

The parenting experience: an exploration study of coping mechanisms of young
parents

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Declaration

I Gladys Nompumelelo Nombewu, declare that:

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at another university.
3. The dissertation does not contain other persons' data unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This dissertation does not contain another person's writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers.

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Signed:

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Date:

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Abstract

This study aimed to understand experiences of young parents, and how they coped with parenting challenges in Quarry Heights. Furthermore, this study sought to determine coping techniques used in dealing with parental challenges.

The study employed a qualitative approach, where a total of ten participants were interviewed, using an interview schedule. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected and various themes emerged.

The findings indicate that the transition to parenthood was an unplanned difficult event. Lack of knowledge and parenting skills, lack of financial resources and negative emotions emerged as main challenges. As a result, academic performance was disrupted, social networks were disconnected and parents felt socially isolated. The study found that, parents do not have sufficient coping resources to handle the transition. Coping strategies utilised were not effective in dealing with the challenges. However, social and financial support from family members made the transition process manageable.

Therefore, research at government level is recommended to determine the feasibility of developing mentoring programs for teaching parenting and life skills. Furthermore, establishment of counselling centres in schools is recommended for psychological support. Based on the limitation of this study, it is recommended that a diverse sample with different race, gender and socio-economic status for diverse views be used for future research.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Problem statement.....	2
1.2 Aim of the study.....	3
1.3 Objectives of the study.....	3
1.4 Research questions.....	3
1.5 Summary.....	4
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 Challenges experienced when transitioning to parenthood.....	6
2.2.1 Reaction upon finding out about the pregnancy.....	6
2.2.2 Pre-natal care experience in health care facilities.....	8
2.2.3 Lack of financial resources for childcare.....	9
2.2.4 Mistreatment by teachers and learners at school.....	10
2.2.5 Increased responsibilities as a consequence of transitioning to parenthood....	10
2.3 The impact of early transition to parenthood.....	11
2.3.1 Health consequences.....	11
2.3.2 Educational and economic consequences.....	11
2.4 Coping strategies utilised during the transition to parenthood.....	12
2.4.1 Emotion and problem focussed coping strategies.....	12
2.4.2 Social support.....	13

2.5	Theoretical framework.....	13
2.6	Summary.....	17
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....		18
3.1	Introduction.....	18
3.2	Research design.....	18
3.2.1	Qualitative approach.....	18
3.2.2	Location of the study.....	19
3.2.3	Sampling technique and size.....	19
3.2.4	Data Collection.....	19
3.2.5	Data analysis.....	20
3.3	Reflexivity.....	22
3.4	Validity and Reliability.....	22
3.4.1	Credibility.....	23
3.4.2	Transferability.....	23
3.4.3	Confirmability.....	23
3.5	Ethical consideration.....	24
3.6	Summary.....	24
Chapter 4: Findings of the study.....		26
4.1	Introduction.....	26
4.2	Demographic information of participants.....	26
4.3	Context under which the transition occurred.....	27
4.4	Challenges experienced during the transition to parenthood.....	34
4.5	Impact of early transition to parenthood.....	38
4.6	Coping strategies utilised during the transition to parenthood.....	40
4.7	Assistance necessary to strengthen coping resources.....	42
4.8	Lessons learned while moving through the transition.....	44

4.9	Hope for solutions that will improve life for a better future.....	46
4.10	Summary.....	46
Chapter 5: Discussion.....		47
5.1	Introduction.....	47
5.2	Context under which the transition occurred.....	47
5.3	Challenges experienced during transition to parenthood.....	50
5.4	The impact of early transition to parenthood.....	51
5.5	Coping strategies utilised during the transition to parenthood.....	52
Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations.....		55
6.1	Conclusion.....	55
6.2	Limitations of the study.....	56
6.3	Recommendations of the study.....	56
References.....		57
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form.....		67
Appendix B: Interview Schedule.....		69
Appendix C: Gatekeeper’s Approval Letter.....		70
Appendix D: Ethical Clearance.....		71
Appendix E: Turnitin Report.....		72

Chapter 1: Introduction

According to Virasiri, Yunibhand and Chaiyawat (2011, p.1113), “parenting is a positive, purposive, nurturing activity and interaction process which is specifically aimed at promoting a child’s welfare”. However, when parents do not perform their duties accordingly, the process has a potential of turning out negatively affecting the child and cause social problems such as child abuse and teenage pregnancy (Virasiri, Yunibhand & Chaiyawat, 2011). An early transition to parenthood is a common occurrence around the world, according to Blum and Gates (2015), 16 million teenage girls around the world become young parents every year. For purposes of this study, the term ‘young parents’ will be used to refer to the participants. The number translates to 44 births per 1000 girls every year, the majority of these births are reported from the developing countries (Unicef, 2019). In the African region, between the period of 2015 – 2020, it is estimated that 92 births per 1000 girls occurred (Unicef, 2019). While in South Africa it is estimated that 71 births per 1000 girls occurs annually (Unicef, 2019). Furthermore, a report by Hall (2019), states that the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal had the 4th highest number of births to women between the ages 15 – 24 in 2018. Teenage pregnancy therefore means a transition to parenthood earlier in life.

The transition to parenthood occurs while teenagers are adjusting to the changes and new responsibilities brought about by the demands of growing into adulthood. According to Lally and Valentine-French (2019), the transition to adulthood is characterised by leaving high school and moving into the adult world that requires decisions to be made with regards to career choices, love interest and where to live. The transition to parenthood requires parents to become responsible for the well-being of their children. According to the South African Children’s Act 38 (2005), it is the parent’s responsibility to contribute to the maintenance of a child and ensure that a child is well taken care of. The Act further refers to child care as the provision of shelter, education and financial support amongst other needs (Children’s Act 38, 2005). Therefore, parental responsibilities are characterised by the act of caregiving, ensuring that the child is taken care of in terms of their physical, social and psychological needs; and providing protection and love. The task of parenting places enormous responsibilities on parents.

While some young parents are able to cope with the multiple changes and new responsibilities, others find it difficult. The contrasting realities of parenting are exemplified in the research studies conducted by Govender, Naidoo and Taylor (2020) as well as Marks (2018). In their study Govender et.al (2020) looked into the prevalence of antenatal and postpartum depression amongst young parents in Kwa-Zulu Natal and found that 8.8% of parents suffered from postpartum depression which was linked to partner physical violence. In the study titled “Exploration of the Perceived Success Factors and Barriers for Teen Mothers”, Marks (2018) found that women who became parents in their teenage years were able to overcome challenges as a result of resilience and perseverance. Furthermore, Marks (2018) demonstrates the importance of agency; young parents were able to cope with challenging circumstances by taking control of their lives and made decision about the future.

According to Bandura (2006), agency is about intentionally formulating plans to address an issue and forming strategies of how to achieve those plans; it is about imagining how the plan will turn out in the future, establishing actions to be taken that will assist in achieving the set plans, and in pursuit of the end goal, reflect on thoughts and actions in order to make appropriate adjustments. Bandura (2006), further states that the person’s functioning is also as a result of the interaction between their interpersonal behaviour, natural and social environment; meaning that a parent’s sense of agency is also influenced by interpersonal behaviour and the social environment such as family support. This is consistent with Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg (2012), who state that a person’s response to change will depend on their individual circumstances and the impact that the change will have on their lives. Therefore, a parent’s ability to cope will depend on individual circumstances.

1.1 Problem Statement

A research study conducted by Gbogbo (2020), found that transition to parenthood is characterised by feelings of confusion, inadequacy, regret and anxiety. In addition to emotional challenges; Mangeli, Rayyani, Cheraghi and Tirgari (2017) found physical problems, increased burden of responsibility, lack of support, role conflict and lack of parental skills and knowledge as additional challenges that young parents face. While Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and Mcmichael (2015) found that 93.0% of young parents were unemployed, suggesting the inability to financially provide for themselves and their children. According to Gould and Ward (2015) parents who have financial difficulties are prone to

depression which may cause them to discipline in a punitive manner and fail to express love to their children. Consequently, creating an environment where children behave unsociable and aggressive from early childhood (Berk, 2013). It is therefore important that parents are able to cope with challenges.

According to Gbogbo (2020), support from friends and family plays a significant role as a coping strategy for dealing with parental challenges. In literature, there is however minimal attention paid to other coping strategies for dealing with parenting challenges. Various studies have focused on parental experiences, challenges and the ramifications of early pregnancy later in life (While Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015; Jacobs & Mollborn, 2012; Johansen, Nielsen & Verner, 2020). The scarce literature on the application of different coping strategies calls for this research. Insight into applied coping strategies will be beneficial in giving an understanding to young parent's state of wellbeing, which is equally important for the wellbeing of the child as suggested by Gulliford, Deans, Frydenberg & Liang (2015), who state that effective coping strategies improve parent wellbeing, parenting skills and relationship with the child.

1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to understand experiences of young parents, and how they cope with parenting challenges.

1.3 Objectives of the study

- To understand lived parenting experience of the young parents.
- To determine challenges that young parents are faced with.
- To determine coping techniques used by young parents in dealing with parental challenges.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the lived parenting experiences of young parents?
- What are the challenges faced by young parents?
- What are the techniques used by young parents in dealing with parental challenges?

1.5 Summary

This chapter introduces the study, it provides a general background and context of the study. It gives the problem statement, highlight the significance of the study, states the aim and objectives of the study and lists the research questions which the study aims to answer.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

According to Madelo and Plaza (2021), accepting parenting responsibilities enabled young parents to cope with challenges as they channelled focus to their children's needs. Gbogbo (2020) identified personal resolutions intended to reduce negative emotions as another form of coping with challenges. The studies indicate different strategies applied in order to cope. Therefore, having coping strategies is important for dealing with challenges and strategies used depends on individual circumstances hence a strategy that worked for one person may not be applicable to the next depending on their situation.

According to Folkman and Lazarus (1980, p.223), "coping is the cognitive and behavioural efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them". Aldwin and Yancura (2004) state that, there are five types of coping strategies; problem-focused coping, emotion focused coping, social support, religious coping, and meaning making. The problem focused coping strategy is used under circumstances where an individual has control of the outcome, as the aim is to fix or remove the cause of the problem by applying techniques such as defining the problem, searching for information, seeking assistance and making a plan of action (Jurji, Kasuma, Rahman, Shahrinaz, & Aren, 2018). Whereas the emotion focused coping strategy does not change the problem, instead it focuses on changing the thoughts and emotions that results from stress and involves techniques such as denial, venting of emotions and seeking social support (Jurji et al., 2018). According to Aldwin and Yancura (2004), social support relates to emotional and financial support from others, while religious coping relates to the incorporation of social support, problem focused and emotion focused coping components with the aim to transforming the meaning of the problem during challenging times. Lastly, meaning making coping relates to looking at a positive side of a challenging situation (Aldwin & Yancura, 2004).

In order to understand coping mechanisms applied it is important to first identify the problems experienced. This chapter reviews related literature on the topic under investigation. The chapter therefore begins by identifying prevalent challenges that arise when transitioning into parenthood, followed by consequences of the early transition and

coping strategies utilized to manage the situation and concludes with the theoretical frameworks.

2.2 Challenges experienced when transitioning to parenthood

Various studies (Madelo & Plaza, 2021; Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020; Mangeli et al., 2017; Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015; Chigona & Chetty, 2007) on early transition to parenthood agree that the transition presents physical, emotional and financial challenges that young parents find difficult to deal with.

2.2.1 Reaction upon finding out about the pregnancy

Families wish for their children to finish school, study further to build careers, gain financial freedom and possibly get married and have children (Jacobs & Mollborn, 2012). Therefore, young parents become afraid of how their families will react to the news of pregnancy (Mkhwanazi, 2010). Various studies (Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020; Madelo & Plaza, 2021) demonstrated mixed reactions, some families found it difficult to accept the news, while others came to accept and supported the young parents over a period of time. Madelo and Plaza (2021), found that families got angry and disappointed. Similarly, a study conducted by Jacobs and Mollborn (2012) on the turmoil caused by early pregnancy on family relationships, revealed that women in the family, were particularly angry and disappointed by the news. As a result of anger and disappointment expressed by family members, young parents feel rejected; the feelings of rejection affect their mental health (Madelo & Plaza (2021). In addition to feeling rejected; young parents reported feeling embarrassed, ashamed and disappointed with themselves, for the friction caused in the family (Jacobs & Mollborn, 2012). However, for others the negative reactions were not permanent. Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, (2015) found that despite being let down, the women in the family were noticeable supportive after accepting the news. Johansen, Nielsen and Verner (2020) attributes the positive response to the family's historical background. According Johansen, Nielsen and Verner (2020), families that have experienced early transition to parenthood in previous generations express little condemnation because it is socially acceptable.

The news of the pregnancy places women in fear of being rejected by their partners. Various research on early parenthood highlighted a common theme where a majority of fathers

disappeared when they learned of the pregnancy or raised doubts about the paternity in order to run away from the responsibilities of raising a child (Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020; Gbogbo, 2020; Jacobs & Mollborn, 2012; Kaufman, de Wet & Stadler, 2001).

In addition to running away from child maintenance, young men run away from the cultural responsibility of acknowledging paternity which requires a payment of fine for damages caused to the young women's family (Kaufman, de Wet & Stadler, 2001).

According to Kaufman, de Wet and Stadler (2001) there are different explanations and understandings associated with paying a fine for the damage caused depending on the culture of the women. For the purpose of this study which is based in an area that is predominantly Zulu in culture, the "payment of the fine for the damage caused" is known as "inhlawulo". It is an act of paying a fine to the women's family for having disrespected them, and "damaged" the women by decreasing her bride price value, (Kaufman, de Wet & Stadler, 2001). The process is negotiated and concluded with an agreed cash amount or certain number of cows provided the man agrees to have impregnated the woman. In cases where the partner denies paternity, the girl's family will walk away or insist on a paternity test.

The acceptance of pregnancy is important as it allows for the paternal family to conduct traditional ceremonies for the child to be introduced to the father's ancestors and use the father's surname (Lubbe, 2020), it also gives recourse for child maintenance. In cases where the paternity is denied, it paints the women in bad light, suggesting that she is promiscuous and further robs the child of their identity in the community (Kaufman, de Wet & Stadler, 2001).

The women who participated in the study conducted by Lubbe (2020), whose partners had denied paternity in front of both families, reported that the "inhlawulo" process was demeaning and shameful. Their self-worth was reduced and literally felt like "damaged goods" as they would forever be remembered in their family and in the community as girls who were denied by partners. Lubbe (2020), warns of the resultant negative impact that these kinds of practises have on the identity and mental well-being of women.

On the other hand, men who admit to being the father and wish to take full responsibility of the "damage caused" find themselves in a difficult position when they are unable to pay the fine and provide financial support for the child. They are denied access to the child by the

mother of the child and her family (Samukimba & Moore, 2020; Lubbe, 2020). This conduct therefore takes away the father's right to parent based on economic status, placing fathers under a great amount of stress.

In addition to family reactions, young parents are afraid of how the school, friends and the community will react upon finding out about the pregnancy. According to Pillay (2018), some young parents decide to drop out of school in order to save themselves the embarrassment. While others reported that their close friends distanced themselves after learning about the pregnancy, socially isolating them in the process (Jacobs & Mollborn, 2012). In the community, young parents are viewed in bad light, they are seen as having a potential to negatively influence other young people (Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015). Research shows that young parents are called bad names, stigmatised and isolated. As a result, they feel embarrassed and humiliated (Gbogbo, 2020; Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015; Madelo & Plaza, 2021).

2.2.2 Pre-natal care experience in health care facilities

Young parents would rather miss pre-natal care appointments than be humiliated in public (Sewpaul, Crutzen, Dukhi, Sekgala & Reddy, 2021). According to Hackett, Lenters, Vandermorris, LaFleu, Newton, Ndeki and Zlotkin (2019), young parents feel stigmatised at health care facilities for being young and pregnant, noting a big difference in how they are treated in comparison to older parents. As a result, they put their lives and that of the unborn child at risk of death and severe illnesses by choosing not to attend health care facilities. According to the South African maternal deaths report (2018), young pregnant women die as a result of hypertensive disorders. The disorders are preventable through antenatal care which provides screening and management of high risk illnesses Sewpaul et al., (2021).

Sewpaul et al., (2021) found that Health care workers are rude, their actions make young parents feel insignificant, they are not attended to timeously, not given detailed information regarding their health and that of the baby, and during the consultation they would rather not ask questions in order to avoid an unpleasant response. The study conducted by Jonas, Crutzen, Krumeich, Roman, Borne & Reddy (2018) which aimed to gain a holistic picture of why healthcare workers behave in the manner in which they do towards young parents concerning sexual and reproductive health issues, reported that health care workers were

conflicted between their personal beliefs and views and what was required of them professionally. Health care workers reported being conflicted with the idea of family planning and abortion services, other health care workers reported a lack of resources, limited time for consultation due to a large volume of patients to see and working under pressure with insufficient staff support as reasons for being impatient and providing poor services. As suggested by Sewpaul et al. (2021), health care workers need to undergo further training on how to deal with sexual and reproductive health issues and ethical consideration in the health sector.

2.2.3 Lack of financial resources for childcare

Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael (2015) observed that a majority of young parents come from low socio economic backgrounds. Consistent with this observation, Mangeli et al., (2017) found that a majority of young parents are not in good economic positions hence they cannot afford to raise a child. These studies suggest that young parents are not financially independent and therefore lack the financial resources required for the basic needs of a child. Govender, Naidoo & Taylor (2020) found that young parents had to ask or borrow money in order to survive.

According to Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2021), young people between the ages of 15 to 24 were found to be at a disadvantaged in the labour market as more than 63% of them were reported to be unemployed in the first quarter of 2021. The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2021), cited a lack of work experience as a major reason for employers overlooking young people. The study conducted by Gbogbo (2020) found that 97% of the young parents were unemployed. According to Swartz, Colvin and Harrison (2018), young parents who are able to secure employment do not earn sufficient income to provide for all the basic needs of a child, hence they rely on the government child support grant for additional financial support. The cost of providing food for a child at a very basic level is a minimum of R541 (Hall, Mokomane, Richter & Lake, 2018), therefore the child support grant of R480 (South African Government, 2022) does not fully cover the cost of basic food. Consequently, there is no provision for payment of other needs such as a day care centre. Govender, Naidoo and Taylor (2020), reported on young parents who were constantly worried about not having enough food, nappies and clothes.

The inability to pay for a day care centre translate to a missed opportunity of going back to school once a child is born (Pillay, 2018) and insufficient time for attending to school work for those who are able to return to school (Chigona & Chetty, 2007). Therefore, a child day care centre is important for ensuring that young parents successfully complete high school.

2.2.4 Mistreatment by teachers & learners at school

Teachers have no interest in providing special treatment for young parents, all learners are treated the same (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Chigona & Chetty, 2008). According to Matlala, Nolte and Temane (2014), some teachers reason that their main role is to teach, highlighting a lot of work between teaching and administrative duties and therefore cannot afford to pay special attention to the needs of pregnant learners. Furthermore, Matlala, Nolte and Temane (2014), found that teachers stigmatise young parents. As a result, they do not feel that teachers afford them the same respect in comparison to other learners, hence they feel discriminated against (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Chigona & Chetty, 2008) and lose self-esteem.

In addition to the discriminatory behaviour by teachers, young parents are also mistreated by peers who gossip and laugh behind their backs (Chigona & Chetty 2007), as a result they isolate themselves, do not participate in class and do not interact with other learners. According to Marshall, Knight, Devine, Coker and Stowe (2018), young parents are also bullied and ridiculed.

2.2.5 Increased responsibilities as a consequence of the transition to parenthood

The burden of taking care of a child rests upon a mother and other women in her family (Swartz, Colvin & Harrison, 2018). According to Hall, Mokomane, Richter and Lake (2018), in cases where both parents live together, the primary caregiver remains women since they spend more time caring for the needs of the child than men. Furthermore, Makhanya and Matthias (2017) found that single fathers who live with their children do not become the primary caregivers, instead their mothers or sisters take on the day to day caregiving responsibilities of raising a child. As a result, mothers have increased responsibilities in comparison to fathers; in this regard, they experience more challenges and are more likely to struggle financially and emotionally.

Govender, Naidoo and Taylor (2020) found that mothers in particular do not have time to socialise since a majority of their time is consumed by caring for the child. Those who had more than one child reported being extremely exhausted (Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015). Mangeli et al., (2017) attributes fatigue to a combination of house chores, school work and parenting responsibilities. Parents feel lonely and isolated, they develop anxiety and stress since they are constantly worried about the wellbeing of their children (Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020); they lose self-esteem due to a lack of confidence about the quality of care they are providing (Gbogbo, 2020).

2.3 The impact of early transition to parenthood

According to Berrington, Ingham, Stevenson, Borgoni, Hernandez and Smith (2005) and the Human Sciences Research Council (2009), transitioning early into parenthood has health, economic and education consequences.

2.3.1 Health Consequences

According to the World Health Organisation (2022), parents between the ages of 10 to 19 years are predisposed to eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections than those between the ages of 20 to 24 years. Furthermore, babies are predisposed to low birth weight, preterm delivery and severe neonatal conditions. Blum and Gates (2015) state that parents who are younger than 15 years are more likely to experience child birth complication and die.

A clinical chart review conducted by Moodley and Ngene (2020) based on data collected in South Africa between 2014 and 2016, found that 47 parents under the age of 19 died as a result of eclampsia. Moodley and Ngene (2020), further states that 35 had antenatal care after 20 weeks of pregnancy while 7 had no antenatal care at all. The review indicates that the deaths could have been avoided with early antenatal care and the provision of quality health services.

2.3.2 Educational and Economic Consequences

The studies conducted by Pillay (2018) and Chigona & Chetty (2007), show that young parents drop out of school due to a lack of time, absenteeism and the inability to find a baby sitter. As a result, they are not able to complete high school and consequently miss the

opportunity to proceed to higher education institutions or secure better paying employment. The inability to secure prosperous opportunities is not unique to young parents only, however Johansen, Nielsen and Verner (2020) argue that early parenthood reduces significantly the education and employment opportunities for young parents when compared with older parents. This is consistent with the findings of Berrington et al., (2005), which state that young parents are more likely to be unemployed and dependant on the state for housing and other benefits than older parents.

2.4 Coping strategies utilised during the transition to parenthood

Coping strategies enable individuals to manage conditions that give rise to the challenges (Jurji et al., 2018). According to Kaye (2008), young parents use a combination of emotion focused and problem-focused strategies, however the emotion focused strategy is more prevalent. While others rely on social support in order to cope (Gbogbo, 2020).

2.4.1 Emotion and problem focused coping strategies

Aldwin and Yancura (2004) state that, emotion-focused coping includes avoidance, withdrawal, expressing emotion and the use of substances such as alcohol or food. The study conducted by Jacobs and Mollborn (2012), highlighted avoidant strategies that young parents employed in dealing with broken relationships within the family; they were reported as containing or bottling up their emotions in order to maintain peace at home. According to Roth and Cohen (1986, p.813) avoidant strategies “reduce stress from becoming crippling”. The young parents would rather bottle their emotions, in order to avoid further verbal argument that could destroy the family relations. The avoidant strategy is a temporary relief, however it is beneficial in dealing with stress at the onset of the problem, when the problem is uncontrollable and the individual has limited emotional resources for coping (Roth & Cohen, 1986). However, Aldwin and Yancura (2004) warns that the strategy has detrimental effect in the long run when the problem is not solved.

According to Aldwin and Yancura (2004), problem focused coping involves taking direct action. This is evident in the study conducted by Swartz, Colvin and Harrison (2018), where young parents actively looked for employment after completing high school in order to financial provide for their children’s basic needs

2.4.2 Social support coping strategies

Social support plays a significant role in the transition to parenthood, it is a prevalent coping strategy as identified in several studies (Kotoh, Amekudzie, Opoku-Mensah, Baku & Glozah, 2022; Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020; Gbogbo, 2020; Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015). According to Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and Mcmichael (2015), young parents managed to cope with the transition due to support received from family members, partners and friends. The support varies from emotional to financial support. Family support allows for the completion of school when provisions are made to babysit (Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Mcmichael, 2015). Increased confidence is witnessed when family members encourage and counsel young parents (Kotoh et al., 2022; Gbogbo, 2020) and children's needs are provided for when family members provide financial support (Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020).

Gbobo (2020) noted that partners provided insufficient support, while Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020 found that the paternal grandmothers provided financial support on behalf of partners. Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and Mcmichael (2015) identified moral support from friends whom young parents had a strong bond with prior to the pregnancy, whereas Gbogbo (2020) found that supportive friends were those who were also parenting and could therefore identify with parenting challenges and the need for support. Even though there are various research studies that have found schools and teachers to be unsupportive towards young parents (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Bhana & Mcambi, 2013; Marks, 2018), some young parents attribute their successful completion of school to the support received from teachers through encouraging words, advise and kindness (Pillay, 2018; Marks, 2018).

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The assumptions of this study is that there are various factors that influence one's ability to cope through a transitioning period. Support is one of the contributing factors that assist parents to deal with the transition to parenthood. Problem focused and emotional focused coping strategies, play a contributing factors in how parents deal with these transition. Hence Schlossberg's Transition Theory is the framework for effectively understanding the parenting experiences and abilities to cope.

The Transition Framework was initially developed by Nancy K. Schlossberg; the framework aims to provide a structured understanding of people in transition, the model has three major parts; part one identifies the transition and the process of transition, part two deals with taking stock of coping resources using the 4 S system and part three talks to taking charge by strengthening resources (Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg, 2012).

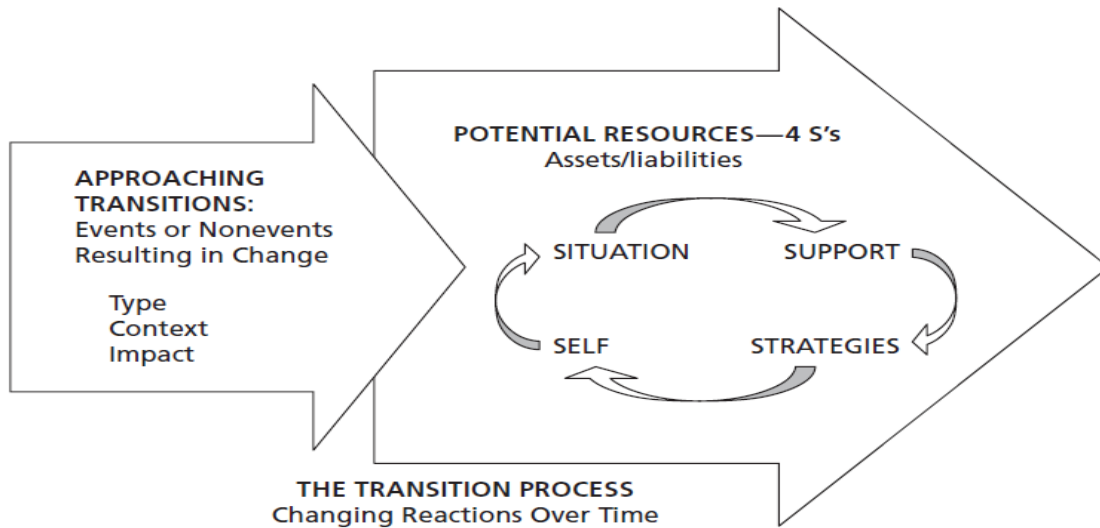


Figure 1: The individual in Transition (Anderson, Goodman and Schlossberg, 2012)

Part one - Approaching Transitions

Anderson et al. (2012), explains the transition period as that which is anticipated, unanticipated or a non-event, often bringing about a change that will require an individual to cope; and how a person responds to the transition will be influenced by their historical background and experiences. It is a continuous process, occurring over a period of time where a person finds themselves moving in, moving through and moving out of transition, therefore the individual reactions are continuously changing. A transition is considered to be a transition on condition that the individual experiencing the event considers it to be a transition.

According Anderson et al. (2012), the anticipated transitions are said to be the ones that are expected such as a planned marriage; the unanticipated transitions are sudden, unexpected, and present a crisis such as unplanned pregnancy; the non-event transitions are the ones that were expected to happen but never took place, changing the course of life for the individual such as not finishing high school. Anderson et al. (2012), further states that a more meaningful description of the transition is drawn from understanding the perspective of the

individual about the said transition, the context in which the transition is happening (cultural or social context) and the impact the transition has on the individual's life.

Part two - Taking Stock of Coping Resources:

Anderson et al. (2012), explains part 2 of the transitioning process by utilising the 4S system which makes available factors that determine how an individual cope. The 4S stands for Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies (Anderson et al., 2012).

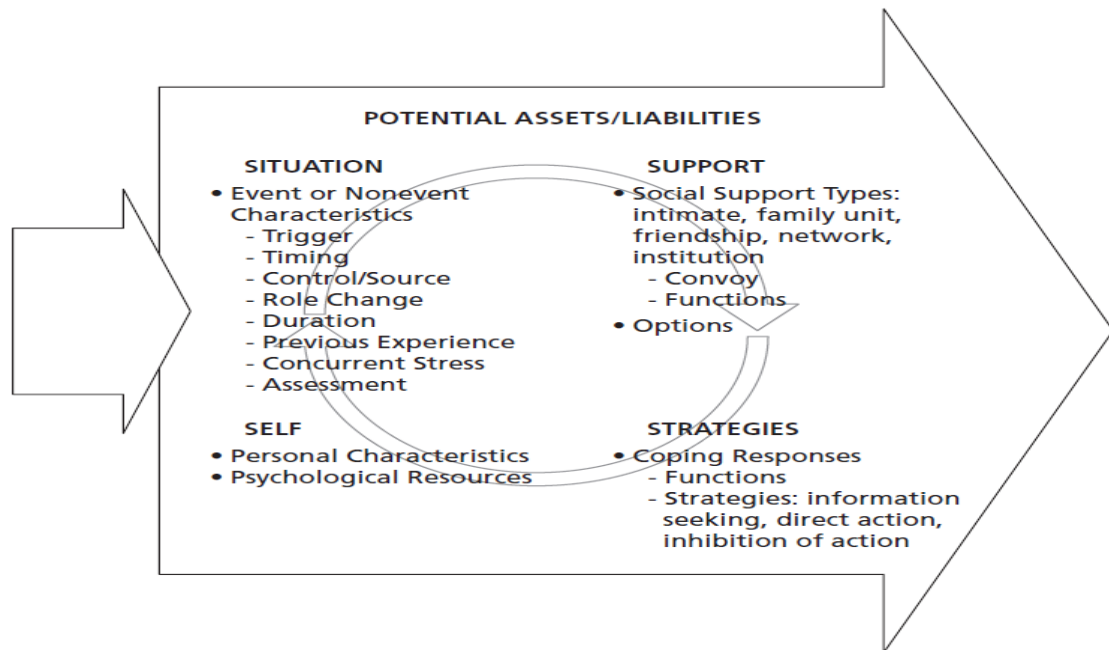


Figure 2: Coping Resources – the 4 S's (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2012)

Situation – people's ability to cope is influenced by the situation they find themselves in, such as timing and role change; for a young 15-year-old girl who suddenly falls pregnant, her role changes to that of a mother who now has the responsibility of taking care of a child. The timing of the pregnancy also plays a role as this is someone who is still in school and under the care of her parents, these variables therefore determines her ability to cope.

Self – factors such as the individual's personal characteristics (age, gender, socioeconomic status or culture) and their psychological resources (optimism, spirituality & resilience) will determine how they cope as they move in, through and out of the transition period. According to Chigona and Chetty (2007), teenage mothers who come from poverty stricken background and are still in school, cannot afford to take their children to crèche, which means they don't have anyone to look after their children and are therefore not able to cope with school work

and parenting responsibilities. While the study by Marks (2018), showed that mothers who were resilient were able to overcome the obstacles presented by teenage pregnancy.

Support – in the transitioning period, the availability of support or a lack thereof must be identified as it influences how one copes with the change. Intimate relationship support such as family and friends serves as an asset to individuals who are going through a transition; support from institutions (e.g. child support grant) is also recognised as important for coping (Anderson et al., 2012).

Strategies – as the individual is transitioning, what are strategies in place that enable them to cope; what are the plans to modify the situation, control the meaning of the problem or help to manage stress. Is the individual confronting the root cause of the problem and taking specific actions to eliminate it? Or is the individual in denial, selectively addressing the problem by paying attention to some parts of it and not addressing its entirety. (Anderson et al., 2012).

Part three - Taking Charge:

According to Anderson et al. (2012), the last part of the transitioning model focuses on strengthening the coping resources through assessment, goal setting and interventions with the aim of addressing what the individuals can do in order to cope.

Assessment - Anderson et al. (2012), state that at this phase the individual's assets and liabilities are assessed by looking into their environment (current challenges), internal resources (self-efficacy), external resources (people that can be relied upon for support) and strategies (controlling or changing how one feels about the challenging situation i.e. counting one's blessings for instance).

Goal setting - The individual's resources for coping are also strengthened by setting goals that are related to personal growth, changing one's environment and adding support structures that are relevant to one's current situation (Anderson, Goodman & Schlossberg, 2012).

Intervention - The implementation of interventions such as behavioural intervention assist individuals in strengthening their coping resources. The problem-solving intervention as an examples, enables the individual to define the problem, establish an action plan, identify alternatives and start the action (Anderson et al., 2012).

2.6 Summary

This chapter reviewed African and international literature related to early child bearing experiences of parents. The chapter detailed parent's lived experiences from when they announced the pregnancy to giving birth and taking care of a child. The chapter highlighted the challenges experienced by parents when seeking prenatal care in health care centres, difficulties experienced at school and in the community, and financial challenges. Lastly, the chapter highlighted the long term impact of early child bearing and different coping strategies utilised to deal with challenges.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the process that was followed to carry out the study. Research is a “scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic or area” (Kabir, 2016, p. 2). It is a structured and planned task for gathering information. According to Kabir (2016), the purpose of research amongst other objectives is to explore phenomenon, and discover new information which enable the researcher to develop clear concepts about the phenomenon in order to improve life. Research is therefore important as a source of knowledge that informs for instance the development of government policies. This chapter begins by explaining the research design the study is based upon and continues to explain the study setting, methods and techniques used for sampling, data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes by focusing on critical reflexivity, ethical consideration, validity and reliability.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Qualitative approach

The study followed a qualitative research design to ascertain experiences of parents and their coping mechanism. According to Nieuwenhuis and Smit (2012) qualitative research is interested in understanding people’s social and cultural experiences and how these experiences influence their behaviour. Furthermore, qualitative research is interested in bringing forth the participant’s story as they navigate through their state of affairs (Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012).

The research applied a phenomenological approach, which is called for when the aim of the study is to describe the phenomenon in question from the participant’s point of view. The “meaning that certain lived experiences hold for participants” is the center of attention for Phenomenological studies, Nieuwenhis and Smit (2012, p. 132). The approach was chosen over other qualitative approaches as it strongly asserts the importance of bracketing by the researcher to mitigate personal bias.

3.2.2 Location of study

The study was conducted at Quarry Heights in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Quarry Heights is a low income urban residential area in Durban North, where 60% of the population is Black Africans. The province of Kwa-Zulu Natal was of interest as it is reported to be one of the province with the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in South Africa. According to Hall (2019) the province had the 4th highest number of births to women between the ages of 15 – 24 in 2018.

3.2.3 Sampling technique and size

The study used a non-probability sampling method, namely purposive sampling. Participants were selected on the basis of availability and willingness to take part in the study (Laher & Botha, 2012). The sample consisted of ten participants who had their first child when they were teenagers. A total of eight mothers and 2 fathers between the ages of 19 to 25 were interviewed. Participants who do not live with their children were excluded. Purposive sampling was found to be ideal for the study as it allowed for the selection of participants with distinctive qualities that are characteristic of the population (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). According to Laher and Botha (2012) when researchers opt for the purposive sampling process, they use their creativity in order to find participants that will meet the inclusion criteria in order to participate in the study.

Two local crèches situated in Quarry Heights were approached and sought permission to place on their notice boards an invitation for participation in the study. The invitation stated the title, aim, inclusion and exclusion criteria's of the research. The invitation emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and contained the contact details of the researcher.

Participants who responded to the invitation were then included in the study.

3.2.4 Data collection

Prior to data collection, the gate keeper's permission was obtained from the ward councilor and ethical clearance was granted by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal's Ethical Committee (Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003789/2022). Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Semi structured interviews allow the researcher to thoroughly explore the participant's ideas and opinions by asking open ended questions (Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012). An interview schedule with 17 questions was used to collect data. An interview

schedule is a guide created based on the topic of the study in order to assist the researcher in asking relevant questions that will answer the research questions (Nieuwenhuis & Smit, 2012).

The individual interviews were conducted online through Microsoft teams in order to observe the university's and the country's Covid-19 protocol and respect the health and safety of the participants. The Covid-19 protocol encourage social distancing, wearing of masks and hand sanitising. Once the appointments were confirmed with participants, arrangement were made with one of the crèche owners to utilize their premises for the meeting. Interested participants who did not have access to electronic devices or Wi-Fi were not excluded from taking part in the study, provisions were made by providing a personal laptop with Wi-Fi router in order to connect online. Out of 10 participants that were interviewed, only one participant owned a laptop and had access to Wi-Fi in order to connect online. Prior to each interview, participants were requested to give a verbal consent. Each interview was recorded, conducted in Isi-Zulu and took between 30-45 minute.

3.2.5 Data analysis

Data was analysed using thematic analysis. According to Kawulich and Holland (2012), thematic analysis is a process of analysing qualitative data by identifying themes and patterns. Braun and Clarke (2006), suggest the following steps for analysing qualitative data using the thematic analysis method:

Step 1: The researcher familiarizing themselves with the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), at this phase, the process involves transcribing and re-reading of the transcribed data in order for the researcher to be familiar with the data. Once data collection was completed, the researcher transcribed the ten audio recordings. Rincon (2018, p.1) defines the process of transcribing as “converting an audio into a written format” and further categorises the process into three types; verbatim transcription, edited transcript and intelligent transcription. As a novice transcriber, the researcher opted for the edited transcript process as it was a less intensive option compared to the other two types which required the inclusion of detailed information such as background noise and incomplete words as an example. According to Rincon (2018), during the edited transcript process, the researcher excludes speech errors and sounds such as “mmm” and writes what is important as long as the meaning of the recording

is not distorted. Even though the edited transcription process was found to be less intensive, however it was a lengthy process that took the researcher an average of eight hours per audio recording. The transcribed interviews were then translated to English. The transcripts were read to verify that the information was correct and that the meaning of the information was not lost in translation. The transcripts were also checked for typing errors.

Step 2: Generating initial codes. At this phase the researcher systematically identifies, interesting points from the entire data collected and groups similar points together (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcripts were printed, the researcher read through each transcript again using highlighting pens of different colours to highlight codes that appeared to be common in the participant's response. The researcher then made notes of the different codes, each code was highlighted with a different colour. The codes were then grouped together according to the assigned colours

Step 3: Searching for themes. The researcher at this phase groups the interesting points identified into potential themes and gathers all relevant data for each potential theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher read through the highlighted codes per colour and identified potential themes. The data relevant for each potential theme was then extracted (copied) from the transcripts and pasted under each relevant potential theme.

Step 4: Reviewing themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), at this phase the researcher checked if the themes are in alignment with the extracted data, therefore generating a picture of the analysis. At this phase, the researcher read the extracted data under each theme to check if the extracts and the theme were in alignment. Once it was established that the extracted data and the theme correlate, the researcher began to formulate a picture of how to present the themes in a sequence that would best represent the meaning of the findings.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes. At this phase Braun and Clarke (2006), states that the researcher analyses the themes and the extracted data and the overall story that is emerging in order to refine the information so that a clear structure is formed and themes are defined and named. The researcher analysed the story that was unfolding and checked if it was connecting to the research questions. Once it was established that there is a connection, some of the themes were broken down to sub themes to give a clear picture under each theme.

Step 6: Producing the report. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that in this last stage, the researcher conducts the final analysis, selecting examples of compelling extracts, connecting the analyses to the research question and literature and writing up the analysis report. In this study the researcher read again the information gathered and organised thus far, analysing it to ensure that there is a connection between the findings, research question and literature. The process of writing the report included the provision of more than two extract as a way of demonstrating the prevalence of the identified themes within the story that the researcher was presenting.

3.3 Reflexivity

According to Sultana (2017) reflexivity in qualitative research is a practise of being constantly aware of one's position, actions and power as a researcher in relation to the participant. Reflexivity in qualitative research is important for enabling the researcher to be aware of the extent of their contribution in establishing meaning of data collected, analysed and reported (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, & Caricativo, 2017). According to Haynes (2012, p. 8) researchers conduct reflexivity by asking themselves questions such as "What is the motivation for undertaking this research? What underlying assumptions I am bringing to it? How am I connected to the research, theoretically, experientially, emotionally? And what effect will this have on my approach?"

The researcher lives in a community where teenage pregnancy is a common occurrence. Therefore, she has her own preconceived ideas about teenage pregnancy, mainly that when young girls fall pregnant at an early age, they will not have a bright future. The researcher is aware that this is a personal view which can affect her interaction with participants and the meaning they give to the data collected. Through this research process, the researcher has learned that the idea of a bright future is subject to her values. It is therefore inappropriate to impose those values on others.

3.4 Validity & Reliability

In order to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research, it is important that the trustworthiness of the study is assessed. Trustworthiness is achieved through the application

of four criteria namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, Kawulich and Holland (2012).

3.4.1 Credibility

According to Shenton (2004) it is important to develop early familiarity with the participant's environment; when the potential participants showed interest for participating in the study, they were called back, to assess their suitability and explain matters related to informed consent. The call took place prior to collecting data in order to establish a relationship of trust. The process of Member Checks was utilized, according to Shenton (2004), member checks is used to verify the correctness of the data collected and analysed by testing the outcome with the participants. Verification took place after data collection and during the process of data analysis, where the participants were called to verify their and the results were shared with participants.

3.4.2 Transferability

According to Shenton (2004), transferability is obtained by presenting a comprehensive data of the study, for another researcher who may be interested in the study, to be able to determine whether the results are transferable or not. Shenton (2004), recommends the following information relating to the research design to be covered extensively (number of participants taking part in the study and where they are based, exclusion criteria for sampling, data collection and analysis methods used, number and length of the data collection sessions). The above information is detailed in this chapter to give the reader of the report a comprehensive picture of how the study was conducted and highlight the challenges that were experienced.

3.4.3 Confirmability

According to Shenton (2004) great care must be taken to ensure that the findings of the study are as a direct results of the participant's experience and not influenced by the researcher's bias and preconceived ideas. The researcher engaged in two methods of bracketing, namely writing memos and bracketing interview. The researcher kept a record of own preconceived ideas and previous knowledge on early parenthood. During the data collection and data

analysis stages, the researcher discussed and reflected on these preconceived ideas with a fellow classmate.

3.5 Ethical consideration

Ethical consideration refers to the principles that guide a research to ensure that it is conducted ethically. The ethical principles are important for research processes as they are put in place in order to ensure the protection of participants from harm and the integrity of the researcher (Wassenaar, 2006). According to Kang and Hwang (2021), researchers must uphold the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, practice honesty and integrity and adhere to the principle of beneficence in order to avoid ethical dilemma. Prior to the commencement of the study, the researcher received the gatekeeper's approval to conduct the research in the area. The study was also approved by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Appendix D) before collecting data.

It was explained to the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary and there won't be any financial benefit for participating. The participants were also advised that they were free to withdraw from the interview at any point should they feel uncomfortable and were also free to not answer questions that they were not comfortable with. Newman, Guta and Black (2021), states that the advantage with online interviews, is the ease with which the participant can simply end the meeting by a click of a button when they do not wish to continue with the interview; suggesting that online meetings take away the power that researchers have when the interview is conducted face to face, the participants no longer have to feel under pressure to stay longer in a meeting room when they are feeling uncomfortable. It was explained to the participants that the external hard drive containing the interview recording and transcripts would be kept in the supervisor's office in a locked cupboard for a period of five years and that information would be deleted after five years.

3.6 Summary

This chapter outlined the process that was followed in carrying out the research, it described the research design that informed the study. It described the setting where the study was conducted, how the data was collected and analysed. The chapter also provided details on

ethical issues that were considered, and matters that relate to the validity and reliability of the study and the reflexivity in qualitative research.

Chapter 4: Findings of the study

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study aimed at understanding the parenting experiences of young parents, and how they cope with challenges. Through thematic analysis, the researcher extracted themes that represent the main findings from the data collected. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), enough evidence should be presented in the form of extracted data in order to provide a convincing presentation that the identified themes are truly prevalent in the data, hence they are considered as main findings. Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) assert two methods of writing findings in qualitative research; where in the first method, the findings are reported under each theme supported by relevant extracted quotes from the collected data. The discussion on the findings is then presented in a separate chapter. The second method incorporate both the findings and discussion in one chapter. For the purpose of this study, the researcher opted for the first method where the main findings are presented separately from the discussion which will be presented in the next chapter.

4.2 Demographic information of participants

Prior to the discussion of the findings, the chapter will focus on the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the study (see Table, 4.2.1).

The study consisted of (n=10) participants, eight females and two males. The demographic information indicates that there was an uneven representation of gender. The inclusion criteria for participation in the study required participants that live with their children, therefore the number of females is higher considering that they are primary caregivers. All participants were unmarried.

Table 4.2.1: Demographic information

Participants	Gender	Age	At the time of pregnancy		No. of children & Age	Source of income
			Age	Grade at school		
P1	Male	25 years	19 years	Completed grade 12	1 at 5 years	Self-supporting through part time business
P2	Female	23 years	22 years	11	1 at 6 months	Supported by Mother
P3	Male	21 years	18 years	11	1 at 3 years	Supported by Mother
P4	Female	21 years	17 years	12	2 at 5 years & 11 months	Supported by Both Parents
P5	Female	20 years	19 years	12	1 at 1 year	Supported by Grandmother
P6	Female	21 years	18 years	9	1 at 3 years	Supported by Boyfriend
P7	Female	21 years	19 years	10	1 at 2 years	Supported by Mother
P8	Female	23 years	18 years	10	2 at 5 years & 6 months	Self-supporting through part time business & Child support grant
P9	Female	23 years	18 years	11	2 at 5 years & 3 months	Self-supporting through part time business
P10	Female	25 years	16 years	8	1 at 9 years	Supported by Father

4.3 Context under which the transition occurred

Prior to being pregnant or impregnating a girl, the study found that most participants were happy at home with the living conditions. They described their upbringing:

Participant 10 - *“At home I was a child and I loved to play. I was a little bit troublesome at school, like any other child. In society, I was a disciplined child and respectful”.*

Participant 1 – *“Before my father finding out that I was going to have a child, we were close, it was almost as if he is my older brother. Even when we took walks together, people would think he is my older brother because of how much we loved each other; and in the community everything was fine”*.

Some participants had a difficult childhood:

Participant 6 – *“I lived in an Orphanage, because when my mother died we didn't have a place and she (my sister) was told to fend for herself because she was old enough and I was told that because I am 8 years they will raise me. My sister was 18 years the last time she saw me. We don't have family members. My mother's family is from Lesotho”*.

Participant 8 – *“My situation was not good because I was raised by my grandmother who lived with my step grandfather who treated us badly. We (me and my cousin) were not allowed to go out, or talk to anyone, or play with other kids we were locked inside all the time, we only went out when we were going to school or to the store”*.

The study found that the lives of participants changed drastically at home when the pregnancy was disclosed to family members:

Participant 1 – *“My relationship with my father that year became very bad, I felt that he hated me or was angry with me, he avoided me, he was always away from home, even if I asked for assistance, he would not talk to me. This thing (behaviour) was even noticed by my brother, who asked him if he loved my child, pointing out that ever since it was mentioned that there is a child, he has not said anything or asked to see the child. The pain made me vulnerable, I ended up smoking, something which I never used to do, because I lived a clean life, but that year I could not keep up.”*

Participant 4 – *“the relationship with my parents was right, but after the baby, things changed because I got it when I was 17, and I can see that I let them down. They were angry with me and especially my father, there was tension between me and him saying that I was pregnant while still studying at school. He was angry maybe for two*

months. He was a person who would come home from work and lock himself up in his bedroom and not speak to me”.

The study indicates that many families were disappointed by the news of early pregnancy. However, they accepted the situation and in some cases encouraged the young parents to keep the child:

Participant 10 – “I felt bad for falling pregnant, I was lucky because my mother was there. Even though she was a strict person, a person who would hit but also talk to you. She showed me that there is no need for me to kill the child, if I don’t want the child, I must give the child to her. That helped me because I got the first support at home.”

Participant 9 – “It was hurtful to hear my mom say that she is disappointed in me. I humble myself as a child and apologised to her, I also asked her what I can do to show that I regret what I have done. She told me the only thing I can do to show remorse is to keep the child.”

Participant 2 – “My mother told me that, she heard (from my brother) that I was pregnant, and I agreed. She then stated that, it is better because I did not abort the baby.”

A majority of participants did not go through the process of inhlawulo “payment of the fine for the damage caused”, since their families either did not practise the tradition or did not find it necessary to go through the process. Participants that went through the process, indicated that it was not a matter of choice, it had to be done no matter how expensive and embarrassing they found the process to be.

Participant 1 – “The situation forced me to choose between getting a job or going to school. At that time, I had to choose getting a job, because the mother of my child was doing grade 12 when she got pregnant. So I was looking at the fact that she is young and at her home they had kicked her out for being pregnant. That is the reason I had to cancel going to school, so that I can plan to pay damages so that her family can be ok. I was able to pay damages because all the money that I had worked for, I was able

to save it. I was then able to buy a cow and other associated costs that are needed. The father of my girlfriend is a polygamist, so I had to buy blankets and aprons for all his wives and also buy a goat. I also had to pay out money for the chief.”

Participant 5 – *“At home there is a tradition that they have to escort me to the boy's house and they did that. When we got there, they spoke as adults and explained that I was pregnant and the father of the child is from their family. His mother asked me specifically about which boy was it since they have many boys. I explained and he was called to confirm, and he agreed. It (the process) made me sad because I felt like they were exposing me to the world that I'm now pregnant, but I couldn't argue or refuse to go through the process because it's a tradition that has always been there, that is how they grew up (the elders) and that is how things are done. I tried to persuade my sister to ask my grandmother not to escort me there, at least try to call them. But she said that because this is the way things are done, I should accept my position and not disagree with what my grandmother was saying. So I listened to her and did as I was told.”*

The decision to keep the child came with repercussions. The study found that, participants felt they had become a burden to their struggling families for having brought problems and an additional member to the household:

Participant 1 – *“What happened to me was painful, because of how things were at home and how things were at the home of my pregnant girlfriend. I had to leave Mtubatuba and move to Durban (look for work). I didn't even know where I would sleep, but because the situation was compelling me to leave home, there was nothing I could do because my father was self-employed and lives with my step mother and other children. As an older child I could see that this would be stressful to my father. So I had to leave, because even the mother of my child was kicked out at her home because of the pregnancy, the only way she could go back, was that I had to work, raise funds so that I can go to her home and pay damages (inhlawulo) so that she can go back home.”*

Participant 5 – *“I looked at the situation at home and realized that I would add another burden. My grandmother hoped that when I finish Matric I will go to*

University, but that did not happen. My grandmother is the breadwinner, my sister works part-time jobs.”

Participants wished they had delayed having a child to a later stage in life when financially independent:

Participant 6 – *“Having an unplanned child; it disturbed me a lot because my wish was to work first before having a baby.”*

Participant 7 – *“I felt bad for having a child while still in school because I had always said to myself I don’t want to have child while I’m still a child under the care of my parents. I wanted to have a child when I’m older and independent.”*

Participants viewed the transition to parenthood as a wakeup call. The life changing event forced young parents to take life and education seriously in order to do better for their children and compensate for the disappointment brought to families:

Participant 3 – *“When I realised that my mother was angry about the pregnancy, I decided to change the way I do things. For example, I made sure that she always finds me home and I did all my chores on time. I listened to her, to show remorse for what I have done. I decided to put more effort at school. I was not distracted at school. Instead, this motivated me to do better as I realized that I had responsibilities ahead of me.”*

Participant 5 – *“I told myself that since this has happened, I must try not to disappoint them (my grandmother and sister) further, I must pass matric. I will make them happy and they will forget that I ever made such a mistake.”*

Participant 7 – *“It was okay at school, but I started getting serious after having a child realising that I need to learn hard not only for me but for my child as well.”*

In addition, participants indicated that spending money wisely became important:

Participant 4 – *“I don't spend money in any way because I know that I have a child and that is my first priority, even if it's a small amount.”*

Participant 5 – *“when I get money, I don't think of myself. I think of my child's needs first.”*

There was a decline in the academic performance for some participants who were still at school at the time of the pregnancy:

Participant 4 – *“After delivery I was absent at school for few days because I gave birth on the 5th and I had to resume school because we were writing preliminary exams on the 18th. The preliminary exams didn't go the way I wanted because I was a person who used to study, but after the arrival of the child it changed. We (myself and friends) used to stay until late at school. But after the child, I could not, I had to pick up the child and come home to cook and take care of the child. My mother even gave me an idea to study when the child fell asleep, but he would wake up early and I would just close the books even though I am writing the following day.”*

Participant 9 – *“At school my performance dropped, I failed and repeated Grade 11.”*

The decline in school performance was attributed to insufficient time for studying as participants, mainly female participants had household chores to perform in addition to taking care of the child:

Participant 2 – *“When I come back from school, I normally wash the school shirt, clean, cook, bath and feed the child. I normally study when he is asleep.”*

Participant 6 – *“When I get home I need to clean and cook. I don't have time to study at home. I only do it when I am at school.”*

Participant 8 – *“It was difficult to come back home and have to cook, do homework and breastfeed. I was only able to study at night once the baby has gone to bed”*

In addition to finding a balance between school work and parenting, participants had to deal with snide remarks from teachers, classmates and suspension from academic activities:

Participant 2 – *“Some teachers were very rude. Some were asking how I got pregnant while studying and some said both of these things (school and a child) will not succeed at the same time.”*

Participant 8 – *“My classmates used to laugh at me, making jokes about me. When they were laughing at me, I would feel bad, and could not wait to go home and change to more comfortable clothing because the uniform was not comfortable, it was not fitting me properly. I would stay in classroom and if I needed anything for eating, I would ask other children to get it for me. I would go out of the classroom only when I went home.”*

Participant 10 – *“My teachers have never had a problem, but those teachers that did not teach me, had a problem with my pregnancy and mobilised for me to be expelled at school and it actually happened in August. They wrote a letter indicating that pregnant girls are being suspended from attending school they should come back once they have delivered. Unfortunately, I was going to deliver the following year in April, so I ended up staying at home for that year. After the child was born, I went to another school.”*

Furthermore, participants felt judged by the community that they grew up in:

Participant 7 – *“My friends in the neighborhood have never had a problem (with my pregnancy). But it was their parents who were talking about me, saying that their children must not be friends with me or be close to me because I don't know how to behave, I sleep around hence I'm pregnant.”*

Participant 8 – *“In the community, I would hear comments about my pregnancy, people mocking the fact that I was always in doors, how is it then that I'm now pregnant. I avoided people and stayed at home, If I needed to go out, it was better if the father of the child is with me, to anyone it showed that here is the father of the child he is being supportive, therefore I'm not going through the pregnancy alone.”*

Notwithstanding hardships endured, participants presented a positive attitude and courage to carry on for their sake and that of their children's wellbeing.

Participant 1 – *“I applied at university to study Fashion, every year I would apply. In 2019 I was eventually accepted (at DUT)”*

Participant 4 – *“I failed matric in 2018 because of the child. I had to take care of the child and also at the same time I had to study. In 2019 I stayed at home. In 2020, I went back to school and did Grade 11 and then I did Matric in 2021 and my results are better.”*

Participant 10 – *“I intend to apply at universities once I have upgraded my matric results for maths and economics.”*

The findings indicate three participants between the ages of 21 to 23 years, currently in grade 12 could have easily given up on high school considering their age, but were still determined to complete school with a hope of a brighter future.

Participant 2 – *“I would like to assist my mother extend the house, in terms of studying it will depend on my final marks. I want to work for one year and then study on the following one. I like Fashion Designing (I plan to do that in 2024) then do my driving license.”*

Participant 6 – *“When I finish school, I would like to start my own crochet business because I find school (academic route) difficult. I like to do crafts. I like crocheting a lot. I do scarfs and jerseys.”*

4.4 Challenges experienced during the transition to parenthood

The study found that young parents were faced with a variety of challenges, from when they learned of the pregnancy until the child was born.

Participants admit they lacked knowledge and skills required for raising a child hence they often requested assistance from the elderly and found their advice valuable:

Participant 1 – *“I think in order to be a parent you need to have patience. I would sometimes lose my temper when my child did not want to eat. One day a relative came to see us and found me irritated with my child because she was refusing to eat. She could see I was irritated and ready to give up on her. That is when she advised me that, I need to be patient with her and understand she is still a child, she was three at that time. So I needed to find a way of begging her to eat. The advice worked because at the end she was able to finish her food. Had the relative not arrived, I would have probably given up on her and she would not have eaten that day.”*

Participant 5 – *“Since I'm still a child, there are things I don't know, like if a child is sick, I don't know what to do. My grandmother since she knows traditional remedies. She explained everything to me.”*

Participant 10 – *“I did not raise my child alone because I was still under my parent's care, but I would say allowing other people on the sidelines to discipline the child is helpful, and when they do, I should be quiet, observe and listen, that helps me to learn as well so that in the future I'm able discipline the child.”*

The findings show that the inability to provide financially for a child is a major challenge as majority of participants reported to be unemployed. Those who had small businesses or were working part time, did not appear to be financially stable:

Participant 4 – *“If you don't work, it's very difficult. The fathers of the children run away, he is no longer around to support the child, which means my parents have to take the financial responsibility. It's harder to tell a parent that a child doesn't have pampers than it is to tell a father. You end up having to ask other people for assistance.”*

Participant 8 – *“I would say a challenge is having to figure things out for yourself, like you need pampers, food and laundry soap, you need to figure out how you are*

going to get them because there is no money, sometimes you end up asking from people. Which would not be the case if one was working and older.”

Participant 9 – *“The growing up of a child can be difficult, when the child gets sick and you don’t know what to do or who to tell, and when you go to the clinic you don’t get help. You end up feeling helpless, not knowing what to do. You end up being forced to go to the doctor, at the same time you don’t have any money for the doctor, but at the end of the day, the child must be saved,*

The study indicates that participants found parenting to be a difficult task that cannot be taken lightly:

Participant 2 – *“I would say it is difficult being a parent since there are a lot of things required by the child, since he is developing teeth, he need more pampers and medication.”*

Participant 9 – *“Life is difficult, when there is no one to support your child and you have to support the child yourself. Even if there is parental support, there is always that thing from the parent that had you listened to me, you would not be here.”*

Participant 10 – *“It’s difficult being young parent. We need money for everyday needs. When you are young, you always wish to be old, but when you get there, you realize that it is difficult. First, money is needed. So it’s been difficult as I am just a child and everything is my responsibility. Unfortunately, I lost a parent and the child’s father left.”*

The study found that fathers remained involved in their children’s lives. However, they were dependent on their families for support as some were still in school, while others were unemployed or worked part time. Two female participants reported their partners abandoned them when the child was born, making life hard as they had to solely depend on their families for support:

Participant 9 – *“His family paid partially for the damages (inhlawulo), they paid “imali yamazolo nembuzi yezintombi (the maiden’s goat)” and said that because he is*

still in school, when he finishes school, he will have to pay for the rest that is required for the damages caused to my family”.

Participant 3 – *“I provided for my girlfriend financially. I would normally receive support from home, however, I also had my own ways. I played key board part time, that’s how I made money”.*

Participant 4 – *“After the child was born, the father of the child lost his job. I talked to him and he said that he will take care of the child because he is relying on UIF, he took care of the child until the UIF came to an end. He then left for JHB to look for a job, he kept quiet ever since and that was how we broke up and that’s how he stopped supporting the child. My parents supported the child financially.”*

Participant 10 – *“At first, he (father of the child) was happy. But after I gave birth, he brought me the baby's things and then he told me that his mother said that he must not support the child because I have both parents. I was not going to force the child upon them, unfortunately the father of the child did not do right by the child and that’s how it all ended.”*

The study found that participants experienced emotional challenges:

Participant 1 reported *“feeling stressed”*, when his girlfriend was kicked out at her home for falling pregnant and he had to leave his rural home for the city in order to look for work.

Participant 3 reported *“feeling sad”*, when he saw that his mother was angry that he had made a girl pregnant.

Participant 4 reported *“feeling hurt”*, when her father gave her a silent treatment for two months after finding out about her pregnancy. She also *“felt bad and was bothered”* by remarks made by classmates during her pregnancy.

Participant 5 stated that the process of “inhlawulo” where she was escorted to the boyfriend’s home to inform them of the pregnancy made her “*feel sad*” because she “*felt exposed to the world for being pregnant*”.

Participant 7 reported that when parents in the neighbourhood told their children not to be interact with her because she was pregnant, those comments “*did not sit well with her, she felt bad*”.

4.5 The impact of early transition to parenthood

The study found various negative effects as a result of early child bearing, however the disruption on education was found to be the main significant effect:

Participant 4 reported that “*I’ve lost opportunities. For instance, I should have been in university by now and not at home. But I could not leave home because the children are still young. Having a child sometimes its irritating because I would be studying by now, and studying far from home, but since I have a child I can’t.*”

While Participant 10 stated that “*Having a child early, has changed my life so much. There are life stages that I had to skip as a child and be a parent and that forced me to think quickly. I think the reason I didn’t go far with school is that money can put you under pressure, when you at home and there is no food, you are forced to go out as a women and go and do other people’s laundry so that there can be food at home, especially since I have a child, I can’t just sit at home when I see that there is no food at home, so all of that has made me to grow up pretty fast. I think that, had I not had a child, I’m sure I would have gone far in terms of education. I was not highly intelligent, but I liked to prove that I could get the good marks that I want.*”

Furthermore, participants had to change their friends:

Participant 4 – “*I had to change friends, because the ones I had didn’t have kids.*”

Participant 8 – *“I realised that I cannot compare myself with friends. So I decided to maintain a distance from friends and just remain polite and greet when I see them.”*

Participant 10 – *“I had to isolate myself from friends who do not have children.”*

The drastic change forced young parents to suspend activities they used to enjoy. Some participants reported they no longer had time to spend with friends:

Participant 4 - *“I could no longer spend time with friends, no longer loitering with friend.”*

Participant 7 – *“It’s no longer easy for me to go out with my friends to have fun because I have a child to look after.”*

As a result, they were missing out on fun:

Participant 5 – *“Things one used to do, you find that you can no longer do them. For instance, if there is a concert I would go, but after having a child I was not able to go to concerts because I needed to look after the child.”*

Participant 7 – *“It’s sad to see my friends going out, looking beautiful and having fun, we used to celebrate each other’s birthdays, we would go out, do things together. But now when it’s my birthday, I just get a simple “happy birthday” from my family. I can no longer go out with my friends and celebrate.”*

Participant 10 – *“Having a child has forced me to refrain from things I used to do. We grew up going to the township shows for dancing and singing. I can't go to places anymore.”*

In addition, young parents had to prioritise the needs of their children before their own needs:

Participant 5 – *“I consider what my child needs first, e.g. winter clothes since it’s going to be winter now.”*

Participant 6 – *“I had to now consider the wellbeing of the child first, when it comes food, I ensure that the child eats first before me.”*

Participant 9 – *“In everything I do, I have to think twice, I have to think for the child first.”*

Participants came from low income household and were dependent on the old age and child support grant, therefore families could not afford to financially provide for them and their children. As a result, participants chose for provisions to be made for their children instead of meeting their own needs such as clothing. Participants preferred to rather have clothes bought for the child instead:

Participant 1 – *“The challenge is you are young, you have to clothe yourself and clothe the child as well. Everything that you do now, you can’t think for yourself only. After hard work, whatever you get you must think for the other person (the child).”*

Participant 5 – *“It becomes difficult to ask for things at home for myself and also ask for the child. So you end up putting your needs aside which means you don’t get to have some of the things you need, you rather have the family provide for the child instead.”*

Participant 10 – *“If you don’t work, you end up not asking the parents for stuff that is related to you, you would rather they provide for the needs of the child than providing for my needs.”*

4.6 Coping strategies utilised during the transition to parenthood

The study found that participants were able cope with challenges as a result of social and financial support from family members. There was no indication that participants received support from the community. The child support grant and friends were not highlighted as a significant form of support. Even though some participants received support from their partners, it did not appear to be consistent as most partners were unemployed or relied on part time employment.

Social support: family

Participants sought assistance mainly from family members.

Participant 3 – *“If I do not have money, I normally request support from home.”*

Participant 2 – *“My mother is the one who normally provides financial support because the father of the child does not earn much.”*

Participant 5 – *“: I get a lot of support from my family, especially with my grandmother who has agreed to look after my child while I’m looking for a school this side or when I find school.”*

Participant 7 – *“My mother helps by buying the baby’s stuff, if the father of the child does not have money at that time. My mother also looks after the child when I’m not around. When I go to school, I drop off the child at a relative’s house, the relative looks after the child, then I collect the child after school.”*

Participant 4 – *“If you don't work. You end up having to ask other people for. Most of the time, I would go to my friend as she also has a child. However, I received most of the support back home.”*

Child support grant

Participant 4 – *“The government grant that we receive is great support but it’s not enough.”*

Participant 8 – *“We support ourselves through grant (child support grant) and I also I get support from my child's father, and if I'm stuck, his family helps me.”*

Social support: friends

A few participants resorted to asking friends and borrowing money from somewhere:

Participant 9 – *“you end up borrowing the money from somewhere in order to take the child to the doctor.”*

Social support: partner

Participant 6 – *“My partner is the one who is employed and taking care of us (participant and her child).”*

Emotion focused and problem focused strategies:

In dealing with her feelings of hurt for having made his father angry by falling pregnant,

Participant 4 reported that *“I sat down with my mother and told her that since my father found out that I was pregnant, he no longer talks to me. My mother called a meeting and we sat down and discussed. It was then that I had the opportunity to apologize, after that things changed for the better.”*

When she could not convince her family to not go through with the process of “inhlawulo” in order to save her the embarrassment of being escorted to the boyfriend’s family home,

Participant 5 stated *“I listened and did as I was told”*

Participant 4 applied different strategies in dealing with her emotions; with regards to her classmates, she decided to laugh off the remarks

Participant 4 - *“but I did not take the remarks to heart. I’m a person that loves to laugh, so I would just laugh.”*

When she heard that neighbours were describing her as a bad girl that sleeps around,

Participant 7 decided *“not to pay attention”* to them.

4.7 Assistance necessary to strengthen coping resources

The findings indicate that a majority of the participants needed extra support in order to be successful. Some participants suggested having someone to look after the child while they were at school or while they were looking for business opportunities or employment would be of great assistance. While other participants indicated they needed mentors to guide them:

Assistance with child care

Participant 1 – *“Others have children and they themselves don’t have parents. I think if there could be a place, like a day care, maybe if the government can do that. It could be the government or people in the field that deals with young people where if a*

young person cannot take care of the child. They can go there and give them the child to raise until such time they are able to come back and get the child once they have the resources of raising a child to avoid children been dumped in toilets.”

Participant 7 – *“I need support from home and from the father of the child. I need them to assist by looking after the child while I concentrate on my studies, especially when we have to attend on Saturdays and afternoon during the week. When I have to attend afternoon classes during the week, I’m not able to attend because now I have to go and collect the child and look after the child. So I basically need someone to look after my child, while studying or until I’m done studying and then once I’m free, I will then go and get the child.”*

Participant 8 – *“have a caretaker who can look after my children when I’m at school.”*

Participant 9 – *“I need someone who can take care of my child full-time because I sometimes go away to look for something that will bring in money”*

Financial assistance

Participant 2 – *“If young parents could get support related to child necessities”*

Participant 7 – *“need for financial supports for things like pampers which when we don’t have them leads to stress.”*

Assistance from sponsor or a mentor

Participant 1 – *“Yes, I do need support on a personal level. My plan this year is to try by all means and find a place where I can work at. Where I can have my clothes, where people can find them if they want them. Like premises, a studio or a workshop, where I will be selling, where It will be easy for people to find my clothes”*

Participant 4 – *“It would help if there are people available whom we could talk to when we have problems. If I have a problem, I can open up to an outsider.”*

Participant 5 – *“I need a mentor, someone who will show me the way, the difference between what is wrong and right. Like, since I'm looking for a school now I need someone to advise me about the school and the choices I have to make regarding the university application process.”*

Participant 5 – *“Young parents need support but not only financial support, they need support because they go through depression. They need to have a person even if it's a friend or a family member so that they are able to cough out what is troubling them inside because not doing so is harmful”*

Participant 6 – *“Young people need to be advised that when you have a child you must not give up because life goes on.”*

Participant 8 – *“I would say I need support in terms of school, have someone who can assist me to further my studies”*

Participant 9 – *“The support that is required is not to look down on the young parents, instead always motivate them. Encourage them and tell them that we love them.”*

Participant 10 – *“I think we need support in terms of knowledge. There are some things that we need to be taught. What I think is more important than child support grant is the availability of guidance or mentors who can be able to guide young women and advise them that; now that you have a child you are going to meet challenges such as this or that. Many young parents are yelled at and not spoken well with, and others avoid problems with alcohol. I think the guidance can also help in preventing second and more pregnancies at an early age.”*

4.8 Lessons learned while moving through the transition

The transitions required immediate changes as life could no longer be as they knew it. Participants learned the importance of taking on responsibilities at home, growing to accept their circumstances and listening to the elderly for guidance:

Participant 3 – *“I have grown to be responsible at home. Things have changed because I also contribute at home if I have the money.”*

Participant 5 – *“Parents should listen to everything the family say. Once you know that you are involved in sex, protect yourself, go to the clinic for contraceptive, stay away from boys until you finish school and be independent.”*

Participant 6 – *“young parents should get help with counselling and be educated about sex, where they are advised not to rush into it before time. Pay attention to what they need most in life and put education first.”*

Participant 9 – *“It’s important to listen to your parent at all times, whatever she says it’s not meant to mislead you, but to advise you as someone who has already walked the journey. A child is expensive.”*

Participant 10 – *“I’ve learned that you need to accept things the way that they are and not compare yourself with others in order to avoid stress or depression”*

The study found that participant’s understanding of their responsibilities towards their children was looking after their children at all times and taking care of their need:

Participant 7 – *“I need to always look after the child, guard them for their safety and wellbeing.”*

Participant 8 – *“It’s also important to have emergency savings so that you can afford a doctor because at the age of 5 years like my first born, they are at a stage where they get accidents frequently.”*

Participant 9 – *“The child must be fed and clothed, and be like all other children”*

Participant 10 – *“I make sure that the child goes to school, like any other children wears uniform, I ensure that the child eats, and just make sure that the child does not stand out as a child of a teenage mom, when he is amongst other children. So much so*

that I talk to him and tell him everything that I do with money so that he knows when I can and cannot afford.”

4.9 Hope for solutions that will make life better in the future

The participants demonstrated that they are cognizant of the challenges that arise as a result of early child bearing and hope for solutions that will improve their lives:

Participant 3 – *“the solution is for one to study further and get a better paying job to cater for one’s needs.”*

Participant 4 – *“There should be job opportunities for the youth. Some jobs should be able to hire even people without Matric.”*

Participant 9 – *“The solution can be for one to get a temporary or permanent job, because when you work, there’s money that you save which can be used to meet the needs.”*

Participant 10 – *“Most of the children that fall pregnant drop out of school, give up and don’t get involved in anything. I think it would help if there was an alternative for a night school, because it is often said that we should not mix with our peers because we will be a bad example since we have children. So to ensure that we don’t mix with other girls maybe it would help to have the young mothers attend night schools, but the problem is we don’t see those schools anymore. It would also help if they would also give an allowance to write exams around April/May, the same way they do with “normal schools”.*

4.10 Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study from the data that was collected. Several themes were identified. The findings presented the context under which the transition occurred, highlighting the challenges that parents faced. The findings revealed the impact that the transition has on parent’s lives and how they coped with challenges. Furthermore, the findings revealed the assistance that parents require in order to cope and highlighted the lessons learned moving through the transition. Lastly the chapter presented suggested solutions that can make life better going forward in life.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion on the findings of the study, it makes recommendations and provides a conclusion. The aim of the study was to understand the experiences of young parents, and how they coped with parenting challenges as they transition to parenthood. The findings will be discussed and interpreted under the three objectives of the study linked to literature and theoretical framework.

5.2 Context under which the transition occurred

The findings reveal that the transition to parenthood was not planned, it was an unanticipated event that was viewed as a negative change associated with feelings of sadness. According to Anderson et al. (2012), unplanned events present challenges that are not ordinarily experienced with planned events, hence the transition presented negative feelings. The described feelings of sadness were as a result of feeling shame for disappointing the family. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Gbogbo (2020) and Govender, Naidoo and Taylor (2020) who found that families were angry and extremely disappointed by the revelation. The family's negative response is attributed to the stigma associated with teenage pregnancy and the fear that hopes for a brighter future for the young parent will not be fulfilled. According to Mkhwanazi and Block (2016) teenagers bring shame to their families when they fall pregnant at an early age. While, Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and Mcmichael (2015), found that early childbearing gave families a bad reputation in the community, as it suggests poor parenting. Furthermore, families are troubled by the possible loss of a better life in the future (Jacobs & Mollborn 2012). Nevertheless, families eventually accept the predicament and support teenagers during the transition (Gbogbo, 2020).

The study conducted by Govender, Naidoo and Taylor (2020) found that families accepted early childbearing when "inhlawulo" was paid. Even though majority of young parents in this study did not go through the process of "inhlawulo", it was however noted that when the process was followed, it served as a form of acceptance and taking responsibility. The study found that a mother who had been kicked out of home, was able to return after the father of the child paid inhlawulo. Furthermore, acceptance was based on family values, which placed

a high regard on life hence some young parents were discouraged from doing abortion by their families symbolising that the unborn child was accepted.

In addition to feeling sad, young parents felt a sense of regret for burdening their families, an indication that financial resources were already stretched to maximum capacity. Therefore, families were not in a position to support an additional member. This finding is consistent with Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and Mcmichael (2015) and Mangeli et al., (2017) who assert that parents who transition to parenthood early in life are from low income households and are unemployed. Hence, in hindsight parents feel it would have been better to delay the transition to a later stage in life when prospects of financial independence were greater. Therefore, working hard at school and home serves to compensate for disappointing the family and aims to amend broken relationships. Recognising the need to amend family relationships signifies a higher level of maturity and is indicative of remorse, such measures seek to create peace and restore trust in the families.

Difficulties were encountered at school, teachers were not sympathetic to the condition and created a classroom environment that was not welcoming. However, mistreatment was not a deterrent as school attendance continued except in the case of expulsion. This finding echoes other studies that explore the experience of those who are in the schooling system. The study conducted by Bhana and Mcambi (2013) indicate that schools are not supportive which creates an environment that causes hurt and pain. Matlala, Nolte and Temane (2014) explain that, teachers fear accommodating parent's right to education as it can potentially be viewed as a sign of approval by other learners, giving the impression that schools are supportive. Therefore, it maybe be argued that schools respond with expulsions or negative remarks with the aim of discouraging other learners from falling pregnant. According to Matlala, Nolte and Temane (2014) schools recognise young parent's right to education, on the other hand feel they don't have the skill to deal with their condition, hence they don't know how to respond to the situation. Chigona and Chetty (2007) suggests training that will enable teachers to better handle the situation.

Communities view early childbearing in low regard. Mothers in particular are perceived as sexually promiscuous when they fall pregnant at a young age (Chobany & Hull, 2021). According to Chigona and Chetty (2008) mothers are also mistreated by the community when they learn of the pregnancy, for instance, communities confront schools advocating for

mothers to be expelled with the aim of isolating them from their peers. Therefore, communities do not view early childbearing as a concern that holds both young parents accountable, instead communities assign the blame to mothers only (Kotoh et al., 2022). Swartz, Colvin and Harrison (2018) state that society is more critical of women's sexuality than men. The findings of a study conducted by Chobany and Hull (2021), attest to this negative attitude towards mothers; the study found that mothers are viewed as too young to be parents, irresponsible and not ambitious, while fathers are perceived as responsible, ambitious and at the appropriate age for parenting. Contrary to Chobany and Hull (2021), mothers were found to be more responsible than fathers. Mothers and their families were identified as primary caregivers, therefore carried more parenting responsibilities than fathers. As a result, mothers struggled with the increase in responsibilities and conflicting roles between being a learner and a parent.

Due to limited support for childcare, mothers were required to do house chores, look after a child and study. Consequently, a balance could not be achieved, therefore school performance was compromised which led to poor matric results. Similarly, Chigona and Chetty (2007) found that few young parents pass well in matric. Poor matric results decrease the prospects of gaining entry into institutions of higher learning, decreasing further the prospects of securing employment. Even though a tertiary qualification does not guarantee employment, Spaul (2013) states that the unemployment rate of 18 to 24-year-old with tertiary qualifications is lower than the rate of those without, therefore the chances of securing employment when there is a qualification are better when compared to those who do not have qualifications.

Nevertheless, having a child has changed the manner in which young parents behave; decisions are taken cautiously and serious thoughts given about the future. Moreover, there are high levels of motivation to work harder at school, an indication that education is regarded vital for opening up opportunities that can lead to a brighter future. Furthermore, completing school served as an apology to families for disappointing them and as vindication in the community and school environment that they are not a lost cause. According to Chohan and Langa (2011) such behaviour is indicative of maturity and growth. Furthermore, Govender, Naidoo and Taylor (2020) attest to this finding and indicate that young parents have a strong desire for education in order to have good jobs and serve the community.

5.3 Challenges experienced during transition to parenthood

The study conducted by Mangeli et al. (2017) found mothers as particularly incompetent at childrearing, placing the lives of their children at risk due to lack of knowledge and skills. However, this study revealed that parents were responsible with their children even though they were not ready to transition to parenthood. According to Anderson et al. (2012) there is insufficient time to prepare in advance for new changes when moving through an unplanned event which results in poor decisions making. In addition, Anderson et al. (2012) attributes incompetence to an imbalance between assets and liabilities, where there are less assets such as parenting skills. Therefore, it may be argued that regardless of age, first time parents generally struggle with childrearing, since they do not have sufficient assets hence they consult their families for social support, thereby showcasing the high level of maturity for consulting when in despair.

Nonetheless, other challenges were experienced whose severity was exacerbated by unemployment which made it difficult to take on child care responsibilities. Anderson et al. (2012) states that transition in one area of life has the potential to invoke stress in another area of life. As primary caregivers, mothers were constantly worried about the inability to afford basic necessities such as nappies which led to desperate measures such as borrowing money or begging from others. Even though a majority of the fathers were present in the lives of their children, they did not provide sufficient financial support, therefore the burden of financial support was left to the maternal family. This finding is in line with Swartz, Colvin and Harrison (2018) who found that even though there was an interest from fathers to be actively involved in the care of their children, fathers struggled to take on the financial responsibility, therefore maternal families financially provided for children. Furthermore, the child support grant could not be completely relied upon as it was found to be insufficient when compared to the child's needs.

Young parents are emotionally conflicted and find the transition uncomfortable and painful. The negative feelings such as sadness and hurt which are experienced at the onset of pregnancy continue as the children grow. Negative emotions are as a result of how families, friends and the community treat young parents. Mangeli et al. (2017) states that emotional challenges cause stress and have the potential of causing harm to the health of young parents

and their family. In addition, Kotoh et al. (2022) warns that such emotions have the potential to cause suicidal thoughts.

5.4 The impact of early transition to parenthood

Young parents had regrets after having a child since their plans to study further were disrupted and hopes of possibly pursuing a desired career were diminished. However, Mangeli et al. (2017), found that regrets were not only associated with the disruption in education, it was also related to a disruption into their personal desires such as spending time at the salon or shopping mall. Therefore, young parents were not ready for the change of roles, from being a teenager to a parent.

Anderson et al. (2021) state that transitions carry a certain degree of stress as they involve a role gain or loss. Role gains are positive events such starting a new job, while role loss are negative events such as having a child at an early age. Consequently, a role loss was experienced when parents disconnected from their network of friends since they no longer had the same interest and responsibilities. Contrary to Humberstone (2018) who found that disconnection was associated with stigma, where friends distanced themselves from young parents. This study found conscious decisions were made to disconnect from the friends since there was no time to socialise. Humberstone (2018) suggests that such behaviour could be beneficial, provided young parents do not disconnect all friends, instead decrease the number of friends in the network in order to focus on friends whom they have a strong bond with. Furthermore, Ellis-Sloan and Tamplin (2018) warns that complete social isolation is not desirable as it minimises the prospects of social support which could lead to an inability to cope with challenges particularly if young parents do not have support from the family, school and the community. Hence it is important to keep a network of friend for companionship, advice and emotional support (Ellis-Sloan & Tamplin, 2018).

On the other hand, young parents had the desire to still socialise with friend in entertainment activities that bring them together such as parties. However, the transition has deprived them of the opportunity to get involved in such activities, hence they felt excluded. This finding is in line with Govender, Naido and Taylor (2020) who found that, after the transition young parents did not have a social life, as a result they felt lonely and isolated. Jacobs and Mollborn (2012) noted that, when young parents were not able to reconnect with friends, the

relationship with their children was able to compensate for the lost friendships. Jacobs and Mollborn (2012) suggest that the strong bond that develops between a young parent and child makes it possible to deal with the loss of friends and isolation. A shift in priorities occurs, the child's wellbeing becomes important. Strong bonds were developed between young parents and children; parents stated how a child's wellbeing was of paramount importance, hence it became important how money and time was spent, putting the needs of a child first.

5.5 Coping strategies utilised during transition to parenthood

Social support is important for managing a stressful event, moreover parental support enable individual to transition easily (Anderson et al., 2012). According to various studies (Kotoh et al., 2022; Gbogbo, 2020; Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020; Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and Mcmichael, 2015) conducted on early childbearing, family members were identified as the main source of support. Female members such as mothers, grandmothers and sisters were identified as particularly active in providing childcare, financial and emotional support (Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020; Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and Mcmichael, 2015). Findings attest that through female kin support, young parents were able to provide for the basic needs of a child and go back to school. Furthermore, they learned other skills, such as handling a sick child. Therefore, female kin support played a significant role in building the young parent's confidence and developing their parenting skills.

Coert, Adebisi, Rich and Roman (2021) found a positive correlation between family support and parental efficacy. According Jones and Prinz (2005) parental efficacy is the belief that parents have about their competency to look after a child successfully. Coert, Adebisi, Rich and Roman (2021) found that when parents had family members whom they could rely on for advice, they became satisfied with their performance in their role as parents. Support serves to provide honest feedback amongst other functions which may assist an individual to apply a more effective coping strategy (Anderson et al., 2012). This study attests to the relationship between social support and parental efficacy, as parents reported on skills learned from female kin which helped them to care for their children better. Therefore, highlighting the importance of social support.

Similar to Chigona and Chetty (2008), community members did not support young parents, this finding was not surprising since the communities viewed early child bearing as immoral

(Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and McMichael, 2015). In light of the location where the study was conducted, it can be argued that it is not realistic to expect the community to provide support since it is a socio-economically disadvantaged area. Therefore, there are limited resources to share.

Consistent with the studies conducted by Gbogbo (2020) and Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong and McMichael (2015), there's no significant amount of support from friends and fathers. Fathers provided inconsistent financial support since they were unemployed. While others, stayed away and did not take any form of responsibility. According to McLanahan, Tach and Schneider (2013), such behaviour has detrimental effects on a boy child in particular. McLanahan, Tach and Schneider (2013), argues that absent fathers in early childhood increase chances of children engaging in risky behaviours such as smoking in their teenage years. Therefore, social support is not only important for the primary caregiver, it plays a significant role in the development of a child as well.

According to Anderson et al. (2012) individuals who are flexible and use multiple strategies are identified as coping effectively through the different stages of transitions. However, studies indicate that parents apply the emotion focused strategy (Jacobs & Mollborn, 2012). This study demonstrated that both the emotion and problem focused strategies were used, however the avoidant emotion focused strategy was widely used. Jacobs and Mollborn (2012) suggest the strategy is ideal for maintaining peace since an attempt to address conflict directly may open up wounds and put the parents at a risk of further damaging relationships that are already strained. This finding is consistent with Kaye (2008) and Gbogbo (2020) who noted that this strategy was frequently used by young parents for dealing with challenges presented by early child bearing. This study is in agreement with the view of Roth and Cohen (1986), who state that the avoidant coping enables an individual to deal with the problem when it arises, when they don't know what to do. However, the strategy does not address the root cause of the problem and it remains unresolved causing harm in the long run. Problem focused strategy was hardly used, however when used young parents actively planned and implemented solutions. Jurji et al. (2018) attest that it is an ideal strategy for fixing the root cause of the problem, however it is hardly used.

According to Anderson et al. (2012) the ability of an individual to cope with a transition is influenced by a balance between their assets and liabilities which are the situation, self, support and strategies. Anderson et al. (2012) further states that, when there are more assets than liabilities, an individual is likely to cope easily with a challenge when compared to an individual who has less assets. In addition to the influence of assets and liabilities, Anderson et al. (2012) indicates that the manner in which an individual cope with their challenge will also be influenced by how they appraise the change; whether they see the change as positive or negative.

The findings indicate that the transition was not a pleasant experience as it occurred prematurely. Young parents had more liabilities and less assets, hence they had to sacrifice their needs in order to cater for their children's. The transition had a negative impact predominately on mothers since their role carried more responsibilities as primary caregivers, fathers did not need to make significant changes in their lives. The study finds that social support enabled young parents to cope to a certain extent, however additional support is required for childcare which hinders the ability to complete high school successfully. According to Anderson et al. (2012), it can be assumed that the harder the impact, then more resources will be needed as it will take longer for an individual to adapt to the change. Parents therefore, require role models to guide and mentor them through the transition in addition to counselling. Chigona and Chetty (2007) suggest counselling will equip young parents with tools required to deal with negative feeling and methods of balancing parenting and school. Young parents do not have sufficient assets to fully take charge of their lives, the transition threatens prospects of a bright future. Therefore, it is important that they are supported in order to finish school and study further for the purpose of job or business opportunities. The findings indicate that young parents have learned from their mistakes and stand to have a better future provided they use the lessons learned to empower themselves by making wise decisions in the future.

Chapter 6: Recommendation and Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand the parenting experiences of young parents, and how they cope with challenges. A background into the study was provided, key concept related to the topic of the study were presented in the literature review. The qualitative method was used to conduct the research. The findings were analysed using thematic analysis and discussed in terms of the theoretical framework and literature.

The overall parenting experience was perceived as a difficult transition as it caused conflict within families and disrupted social networks, as a result, young parents were socially isolated. The study discovered that young parents had to change friends as they no longer had the same interest. Young parents felt humiliated in the community and as a burden to their families. The parenting experience had a negative impact on academic performance due to increased responsibilities and a lack of time. However, the experience served as a wakeup call to take life seriously, spend money wisely and take on more responsibilities at home.

Lack of knowledge and parenting skills together with a lack of financial resources emerged as main challenges in addition to negative emotions of stress and feeling hurt.

The study revealed that young parents do not have sufficient coping resources to handle the transition. The coping strategies utilised were found to be ineffective in dealing with the challenges. However, social and financial support from family members made the transition process manageable. The study did not find evidence of significant social or financial support from friends and partners, while the community provided no support at all.

Avoidant coping strategies used enabled parents to deal with negative emotions at the time of conflict. The source of angry remarks and stigmatising comment came from family members and the community. Considering that family and community members are figures of authority, young parents are unable to confront the source of negative remarks and stigmatisation directly, the negative emotions remain unresolved. Therefore, counselling and mentoring is necessary to enhance self-esteem and challenge the power dynamics within the

family and the community. Counselling is important for equipping young parents with skills on how to apply other effective coping strategies and build one's confidence. While, mentoring is important for training young parents on how to handle parent effectively.

Strengthened coping resources translate to confidence and independence. Confident and independent parents result in positive parenting which in turn produces well developed children.

6.2 Limitations of the study

- The study was conducted in Quarry Heights, a low income area. Consequently, the findings cannot ascertain that similar results will yield when conducted in a different area. The findings of this study therefore cannot be generalized to all young parent populations in other areas.
- The study adopted a qualitative research approach which requires a small sample of a population. The results cannot be generalized to a larger population of black young parents in Durban.
- The study population was limited to parents from Durban North between the ages of 19 to 25 years. Incorporation of different races, gender, age group and socio-economic status may have generated findings that expand to the parental experiences of others.

6.3 Recommendations of the study

- The researcher recommends future research on parental experiences, challenges and coping strategies should be explored in different areas.
- Diverse sample with different race, gender and socio-economic status for diverse views is recommended.
- Future research at government level is recommended to determine the feasibility of developing mentoring programs for teaching parenting and life skills.
- The researcher recommends counselling centres to be established in schools for psychological support.

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Appendix A Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Nompumelelo Nombewu (Student no. 221117117). I am a Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus. The title of my research is: The parenting experience: an exploration study of coping mechanism of young parents. I am interested in interviewing you so as to hear your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action. Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study. All the information shared through the interview will be treated as confidential, your name and location will be kept anonymous. There are limits to confidentiality. The limit of confidentiality occurs when a participant is clearly harmful to him- or herself or others, or in the case of sexual abuse. The researcher is then obliged to divulge information to the appropriate authority, but should nevertheless inform the participant and obtain permission, if possible.

The interview will take about one (1) hour. The recording as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected electronic file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by deleting and shredding. There will be no financial benefit when participating in the research.

Should you become uncomfortable in answering certain interview question, you are free not to answer them. The interview session will be recorded for ease of retrieving the discussions and transcribing the data accurately. The recording will be protected by a password, and will not be marked with your name, as code names will be used to identify the participants. The transcribed notes will be filed electronically and protected by a password. If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement.

I can be contacted at: School of Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus. Email: 221117117@stu.ukzn.ac.za; Cell: 084 606 6762/ 082 061 9849

My supervisor is Dr Mthokozisi Hlengwa who is located at the School of Human Sciences, Howard Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email hlengwam1@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number: 031 260 7982.

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Office, Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number 031 260 4557/3587/8350.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (*full names of participant*) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

In addition to the above, I agree to the audio recording of my interview for the purposes of data capturing. I understand that no personally identifying information or recording concerning me will be released in any form. I understand that these recordings will be kept securely in a locked environment and will be destroyed once data capture and analysis is complete.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

Title – The parenting experience: an exploration study of coping mechanism of young parents.

Questions

1. Biographical details: age, gender, ethnic group, marital status, highest education qualification, employment status, number of children, members of the household.
2. Tell me about yourself?
3. How was your life before being a parent: at home, at school, in the community?
4. What has been your experience on parenting?
5. How have you adjusted to being a parent? What are the adjustments that you had to make now that you are a parent?
6. How has it changed your life, looking at yourself before you became a parent and now?
7. What has been the biggest impact on your life as a result of being parent?
8. What have you learned about yourself now that you are a parent?
9. What would you say are the skills and knowledge required of you as a parent?
10. What would you say are your responsibilities as a parent?
11. What are the challenges of being a young parent?
12. Based on the challenges mentioned, what strategies are you using to cope as an individual and as a parent?
13. What do you think can be the solution to the challenges you have raised?
14. In general, what do you think young parent should do in order to cope with parenting?
15. What kind of support do you have available (at home or in the community)?
16. Do you think you need more support in order to be successful on a personal and parenting level? If so, please explain what kind of support would be required?
17. What kind of support in general, do you think is necessary for young parents?

Appendix C Gatekeeper's Letter



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Ref: 082 069 3065

Office: 031 5770327

Enquires : 19 / November / 2021

To : Whom it may concern

Sir / Madam.

This serves to confirm that Nompumelelo Nombewu with ID no 830310 0845 080 and Student number : 221117117 resides at number 2580 Greenfield Avenue, Avoca in ward 11 where I am a Ward Councillor.

Nompumelelo is a Master's student at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, in the school of Applied Human Sciences (College of Humanities) Nompumelelo will be conducting a research in the Quarry Heights area for a period of 3 to 5 days in the first quarter of 2022, project title will be parenting experience, an exploration study of coping mechanism of young adults. The aim of the study is to understand the parenting experiences of young parents and how they cope with challenges.

I have no objection in this study being conducted in my ward as the young student will be of great help in the near future with whatever the outcome of the research might be.

The name of her Supervisor : Dr Hlengwa with email – Hlengwam1@ukzn.ac.za
Nompumelelo can be contacted on 084 606 6762.

Yours in Community Development
J A Johnson
eThekweni Municipality



Appendix D

Ethical Clearance



28 January 2022

Gladys Nompumelelo Nombewu (221117117)
School Of Applied Human Sc
Howard College

Dear GN Nombewu,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003789/2022

Project title: The parenting experience: an exploration study of coping mechanism of young parents.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 06 January 2022 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) 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.

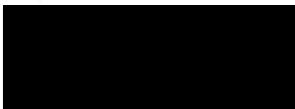
This approval is valid until 28 January 2023.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix D Turnitin Report

The parenting experience: an exploration study of coping mechanism of young parents

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10% SIMILARITY INDEX	9% INTERNET SOURCES	2% PUBLICATIONS	5% STUDENT PAPERS
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PRIMARY SOURCES

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