

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

**FACTORS THAT ENABLE TEENAGE MOTHERS TO RETURN AND STAY IN
SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF THE YILO KROBO MUNICIPALITY**

BY

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INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

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DECLARATION

Candidates' Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature 

Date21/03/2024

Name: Priscilla Adom-Miah

Supervisors' Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised by the guidelines on supervision of dissertations laid down by the University of Ghana.

Principal Supervisor's Signature 

Date ...21/03/2024.....

Name: Rev. Professor Adobea Yaa Owusu



DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to courageous teenage mothers striving to balance motherhood and education despite daunting odds. Your determination in the face of numerous obstacles is truly inspiring. I hope that this research will contribute to enacting positive change by highlighting the factors that facilitate your educational success.



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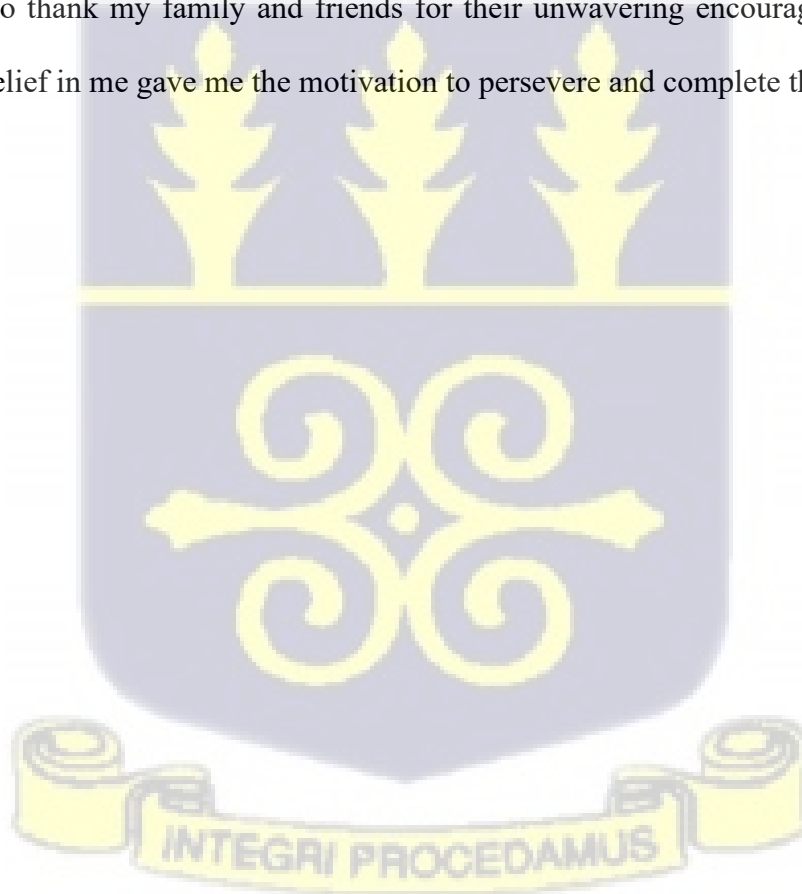


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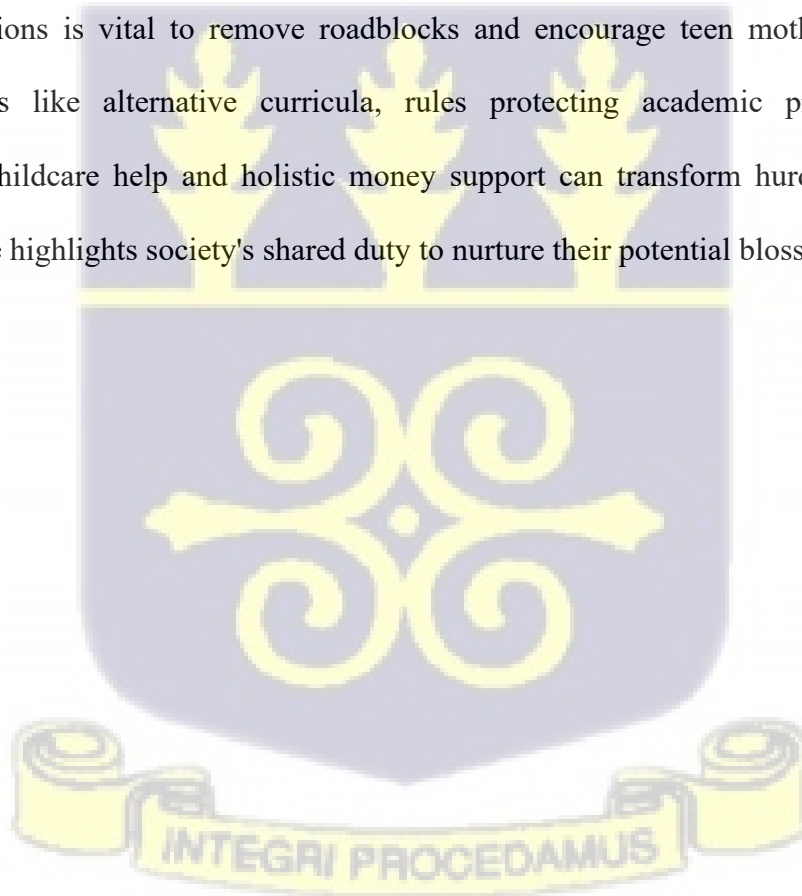
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ABSTRACT

Teenage pregnancy negatively impacts education in Ghana. Many young mothers face challenges pursuing studies while parenting. This research explored factors allowing teen mothers in Ghana's Yilo Krobo Municipality to return to school post-childbirth. In-depth interviews with six teenage mothers, two head teachers, and the Director of Education of the Municipality revealed barriers like money problems, inflexible school policies, judgmental attitudes, and little external assistance. The analysis found that teenage mothers strongly wanted more education to gain financial independence and better futures. However, structural challenges and systemic gaps frequently undermined these ambitions. Comprehensive backing across government, neighbourhoods and learning institutions is vital to remove roadblocks and encourage teen mothers' strength and growth. Options like alternative curricula, rules protecting academic progress, anti-bias programming, childcare help and holistic money support can transform hurdles into stepping stones. Evidence highlights society's shared duty to nurture their potential blossoming.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The worldwide rate of pregnant adolescents between 2015 and 2020 was estimated to be around 15% among females under 18 years (Maheshwari et al., 2022). The majority, specifically 90% or more, of these pregnancies, took place in countries characterised by low and middle-income levels (Maheshwari et al., 2022). Odimegwu and Mkwanzani (2016) also revealed that in 2010, the majority of teenage pregnancies (approximately 95%), occurred in developing nations. This resulted in approximately 36.4 million girls, becoming mothers before reaching the 18 years. In 2021, an estimated 14 per cent of adolescent girls and young women give birth before 18 years (UNICEF, 2023). In 2013, Sub-Saharan Africa had the most significant incidence of teenage pregnancy globally, with the prevalence of births occurring among teenage mothers surpassing 50% (World Health Organization, 2013)

In Ghana, teenage pregnancy and motherhood have long been a source of concern for policymakers, researchers, and development partners. Hernandez et al. (2022) stated that although teenagers made up only 22% of the Ghanaian population, a 2014 report from the Demographic and Health Survey revealed that they account for 30% of all recorded births in the country (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). According to Ankomah and Gyesaw (2013), 12% of adolescent females between the ages of 15 and 19 years are either currently pregnant or have already experienced childbirth. In the Yilo Krobo Municipality of Ghana, the prevalence of teenage pregnancy is also high, meaning that adolescent girls are at risk of getting pregnant before they reach the 18 years

(Quayson, 2013). Teenage pregnancy poses significant challenges to educational attainment as well as maternal health (Amo-Adjei & Anamaale Tuoyire, 2016).

Studies that have examined the effects of teenage pregnancy on education consistently show that it has a negative impact. Ezeanolue et al. (2015) highlighted the detrimental effect of teenage pregnancy on school dropout rates. Their study found that pregnant teenagers were more likely to discontinue their education compared to their non-pregnant counterparts. Their research also found out that factors such as financial constraints, lack of social support, and limited access to reproductive health services influenced the decision to drop out of school. The consequences of early pregnancy, including the need for childcare responsibilities and the societal stigma associated with teenage motherhood, often made it difficult for pregnant teenagers to continue their education. Consequently, school dropout rates among pregnant teenagers were significantly higher, further exacerbating the negative impact on their educational outcomes.

Another study conducted by Abor et al. (2011) examined the relationship between teenage pregnancy and academic performance in Ghana and indicated that pregnant teenagers experience major challenges in their studies. In comparison to their friends who are not pregnant, they frequently do worse overall and receive lower marks. According to the study, pregnant teenagers may experience trouble concentrating, higher stress levels, and a loss of motivation due to the psychological and physical demands of pregnancy as well as social stigma. They consequently find it difficult to fully commit to their studies, which eventually results in lower academic accomplishment. A similar study by Maemeko et al. (2018) revealed that teenage pregnancy has a harmful effect on educational achievements. The study discovered that teenage girls who become mothers are more likely to leave school compared to their peers who are not pregnant.

Despite the adverse effects of teenage pregnancies on educational attainment, little research has been done to explore measures that could facilitate their return and retention in school.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

While studies like Maemeko et al. (2018) and Tester-Jones et al. (2015) confirm the negative impact of teenage pregnancy on education in Ghana, little research explores reintegration measures (Aparicio et al., 2015). This study investigates factors enabling teenage mothers in Yilo Krobo Municipality to return to school, addressing this gap by investigating the factors that facilitate the return and retention of teenage mothers in school using the Yilo Krobo Municipality as a case study. By examining the local context and considering the experiences and perspectives of the teenage mothers themselves, this research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform the development of effective interventions and support systems.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to determine the factors that influence whether teenage mothers return to or stay in school within the Yilo Krobo Municipality. Through an in-depth examination of these dynamics, the study also seeks first-hand knowledge about factors enabling teenage mothers' successful transition back to school.

The objective of this research is to ascertain the educational reintegration and retention rates among adolescent mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality and to analyse determining factors. By conducting a comprehensive investigation into these dynamics, the study endeavours to gain firsthand insights into the factors that facilitate the return and retention of teenage mothers back into the educational system and the role of the community in this. Relevant factors at the individual level to be considered include socio-economic background, support systems, and personal

motivation, and at the community level, societal attitudes, access to childcare facilities, and availability of educational resources.

By examining these factors and objectively evaluating the role of community engagement in getting teenage mothers back to school, this study offers valuable insights into potential strategies for improving educational attainment among this particular demographic group. Thus, this research has broader implications for tackling issues related to social inclusion, gender inequality, and poverty reduction.

1.4 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To assess the educational outcomes of adolescent mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality, specifically in terms of their school re-entry and retention rates.
- ii. To examine the reintegration experiences of adolescent mothers in Yilo Krobo Municipality.
- iii. To examine the contribution of the community in facilitating the reintegration of adolescent mothers into the educational system.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do teenage mothers return to and stay in school in the Yilo Krobo Municipality?
2. What are the factors that facilitate teenage mothers to return to and remain in school in the Yilo Krobo Municipality?
3. How does the community support and facilitate the re-entry process of teenage mothers into school in the Yilo Krobo Municipality?

1.6 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This research used a qualitative approach, employing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to gather data. Qualitative methods are well-suited for exploring complex social phenomena and gaining a deep understanding of participants' experiences, perspectives, and the contextual factors influencing their decision-making (Creswell, 2014). The sample for this study consisted of teenage mothers who have successfully returned and stayed in school, teenage mothers who have not returned to school, as well as school administrators and community leaders in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. Purposive sampling is used to select participants, ensuring diversity in terms of age, educational background, and socio-economic status.

The study is organized into five main chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Data Collection and Analysis, and Conclusion. In the Introduction chapter, the background of the study is discussed, along with the aim and objectives of the research. The Literature Review chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the existing theoretical and empirical research on teenage pregnancy, educational attainment, and the factors that facilitate or impede teenage mothers' return to school. The chapter includes a theoretical framework for the study. This chapter explained the key terms in this study and incorporate relevant scholarly articles and studies that explore the impact of social support and educational policies on teenage mothers' educational outcomes.

The Methodology chapter outlined the research design, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations. The chapter explained the rationale for using a qualitative approach and detail the methods for conducting in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Furthermore, the chapter described the steps which were taken to ensure participant confidentiality and obtained informed consent. The Findings and Discussion chapter presents the themes and

patterns identified from the data analysis, shedding light on the factors that enable teenage mothers to return to school and stay enrolled in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. Finally, the Conclusion chapter summarized the main findings, discussed their implications, and provided recommendations for educational institutions, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in supporting teenage mothers' educational aspirations.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 CONCEPTS IN THE STUDY

2.1.1 Definition of Teenage Pregnancy

UNICEF defined teenage pregnancy as the occurrence of pregnancy in individuals who fall within the age range of 13 to 19 years old (Mezmur et al., 2021). Teenage pregnancy is the phenomenon wherein an individual in their adolescent years, before reaching adulthood, experiences pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy is widely recognised as a substantial societal and public health concern across various regions of the globe (Alukagberie et al., 2023).

A study by Wall-Wieler (2016) revealed that teenage pregnancy encompasses both the physiological occurrence of becoming pregnant during the teenage years and the outcomes that ensue as a result. The subject matter encompasses the biological phenomena of conception, gestation, and childbirth, alongside the psychological, social, economic, and educational obstacles encountered by adolescent parents.

The root cause of adolescent pregnancy is multifaceted, entailing a complex interaction of various factors at the individual, family, cultural, and societal levels. Several factors commonly associated with teenage pregnancy include insufficient sex education, restricted availability of contraception, influence from peers, low socioeconomic status, absence of parental guidance, early initiation of sexual activity, and familial history of teenage pregnancy (Akella et al., 2014; Idris et al., 2022). Mbizvo et al. (2023) argued that the absence or insufficiency of comprehensive sexual education is a major cause of teenage pregnancy, i.e., insufficient provision of vital knowledge pertaining to contraceptive methods, sexual well-being, and the prevention of pregnancy. The lack of a comprehensive educational programme covering these subjects renders individuals inadequately

prepared to make informed choices pertaining to their sexual health. The absence of reliable and inclusive information on diverse contraception methods may consequently contribute to the occurrence of unintended pregnancies or the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Furthermore, another study by Mark and Wu (2022) assert that the lack of comprehensive sexual education can contribute to the continuation of misunderstandings, social disapproval, and detrimental generalisations pertaining to sexual well-being, thereby constraining individuals' capacity to participate in secure, and mutually agreed-upon sexual partnerships. It is, therefore, imperative to address the deficiencies in sexual education to equip individuals with the requisite knowledge, and competencies to make informed decisions, safeguard their sexual well-being, and avert unintended outcomes.

Aluga and Okolie (2021) suggested that socioeconomic factors exert a notable influence on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy. Their study investigated the correlation between socioeconomic variables and adolescent pregnancy and emphasised the heightened likelihood of early pregnancy among economically disadvantaged individuals or communities due to the restricted availability of education, healthcare, and employment prospects. A study by Senkyire et al. (2022) revealed that adolescent pregnancy and adolescent motherhood were found to have significant associations with various socioeconomic variables, including access to formal education, household wealth, marital status, and zone of residence. It was discovered that adolescents from families with lower parental income exhibited higher levels of sexual activity compared to their counterparts from families with higher or medium parental income. This aligns with the assertions and findings indicating that financial difficulties promote young girls to engage in early sexual activity as a means of financial survival.

2.1.2 Impact of Teenage Pregnancy on Education

The outcomes of pregnancy and childbirth among adolescent mothers were examined from different countries conducted by Ganchimeg et al. (2014) commissioned by the World Health Organisation. The research encompassed a total of 37 nations and revealed a correlation between adolescent pregnancy and heightened probabilities of unfavourable outcomes for both the mother and the newborn. Adolescent mothers, in comparison to their older counterparts, experienced elevated rates of preterm birth, low birth weight, and perinatal mortality. The aforementioned findings underscored the significance of attending to distinct healthcare requirements of pregnant adolescents to enhance outcomes in maternal and child health.

The ramifications of adolescent pregnancy transcend the mere physiological occurrence of conceiving during the teenage years. The phenomenon encompasses a broad spectrum of repercussions that have an impact on the lives of adolescent mothers, particularly concerning their educational pursuits. The educational opportunities available to adolescent mothers are substantially impacted by their pregnancy, and the difficulties they encounter in managing the demands of motherhood alongside their academic endeavours frequently result in unfavourable consequences.

In a study conducted by Gyan (2013), it was realised that there exists a reciprocal relationship between teenage pregnancy and school dropout, where teenage pregnancy can both contribute to and result from the decision to discontinue education. The study also stated that being enrolled in school frequently serves as a preventive measure against teenage pregnancy, making individuals who have discontinued their education more susceptible to engaging in such behaviour.

According to Maemeko et al. (2018), teenage mothers are more likely to experience a trajectory of poverty, exhibit lower educational attainment, and encounter limited prospects in the labour market compared to their non-parenting teenage counterparts. They also observed that existing

studies on the prevention of teenage pregnancy predominantly centred around adverse consequences associated with adolescent parenthood. They indicated that there is a positive correlation between adolescent pregnancy and school dropout rates. Teenagers who experienced pregnancy were more prone to discontinue their education, and conversely, teenagers who discontinued their education were more susceptible to experiencing pregnancy.

The growing trend of adolescent pregnancy has been recognised as a prominent determinant contributing to the disruption of education among teenage girls. Pregnant adolescents frequently discontinue their education as a result of various factors such as discrimination, inadequate support, and the difficulties associated with balancing motherhood responsibilities with academic pursuits (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2013). The act of leaving school prematurely carries enduring implications, as adolescent mothers lacking a high school degree encounter an elevated likelihood of experiencing poverty, unemployment, and dependence on governmental aid. The inclination to pursue further education with insufficient assistance.

According to a study conducted by Tester-Jones et al. (2015), a significant number of adolescent mothers express a desire to pursue their education when they receive sufficient support. Facilitating the educational continuity and attainment of diplomas for adolescent females who are pregnant, or parenting not only yields advantages for the individual mothers but also engenders favourable consequences for their offspring and the broader community.

2.2 INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS THAT IMPACT EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

2.2.1 The Relationship between Maternal Age and Educational Aspirations

Adolescent mothers in the younger age bracket exhibit a higher propensity to discontinue their educational pursuits and a diminished likelihood of re-engaging in educational endeavours as compared to their older counterparts. Based on a study conducted by Catherine et al. (2015), it was discovered that adolescent mothers who belonged to the older age group exhibited heightened levels of educational aspirations and possessed improved life skills, which enabled them to effectively navigate the simultaneous demands of parenting and pursuing their education. This study highlights the importance of comprehending the distinct needs and circumstances of adolescent mothers while emphasising the potential benefits of providing focused assistance and resources that are customised to their particular age groups. The objective is to improve educational attainments and overall well-being.

Xie et al. (2014) conducted a research study that investigated the correlation between the educational achievements of mothers and their aspirations for education during adolescence, as well as the consequences of childbirth among adolescent mothers. This study highlights the importance of educational goals and achievements in the adolescent population, as the school environment significantly influences their social and vocational development. However, previous studies investigating the correlation between maternal education and birth outcomes have predominantly focused on the level of maternal educational attainment during adulthood or at the time of the child's birth.

Barclay and Myrskylä (2016) identified a significant correlation between maternal age, advancement and increased educational achievements in their research study. However, the positive correlation that was observed becomes non-significant when other variables, such as the mother's level of education and income, are taken into account. This study investigated the association between maternal age and offspring outcomes. It investigated data from Sweden and

utilised a research design that entails the comparison of siblings who share the same biological mother and father. This research suggested that offspring born to mothers who are of advanced age tend to demonstrate more positive outcomes in terms of educational achievement, physical health, and lifespan. It postulated that this phenomenon may be ascribed to the increased probability of older mothers having stable relationships, higher educational attainment, and greater financial means. The study also demonstrated that the negative effects of maternal age on offspring outcomes have shown a decrease over time, possibly due to improvements in healthcare and social policies.

Augustine (2017) conducted a study that revealed a positive association between the educational achievements of parents and the academic ambitions of their children. This study provides compelling evidence that supports a positive correlation between heightened educational achievement among mothers in the United States and elevated academic ambitions for their offspring. It unveiled a significant positive association between the educational attainment of mothers and the corresponding academic aspirations held by their offspring. Furthermore, the study unveiled a significant association between the level of education attained by mothers and their level of engagement in their children's education, along with elevated aspirations for their children's academic achievements.

2.2.2 The Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Motivation

During the process of adolescent mothers' transitioning into motherhood, they face a wide range of challenges that encompass various dimensions, including physical, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects (Mangeli et al., 2018). The period under consideration is frequently characterised by a deficiency in knowledge and proficiency when it comes to effectively carrying out their maternal responsibilities (Mangeli et al., 2018). Nevertheless, individuals who demonstrate

elevated levels of self-efficacy in parenting and academic achievements may find solace, as they display a greater inclination to actively pursue additional educational prospects (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Adolescent mothers who exhibit elevated levels of self-efficacy in their parental skills and academic achievements demonstrate increased motivation to pursue further education. Interventions that prioritise the enhancement of self-confidence among adolescent mothers can potentially serve as a vital component in facilitating the attainment of educational goals (Boateng et al., 2023).

Self-efficacy pertains to the conviction held by parents regarding their capacity to exert a constructive impact on the developmental trajectory of their offspring (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Therefore, it can be argued that interventions aimed at bolstering self-assurance in adolescent mothers can have a significant impact on their ability to attain educational objectives (Mangeli et al., 2018; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016).

Previous studies have demonstrated a significant correlation between maternal self-efficacy and multiple dimensions of children's development, including their self-regulation skills, social competence, and cognitive abilities (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016).

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that academic self-efficacy plays a crucial role as a mediator in the relationship between self-esteem during adolescence and academic engagement. This finding aligns with the results reported in the study conducted by Zhao et al. (2021).

The establishment of conducive environments that foster academic success among college students is of utmost significance, as it facilitates the effective resolution of educational obstacles (Equity and Quality in Education, 2012).

The acquisition of self-regulation skills, which involve both emotional and cognitive components, is essential for optimal participation in educational endeavours, particularly among young individuals (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

By placing emphasis on interventions that enhance self-confidence among adolescent mothers, the pathway towards attaining educational goals becomes more discernible, resulting in enhanced outcomes for both the mother and her child.

2.2.3 Social Support Systems (Family, Friends, and Peers)

Adolescent mothers who possess active support systems, including family members, partners, and friends, exhibit elevated school enrolment and attendance levels. Furthermore, it has been found that peer support groups tailored specifically for adolescent mothers can offer essential social and emotional assistance (Wall-Wieler et al., 2016).

2.3 FACTORS AFFECTING THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERS IN A SCHOOL SETTING

2.3.1 The Subject of Discussion Pertains to Re-entry Policies and Programmes

The implementation of school re-entry policies that provide a supportive environment for pregnant students, along with the establishment of specialised programmes designed to address the unique challenges faced by teenage mothers, can effectively facilitate their reintegration into the educational system. Services such as the provision of on-site childcare facilities, and the

implementation of flexible schedules are particularly advantageous in facilitating the academic endeavours of individuals.

2.3.2 The Importance of a Supportive School Environment

The presence of a nurturing educational environment, wherein adolescent mothers experience acceptance and motivation from educators, administrators, and fellow students, enhances the probability of their sustained involvement in the educational system. According to Maemeko et al. (2018), the establishment of anti-discrimination policies is crucial for fostering an inclusive and hospitable atmosphere.

Flexible academic options refer to the various educational pathways that offer adaptability and versatility to students. These options allow individuals to tailor their learning experiences to better suit their unique needs, preferences, and circumstances. According to Mathewos and Mekuria (2018), the provision of alternative educational opportunities, such as online or evening classes, enables adolescent mothers to engage in learning at a self-determined pace and effectively manage their parental responsibilities.

2.4 THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY FACTORS ON THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERS

2.4.1 The topic of social stigma and support is of significant academic interest.

Societal disapproval is one of the many challenges adolescent mothers face. It has a substantial influence on their psychological and emotional welfare. The disapproval experienced by individuals in society is frequently rooted in cultural norms and societal expectations pertaining to the suitable age for engaging in childbirth. The societal disapproval surrounding adolescent pregnancy can result in the marginalisation of young mothers, contributing to feelings of social

exclusion, depressive symptoms, and potentially even suicidal thoughts. Amoadu et al. (2022) posit that the adoption of community education campaigns and the establishment of support groups for adolescent parents can yield significant outcomes in terms of stigma reduction and provision of needed assistance.

Community education campaigns can play a pivotal role in changing societal attitudes towards teenage mothers. These campaigns can also educate the community about the challenges faced by teenage mothers and the support they need, fostering empathy and understanding. Support groups for teenage parents can also be instrumental in mitigating the negative effects of societal disapproval. These groups provide a safe space for adolescent mothers to share their experiences and learn from each other. They also offer emotional support and practical advice on parenting, which can be particularly beneficial for young mothers who may lack other forms of support.

2.4.2 The Provision of Accessible Healthcare and Childcare Services

The provision of accessible and affordable prenatal and child healthcare services, along with subsidised childcare, facilitates the regular attendance of adolescent mothers in educational institutions and promotes their active engagement in the pursuit of knowledge (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2013). A cross-sectional study carried out in South Africa by Cluver et al. (2023) revealed a positive correlation between the utilisation of formal childcare services and enhanced outcomes for both mothers and children. These benefits encompass improved maternal mental well-being, increased maternal educational achievements, and enhanced cognitive development in children.

The importance of accessible and affordable healthcare and childcare services for the well-being of mothers and children can be deduced. The provision of such services has the potential to

enhance the consistent attendance of adolescent mothers in educational institutions and encourage their active involvement in the pursuit of knowledge, according to Pleaner et al. (2022).

Moreover, Gittings et al. (2023) elucidated that the utilisation of formal childcare services has been associated with favourable outcomes for both mothers and children. These outcomes encompass enhanced maternal mental well-being, heightened maternal educational accomplishments, and improved cognitive development in children.

2.4.3 Community Programmes and Resources

Community organisations play a key role in facilitating the academic success of teenage moms by providing a range of supportive services. Tester-Jones et al. (2015) assert that community organisations assume a pivotal role in providing assistance for the educational achievement of teenage moms. These organisations provide a range of tools, counselling services, parenting programmes, and academic help. These services effectively address the many obstacles that hinder their educational pursuits, therefore empowering them to overcome these challenges and achieve academic excellence.

2.5 THE CASE STUDY OF THE YILO KROBO MUNICIPALITY: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Yilo Krobo Municipality is located in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the country, with nearly 30% of girls aged 15-19 reporting they have begun childbearing (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The municipality's significant prevalence of teenage pregnancy is accompanied by a dearth of educational support within the school and familial frameworks for pregnant adolescents (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

This research focuses on the Yilo Krobo Municipality, with a specific emphasis on female students enrolled in public junior high schools. This focus stems from the observation of comparatively elevated levels of teenage pregnancy within these public schools as compared to private schools.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social Cognitive Theory is applicable to this research on the educational attainment of teenage mothers because it provides a framework for comprehending the variables that influence their behaviour and outcomes. Social cognitive theory is one relevant theoretical framework that can be used for understanding the educational attainment of teenage mothers. This theory places significant emphasis on the influence of self-efficacy, motivation, and social support on people's behaviour and results (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). According to Boateng et al. (2023), the social cognitive theory posits that interventions targeting the improvement of self-confidence and provision of support to teenage mothers have the potential to provide favourable effects on their educational attainment.

The social cognitive theory, formulated by Albert Bandura during the 1970s, places significant emphasis on the influence of cognitive processes, social interactions, and observational learning in the formation of human behaviour. The proposition posits that individuals obtain knowledge, skills, and attitudes by means of observation, imitation of others, and self-reflection. Self-efficacy is a fundamental construct within the theoretical framework, as it significantly impacts motivation, goal establishment, and the ability to persist in the face of challenges. In contrast, observational learning pertains to the acquisition of novel behaviours through the process of observing others and the subsequent outcomes, without engaging in direct trial-and-error learning. Several factors have been identified as influencing this process, including model characteristics, observer's attention and retention, motivation, self-efficacy, and reinforcement or punishment. Individuals'

beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours are also influenced by the social environment, which encompasses family, peers, and society (LaMorte, 2022).

In the context of teenage mothers, self-efficacy refers to their confidence in their ability to thrive in their educational endeavours despite possible challenges. Interventions can empower teenage mothers to deal with difficulties and pursue their educational objectives by boosting their self-confidence and belief in their abilities.

The social cognitive theory also examines motivation as a crucial factor. It acknowledges that people are motivated by their aims and aspirations. By understanding adolescent mothers' motivations, such as a desire for a better future for themselves and their children, interventions can be tailored to align with their intrinsic motivations and provide the necessary support for them to continue their education.

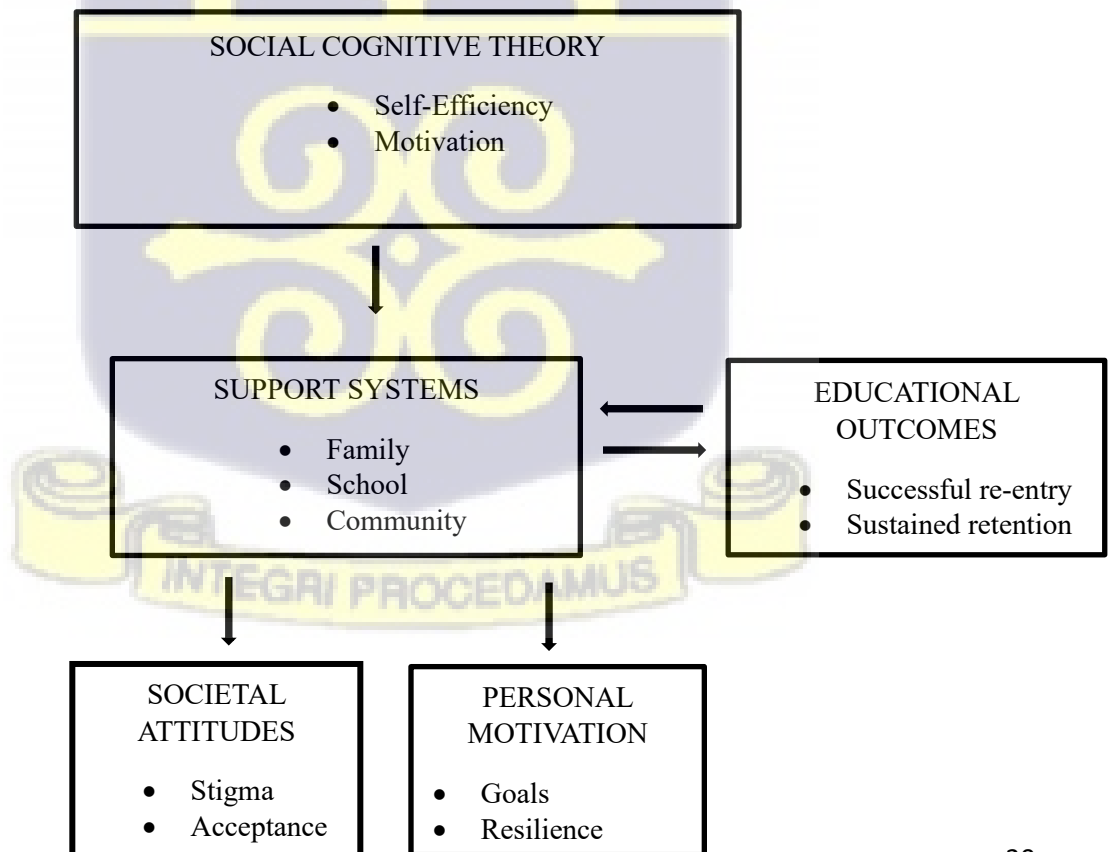
Additionally, social support is a crucial component of the social cognitive theory. It recognises the impact of the social environment, including family, friends, and peers, on the behaviour and outcomes of individuals. A strong support system can positively affect the educational attainment of teenage mothers. Family members and friends can offer emotional and practical support, while peer support groups can foster a sense of belonging and understanding.

By employing the social cognitive theory in this research, the interventions that increase self-confidence, provide motivation and cultivate social support are investigated to contribute to the educational reintegration and retention of adolescent mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. This framework helps to investigate the complex relationship between individual factors, social influences, and educational outcomes, thereby providing valuable insights for designing effective interventions and support systems for teenage mothers.

2.6.1 Conceptual Framework

This framework (Figure 2.1) synthesizes the key variables identified in the literature (support systems, societal attitudes, personal motivation) and their relationships, grounded in Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1986). It visually simplifies how these factors interact to influence teenage mothers’ educational reintegration. It posits that self-efficacy and motivation, interact with support systems (family, school, community) and societal attitudes (stigma, acceptance) to shape personal motivation (goals, resilience), ultimately determining educational outcomes (successful re-entry, sustained retention). The framework suggests that successful reintegration requires not only individual determination but also an enabling environment where supportive structures counteract societal barriers, thereby creating a reinforcing cycle that promotes academic persistence.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework for Teenage Mothers’ Educational Reintegration



Source: Bandura, A. (1986). Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

2.7 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review highlights the significant impact of teenage pregnancy on educational attainment, particularly in low and middle-income countries like Ghana. Pregnant teenagers face financial constraints, lack of social support, and limited access to reproductive health services, leading to their decision to drop out of school. Factors like societal stigma and childcare responsibilities also hinder their ability to continue their education. Pregnant teenagers also experience difficulties in concentration, higher stress levels, and a loss of motivation.

This literature review emphasizes the need for interventions and support systems to address the challenges faced by teenage mothers in continuing their education. By understanding the factors that enable their participation, this research aims to fill the gap in knowledge and provide insights into effective strategies for supporting teenage mothers in their educational aspirations.

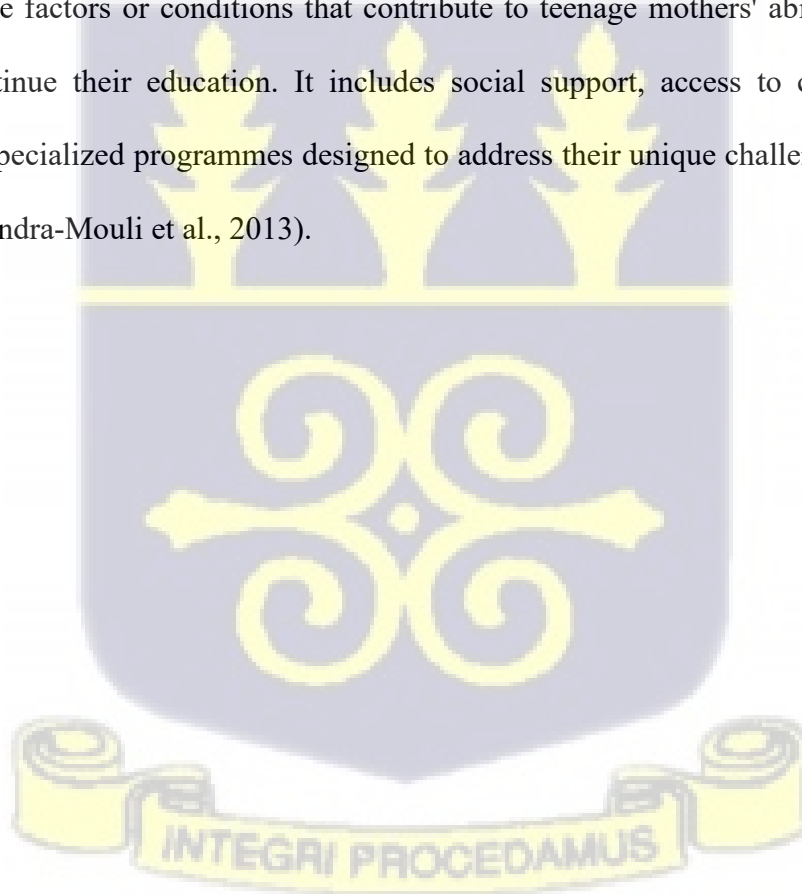
2.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1. Teenage pregnancy: It refers to the occurrence of pregnancy in individuals between the ages of 13 and 19 (Abor et al., 2011).
2. Teenage mother: A teenage mother is a female individual who falls within the age range of 13 to 19 years and has given birth to a child (Abor et al., 2011).
3. Contribution of the community in facilitating the reintegration of adolescent mothers into the educational system: This refers to the involvement of the community in supporting and facilitating

the reintegration of teenage mothers into the educational system. It includes community awareness, campaigns to reduce stigma, provision of social and emotional support, and access to healthcare services and childcare facilities (Cluver et al., 2023).

4. Educational reintegration and retention rates among adolescent mothers: This refers to the rates at which teenage mothers are able to return to school and continue their education after giving birth. It also includes their ability to stay in school and successfully complete their academic pursuits (Maemeko et al., 2018; Tester-Jones et al., 2015).

5. Determinants that enable adolescent mothers to re-enrol and persist in their academic pursuits: This refers to the factors or conditions that contribute to teenage mothers' ability to re-enrol in school and continue their education. It includes social support, access to childcare, flexible schedules, and specialized programmes designed to address their unique challenges (Wall-Wieler et al., 2023; Chandra-Mouli et al., 2013).





CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology used in this dissertation investigates the factors that contribute to the successful reintegration and continued education of adolescent mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. It is characterised by a comprehensive framework that differentiates between the research design and the sampling methods utilised. The meticulous methodology employed in this study adheres to well-established research principles, thereby ensuring a rigorous and systematic investigation.

The chosen paradigm for this research is interpretivism, which recognises that studying human and social sciences requires different methods compared to physical sciences. Interpretivism acknowledges that individuals interpret their world and make decisions based on these interpretations, while the world itself lacks inherent meaning (Hammersley, 2013). In line with interpretivism, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation within its unique contexts, rather than generalised truths.

Interpretivists recognise that a single phenomenon may have several interpretations, and they attempt to understand the various ways in which people perceive and experience the world in different situations and cultures (Creswell, 2014). They stress the significance of avoiding prejudice and understanding the complexities of social processes (Chowdhury, 2014). The interpretivism paradigm has the benefit of allowing researchers to not only describe things, people, or events but also to get a better knowledge of them within their social settings.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilizes a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring the factors that facilitate the return and retention of teenage mothers in school, as it allows for an in-depth examination of the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Tarnoki and Puentes, 2019).

By conducting interviews, this research methodology gathered detailed and comprehensive data. This helped to uncover the complex details and nuances of the subject matter.

The following are the dependent and independent variables for this study:

Dependent Variable:

Educational reintegration and retention rates among teenage mothers: This refers to the rates at which teenage mothers can return to school and persist in their academic pursuits.

Independent Variables:

Support systems: This variable includes factors such as family support, peer support, and social networks. It is relevant for the study as it can impact the teenage mothers' decision to return to school and their ability to navigate the challenges of balancing motherhood and education.

Societal attitudes: This variable refers to the attitudes and perceptions of the community towards teenage mothers and their education. It is relevant for the study as it can influence the level of support and acceptance teenage mothers receive in their educational journey.

Personal motivation: This variable captures the internal drive and determination of teenage mothers to pursue their education.

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE YILO KROBO MUNICIPALITY

Yilo Krobo Municipal District is located in the Eastern Region of Ghana, with Somanya as its capital town. It is bounded by Lower Manya Krobo Municipality and Upper Manya Krobo District to the north and east, respectively, Akwapim North Municipality and Shai-Osudoku District to the south, and New Juaben South, Okere District, and Fantekwa District to the west. The district covers an estimated area of 805 square kilometres, constituting 4.2% of the total land area of the Eastern Region.

The population of Yilo Krobo Municipality was 122,705 in 2021, which accounted for 4.2% of the regional population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). The municipality had a gender distribution of 59,656 males and 63,049 females. The population density was approximately 240.2 persons per square kilometre. The age distribution in the district is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Population Distribution by Age Group

| Age (Years) | Population |
|-------------|------------|
| 0-9 | 27,066 |
| 10-19 | 26,797 |
| 20-29 | 20,103 |
| 30-39 | 18,154 |
| 40-49 | 12,227 |
| 50-59 | 8,153 |
| 60-69 | 5,408 |
| 70-79 | 2,788 |

Source: Ghana Statistical Service (2021). 2021 Population and Housing Census: Yilo Krobo Municipality District Analytical Report.

Yilo Krobo Municipality has both urban and rural areas. The municipality is divided into 230 settlements and seven zonal councils: Somanya, Oterkpolu, Boti, Nkurakan, Nsutapong, Klo-Agogo, and Obawale. The urban population was 58,096, while the rural population was 64,609. The spatial distribution of the municipality shows a mix of agricultural and residential areas, with the urban areas being more densely populated (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021).

In terms of the economy, Yilo Krobo Municipality has various investment potentials. These include the tourism and hospitality industry, agriculture and agribusiness (cassava, maize, vegetables, mango, poultry, and cattle), and the production of inputs and processing. The municipality also has large tracks of arable land for commercial crop cultivation, favourable conditions for agro-processing and estate development, magnificent natural landscapes for tourism facilities, and large deposits of limestone suitable for cement factories. (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, n.d.) The municipality benefits from its proximity to several cities such as Tema, Accra, and Koforidua.

In the educational sector, Yilo Krobo Municipality faces challenges such as inadequate educational infrastructure, a high number of dilapidated structures, uncompleted structures, inadequate ICT/libraries, inadequate school furniture, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and inadequate teachers' accommodation (Awal, 2023).

3.4 POPULATION

The population of a study refers to the total number of people to whom the study is concerned. It is from the population that we obtain the sample for the study. The population of this study is all JHS schools, all community leaders, all female JHS students, all headteachers, and all teachers in of public schools in the Yilo Krobo municipality. Public schools were selected due to their

comparatively higher incidence of teenage pregnancy in the Municipality, as opposed to private schools (personal communication, Mr Peter Attah Bilson, Director of Education, Yilo Krobo Municipality, 20th September 2023).

3.4.1 Quantitative Contextual Data

Quantitative Contextual Data on Teenage Pregnancy in Yilo Krobo Municipality

To establish the scope and severity of teenage pregnancy as a critical educational challenge in Yilo Krobo Municipality, this study integrates multiple authoritative data sources that demonstrate the disproportionate impact on adolescent girls' education. The quantitative evidence presented below serves three key purposes: establishing baseline prevalence rates, documenting educational consequences, and identifying structural determinants that require policy intervention.

1. Demographic Prevalence and Trends

Recent demographic data reveals that Yilo Krobo faces one of the most severe teenage pregnancy crises in Ghana's Eastern Region. According to the most recent national census:

- **Current Prevalence:** 30% of female adolescents aged 15-19 in Yilo Krobo had either given birth or were pregnant at the time of the 2021 census (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2021, p. 47). This represents:
 - A 36.4% increase from the 2014 rate of 22% (GSS, 2014)
 - Nearly double the global average of 17% for developing nations (UNICEF, 2023)

- **Regional Comparison:** The municipality's 30% prevalence rate significantly exceeds both:
 - The Eastern Region average of 14.4% (GSS, 2021)
 - The national average of 22% (GSS, 2021)

2. Educational Consequences

The impact on educational attainment is particularly severe in public junior high schools (JHS), as documented in municipal education records:

- **Dropout Rates:**
 - 25% annual pregnancy-related attrition among female JHS students (Yilo Krobo Municipal Education Directorate, 2023)
 - Rural schools report higher rates (28%) than urban institutions (19%) (Yilo Krobo Municipal Education Directorate, 2023)
- **Reintegration Challenges:**
 - Only 18% of affected students successfully re-enroll post-pregnancy
 - Significant urban-rural disparity in re-enrollment:
 - Urban schools: 32% re-enrollment rate
 - Rural schools: 9% re-enrollment rate (GSS, 2021, Table 3.2)

3. Key Determinants and Structural Factors

Analysis of municipal case records and national surveys identifies consistent patterns:

1. **Primary Causes** (Quayson, 2013; Amoadu et al., 2022):

- Poverty (reported in 62% of cases)
- Peer pressure (55%)
- Lack of parental supervision (48%)

2. **Systemic Barriers:**

- Absence of comprehensive sex education in 89% of public JHS (Yilo Krobo Health Directorate, 2022)
- Limited contraceptive access for 73% of Ghanaian adolescents (Amoadu et al., 2022)

Teen Pregnancy and Education Outcomes in Yilo Krobo versus. Ghana

Table 3.2 compares key indicators between Yilo Krobo and Ghana. The data shows Yilo Krobo has higher teen pregnancy rates but lower school re-entry rates than the national average. The rural re-enrolment gap is nearly half the national rate, highlighting significant local challenges.

Table 3.2: Teen Pregnancy and Education Outcomes in Yilo Krobo versus Ghana.

| Comparative Analysis: Yilo Krobo versus National Indicators | Yilo Krobo (2021) | Ghana Average (2021) |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Teen pregnancy rate | 30% | 22% |

| Comparative Analysis: Yilo Krobo versus National Indicators | Yilo Krobo (2021) | Ghana Average (2021) |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| School re-entry rate | 18% | 25% |
| Rural re-enrollment gap | 9% | 15% |
| Urban re-enrollment gap | 32% | 38% |

Sources: GSS, 2021; Yilo Krobo Municipal Education Directorate, 2023; Ghana Education Service, 2021

3.5 SAMPLING STRATEGY

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of participants who have specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research question (Tarnoki and Puentes, 2019). In this case, participants were selected based on their status as teenage mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. The teenage mothers were purposively selected from two public junior high schools in the Municipality namely; Adjikpo Dokuyo M/A JHS, and Ogome Anglican JHS. These two schools were purposively selected out of six public JHS schools which had the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the Municipality (Yilo Krobo Municipality, Statistics Division). Statistics from the municipality showed that the two selected schools have a significant number of teenage mothers in their student population, which is relevant to this study. It is important to put it on record that the sample was gotten from only those two schools because although other eligible participants were found in the four remaining

schools, those persons were unwilling to talk to the researcher regarding the information the latter wanted.

The participants were identified with the assistance of the head teachers through purposive sampling. Individual (one-on-one) meetings were organised for the teenage mothers, and they were briefed about the purpose of the study. Six teenage mothers were used for the study, using a convenience sampling method, specifically purposive sampling. These six participants were selected based on the ease of access to information about them, which was obtained from the headteachers of the schools. Participants were identified through snowball sampling, with initial referrals provided by the school headmaster based on the knowledge of students who met the study criteria. Four were teenage mothers who have returned to school and the other two were those who have not returned to school.

Out of the four teenage mothers, two were from Ogome Anglican JHS and the other two were from Adjikpo Dokuyo M/A JHS. The only two teenage mothers who had not returned to school and were willing to be interviewed were from Ogome Anglican JHS. Other teenage mothers were not willing to be interviewed. This is because of the stigmatisation of teenage mothers in the community.

Also, two headteachers, the Director of Education of the Yilo Krobo Municipality and two religious leaders were interviewed. The Director of Education of the Yilo Krobo Municipality and the two headteachers were selected purposively to provide meaningful insight into the issues of teenage pregnancy and its various dimension dimensions within the municipality. The headteachers—selected from the two public junior high schools with the high recorded rates of teenage pregnancies—were chosen for their experience and firsthand knowledge of reintegration challenges.

The two religious leaders were also selected purposively. The selection of the two religious leaders was based on their availability with direct relevance to the study. They were chosen purposively because they were the only ones known to the researcher and were accessible for interviews. Additionally, they both have their children in the two junior high schools that were selected for the study. This made them very relevant to the study, hence their selection.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In-depth interviews were conducted to collect primary data for this study. According to Tarnoki and Puentes (2019), in-depth interviews provide an opportunity to explore the experiences, challenges, and support systems of individuals in detail. Using this method helps to uncover the participant's views but respects how the participant frames and structures the responses. This method is based on a fundamental assumption to qualitative research. Through the use of interviews, this research approach was able to collect extensive and in-depth data that will facilitate the exploration of the complexities pertaining to the topic.

Individual in-depth interviews were used for all participants of the study. Open-ended questions were asked for detailed responses. The interviews were conducted by the researcher personally. This was to ensure 100% confidentiality and to assist the respondents in understanding the questions in order to get the right answers to the questions.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To ensure ethical standards are met, the researcher secured permission from the Yilo Krobo Municipal Education Directorate prior to data collection and obtained informed consent from all participants, ensuring that they understood the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality of their information. The participants were given a thorough explanation of

the research, were guaranteed their privacy, and gave their agreement after being properly briefed. They were also made aware that refusing to take part in the interview at any time would not have any negative consequences for them. The researcher also sought the permission of the respondents before recording them before the interviews (Owusu, 2022). There was no formal institutional ethical clearance.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were collected from the interviews through recordings and note-taking. The data obtained from the interviews were then transcribed, edited, and thematically analysed. The thematic analysis involved identifying themes within the data and organising them into meaningful categories (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Owusu, 2020). This approach allowed for the identification of factors that facilitate the return and retention of teenage mothers in school, as well as any barriers or challenges they may face.

According to Owusu (2020) and Villegas (2022), thematic analysis entails finding and organising themes within the data, allowing for a thorough examination of the elements that promote successful reintegration and continuing education of teenage mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality.

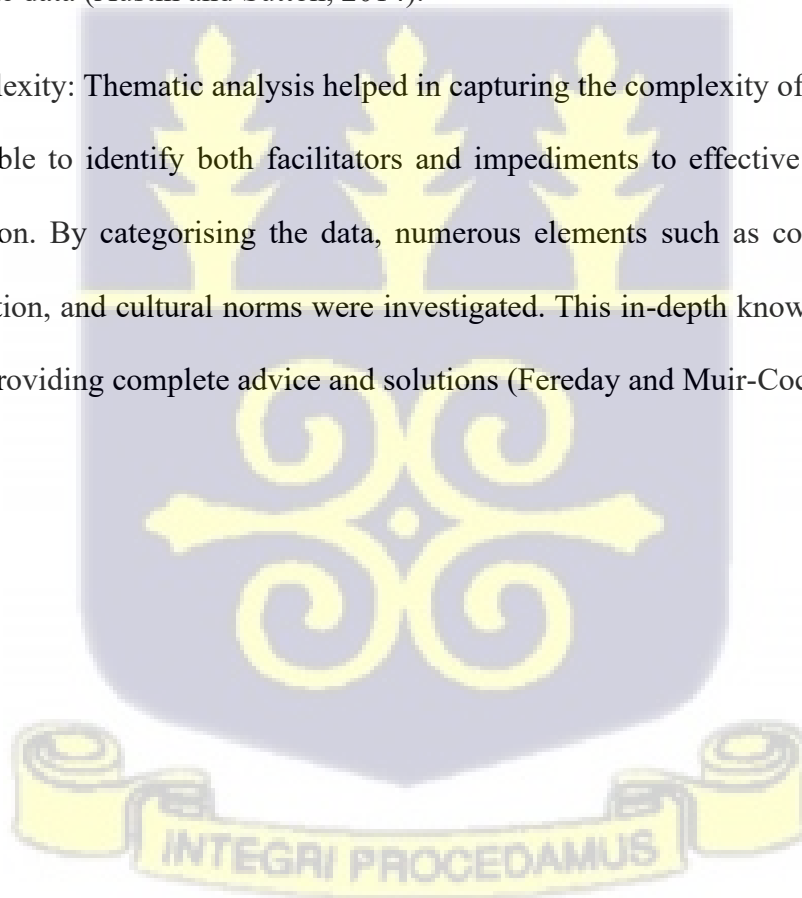
The reasons why thematic analysis was used for this study are explained below:

In-depth exploration: Thematic analysis enabled a thorough assessment of the data. It helped to uncover patterns, repeating ideas, and significant concepts in the dataset. This method is especially useful for examining complicated phenomena such as the reintegration and ongoing education of teenage mothers, since it allows for a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at work (Sutton and Austin, 2015; Owusu, Teye-Kau and Tenkorang, 2020).

Flexibility: Thematic analysis is a versatile approach that may be used in a variety of study situations and data kinds. It does not impose predetermined classifications or theoretical frameworks on the data but rather enables themes to emerge from the data itself (Dawadi, 2020). This adaptability made it useful in this study, which encompasses a variety of experiences and views.

Interpretive Approach: It aims to understand the meanings and interpretations that people attach to their experiences. This helped in the acquisition of insights into the subjective experiences, attitudes, and viewpoints of teenage mothers on their reintegration and education by finding themes within the data (Austin and Sutton, 2014).

Capturing complexity: Thematic analysis helped in capturing the complexity of the study subject. It made it possible to identify both facilitators and impediments to effective reintegration and ongoing education. By categorising the data, numerous elements such as community support, personal motivation, and cultural norms were investigated. This in-depth knowledge of the issue is essential for providing complete advice and solutions (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results that were obtained from the study. The results of the study are presented based on the objectives of the study. The study explored factors that enable teenage mothers to return and stay in school in the Yilo Krobo Municipality, using The Social Cognitive Theory to understand the educational attainment of teenage mothers. The Social Cognitive Theory posits that interventions targeting the improvement of self-confidence and provision of support to teenage mothers have the potential to provide favourable effects on their educational attainment.

4.2 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

This section covers the socio-demographic characteristics of teenage mothers namely; age, marital status, educational level, religion, and occupation.

4.2.1 Age distribution of teenage mothers

A total of six teenage mothers were selected from two public junior high schools in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. Of the six interviewed, the mean age of the participants was 17 years.

TABLE 4.1: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF TEENAGE MOTHERS

| Age (years) | Frequency |
|-------------|-----------|
| 15 | 1 |
| 16 | 2 |

| | |
|-----------------|----|
| 17 | 1 |
| 19 | 2 |
| Mean Age | 17 |

Source: Field data, 2023

4.2.2 Religion and Marital Status

Out of the six teenage mothers interviewed, five were Christians and one was a Muslim. All respondents were unmarried. Four of the teenage mothers had returned to school while the other two had not returned to school. Among those who returned to school, their ages were 19, 16, 15 and 17 years old. The two who had not returned were ages 19 and 16 years old. Five of them had one child each. Specifically, for those who returned to school, the ages of their children were: a year, two months, a year, and three months, respectively. For the ladies who did not return to school, the 19-year-old had two children aged two years and five months, while the 16-year-old had a one-year-old child.

4.2.3 Educational Level and Occupation

Of those who re-enrolled, three were in JHS 2 and one in JHS 1. Each of them had to repeat a class. The reasons why they repeated a class are mentioned later in this chapter. Three out of the six teenage mothers who re-enrolled were in JHS 2 indicating they were nearing completion of basic education prior to their pregnancy. The teenage mothers who were not in school were working. One was a cleaner and the other was selling food. None of the teenage mothers who returned to school were working.

4.2.4 Community Opinion Leader Participants

Two religious leaders were interviewed - a male Christian pastor, and a Christian pastor's wife (the wife of a different male pastor). Each had a teenage daughter. Two male head teachers were interviewed, aged 58 and 49 years old, respectively. Both identified as Christian. The 58-year-old headteacher had one teenage daughter while the 49-year-old did not have any teenage children. The Municipal Director of Education interviewed was a male. He provided insights from an administrative perspective.

4.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.3.1 Research Question 1: Educational Reintegration and Retention

The first research question sought to examine the extent to which teenage mothers return to and stay in school in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. The results revealed that four out of the six teenage mothers interviewed had returned to school after giving birth.

However, while the ability to re-enrol was promising, the continuity of their education was disrupted. All four teenage mothers who returned reported having to take a break from school for a period of time, ranging from a few months to over a year, for childbirth and infant care. Girl 1 shared, *"I had to drop out of school temporarily to focus on my pregnancy and take care of my child. I stayed home for a year before returning to school."* Girl 2 said, *"I had to leave school to give birth. I stayed home for a few months before going back to repeat my class."*

They had to leave to deliver their children. They needed to repeat their classes to cover all the schoolwork they missed. While the temporary dropouts due to pregnancy, childbirth and infant care are understandable given the teenage mothers' circumstances, these interruptions in their education still disrupted their academic continuity and impacted their learning and progression.

Notably, the fathers of their children did not feature in their support systems for both them and their children, which is a significant problem, as it places an undue burden on the teenage mothers without the involvement of the men responsible for their pregnancy.

The stories of those who returned highlight that retention is hindered by gaps in education.

For the two teenage mothers who had not returned to school, they faced challenges, highlighting socioeconomic and institutional challenges. Girl 5 shared, *"After becoming a teenage mother, I faced many challenges that made it difficult to continue school. Lack of support, finances, and societal stigma were major factors."* Girl 6 cited *"insufficient financial support from my family"* as the key reason impeding her re-enrolment. Their accounts illuminate individual barriers that obstruct educational reintegration.

This aligns with Tester-Jones et al. (2015), who found that many teenage mothers have a desire to continue their education when given adequate support. However, continuity was disrupted by temporary dropouts for childbirth and infant care. Girl 2 shared she needed to *"drop out...stayed home a few months before going back to repeat."* This corroborates the literature which highlights academic challenges due to gaps (Maemeko et al., 2018). While not inherently negative, such interruptions impact learning and progression, an insight also noted by Chandra-Mouli et al. (2013).

The two mothers who had not returned to school, faced more severe barriers around finances, family support, and stigma, aligning with studies by Ezeanolue et al. (2015) and Abor et al. (2011) on socioeconomic challenges causing non-re-enrolment of the teenage mothers. Their accounts spotlight obstacles obstructing reintegration.

4.3.2 Research Question 2: Factors Facilitating Reintegration and Retention

The second research question examined the factors facilitating teenage mothers' return to and retention in school in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. Analysis of the results highlighted the presence of family support as an integral enabling factor for educational reintegration. All four girls who re-enrolled emphasized the instrumental support they received from family members, chiefly grandparents, mothers, aunts, and cousins.

Girl 1 shared that her grandmother provided financial assistance, childcare, food, clothing, and emotional encouragement which were "crucial in enabling me to return to school." Girl 2 explained that her mother and aunt "*fed me, fed my child, and paid for everything I needed for school. They also encouraged me to come to school.*" The provision of childcare, finances for fees and supplies, and emotional support by the family eased the process of re-entry.

Acceptance and encouragement from teachers also facilitated re-enrolment, creating a supportive school environment. Headteacher 1 stated "*We believe that every teenage mother deserves a second chance at education*" and so they encouraged the teenage mothers by informing their classmates not to stigmatise them.

The integral role of family support in enabling re-entry strongly echoes Catherine et al. (2015) who found teenage mothers with family assistance had better engagement. Girl 1 shared how her grandmother provided "financial support, emotional care, childcare ... crucial in enabling my return." Family aid eased re-entry barriers.

4.3.3 Research Question 3: Community Support Systems

The third research question examined the role of community support systems and interventions in facilitating teenage mothers' return to school in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. The results

highlighted a concerning lack of organized community assistance for teenage mothers beyond immediate family support.

When asked about supportive initiatives, the girls could not identify any existing community programmes. Girl 4 captured this, saying *"Just my grandmother has helped me so far. The community has not organized anything for us."* The religious leaders confirmed that while their churches provided some assistance through counselling, mentorship and in a few cases, financial aid, this was limited to members only. As Religious Leader 1 clarified, *"Our support system is only for members of our church."*

The Municipal Director of Education also concurred regarding the lack of targeted external support systems. He explained, *"There are no specific programmes or initiatives that directly address the financial challenges faced by teenage mothers."* The headteachers similarly highlighted that schools' efforts to reach out to NGOs for assistance had yielded minimal outcomes as organizations were overwhelmed in supporting the entire municipality.

Hence, the findings highlighted a gap in the municipality's support systems, particularly concerning comprehensive community assistance for teenage mothers. Although families provide support to the best of their abilities, financial aid and specific programmes designed to help teenage mothers overcome challenges and reach their educational objectives remain lacking.

The study found minimal organized community assistance for teenage mothers beyond family, with schools unable to adequately compensate, affirming Maemeko et al. (2018). Religious institutions only aided members, while the Director of Education concurred on absent government financial interventions, spotlighting systemic gaps. This aligns with literature advocating for comprehensive societal support mechanisms to transform adverse structural barriers into

supportive systems that bolster teenage mothers' personal agency and resilience (Tester-Jones et al., 2015).

4.4 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

Further synthesis of the qualitative information provided a deeper and more detailed understanding of the various factors that affect the educational efforts of teenage mothers in the municipality.

Three salient, interconnected themes emerged for this synthesis: (1) The significance of support systems, (2) Challenges faced by teenage mothers, and (3) The role of personal motivation and resilience.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Support Systems

The first theme, support systems, captures the vital role played by family, community, and institutional assistance in enabling educational reintegration and progression. Support manifested in diverse and intersecting forms: financial, emotional, childcare, and stigma reduction.

Family support surfaced as the foremost enabler. All teenage mothers who re-enrolled attributed it to assistance from grandmothers, mothers, aunts, siblings, and cousins. For instance, Girl 1 credited her grandmother who provided *"financial support, emotional care, and takes care of my child when I am in school."* Girl 2 explained how her mother and aunt offer *"financial support, emotional/psychological support, childcare, food, and clothing."* This emphasizes the value of intergenerational family support networks in mitigating teenage mothers' constraints.

Financial assistance was underscored as critical for education access. Girl 5 powerfully summarized, *"Financial support and someone to keep the baby when I am in school...With that, I can take care of myself and the baby. I can also return to school."* The lack of financial means prevented Girls 5 and 6 from re-enrolling, showing how poverty restricts choices and

opportunities. However, complex family dynamics also determine support experiences. Girl 5 highlighted how her parents focused limited resources on her siblings instead of her children, depriving her of familial assistance. Hence, close family/cultural norms regarding teenage pregnancy and relationships impact support provision.

Beyond families, schools foster support via flexibility and reducing stigma. Headteacher 2 shared that *"We try to give them flexible schedules"* to balance motherhood demands. Both headteachers actively counter stigma by warning students against discrimination of the teenage mothers. However, religious leaders noted limitations in community assistance for non-members. The Director of Education highlighted the lack of governmental financial interventions too. Hence, support systems are not institutionalized.

An issue worth noting, was the absence of the fathers of the teenagers' children as part of their support systems, both for the young mothers themselves and for their children. This lack of involvement from the men responsible for the pregnancies placed a disproportionate burden solely on the teenage mothers.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Challenges and Barriers

The second theme encapsulates the multifaceted challenges embedded in socioeconomic, cultural, and policy contexts that constrain teenage mothers' educational continuity.

Financial constraints emerged as the foremost obstacle. The Director of Education acknowledged, *"Financial constraints is a significant challenge, as many of these girls come from poor backgrounds."* Girls 5 and 6 who could not re-enrol cited a lack of finances as the main barrier.

Even among those who returned, poverty exacerbates struggles. Girl 1 shared how she resorts to doing homework at a friend's house as she lacks space at her cramped home.

The lack of affordable and inadequate childcare also hinders education progress.

Girl 2 explained how she has to “*go home during break and feed my child*” as there was no provision for pumping and storing breastmilk at home though she had her mother and aunty taking care of the child when she was in school. Having to go home disrupted her school day. Her experience also highlights how the absence of childcare accommodations within educational policies disadvantage teenage mothers.

Additionally, stigma and discrimination in school impede retention. Girl 6 stopped attending school as “*the students laughed at me so much.*” Girl 1 felt ashamed being placed in a class with juniors who called her “*Maame Panyin*” (*an older woman*).

Finally, discontinuities in education emerged as a barrier. All four girls who returned had gaps of months to years in schooling due to pregnancy, childbirth, and infant care responsibilities. While not inherently negative, such interruptions impact learning and academic progression as all the teenage mothers who returned to school had to repeat their respective classes.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Personal Motivation and Resilience

The final theme highlights teenage mothers' personal motivation and resilience as driving forces underpinning their educational aspirations despite barriers. Their motivation derived from intrinsic aspirations for financial independence, better jobs, and a stable future for their families. Girl 1 poignantly shared that getting pregnant made her more determined to finish school and break her family's cycle of poverty. Girl 2 expressed her motivation “*to become a big businesswoman after school and make a lot of money.*” Their stories reveal how personal goals fuel resilience.

Family, school, and community support reinforced this intrinsic motivation. For instance, Girl 3 explained how her cousin emphasized education's role in securing a good job, underlining how

social capital builds personal motivation. The head teacher affirmed that schools have a responsibility to nurture teenage mothers' motivations through inclusive environments that provide "second chances".

Even mothers who had not returned to school expressed future aspirations, highlighting their resilience. Girl 5 shared hopes to be a fashion designer someday, saying *"For now, I would keep selling kenkey to get some money for myself and my children. If I am able to get enough, I will learn fashion design."* Her story beautifully captures how personal goals can shine through despite constraints.

4.5 APPLICATION OF THE SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

4.5.1 Introduction

In this section, the results of this study are analysed through the lens of the Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that human behaviour is dynamically influenced by personal, behavioural, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1986). By examining teenage mothers' experiences in the Yilo Krobo Municipality through this multidimensional framework encompassing personal agency, structural barriers, and support systems, meaningful insights emerged. The Social Cognitive Theory corresponds with the study's goals to examine how personal factors, and broader social influences affect the educational paths of teenage mothers.

The research questions specifically focused on: (1) educational reintegration and retention (2) facilitating factors and barriers and (3) community support systems.

4.5.2 RQ1: Educational Reintegration and Retention

While four mothers re-enrolled, highlighting personal motivation, their education was discontinuous. Girl 2 shared, *"I had to drop out...stayed home a few months before going back to repeat."* The gaps and class repetition reveal rigid structures which do not accommodate the needs

of the teenage mothers. Given the rigid structures there was the need for the repetition of classes to ensure good academic performances from the teenage mothers.

This highlights the interplay between personal factors like motivation and environmental factors such as institutional structures, as emphasized in the Social Cognitive Theory. The rigid educational system failed to provide flexibility and support to accommodate the unique needs of these teenage mothers, acting as an environmental barrier to their continuous progress. The need for class repetition suggests a lack of mechanisms within the school environment to help them catch up after gaps in their education.

However, lack of motivation does not fully explain why some mothers did not re-enrol at all. Other barriers such as financial constraints emerged as a formidable barrier within the social environment, significantly hindering some teenage mothers from re-enrolling in the educational system. Girls 5 and 6, who had not returned to school, cited lack of financial support as the primary reason impeding their re-entry into the educational system. As Girl 5 poignantly stated, *"Financial support and someone to keep the baby when I am in school...With that, I can take care of myself and the baby. I can also return to school."* However, for those who re-enrolled, immediate family members played a crucial role in providing the necessary social support, mitigating some of the challenges. All four girls emphasized the instrumental assistance they received from grandmothers, mothers, aunts, and cousins in the form of financial aid, childcare, emotional encouragement, and provisions like food and clothing. As Girl 2 explained, her mother and aunt *"fed me, fed my child, and paid for everything I needed for school. They also encouraged me to come to school."* This familial support eased the process of re-entry and continuation of education for these teenage mothers.

While lack of motivation does not fully explain why some mothers did not re-enrol at all, personal drive and aspirations interacted with environmental factors like financial constraints and the availability of social support systems.

This highlights the importance of addressing both personal and environmental factors to facilitate change - in this case, successful reintegration and retention by adopting a holistic approach that tackles personal motivations while also reforming the institutional structures and creating a supportive environment within the educational system to cater to the specific needs of teenage mothers.

4.5.3 RQ2: Factors Facilitating Reintegration and Retention

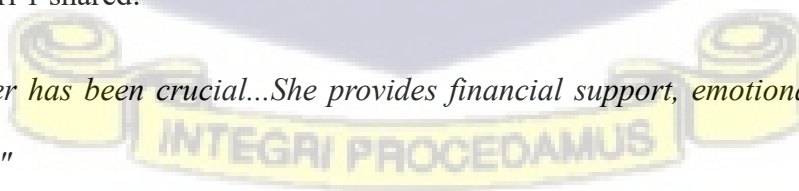
The Social Cognitive Theory highlights how behaviour is enabled and constrained by environmental influences. Support systems facilitate reintegration, but barriers perpetuate marginalization.

A) Support Systems

The critical role of family assistance in reinforcing the personal agency and intrinsic motivation of the teenage mothers interviewed to continue education featured strongly. This echoes the Social Cognitive Theory's emphasis on the importance placed on social capital in enhancing self-efficacy (Catherine et al., 2015).

For instance, Girl 1 shared:

"My grandmother has been crucial...She provides financial support, emotional care, and takes care of my child."



The data reveal how vital social support networks mitigate challenges that could also potentially undermine the teenage mothers' motivations when confronting challenges alone. In this study, the resilience of the teenage mothers was reinforced rather than hindered.

B) Barriers

However, poverty limits families' ability to support the education continuation of the teenage mothers interviewed. Girl 5 explained:

"My parents don't take care of me or my children...They have 3 more children to take care of." Her experience conveys how challenging socioeconomic ecosystems intersect with personal determination and family dynamics to perpetuate marginalization; an insight aligned with the Social Cognitive Theory.

Stigma also disrupts education, with Girl 6 sharing she stopped attending school as *"students laughed at me"*. Such experiences psychologically disempower teenage mothers. Therefore, obstacles arising from societal attitudes and institutional policy gaps limit individuals' ability to act or make choices.

4.5.4 RQ3: Community Support Systems

The interviews revealed minimal community support systems, though religious institutions assist its members, and for that matter, the teenage girls interviewed. Structural lack of external interventions further entrenches challenges. The Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the need to reinforce personal agency by transforming ecosystem barriers through guidance, resources, and opportunity creation (Bandura, 1999). Currently, such scaffolding is inadequate in the municipality.

4.6 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the factors that influence the educational continuity of teenage mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality of Ghana. The study used the Social Cognitive Theory to explain how personal efforts and socio-structural influences interact to shape the educational outcomes of teenage mothers. The findings suggested that targeted interventions, such as policy reforms, material provisions, and fostering inclusive school cultures, could leverage the intrinsic motivation of teenage mothers to achieve sustainable improvements in education outcomes.

The data showed that four of the teenage mothers were determined to continue their formal education, driven by their aspirations for socioeconomic upliftment and securing better futures for their children. They believed that education could expand their life choices and cultural capital. Thus, they persisted in their investment in education despite temporary dropouts for childbirth and infant care. However, the inflexibility of the education system towards adolescent motherhood realities has been disruptive. The teenage mothers who returned to school had to repeat their respective classes to ensure they covered all the required syllabus to pass their exit examinations. This was because they left class to attend to their motherhood needs. Despite these challenges, teenage mothers demonstrated resilience and focus on long-term economic empowerment, conveying education's transformational power to carve pathways out of intergenerational disadvantage.

The chapter also highlights the challenges faced by teenage mothers in continuing their education, as they navigate the complex interplay of personal resilience, socio-cultural attitudes, and structural barriers. Despite their strong motivation and determination, the teenage mothers who were interviewed were confronted with resource constraints and stigmatisation. Financial

constraints severely limited their ability to afford childcare, school fees, and other costs associated with returning to school. Two of the teenage mothers lacked adequate physical spaces at home conducive to studying and completing homework while caring for their children. Furthermore, experiences of stigmatisation and name-calling by peers exacerbated their challenges, undermining their aspirations and continuing intergenerational disadvantage. In this context, the community and the municipality's unique circumstances demand a reorientation of policies towards meaningful nurturance to improve education outcomes for teenage mothers.

Notably, the fathers of their children did not feature in their support systems for both them and their children, which is a significant problem, as it places an undue burden on the teenage mothers without the involvement of the men responsible for their pregnancy.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter summarizes the key findings, discusses their implications, acknowledges limitations, and provides recommendations based on the evidence from this study exploring factors enabling teenage mothers' educational reintegration in Ghana's Yilo Krobo Municipality. The study was guided by three research questions which focused on examining educational reintegration and retention rates, facilitating factors and barriers, and the role of community support. The Social Cognitive Theory was used to understand the interplay between personal agency, behaviour patterns, and social structures shaping the experiences of teenage mothers. Potential areas for future investigation are also proposed.

The study found that four out of the six teenage mothers interviewed had returned to school after giving birth, demonstrating strong individual motivation to continue their education. However, while their ability to re-enrol was promising, the continuity of their education was disrupted. All four teenage mothers who returned reported having to take a break from school for a while, ranging from a few months to over a year, for childbirth and infant care. They had to leave to deliver their children and needed to repeat their classes to cover the schoolwork they had missed. These interruptions in their education disrupted their academic continuity and impacted their learning and progression. The two teenage mothers who had not returned to school faced challenges such as lack of financial support and societal stigma, highlighting socioeconomic and institutional barriers that obstructed their educational reintegration.

The teenage mothers' experiences underscore the interaction between individual motivation and environmental factors in shaping educational outcomes, as posited by the Social Cognitive Theory.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Four out of the six teenage mothers in this study demonstrated strong individual motivation to continue their education, driven by aspirations for better futures. However, systemic barriers present in their environments, such as lack of childcare support, stigma, and financial constraints, hindered their capability to re-enrol and progress. On the other hand, support systems like family assistance facilitated re-entry by providing resources and encouragement.

These findings align with the Social Cognitive Theory's premise that personal agency can be either empowered or restricted by the surrounding ecological factors. The teenage mothers' experiences spotlight the need to address both individual determination and transform structural obstacles through comprehensive reforms. Targeted interventions to improve childcare accommodations, counter stigma, and increase financial aid could leverage teenage mothers' resilience to catalyse sustainable positive change in education outcomes. These findings underscore the Social Cognitive Theory's premise: teenage mothers' success hinges not only on personal agency but on dismantling systemic barriers.

This highlights the importance of coordinated efforts across all levels of society to reinforce personal agency with an enabling environment.

5.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

This qualitative study was guided by three research questions which examined:

1. Educational reintegration and retention rates.
2. Facilitating factors and barriers

3. The role of community support.

5.3.1 Educational Reintegration and Retention Rates

Data gathered through interviews with teenage mothers, headteachers and municipality education authorities led to the conclusion that while most teenage mothers actively sought school re-entry after childbirth, continuity remained disrupted by socioeconomic constraints and inflexible systems. All four teenage mothers who returned reported having to take a break from school for childbirth and infant care, leading to academic gaps.

5.3.2 Facilitating Factors and Barriers

The study concluded that family assistance played an integral role in initial re-enrolment by providing childcare, finances, and emotional support. However, teenage mothers faced numerous challenges ranging from resource limitations, discriminatory attitudes, academic discontinuities, and insufficient specialized external support such as organized community interventions, beyond religious groups aiding members.

5.3.3 Role of Community Support

The evidence showed a lack of organized community support systems beyond immediate family assistance. Religious groups provided limited aid to their members only. Schools were unable to compensate for this gap. Respondents also highlighted the lack of governmental financial interventions.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study reveal critical implications for policy, institutional practice, and community engagement to support teenage mothers' education. These implications emerge across

three interdependent levels of intervention: (1) systemic changes in national and local policies, (2) institutional adaptations within schools, and (3) community and family support networks. As this study demonstrates, enabling teenage mothers to achieve their educational and career aspirations requires precisely this kind of comprehensive, multi-level collaboration across society.

Supporting teenage mothers and allowing society to benefit from their potential necessitates moving beyond limited, isolated interventions towards transformative systemic change.

Deliberate, unified efforts are needed from the government, institutions, families, and communities to reinforce teenage mothers' agency and resilience. This involves targeting individual, family, community, and national levels simultaneously with interconnected social, emotional, and economic support.

Actions must target individual, family, community and national levels simultaneously to reinforce teenage mothers' agency and resilience with interconnected social, emotional and economic scaffolding. Specifically, nationwide government-backed alternative schooling pathways, protections enabling continuous learning after childbirth, subsidies easing monetary pressures and stigma reduction campaigns centred on discipline and dialogue could transform obstacles into opportunities. Schools could allow temporary excused absences for postnatal care (with approval from school heads) and permit breastfeeding mothers to step out during breaks in designated private spaces, where culturally acceptable. This recommendation is supported by the study's findings, where teenage mothers like Girl 2 highlighted the need to 'go home during break and feed my child,' disrupting their school day due to lack of breastfeeding spaces.

Flexible schedules and childcare support would address these gaps, as echoed by Headteacher 2, who noted efforts to 'give them flexible schedules.'

It is recommended that families and neighbourhoods back intergenerational assistance through communal parenting networks, sponsoring support groups and collectively upholding education's value also carry responsibility.

5.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

While this qualitative study yielded meaningful insights, further research through mixed methods could enrich the understanding of teenage mothers' educational experiences and outcomes.

Suggested future investigations include:

- a. Quantitative longitudinal measurements assessing educational retention rates before and after introducing multifaceted support interventions to quantify effectiveness.
- b. Quantitative and qualitative exploration of potential sociodemographic differences in barriers and facilitators faced by subgroups based on age, family income, rural/urban location, and other factors.
- c. Long-term longitudinal tracking quantitatively and qualitatively examining how evidence-based assistance programmes shape teenage mothers and their children's welfare and life trajectory.

5.6 LIMITATIONS

While producing meaningful context-specific insights, limitations around small qualitative sampling and single geographic area restrict result generalizability and validation of statistical relationships. Still, the in-depth narratives centrally capture personal experiences key to the research aims.

5.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study showed that enabling teenage mothers in Ghana to achieve their educational and career dreams requires a comprehensive, collaborative transformation of sociocultural mindsets and structural support systems. Only by reinforcing personal agency with interconnected social, financial and policy scaffolding can society ignite its power to attain self-fulfilment and collectively advance. The evidence compels committing to uplift teenage mothers holistically by walking beside them in unity.

Fundamentally, the experiences of the six Yilo Krobo's teenage mothers studied spotlight the deep interconnectedness of personal agency, cultural attitudes, and structural barriers in shaping life trajectories. Their narratives reveal formal education's unparalleled emancipatory power to expand freedoms and break entrenched generational poverty cycles. But fully enabling this promise demands deliberate, unified reworking of social systems to amplify teenage mothers' inner strength rather than diminish it. Igniting the light inside all youth to radiate their brilliance relies on a societal commitment to walk beside them, clearing roads while fanning their flames.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research evidence, the proposed recommendations include:

a. National Level

The government should:

1. Create alternative academic pathways like equivalency and virtual schooling enabling continuous personalized learning for teenage mothers who do not reintegrate.

b. Institutional Level

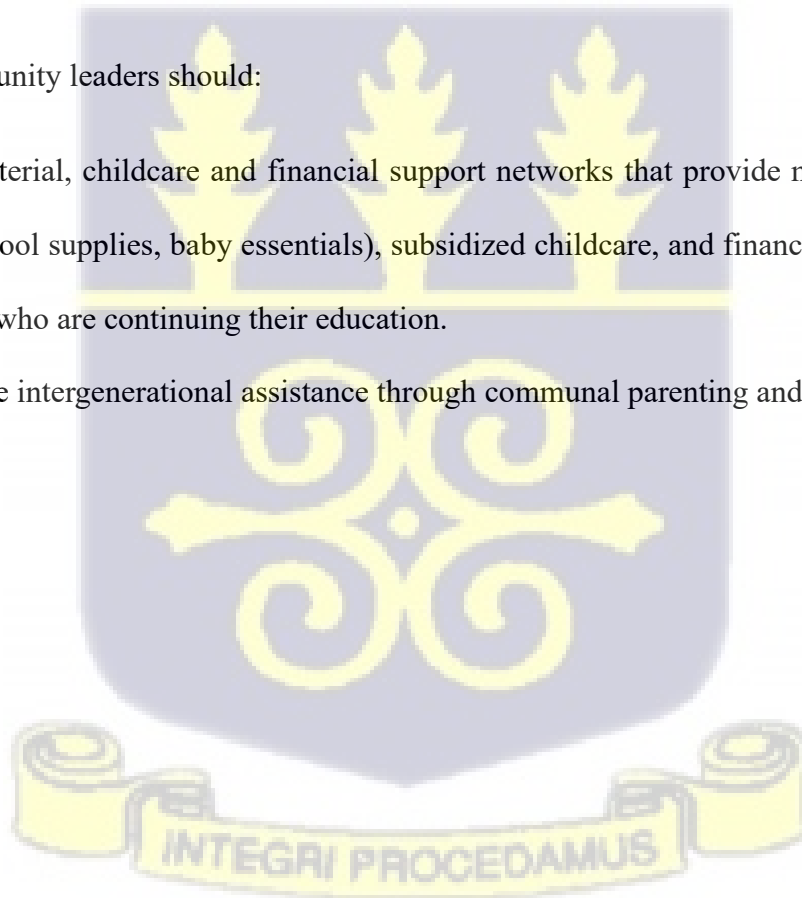
School administrators should:

1. Mandate staff and student sensitization programmes countering judgmental mindsets.
2. Where resources permit, schools could collaborate with community childcare providers to support teenage mothers, as lack of childcare was a key barrier to teenage mothers' education.
3. Implement support groups and tailored counselling services within schools--specifically designed to address the emotional and academic challenges faced by pregnant adolescents and young mothers.
4. Develop re-entry transition programmes assisting with socioemotional adjustment in schools for pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers.

c. Community Level

Local community leaders should:

1. Fund material, childcare and financial support networks that provide material assistance (e.g., school supplies, baby essentials), subsidized childcare, and financial aid for teenage mothers who are continuing their education.
2. Reinforce intergenerational assistance through communal parenting and motivation.



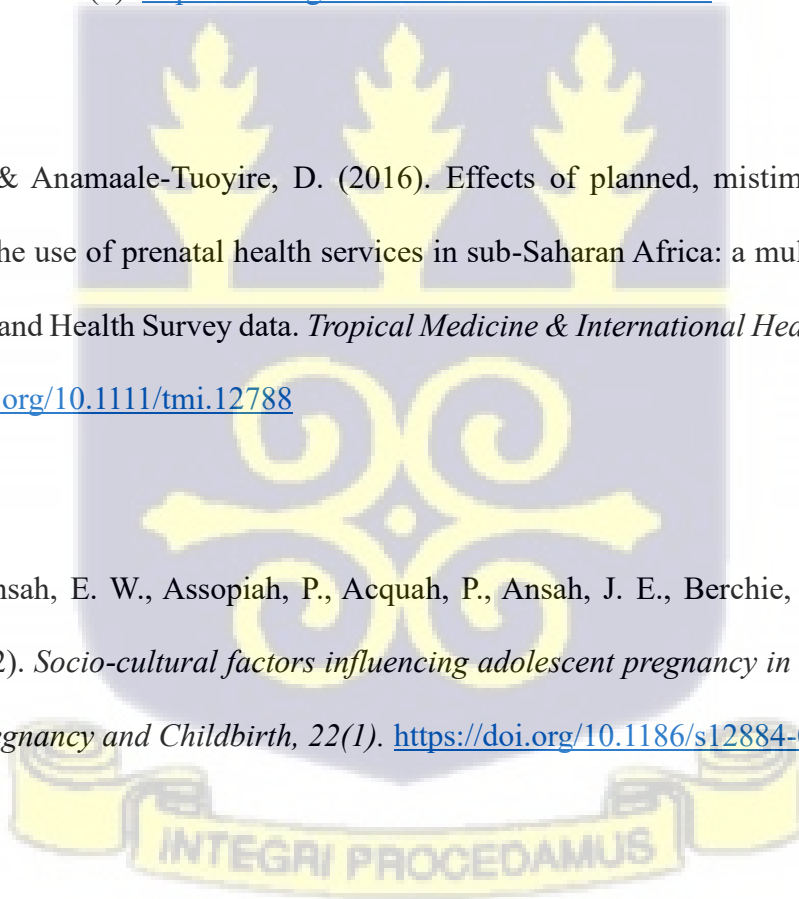
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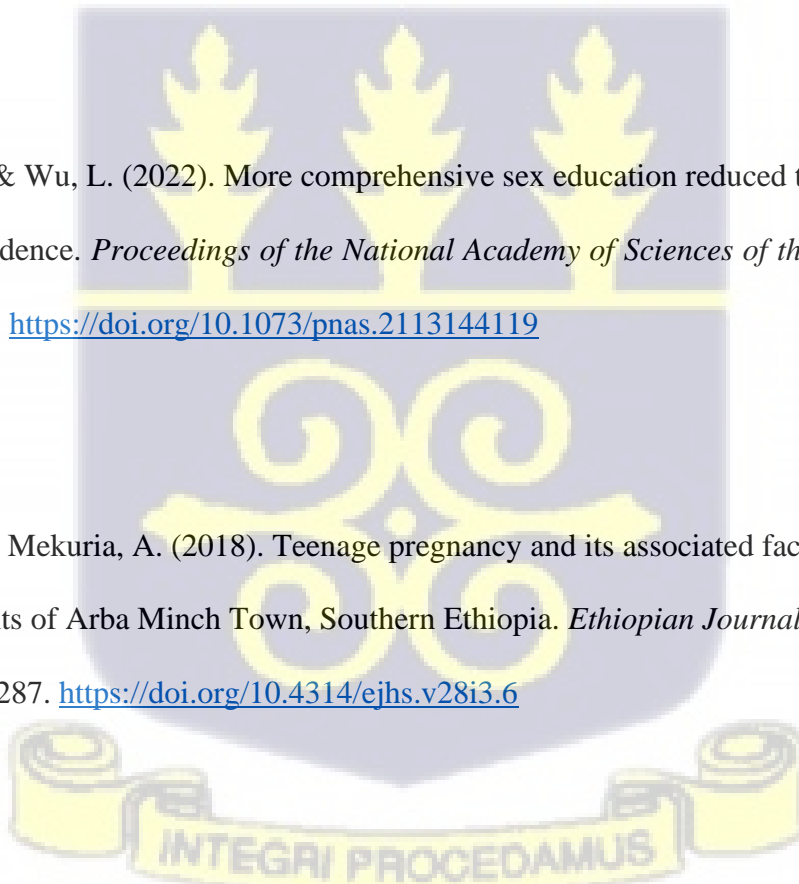
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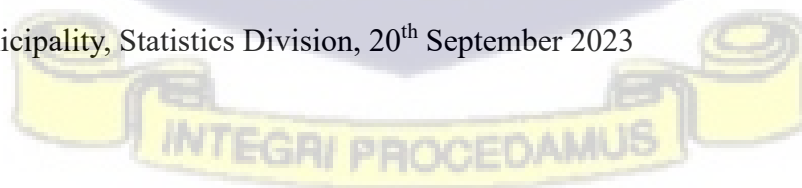
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