

Unpacking the Complexities of Re-enrollment in Secondary Schools: A Dual Perspective from Parents and Teenage Mothers in Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Teenage pregnancy is a multifaceted issue that intersects with various social, cultural, and economic factors. The issue of teenage pregnancy raises important questions about the well-being and future prospects of young girls and most importantly, efforts at reschooling them. This study adopted a qualitative method using interview method to explore both teenage mothers' and their parents willing to re-enroll their daughters in school. The population for this study consisted pregnant girls awaiting child bearing, young-mothers and teenage mothers who had dropped out of school or still attending school. Eight teenage mothers that dropped out of school and two parents were reached and interviewed. The results revealed that teenage mothers admitted that they missed school, and interested in continuing their education. Parents were worried about their daughters dropping out of school and were willing to help them complete their secondary school education, while identifying financial difficulties as a major challenge.

Keywords: Education, Re-enrollment, Secondary School, Teenager, Teenage Mother.

A. Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in the general human development. At individual level, education enables one to develop and appreciate ones' values and ethics that foster integrity and peace necessary for harmonious co-existence of individuals (Haleem et al., 2022); (Makdoom & Aamir, 2023); (Avila-Larriva & Vallejo-Sancho, 2023); (Dakar. & Office", 2023)). At the national level, education helps people acquire the information, abilities, and attitudes necessary for growth and productivity; while placing secondary school education at a vantage position in achieving the primary purpose of education (Haleem et al., 2022). In (Opesemowo, O. A. G., Iwintolu & Afolabi, 2023) this sense, education is highly regarded worldwide, and almost every country is having difficulty addressing the numerous issues that the education sector faces. These difficulties jeopardize the completion of educational systems and the ultimate accomplishment of educational objectives (Marchetta & Dilly, 2019); (Popov et al., 2021). School drop-out is a significant obstacle that many students face, with various factors such as learner, school, government, home/family, and societal influences contributing to this issue. Factors related to home and family involve parents and the household, while school elements are situated within the school environment; society-based factors are connected to the wider society, and government-based influences can be traced back to governmental policies or actions (Marchetta & Dilly, 2019); (Popov et al., 2021).

Several researchers have identified various factors contributing to girl-child dropout from school. Evidently, No, et al. 2016; (Adelman & Szekely, 2016); (Singar & Zainuddin, 2017) (Azubayeva, 2021); (Paul et al., 2021) and (Kumar et al., 2023) found

single-parent households, unstable family-life setting, parents' literacy level, lack of family support, socio-economic status, wish to get married, as parent/household factors influencing dropout in schools. Also (Adelman & Szekely, 2016); (Schmidt & Rotgans, 2021); (Renninger & Hidi, 2022) found a lack of interest in academic-related activities, among others responsible for learners' factor. (Barrett et al., 2019), (Anaman et al., 2022) and (Sikwanga & Geduld, 2023) highlighted overcrowded classrooms, underqualified teachers, and inadequate learning resources as government-related issues leading to student dropout. (Vushe, 2019) identified child labor, poverty, and lack of sponsorship as key factors contributing to this problem. Additionally, (Phoobane, 2022) highlighted poor mentorship from school and home, teenage pregnancies, poor performance in academics, long distance to school, grief, and lack as key factors leading to girl-child dropout. These findings emphasize the complex interplay of social, economic, and educational challenges that impact girls' ability to stay in school and complete their education.

Although, while collaborative efforts from students, parents, teachers, government, and organizations may address various factors leading to teenage dropout, teenage pregnancy is underscored as a critical concern that requires specific attention and intervention. It is emphasized that without proactive measures to reintegrate teenagers who have experienced pregnancy, there may be limited or no effective solutions to ensure their continued academic success. The importance of deliberate efforts to address this specific challenge and support the re-enrollment of affected teenagers is underscored as crucial for their educational advancement and overall well-being.

A teenager, who is also an adolescent, is someone who is in the age bracket of 13 to 19 years. Teenage motherhood refers to the instance whereby 13- to 19-year-old people engage in sexual trials, become pregnant and eventually give birth ((Tyumre, 2020); (Saidi, 2020); (Galleposo, 2024) A large number of girls that leave school in the Nigerian society yearly have been attributed to teenage motherhood, a trend which has been escalating. *An estimated 16 million girls aged between 15 and 19 give birth every year*, with 95% of these *births* occurring in developing countries ((Nkhoma et al., 2020), (Melesse et al., 2020); (Ursache et al., 2023) without exception of Nigeria. In each year, female students drop out of school due to the pregnancies. Over the last twenty years, there has been significant debate surrounding the topic of teenage pregnancy and parenting. Politicians, researchers, and the media have expressed serious concerns about the impact of teen parenting on both mothers and children. This heightened attention has led to a strong focus on understanding the reasons why young women are more likely to become teenage mothers and the potential effects on both them and their children. Much of this has served to emphasize the negative aspects of teenage pregnancy, with a variety of interrelated factors such as poverty, low educational attainment, unemployment, family background, emotional/psychological difficulties and a history of sexual abuse being generally accepted as increasing a young woman's chances of becoming pregnant in her teenage years (Melesse et al., 2020); (Aluga & Okolie, 2021); (Emeri & Olarenwaju, 2022).

This study is necessary because of the dearth of evidence on discussions around teenage mothers' and their parents' willingness to re-enrol for school. While the teenage mothers' opinion is very important because they are the focus of this study; their parents' willingness is also germane considering the level of dependency of the teenagers on their parents in this part of the world. The dual responsibilities faced by teenage mothers can indeed have a significant impact on their academic performance and overall well-being ((Tirgari et al., 2020), (Maarman-Afrika, 2023)). Also, ability to balance the demands of being a student and a parent simultaneously can be incredibly challenging; the need to allocate time and financial resources between education, childcare, and other obligations can create a difficult juggling act for the young mothers. Moreover, mistreatment, humiliation, and discrimination experienced from teachers, peers, and society at large can further compound the challenges faced by teenage mothers. It is crucial for schools and communities to provide support systems and resources to help these young mothers navigate these obstacles and continue their education while also fulfilling their parental responsibilities ((Groves et al., 2022); (Ajayi et al., n.d.); (Tudy & Millan, 2023)). We therefore generated a research question based on our research aim to guide the study. The question is: RQ1: How willing are teenage mothers' ready to be re-enrolled in school?

The role that parents play in terms of finance, emotional support and involvement cannot be over-emphasised. Several studies have highlighted the significant influence of parents on teenage mothers' educational aspirations and decisions ((Ma et al., 2018), (Liu et al., 2018), (Murong'a et al., n.d.), (Puccioni et al., 2020), (Jeynes, 2024)). They asserted that that parents who expect their children to perform well in their studies get involved in assisting them while parents who expect their children to perform poorly may most likely not involve themselves in their children's learning process. (Ma et al., 2018)) (Liu et al., 2018)) discovered that the expectations parents have for their teenage mothers significantly influence the career choices they make and whether they decide to go back to school. Additionally, these studies found that the level of education and socio-economic status of parents also play a role in shaping the educational aspirations of teenage mothers. In the same vein, (Murong'a et al., n.d.)) and (Groves et al., 2022)) emphasized the importance of parents engaging in discussions with their teenage mothers and providing educational support to encourage them to pursue higher education; while, (Ma et al., 2018) found that parents are more involved in their children's education when the mothers have higher levels of education themselves.

We therefore generated another research question based on our research aim to guide the study. The question is: RQ2: What are the perceptions of parents to teenage mothers' re-enrolment in school?

B. Methods

The researchers made use of qualitative design. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study because of the nature of the topic of inquiry. It is effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations. Researchers are able to conduct first-hand observation, interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, participant-observation,

recordings made in natural settings, documents and artifacts; and the data are generally non-numerical.

The population for this study consisted of pregnant girls awaiting child bearing, young-mothers and teenage mothers who had dropped out of school or still attending school. The purposive sampling technique was used to select eight teenage mothers that dropped out of school and two willing parents. The study was carried out within an intact group of teenage mothers in the schools and out of schools in both private and public secondary schools in Ipetu Ijesha town of Osun State, between June to August, 2023. Ipetu Ijesha also called Ipetu-Aro Odo among its inhabitants is a town in Oriade local government area, in Osun State, Nigeria. It is located in the Western part of Nigeria, and the people are of the Yoruba ethnic group. Ipetu Ijesa is a very rural town; characterized by predominantly farmers. The choice of the town was premised on the rampant incidences of teenage pregnancy in the town and most significantly the failure of teenage mothers to be re-schooled after delivery of their babies.

The study employed an interview guide that was in form open-ended interview. The researchers obtained permission from schools where the students dropped out from and from the students' parents with a letter of introduction from the institution and maternity centres. When this was approved the researcher personally visited the parents and the students to fix a date for the meeting and through phone calls to obtained informed consent. Observation, document analysis and interview methods were employed in collecting data from respondents. A recording device, with permission of respondents was used to document their responses for further analysis of same. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of (frequency count, percentage and thematic style of data analysis was used to analyze the qualitative aspect of the data. The researchers consider ethical issues by providing a detailed explanation to all participants, including asking for their consent to participate in the study and ensuring the confidentiality of the information they provide. To protect their privacy, respondents were referred to as teenage 1, teenage 2 instead of their real names. The findings from the study are presented thematically in this section. The findings are presented under two broad categories based on the nomenclature of the respondents which are: the teenage mothers and the parents. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented first, after which the findings are further discussed under emerging themes and sub-themes in each of the two categories.

C. Results and Discussion

1.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of The Teenage Mothers

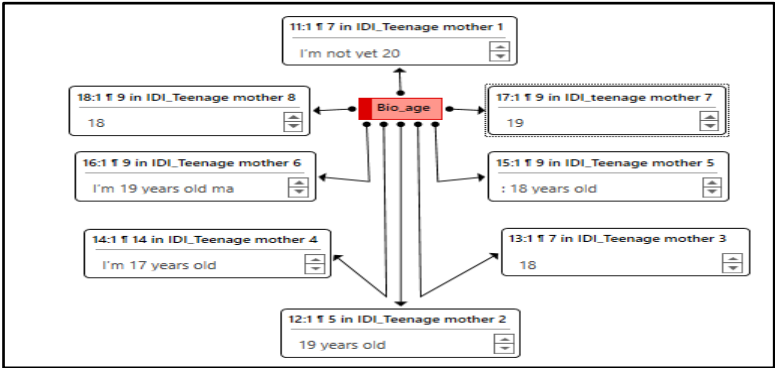


Figure 1: Network View of The Age of The Respondents

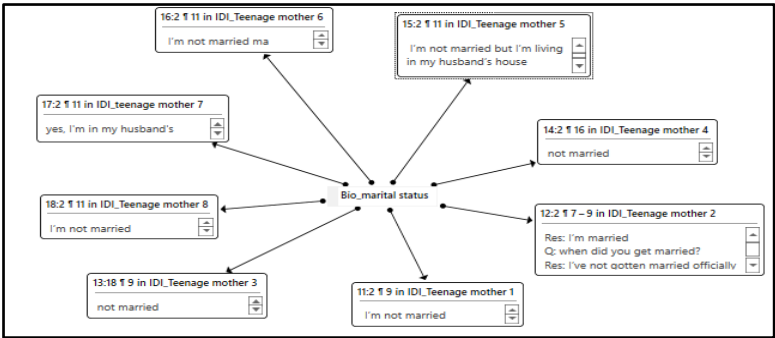


Figure 2: Network View of The Marital Status of The Respondents

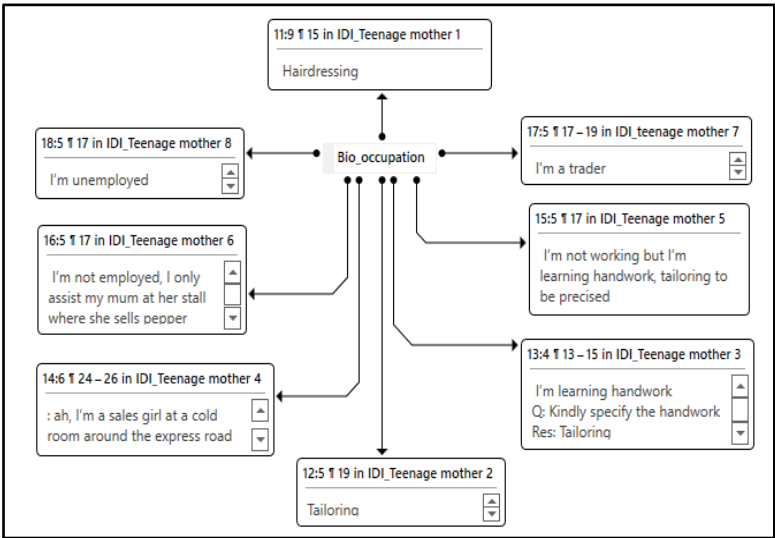


Figure 3: Network View of The Occupation of The Respondents

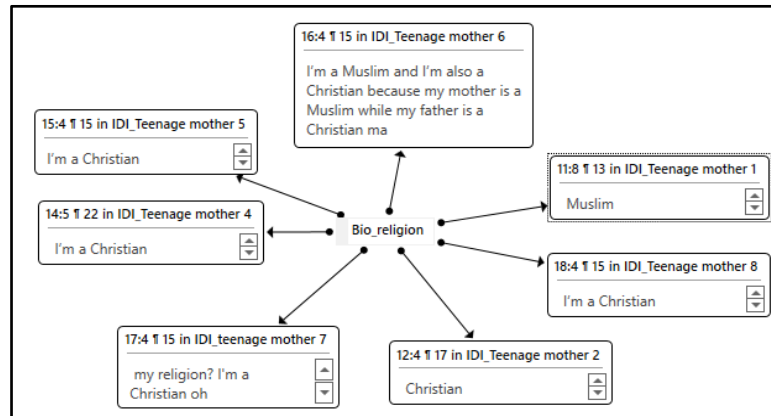


Figure 4: Network View of The Religion of The Respondents

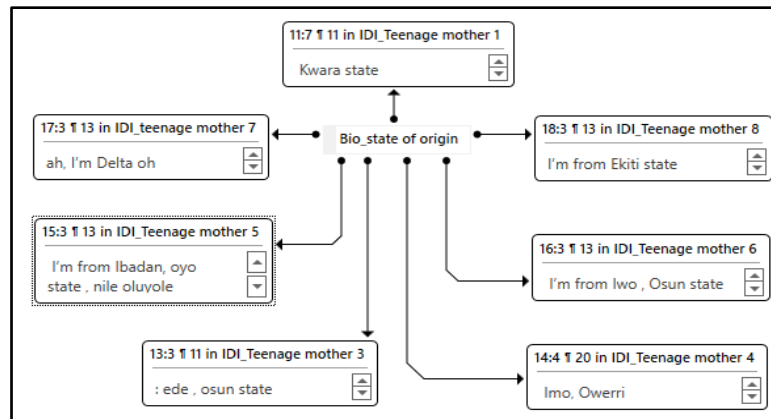


Figure 5: Network View of The State of Origin of The Respondents

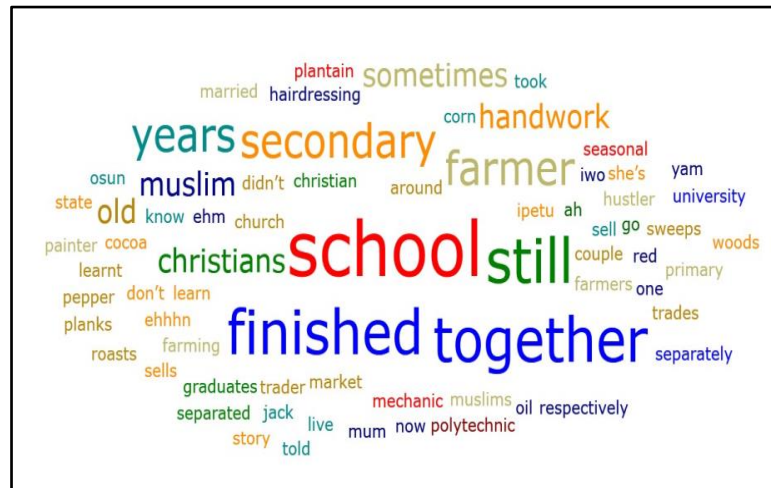


Figure 6: Word Cloud, Showing Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Teenage Mothers' Parents

Preliminary Analysis

Experiences and Perceptions of the Teenage Mothers on Re-Enrollment

1.2. Effects of Pregnancy on the Academics of the Teenage Mothers

Under this theme, we shall discuss the school life experiences of the teenage mothers, as well as schooling and pregnancy of the teenage mothers.

1.2.1. School Life Experiences of the Teenage Mothers

Interviewer: How was your experience in school like before you got pregnant?

Respondent: School was interesting because when I was about to drop out, I was really sad because of my friends that I left

Teenage mother 7

Respondent: School was good because my friends and I used to have fun

Teenage mother 6

Respondent: Everyone knows that school isn't easy oh, they flog us because of assignment every day, school isn't easy at all, I wake up by 7:00 clock sometimes 6:30 because I want to go to school

Teenage mother 4

Respondent: I used to go to school regularly, but I'm not really brilliant. I was trying but I had to drop out because I didn't really understand much in school.

Teenage mother 3

Interviewer: Are you missing school at all?

Respondent: yes, I miss school

Interviewer: what are you really missing not going to school?

Respondent: my friends

Teenage mother 2

Respondent: (sighs) ehn , I miss some of my teachers that are really nice and my friends too

Teenage mother 6

Respondent: Yes, I miss school and I wish to re-enroll if I can get a sponsor

Teenage mother 8

Respondent: God forbid! Who misses school? I don't miss school oh

Teenage mother 4

Respondent: Ehhhn, I did not used to really miss school until I started having boyfriends once in a while

Teenage mother 5

1.2.2. Schooling and Pregnancy of Teenage Mothers

Interviewer: were you schooling before you got pregnant?

Teenage mother 2

Respondent: yes, SS3

Interviewer: did you successfully complete your SS3?

Respondent: no

Teenage mother 2

Interviewer: Was your pregnancy intended?

Respondent: This is my first child

Teenage mother 1

Respondent: Ah! It was a mistake oh, it was a mistake

Teenage mother 4

Respondent: Like I said earlier, the child is just God's will, it wasn't planned

Respondent: I have 1 child before the one in my belly. Teenage mother 5

Respondent: Since I'm in my husband's house, it was planned. Teenage mother 7

Respondent: My friends don't talk to me anymore since I've given birth, we're no longer on the same level, they are still in school and I'm now a mother, they are no longer friends with me, I now have new friends so I've also moved on. Teenage mother 7

Respondent: Yes, we do hangout Teenage mother 4

Teenage mother 2

Research Question 1: How willing are teenage mothers' ready to be re-enrolled?

1.3. Willingness and Plans of the Teenage Mothers on Re-enrollment in School

This theme focuses on the willingness of the teenage mothers to re-enroll, their plans for re-enrollment, their perception on their parents' readiness to re-enroll them and their perception on the hindrances to teenage mothers' re-enrollment in school.

1.3.1. Willingness of the Teenage mothers to Re-enroll in School

Interviewer: are you willing to re-enroll in school?

Respondent: I wish to re-enroll

Teenage mother 2

Respondent: If I can get a sponsor that will carry the cost, I might consider to go back to school

Teenage mother 3

Respondent: If I'm given the opportunity when my child is old enough, I will re-enroll

Teenage mother 5

Respondent: no, I'm not

Teenage mother 1

Interviewer: why are you not willing to re-enroll in school?

Respondent: I feel that my friends in school will make jest of me

Teenage mother 1

Interviewer: no, I'm not

Interviewer: why are you not willing to re-enroll in school?

Teenage mother 7

Respondent: Ehn, I now have responsibilities (my children) the one I've given birth to and the one in my tummy, even if I go back to school I would not be able to assimilate.

Teenage mother 7

1.3.2. Plans of the Teenage Mothers to Re-enroll in School

Respondent: More so, my in-laws are already making plans for me to go back to school

Teenage mother 5

Respondent: Ah, yes ma when I put to bed I'll surely re-enroll ma

Teenage mother 6

Respondent: No money to go back, then I'm pregnant and I also have a child and my husband cannot even allow me re-enroll

Teenage mother 7

Respondent: Ah, everyone knows that school is not easy and now I wake up at the that is convenient for me, I sleep anytime I like, I can go anywhere I wanna go to but everyone knows that if I'm still schooling it would have been a different story, I would have been going to class every day, so I don't even know.

Teenage mother 4

Research Question 2: what are the perceptions of parents to teenage mothers' re-enrolment in schools?

1.3.3. Perceptions of the Teenage Mothers on the Readiness of their Parents to Re-enroll them in School

Respondent: If I tell them that I want to re-enroll, they will definitely be willing to help me. They wouldn't think twice about me going back to school because when I told them I could no longer understand what I was being taught in school they begged me to continue and they still urge me till date

Teenage mother 3

Respondent: Yes'm, they wish to re-enroll me back to secondary school

Teenage mother 6

Interviewer: particular parent (father or mother)?

Respondent: both of them are willing to re-enroll me. they really want me to re-enroll

Teenage mother 6

Respondent: Yes, my mother made mention of it few days ago

Teenage mother 1

Those who alluded that their parents were not willing to re-enroll them in school stated money as the factor responsible for their unwillingness.

Respondent: Eh, where do they want to see the money to re-enroll me? Hmmm, do you know how many sisters I have? I'm not sure oh, I don't know ho.

Teenage mother 4

1.3.4. Perception of the Teenage Mothers on the Factors Hindering the Re-enrollment of Teenage Mothers in School

Interviewer: what do you think are the factors hindering your re-enrollment?

Respondent: Number 1 factor is money, 2 if I go to school no one is willing to help me take care of my child, my mother will go to her shop and my father will go to the farm and my siblings are also in school, so there's nowhere to keep my child and my husband isn't taking responsibility, I'm not going back but everything is based on money, I don't have money, even my monthly income is not sustaining my child and I, or you want to give me money? If you give me money, I don't mind oh (smiles) but for now I don't have money. Where do I wanna see the money? Where will my parents get the money from in this present county? Everyone knows how everything is right now

Teenage mother 4

Respondent: If they are still angry at me because of my child

Teenage mother 8

Perception and Disposition of the Parents to Re-Enrollment of the Teenage Mothers in School

1.4. Parental Disposition to the Pregnancy of their Teenage Children

Interviewer: what was your reaction when you found out that your daughter was pregnant?

Respondent: ahh, I was really pained ahhhh her father cried bitterly (sucks teeth) my first child that was supposed to be in school and make us proud went to get pregnant out of wedlock. Was it hunger that caused it or what because we really tried our best for her. Was she supposed to get pregnant at that stage? We were furious ahhhh (sucks teeth) ahhhh

Parent 1

1.5. Willingness of the Parents to Re-enroll their Pregnant-Teenage Children in School

Interviewer: are you willing to re-enrol your daughter in school to complete her secondary school education?

Respondent: hmmm, yes I really wish to, even her father wants her to re- enroll. I promise to try my best to re-enroll her by God's grace.

Parent 2

They declared that the dreams of their pregnant teenagers are still achievable. They went further to explain how they intended to support such dreams to bring them to reality. One is by making sure they (teenage mothers) go back to school. Another is by helping them in taking care of their children. One of them opined that for the dream of her teenage child to come to reality, she (teenage mother) needed to carry her baby to the person who impregnated her and drop the baby for him.

Respondent: I told her father few days ago that if she's willing to re-enroll I'll help her take care of her child when she's in school but that doesn't warrant waywardness anymore and her father has agreed. I've told her that if she can try to finish from secondary school, and she wants to further, she shouldn't pick a higher institution that is expensive, she should go for the ones that we can afford because we're just trying to make ends meet.

Parent 1

Respondent: Firstly, I'll ask her to take the child to the father's house then she'll come back though I'm not going to separate her husband and her. But she'll have to take the child to her husband then come back to complete her secondary school after that she can go back to her husband's house to take care of her child.

Parent 2

1.6. Perception of Parents on the Hindrances to Teenage Mothers' Re-enrollment

Interviewer: what do you think could hinder you from re-enrolling your daughter in school to complete her secondary school education?

Respondent: Money ooh

Discussion

This discussion highlights teenage mothers' willingness to re-enroll, their plans for doing so, perceptions of parental support, and the challenges they believe hinder teenage mothers from returning to school. The teenage mothers shared their experiences during their school years, revealing a mix of fond memories and challenges. Many enjoyed schools primarily for the companionship of friends, while others faced difficulties such as strict discipline, early morning routines, academic stress, and the burden of assignments (Adangabe, 2020; Adangabe et al., 2021; Timothy & Juhudi, n.d.). When asked what they missed about school, most cited their friends, a few mentioned teachers, and one reluctantly admitted missing schoolwork when specifically prompted. One mother expressed a strong desire to return to school if sponsorship were available (Brown, n.d.; Mangeli et al., 2017). However, some admitted they did not miss school, with one explaining that her interest waned when she began dating. All the teenage mothers confirmed they were in secondary school when they became pregnant. One-quarter were in junior classes, and the rest were in senior classes. Seven out of eight were pregnant for the first time, with all unplanned pregnancies occurring out of wedlock. The only mother with a previous child stated her current pregnancy was intentional, as she was living with her husband. The ages of their unborn children ranged from 12 to 28 weeks, and all dropped out of school due to pregnancy.

Approximately three-quarters of teenage mothers expressed a willingness to re-enroll in school. Some emphasized the need for sponsors, while others stated they would only return if given the opportunity. Conversely, one-quarter of respondents revealed they were unwilling to go back to school (Akhtar et al., n.d.; AKKUŞ & ÇINKIR, 2022).. One teenager cited fear of stigmatization from peers, while another worried about her ability to assimilate upon returning. Among those planning to resume education, specific steps were not always clear. One mentioned her mother's encouragement, another referred to plans being made by her in-laws, and one stated she would re-enroll after delivering her baby. However, some teenage mothers expressed no intention of returning to school due to barriers such as lack of financial support, opposition from their husbands, and an unwillingness to endure the stress of schooling. The mothers interviewed also shared their perceptions of parental support for re-enrollment (Anima et al., 2022; Scholarworks et al., n.d.; Simpson, n.d.). Two specifically mentioned their mothers' willingness to assist, and most believed both parents were supportive. Nonetheless, financial constraints remained the primary obstacle to re-enrollment. Other significant barriers included lack of childcare support, marital challenges such as unsupportive or irresponsible husbands, and difficulty balancing motherhood and education. Parental anger towards the teenagers due to their pregnancies, personal reluctance to return, fear of stigmatization, and concerns about their ability to assimilate also hindered their willingness to go back to school (Anima et al., 2022; Scholarworks et al., n.d.; Simpson, n.d.). These findings underscore the complexity of teenage mothers' re-enrollment decisions and highlight

the need for supportive interventions addressing financial, social, and emotional barriers.

The two parents interviewed expressed disappointment and displeasure over their teenage children's pregnancies. One parent admitted to physically disciplining her child upon discovering the pregnancy, which also caused a dispute with her husband. Despite their initial reactions, both parents voiced their willingness to support their children's re-enrollment in school after childbirth, emphasizing that the teenagers' dreams remain achievable. They highlighted plans to help realize these dreams by ensuring the teenage mothers return to school and assisting with childcare responsibilities (Brown, n.d.; Mangeli et al., 2017). One parent proposed a controversial approach, suggesting that the teenage mother should hand her baby over to the child's father to enable her to focus on her future. Financial difficulty was identified as the sole barrier to the re-enrollment of teenage mothers. This underscores the significance of providing financial support to teenage mothers to help them continue their education. The experiences of the teenage mothers in relation to their peers varied. While one reported being abandoned by her friends after becoming pregnant, another had a contrasting experience, stating she still maintained her social relationships and regularly spent time with her friends despite becoming a mother. These findings reveal the complex dynamics surrounding teenage pregnancies, including parental reactions, plans for support, and the varying social experiences of the teenage mothers. The role of financial and emotional support, along with societal attitudes, appears critical in addressing the challenges faced by teenage mothers as they navigate the dual responsibilities of motherhood and pursuing education (Anima et al., 2022; Scholarworks et al., n.d.; Simpson, n.d.).

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, teenage mothers admitted they missed schooling and interesting things about school; they also showed readiness to be re-enrolled in school. Parents of teenage mothers were distressed by their daughters' dropping out of school and were prepared to have them re-enrolled. The parents identified financial constraint as a major challenge to re-enrolling their wards to complete their education.

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