

**THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF BOYS AND GIRLS
TOWARDS SCHOOLGIRL PREGNANCY AT 'MAMPOTA HIGH
SCHOOL IN BERA, LESOTHO.**

**A Mini-Dissertation Submitted In Partial Fulfilment Of The Requirements For The
Degree Of Master Of Education (Gender Studies).**

By

MPHO MOSAASE

University of KwaZulu-Natal Durban

Howard College Campus

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Declaration

I, Mpho Mosaase, declare that this is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any university. Any reference to other peoples' work has been duly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mpho Mosaase', is written over a horizontal line.

Durban on this the 12th day of October 2004

Dedication

To the memory of my husband Fusi Mosaase who passed away before I could complete this task and to my baby Thato, may you not wander too far away from me.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

CEDAW	Conventions on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationists
MHS	‘Mampota High School
MOE	Ministry of Education
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Abstract

This study explores perceptions and attitudes of boys and girls towards schoolgirl pregnancy at Mampota high School in Lesotho. No policy exists in Lesotho concerning school girl pregnancy. While Lesotho espouses democratic rights to all, pregnant schoolgirls continue to be excluded from the school system. In this era this does not only discriminate but also impinges on one of the fundamental rights of girls, the right to education. Pregnant girls continue to drop out of school because of the negative perceptions and attitudes of teachers and other students even in countries where expulsion is outlawed. Although these attitudes reflect myths and stereotypes, they are not illusions. They remain powerful and are a major driving force behind pregnant girls dropouts. They reinforce the stereotypical construction of gender and work to marginalise and disempower young girls. These perceptions and attitudes sentence girls to a life of subservience and reduce their life chances both economically and socially.

Focus group interviews and questionnaires were used examine the attitudes of boys and girls towards schoolgirl pregnancy at MHS. The findings suggest that both boys and girls construct gender in ways that discriminate against pregnant schoolgirls, but girls as more prejudiced than boys towards pregnant schoolgirls. A good sign emerging from the study is that not all boys and girls take this position and this points to the possibility of making the school a safer place for pregnant school girls.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the problem

Schoolgirl pregnancy is a common social problem in both the primary and high schools of Lesotho, leaving girls without access to schools. Lesotho is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and children (CEDAW) signed in 1993, which condemns any form of discrimination against women and girls. Despite this, the dropout rates at schools due to pregnancy continue to affect girls alone. Lesotho does not have an official policy regarding schoolgirl pregnancy and the fate of pregnant schoolgirls is left to prevailing norms and values of the schools, which affect girl's education - presumably at the behest of the school principal. This study explores the attitudes and perceptions of girls and boys towards schoolgirl pregnancy at 'Mampota high school in Lesotho and shows how pregnant girls continue to be marginalised and excluded from the school system.

'Mampota is a rural based co-educational school that draws more than ninety percent (90%) of its students from the surrounding rural areas. It is church owned with a strong Christian ethos. Lesotho is a patriarchal and largely religious nation with one of the most complex situations concerning ownership of schools. As indicated in Panyane (2002)

churches are education founders in Lesotho. 95% of schools stand on church sites and most churches have allowed their church halls to be used as classrooms in the absence of proper classroom facilities (22).

Panyane also states that each church exerts its influence on society in direct proportion to the number of schools it owns. Schools are a symbol of power for the churches in Lesotho (ibid).

Schoolgirl pregnancy is thus embedded within strong religious views of premarital sex and teenage pregnancy. The religious background of the community and the schools make

discussions between adults (teachers and parents), and children on the subject of sex a taboo. The silence around sex and sexuality and the pressure of peer sexual cultures render young people liable to making uninformed choices. Both boys and girls though not equally, are disadvantaged by this situation.

The unfavourable socio-cultural and economic consequences of early child bearing continue to affect girls alone. There is a general tendency to judge girls as entirely responsible for becoming pregnant while the boys are seen as victims who have been lured into the sexual act by promiscuous girls. As a result, boys rarely shoulder any responsibility for premarital sex that has resulted in pregnancy while girls risk being ostracised by community, school and sometimes even their families.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Schoolgirl pregnancy remains one of the major causes for student dropout in the primary and high schools of Lesotho. Early child bearing exposes girls to a wide spectrum of health, economic and social problems including HIV/AIDS. The bulk of literature on early childbearing explicitly illustrates that a pregnant girl's education is likely to be disrupted as they voluntarily or involuntarily drop out of school. Having acquired low or no qualifications, they are likely to lack job skills, a situation that renders them vulnerable to live as dependants and in poverty.

The risks of pregnancy-related complications are also higher for young women than for older women. Research has established that girls below the age of 20 are more likely not to gain enough weight during pregnancy, which increases their chances of having babies with a low birth weight (Al-Azar 1999). Such babies could be born with deformities that may result in death in their first year of life. Other pregnancy-related complications likely to be suffered by teenage mothers include; premature labour, anaemia and malnutrition, difficult delivery, cephalopelvic disproportion, retarded foetal growth and pre-natal mortality (Blum and Goldhagen 1981; Al-Azar 1999).

The fear of exclusion from school causes some teenagers to resort to abortion, which is illegal in Lesotho. Besides the legal status of abortion, most teenagers cannot afford to have the procedure done by a qualified physician. Because of these and for confidentiality, they self-induce abortions or seek backstreet abortions exposing themselves to a high risk of infection including HIV/AIDS. Girls are highly likely to have no social support systems

when they become pregnant. In addition, the lack of parenting skills together with economic hardships may make them prone to high levels of stress disempowering them even further.

As stated earlier there is presently no policy in Lesotho regarding schoolgirl pregnancy. Therefore school administrations have the power to deal with the problem in ways that seem appropriate to them, but more precisely in ways that seem morally and culturally acceptable to their particular community. The common practice in the primary and high schools across Lesotho is to dismiss girls who become pregnant while still at school. In some schools there is absolutely no possibility of re-entry even after the girl has delivered the baby. The expulsions not only place girls in the spotlight for public ridicule, blame and stigmatisation, but also interfere with the fundamental right of the girls to education. For most girls, exclusion marks an abrupt end to their education, a situation that has far reaching effects and serious implications for the future and earning potential of the expelled individual, her unborn baby and even for the country's development.

Expulsion of pregnant schoolgirls is a punitive exercise endorsed on grounds of prejudicial gender-based beliefs that tacitly tolerate masculine sexual freedom while restricting female sexuality. Through this practice the school only serves to ignore this problem instead of addressing it. Each year larger numbers of pregnant girls are excluded from schools, yet pregnancy rates remain high among schoolgirls in Lesotho. The practice of expulsion of the girl only depicts schoolgirl pregnancy as having no implications for boys. Yet both boys and girls are vulnerable to STIs and HIV/AIDS. Girls are particularly vulnerable as they are unable to negotiate condom use (Macphail and Campbell 2000). Expelling girls contributes very little or nothing towards reducing the pregnancy related dropout rate and risky sexual behaviour.

School authorities upon discovering their condition officially dismiss pregnant girls. However, some girls withdraw from school even before the authorities are aware that they are pregnant. It is against this background that the researcher sought to find out what boys and girls think about schoolgirl pregnancy and what their attitudes and perceptions of pregnant schoolgirls are. This study seeks to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of students of Mampota High School towards pregnant schoolgirls. Through this, the researcher will also be able to establish how these attitudes contribute towards the marginalisation of

pregnant girls and to understand how perceptions and attitudes are shaped and informed by common school practices.

1.3 Motivation for the study

As a teacher the researcher has witnessed unfair dismissal of girls who had been impregnated by some of the boys in the school. The boys continue with their studies with little impact on their schooling. The practice is so consequential and legitimated that schooling sees it as inevitable. This is not only a form of oppression but is also a violation of the rights of girls. To a large extent the school reflects and perpetuates society's normative perspectives and patterns of gender relations as well as stereotypical attitudes and perceptions towards sexuality and pregnancy. As far as schoolgirl pregnancy is concerned, normative perspectives are dominant.

The view of some of the teachers is that they cannot teach 'women' (pregnant girls) yet they do not object to teaching 'men' (boys who have fathered babies). These attitudes have led to the perpetuation of a discriminatory practice of exclusion that in turn has shaped the perceptions of pregnancy among students and the negative attitudes towards pregnant schoolgirls. The unequal positioning of boys and girls and the way this is naturalised by teachers (male and female) and the students themselves became clear during my experience as a teacher. There are obvious disparities prevailing in the school that are evident in the way in which classroom dynamics operate. The problem of gender inequality is exacerbated by the particular rural context of the school. More than ninety percent (90%) of its students are from rural areas. Girls are very reluctant to challenge male domination and are intimidated by boys. I feel very strongly about the need to transform the present conventional patterns of gender relations and prejudices.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to examine the perceptions and attitudes of boys and girls towards schoolgirl pregnancy. In keeping with the aim of the study, the following objectives are highlighted;

- The main objective is to assess the perceptions and attitudes of boys and girls towards schoolgirl pregnancy from a gender perspective.

- To examine how such attitudes and perceptions create harmful conditions for pregnant young girls.

It is hoped that this study will be useful in raising awareness of alternate, more gender sensitive ways of dealing with schoolgirl pregnancy.

1.5 Questions addressed

- What are the perceptions and attitudes of boys and girls towards pregnant schoolgirls?
- How do boys perceive themselves in relation to schoolgirl pregnancy and responsibility?

1.6 Theoretical perspective

This study draws from the literature on gender and education and is pro feminist and seeks gender justice. The study concerns itself with unequal gender power relations. A new emphasis in the literature on gender and education has focussed on the social construction of the relations between boys and girls (Morrell 1998). Both boys and girls are considered to be active agents in constructing their identities. In this study both boys and girls were targeted in understanding how inequalities are created and sustained. At the same time nuanced understandings of gender and education have acknowledged that while boys and girls exercise power, it is girls who broadly remain marginalised. In this study too pregnant girls are constructed in ways that marginalise and exclude them.

1.7 Methodology

The study employs questionnaires and focus group interviews as means of data collection. The objective of the focus group interviews was to interact with boys and girls in order to understand how they make sense of their power relations and their unequal positioning. The focus group interviews were complemented with a questionnaire that was self administered and collected upon completion.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The time frame within which this study had to be completed is its first and greatest limitation. Primary data was collected in Lesotho during a time when lectures were continuing; as a result the researcher was under pressure to fulfil both obligations. This might have compromised the process of obtaining some of the most crucial information from primary sources. The school was also preparing for external examinations and there was very little it could do to help the researcher to access the students. The school is not easily accessible as it is in the rural areas with very poor infrastructure and unreliable road transport.

1.9 Organisation of the study

Chapter One sets out to provide the background and motivation for the study. In Chapter Two the theoretical framework is provided. Here the perspective draws on unequal power relations between boys and girls. While there is a huge body of literature on schools and pregnant schoolgirls, in this study the researcher will draw mainly from the Sub-Saharan experiences. Chapter Three outlines the methodology. Focus group interviews were undertaken as the main means elicit data on attitudes and perceptions of boys and girls towards pregnant schoolgirls. Questionnaires were also used as a means to collect data for this study. Chapter Four presents findings of the study while Chapter Five summarises the conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This study investigates the attitudes and perceptions of boys and girls towards schoolgirl pregnancy at Mampota high school in Lesotho. Some of the literature on schoolgirl pregnancy in the sub-Saharan Region will be reviewed in relation to exclusion and the attitudes and perceptions towards pregnant schoolgirls. Girls who become pregnant while schooling continuously face severe discrimination at the individual and institutional level while boys are rarely subjected to similar situations. This study locates itself as seeking gender justice and attempts to draw on the social construction of gender (and sexuality) in order to highlight the unequal power dynamics that inform the attitudes and perceptions of boys and girls towards pre-marital pregnancy.

2.1 Theoretical perspective

The purpose of this study is to investigate gender discrimination in the attitudes and perceptions of boys and girls towards pregnant schoolgirls. The discussion takes on the approach of gender justice. According to Morrell (1998) the gender justice approach

goes beyond the earlier notions of gender equality (which placed stress on equality of opportunity and outcome between boys and girls) to allow a broader engagement with unequal gender power relations (ibid:219).

Gender plays an important role in the ways in which boys and girls are positioned and position themselves with regard to schoolgirl pregnancy. Boys are predominantly positioned as powerful, entitled and with higher status than girls who are positioned as the 'other'. The construction of the pregnant schoolgirl exacerbates the 'othering' of young pregnant schoolgirls.

Pattman and Chege (2003) also stress the importance of focusing on the power relations between boys and girls when researching them (boys and girls). The authors also observe that excluding boys and men when studying gender, severely limits and distorts what can be learned about the gendered identities and experiences of girls and women. In this study I

focus on boys too. However, it is important to consider the relations of power between boys and girls that contribute to this 'othering'. I will consider some of the literature that looks at schoolgirl pregnancy, and how this literature constructs girls and boys.

For this study gender power relations provide a broad framework in which to understand the context of schoolgirl pregnancy. Gender justice assumes that all attempts to curb gender inequalities cannot be effected through an exclusive focus on girls or on their disadvantaged position in education (ibid), but can only be achieved by including boys. In this new approach, gender power is understood in terms of the way boys and girls construct gender identities.

This theoretical approach does not simply equate boys with power and girls with powerlessness because as Morrell (1998) explains that girls are not treated purely as victims in the same way that boys are not assumed to be a homogeneous entity (treated as if they are all the same and are all problematic). Gender justice does not however deny that girls remain disadvantaged and subject to discrimination in the school context (Morrell 1998). This is important for this study, as it is pregnant schoolgirls who are subject to discrimination. Morrell (1998) however quotes an earlier study by Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, which contends that as much as schools are responsible for producing and perpetuating inequality, they also have the capacity to be forces of transformation. I also focus on the construction of gender identities and the way boys and girls construct these identities. The chief area of focus is not on the construction of masculinity but it is pertinent in this study to understand the construction of masculinity as gender identities are marked by the privileging of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995) defines hegemonic masculinity as,

[t]he configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (1995:77).

This study focuses mainly on pregnancy, but pregnancy is a sub-section of a broader area of gender and sexuality and these have a larger impact on pregnancy. Gender and sexuality are a means by which we attempt to understand society and its reactions (Weeks, Holland and Waites 2003). It is therefore imperative to explore how gender and sexuality form part and parcel of the discussion on pregnancy.

Gender and sexuality

The concepts of pregnancy, gender and sexuality, are interrelated and cannot be understood apart. As Weeks, Holland and Waites (2003) point out, gender plays an important role in the social organisation of sexualities. Burns (2002: 9) points out that sexuality is a broad concept and they propose that in order to avoid its simplistic reduction to a heterosexual penetrative sex, sexuality needs to be seen as a complex and powerful site of human creativity and self-making, as well as the site of much pain and destruction. It is a broad concept that does not refer only to sexual practices, but also to what people know and believe about sex, personal feelings and desires, and in particular what they think is natural, proper (socially accepted attitudes, norms and meanings) and desirable (ibid). Sexuality also includes people's sexual identities in all their cultural and historical variety (Macphail and Campbell 2000; Varga 1997). Sexuality is related to desires and is performed but it is also power-laden. It is clear that these experiences and their conceptualisation, explanation and meaning are not fixed but are in constant flux.

According to these scholars, sexualities are still hierarchically organised, with some forms being dominant while others are subordinate and marginalised, and are shaped by complex relations of power (ibid 2003:6). Sexuality is indeed shaped by relations of power and female sexuality is often subordinated and marginalised in the school context through ways in which heterosexuality is policed. It is in this context that girls are expected to sit, dress, speak and behave in a certain manner that boys are not.

According to Weeks, Holland & Waites (2003), some theorists have made suggestions to the effect that gender in fact constitutes sexuality and that female sexuality in particular is constructed through the mechanisms of male power (ibid: 2003:43). This is not to suggest that girls are passive recipients of male power but to stress that they are always at the receiving end of repressive ideologies of womanhood (Mazzarella and Pecora 1999). Alvesson and Due Billing (1997) also point out that,

gender is seen as a fundamental organising principle of patriarchal society; social relations (of all kinds) are heavily structured by hierarchical differences in the social positioning of men and women....[W]idespread oppression and devaluation of women are regarded as central features of society and its institutions (ibid: 29).

Pregnancy in itself is a statement about one's sexuality and a resistance to official and unofficial curriculum. The marginality of female sexuality often works to construct pregnant schoolgirls as 'bad girls'. This representation of pregnant girls as 'deviant other' (Holland and Adkins 1996), is a common and discriminatory feature in the representation of women because it stereotypes pregnant girls. One of the processes closely associated with discrimination and oppression is stereotyping, as it acts as a vehicle for maintaining oppression (Thompson 2003). Girls with an opinion of their sexuality and those who display a certain level of independence are assumed to be sexually experienced and promiscuous. Similarly when girls challenge and resist male aggression and intimidation they are not being "feminine". Girls are also constructed as passive yet at the same time as highly provocative.

Society has prescribed stages of growth for the female, from childhood through adolescence all the way to motherhood, which are seen as distinct and sequentially arranged. This means that girls ought to behave in certain acceptable ways, especially conscious of the need to maintain and protect their virginity (Kimmel 2000). Once that virginity is violated it is a disgrace to the girl and her family. Girls may want to freely express and display their sexuality, but they can only do that in suppressed ways in order not to 'offend' the community. Sex and sexuality are deemed to be reserved for post-adolescence, and even then women are not expected to be as assertive and expressive as men.

2.4 Schoolgirl Pregnancy

The extent of the problem

A report of the World Health Organisation (1993) describes pregnancy as one of the markers of unprotected sexual activity. The study makes specific reference to Sub-Saharan African region, where literature shows there is substantial evidence of a culture of premarital sex and pregnancy among the youth today (Macphail and Campbell 2000; Delius and Glaser 2002; Harrison, Xaba and Kunene 2001; Polonyana 1993). Arnot, David and Weiner (1999) however posit that in most parts of the developed world the predicament has been substantially reined in, and issues of pregnant schoolgirls' access to schooling are being addressed. According to Preston-Whyte and Zondi (1991), in the case of South Africa experimenting with penetrative sex begins as early as the age of 12 or 13. Even here too, despite its reputation for being the most liberal context on the continent, classroom

dynamics are yet to be addressed. Whereas the scope of the current study is limited to Lesotho, schoolgirl pregnancy is a global social problem.

According to Al-Azar (1999), more than 10 % of all annual births worldwide - almost 15 million - are to young mothers. Though there has been a decline in the past 20-30 years in early childbearing in Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, little change has occurred in sub-Saharan Africa. It is not easy to determine the exact extent of adolescent pregnancy in Lesotho because of the paucity of information on the subject and due to under-reporting of the situation (Mturi and Moerane 2001). As stated earlier, premarital pregnancy is culturally associated with immorality and stigma in Lesotho. As a result people are still very secretive about pre-marital pregnancy. In 2001 alone, however, 11 Form A girls (Form A girls are 13 years upwards) were reported to be pregnant and were expelled from John Mount High School, one of those with the highest rates of schoolgirl pregnancy in Lesotho (*Mopheme-The Survivor* 15/04/2003).

Exclusion and withdrawal

Exclusion of girls from formal schooling remains a consequence of pregnancy that is perceived by society as inevitable and acceptable. Pregnant girls' experiences of exclusion reach far and wide into various units of society including the church and the school. Schools in Lesotho can be grouped into four basic categories; government schools, church schools, private schools and community schools (Panyane 2002). Each group and sometimes individual schools within these groups adopt different policies regarding the exclusion of pregnant girls. However all expulsions whether temporary or permanent, are based on the notions of upholding society's moral values and norms which prohibit premarital sex. It is very rare for boys to be subjected to the same scrutiny.

According to the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE), only 34% of girls complete primary school while 10% complete secondary school compared to 36% of the boys in Sub-Saharan Africa (in Chilisa 2002:21). Though the situation is foregrounded by a number of variables including poverty, and parental attitudes towards female education (UNESCO 1996) pregnancy related dropouts seem to be specifically responsible for this problem. In 1994 it was estimated that between 10% and 20% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa routinely drop out due to pregnancy each year (Al-Azar 1999).

Meekers (1994) in Al-Azar (1999) states that the majority of African girls have only two options should they become pregnant while in school. The first option is to have the baby and drop out of school either voluntarily or involuntarily. In some countries they are forced to leave by school authorities and or official regulations, as was the case in Zimbabwe until 1997 (Sutherland 1999). The second option is to abort the pregnancy and continue with schooling. In the public schools of United States of America until the mid-1970s visibly pregnant married women, whether students or teachers were banned from school grounds, lest their swelling bellies cross that invisible boundary separating the real world where sex and pregnancy exist from the schools where they did not (Luker 1997:2).

Expulsion was endorsed as an object lesson in the wages of sin (ibid:2), which means girls were being punished for promiscuity. This same practice still takes place in Lesotho particularly in church schools even though it has no basis in the legislation of the country. Emphasis on pregnancy as a disciplinary offence routinely leads to the expulsion of girls from school and the disruption of their education.

According to Panyane (2002) the Ministry of Education (MOE) is silent about the systematic exclusion of pregnant schoolgirls practised across Lesotho. The practice is based on internal policies over which the MOE has no influence because of the absence of a national policy on schoolgirl pregnancy. It has also been established that schools have no written regulation that specifically relates to pregnancy, but are governed by documented and undocumented regulations that are operational as part of the school tradition.

According to Chilisa (2002) in most countries that do not have explicit policies (of which Lesotho is one) the values, norms and attitudes of society towards premarital pregnancy determine the fate of pregnant girls which is invariably expulsion. In Botswana for example, a schoolgirl mother is expected to stay away from school at least for a year on the strength of a customary belief that the breast milk can affect the learning ability of other students (ibid 2002). In most African countries it is only lately that this practice is being challenged, only verbally in most cases or in the best case scenarios with very little or slow implementation of equity-based policies. Chilisa (2002) in a review of the education policies of 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, rightfully argues that expulsion policies “symbolize direct violence against girls”; and suggests that gender equity demands that countries adopt and implement ‘continuation policies’ because they challenge the societal and family values and attitudes that separate school from pregnancy.

In South Africa the existing school policy allows pregnant girls access to schools. However pregnant girls still drop out because they are ostracised (Masuku 1998; Manzini 2001). In their studies conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, both Masuku and Manzini observed a lot of societal resistance to the presence of pregnant girls in schools regardless of the 1996 School's Act which outlawed the expulsion of pregnant girls from school. Masuku (1998) insists that the rates of pregnancy related dropouts are still high. She used a questionnaire as the main instrument of data collection, complemented by informal interviews and observation. Both the teachers and students that participated in her study and her findings named the negative attitudes of boys and girls as a major force behind pregnant girl dropouts. She discovered that 41 out of 67 boys in her study favoured punitive measures against pregnant girls while 26 were against it. Only one boy argued for the expulsion of schoolboy fathers as well. On the contrary, out of 83 girls in her study, only 22 girls favoured expulsion while 61 were against it.

Some of the reasons for prejudice against pregnant girls were (i) they are short tempered; (ii) they are a bad example; (iii) they are a disgrace; (iv) they cause drowsiness in other students; (v) they are guilty of breaking the school rules and (vi) it is their fault that they are pregnant. It is against this backdrop that focus group interviews were selected as the main means of eliciting information from boys and girls in this study. Although questionnaires allow respondents to write what they really believe, they are constructed in English and this poses a barrier to people whose first language is not English and who therefore may not fully understand the questions. As a result respondents are likely to leave some of the questions unanswered and thereby some very crucial data may be omitted.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the myriad issues surrounding adolescent pregnancy. Most of the literature focuses on girls and depicts them as victims, an undisputable fact to some degree, considering how school practices perpetuate inequality. The South African situation emerges as a clear indication that policy does not automatically translate into practice. The school environment continues to be inconducive for pregnant girls yet the law prohibits discrimination against them. The school continues to reproduce inequality and to construct boys as more equal than girls; therefore it is not enough to devise a policy if it exists only in writing.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Background

This study was undertaken to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of boys and girls towards schoolgirl pregnancy. This chapter describes the nature of the study, the sample, the research instruments used and it also outlines the procedures followed in collecting data.

3.1 The nature of the study and Planning

The study employs qualitative methods of data collection. Qualitative methods seem relevant to this study as it seeks to understand complex yet dynamic human relationships from a gender perspective. Silverman (2000) contends that there are areas of social reality which quantitative methods cannot measure. Silverman (ibid) further argues that qualitative methods can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena that would not be obtained from purely quantitative data (2000:8).

The researcher sought permission to carry out research at the school through a letter to the principal and it was granted. The researcher has taught at MHS for eight years 1994-2002 and therefore it was easy to gain access. Prior to data collection, informed consent was also sought from all participants. Silverman (2000) posits that one of the crucial ethics of research is to seek informed consent from participants prior to conducting one's research. He describes this as providing information which is relevant to the subject's decision about whether to participate and to make sure that they understand the implications (ibid: 2001) There was no need to obtain consent by proxy as all participants were capable to agree or disagree to take part in the study.

3.2 The sample

A sample is described as a selection of individuals drawn from the target or parent population which is intended to reflect that populations' characteristics in all significant respects (Brewerton and Millward 2001:114). The sample for this study consisted of a total of 48 respondents, 26 boys and 22 girls. The initial arrangement was for the sample to comprise of students from one Form C class only (aged 15 and upwards). The choice of form C students was based on two factors, one being that it was their third year at the school and they would have had several encounters with pregnant girls in the school. The second factor was that the Form D and E classes were less than twenty students each which seemed too small a sample. However as it turned out, students from Form B to Form E classes attended the session to make this sample a total of 48. The advantage was that though not necessarily in proportion, the sample was representative of all age groups likely to be present in the school. Due to time imposed limits data collection was carried out over the weekend to avoid interfering with classes. Therefore there was no time to make any changes.

3.3 Research instruments

Focus group interviews

According to Kitzinger (1995) focus groups are particularly suitable for discussions of sensitive topics of sexual matters, stigma or experiences that are considered taboo. Being in a focus group provides support or some form of empowerment for the less vocal or more inhibited members. This method was used because it creates an open and interactive discussion between the researcher and the respondents. The interactive nature of a focus group allows for a wide spectrum of ideas and opinions to be captured. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) maintain that,

[i]t is often very useful allow participants to share their thoughts with each other. In this way they can spark off new ideas in each other and consider a range of views before answering the researcher's questions (Bless and Higson –Smith 1995:113).

One of the advantages of focus groups is that the researcher can make sure subjects understand the questions (Marlow 1998). They are also economic in terms of time since a group of people can be interviewed at the same time. Respondents are free to make suggestions, ask for clarifications, and elaborate on the points made by others and therefore a focus group become a fertile ground for primary data. The most important aspect of an

interview is it gives one an opportunity for direct personal contact with the subject required to answer the questions (Bless and Higson-Smith 1995:113). As a result, the researcher also gets in touch with the way subjects perceive their world and can observe the exact reaction to the topic under discussion (ibid:1995). Additionally focus groups yield enlightening information that may provide new leads or raise questions that otherwise might never have been asked.

There were four focus groups, two consisting of eleven (11) students each and two consisting of thirteen (13) students each. Though it is time consuming, semi-structured and open-ended questions were used to allow subjects the liberty to describe their experiences. According to Marlow (1998) when using semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has more freedom to pursue hunches and can improvise with the questions (Marlow 1998: 160). All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed later the same day they were conducted.

3.4 Questionnaire

A questionnaire (see appendix 1) was also considered useful for the purposes of triangulation and because of its capacity to obtain various types of information such as the demographic or background data, behavioural and attitudinal data (Brewerton and Millward 2001). The questionnaire was also meant to minimise the social desirability effect (Stern (1979) in Mouton 2001) or social desirability bias (Bailey 1997) whereby respondents say what they feel will please the interviewer because it is consistent with a norm even if it is not what they believe. It was intended to elicit information even from those who are shy to express their views

3.5 The Research process

3.5.1 Day one

Session one

After introducing herself the researcher explained the purpose of the research, the procedures for the day and what was expected of each participant in the focus groups. It was made clear that the aim was not to reach a consensus and the importance of every opinion was emphasised. Participants were free to make suggestions, clarifications, add to points made by others, ask questions and to disagree. After this brief they were given time to ask questions in case something was not clear.

Session two

Participants were provided with pens and each given a questionnaire to fill in (the questionnaire was answered anonymously to ensure honesty). Respondents were given forty (40) minutes to respond to the questionnaire which was collected upon completion.

The questionnaire was intended to find out;

- if there have been pregnant girls in the school,
- how respondents found out about pregnant girls' condition,
- how they feel about their presence in the school and why
- and consequently how they relate to them. (This includes what they say or do to them to make them feel comfortable or uncomfortable).

The session lasted 40 minutes.

3.5.2 Day two

Session one

The sample was split into four focus groups, two groups of boys and two of girls. Boys were interviewed separately from girls so that each group would feel free to participate without feeling intimidated by the presence of the other. This session had the same objective as the questionnaire and the questions were intended to investigate the same aspects. It was meant to find out if there were irregularities or contradictions between the responses to the questionnaire and the interview. The discussions lasted approximately one hour each for the four focus groups.

Session two

The objective of this session was to examine

- how boys and girls relate to schoolboy fathers
- their opinion on duty bearing (who is responsible).

- their opinions on what can be done to eradicate the prejudice and discrimination against pregnant girls.

The sessions with boys took longer because they got carried away and talked profusely; while the girls' session lasted a bit shorter, since most talked very little. This may be explained by the fact that the girls are socialised not to openly discuss subjects of sexual nature, not least in the company of the opposite sex. The longest session was forty to forty five minutes.

3.5.3 Day three

This was the final session and the boys' and girls' groups were combined. The main aim of this session was for boys to interact with girls and to examine how each group behaves in the presence of the other. The discussion was based on duty bearing (who is responsible). It was also aimed to find out the respondents' opinions on what can be done to eradicate the prejudices and discrimination against pregnant girls in the school. Some of the questions from the previous focus groups were discussed again in the mixed group. At the end respondents were encouraged to ask questions which the researcher responded to and then thanked them for their time and for sharing their experiences. The researcher provided lunch for both days since it was on a weekend.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter presents and discusses the data gathered during the research process. The aim of the research was to examine the perceptions and attitudes of boys and girls towards schoolgirl pregnancy at 'Mampota High School in Berea Lesotho. Findings indicate that the place of residence is one of the variables that have a significant influence on the attitudes and perceptions of boys and girls in this school. As indicated in Table 4.1 most respondents reside in the rural areas. Their responses point to high levels of ignorance. Common myths such as believing that pregnant girls cause drowsiness, stereotypes and superstitions are rife among these young people. Responses also indicate the degree to which their perceptions and attitudes are gendered, and the beliefs of the community within which they live.

Table 4.1: Respondents place of Residence

	RURAL		URBAN	
Boys	24	92 %	2	8 %
Girls	22	100 %		
Total	46		2	

Only two the boys with an urban background did not hold the stereotypes and myths still strongly held by the majority of the respondents. Perhaps this is attributable to their exposure to the media and other modernising influences, as contrasted with the rural based students.

In order to find out the respondents attitudes and perceptions towards schoolgirl pregnancy, questions were asked to investigate:

- The presence of pregnant girls in the school
- How respondents relate to them in and out of classroom and why

- What they do and say to make the subjects comfortable or uncomfortable
- How they relate to schoolboy fathers
- Their opinions on duty bearing (who is responsible) and on the way the school deals with pregnant schoolgirls.

The respondents were asked two questions, namely

1. Would they be happy or comfortable sitting next to a pregnant girl in the classroom?
2. Do you think girls who become pregnant while in school should be expelled?

Follow-up questions were also posed, and respondents they were asked to say why they say yes or no to each question. Responses to both questions are presented in tables 4.2 and 4.3 below.

Question 1: Would you be happy / comfortable sitting next to a pregnant girl in the classroom?

Table 4.2: Respondents' Approval of Pregnant Girls' Presence in Classroom

Response Category	Respondents' Sex	
	Boys	Girls
Yes	10 (38 %)	2 (9 %)
No	16 (62 %)	20 (91 %)
Total Responses	26 (100 %)	22 (100 %)

The answers to the first question are summarised in Table 4.2. The responses indicate that 16 boys (62 %) would not want to sit next to a pregnant girl. While 10 (38 %) would not mind sitting next to a pregnant girl. Altogether 20 girls (91 %) said they would not want to sit next to a pregnant girl while two girls (9 %) do not have a problem with it. The reasons given for not wanting to sit next to a pregnant girl are mostly based on superstitious beliefs while some reflect misogyny on the part of boys. Others reflect a lot of ignorance and gender insensitivity for both boys and girls. Some of the responses of boys that reflect misogyny and ignorance include the following:

I won't be happy because it means that I'm not sitting near a student I'm sitting near a parent and that is not good.

I would no more like her and even not ask her to help me.[Sic]

I am not the one who impregnated her so I cannot let her affect my performance.

She occupies more space on the desk.

She might give birth in the class and show us bad things

She must go home because one cannot chase two hares at the same time

They do not concentrate so they increase the number of failures

The outcomes generally point to a greater level of prejudice among the boys than that observed among the girls. In the focus group discussions, boys said pregnant girls make them feel sleepy yet they admit they do not experience the same problem when their family members are pregnant. Only one boy (from an urban area) disagreed with the argument. His explanation was that boys roam about at night and never get enough sleep. As a result they come to school still heavy with sleep only to blame it on anyone who is suspected to be pregnant. Follow up questions were asked in an attempt to explore and explain the association of pregnant girls with sleepiness. However, responses were mostly based on hearsay, superstition and a feeling that as boys they are more entitled to be in school than a pregnant girl. One boy explained that if a boy sits next to a pregnant girl, other boys call him a father of that girl's child and because most boys fear being labelled as fathers they stay away from pregnant schoolgirls.

Some boys said pregnant girls lose concentration and sleep in class. As she sleeps she causes other students to feel sleepy and therefore they start dozing off. Others argue that the mere presence of a pregnant girl in the class has a sleepy effect on everyone in the class even if she herself is not sleeping. Feeling sleepy and tired all the time is usually a sign that someone is pregnant even though they may not know yet who it is.

At this point the researcher will illustrate the degree of ignorance and gender insensitivity in the respondents' attitudes through an interview with CJ, one of the boys who feel very strongly about the presence of pregnant girls in the school.

Researcher (Res): CJ what happens to a girl who becomes pregnant while in school?

CJ: They are expelled but others disappear without the knowledge of teachers.

Res: Why do you think they disappear?

CJ: I think they are not free like other students.

Res: What makes them not to be “free”?

CJ: Other students make them feel embarrassed.

Res: What about you?

CJ: Ai! (laughs).

Res: If a pregnant girl is your neighbour in the class, would you be happy to sit next to her?

CJ: Aikhona! [No].

Res: Why?

CJ: Because I can sleep in class and I don't want her to touch me because she is now our mother in the class. [Sic]

Res: You don't like a mother touching you?

CJ: (laughs).

Res: Are there boys in the school who have made fellow students pregnant?

CJ: Yes.

Res: What do you think should happen to schoolboys who impregnate a girl in the school?

CJ: Nothing should happen because the boy can't be expelled as he is not the one who is pregnant. [Sic]

Res: Do you think girls who become pregnant in school should be expelled?

CJ: Yes.

Res: Why?

CJ: She will force other students to have sex and more girls will become pregnant if she is not expelled. Apart from that other students will laugh at her and criticise her so she would not be happy.

Res: How does she force other girls to have sex?

CJ: (silence)... maybe she will tell them that sex is nice.

Res: How does expulsion stop other girls from becoming pregnant?

CJ: Others will see that sleeping with boys is not a good thing and their future will be wasted.

Res: Do girls stop sleeping with boys because pregnant girls are expelled?

CJ: Madam we have heard that 'Kennedy High school' has had more than thirty pregnant girls last year, so if girls are not expelled they will be too free.

Res: Are pregnant girls not expelled at Kennedy High School?

CJ: They are.

Res: If there was a law that says pregnant girls should stay in school, would you change your attitude towards them?

CJ: Aikh'ona! [No] Madam that will not be a school, maybe they should go to a school for pregnant girls only because some of us these pregnant girls give us problems. [Sic]

Res: Such as?

CJ: He! aik'hona! B'a re hata [Sotho expression that the mere presence of a pregnant girl makes them not to focus].

Res: CJ who would you say is responsible for a pregnancy?

CJ: It is the girl madam!

Res: What about the boy?

CJ: Boys are boys madam, all the time they want to sleep with girls, so if the girl says yes it is her fault because they know it is wrong to sleep with boys. (He is not the only one who holds this view).

This boy's attitude reflects the perception of pregnancy as entirely the responsibility of girls as those who hold this view do not have a problem sitting next to a boy who has impregnated a girl who according to them is also a parent. It further reflects a manifestation of unequal power and a contradiction of the expectations of normative femininity. Girls are expected to be submissive but at the same time they are expected to resist male power.

Girls who said they do not want to sit next to a pregnant girl mostly did not want to be associated with a pregnant girl because this would imply that they are also sexually active. They fear being harassed together with her so they isolate her so that the pregnant girl alone is marginalized and not girls collectively. Others do not want to carry her guilt and shame, so if they were her friends they no longer want her in their company. Girls also position

themselves as less entitled to their education as they also play an active role in marginalising pregnant girls. They also blame pregnant girls as though they are solely responsible for their pregnancy. In response to why they would not be comfortable sitting next to a pregnant girl some of the girls made the following comments;

A pregnant girl makes you feel sleepy so I can sleep when the teacher is talking. [Sic]

The girls know the results of sleeping with boys so I don't feel sorry for a pregnant girl.

When I sit next to a pregnant girl the boys keep looking at us as if I am pregnant too.

The following interview with Portia (one of the girls) shows how some of the girls feel about pregnant girls

Researcher (Res): Portia if a pregnant girl is your neighbour in the class, would you be happy to sit next to her?

Portia: Yes madam but only if her belly does not show.

Res: Does it mean if her belly shows you will sit away from her?

Portia: (looks away) Yes.

Res: Why?

Portia: It is not like I hate pregnant girls but you see when you sit next to her other students harass her; they harass you as well as if you are also pregnant. Sometimes they say you are also going to become pregnant.

Res: Is that the only reason you would not sit next to a pregnant girl?

Portia: Yes but they also make us feel sleepy in the class.

Res: Do you believe that?

Portia: I don't know.

Res: What if the pregnant girl is your friend?

Portia: She would still be my friend.

Res: Do you think pregnant girls should be expelled from school?

Portia: Yes.

Researcher: Why?

Portia: Ache! Other students don't want to be taught with pregnant girls and if they are not expelled they will be a bad example.

Res: Do you think a boy who made a fellow schoolgirl pregnant should be expelled?

Portia: Yes madam they are both having a baby so they should both suffer.

Res: Who do you think is responsible for a pregnancy?

Portia: The boy and the girl madam but the girls know when they sleep with boys that they are the ones who will be pregnant and not the boy but they sleep with them anyway.

Res: so you think the girl is more to blame?

Portia: Yes madam.

Even though Portia believes that a schoolboy father should be punished as well, she still holds the view that the girl should shoulder more responsibility for a pregnancy. She is also not sure whether she believes the myth about sleepiness but already positions girls as less entitled. It is also clear that she fears being harassed together with a pregnant girl, but is also not in a position to give her support even though she says she does not hate pregnant girls.

What Do Boys And Girls Do And Say To Upset Pregnant Girls?

Boys and girls report that whatever they say is not said directly to pregnant girls because if the victims report them, the perpetrators could be in trouble with the teachers. There have been exceptional cases where a particularly rude girl or boy has been openly nasty to a pregnant girl. Such incidents were dealt with accordingly by authorities. Besides subjecting them to gossip, ridicule and making them the laughing stock, students isolate pregnant girls and use their names to write sexually explicit graffiti in the toilets, on class benches or desks, and on rocks near the footpaths they take to and from school. They also feign daily

complaints to teachers about feeling sleepy and tired. My understanding was that by constant complaining students indirectly put teachers under pressure to ask for the removal of the pregnant girl from school and publicly humiliate pregnant schoolgirls.

The perception that boys and girls have about schoolboy fathers suggest that they have no problem with them. However girls also indicated that they fear the boys therefore they cannot show how they feel about schoolboy fathers because the boys will hit them. Girls reveal that boys are very protective of each other and will threaten girls who gossip about a boy. This reveals the interplay of violence, unequal power dynamic and how being a boy, one benefits from the patriarchal dividend (Connell 1995).

Question 2: Do you think girls who become pregnant while in school should be expelled?

Table 4.3: Respondents’ Approval of Expulsion of Pregnant Schoolgirls from School.

Response Category	Respondents’ Sex	
	Boys	Girls
Yes	17 (65 %)	19 (86 %)
No	4 (15 %)	3 (14 %)
Not Sure	5 (19.2 %)	
Total Responses	26 (100 %)	22 (100 %)

65% of boys and 86% of girls strongly feel that if pregnant girls are not expelled from school, this will encourage more pregnancies and promote prostitution on the school premises. One boy actually said the school is doing pregnant girls a favour by expelling them so that they can focus their energies on one thing, implying that they should finish with child delivery before resuming full-time studies. Other boys argue that such girls should be excluded from school once they realise they are pregnant because if they stay they will influence other girls to sleep with boys. These boys suggest that such girls may come back to school after the birth of the baby. This suggests that the pregnant girls must become invisible and sexual evidence must be closeted from the school environment. They could not respond to whether after the girl has given birth she will not have the same influence on others girls.

Two boys, (8%) strongly argued that expulsion is not necessary and does not solve the problem as it jeopardises the girl’s and her child’s future. They also argued that becoming

pregnant while in school is a mistake and could be an accident and the punishment is too harsh especially since it affects girls alone. Some of those who support expulsion think schoolboys who impregnate schoolgirls must also be expelled while others feel that such boys should be allowed to continue with studies so that they can help the girl and her baby. Unfortunately while there is no guarantee that the boy will look after the girl and her child, this attitude perpetuates dependency on men. Economic responsibility is made the domain of the boy and so perpetuates gender inequalities and the disempowerment of girls.

Evident here is how the broader socio-cultural values and norms position pregnant schoolgirls and shape the perceptions and attitudes of boys and girls as they are adamant that the consequences of sexual activity are punishable. A general feeling among girl respondents in this study was that a pregnant girl is a bad girl who went out of her way to misbehave and must be punished. As in the case of the entire society, most ignore the role played by the male who impregnated the girl. Only 3 (14%) suggested that pregnant girls need their friends and classmates while 19 (86%) advocate their expulsion on grounds that they will become a negative influence to others. They also feel that they have to be expelled to set an example for other girls who might be thinking of sleeping with boys. The girls also echoed what the boys said about pregnant girls making them sleepy.

4.3 Respondents' Suggestions about Eradication of Discrimination

There were suggestions of suspension (temporary exclusion) of the pregnant girl until she has given birth. Boys and girls argue that this benefits the girls as well because according to respondents it does not seem likely that others will stop harassing pregnant girls. One boy actually said,

I think the only solution is a school for pregnant girls only because I don't think pregnant girls are free too [sic].

However some of the boys still insisted that exclusion, temporary or permanent is not necessary as it is a waste of schooling time for pregnant girls. They said if such girls are expelled they become more frustrated because there is no support for them in the villages. One boy made the following comment;

At least at school some of us understand that they need our support.

In the end one of the boys who felt very strongly about expulsion made the following comment;

I think this thing can stop if we can be equal. If the boys respect their girlfriends they will listen to them and maybe this pregnancy thing will stop, or if somebody is pregnant we know she is still our sister too. [Sic]

The whole room burst into applause and I wondered why. Through informal chats the researcher learned that he is one of the macho boys who have no respect for anyone in the school. His powerful positioning within the group meant that he was able to influence and impress others. The majority were still undecided as to what could be a more reasonable solution but they were beginning to understand that their attitudes are uncalled for/not necessary.

On their own, (single sex group) girls generally participated actively in the discussion. However there were those who responded only to questions that required 'yes' or 'no' or otherwise remained silent and a bit uncomfortable. Boys were very excited and active in their groups as well and although the researcher was female this did not make them any less free. My personal observation was that their excitement came from merely discussing girls. Some of them often referred to girls as if they were not people but things, '*ntho tsena*' meaning 'these things', while others were indeed sensitive to the needs of pregnant girls.

During the mixed session, boys did not want to sit with girls and girls were also very careful not to cross that invisible boundary to the boy's side. It was clear how much the girls have internalised their subordination and how much boys feel that they are more entitled than girls to physical space. None of the girls challenged the arrangement and they were totally intimidated by the presence of boys. Girls spoke very little while boys dominated the discussion. One boy made a very crude remark

Banana bana le bona ba rata ho ikaneha madam.

Translated this means (girls like to be laid), giving a cultural image of girls wanting sex. This was a very provocative thing to say but the girls just looked at him disapprovingly and said nothing. However before I could intervene, one of the boys from the urban area said

What about the boys! Everything that girls do they do with boys so we are not going to pretend as if what they do is right.

He went on to state that most of the time girls do not have sex willingly but they are forced or tricked by boys. This sentiment is echoed in several studies indicating unequal power in

sexual relationships with girls at the receiving end of abuse, threatened abuse, rejection and being taken advantage of (Macphail and Campbell 2000).

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings that indicate that both boys and girls have negative attitudes towards pregnant girls. However not every boy and girl in the school feels the same way about pregnant girls. Nothing drastic has been reported by either victims or other learners except basically gossip and isolation. It would appear that girls are the ones at the forefront in the harassment of pregnant girls and boys follow their lead. As a result, even though girls collectively experience unequal power, they also conduct their sexuality in ways in which they unconsciously collude with male domination. Except for a few exceptions, most girls articulate and ascribe to the conventional model of femininity (Holland et al 1991) whereby they put boys and boys' comfort first. The ill-treatment of pregnant girls in which girls play a part perpetuates unequal treatment particularly since the same girls do not ill-treat schoolboy fathers.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the findings of this study that boys and girls have negative perceptions about pregnant girls and that negative attitudes towards them are rife in this school. The pregnant girl is constructed as the bad girl while the schoolboy father's role in her condition is largely ignored. Though teachers were outside the scope of this study, students' responses revealed that teachers do not make a deliberate effort to make pregnant girls feel unwelcome. They also reprimand those students who harass pregnant schoolgirls. No serious measures in terms of regulations have been taken to actually stop the discrimination against pregnant girls. There appears to be tacit tolerance of such behaviour by the school which already expects such girls to leave because they no longer belong in school.

In this study, contrary to findings in other settings like South Africa (Masuku 1998), more girls than boys prefer punitive measures against pregnant girls. Only 9 % did not have a problem sitting next to a pregnant girl while 90 % felt they do not want a pregnant girl anywhere near them. Eighty-six (86 %) of the girls advocated for the pregnant girls' expulsion and only 14 % felt that pregnant girls still belong in school. It is indeed an enormous challenge to bring about a change of attitudes regarding schoolgirl pregnancy. However, based on the following factors I would like to argue that the task is enormous and challenging but not impossible:

1. First the attitudes and perceptions of boys and girls are based on non-factual information, myths and stereotypes. There is therefore a strong need to provide biological/scientific facts so that such stereotypes are dispelled. It is clear that duty bearers such as parents and teachers are not doing enough.
2. These boys and girls have learned these attitudes and it means they can be unlearned or learned differently. Lastly the fact that not all boys feel the same way about the presence of pregnant girls in the school is a good sign as it reinforces the concept of multiple masculinities. This further shows that boys do not behave in homogenous ways. The number of boys who defy the norm by abandoning culturally valued attributes in this study

shows that there is hope and that men can be used to effect change in the asymmetrical social relationships.

3. The boys and girls in this study made it clear that teachers do not deliberately harass pregnant schoolgirls which is a good sign. However pregnant schoolgirls continue to leave the school system. Teachers are important agents in addressing gender inequalities therefore the MOE must make provision for training of teachers so that they are more alert to the dynamics in the school which encourage pregnant girls to leave.

4. In the short-term period it would be beneficial to consider a suggestion made by one of the boys in this study about a school for pregnant girls only as it will provide pregnant schoolgirls with a safer environment to study and could limit the number of schoolgirls who drop out because of pregnancy.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire: (to be answered by students)

Your participation in this questionnaire will help find out perceptions and attitudes of students towards pregnant schoolgirls. You are required to answer all questions with honesty, as this will be very useful.

Please tick where appropriate.

1. Gender.

Male []

Female []

2. age range

11- 14

15- 19

20- 25

25 and above

3. level of education/class

Form A

Form B

Form C

Form D/E

4. Place of residence

Rural (village)

Urban (town)

5. Have your parents ever talked to you about sex issues or changes in your body?

Yes []

No []

6. Are there girls who have become pregnant while studying in your school?

Yes []

No []

6. Are pregnant girls allowed to continue with their studies in your school?

Yes []

No []

7. Do you think girls who become pregnant while in school should be expelled?

Yes []

No []

8. Please give reasons for your answer to question 7 above.

9. Are there boys who have impregnated a fellow student in your school?

Yes []

No []

10. Do they continue with their studies?

Yes []

No []

10. What do think should happen to a schoolboy who impregnates a girl in the school?

11. If a pregnant girl is your neighbour in the classroom, would you be happy to sit next to her?

Yes []

No []

12. Please give reasons for your answer to 11 above.
