zyl et al., 2015).

The study provides in-depth understanding of the interactions and reactions experienced by pregnant girls and mothers from impoverished backgrounds in relation to family and friends and how that relationship can be stabilised for them to gain respect and to acquire education with confidence. Locally, most studies generalise experiences of pregnant and parenting girls and the schooling journey, disregarding the impact of financial status, interactions and reactions that the girls encounter in the process. Thus, by allowing the pregnant girls and mothers to chronicle what they experience daily and listening to their opinions, concerns and expectations the study aimed to extract details of lived experiences of school-aged pregnant girls and mothers in relation to family and friends' reactions and interactions encountered in penurious situations as one of the means to advocate change in the perceptions of families about school-aged pregnancy and parenting and probably to encourage support.

5.2 Theoretical Framework

The study draws on social constructionism to explain in detail the reactions and interactions that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers experience with their families and friends and how their situation can be normalised for them to get better experiences. Social constructionism emphasises that meaning originates from coordinated actions and beliefs and that recurring co-actions or coordinated actions result from relational scenarios (Gergen, 2009). Therefore, the constant experiences and feelings that the pregnant girls and mothers gain and develop through interactions and reactions within their families and friends are of pivotal importance in the relationship formation (Wang, 2016). They also play a significant role in promoting positive emotional and psychological development (McNeely, Mia, DrPH & Blanchard, 2009). Thus, every negative or positive reaction and interaction that the girls receive they relate to it and these have an impact on their development that includes, affection, perceptions and decision-making skills (McNeely et al., 2009).

Social constructionism is also concerned with what is known about the human world of social experience (Andrews, 2012), and with the notion that the world cannot be known without relating to peoples' experiences (Andrews, 2012). The tying of school -aged pregnancy and parenting to the discourse of morality by society (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), exposes deep-seated prejudices in families and friends that the girls spend their time with (Andrews & Draga, 2013; Du Preez., Botha, Rabie & Manyathi, 2019). This causes pregnant girls and mothers to experience different reactions in their social circles, which sometimes force them to revert to their focus on education (Molefe, 2016). Engaging in dialogues with pregnant girls and mothers' daily life experiences reveals the truth and reality that should be known about parenting, pregnancy and the challenges faced in social circle in trying to acquire education in destitute conditions (Gergen, 2009). Social constructionism puts emphasis on uncovering the reactions and interactions that pregnant girls and mothers encounter in the creation of their perceived social reality (Andrews, 2012), since what people consider as knowledge emerges from social interchange (Gergen, 2009).

Indeed, what pregnant girls and mothers go through daily, and the effect it has in their development cannot be known or told by anyone, unless pregnant girls and mothers themselves reveal it through conversations. Berger & Luckmann, 1991), maintain that the conversations are the most important means of maintaining, modifying and reconstructing

subjective reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Through learning that occurred from each conversation pregnant and parenting girls created subjective meaning of their experiences (Andrews, 2012), which formed part of their identity within society (Collins & Coleman, 2008).

5.3 Research Methodology

5.3.1 Geographical and socio-economic context of the study

The study was conducted in Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, situated in the Eastern coast of South Africa (Marx & Charlton, 2003). The targeted research sites were three schools, two schools located in Clermont which is approximately 12 kilometres from the Durban Metropolitan Area and one school situated in Mariannhill in the hillside west of Durban. All three schools are built in densely populated areas and surrounded by informal 'settlements and one school is in a semi-urban area (Mbambo, 1998; Khandhela, 1993). Most families are crowded with children in small shacks. Both areas are stricken by poverty and are dominated by substance abuse and sexual licentiousness. There is high rate of unemployment and teenage childbearing is rife in these areas. Both places are situated near industrialised areas which are the source of employment for the communities while other community members rely on housing rentals, income from the taxi industry, various informal businesses and domestic work.

5.3.2 The Study methodology and data generation methods

The study used qualitative research techniques, individual and focus group interviews and a mapping exercise to collect data that allowed in-depth understanding of the interactions and reactions that the pregnant girls and mothers face as they attempt to acquire education under poor socio-economic conditions. The descriptive and analytic nature of a qualitative approach permitted the extraction of detailed information from pregnant girls and mothers through listening to and holding conversations with them (Maxwell, 2016). Individual interviews allowed the researcher to inquire further through probing. This enabled the drawing out of detailed information about the interactions and reactions the pregnant girls and mothers' experience in their homes in their communities and from their friends (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Interactions and conversations that took place during the focus group interview provided a deeper understanding of their situation (Hesser-Bibber & Leavy, 2011), as they obtained varied views from all participants (Ranjit, 2014), by them sharing what they face in

their families and friends as they interact with them. Taking of field notes provided the study with rich contextual data as it permitted recording of firsthand information (Creswell & Clark, 2011), from what was heard, said and observed from participants and the notes picked up what was not mentioned during both interviews (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Participatory mapping permitted maximum exploration of attitudes and perspectives of participants in their individual environments (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2010).

The study aimed to gain a deeper insight into the interactions and the reactions that impoverished pregnant girls and mothers experience in their families and with their friends. The use of individual interviews, focus group interviews, participatory mapping, participants' observations and field notes became useful in clarifying the detailed real daily interactions and reactions that the girls experience (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Participatory mapping provided substantial illustrations that allowed for a clear understanding of pregnant girls and mothers' day-to-day interactions and reactions. The study also used focus group and individual interviews as its data collection techniques to draw in depth the responses that pregnant girls and mothers experience in their social circles that are, families and friends. To gain deeper understanding of the interactions and reactions that pregnant girls face in their families and friends the study used focus group discussions and individual interviews as data collection techniques (Hesser-Bibber & Leavy, 2011). Various methods of data gathering techniques that ensured reliability of the data generated were used (Nieuwehuis, 2007), such as the use of a voice-recorder, mapping and field notes. Interviews were recorded and later played back to ensure that the transcriptions of the interviews were not distorted (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The school premises were used as the research site for both focus group and in-depth interviews. For the mapping exercise, participants were requested to draw places at home and in their surroundings that relate to their lived experiences, whether these were good or bad, and to give short descriptions of their formulated meaning. All interviews including the mapping exercise were conducted in isiZulu which allowed participants to express their views freely while answering questions and giving descriptions for the mapping exercise. The mapping exercise actively involved participants and empowered them as they carried on with the research process on their own and got free time to reflect (Literat, 2013). The researcher engaged with participants and recorded observed behaviour in the fieldwork while they were discussing their experiences in their social spheres as a qualitative approach allows naturalistic engagement during data collection (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012). The paper

relied on what school- aged pregnant girls and mothers narrated about their everyday encounter and actions in order to gain knowledge about their daily experiences.

5.3.3 The Study participants

The pregnant girls and mothers that agreed to take part in the study were nine girls doing grade 10 to 12, between 15 to 19 years old. Five participants were from one school and four were from two different schools. Two girls were at a late stage of their pregnancy; four girls were mothers of one week to three year old babies and one was away from school for delivery break, and certain to return after giving birth. The pregnant and parenting girls were purposively selected as they were rich informants for the topic, that is, girls from poverty-stricken townships who lived under poor economic conditions. The five girls had no parents, and they were living with relatives or grandmothers and four had parents who were unemployed or relying on piece jobs.

5.3.4 Data analysis procedures

The study used thematic and content analysis to analyse data. These were directed by research questions and the data analysis process was in line with the general threshold of the study (Tylor- Powel & Renner, 2003). Collected data were translated from isiZulu into English interpreted, transcribed and classified into themes. Transcripts from individual and focus groups were sorted into categories and themes, recurring patterns and concepts in categories were noted (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Generated data from audio- taped narratives, written narratives, field notes and mapping exercises were analysed to produce repeated themes (Neuman, 2011). Various themes that emerged during the analysis process were coded, sorted and interpreted to create meaning from the gathered data.

5.3.5 Ethical Considerations

All necessary ethical considerations were observed accordingly due to the sensitivity of the topic. Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, permissions from the Department of Education, schools and parents were obtained. The principals and Life Orientation teachers helped with the selection of participants. Participants who agreed to take part in the study were given written consent forms that informed them about their liberty to withdraw at any time from the interview. Research procedures were explained to them, and

they were made aware that they were not forced to respond to questions that they did not feel comfortable to answer. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the participant's confidentiality and anonymity during interviews. Interviews were conducted in the school premises in the privacy of a secure classroom. Participants shared their stories willingly.

5.4 Findings and Discussions

5.4.1 Our families ... they still love us ...

The findings revealed that the reactions and interactions that most school-aged pregnant girls and mothers experienced in their families were satisfying as it made them realise that the love, they had for them was unconditional. This is because their families did not change the way they were treating them before falling pregnant. Instead, they accepted them together with their babies. In consequence, the girls valued the acceptance, the support and the discipline they got. In such a way that they felt secure in their homes irrespective of the conditions they lived in. In consequence, they felt happy with the manner in which they were received by their families. Narratives below illustrate this:

I can say at home they still love me because if I do something stupid they shout at me as they used to do before I fell pregnant. But now it is me and my baby so they treat me as their child together with my baby. I feel free when I am with my family because they support me, if I have a problem or if there is something that troubles me, they guide me and give me good advice. I am really happy with the way they treat me at home. They now take me seriously and understand that I am struggling with most of my subjects and they are always willing to help. The only difference is that if I ask for something they tell me about the baby.

(Zoe, 15-year-old mother -1-week infant: Mazo Secondary; focus group interview)

What can I say (sighing), at home they accept me together with my children. Although, we have many challenges as a family since I am staying with my grandparents with no parents. We are happy we live together peacefully even though things are not the way we want; we have learnt to accept our family life and we are able to stand for our family situation.

(Marcia, 18-years-old mother -2 children: Mini Secondary; individual interview).

Actually, my parents were very absurd when they found out that I was pregnant, honestly I did not know what was going to happen to me. To my surprise they continued to treat me as their child and accepted my child.

(Zee, 16- years-old mother- 8 months baby: Mazo Secondary; focus group interview)

Most girls appreciated the support they got from their families. Possibly, because they were aware of the mistake they had made and they were uncertain about the families' reactions (Morrell, Shefer & Bhana, 2012). Hence, it amazed them to find out that their caregivers were still there for them and communicated well with them. That was a relief to them because even though they were young parents but they were still children, they needed adults support and guidance (Krebbekx, 2019), in order to cope in their situation and to be able to finish school (Bhana et al., 2010). Most girls said they felt free in their homes, thus made the findings contradict with other studies that pregnant girls and mothers are not supported and are isolated in their families (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019).

Zoe, said with happiness:

“I feel free when I am with my family,”

These parents and guardians should be commended for the environment they created for pregnant girls and mothers as they did not only make the load lighter for them, but they were also contributing to the shaping of their futures and to their socio-economic situations (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). The presence of compassionate caregivers for school-aged pregnant girls and mothers made poverty not too much of a harsh factor in their education attainment experiences compared to those who had no adult to lean on (Bhana et al., 2010), since they become available for them to give guidance and support in many aspects including words of encouragement and in taking the initiative in adult responsibilities.

Marcia, bubbly and very talkative, explained her family life:

‘we live together peacefully; we are able to stand for our family situation.’

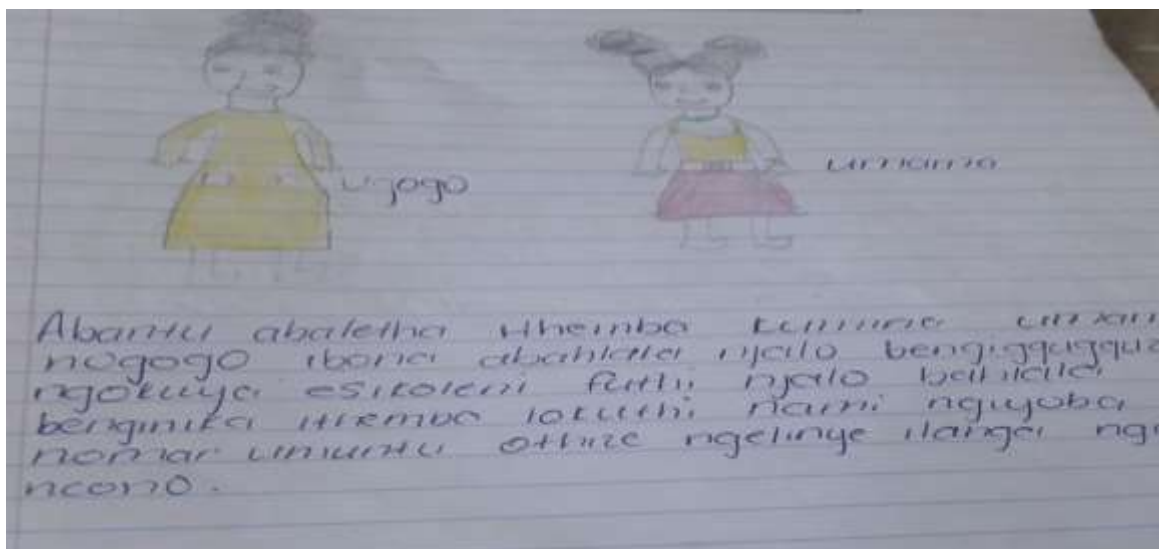
The above excerpt showed that the presence of adult figures in the family of pregnant girls and mothers taught them to adapt to the family situation that could enhance their own power

to overcome adversities (Masten, 2007). This is an indication that parents and caregivers should be there for their daughters to pick them up so that they are able to make a positive turnaround. Positively, parents and guardians have a greater influence than peers in motivating young people by being good role models (McNeely et al., 2009).

5.4.2 At home...they advise and encourage us...

The findings revealed that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers embraced the words of encouragement and advice that they got from their family members whom they love and trust. This makes it clear that not giving up on them and being consistent in uttering positive words can yield good results.

The mapping below represented people whom Nonhle considered as her pillars and sources of strength.



My family loves me. We are many at home we talk about many things. But, people that I value the most are my grandmother and my mother because they bring hope to my life. They always encourage me to go to school and tell me that I will be someone successful in the future. Those words make me feel good and forget about all the mistakes that I have made and I now want to achieve so that they can be proud of me.
 (Nonhle, 16- years old-pregnant girl: Mazo Secondary; mapping exercise)

At home I am happy; nothing worries me, because my sister and my brothers are there for me. They give me support and encouraged me to go back to school and work hard because they know that I can do it. So now I am trying very hard I want them to see that I appreciate all that they are doing for me and my baby.

(Sue, 17- years old mother - 2 weeks infant: Ngcobo Secondary view individual interview)

My mother was very sad when I told her that I was pregnant. She was very worried she did not know how to tell my father. I guess she found a way because they both accepted and allowed me to go back to school. They both encourage me; my mother always tells me that I need to learn so that I can change the situation. So I do not forget that I have that responsibility

(Nancy, 17-years old mother -12 months baby: Mini Secondary; Individual interview)

The narrative indicated that family members played a decisive role in helping pregnant girls and mothers to reshape their lives (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). Possibly because they loved and trusted them, they embraced everything they said. They also liked the positive words they spoke to them and kept them as their motivators and made them not want to disappoint them (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), thus demonstrating the need for parents and caregivers to continue considering them as their children who relied on them for support and lifting them up no matter what they have done (van Zyl et al., 2015). Encouraging and supporting them could help them to realise their mistake and to be willing to change and to work hard to achieve their dreams that could be of benefit to the whole family since teenagers rely on families and caregivers for a sense of identity and to acquire decision-making skills (McNeely et al.,2009).

5.4.3 We appreciate the friendship and advice we get from some of our friends....

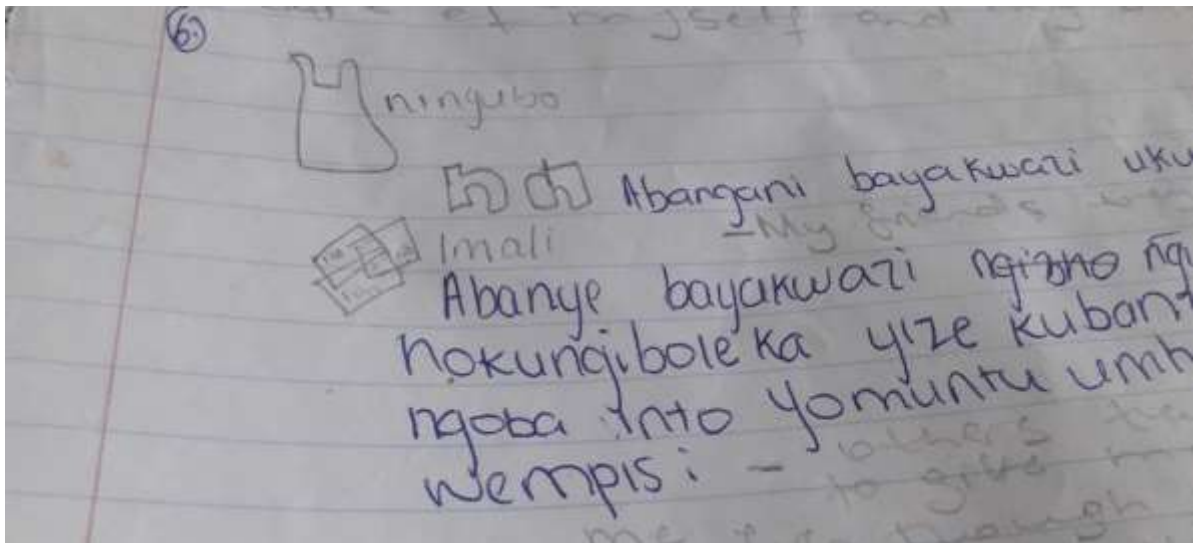
Findings reveal that pregnant girls and mothers continued getting along well with their friends during and after pregnancy. Pregnant girls and mothers appreciated the friendship, encouragements and advice that they got from their friends. Participants reported as follows:

I can say I have good friends even though when I compare my life with theirs I feel ashamed especially when we have to go out with them because I do not feel confident with what I wear. But they do not have a problem, they accept me even when they

found out that I was pregnant they were spoiling me. Even now they are still supportive.

(Sue, 17- years old mother - 2 weeks infant: Ngcobo Secondary view)

This mapping depicted the companionship and empathy that Inam's friends showed towards her situation.



Actually, most of my friends are neighbours so they understand my situation although sometimes they misuse my kindness but I ignore them and focus on their positive sides. But I do walk away from them but they come back because they know that I would accept them back. I do not complain they support me in many ways. They give or lend me money, some lend me clothes. I feel bad if I fail to give these back in time.

(Inam, 19-years old mother - 3 years baby: Mazo Secondary; mapping exercise)

My relationship with my friends did not change because they also have children, I can say things are still the same because they are supportive they want me to learn so that I can pass.

(Zee, 16- years-old mother- 8 months baby: Mazo Secondary; focus group interview)

The comments revealed that friends were supportive and gave positive advice and encouragement to their pregnant and parenting friends. Possibly, because they knew what they were going through, and they also understood their situation.

Sue narrated:

'my friends were very supportive before pregnancy. Even when they found out that I was pregnant they were spoiling me.

It was good for the school-aged girls to support each other since, school-aged pregnant girls and mothers who were getting support enjoyed a better experience than those who were not supported (Bhana et al., 2010). It is touching that other girl were aware that their friends needed to be spoilt not to be judged, not that they were complimenting them on what she did but they were being thoughtful to trigger strong positive sensations (McNeely et al, 2009). Doing what they thought their friend needed at that time, their actions brought hope to the society that there is a promising seed that is growing in young people. Moreover, narratives also indicated that poverty took away equal sharing of friendship and subjected the girls to subordination, dependency and powerlessness (Nkani & Bhana, 2016; Lambani, 2015). This made it hard for them to leave some friendships, which needed to be discouraged to protect young people. Penurious conditions diminished the girls' self-esteem (Molefe, 2016), and made them feel inferior among friends and exposed them to financial reliance on friends. This shows the need for introducing money-making skills for children at a very young age so that they can be able to generate their own money and evacuates dependency and poverty.

5.4.4 Our families... value our babies ...

The findings indicated that pregnancy and parenting came with surprises that the girls never thought of as they were forgiven by their parents and caregivers who allowed them to continue living with their family. However, they witnessed the diminution of their value and being replaced by their own babies something that they never saw coming. They were deprived of some prospects especially financially provisions which made them felt edgy and frustrated. Participants explain below:

Ay! My grandmother was very disappointed when she found out; I could see it in her face. She allowed me to stay at home but she told me that since I decided to fall pregnant. I must count her out. I had to take care of myself, so, they pay less attention to me now it is all about my babies. Everything that was done for me, my grandmother is now doing it for my babies. Sometimes it hurts (saying with sadness).

(Marcia, 18 –years old mother - 2 kids: Mini Secondary; focus group interview)

You know, my sister and my brothers were very angry with me but they later calmed down and accepted the situation and became supportive. My brothers love the baby

more than me. They used to do everything for me, they were very nice they used to value me a lot but now they put the baby first before me, they say it's because I gave birth- which I do not have a problem with because I know I was wrong.

(Sue, 17- years old mother - 2 weeks infant: Ngcobo Secondary; individual interview)

I really don't understand my grandfather because he does not want anything to do with me but he loves my son a lot, he does not mind looking after him.

(Inam, 19 years old mother- 3-years-old child: Moza secondary; mapping exercise)

My father does not give me love, when I ask for something he shouts at me he has no time for me at all. But he likes my son, he spends time with him, he even takes him to crèche.

(Nancy, 17-years old mother -12 months baby: Mini Secondary; Individual interview)

Participants' responses showed that school-aged pregnancy and parenting hurts all parents and caregivers. Naturally, because their daughters were still at school where they were sent to learn hoping that they would finish school and achieve big things in life and be able to live a life that they themselves could not live (van Zyl et al., 2015). Consequently, pregnancy and parenting became very frustrating to parents as it also had financial implications for the family (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). School- aged pregnant girls and mothers were in a crucial stage of development (McNeely, et al., 2009), which most parents disregard when they are old, forgetting about the pressures and challenges of being young that they once experienced. Obviously, parents put the burden on the children by assuming that they will make right decisions and not become pregnant without being given any guidance (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019, Lambani, 2015). Instead, parents and guardians prefer to let their children to be influenced by sexual knowledge from the media and peers (Krebbekx, 2019). However, it becomes complicated in penurious families as most of them are less educated (WHO, 2020; Lambani, 2015). As a result, some parents became very angry and rejected them and took time to forgive (Chigona & Chetty, 2008), whereas others got angry and accepted after a short period of time.

As already quoted, Sue stated in her narrative

'my brothers were very angry at me but they later calmed down, but now they put the baby first [before] me, which I do not have a problem with because I know I was wrong.'

Pregnant girls and mothers became receptive to every response they got as they carried the guilt and they were also desperate for support (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). The narratives also clearly indicated that pregnancy and parenting changes the lifestyles and relationships of the girls with their families. Marcia narrated:

' everything that was done for me, my grandmother is now doing it for my children so I am on my own. "

The excerpt indicated the difficulties that young people pass through after pregnancy. One can imagine being expected to take care of yourself at the age of 16 years. Being pushed to take care of themselves at an early age and being supplanted by a baby hurt the pregnant girls and mothers, reduced their self-esteem (Molefe, 2016), and made them believe that they were of less value. In consequence, they internalised the whole situation and took it as the way of letting them know that they were no longer children (van Zyl et al., 2015), and that they were no longer important, but their children were. So, they had to consider them and forget about themselves and their interests and dreams which could push them to enter into the worst situation namely, transactional relationships, subsequent pregnancy and dropping out of school (Bhana et al., 2010). This showed the urgent need for various departments to work together with parents in different communities to provide young people with information about sexual relationships and their outcomes. Also, it is time for parents to break the silence and to join forces in teaching their children what they know as knowledge is the neutral guide in sexual development of the youth (Krebbekx, 2019). In addition, parents in communities should be willing to treat and help someone's child as their own child for the benefit of those teenagers who are without any adult figures.

5.4.5 Baby daddy's families- featuring in our times of need ...

The findings revealed that baby daddy's families played a major role in helping pregnant girls and mothers to acquire education and pregnant girls and mothers learnt to trust them simply because, they were always there with solutions they needed in their times of desperation. They helped by caring for their babies and by provided financial support and by protecting them from the wrath of their family members. They therefore appreciated their presence and contribution to their lives. Participants illustrate in their narratives:

My boyfriend's mother is supportive (saying with a smile). If I need money she gives me (some), she is like my mother, and she treats me like her own child. If I do not have food she gives me (food) and packs enough that will last the whole weekend. She is aware of what my father is capable of. He badmouthed me but they did not take note of what he said because they know him.

(Lungi, 16 –years old pregnant girl: Ngcobo Secondary; individual interview)

Ay! My grandfather did not want me to take the baby to his family as he wanted them to pay for the damages. But I had no choice because I did not have any one to leave the baby with; the baby's grandmother was willing to look after him for me so that I could go back to school so I took him there. My baby's grandmother helped me a lot. I had to sneak every morning with my baby; it became a great relief when his grandmother took him fulltime.

(Inam, 19-years old mother - 3 years baby: Mazo Secondary individual interview)

My mother buys things for the baby to add on what the father's family has bought, but it is never enough. And they have to bring stuff for the baby often. I can say they help me a lot especially with the baby.

(Zee, 16- years-old mother- 8 months baby: Mazo Secondary; focus group interview)

The responses indicated that pregnant girls and mothers treasured the relationship they had with the baby daddy's families. Undoubtedly, because they demonstrated love and support that they needed. These families became good examples that needed to be encouraged so that other parents with sons who are fathers should look up to them. Certainly, it created a healthy relationship for them (McNeely et al., 2009), which is also important for the babies. Lungi said:

'she is like my mother, and she treats me like her own child.'

Grandmothers like these should be applauded for going the extra mile in accommodating mothers of their grandchildren and their babies and for treating them like their own. More especially, because most of the pregnant girls and mothers had no parents and they never knew their mothers, so it is amazing for their baby grannies to fill in that gap. Comments showed that baby's fathers' families did take responsibilities of supporting the girls who are impregnated by their sons more than their families and this contradicted other studies'

findings that children become only the responsibility of the girl's family (Molefe, 2016; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019).

Additionally, the responses clearly showed how pregnant girls and mothers' families sometimes despised and gambled with their daughters' wellbeing and future. Inam reported:'

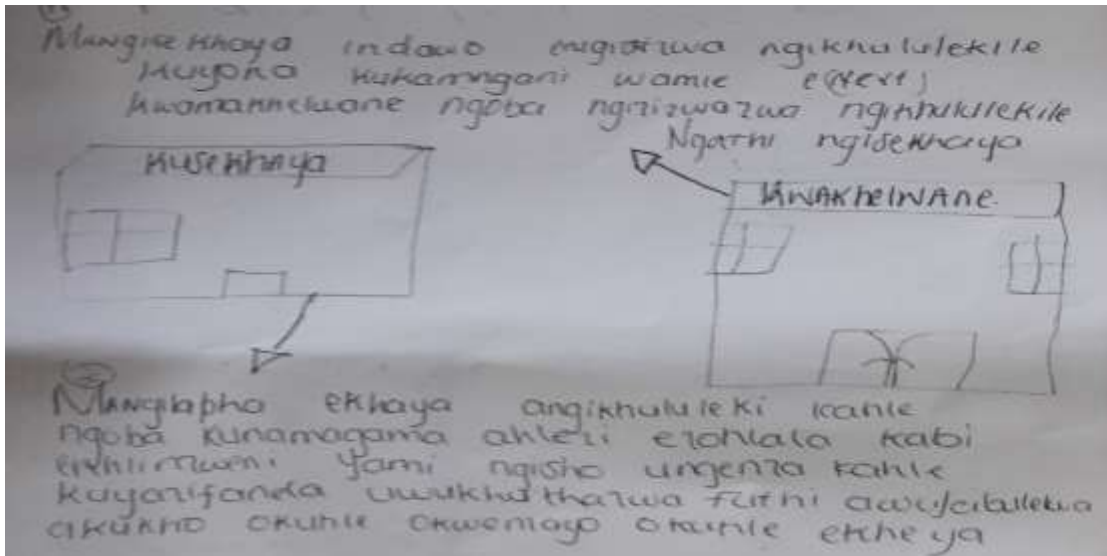
my grandfather did not want me to take the baby to his family. He wanted them to pay for the damages first. He also did not want me to go back to school “

The comment made it evident that some difficulties that the school-aged girls experienced were triggered by family relationship instabilities, like bad parenting and orphanhood (Gyan, 2013; van Zyl, et al. 2013), which sometimes pushed girls to seek for better acceptance from outside their families (Molefe,2016; Juma, Alaii, Barthalomew et al.,2013). This comment made it clear that baby' fathers and their families were willing to offer support, but they were hindered by baby's mother's families (van Zyl et al., 2015). Also, it demonstrated the need for the Department of Social Welfare to work closer with schools in order to help learners who are living in destitute and abusive situations. Indeed, it is completely unrealistic to expect good academic performance from the pregnant girls and mothers who lived in such conditions (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). That makes one salute the agency that the pregnant and parenting girls demonstrated in withstanding such situations (Easterbrooks., Chaudhuri, Bartlett & Coperman, 2010), and managed to pass and go to the next grade since most of them fell pregnant when they were in grade 10 and persevered until grade 12. This indicates that if pregnant girls and mothers from poor socio-economic conditions could be provided with adequate support, opportunities and could be cared for (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), they could change their family lives.

5.4.6 However, home is not always the most comfortable place ...

The findings revealed that some parents and caregivers battled to accept their children's pregnancies and took their time to forgive them, to the extent, that they saw no need to continue supporting or considering them as their children. In other words, they disowned them even though they let them stay in their homes. Clearly, they decided to deprive them of their basic personal and school necessities. Nonetheless the pregnant girls and mothers persevered. However, home was not always a comfortable place for them. That resulted in the collapse of family relationship and brought mistrust

Inam illustrated in her mapping below the insecure and uncomfortable conditions she lived under in her family.



What I can say, is that my grandfather was very angry he wanted me to leave school and did not want anything to do with me. He would not buy anything for me because I fell pregnant (ngamitha). Even if I make a mistake, they remind me that I have a baby. Because of this, I do not feel free at home as they always pass negative comments that hurt. It is like I do not do anything right in my life. But we communicate well with my sister, we support each other.

(Inam, 19 years old mother- 3-years-old child: Mazo secondary; mapping exercise)

I live with my father's little brother and his wife and his children. They don't treat me well. They make me feel that I am not their child even though they pretend to other people that they treat me well.

(Lungi, 16 –years old pregnant girl: Ngcobo Secondary; individual interview)

The responses showed that some pregnant girls and mothers did not seem satisfied with the kind of treatment they received from some family members. This made them feel insecure, uncomfortable and rejected and it made them believe that they were not valued in their families. Some family members made it difficult for them (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), by always blaming them for falling pregnant and for giving birth. Sadly, those who were living with relatives who discouraged them ended up believing in those negative words, which

resulted in them doubting and labelling themselves. As Gergen (2009) states, coordinated actions that occur through relational scenarios extend over time thus causing girls to internalise what is said to them (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013).

Inam stated with a hopeless voice,

‘They always pass negative comments that hurt’.

This excerpt indicated the need for communities to embrace the culture of Ubuntu which involves compassion and concern for others (Moeketsi 2008). Certainly, the diminishing of Ubuntu in communities results in multiple social ills which affect the whole society. Those girls who stated that they have no one to talk to they became engulfed by the situation, noticeable even in their facial expressions. The unwillingness of relatives to assist teenagers pushed young people to the worst situations like pregnancy (Motsa & Morojele, 2016), and the very same relatives were the ones who became very judgemental thus causing distress and loss of hope in the school-aged girls and mothers (Molefe, 2016; Masuku, 1998). The responses further indicated that those girls who were rejected by their guardians, treasured positive relationships and the support they had even from one member of the family (van Zyl et al., 2015). Which means that, if other parents in communities could work together in helping children without any parental figure, a huge difference could be made and be enjoyed by community members themselves as young people seek role models (McNeely et al. 2009) and this would certainly help the pregnant girls and mothers to access their education and ultimately to change their families’ economic standing (Bhana et al., 2010).

5.4.7 Some of our friends are ashamed of us ...

The findings divulged that pregnancy and parenting gave girls the opportunity to scrutinise the friendships they had. Although some girls continued with their friends, to others it brought an abrupt end to their friendship as they could not meet the friendship demands and their presence brought shame and fear of being associated with them. Accordingly, pregnant girls and mothers were not satisfied with the manner in which they reacted to their situation of pregnancy. Narratives illustrate below:

It is just me; I could not continue being in a friendship with them because parents ask what we are saying to each other because they have no babies. They blame me for disappointing them and doing something they did not expect from me. So I try to avoid

all that and cut off the relationship with them. They were also talking about me behind my back. They criticise me (becoming emotional).

(Nancy, 17-years old mother -12 months baby: Mini Secondary; Individual interview)

The relationship is no longer the same. We only greet each other now, unlike before where we used to talk about everything, even if someone has a problem we used to talk about it together but now they go and talk to other people, well what can I say it is their choice.

(Lungi, 16 –years old pregnant girl: Ngcobo Secondary; individual interview)

The friendship got destroyed after pregnancy because my friends could not walk with me because I had big tummy so they believed that I will make people to look at them and think that they shall follow. They were giving me too much stress.

(Sesi, 16 years-old pregnant girls: Mazo Secondary; focus group interview)

The responses revealed that pregnancy and parenting affected the school-aged girls' friendships. Probably, because other friends did not behave in the manner that pregnant girls and mothers expected from people, they called their friends. Therefore, they decided to end the friendship (McGaha- Garnett, 2007). That was not good for them since they needed support from their friends as they were in a stage where they were in need of acceptance (McNeely et al., 2009).

Nancy said with sad face,

‘They were also talking about me behind my back, they criticised me’.

However, the decision that the girls took to leave the friendship if they felt disrespected demonstrated courage that needed to be encouraged in most young girls so that they would grow knowing their self-worth (McNeely et al., 2009), Surely, no one wants to be around someone who gossips about them and be blamed for influencing them, It goes without saying that most parents wanted their children to stop the friendship with pregnant girls and mothers believing that they would be a bad influence on their daughters (Chigona & Chetty,2007). The comment showed that parents were concerned about their children; they wanted them to finish school without being disrupted by pregnancy (Ritcher, Norris & Ginsburg, 2007), which was reasonable enough. However, fearing that the child would be influenced by others was not, as it undermined the girls' freedom of association, and their choice-making and

decision- making abilities (Morrell et al., 2012), which promoted pregnant girls and mothers' isolation (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). This demonstrated the need for parents to give themselves time to talk to their children about adolescents' development that includes sexuality and peer pressure influences so that they would not be threatened by their children's friendships.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This study found that the support that the pregnant girls and mothers get from people around them such as family, caregivers and friends makes a difference in helping them to acquire education even if the help comes from their baby father's family. The study further revealed that parents and caregivers who take time to accept their daughters after pregnancy do not only deprive them of education and expose them to long-lasting dependency, but they also take away the self-worth and pride from them. Moreover, the study revealed that the judgemental tendency of some parents in communities exposed pregnant and parenting girls to exclusion, continued ill-treatment and lower the self-esteem of the school-aged girls who are in that situation. This study therefore concluded that pregnant girls and mothers get mixed reactions and interactions from their families and friends which curbs their ability to attain education like all other girls of their age. This includes, being subjected to living a restricted life, and internalising various painful experiences and injustices.

5.5.1 Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations in order to heighten the schooling process of school-aged pregnant girls and mothers,

- Parents should work together to ensure that they share productive, guiding and motivating information with each other to ensure that their children get education irrespective of pregnancy and parenting or economic status.
- The Department of Health and Social Welfare should work together with the Department of Education to educate parents on the simple ways that they could adopt to deal with pregnancy if it occurs in the family. Also, to provide them with basic information that illiterate and impoverished families struggle to get and end up not benefiting from available government securities (Raza, 2017).

- Parents should ensure that they provide information to their children about sexual health and reproduction including decision-making and friendships.

5.6 References

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CHAPTER 6
PREGNANCY, PARENTING AND SCHOOLING: NARRATIVES OF RESILIENCE
FOR SCHOOL- AGED GIRLS FROM THREE POVERTY STRICKEN TOWNSHIP
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DURBAN

ABSTRACT

Studies show that pregnant girls and mothers from penurious environment experience challenges in trying to navigate pregnancy, parenting and attaining education which sometimes results in dropping out of school. However, some school-aged pregnant girls and mothers manage to navigate through the difficulties and despite the situation they finish school. This study drew on a social constructionist model to offer a detailed understanding of the manner in which school-aged pregnant girls and mothers demonstrate resilience in negotiating pregnancy, parenting and acquiring education under destitute conditions. Purposively selected participants were pregnant girls and mothers between 16-19 years old, doing grades 10 and 12 in three poverty stricken township secondary schools in the District of Pinetown in Durban, KwaZulu- Natal province, South Africa. The study utilised individual interviews, focus group interviews, participant observation and participatory mapping to determine the coping strategies that pregnant girls and mothers contrive in order to navigate challenges and to acquire education. Pregnant girls and mothers displayed resilient behaviour by overpowering the challenges as they demonstrated the drive to finish school and to achieve their dreams irrespective of the hostile situations they encountered. The tactics they devised include starting their day early and ending it late, respecting teachers and parents, making use of every support given and learning to prioritise wisely. The study recommended that parents and caregivers should be more open to their children and they should be willing to support and motivate them as they demonstrate a positive attitude towards change.

KEYWORDS: Change; dropout; money; resilience; education; support

6.1 Introduction

School-aged pregnancy and parenthood is a global issue that has hit all societies-, high-, middle- and low-income communities (WHO, 2020). International data from 28 demographic

and health surveys revealed that countries that have high enrolment were likely to report pregnancy as the reason for dropout (NRC. & IOM, 2005 cited in Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Letsoalo, 2009). In America, 51 per cent of school-aged mothers earn their high school diploma and in South Africa 30 per cent of high school girls who left school cited pregnancy and parenting as the reason for them dropping out (Stoner, Rucinski & Edwards, 2019).

In South Africa dropping out of school remains a risk factor for those girls who fall pregnant and become mothers as approximately one third return to school after giving birth (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2009). But, this is found predominantly in marginalised, illiterate and poverty stricken communities (WHO, 2020; Mkhwanazi, 2010). Social science studies show that school-aged girls from poor socio-economic backgrounds, living in a densely populated environment are at high risk of falling pregnant since they share small living spaces with adults and therefore become exposed to substance abuse and to early engagement in sexual activities (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019; Juma, Alaii, Askew, & Van den Borne, 2013). The Child Trends Databank (2018) recorded that approximately 37 per cent poverty- related high school dropouts for 2016 which were the result of lack of school requirements and food (Juma, et al., 2013). Girls from poverty stricken households turn to transactional sexual activities, which has been identified as a common sexual risk behaviour associated with girls facing destitution (Juma et al., 2013), which restrict chances of negotiating birth control options and safe sex (Panday et al., 2009; van Zyl, Van der Merwe & Chigeza, 2015). Since, pregnancy and parenting is regarded as the cause and the consequence of school dropouts (Grant & Hallman, 2009), pregnant girls and mothers who endure the adverse conditions and escape sexually risky conduct that could divert their focus from being able to reach grade 12 should be commended for withstanding well-known negative results of school dropping out which are pregnancy, parenting and poverty.

School-aged pregnant girls and mothers are in the teenage stage which is regarded as an exploratory period where teenagers engage in risky behaviour without thinking of the consequences and of the heightened psychological risk (Macleod & Tracy, 2010; Macleod, 2003; Brook, Morojele & Zhang & Brook, 2006; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). In most cases cognitive limitations, restrict them from thinking about important aspects in life such as economic disadvantages, adult abuse, behaviour and their individuality (Males, 2010). Even

though, the teenage phase is challenging to most teenagers and distracts their progress, others manage to show resilient functioning as they navigate through high adversity and demonstrate competence (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). Particularly, those who come from impoverished households and child-headed families, as they show understanding of the situation they are in and are willing to adapt in a positive manner (Masten, 1994), with the intention of leaving the life of shortage they are facing. Also, by realising that they need to rise above the situation, they do whatever it takes to use the offered opportunities, even if it means exhausting every resource, support, tolerating the mockery and labels from peers and developing different coping strategies to get education with the aim of breaking the cycle of poverty in their families (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). International research indicates that school-aged girls, despite their careless behaviour, do not perceive motherhood as devastating instead they view it as a way of acquiring social acknowledgment and of gaining the status of womanhood (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013). But, when they are confronted with the reality of their situation, they come up with various ways of dealing with the presented situation. In their shock they feel remorse and show greater eagerness to make things right and they swap priorities. Being inspired by their children who become the main motivators to achieve, they change their attitude as they give new meaning to life and they now wish to provide for them what they did not get from their parents such as love, attention and guidance (van Zyl et al., 2015).

This study explored the manner in which school-aged pregnant girls and mothers demonstrate resilience in negotiating pregnancy, parenting and acquiring education under destitute conditions. Focusing on the negative impact of school-aged pregnancy and parenting most studies underestimate the agency that school-aged girls showcase as they navigate their situation. The study sought to offer in-depth understanding of the agency that school-aged girls demonstrate in negotiating pregnancy, parenting and schooling under destitute conditions. The study allowed pregnant girls and mothers to narrate their stories, and the effort they put in, what they pass through and the strategies they devise. The study might change society and stakeholders' perception about school-aged parenting and pregnancy and acknowledge the girls' resistant behaviour and develop respect and willingness to give support to the girls from impoverished backgrounds for them to finish school.

6.2 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted social constructionism to illuminate the resilient behaviour that the school-aged girls demonstrate in order to achieve their duties of parenting and schooling under destitute conditions. Social constructionism accentuates that people's understanding of what is real, sensible and good goes with the way of life. Understanding emerges from the process of relating (Gergen, 2009). It also maintains that people collaboratively create understanding of what exists and that shared understanding guides their actions (Gergen, 2009). Resilience is not regarded as an 'all-or-none' phenomenon but it is underscored by mounting evidence of uneven forms of adaptation in social relationships, academic achievements or role assumptions (Easterbrook, Chaudhuri & Battlet & Copeman, 2010, p.2). Aspects of resilience exert divergent influences on the individual's life based on culture and context in which resilience is realised (Ungar, 2008). Among youth resilience is attributed to contextual and normative factors that assist in the development of positive attitudes (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Hence, it is based on the girls' understanding and knowledge of their capabilities and potential essential for positive adaptation (Masten & Obradovic, 2006).

Social constructionism further considers people's behaviour as merely contingent and tied to conditions which they live in. This increases optimism in the possibility of change and in the search for creative ways to shape reality (Gergen, 2012). Understandably, child-headed households and penurious conditions disadvantaged pregnant girls and mothers in that position in terms of equal access to education, available social assistance and immediate support. Consequently, their resilient functioning is triggered by internal locus of control, social support and achievement orientation (Mampane, 2014). This study therefore determines resilience in the girls' behaviour as the ability to resist socio-economic, familial challenges, to deny the discouragement by remaining in school and in making efforts to devise coping strategies and by showing consistency in following them. Resilience is also characterised by social support, caring and supportive relationships for the individual to develop a sense of efficacy (Knight, 2007). Therefore, protection from the state resources and support from the girls' social circles assists them to develop their own powers of resilience within the presented context (Mampane, 2014). Indeed, social constructionism allowed the study to explain the girls' resilient acts as they continued being tough in the face of difficulties that included abounding schooling and parenting duties and financial challenges. But they remained committed by demonstrating perseverance, making sacrificial decisions, swapping

priorities and increased determination to finish school with the aim of providing a better future for their children (van Zyl et al., 2015).

6.3 Research Methodology

6.3.1 Geographical and socio-economic context of the study

The research was conducted in Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal that is situated on the Eastern coast of South Africa (Marx & Charlton, 2003). The targeted research sites were three schools, two were in Clermont which is about 12 kilometres from the Durban Metropolitan Area and one school located in Mariannhill on a hillside west of Durban. All three schools are situated in densely populated areas and are bordered by shacks and one school is located in a semi-urban area (Mbambo, 1998; Khandlhela, 1993). Families are crowded together with children in small slums. Both areas are afflicted by poverty and dominated by substance abuse and sexual licentiousness. There is a high rate of unemployment and school-aged early childbearing. Both places are situated near industrial areas which are the source of employment for the communities while other community members depend on stand rentals, income from the taxi industry, domestic work and various other informal businesses.

6.3.2 Resilience in pregnancy, parenting and education: A Literature Review

Resilience is defined as the ability to overcome faced hardships (Malindi, 2014), by showing positive behaviour in the participation of everyday activities like the response demonstrated towards challenges and adverse circumstances showing an ability to bounce back and to rise above the experienced daily stressors (Mampane, 2014). The concept resilience is examined as a process not as a stagnant construct (Masten, 2001; Richardson, 2002). According to Lerner (2006) resilience functioning is encouraged by various factors such as the availability of social services, economic and social resources in the family and neighbourhood and vigorous interaction within the social circles that includes personal, relational and contextual engagement. The individual's resilience is measured through understanding and knowledge of their development and potential for positive adaptations (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). School-aged pregnancy and parenthood is associated with the worst consequences involving challenging life curves for the girls who are still developing physically, and psychologically (Molefe, 2016), and striving to acquire education. As a result when a school-aged girl becomes pregnant vast negative implications are expected, that include end of education or

poor performance (Gyan, 2013) and restricted occupational and economic attainment (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). What is more, it is the engagement in risky behaviour like substance abuse (Banerjee, 2016), and experience of high levels of depressive symptoms, that signal less compassion (Borkowski, Whitman & Farris, 2007), love and care for their babies (Easterbrooks et al., 2010; van Zyl et al., 2015). The findings of a study by Easterbrooks et al., (2010), reveal that many school -aged mothers and pregnant girls living in impoverished neighbourhoods showed great financial stress. This is because most families that live in extremely financial restricted neighbourhoods are known to be less involved in their children's education-oriented practices (Banerjee, 2016). In consequence, poverty is considered as a high-risk factor that could impact negatively on the school-aged girls' growth that results in unhealthy development and barriers to the educational attainment processes (Mampane, 2014).

Resilience researchers admit that teenagers who face overwhelming risks in their environment can overcome the challenges and manage to develop successfully into a competent and resilient group of people (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Masten, 2001; Werner, 1993). Literature on resilience further shows that even though pregnant girls and mothers face life-threatening situations in their environment and pass-through different hardships. As they attempt to balance parenting and to attain education simultaneously (Nkani & Bhana, 2016), it normally result in poor education outcomes and in dropouts. But some try hard and demonstrate agency in facing and overcoming the stereotypes (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2008), that are linked to school-aged pregnancy and parenting. They achieve this by approaching the situation with maturity through acknowledging the importance of education in their lives, valuing the opportunity at hand to acquire education, withstanding different circumstances and focusing on their schoolwork with an aim to change their lives. Several studies note that school-aged parenthood might bring positive outcomes to the girls' lives and can mark an optimistic entry into adulthood among mothers for whom economic and educational opportunities may be limited (Borkowski et al., 2007). Consequently, to some mothers, becoming a parent creates a new beginning for both the infant and themselves (Marsiglio, 2004). Resilience is a process and school-aged pregnant girls and mothers' resilience is displayed by their facing of unfavourable socio-economic situations and by understanding of responsibilities and challenges but by demonstrating a positive attitude in adapting to the situation by being willing to put effort into balancing roles of parenting and

schooling and displaying willpower to finish school and to escape a life of poverty. Then, the study considered the girls' behaviour as resilient by looking into their positive attitude towards school and continuous school attendance, escaping risky behaviour such as transactional sex, displaying no signs of severe depression, a positive assumption of parenthood and by devising coping strategies in dealing with depressed economic conditions.

6.3.3 The Study methodology and data generation methods

This study used a qualitative research approach, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, individual interviews, participant observation and participatory mapping methods to generate data that permitted in-depth insight into how pregnant girls and mothers demonstrate resilience in their navigation of parenting and acquiring education. A qualitative approach discovered experiences and meaning through narrative reporting (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012), that allowed the drawing of detailed information from participants through listening and discussions (Maxwell, 2016). Individual interviews provided deep knowledge (Hesse-Bibber & Leavy, 2011), about the pregnant girls and mothers' resilience as it allowed face-to-face interaction that involved active listening, observation and meaning-making (Hesse-Bibber, & Leavy, 2011). This permitted further investigation through probing and enabled extraction of comprehensive information about the girls' navigation processes (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Focus group interviews provided useful information as it facilitated the expression of ideas and experiences even from those girls who were reluctant to speak out (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, interactions and discussions that took place revealed elements of understanding (Hesser-Bibber & Leavy, 2011), as it enabled sharing of ideas and approaches participants use as their navigation strategies. Taking of field notes enriched the study with added contextual information since it allowed recording of first-hand data (Creswell & Clark, 2011), from what was captured, said and detected from participants and which was not mentioned during both interviews (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Participatory mapping permitted maximum exploration of attitudes and perspectives of participants in their environment (Literat, 2013). The qualitative research approach techniques provided significant meaning attaching to situations that the pregnant school-aged girls and mothers endure and the agency they display.

The purpose of the study was to extract detailed information about the resilience that school - aged pregnant girls and mothers from poor socio- economic background demonstrate in their

endeavour to balance parenting, pregnancy and the acquiring of education, resisting poverty, stigmatisation and challenges of parenting in order to get education. Using semi-structured interviews, individual and focus group interviews and participant observation, participatory mapping and field notes became useful as they enriched the study with the facts that elucidated the manner in which the girls cope in harmonising pregnancy, parenting and in acquiring education under unfavourable conditions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Participatory mapping provided significant illustrations that permitted clear insight into what girls had to deal with and the agency they show to overcome situations in order to balance responsibilities of getting education and parenting. The paper utilised focus group and individual interviews as data gathering techniques (Hesser-Bibber & Leavy, 2011), in order to illuminate resilient actions that girls demonstrate and the compromises they make to receive education and deal with the responsibilities of pregnancy and parenting. The use of various methods of data gathering techniques guaranteed the trustworthiness and reliability of the data generated (Nieuwehuis, 2007), such as the use of a voice-recorder, mapping and field notes. Interviews, as noted before, were recorded and later played back to ensure that the interview was not distorted (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For the mapping exercise, participants were requested to make sketches of places at home and at school that relate to their day-to-day life experiences, whether it was good or bad, and write short notes about the formulated meaning. All interviews including the mapping exercise were conducted in isiZulu thus enabling participants to express their views with ease without any language hindrances while answering questions and giving descriptions for the mapping exercise. The mapping exercise involved school-aged mothers and pregnant girls actively and it empowered them as they continued with the research process on their own and provided enough time to reflect (Literat, 2013). While the researcher was engaging with pregnant girls and mothers in the fieldwork as qualitative approach permits naturalistic engagement (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012), their behaviours and attitudes were observed and recorded in the field notes. The school-aged pregnant girls and mothers narrated their day-to-day experiences, shared coping strategies, approaches and dreams which became the authentic source of knowledge for the study.

6.3.4 The Study participants

Participants were purposively selected pregnant girls and mothers who were between 16 to 19 years; doing grades 10 to 12 in three high schools from poverty-stricken townships. Three

participants were from one school and four were from two different schools,(two per school). Two girls were at a late stage of their pregnancy; four girls were mothers to one year to three-year-old babies and one was away from school for a delivery break, and certain to return after giving birth. The four girls had no parents and are living with relatives or grandparents and three had parents who were unemployed or relying on piece jobs.

6.3.5 Data analysis procedures

Thematic and content analysis techniques were used to analyse data. These were guided by research questions and the whole process of data analysis was in accordance with the overall threshold of the study (Tylor- Powel & Renner, 2003). Generated data was interpreted, transcribed from isiZulu to English and classified into themes. Individual and focus group transcripts were arranged into categories and themes, connections in categories were noted (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). All generated data with participants' audio-taped and written narratives, images and notes were analysed to produce repeated themes (Neuman, 2011). Various themes that emerged during the analysis process were coded, sorted and interpreted to create meaning from the gathered data.

6.3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study explores a sensitive topic that involves the young girls' education, reproductive health rights and socio-economic standing. Therefore, all necessary ethical considerations were followed. Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu -Natal was granted, and permission from the Department of Education and permission from the school and parents was obtained. The principals appointed Life Orientation teachers to help with participant selection. The participants were given written informed consent that made them aware of the freedom to withdraw at any time from the interview. The researcher ensured the participants' confidentiality of the learner information they would provide and anonymity by using pseudonyms during interviews. Both focus group interviews and individual interviews were conducted on the school premises in a secure classroom to avoid interruptions and snooping. Participants shared their stories voluntarily and were free not to respond to questions if they did not feel comfortable to answer. The researcher explained the research procedures to the participants.

6.4 Findings and Discussions

6.4.1 Making things work for the babies' sake...

The findings revealed that the money that pregnant girls and mothers received was not enough for the babies and their personal needs. This is because, they found out that babies required many things which they could not afford. In consequence; their babies got things that they were able to buy from the social grant money which they felt it was too little if they calculated their babies' necessities. Therefore, they had to devise ways to make things work for their babies' sake. Consequently, they had to make adjustments and sacrifices in order to carry on because they were unable to get any share from the social grant money that was received which was the only financial source they had. Subsequently they were left with nothing that forced them to deny themselves. Therefore, restricted financial conditions made it difficult for the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers to acquire education and to navigate parenting. Nevertheless, they did not let the experiences halt their schooling trajectories but they decided to be mature about the situation and continued with their schooling. As social constructionism maintains, we create understanding of what exist and the understanding guides our actions (Gergen, 2009).

Participants explain below:

When it comes to money it becomes a problem. The money that the baby gets from the social grant is only for him and it is not enough. He needs lot of things such as diapers, food etc. so no money remains for me. I have no clothes even those that I wore during pregnancy are big and loose now. It is not easy; I try to focus on my school work although there are interruptions. For instance, when the baby is sick it comes to mind, but I would ignore it, because thinking about it won't help. It is important for me to learn.

(Zoni, 17- years old, mother of 5 days old infant: Mathlole Secondary; individual interview)

We are struggling at home financially; my grandparents have to send money to the family in the farm and they have to provide for all the family needs. I can't expect them to do things for me because babies' grant money helps only them. I need things for myself, I like to go out with friends, but I can't. I have to think for the babies first and my family financial situation. I felt very sad this year; we had an excursion at

school I couldn't go because my granny didn't have money. I missed out on that lesson.

(Mumsy, 17 –years old, mother of 2 children: Neo Secondary; individual interview)

I can say things are not easy for me, since I became pregnant the situation became worse. I do not have school basic needs like uniform, jersey, shoes etc., that makes me feel ashamed, I think a lot about the whole situation. Hence my performance is dropping but I'm trying hard to get it back. As we go to school, other children bring money to school. It is not nice to see others buying and I only rely on the feeding scheme.

(Minah, 18- years old, mother of 2 years old baby, Mini Secondary; individual interview)

The above narratives indicated that pregnancy, parenting and poverty jeopardised the girls' personal development to the extent that, they lived a life of shortage that accordingly caused them to mature earlier than their age (Molefe, 2016), as they learned to think in an advanced manner and to disregard things that matter most to girls of their age group. For instance, being able to differentiate between what they need and want and ignoring what others do or say about them. That was a great resilient action that girls needed to be applauded for, since teenagers in their stage consider other inputs and were normally highly dominated by peer pressure (McNeely et al., 2009). Zoni commented in the individual interview:

'I have no clothes. There are lots of interruptions, but I ignore them, because thinking about it won't help it is important for me to learn.'

The extract made it evident that girls make compromises that are difficult for the girls of their age that force them not to prioritise themselves and their needs but to focus on getting education and ensuring that their babies are satisfied (van Zyl et al., 2015). Even though social constructed views link school-aged pregnancy and parenting to negative moralistic issues (Panday et al., 2009), that force girls to live in remorse (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). But pregnant girls and mothers in their narratives indicated that they were not proud of what they did but the situation motivated them to persevere and to strive to improve their performances.

Minah narrated,

‘I think a lot about the whole situation. Hence my performance is dropping but I’m trying hard to get it back.’

The above excerpt showed that pregnancy and parenting in deprived socio-economic conditions is overwhelming for school-aged girls who are in that situation. Hence, different means to support them should not be withheld since they were still growing (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), and had either limited support mechanisms or no support structures. That means different societal structures for example clinics and welfare offices and schools that are around them have a big role to play to provide them with the support they require for them to get education and to escape a life of destitution.

Moreover, the findings made it evident that pregnant girls and mothers had various things that they needed but they could not get because of the depressed financial conditions they lived in (Furstenberg, 2016). That ranges from uncountable family expenses, lack of clothes and money thus contributed in the isolation that girls and mothers experienced. However, all sorts of challenges that the girls encountered did not cause them to whine about the situation or discourage them to continue with their education instead, they became resistant towards the situation and learnt to inspire themselves for a good cause.

Mumsy commented in her individual interview,

‘I need things for myself, I like to go out with friends, but I can’t. I have to think for the babies first and my family financial situation.’

The comment indicated the effort and level of development the girls reached in order to adapt to the situation. That was surprisingly and amazing since, in the adolescent stage there is a period where they are obsessed about building their own relationships outside their families (McNeely, et al., 2009), so realising that they have to think about their babies and their family situations first in every decision they made was a remarkably agency that girls demonstrated. The responses further indicated that parenting and poverty brought numerous interruptions to pregnant girls and mothers’ schooling process. This is because pregnancy and parenting on its own is demanding and scary (Malahlela, 2012), and it became worse for them because of the stage and socio-economic status that they were in. As, they lack school materials like, school uniform that exposed their situation to other learners which brought embarrassment and interfered with their experiences of the school space. However, pregnant girls and mothers positively navigated the situation without letting their family economic conditions and

parenting stand between them and their educational rights. By realising that complaining about the hardship would not help but focusing on getting education would and using social support such as the feeding scheme that was available without caring what others said would also assist them. The pregnant girls and mothers' determination to pursue education demonstrated the need for stakeholders to work tirelessly to devise support since according to Mampane (2014) providing support contributes to educational resilience. Such inputs would be useful in bringing about a life transition for the girls living an impoverished life.

6.4.2 Showing sense of responsibility....

The findings made it evident that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers before pregnancy were overtaken by adolescent behaviour. Subsequently, they became preoccupied with many things that blinded them and made them not to prioritise their education and to neglect the relationship they had with their parents and caregivers. Accordingly, they forgot about the reasons that brought them to school and future goals that lay ahead of them. However, after pregnancy they demonstrated resilience by deciding to clean up their acts and to change their attitude towards their schoolwork and to their families which resulted in them focusing on their schoolwork thus improving their performances and their behaviour in their homes which created a better relationship with family members. Participants explain in their narratives below:

Before pregnancy I was all over the place but now, I am sturdy. My performance was not consistent because I did not care about my schoolwork, after school I would arrive at home and hurry to go and do traditional dance. But now my performance has improved and so as my relationship with my dad. I now know that I have to pass and I want them to help me.

(Zakithi, 16- years old pregnant girl: Mathlole Secondary; individual interview)

I no longer have time for fooling around. Before pregnancy I used to go out with my friends and saw no need of staying in the house. I would go home just to get food. I didn't care if the dishes are dirty or not. But now I know that I have to clean the house, I help my grandmother. If I have a small amount of money I buy something for my grandmother like cakes as a token of appreciation. I want to be a social worker and help others. It is not nice to see someone suffering

(Lili, 19 years old, mother of 2 children: Mini Secondary; focus group interview)

I do everything that my parents tell me to do, before I was not doing- I would tell them that I am tired. After school I would come home late. But now I fetch my child and go straight home. I no longer have time for friends. I know that I have to learn so that I can be able to provide for my child when he grows up.

(Zoni, 17- years old, mother of 5 days old infant: Mathlole Secondary; individual interview)

The above comments made it clear that pregnancy and parenting gave school-aged pregnant girls and mothers' time to reflect. Naturally, because they got a chance to realise that they were making many mistakes that caused them to be useless in their homes. However, they now became helpful in their homes and they saw the reason to acquire education. That concurred with social constructionism theory that is framing the study which allows optimism that provided opportunity for self- reflexivity and self-critique.

As Zakithi narrated earlier in the focus group.

“It is better now than before pregnancy because I was too busy but now, I am sturdy. My performance has improved so as the relationship with my dad.”

The comment brought hope as it deconstructed the social stereotype about the girls who became parents in schools, that it meant the end of their good future and career path (Gyan, 2013). But in contrast, it now created positive transformation for the girls and improved the relationship with their families (Arai, 2009). Incredibly, school-aged pregnant girls and mothers find difficult to access education due to economic and social adversities (Brook, Morojele, Zhang & Brook, 2006), that affected them in their communities, families and in schools. But they showed resilience by continuing with their education, taking of their duties as mothers and became helpful in their families by doing house chores. As Lili stated above that if she got little money, she bought some cakes for her granny which she called it with a smile- a token of appreciation. Their positive gestures and efforts indicated that they did not want to continue living reckless lives that would hook them into poverty and illiteracy that encouraged their parents and caregivers to continue helping them. Furthermore, the findings revealed that parenting made girls to shift their focus from friends to their babies. That was a resilient behaviour that needed to be commended since girls went against the known assumption about school-aged parenting that they neglect their children (Easterbrook et al.,

2010; Juma et al., 2013). Moreover, acknowledging that their babies were their responsibilities hence they insisted in their narratives on wanting to improve their performances and showed willingness to finish school so that their babies will not go through the same situation they have been through (van Zyl et al.2015), as they grow. That demonstrated growth and acceptance of culpability for girls of their age. The different factors that facilitated their different situations like neglect made them to develop a sense of sympathy that fuelled Lili to decide on the career path that she would want to follow. The school-aged pregnant girls and mothers showed agency in their decision making by not wanting to achieve only for themselves and their families but also for other people as Lili stated that she wanted to be a social worker to help others as she could not stand seeing someone suffering. This indicated the sanguinity that girls have developed to be the voice for other young girls which means if they could be supported and properly directed, they could bring change in their communities.

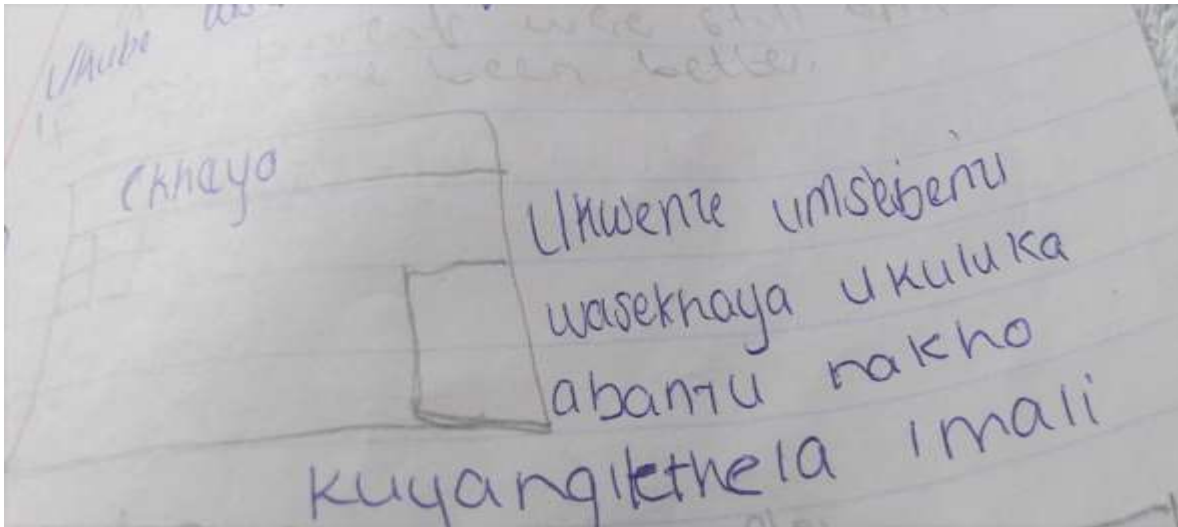
6.4.3 We want to do things differently....

The findings revealed that pregnant girls and mothers worked hard to make things right for everyone to see that they wanted to do things differently. They tried their very best to behave at school and at home so that they could get what they wanted. Also, they did not fold their arms and became complacent with the situation instead they came up with different strategies to deal with the situation. Participants illustrate:

I need education so I listen to the teachers I want to make sure that I understand everything I have no time to waste my friends have left me behind. I arrive at school at six before school starts to update my work. In the afternoon I stay behind until 4 o'clock. I now know that I am learning for myself and my children to live a better life. Before I thought I was doing this for my grandparents. I am doing very well (smiling) if there is a part that I did not understand I go to the teacher. I normally go to them during break time if I find them eating, I don't mind waiting until they finish.

(Mumsy, 17 –years old, mother of 2 children: Neo Secondary; individual interview)

This was drawn by Minah showing what she did to get money for her personal, school and baby's needs.



I have no one to help me so I have no stable source of money, but I need stuff like all other girls. So, I decided to do people's hair. That is where I get money to buy things that I need. I realised that I do not have to date men in order to get money to provide for my expenses because doing that might make me to have more babies and add more troubles.

(Minah, 18- years old, mother of 2 years old baby, Mini Secondary; mapping exercise)

The above comments made it evident that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers acknowledged that they need to do something in their lives. Mostly, because they were aware of the responsibilities that they cannot shift onto anyone else. They had to provide for themselves and their babies 'needs.

Consequently, they devised plans that could assist them to improvise for them to navigate the situation. All the efforts indicated the eagerness that girls had to finish school (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), which activated rationalisation. Moreover, the findings indicated that the conditions of poverty and parenting that girls encountered made them to realise that there were things that they could do for themselves to generate money rather than waiting for hand-out by getting involved in promiscuity.

As Minah had explained earlier in her mapping,

"I do not have to date men in order to get money to provide for my expenses because doing that might make me to have more babies and add more troubles."

The agency that girls demonstrated should be applauded since they did not allow themselves to be discouraged by the situation and to give up on their dreams of continuing with their education (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Also, they did not turn to transactional sexual activities that school- aged parenting and pregnancy is associated with (Molefe, 2016). Remarkably, girls in their discussions indicated that they were mindful that engaging themselves in sexual activities in the search for help might worsen their situation and impedes them from attaining a better life. If girls could be given the right direction in relation to reproductive health and sexuality and if they were encouraged to engage in productive programmes, they could be able to make wise choices and break the chains of poverty

Moreover, the narratives indicated that pregnant girls and mothers were aware of the time that they had wasted as they felt the pinch of being left behind by their friends, they then appreciated the opportunity they got. Therefore, they did not want to misuse even a minute of the given new chance. They did their schoolwork, removed all the shyness and never even minded to chase the teachers if they did not understand certain content. That demonstrated the girls' eagerness and commitment to getting education after pregnancy. They shared the same insight with social policy and youth services scholars who asserted that school-aged parenthood could provide a positive entry into adulthood for pregnant girls and mothers (Easterbrooks, et al., 2010; Arai, 2009). Teachers who missed their break time should be accredited for being willing to help school-aged pregnant girls and mothers as they decided to reshape their future (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). Because of these teachers' pregnant girls and mothers got the assistance they needed the teachers mentioned that they were free to be at school from 6 o'clock am to 16:00 hours which meant a lot to the girls as they stated with joy, showing a sense of gratitude. Also, it is a remarkable effort that the school made. It brought hope to the girls since most of them lived in packed rooms in their homes and in noisy neighbourhoods. In light of this, the girls in their narratives indicated that they got the help they needed from their teachers and friends from school. As Raza (2017) and Mampane (2014) maintain that social and environmental influences capacitate people and anchor resiliency. What is more is that the support that girls from underprivileged townships got either from teachers or from the school, did anchor their resilient behaviour. (Mampane, 2014). The findings further showed that pregnant girls and mothers, when they returned to school after giving birth, they owned their education (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Before his they did not understand that education was a special gift that their parents or caregivers gave to

them; instead, they despised it because they thought they were doing what everyone had to do or were doing so just to please their caregivers. Mumsy commented in the focus group discussion:

“ I did not care I thought I was doing what my grandparents wanted me to do. But now I know that I am learning for myself.”

The above extract makes one believe that pregnancy and parenting speaks louder than teachers, parents and caregivers combined because if they tried to convince them to do their schoolwork and be serious about their education, they did not respond until they fell pregnant. Most girls in their narratives asserted that their performances improved after pregnancy because of the effort they now have to put into their schoolwork and because of the assertiveness they used in their approach to their academic work. These findings disagreed with other studies that parenting, and pregnancy lowers girls’ school performances (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012). That showed that the issue of school-aged pregnancy and parenting should not be approached by stereotyping. Instead, it should be dealt with using reason. Those girls who demonstrate agency by showing genuine interest in changing and in wanting to achieve in life should be given maximum support by all role-players for them to achieve their goals.

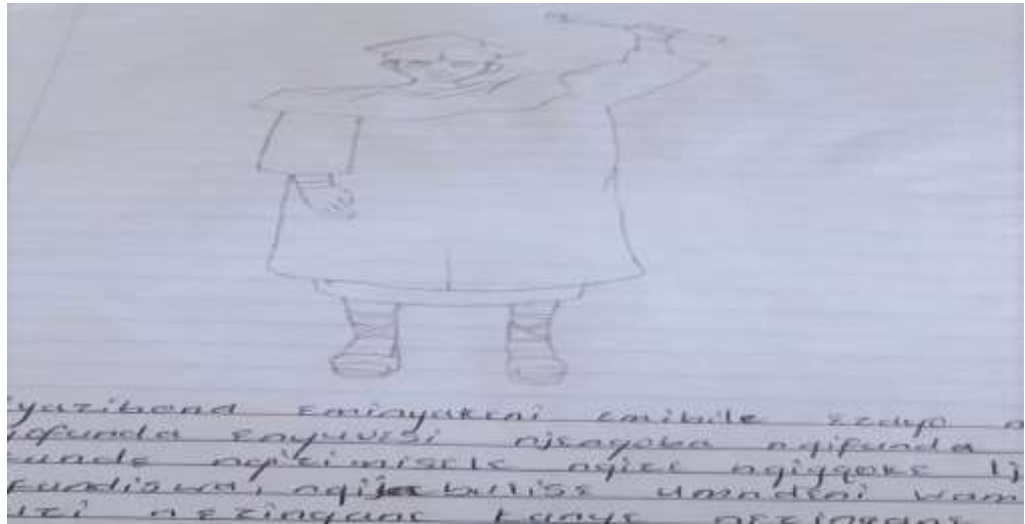
6.4.4 Transcending hardship....

The findings revealed that pregnant girls and mothers passed through different adversities as they try to negotiate pregnancy, parenting and to acquire education. Although, the adversities that interfered with pregnant girls and mothers’ schooling journey emanated from various sources including stigmatisation from community and friends, lack of required resources, family problems and learning difficulties. Impressively, the girls were not discouraged and did not allow barriers to stand in their way. Instead, they transcended the hardships as they wanted to achieve their dreams. Participants illustrate this below:

I do not get all that I need. But I have learnt to accept my situation. I told myself that I should not compare myself with anyone; I should focus on my studies. I learnt that even though I have friends, but I need not to share anything with them because we come from different families and we are different. They won’t understand if I don’t have money in some days whereas I can give another child anytime because I understand that there are times where you don’t have things in life.

(Zinhle, 16- years old, pregnant girl: Neo Secondary; focus group interviews)

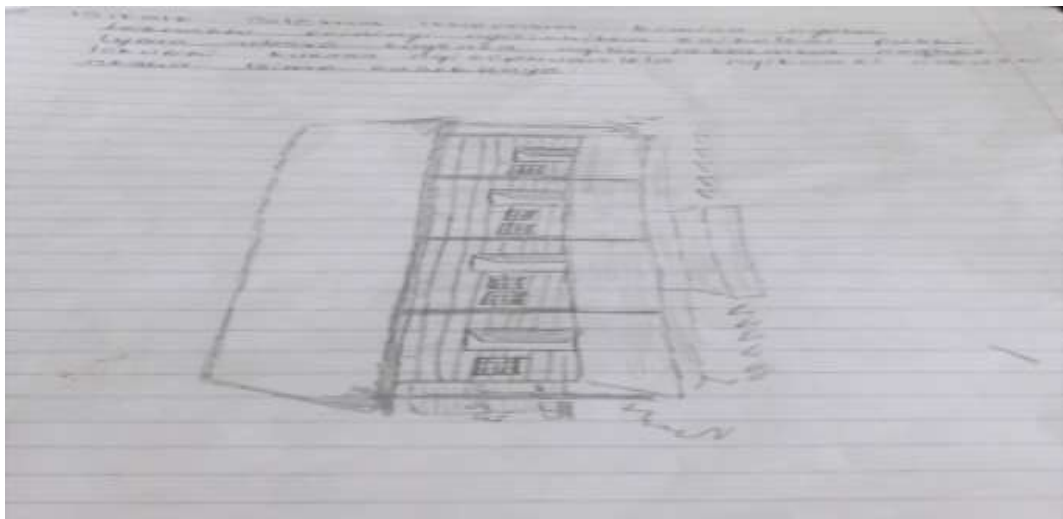
Sona presented this drawing showing where she saw herself in few years to come after she had passed through all of her present hardships.



I do not care who says what, right now I am focusing on building my life. Even if some of my friends exploit my situation; I ignore them and focus on their good sides. I do not allow anything to get to me. When I leave home, I tell my mind that I am going to school I should forget about home stuff and focus on my schoolwork. In few years to come I see myself succeeding in life, going to university committing myself to my studies until I graduate and make my family happy.

(Sona, 16 years old pregnant girl,: Mini Secondary; mapping exercise)

This drawing was presented by Zakithi who depicts the hope that school brought to her and the determination it anchored in her



I can say, right now I have lot of things in my mind, I am also struggling with my schoolwork, my performance is not good. But I persevere; I want education. I feel jealous if the academic gifted children misuse the opportunity. But, in all situations school brings hope to me and it is a place that gives me that courage and assurance that one day I will be able to live the kind of life that I want and also be able to change my family's situation”.

(Zakithi, 16- years old pregnant girls: Mathlole Secondary; mapping exercise)

The comments revealed that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers stood up against the challenges they faced. In such a way that each girl tackled their barriers in a distinctive way for them to get what they wanted which was to acquire education. Others allowed cognitive development to take place by understanding their uniqueness and learnt not to compare themselves with anyone. Definitely, it was an amazing achievement since during school-aged years they worry about being normal (McNeely, et al, 2009). While others learnt to be advanced in the relationship with their friends by being a better friend who focus on positive traits.

Whereas Zakithi decided to persist in ensuring that she acquired her education irrespective of the learning problems she had. She went against the myth that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers, who do not do well at school, find fulfilment in parenting and drop out of school (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013). The findings further revealed that pregnancy and parenting in the schooling place taught the girls to focus on their academic work and to ignored things that they considered useless. Possibly, because they then knew what is important for them, as a result they learnt to separate wheat from the chaff by selecting constructive things and by leaving those things aside that do not add anything to their future. In the phase that they are now in, goals became of great importance and focusing on the future (McNeely et al., 2009). The responses further showed that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers perceived the situation that they were in, in a positive way. Certainly, because they considered it as something that came to encourage them to look at things differently, work hard and taught them to be more responsible than other teenagers. Possibly, because they realised that the success and happiness of their families relied on them and their hard work.

Zakithi narrated,

' one day I will be able to live the kind of life that I want and also be able to change my family's situation ''.

The above comment indicated a need for community engagement (Daisk, 2008), and different levels of response from the Government in order to help young girls who are now willing to change their situations. Naturally, when one looks at their age and the social factors encompassing them and the strains of economic conditions added hardship and worsened the situation thus making it hard for them to cope on their own and prevented them from breaking the chains of severe socio-economic conditions to be able to accomplish their planned goals. In other words their willpower only will not be enough. Kaufman, Clark, Manzini, & May (2004), and Furstenberg (2016), believe that girls with good capabilities in managing logistics and finances during mothering and schooling are able to finish school without any problem. Thus, made it evident that pregnant girls and mothers from destitute environment will struggle to finish their schooling and to achieve their dreams due to their financial disadvantage. Positively, removing some non-supportive elements in the environment (Raza, 2017), and some inequalities that are in place and by providing social development that should deal with disparities across socio-economic statuses in communities (Bonkoff, Frerks, & Hillhorst, 2014), this might make things happen for them and make it possible for them to cross over the obstacles to reach the destiny they dream of.

6.5 Chapter Summary

The school - aged pregnancy and parenting is associated with negative economic and schooling outcomes in the life of pregnant and parenting girls (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Pregnant girls and mothers are aware that they have to work extremely hard to ensure that all the negative predictions for their futures do not come true. The hardships that the pregnant girls and mothers face involve more than balancing parenting and acquiring education, they also include deficiencies and learning problems. In consequence, pregnant girls and mothers devise different tactics that help them to deal with difficult situations they face in a sensible manner as much as they can. For instance, they live according to a strict budget based on the small social grant money they get for their babies, and they disregard their personal needs and priorities. Parenting responsibilities and lacking basic needs made girl realise the importance of the few opportunities they have, which makes them own their education. The findings

further indicated that poverty has the worst impact on pregnant girls and mothers' schooling trajectories as it tempers with their human dignity and self-confidence.

6.5.1 Recommendations

- The study recommended that parents and caregivers should be more open to their children and be willing to support and motivate them when they show positive change.
- Literature on resilience documents that if schools and teachers fail to perform their supportive, role they add distress to learners (Mampane, 2014). Therefore, in schools, teachers should create a favourable environment by opening up lines of communications for all learners so that they can come to them especially for those girls who have no one to talk to so that they express themselves to someone at school.
- Finally, principals need to ensure that their schools have all Government social securities that are available and to make these accessible to learners living in poor socio-economic conditions. Also, they should be more willing to work with other Departments in order to help learners who are in need.

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CHAPTER 7
EDUCATING PREGNANT GIRLS AND MOTHERS: TEACHERS' VOICES FROM
TWO HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE PINETOWN DISTRICT IN DURBAN, SOUTH
AFRICA

ABSTRACT

School-aged pregnancy and parenting is considered as the major cause of interruptions in the girls' schooling processes. Guided by social constructionism the study intends to elicit teachers' voices depicting how pregnant girls and mothers' education in two high schools in the Pinetown District in Durban are preserved and assured. The aim is to explore how these teachers' ideas can contribute detailed insight to our understanding on how the education of pregnant girls and mothers' quality of schooling and educational experiences in similar contexts can be preserved, ensured and enhanced. The study employed qualitative narrative inquiry, questionnaires and unstructured interviews. The findings indicated that teachers have mixed views about the support for pregnant girls and mothers in schools, others see no need for the support while others believed that girls need to be given an opportunity and should be supported in order to achieve their dreams thus they provided significant ideas that could be useful in changing the girls' situation. The study recommended that the issue of poverty, pregnancy and parenting be treated with sensitivity and distinctiveness in schools by devising sustainable support strategies that should be accommodative to the socio-economic diversity of learners and school officials should be willing to guide the girls with constructive ideas that they could use to help themselves.

KEYWORDS: Challenges, community, dropout, future, teachers, parents;

7.1 Introduction

Pervasiveness of school-aged pregnancy and motherhood across the globe has been distressing and of great concern to different social structures, Departmental officials and policy makers in many countries (Gyan, 2013). Due to its impact on the girls' education, condemning them to poverty (Nkani & Bhana, 2016), whilst the financial costs accumulates for the state (Andrew & Dillon, 2014). In the developing countries 7.3 million girls between

13-17 years become pregnant and poverty is regarded as the main reason of their early pregnancies and parenting (WHO, 2020).

In South Africa the Department of Education Minister in 2019 reported 3 529 deliveries among 10 to 14-year-olds and 121 099 between 15 - 19-years-olds (Maqhina, 2019). Findings of the study conducted in New Zealand in 2000 (Udjo, 2013), divulged that school-aged girls who become pregnant expose themselves to poor achievement and they drop out without a certificate. Yet, education has been regarded as a commodity that can be used to uplift socio-economic competencies and to produce better income levels. (Kim, 2016). Moreover, it is regarded by communities as a dominant value and the major tool to improve life choices (Kim, 2016), to unlock opportunities and to provide a possible way out of poverty (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). However, in South Africa pregnancy and parenting does not often end a girls' education but it only delays it (Morrell, Bhana, & Shefer, 2012), as most girls are permitted to return to school after giving birth (DBE, 1996). Though, it leads to various unfavourable factors such as, poor school environment, low grade achievement (Akella & Jordan, 2015), and poor support system with both school and home that girls encounter during this period which might take them away from school (Molefe, 2016). Scarcity of resources exacerbates the situation. The Government of South Africa should be applauded for making different provisions such as policies and social assistance programmes to accommodate the country's socio-economic diversities as a means of ensuring that all children get education. Nevertheless, the *Constitution*, the policy provisions and all efforts seem to be ineffective since, in poverty-stricken communities, pregnancy and parenting still presents a barrier to education for many school-aged girls. Hence, in the country childbearing is negatively related to finishing high school (Macleod & Tracy, 2010). Research located a relationship between school-aged pregnancy, parenting and poverty and identified high correlation between living in poverty and lack of education (Akella & Jordan, 2015). Most authors agree that parenting, pregnancy and schooling is an overwhelming situation that comes with numerous disruptions which makes it difficult for school-aged girls to cope (Udjo, 2013; Easterbrooks, Chaudhuri, Battlet & Copeman, 2010). Poverty become a leading cause of dropping out of schooling (Nkani & Bhana, 2016; Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020) since girls in the situation lack basic needs, school necessities and have no one to look after their babies. However, studies show that the girls who get support from home and at school manage to finish school with fewer disturbances (van Zyl, Chigeza, & van der Merwe, 2015; Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Teachers as

the frontline workers interact with school-aged pregnant girls and mothers almost daily and have to deal with the situation and observe the effect on the girls' school participation and financial deficiencies that learners face, and which often complicate the teaching and learning process.

The study intends to elicit teachers' voices testifying to how pregnant girls and mothers' education is preserved and assured. And also, to explore how the teachers' ideas can contribute detailed insight to our understanding of how the education of pregnant girls and mothers' quality of schooling and educational experiences in similar contexts can be preserved, ensured and enhanced. The focusing of South African literature on experiences and the effects of school-aged pregnancy and parenting in the life of pregnant girls and mothers leaves a gap in information based on teachers' efforts to alleviate the issue. Therefore, talking to teachers who witness all the inconsistencies in the girls' development in most aspects and hearing from them what they think could be done to enhance access to education for the girls is important. The study could guide stakeholders including parents and teachers as to what they could do to contribute to helping girls who fall pregnant and become mothers while still at school. Also, it could be useful to school-aged girls themselves in providing them with the opportunity for introspection

7.2 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted social constructionism to explore teachers' voices on ways in which education of pregnant girls and mothers is preserved and assured. With an intention to explore how their ideas can contribute detailed insight to our understanding on how the education of the girls and quality of schooling and educational experiences in similar contexts can be preserved, ensured and enhanced. Social constructionism believes that human life exists the way it is because of social and interpersonal influences (Gergen, 1985). It also considers that all meaning develops from coordinated actions and co-actions (Gergen, 2009). It is true therefore that teachers construct perceptions (Gergen, 2012), based on what they experience and observe regarding the pregnant girls' and mothers' situation during their social interactions (Schwandt, 2008), that happen in the contact time of teaching and learning. They therefore make meaning about what they observe in the process and the transitions that occur which include a change of attitude, behaviour and performance when the girls become pregnant and as they try to balance parenting and acquiring education (Nkani & Bhana,

2016). Remarkably, teachers recognise and understand the impact that socio-economic background has on the situation.

Furthermore, social constructionism is in the idea that meaning-making procedure is the definition of what counts as a problem and as a solution (Gergen, 2009, 281). Teachers do understand that the struggles that the girls encounter in their path to access education are constituted by various reasons including, inferior-economic conditions, unsupportive family and an unsympathetic societal environment (Kheswa, 2017). Indeed, the teachers realise that the situation does not only constitute an unfavourable schooling environment (Mampane, 2014), for the pregnant girls and mothers but it also creates mediocre schooling experiences and poor academic performances (Akella & Jordan, 2015). This means, that teachers as key role-players get involved by attempting to change the girls' attitude about the situation they try to suggest what actions could be taken for the situation to change by giving ideas that can improve the pregnant girls' and mothers' situation rather than whining about its undesirable implications.

7.3 Research Methodology

7.3.1 Geographical and socio-economic context of the study

South Africa is a country on the southernmost tip of the African continent that encompasses 1.2 million square kilometres of land and 2,881-kilometre coastline that edges the Atlantic Ocean on the West and Indian Ocean in the South and East (Semoli, Ngcofe, Dlamini, Martin & Poole, 2019). The country has a population of 58.8 million (RSA, 2019). The country is divided into nine provinces that are: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, North West Province, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Western Cape (Semoli et al., 2019). The study was conducted in Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, situated on the Eastern coast of South Africa (Marx & Charlton, 2003). The study population was in Clermont which was founded in 1931 as a black proprietorship township of about 696 hectares of land (Mbambo, 1998). It is located approximately 12 kilometres from the Durban Metropolitan Area [DMA] inner West council. The two schools targeted for the study were: Sontong High School that is in the East and Mshini High School in the West (all names are pseudonyms), and both are approximately 10 kilometres away from Clermont Central. The area is surrounded by suburbs which were formerly occupied by white people and is demarcated into four sub-regions namely, Faninn, Clermont Central, Ndunduma and Mvuzane, and there are eight wards with 3775 sites (Mbambo, 1998). The Sontong High

School and Mshini High School are built in a densely populated area and surrounded by informal settlements due to the migration of people to urban areas in search of employment in the nearby industrial parks. So, people from within South Africa and outside the country are renting in Clermont (Mbambo, 1998), and most families are crowded with children in small shacks. The area is stricken by poverty because of the high rate of unemployment, dominant substance abuse, sexual licentiousness, and teenage childbearing. The economy of the area is depended on the nearby industries, housing rentals, income from the taxi industry and informal trading and domestic work while some families are dependent on government social grants to the extent of one hundred per cent. In both schools, the majority of learners are without parents, and they live with relatives while others are from child headed households.

7.3.2 EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL-AGED PREGNANCY, PARENTING, POVERTY AND EDUCATION, A LITERATURE REVIEW

International and local studies predict that pregnancy and parenting have negative impacts on learning (Du Preez, Manyathi, Botha & Rabie, 2019), but other scholars deny this stating that problems arise due to poor management strategies (Chigona & Chetty, 2008), in dealing with pregnancy and parenthood in schools. In South Africa remaining in school during pregnancy and after giving birth is regulated by the *South African School's Act 84 of 1996* (Ramulumo & Pitsoe, 2013; the Department of Basic Education, [DBE], 2007) and, the *Education White Paper 6* (DBE, 2001), that emphasises the respect, acceptance and support for all children and adolescents regardless of their differences. However, practically the provision suffers from poor implementation. To give but one of the implementation problems, permission to attend a school depends on the attitude of the School Management Team [SMT], (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019; Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020), that reflect their own different values and morals. Teachers have positive influence on the well-being of pregnant learners and their education attainment thus, they make education more meaningful to the girls (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019; Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020).

Nonetheless, teachers have mixed opinions about the pregnant girls' access and about their right to education (Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020). Their views are motivated by religious, cultural and personal beliefs and attitudes (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019; Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020). That results in ambivalent reactions towards pregnancy and parenting in schools that are characterised by discrimination, criticism, lack of emotional support, the absence of

empathy, insulting comments, stigmatisation and neglect (Khumalo, 2018; Naidoo, Muthukrishna & Nkabinde, 2019). Life Orientation was introduced into schools as a way of attending to the negative effects of learner pregnancies (Bastable & Dart, 2007). However, some teachers are of the opinion that the policies are not clear about their responsibilities like handling emergencies and protection (Du Preez et al., 2020). For this reason, they face criticism from parents if they teach about sexuality in LO classes (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod, & Letsoalo, 2009). On the other hand, they lack experience, knowledge and skills (Du Preez et al., 2020), to give psychosocial support and to offer assistance during emergencies (Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020). Even though, some teachers believed that training would equip them, others have the idea that providing training based on pregnant and parenting learners would be too much of a burden (Du Preez et al., 2019), and additional responsibility that will blur their roles (Matlala, Nolte & Temane, 2014), as knowledge transmitters to midwives and social workers (Du Preez et al. 2019). Also, they view pregnant girls and mothers as a threat to their ideal learner management in the classroom (Bhana, et al., 2010). Teachers working in socio-economically deprived environments are working under stress fearing being accountable because girls come to school heavily pregnant and ambulances are either delayed or do not come at all (Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020), so they are afraid to help and scared of being charged with negligence (Mpanza, 2012), In that sense they believed that learners should attend up to a certain period of their pregnancy (Matlala et al., 2014).

Furthermore, some teachers are convinced that the girls' right to education is lifted high over their responsible decision-making (Matlala, et al., 2014), and they view the granting of the girls the right to attend as a silent approval of pregnancy for all learners in the school context (Matlala, et al., 2014). But, other teachers understand that girls live in poverty-stricken environments (Panday et al., 2009), that exposed them to early sexual activities and to live in child-headed families without basic provisions for sanitation, food or clothing (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Hence, they were willing to support them in their situation even though they were uncomfortable, and afraid of making a mistake (Matlala, et al., 2014). Moreover, they believe that girls should be supported even if it means communicating with parents about their health needs. Finally, teachers believed that if pregnant girls and mothers were supported at school their academic performances would have improved (Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020).

7.3.3 The Study methodology and Data Generation Methods

This study used a qualitative approach to illuminate teachers' views on how they ensure the education attainment of pregnant girls and mothers and how their inputs offer the detailed insight that could contribute in the enhancement of the girls' educational experiences and equitable education access for all girls who are in similar situations. A qualitative approach enables the access to thoughts and feelings, and it examines perceptions about the topic (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The study targeted secondary schools located in a poverty-stricken township. Participants were purposively selected from two schools; the recruitment criterion was based on participants' period of teaching and engagement with pregnant learners and mothers. Hence, they should have been teaching for more than two years and should have dealt with pregnant or parenting learners from disadvantaged socio-economic environments. Participants were assumed to be informants who are rich in information because of their professional stand which allows maximum interactions and observation of the situation. Selected participants were six teachers from both schools, three from each school but ended up with five participants because the sixth participant did not respond.

Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used as qualitative data generation collection techniques. Open-ended questions were given to the participants to allow them to express their perceptions in their free time about school-aged pregnancy, poverty, and parenting and the schooling process together with their suggested views on solutions. Before giving out of questionnaires, clarity about the research procedures and the filling in of the questionnaires was provided to avoid confusion and to ensure that participants understood what was expected of them. Allowing participants to fill in questionnaires in their own time enabled them to recall incidents about the topic and have enough time to think about it without any rush or other disruptions. This allowed attainment of authentic views and meaning that created the knowledge from what teachers observe almost every day. Questionnaires were written in English, but participants were free to use isiZulu. Semi-structured interviews enabled the use of observations and field notes in picking up contextual information (Creswell, 2013), that questionnaires could not capture and to compliment the information gained from the questionnaires.

7.3.4 Data analysis procedures

The study followed thematic and content analysis techniques to analyse data. This was guided by research questions and was in accordance with the overall guidelines of the study (Tylor-Powel & Renner, 1997). Questionnaires and interview responses were carefully revisited several times (Moser & Korstjens, 2018), to ensure familiarity with data and to identify inherent recurring patterns and concepts (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Connections in classifications were noted (Cohen et al., 2007). Data were analysed to find repeated themes (Neuman, 2011), and were described to provide the findings of the study (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Various themes that emerged during the analysis process were coded, sorted and interpreted in view of the theoretical framework of the study to produce meaning from the gathered data.

7.3.5 Ethical Considerations

All necessary ethical considerations were followed. Permission from the Department of Education was obtained, and ethical clearance was issued by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The letters requesting permission to conduct the study were given to the principals and permission from each school was granted. The principals selected Life Orientation teachers who had been working with pregnant girls and mothers for more than two years. Willing participants were given written informed consent forms that made them aware of the freedom to withdraw at any time from the interview. The researcher ensured the participant's confidentiality and anonymity by using pseudonyms. The participants' consents were granted. Participants were informed about the research procedure and the explanation about the filling in of the questionnaires.

7.4 Findings and Discussion

7.4.1 We give them help with what we could...

The findings reveal that teachers gave help to pregnant girls and mothers with what they could depend on the kindness of the teacher. Since they used personal means that were unstructured and charitable it made it hard for them to be consistent in the support they gave. Participants illustrate this as follows:

We are aware that they are still learners they need opportunity, and we motivate them and ensure that they start the clinic early and get delivery estimated date. I can

say we do need help because as I look at it although we try to encourage them but what we do seem not to be doing enough.

(Mr Zakwe, questionnaires, 34 years old, Mshini Secondary)

We do provide help but it on personal basis if the learner comes forward to ask for help regarding their needs since we have no standardised program. We also organise food parcels and school requirement including uniform, help them finish given tasks. I can say we try our best.

(Mr Lifa, questionnaires, 52- years old, Sontong Secondary)

Experience has taught me to limit my interferences in the learners' personal lives. Because for us sometimes it is hard because if we try to help people misread the intention and you get into trouble. So I avoid any misinterpretation of my intentions by the learner or their parents. Even though we assist wherever we can, such as organising awareness campaigns and women empowerment programmes, but it seems to have less effect.,

(Mrs Zitha, questionnaires, 43- years old, Mshini Secondary)

The above responses made it evident that schools have no formal support programme for pregnant girls and mothers. This is because, even though the girls got a bit of help from schools it relied on the school they attended. Noticeably, even though teachers wanted the best for the pregnant and parenting girls in schools they still faced institutional challenges that were beyond their control. Schools have no consistent and sustainable procedures, guidelines or provisions that are followed in dealing with learner pregnancy, parenting and destitute situations in the schooling space. Some teachers talked about counselling and donations that were offered to pregnant girls and mothers while other teachers stated that there was no programme that they knew of (Bhana et al., 2010), that was in place in their school. The absence of guidelines gave the whole process no structure and gave clear indication that the pregnant and parenting girls were on their own in dealing with the situation. That is because, the efforts to help them depended on the personality of the teacher (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019).

Consequently, teachers had to devise individual means to ensure that pregnant girls and mothers got help so they did what suited them driven by their personal beliefs and attitudes (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), which seemed to make them uneasy. For that reason, the provided support was not for every pregnant girl and mother but was for those who came forward and disclosed either their economic or academic needs. In fact, it relied on the learners' determination and the involvement of the parents. Mr Lifa insisted in his comment that learners have to show an interest and it was also important for parents to show an interest in the girl's academic improvement. The response justified the developmental studies 'findings that the girls who fall pregnant in their early teens normally do not finish school (Makiwane, 2010), possibly, because they are too immature to be consistent in what they wanted and the parenting and schoolwork pressures engulfed them and forced them out of school (Gyan, 2013; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019).

However, the responses further indicated that schoolgirls were not easily discouraged because despite the negative response they were getting in schools, where girls kept on falling pregnant and dropping out of school, some continued to respond positively to awareness campaigns and empowerment programmes. Clearly, schools cannot do it on their own and communities also have responsibilities to guide girls, encourage and support them in their areas with simple coping strategies that could be applicable to their socio-economic conditions that could motivate them to finish school. Since, teenagers grow up in communities not in programmes (McNeely, DrPH & Blanchard, 2009), possibly they might react positively to these efforts. Certainly, pregnancy is a human occurrence (Andrew & Dillon, 2014), and it is an individual's choice to have a child early in life (Males, 2010). Therefore, those girls who decide to be pregnant in destitute conditions needed to be supported (Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020), by being provided with a welcoming environment and being directed along the path to success that could motivate them to see persuasive reasons to remain in schools and the need to secure a better life for themselves.

The findings further divulged that teachers do many things to show support for the pregnant girls and mothers. They ensured that the girls experienced a safe pregnancy by motivating them to attend the clinic and to get the estimated delivery dates. All those minor things one might think they were nothing but they make a difference to school-aged girls who do not know what to do. Certainly, teachers created a connection between the school space and the

girls that made them to dream and have goals (Matlala, Nolte & Temane, 2014; McGaha - Garnett, 2007, Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). The creation of safe environment for the school-aged girls and positive feedback by teachers was crucial as it helped school-aged pregnant girls and mothers to develop a positive identity (Collins and Coleman, 2007), that becomes useful during decision-making and choice-making periods (McGaha-Garnett, 2007). The importance of the teachers positive words cannot be overstated because of the girls' socio-economic status since teenagers from stressful environments struggle to realise their abilities and talents (McGaha - Garnett, 2007). They were also not hearing them from anywhere else, instead they were surrounded by discouragements and inferior conditions (Mpayipheli et al., 2020; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019; van Zyl et al., 2015), which caused them to lose hope in persuing their dreams and then to drop out of school. Certainly, the extent of the teachers' kindness manifested itself in the teacher acknowledging that the girls might be pregnant at school but that they deserve an opportunity (Bhana et al., 2010; Matlala et al., 2014). This was remarkable as it inspired the girls to carry on with their education despite the situations and challenges.

However, teachers' responses indicated that they were not free to assist the girls the way they wanted to, as they feared being misintepreted. Sadly, the comment indicated how society and their customs sometimes hamper their progress and cripple their children's futures. This goes back to the need for the Department of Education to revise and monitor the implementation strategies for the provided policies. Participants' responses made it clear that teachers operating in a destitute context deal with many issues that affect pregnant and parenting girls' education that involved lack of basic needs (Juma, Alaii, Barthalomew, Askew, & Van den Borne, 2013; Lambani, 2015). Therefore, they were forced to offer intensive guidance and emotional support (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Their extra support was useful since children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from protection and guidance they receive at school because it helps them to overcome adversities (Mampane, 2014). However, relying on teachers' personal favours complicated things for both teachers and learners, as disadvantaged pregnant girls and mothers' trajectories to get education exposed the girls to favouritism and individual attitudes (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), this resulted to too many girls leaving school (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019; Molefe, 2016).

The Department of Education devised regulated measures on learner pregnancy (2007), as a guideline shielded by the Constitution of South Africa (1996). Yet, teachers' responses demonstrated the lack of uniformity that resulted from inconsistency in observing the guidelines. (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013). That raised questions about the viability of the policy in schools. Although the policy made provisions for helping the pregnant girls and mothers to get education but the onus was on the School Management Team to ensure that the information is properly disseminated to all the teachers and to safeguard the implementation of the policy (Molefe, 2016). School-aged pregnancy and parenting is associated with helplessness (Nkani & Bhana, 2016), and is regarded as a pathway to scarcity and relentless economic dependency (Chevalier & Viitanen, 2003; Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Therefore, disregarding the importance of devising structured means to ensure that the pregnant girls and mothers get education might yield an unsolicited outcome for the schools, society as well as the country and its economy. It is therefore important for the Department of Education to consider taking effective measures in dealing with the issue of pregnancy and parenting for learners by guiding the principals in prescribed ways that will promote uniformity and develop teachers on how to deal with girls who are pregnant or parenting and engulfed by destitute conditions. Avoidance of school's procedures adds to the girls' learning challenges on top of them having to face adverse socio-economic conditions and parenting.

7.4.2 We want them to succeed in life...

The findings revealed that teachers wanted pregnant girls and mothers to succeed in life regardless of the situation they were in. Accordingly, they wished to create a favourable environment for them to gain a fair chance to access education with fewer disruptions like all other learners so that they might be able to achieve their dreams. For that reason, teachers made their contributions by making suggestions although there were contextual trials. That is certainly in accordance with the theory that social constituted existence could be explored and altered (Wang, 2016). Participants made the following suggestions:

Outsourcing of competent teachers that will provide psychosocial support to learners so that they could regain self-confidence regarding school performance and motivate them to continue pursuing their goals even after giving birth.

(Mr Zakwe, questionnaires, 34 years old, Mshini Secondary)

They need extended learning programmes to ensure that they do not fall behind with their academics. The school needs a programme that should involve the school, learner and parents equally because it is crucial for academic success also; learners should show interest in their education. They can also be assisted by getting enabling documents like ID and birth certificate for them to apply for social grant.

(Mr Lifa, questionnaires, 52- years old, Sontong Secondary)

The school needs a secure space that will guarantee them privacy and make them feel comfortable enough to share their troubles. We also need help from healthcare providers and different stakeholders.

(Mrs Zitha, questionnaires, 43- years old, Mshini Secondary)

The participants' responses showed that teachers had big visions for the girls who became pregnant and parents in the schools. Probably because teachers understood the need for education for the girls who were in their situation, so they did not want them to be held back by pregnancy and parenting in the same socio-economic context (Matlala, Nolte & Temane, 2014; Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Consequently, they made different suggestions that they thought could contribute in helping the schools to assist the girls to continue with their schooling regardless of the harsh socio-economic conditions they were in and despite the multiple responsibilities they have (Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Some teachers acknowledged that pregnant girls and mothers needed a confidential space where they could be free to confide what is inside them in a dignified place. Indeed, that was a constructive input because it could strengthen the relationship and trust between teachers and the girls thus creates a space for teachers to understand learners' situation more and to know where they could help. Since, teenagers want to avoid publicity when dealing with personal and sexual matters (Mchunu, Peltzer, Tutshana & Seutlwadi, 2012), which locked them into the realm of secrecy (Bhana et al., 2010). Yet, this can have a daunting effect on them which can result in severe stress (Masuku, 1998), and impedes them from getting help which can cost them their entire future and destine them to a life of scarcity and illiteracy. The good ideas that teachers had for the girls were inspiring especially, for those girls who had no adult figures in their homes as teachers became their important motivators (Nkosi, & Pretorius, 2019), that created optimism in the possibility for change (Gergen, 2012).

In addition, the findings indicated that dealing with pregnancy and parenting is not an easy task that teachers could just do on their own without external help. This is because teachers have other learners to deal with in carrying on with the curriculum duties thus making attending to pregnancy issues an extra load (Du Preez et al, 2019). Consequently, they felt that what they were doing was not enough so the pregnant girls and mothers needed people who would supplement their effort from other departments like the Department of Health and Social Welfare in motivating the girls who fall pregnant in schools not to give up on their education. This accorded well with the findings of Matlala et al., (2014) that even though most teachers were deeply concerned about the health and wellbeing of the pregnant girls in schools as they were in a critical state. Certainly, that was an important contribution because healthcare providers and community leaders are keystone figures that could help schools to encourage girls to prioritise acquiring education and this could reduce economic dependency that frequently emanates from sexual behaviour (Govender, Naidoo & Tylor, 2019).

Realistically, considering the environment that participants were working in- where children were living on their own and parents and caregivers were minimally involved since parents from extreme socio-economically restricted neighbourhoods pay no attention to their children' education (Banerjee, 2016), hence it was demanding for them. In their responses they talked about advising the girls about getting the required documents for them to get social grants. One might think that was the duty of the parents, the neighbours or community leaders, but it gave the clear picture of the situation they were involved in. One participant suggested the deployment of well-trained teachers who will be able to deal with the situation in a professional manner. Mr Zakwe recommended,

“Outsourcing of competent teachers that will provide psych social support to learners to regain their self-confidence “

The comment indicated that teachers were willing to help but they felt ill-equipped (Matlala et al., 2014; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Even though, other studies showed that teachers complained about challenges involved in the catch-up programmes as pregnant learners were always tired (Mutshaeni, Manwadu & Mashau, 2015). But Mr Lifa believed that it could yield positive results as he suggested extending the academic programme that would help the pregnant and parenting girls with what they have missed. So, what teachers suggested showed parental love (Bhana et al., 2010, Mpayipheli & Kheswa, 2020), and understanding

that teenage phase is an exploratory phase where girls' lives could be led astray (Chevalier & Viitanen, 2003; McNeely et al., 2009), but if they are supported, they can be directed towards a bright future. If the Department of Education could work closely with the teachers and listen to and consider their input, the girls' education would be protected from unnecessary disruptions that normally end their schooling journeys. Bringing up the issue of parental involvement (Molefe, 2016), was crucial and a valuable contribution as it was a concern that most participants had. Such involvement appeared to be impracticable in their situation as they mentioned that most of their learners were from child-headed households (van Zyl et al., 2015). That indicated that schools needed to be realistic and accommodative when devising what would be efficient for their school environment in their effort to tackle the issue of learner pregnancy and parenting because following what was not pertinent to their school situation would not only frustrate them but it will also be ineffective and become an obstacle to the girls' education. Teachers responses indicated that they had best interest for the learners so if they could be supported and their ideas be considered they might succeed in helping the pregnant girls and mothers to acquire education with simplicity.

7.4.3 They should be grateful...

The findings revealed that teachers had different perceptions about the assistance that pregnant girls and mothers needed in order to experience better access to education. Some felt that nothing should be done for them. Therefore, girls should be grateful that they were allowed back to school like all other learners and appreciate social security protection that the Government had given for instance, not paying the school fees and enjoying the feeding scheme therefore they need to make use of it. Participants illustrated below:

We allow them in school during pregnancy. Learners get every kind of support and empowerment and counselling from Government and NGOs but they ignore all those support. They do not lack any assistance it just an ignorance of the learner to get pregnant.

Miss Jones, questionnaires, 30 years old, Sontong Secondary)

I have only academic interaction with pregnant girls and mothers. I believe giving financial assistance will send wrong message to other school girls and blur the role of the school. So, I do not have any strategies for pregnant girls, because I am more interested in preventing other girls from falling pregnant, together with other female

colleagues, I believe teaching and learning can only be successful with learners including pregnant girls and mothers' effort and support within the community

(Miss Sonke, questionnaires, 48 - years old, Sontong Secondary)

The responses revealed that some teachers were not happy with the manner in which pregnant girls and mothers received the support that is offered. Because of this, some teachers felt discouraged, and this resulted in pregnant girls and mothers not being treated well and valued like all other learners. Certainly, some teachers were constrained by socially constructed perspectives about pregnancy, and they therefore viewed pregnant and parenting girls as learners who were not serious about their education (Mkhathini, 2020; Molefe, 2016). Then, they paid attention to non-pregnant learners and considered them as focused learners and deserving of the teachers' best efforts. They talked about different organisations that the school often brought to the school that the girls ignored by falling pregnant anyway. Miss Sonke mentioned equal efforts were needed as it was evident that educators felt like they were sweating, while the pregnant girls and mothers were putting in less or no effort at all (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019).

The findings further revealed that even though other teachers believed that social assistance was enough for the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers, so they needed no further socio-economic support other teachers understood the effect of penurious conditions on pregnant girls and mothers 'schooling lives. Therefore, they believed that the girls have the right to education, so it is important for them to get support (Matlala et al., 2014; van Zyl et al., 2015), and they did their best to ensure that the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers got help in their schools. Like, asking for donations for them to ensure that they get what they needed for school. That did not only encourage the pregnant girls and mothers to continue with their learning, but it also boosted their self-esteem (Molefe, 2016), that encouraged them to approach their schooling with confidence. Nonetheless, the diverse beliefs that teachers have about pregnancy and parenting in schools demonstrated realities and attitudes that the girls had to face which complicated the situation and made it harder for them to gain positive access to learning. It provided the subtle detailed picture of the sources of difficulties that girls experienced in the school context. Some teachers felt that pregnancy is a careless mistake that the girls made despising all efforts made, so because of that they did not deserve any support on top of what they were getting. Miss Sonke's comment made it clear that if the

girls fell pregnant there was nothing much that could be done, the focus should be on the non-pregnant girls because they could still be helped.

Miss Sonke narrated:

”, I do not have any strategies for pregnant girls, because I am more interested in preventing other girls from falling pregnant together with other female colleagues, ‘

The excerpt indicated good intentions that teachers had for their learners but it made the care and intentions appeared to be conditional and contingent. By looking at the participants’ comments, the issue of pregnancy and parenting is still not receiving positive attention from the school community (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019), and the Departmental officials. Since, stakeholders consider permitting pregnant girls to attend schools as being a sign of moral decay (Mutshaeni et al., 2015), because of the taboo that is linked to it, yet it is affecting a number of school-aged girls’ futures (van Zyl, et al., 2015), especially those who are financially disadvantaged. Basically, that might be the reason why it impeded most pregnant girls’ education because most communities put blame on the girls who fall pregnant ignoring social issues like poverty that girls face which hinders their progress and stakeholder’s roles that they have to play to assist them to come out of the situation.

The findings further divulged that teachers were aware of the poor socio-economic situations that their learners were living in. Yet, when the girls fell pregnant, some teachers forgot and behaved like some of the parents who disowned them and became judgemental (Molefe, 2016; Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). Justifiably, parents’ anger might be understood when considering the different social constructions and background, but for the teachers it is worrying because teachers are always presumed to know better. In discussion about financial conditions Miss Sonke saw no need for financial help as she was worried about the reputation of the school and dissemination of the wrong message to other girls.

Miss Sonke expressed her feelings:

‘I believe giving financial assistance will send wrong message to other school girls and blur the role of the school’.

The above extract made it evident that pregnant girls and mothers are perceived as a disappointment to the school (van Zyl et al., 2015). Hence, they are expected to come to school, accept that they have done wrong, take any favours that were offered to them, finish

school and go before they contaminate other young girls (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Matlala et al., 2014), and this limited normal access to the school environment. While some teachers showed sincerity in willingness to help them others were showing that they were working with them just because they were avoiding getting into trouble. But honourably, comments indicated that the pregnant girls and mothers were kept in schools just to comply with the regulations since most teachers felt that pregnancy and parenting are private matters that the girls should deal with in their homes (Matlala et al., 2014; Mutshaeni, et al., 2015). That is rational enough for the school since dealing with the issue of pregnancy and parenting is a challenge (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2018), and for the girls it would reduce pressure and allowed them to be in a gossip free environment and to spend time with their babies, but realistically it is important for them to learn so that they could be able to approach the world with the effective tool that education represents. So, it is important that they should be given maximum support with less judgement by all stakeholders focusing on the common goal which is to ensure that the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers get education disregarding all the odds for them to escape impoverished lives.

7.5 Chapter Summary

The researcher examined teachers' narratives to get a deep insight into their' views concerning the support for pregnant girls and mothers and to draw on their ideas on what could be done to provide a positive effect on the girls' educational experiences. The findings revealed that teachers, as they are in the forefront of the battle working with the pregnant and parenting girls on a daily basis, in their situations they showed understanding of uneasy situations that the girls faced. Hence, they are not putting any blame on the pregnant girls and mothers for the conditions that they pass through, but to the societal environment where the girls grew up in. Even though some teachers saw no need for supporting pregnant girls and mothers in schools but most teachers believed that school-aged pregnant girls and mothers are still teenagers so they need to be given opportunity to achieve their dreams so they showed willingness to support them by giving significant ideas that could be useful in changing their situation. Again, the study found out that teachers have no formal or uniform procedures that are used in schools in order to help pregnant girls and mothers in the situation.

This made things difficult for the teachers because assisting on a personal basis; they found it restrictive and exposed them to the unpredictable wrath and different attitudes of the parents and the community. The findings highlighted that being moralistic about the issue of teenage pregnancy and parenting (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013), disadvantaged the pregnant and parenting girls from impoverished environment as their situations are not treated with sensitivity and urgency. Since, schools and the community worry about the image that pregnancy and parenting brings to them, over the future of the school-aged girls that might be driven to life time poverty. Finally, the study highlighted suggestions made by teachers that they believed it could improve pregnant and parenting learners' schooling process if there were to be maximum community and parental involvement, and collaborative engagement with the Department of Health and of Social Welfare, in the deployment of well trained teachers and counsellors and the introduction of extended programmes that could help the pregnant girls and mothers with their academic work.

7.5.1 Recommendations

Therefore, the study suggested that the Department of Education work with teachers in schools by:

- Ensuring that schools are presented and familiarised with the official policies and that proper monitoring should be put in place;
- Training of teachers so that they can be able to deal with pregnant and parenting learners that could be done in clusters, and each cluster can be provided with one or two well- trained teachers who could work with the pregnant girls and mothers. That could promote uniformity in schools and the formation of various useful strategies; and
- Schools need to treat the issue of scarcity with sensitivity and distinctiveness and be willing to guide the girls with ideas on things that they could do to help themselves, for instance helping them to do handwork. As Furstenberg (2016) suggests fighting poverty could be more effective than trying to stop pregnancy and parenting.

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CHAPTER 8

CONCLUDING A STUDY OF POVERTY, PREGNANCY, PARENTING AND SCHOOLING IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

8.1 introduction

The study consists of six articles that jointly intend to explore the impact of poverty in the navigation of pregnancy, parenting and acquiring education among school-aged girls in Durban, KwaZulu -Natal. Also, to gain insight on schooling experiences of pregnant girls and mothers, how it affect their schooling process as well as the manner in which they interpret the situation. First, the study examines social relations that pregnant girls and mothers form around the school context and its influence in the personal outlook and feeling about the situation. The study further examines strategies that girls devised to navigate through unfavourable environment like limited or no resources and unsupportive social circles to get education. Moreover, it elucidates various factors that interconnect and interfere with the girls' navigation processes. In addition, the study scrutinises the reception that the girls experience in their families and friends. Finally, it expounds different views that could heighten pregnant and parenting girls 'schooling experiences.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the schooling, pregnancy and parenting experiences of impoverished school girls in three township secondary schools in South Africa?
2. How does poverty influence the schooling, pregnancy and parenting of school-aged girls in these contexts?
3. In what ways could school-aged pregnant girls and mothers' quality of schooling and education be ensured and enhanced?

8.2 Significance of the Findings

The general significance of the study is its contribution to the understanding of the widespread issue of school-aged pregnancy and parenting, the girls' education and the effect of poverty that feature in the process thus adding to the intricacy of the phenomenon. The findings revealed challenges encountered only by pregnant girls and mothers from disadvantaged background. Hence, the study has a potential of helping the country's leaders to realise the existing inequalities. This could possibly lead to the early formulation of

effective policies that could be accommodative to various socio-economic statuses. Moreover, it could encourage co-operative working towards the common goal of all role players. Lastly, it could motivate the girls to realise their potential and to be optimistic about change (Gergen, 2009).

Each one of six chapters (articles) attempted to make a distinct contribution towards the objectives of the study as briefly discussed below.

8.2.1 Chapter 2: Poverty, pregnancy and motherhood in the schooling trajectories:

Narratives of seven high school girls in Durban, KwaZulu- Natal

By putting into context the issue of pregnancy, parenting and the acquiring of education for those in a destitute condition reflected through school- aged pregnant girls and mothers' voices, the chapter should provide an the understanding of what is real and rational (Gergen, 2009), about the discourse. Furthermore, it revealed underlining reasons for the socially constructed views that pregnancy, parenting and destitution are antithetical to acquiring education (Gyan, 2013). The findings highlighted the multiple roles that girls have to play and the financial struggles they face which result in a distinct schooling experience for them. Moreover, it indicated the influence of the school environment in the girls' education. This equipped the chapter with a potential to guide different stakeholders including Government officials to realize the importance of ensuring that girls in these contexts are supported. The chapter further reflected the need for the commitment from the Department of Basic Education to ensure the accurate implementation and the monitoring of the learner pregnancy management policies in schools.

8.2.2 Chapter 3: Pregnancy, parenting and education: Voices of four underage girls from one school in Durban, South Africa

Allowing pregnant girls and mothers to express their daily experiences in the school space, the chapter uncovers the social reactions and meaning (Gergen, 2000), that pregnant girls and mothers create in the situation. This was of great importance since pregnant girls and mothers are commonly known as demotivated learners and delinquent children (Mutshaeni, Manwadu, & Mashau. 2015). So by detailing the girls 'day-to-day school experiences the chapter clearly illuminates the effect of the girls' encounter with formal education, the feelings they develop, their views about social engagement and their determination to assert

their right to education. Hence, these findings have potential to guide education policy-makers to ponder about the successes and failures of present policies as far as school-aged pregnancy, and parenting and socio-economic conditions are concerned and to consider advocating an amendment to the policy provisions to be more inclusive.

8.2.3 Chapter 4: Implications of poverty on pregnancy, parenting and education: Experiences of five teenage girls in three township secondary schools in the Pinetown district

Using social constructionism and intersectionality enabled the acquiring of knowledge through social interactions and discursive engagement (Schwandt, 2008). The chapter revealed the depth and diversity of pregnant girls and mothers' realities in their quest to acquire education. Considering that, the findings divulged the multiplicity of pregnant girls and mothers' needs, each case needed to be uniquely attended to. For example, the pregnant girls and mothers' vulnerabilities (poverty, pregnancy and parenting at school) were found to be the products of social injustices and power relationship issues that intersect to hinder their schooling practices. This, revealed the need for collaboration of State Departments, that includes, Social Welfare, Health and Education, in order to help the girls with individual guidance and support for the pregnant girls and mothers who are living on their own and those who are exposed to unjust situations that put their wellbeing at risk and that impede them in acquiring education.

8.2.4 Chapter 5: Family and friends' interactions and reactions: Implications of pregnancy and parenting on the schooling of nine school-aged girls in Pinetown, KwaZulu- Natal

Letting the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers from penurious environment to chronicle the reality of their primary experiences from their natural setting enabled the unfolding of unknown authenticities (Gergen, 2012), about school-aged girls' day to day lives. Therefore, the findings permitted the identification of adequate means that will encourage better acceptance and support of school-aged pregnant and parenting girls from their families. The findings have the potential to draw the attention of the country's leaders to envision extending poverty fighting programmes to schools, by making suitable provision for the girls in accordance with their basic urgent needs including those of, pregnant girls, mothers and their babies. Another importance of this chapter is that it has shown the detailed life world of

pregnant girls and mothers from deprived socio-economic environment that might give clues to the educational stakeholders and policy makers on what should be done to advocate equity in the girls' schooling process.

8.2.5 Chapter 6: Pregnancy, parenting and schooling: Narratives of resilience for school-aged girl from three poverty-stricken township high schools

The chapter put the focus on the formulated strategies that the pregnant girls and mothers devised to navigate the spaces and places of parenting and pregnancy to acquire education with restricted resources and support at home and at school with an aim to change the status quo (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Hence, the findings discerned creativity and growth that the pregnant girls and mothers demonstrated in negotiating the situation. Yet, all suggested that ideas required adult backing so communities, teachers and parents can contribute with whatever is within their means to support school-aged pregnant girls and mothers. The findings limit the space for stigmatisation, labelling and prejudgment as it capacitates communities with knowledge about the resilient behaviour that the pregnant girls and mothers exhibit irrespective of adverse hardships in their navigation and it advocate respect for them as agents of change for their group.

8.2.6 Chapter 7: Educating pregnant girls and mothers: Teachers' voices from two high schools in the Pinetown District in Durban, South Africa

Privileging teachers to communicate with the alarming phenomenon of pregnancy and parenting in schools opened up controversial issues that are deep-seated since they relate to the girls over extended scenarios (Wang, 2016). The chapter furnished teachers with a scarce platform to express their views on how they ensure the schooling of school-aged pregnant girls and mothers in their schools with the aim of contributing insights into our understanding on how their education and educational experiences could be improved, even in other similar contexts, towards equitable education. The findings highlighted different constructive ideas that the teachers believed could enhance the girls 'education and motivate them to finish school regardless of their poor socio-economic situation. Therefore, the findings of the study have the possibility to create better understanding and clear guidelines for what is required to help the girls who fall pregnant and become mothers at school to finish school like all other learners. Also, the chapter has the potential to open the pregnant girls and mothers' eyes to realise the efforts their teachers and other stakeholders put in to support them that could

motivate them to value all forms of support they get by persevering and endeavouring to achieve a better life through acquiring education.

8.3 Theoretical Reflections

The study is rooted in social constructionism and children' geographies as well as intersectionality in order to scrutinise ways in which pregnant girls and mothers negotiate parenting, pregnancy and acquire education simultaneously in the context of a scarcity of resources. Social constructionism did not only expose injustices that socially constructed views brought to pregnant girls and mothers' schooling process but it also revealed the inequalities and exclusion the constructed views that impacted negatively on the pregnant girls and mothers' lives. Social constructionism made it possible to understand the intersections of poverty clearly in the navigation process and the dominant social construction about school-aged girls' pregnancy and parenting that encourages rejection of the girls and embarrassments of the destitute conditions that can overcome school-aged girls. Through social constructionism the study illuminated the effect of social interactions and diverse interpretation of the situation. Therefore, in the pregnant girls and mothers narratives their views, approaches and attitudes towards the individual situations and the eagerness to attain education demonstrated sources of their inspiration that were acquired from contextual realities.

Intersectionality enabled the study to clarify the taken-for-granted factors (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), which create inequalities among pregnant girls and mothers in the school space and hinder the equal access to available help for some of the girls who are encompassed by unrecognised hardships. This includes orphanhood, neglect and the girls' age that goes with lack of knowledge. Through intersectionality the study revealed different vulnerabilities that interconnect and weaken the pregnant girls and mothers' socio- economic conditions. If it was not for intersectionality other factors that add to vulnerabilities such as lack of adult guidance, caring family members and supportive social structures may not have been identified. As some of the contributing factors that complicate the girls' navigation of parenting and schooling could have been continuously ignored in trying to deal with the issue. This could result in recurring inequalities and challenges for girls in the situation.

The use of new sociological childhood studies and childhood geographies allowed the study to acknowledge the abilities of the pregnant girls and mothers to express their views and to examine the fidelity of their childhood interventions. The pregnant girls and mothers narratives honoured the study with a clear understanding on how girls were managing to navigate through all the thin lines of poverty, stigmatisation, parenting and schooling responsibilities. Thus, provides comprehension that although their socio-economic standing forced them to the position of unfair uncomfortable experiences but through their sanguinity and social support they can move away from the situation. Also, from the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers' conversations the study understood the profound effect of socialised prejudice and stereotyping and how this persists in the communities. Such as, professed assumptions about school-aged pregnancy and parenting of ending girls' education and encouraging them to adopt a poor socio-economic lifestyle. Children's geographies enabled the interesting exploration of pregnant girls and mothers' creative views and their resilient actions against the situation in order to acquire education in order to improve economic status for themselves and their families.

8.4 Methodological Reflections

Qualitative inquiry uses narrative reports to find out and describe what people do in their everyday lives (Ravitch & Carl, 2012), and it is responsive even to the most ostracised group in the society (Liamputtong, 2010). Because of this, the study adopted qualitative narrative inquiry. The approach permitted the researcher to draw in depth information about subjective understanding of the situation from participants without any feeling of violation and intrusiveness. The method also enabled the respect and empathetic engagement between the researcher and the school-aged pregnant girls and mothers as it allows face-to-face interactions with participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Accordingly, the pregnant girls and mother's expression of the unique feeling of being given special positive attention was evident in their responses and body language. As a result, it made them feel free to open up and to express their experiences, to share thoughts about the situation with excitement and to enjoy being listened to. Through participants' narratives the study was able to clarify diverse realities about pregnant girls and mothers' life experiences. Since, the inquiry allows naturalistic engagement (Robinson & Mendelson, 2012), and natural setting during data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018), so it privileged the study with firsthand information as

the researcher got the opportunity to observe participants as they were telling their stories and illuminated the real and unuttered feelings about their situation.

Through a participatory mapping exercise and photo voice, pregnant girls and mothers were able to express their real stories and experiences without any intimidation, disruptions and contamination. It allowed the researcher to access their real-life worlds that enabled the understanding of sensitive spheres of their realities that were difficult for them to mention during individual and focus group interviews. Accordingly, the approach broke the difficulties driven by social construction that tabooed the discourse on sexuality between young people and adults, yet which is crucial in teenagers' lives and society. Discussions about pictures, drawings and descriptions circumnavigated socially constructed boundaries and provided in-depth understanding about the pregnant girls and mothers 'experiences and the choices they have to make to come out of the situation with their families. They were even able to express their inner worries about the destitute conditions they face. Focus group interviews were very informative for the researcher and the participants since, the girls were able to share their thoughts and to empower each other that brought liberty and hope for all the girls as they enjoyed social interaction and making positive and inspiring comparisons. Also, engaging in new relationships and grasping that they were not the only ones who passed through hardship to get education in order to shape their future, brought motivation. Individual interviews enabled the intimate discussion between the participants and the researcher that enabled the elucidation of personal realities that provided the girls with the platform for the telling of their side of the story without being judged while providing the study with detailed and delicate comprehension about the pains that poverty brings to the life of most South Africans and the immeasurable damages it wrought on young girls 'education and development. Remarkably, socialised values and culture' inclination of school-aged pregnancy and parenting to immorality and delinquency (Molefe, 2016), blinded families and communities even some professionals to label the girls and to blame them without any scrutiny. That indicates the need for communities and families as well as education officials to take their time and to look at what really feeds the consistency of school-aged pregnancy and parenting in underprivileged schools in South Africa which are the majority and its effect in the country's socio-economic progress.

8.5 Professional and Personal Reflections

To reflect on the research journey of this study the researcher has noted that this is the opportunity that cannot be traded with anything as it honoured the researcher with the great prospect of learning from the best source. Listening to the voice of young girls who live the life everyday did not only furnish the researcher with the rich information that will make people understand sources and the effect of pregnancy and parenting in the school-aged girls' lives and education. But it also taught the researcher to direct her thinking about socially constructed viewpoints on various social factors that are anchored by socialisation such as, women's sexual and reproductive rights (Human Right Watch, 2018), the right to education and dignity that are sometimes violated with justifications. Knowing this made the researcher not to judge the school-aged girls who were pregnant and mothers, instead the researcher approached their diverse situation with respect and sensitivity.

The findings of the study made the researcher realise the masked inequalities seated in the communities and in the state provisions. The researcher also noticed that this marginalised group in South Africa has no platforms to express their concerns which expose them to discursive injustices and inescapable impoverished conditions. In light of this, we as teachers and as the closest and available sources of knowledge we need to equip young people with information that will help them to rise above the penurious environment. We need to be more than teachers to our girls. Among other things we need to be life couches and surrogate mothers to encourage them to read and advocate change in their communities in order to deconstruct the socially constructed stereotypes about the school-aged pregnancy and parenting. Personally, the findings of the study taught the researcher as a woman above all a mother that complaining about the escalation of pregnancy in schools would not change the situation nor help young girls. Therefore, we all as South African citizens need to embrace our culture of Ubuntu and the notion of viewing someone's child as your child (Moeketsi, 2008). We should be willing to help with whatever we have no matter how little it is, it will obviously make a difference in one girl's life. Ignoring her position on the issue of pregnancy, parenting and the impact of poverty, the researcher understood that teenage stage is a developmental and exploratory stage (McNeely, DrPh & Blanchard, 2009), so the girls in this stage need support in all aspects. Moreover, adverse socio-economic conditions can impact negatively on their choice-making resulting in worse situations that cause them to carry on with the chain of poverty (Gaille, 2016). - The study might well advocate for the

society to unlearn the socialised perspectives about pregnancy and parenting and to realise the vitality of contributing in building the nation by spearheading programmes that will fight against poverty and enlighten teenagers about sexuality and reproductive health.

8.6 Limitations of the Study

The socially constructed reflection of school -aged pregnancy and parenting means that the girl is of loose character (Motsa, 2018). This creates unsolicited images about those girls who fall pregnant and become parents in the schools setting and it exposes them to different forms of marginalisation and exclusion. This study investigated delicate issues involved in school parenting and poverty that are accompanied by stigmatisation and indignity. Consequently, selection of sample group was challenging. Some pregnant girls were not willing to share their situations with a stranger since they were still hiding their pregnancies while others were still struggling to accept the fact that they were about to be mothers. Also, using purposive sampling with the help of teachers put the target population in an awkward situation as they found it difficult to deny the request from their teachers and felt obligated to participate. As a consequence, in the fourth school the girls agreed and signed the consent form to take part but no one showed up for the field work. The researcher therefore worked with participants from three schools. Also, the unpredictable girls' health conditions and their babies also became a limitation as, one of the pregnant girls' experienced labour pains on the day of the interview. The researcher had to continue with her after some weeks after giving birth. Again another participant had to take a child to the clinic which took a long time, The researcher could not continue with the interview on the same day. The girls' socio-economic background became another limitation as it resulted in communication breakdowns due to the poor means of communication. During focus group interviews some mothers had to come with their babies to the interviews because it was on a week end and family members were not willing to help if the baby's mother is not at school and they did not have anyone to look after their babies (Chigona & Chetty, 2008), and some girls did not want me to see where they were staying which brought delay because the researcher had to wait until schools opened. What is more, is that some of the girls did not want to disclose their penurious condition and this made it hard to get to the depth of their real situation. To add to the problems, other participants took part in the individual interview after giving birth but when conditions got worse they disappeared. Because of this; I had only seven (7) participants for the focus group interview. The qualitative approach is known for its inquiring method like

focus group interviews for gaining large amount of information (Creswell, 2013; Ranjit, 2014). However, in this study it became a limitation due to the delicacy of the topic and the age of the participants. Most of them were shy to narrate their real experiences and to convey their genuine feelings about the situation in front of others unlike in the individual session. Time factor also caused constraints, as my participants are parents with school, parenting and home responsibilities; The researcher had to consider all that during the interview session. The procedures and nature of the topic required enough time to gain profound insights but time was not always available.

8.7 Conclusion

The study concluded that the stipulated policies on management of school-aged pregnancy and parenting in the schools are not effectively implemented due to lack of monitoring and information dissemination strategies. Moreover, the policies' provisions disregard the countries 'diverse socio-economic status that brings exclusion to learners from extreme impoverished environments. In consequence, the study found out that the pregnant girls and mothers in these areas still experience challenges in negotiating of parenting and schooling simultaneously because of the poor socio-economic conditions they live in hence the majority of them end up leaving school. The study therefore maintains that overlooking the intersection of poverty, school-aged pregnancy and parenting when making policy provisions might impede South Africa in striving to achieve the *Sustainable Development Goals* by 2030 as quality education and ending poverty are amongst the goals (UNDP, 2015). Studies show that pregnancy and parenting is rife in poverty-stricken communities that form the majority of the South African population. The study suggests that policy-makers should consider involving and taking ideas from people like teachers who are key role players in the scene (Nkani & Bhana, 2016), and they are expected to execute the policies and to be equipped with sufficient knowledge in order to do so. Secondly, this study recommended that the issue of school-aged pregnancy and parenting should be approached with delicacy as it involves a girl-child's education, reproductive health and the nation's future (UNICEF, 2007; Nkani & Bhana, 2016). Hence, different Government departments should collaborate in developing information and in the design of programmes that will guide and rehabilitate those girls who accidentally find themselves pregnant while still at school in poor economic circumstances with no caring adult to turn to. According to Kim (2010), poverty prevails because families living in the financial disadvantaged communities do not get quality

education. Henceforth, these communities need to be empowered in different ways to fight poverty including the range of issues based on young girls' needs as well as mechanisms of obtaining help (HRW, 2018), mostly those offered by the state. Finally, the Department of Education should consider stationing counsellors in schools that will work with pregnant girls and mothers (Human Right Watch, 2018), who are encompassed by multiple vulnerabilities that complicate their schooling journey unlike those of their counterparts (Raza, 2017).

8.8 References


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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance Certificate


**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**
**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

16 October 2019

Ms Audrey S Mkhathini (213572552)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Mkhathini,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0074/019D
Project title: School-Aged parenthood and poverty in South African Townships : Resilience of Teenage Girls

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

With regards to your response received on 12 July 2019 to our letter of 07 March 2019, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.


Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of **1 year** from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

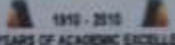
Yours faithfully







Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Prof Pholoho Morojele
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Ansurie Pillay
cc Administrators: Ms M Ngcobo and Mr SN Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
 Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
 Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
 Postal Address: Private Bag 354001, Durban 4000
 Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3567/6350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4003 Email: ethics@ukzn.ac.za / ethics@ukzn.ac.za / ethics@ukzn.ac.za
 Website: www.ukzn.ac.za


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Appendix 2: Informed Consent Letter for the Head of Education Department

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL



School of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Durban

June 2020

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THREE (3) SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE PINETOWN DISTRICT

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am a PhD. student at the University of KwaZulu Natal conducting a study research project titled: **Poverty, School-aged Pregnancy, Parenthood and Schooling in Three Townships Secondary Schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa** I'm keen to explore learners' resilience in the school context. I humbly request your assistance in this research project by granting me permission to conduct my study at your schools. Learners will be required to participate as individual and in focus group interviews that are expected to last between 40 - 50 minutes.

Please note that:

- The school and participants will not receive any material gains for participation in this research project.
- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their opinions.
- The school or participants' identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- All learners' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality).

- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Audio-recording of interviews will not be done if permission of participants is not obtained.
- Data will be stored in the University in a locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

Thanking you in advance for your assistance. For any questions that you might have, you may contact me or my Supervisor.

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini

Supervisor: Pholoho Morojele

██████████

031- 2603234

bonmkh@gmail.com

Morojele@ukzn.co.za

Yours sincerely

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Tel: 033 392 1063

Ref.: 2/4/8/1820

Miss AS Mkhathini
1 Bertha Frame Rd
New Germany
3510

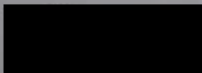
Dear Miss Mkhathini

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN D&E INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled; "SCHOOL- AGED PARENTHOOD AND POVERTY IN SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIPS: RESILIENCE OF TEENAGE GIRLS", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 July 2019 to 10 January 2022.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Pinetown District


Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 01 July 2019

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa

Physical Address: 247 Burger Street • Anton Lembede Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201

Tel.: +27 33 392 1063 • Fax.: +27 033 392 1203 • Email: Phindile.Duma@kzndoe.gov.za • Web: www.kzndoe.gov.za

Facebook: KZNDOE • Twitter: @OBE_KZN • Instagram: kzn_education • Youtube: kzndoe

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Appendix 4: Informed Consent letter for school principals

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL



School of Education

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
P. Bag X03
Ashwood
3605
Durban

June 2020

The Principal

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am a PhD. student at the University of KwaZulu Natal conducting a study research project titled: **Poverty, School-aged Pregnancy, Parenthood and Schooling in Three Townships Secondary Schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**. I am keen to exploring learners' resilience in the school context. I humbly request your assistance in this research project by granting me permission to conduct my study at your schools. Learners will be required to participate as individuals and in focus group interviews that are expected to last between 40 - 50 minutes.

Please note that:

- The school and participants will not receive any material gains for participation in this research project.
- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their opinions.
- The school or participants' identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- All learners' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Audio- recording of interviews will not be done if permission of participants is not obtained.
- Participants will be requested to take photos of places and objects that will assist them to narrate their own world. But they will not be obligated to take photos, if they do not feel comfortable to take photos they will be free not to take these.
- If you are willing for your learners' interviews and discussions to be recorded by audio equipment, please indicate by ticking below

Willing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not willing	<input type="checkbox"/>
---------	--------------------------	-------------	--------------------------

- Data will be stored at the University in a locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed.

I thank you.

Yours sincerely

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini

Appendix 6: Consent Form for School Principal Clernaville Circuit, School-2**Consent Form**

If permission to conduct the research is granted in, please fill in and sign the form below.

I [REDACTED] (full name) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the research to be conducted at [REDACTED] high school. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire.

Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: 21/07/2020

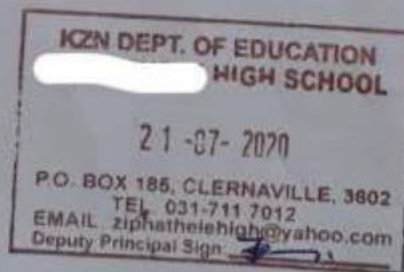
Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini

Supervisor: Pholoho Morojele

031- 2603234

bonmkh@gmail.com

Morojele@ukzn.co.za



Application for Permission to Conduct Research in

Appendix 7: Consent Form from School Principal KwaSanti Circuit, School-3

Consent Form

If permission to conduct the research is granted in, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, [REDACTED] (full name) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the research to be conducted at [REDACTED] high school. I understand that learners are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they desire.

Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: 07 06 MAR 2020

SECONDARY SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 1013
NAGINA
3604

Supervisor: Pholoho Morojele

031- 2603234

bonmkh@gmail.com

Morojele@ukzn.co.za

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini

[REDACTED]

Appendix 8: Informed Consent Letter for Teachers

Date.....

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini, a PhD. student at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I'm conducting a study research project titled: **Poverty, School-aged Pregnancy, Parenthood and Schooling in Three Townships Secondary Schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.**

I am keen to explore learners' resilience in the school context. I kindly request your assistance in this research project by taking part in an individual interview. You will be requested to answer questions by filling in the questionnaire. The purpose of the study is to explore the effect of poverty on the navigation of schooling, pregnancy and parenting amongst teenage girls. It should also reveal how teenage girls cope with the situation.

Please note that:

- You will not receive any material gains for participation in this research project
- Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but will only be reported as population opinion.
- You will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your choice.
- Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- You will be permitted to speak isiZulu or English, depending on your language of choice.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and institution will not be used throughout the research process.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, you will be free to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to you.
- You involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.

If there is any question that you would like to ask concerning this project or participation you can contact me or my supervisor Professor P. Morojele, below are our contact details:

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini

Supervisor: Pholoho Morojele



031- 2603234

bonmkh@gmail.com

Morojele@ukzn.co.za

Your contribution to this research will be of utmost importance.

Yours Sincerely

Sibongile Mkhathini

Appendix 9: Consent Form for the Teacher

I.....(full names of teacher) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participate in the research and I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF TEACHER:..... Date:.....

Appendix 10: Informed Consent Letter for Parents/ Caregivers in English

Dear Parents/Caregiver

I am a PhD. student at the University of KwaZulu Natal conducting a study research project titled: **Poverty, School-aged Pregnancy, Parenthood and Schooling in Three Townships Secondary Schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

I'm keen to explore learners' resilience in the school context. I humbly request your assistance in this research project by allowing your daughter to take part in this project. Learners will be required to participate as individuals and in focus group interviews that are expected to last between 40 to 50 minutes.

Please note that:

- Participants will not receive any material gains for participation in this research project.
- The learners will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect their opinions.
- The participants' identities will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- All learners' responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and institution will not be used throughout the research process).
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, participants will be free to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- The participants will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what they do not want to reveal.
- Audio-recording of interviews will not be done if permission of participants is not obtained.
- Data will be stored at the University in a locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter they will be destroyed.
- Please indicate below if you are willing to permit that whatever your child says be recorded through audio equipment:

I thank you.

Yours sincerely

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini

Appendix 11: Consent Form for Parents/ Caregivers

If permission to conduct the research is granted in, please fill in and sign the form below.

I.....(full name) hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the research to be conducted at_____ high school. I understand that my daughter is free to withdraw from the project at any time, should she desires.

Willing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not willing	<input type="checkbox"/>
---------	--------------------------	-------------	--------------------------

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini

Supervisor: Pholoho Morojele



031- 2603234

bonmkh@gmail.com

Morojele@ukzn.co.za

Appendix 12: Incwadi Yesicelo Sokwenza uCwaningo neNdodakazi Yenu

Umzali / Mnakekeli Othandekayo

Ngingumfundi waseNyuvesi yakwaZulu Natal owenza ucwaningo ngesihloko esithi **‘Ubuphofu, Ukukhulelwa, uBuzali kanye nokufunda Ezikoleni Ezintathu Zamabanga Aphakeme Emalokishini AkwaZulu-Natal eNingizimu Afrika**. Ngicela ukuba umntwana wakho abe inxenye yalolu cwaningo. Kuzobe nemibuzo azo buzwa ngayedwa nala bezobuzwa beqoqene nabanye.

Ngicela uqikelele loku okulandelayo:

- Akukho lutho oluyotholwa umntwana wakho ngokuba ingxenye yocwaningo.
- Kulindeleke ukuba umntwana wakho aphenyule imibuzo ngokunikeza uvo lwakhe.
- Ngeke lisetshenziswe igama lakhe.
- Kuyosentshenziswa amagama ekungewona awabo.
- Zonke izimpendulo zakhe zoyokwamukelwa.
- Imibuzo azobuzwa yona ngeke idalulwe.
- Ukuba yingxenye yocwaningo uyazikhethela. Uvumelekile ukuyeka noma ingasiphi isikhathi. Lokho ngeke kumlethele imiphumela emibi.
- Ngeke aphoqwe ukuba akhulume izinto angathandi ukuzikhuluma noma ezimenza asabe.
- Ukuqopha yonke ingxoxo kuyokwenziwa ngemvume yakhe.
- Ulwazi lonke olutholakalile luyogcinwa eNyuvesi iminyaka emihlanu emva kwaloko lishiswe.

Ngiyabonga

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini



bonmkh@gmail.com

Supervisor: Pholoho Morojele

031- 2603234

Morojele@ukzn.co.za

Appendix 13: Informed Consent Letter for Learners in English

Dear Participant

I am Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini, a PhD. student at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I'm conducting a study research project titled: **Poverty, School-aged Pregnancy, Parenthood and Schooling in Three Townships Secondary Schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

I am keen to explore learners' experiences in the navigation process of the situation in the school context. I kindly request your assistance in this research project by taking part in an individual and in focus group interviews. You will be requested to answer questions and tell your story. Interviews may take 40 to 50 minutes. The interview will take place at your school premises. The purpose of the study is to explore the effect of poverty in the navigation of schooling, pregnancy and parenting amongst teenage girls. It should also reveal how teenage girls cope with the situation. Participation is purely for academic purpose only.

Please note that:

- You will not receive any material gains for participation in this research project
- Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person but will only be reported as population opinion.
- You will be expected to respond to each question in a manner that will reflect your opinion.
- Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- You will be permitted to speak in isiZulu or in English, depending on your language interest.
- Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and institution will not be used throughout the research process.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore, you will be free to withdraw at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to you.
- You will not, under any circumstances, be forced to disclose what you do not want to reveal.

- Interviews will be audio- recorded and you will be requested to take photos of places and objects that will assist in telling your story. However, you are not forced to take part in audio- recording or in photo taking.

If you are willing to take part in the taking of photos and audio – recording please tick in the spaces below.

	Willing	Not Willing
Photos		
Audio –Recording		

- Data will be stored at the University in a locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter they will be destroyed.

Appendix 14: Consent Form for Learners

If you agree to take part in this project, please fill in your full name and sign the form below.

I _____ full name hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for me to participate in the research project, I understand that I'm free to withdraw from the project at any time, should I do wish to do so.

Signature_____

Date_____

Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini

Supervisor: Pholoho Morojele

██████████

031- 2603234

bonmkh@gmail.com

Morojele@ukzn.co.za

Appendix 15: Participants' Details

1. What is your name?

2. How old are you?

3. What grade are you doing?

4. How old is your baby?

Who do you live with?

5. Please tell me more about your life at home?

Appendix 16: Interview Questions for Learners

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the schooling experiences of teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers in four township secondary schools in South Africa?

- 1.1. Can you please tell me about your life at home and at school?
- 1.2. Please tell me what is your relationship like with your family members?
- 1.3. Please tell me how do people in your community interact with you?
- 1.4. How do people in your community react to your situation?
- 1.5. Please tell me about your relationship with your friends before pregnancy and now.
- 1.6. Please tell me how other learners interact with you?
- 1.7. Please tell me how other learners react to your situation?
- 1.8. Please tell me how teachers interact with you?
- 1.9. How do teachers react to your situation?
- 1.10. How does School Governing Body and other elders interact with you?
- 1.11 How does the School Governing Body and other school elders react to your situation?
- 1.12. Please explain how you manage your time in a manner that enables you to get time to do your homework or study?
- 1.13. Please explain if there is any kind of help that you need that can assist you with the caring of the baby?

2. How does poverty, motherhood and pregnancy affect the education attainment of teenage girls in these contexts?

- 2.1. Please explain to me how you manage to take care of your personal financial needs, the child's needs and your educational needs?
- 2.2. Please tell me about your financial condition before pregnancy and now?
- 2.3. Please explain what you need to help you with the financial support for the baby?
- 2.4. Please tell me about any kind of maintenance or child support grant that you get?
- 2.5. Explain how you manage to get all that you need for the baby and your education?

2.6. Please explain what you do if the baby is not feeling well?

2.7. Please explain what you do to deal with the situation of taking care of the baby and your education?

2.8. Please explain how the whole situation affects your education?

3. In what ways could teenage pregnant girls and mothers' quality of schooling and education be ensured and enhanced?

3.1. Can you please tell me what you do at school to make your life easy for you to attain your education?

3.2. Please explain to me what you are doing differently at home that you were not doing before pregnancy for you to get support that you need in order to finish school?

3.3. Please tell me what you do differently at school for you to get support that you need to get your education?

3.4. Please explain what you personally do at school to enhance your academic success.

3.5. Please explain to me how you manage to balance your duties as a parent at home and school demands as a learner?

3.6. Please tell me about your school performance before pregnancy as a learner and now as a mother or as a pregnant girl.

3.7. Please tell me about your personal strategies that you have developed to maintain or improve your academic performance.

3.8. Please explain to me the kind of help you need to ease the situation or boost your learning and for you to improve your performance.

4. Photo Voice

4.1. What is happening in this picture?

4.2 Why did you take this picture?

4.3 Tell me a story about what happened in that picture and all that it means to you about the situation.

4.4. Is there anything else you want to tell me about this picture, maybe your feelings about what happened here?

5. Mapping Exercise

- 5.1. Please draw places that make you feel comfortable at school and explain why?
- 5.2. Please draw places that make you feel uncomfortable at school and explain why?
- 5.3. Draw depictions of your economic situation at home and at school and explain ?
- 5.4. Please draw a picture that depicts how you see yourself in your community, school and home in terms of respect, dignity and acceptance and explain why you depict this in this way?
- 5.5. Please draw a depiction of people or things that bring hope to you and explain why?
- 5.6. Please draw a depiction of people or things that bring joy in your life explain why?
- 5.7. Please draw a depiction of situation or things that make you sad and explain why?
- 5.8. Draw a picture of things that you think make thing difficult for you and explain why?
- 5.9. Please draw a depiction of things that you are good at and explain why?
- 5.10. Draw a picture that shows your life in five years time and explain.

Thank You.

Appendix 17: Imibuzo NgesiZulu

Translated Interview Questions / Imibuzo Yenhlolovo Ehumushiwe

1. Baphatheka kanjani omama abangabafundi namantombazane akhulelwa ezikoleni ezikolemi zamabanga aphezulu emalokishini?
 - 1.1 Ungakhuluma ngempilo yakho yasekhaya nasesikoleni?
 - 1.2 Bunjani ubudlelwane bakho nomndeni wakho?
 - 1.3 Kunjani ukuxhumana kwakho nomphakathi wangakini?
 - 1.4 Ubudlelwane bakho nabangani bakho busafana nangaphambi kokuthi ukhulelwe?
 - 1.5 Kunjani ukuxhumana kwakho nabanye abafundi?
 - 1.6 Bakubuka kanjani othisha bakho njengoba ukulesi simo?
 - 1.7 Isigungu sesikole kanye nabanye abadala abayizisebenzi esikoleni bakubuka kanjani?
 - 1.8 Uyasithola isikhathi sokwenza umsebenzi wesikole ekhaya noma ukufunda?
 - 1.9 Ngabe ukhona okusiza ngengane ekhaya uma usuvela esikole?

2. Ubuphufo, ubuzali kanye nokukhulelwa kuwakhubaza kanjani amantombazane asemancane ukuthi athole imfundo kulezi zindawo?
 - 2.1 Ungakhuluma ngesimo senhlalo yasekhaya kanye nezezimali/
 - 2.2 Ngabe ubani okunakekela ngokukhokhela izidingo zakho kanye nezesikole?
 - 2.3 Ngabe ubani onakekela ingane ngokukhokhela izidingo zayo?
 - 2.4 Ngabe kukhona lapho uthola isondlo sengane noma isibonelelo sikaHulumeni?
 - 2.5 Ngokubona kwakho okutholayo kwanele izindleko zemfundo yakho kanye nezindleko zezidingo zomntwana?
 - 2.6 Wenzenjani uma ingane ingaphilile?
 - 2.7 Wenzenjani ukuze umelane nesimo?
 - 2.8 Ucabanga ukuthi lesi simo siyayithinta imfundo yakho?

3. Ngabe amantombazane akhulelwe na bafundi abawomama bamelana kanjani nempilo yabo yesikole kulezi zikole zamabanga aphezulu eNingizimu Afrika?
 - 3.1 Ungasho ukuthi yini oyenza esikole, ukwenza kubelula ukuthola imfundo yakho?
 - 3.2 Ngabe kukhona okwenzayo ekhaya obungakwenzi ungakakhulelwe ukuze bakulekelele ekhaya ukwazi ukuqedela nezifundo zakho?
 - 3.3 Yini oyenza ngokuhlukile esikoleni ukuze ulekeleleke ukwazi ukuqhubeka nemfundo yakho?
 - 3.4 Yini oyenzayo ngokwakho esikoleni ukuze uthole amamaki amahle njengomfundi?
 - 3.5 Ngabe unawo amaqhinga akho owasebenzisayo ekhaya ukumelana nomsebenzi wobuzali njengomama kanye nengcindezi yomsebenzi wesikole njengomfundi?

Ngiyabonga

Appendix 18: Biographical Data Capture Form for Teachers

Please tick in the appropriate box and be assured that all information either personal information about yourself or the study will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

1. Gender

Female

Male

2. Age

3. Years in School

4. Qualification you have

Appendix 19: Questionnaires for Teachers

I kindly request you to make a contribution by giving your views on the issue by filling in the questionnaire below.

Reminders:

- **Please complete the biographical data**
- **Do not write your name on this questionnaire**
- **Be authentic**
- **If you find spaces limiting please feel free to add**

1. What are the schooling experiences of teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers in four township secondary schools in South Africa?

1.1. What is your general feeling about teenagers who become pregnant or become teenage mothers while still studying at this school?
.....

1.2. What do you think are the social or academic issues related to teenagers who become pregnant or become teenage mothers while still studying at this school?
.....

1.3. Please tell me how you interact with pregnant school-going girls and mothers at school?
.....

1.4. Please explain if there is any kind of help that you need that can assist you with the support you can give to the pregnant school-going child and mother at school.
.....

2. How do poverty, motherhood and pregnancy affect the education attainment of teenage girls in these contexts?

2.1. Please explain to me how you assist school-going pregnant girls or mothers with their personal, child's needs and educational needs?
.....

2.2. Please suggest what you think could be done at a school level to provide financial support for pregnant girls and mothers so that they can continue with their education?
.....

3 In what ways could teenage pregnant girls and mothers' quality of schooling and education be ensured and enhanced?

3.1. Please tell me what you do at school to make things easier for pregnant school-going girls and mothers to attain their education?

.....

3.2. Please explain to me what you are doing differently at school that you were not doing before pregnancy for you to give support to the school-going girl that she needs in order to finish school?

.....

3.3. Please tell me about the academic performance of school going girls before pregnancy as a learner and now as a mother or as a pregnant girl.

.....

3.4. Please tell me about your personal strategies that you have developed to maintain or improve academic performances of school-going pregnant girls and mothers.

.....

3.5. Please explain to me the kind of help you need to provide the teaching and support or to enhance academic performance of pregnant school-going girls and mothers at school.

Thank you.

Appendix 20: Individual Interviews Questions for Teachers

1. Do you know of any policy on pregnant and parent learners from the Department of Education?
2. Does your school have any policy on learner pregnancy and parenthood?
3. How are pregnant girls and mothers treated in the school?
4. What can you say about the academic performance of pregnant girls and mothers?
5. What are the socio- economic conditions for most learners at the school?
6. Do you think poverty has an impact on their school performance?
7. Does the school make any provision for pregnant girls and mothers who live under poor socio-economic conditions?
9. What can you say about the kind of support that pregnant girls and mothers from poor economic backgrounds are getting?
8. What do you think needs to be done to mitigate the situation for them to finish school?

Appendix 21: Turnitin Report

The screenshot displays the Turnitin Feedback Studio interface in a Google Chrome browser. The main document area shows the title page of a thesis titled "POVERTY, SCHOOL-AGED PREGNANCY, PARENTAL ABSENCE AND SCHOOLING IN THREE TOWNSHIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA" by Audrey Sibongile Mkhathini. The document is for a Doctoral Degree (PhD) in Social Justice Education. The Turnitin Match Overview panel on the right indicates a total similarity score of 2%. A list of seven matches is shown, each with a 1% similarity score. The matches are:

Match ID	Source	Similarity
1	Submitted to University - Student Paper	1%
2	Submitted to Eiffel Cor. - Student Paper	<1%
3	Submitted to University - Student Paper	<1%
4	Submitted to Walter SL - Student Paper	<1%
5	Submitted to University - Student Paper	<1%
6	Submitted to University - Student Paper	<1%
7	Submitted to 76830 - Student Paper	<1%

At the bottom of the interface, the page number is 1 of 183, the word count is 66734, and the report type is set to Text-Only Report. The High Resolution option is turned on. The system tray at the bottom shows the date and time as 13-12-2021 12:11.

Appendix 22: Letter from the Language Editor

ASOKA ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITING

45 Vausedale Crescent, Escombe, 4093.



DECLARATION

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS ENTITLED

POVERTY, SCHOOL - AGED PREGNANCY, PARENTHOOD AND SCHOOLING IN THREE TOWNSHIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KWAZULU- NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

BY

Candidate: Mkhathini AS

HAS BEEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITED.

DISCLAIMER

Whilst the English language editor has used electronic track changes to facilitate corrections and has inserted comments and queries in a right-hand column, the responsibility for effecting changes in the final, submitted document, remains the responsibility of the client and the editor cannot be held responsible for the quality of English Language expression used in corrections or additions effected subsequent to the transmission of this certificate on 29/11/2021.

Prof. Dennis Schaffer, M.A.(Leeds), PhD, KwaZulu (Natal), TEFL(London), TITC Business English, Emeritus Professor UKZN. Univ. Cambridge Accreditation: IGCSE Drama. Hon. Research Fellow, DUT. Durban University of Technology.