

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**ADOLESCENT MOTHERHOOD AND ITS SUPPORT SYSTEMS AT THE  
BAWJIASE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



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**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

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BAWJIASE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



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of the requirement for award of degree  
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**JUNE, 2025**

## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Daniel Welbeck Jnr declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature: .....

Date: .....

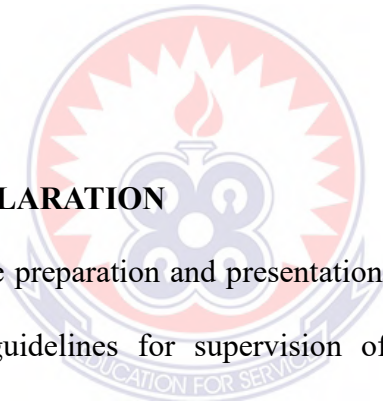
### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of supervisor: .....

Signature .....

Date: .....



## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Mrs. Grace Welbeck.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My appreciation goes to my supervisor, Prof. Lucy Effeh Attom and other lecturers of the Department of Social Studies Education who, in their wisdom and direction have supported me to achieve this feat. I sincerely thank my wife, children and other family members, for their support. Finally, I thank my friends and all participants who contributed to the success of this work.



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## A LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAMUSTED:	Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development
AU:	African Union
BECE:	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CG:	Capitation Grant
COLTEK:	College of Technology Education
CTK-UTAS:	C. K Tedam University of Technology and Applied Science
FAWE:	Forum for African Women Educationists
F CUBE:	Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education
FSUP:	Free School Uniform Programme
FUPE:	Free Universal Primary Education
GEIG:	Girls Education Initiative of Ghana
GES:	Ghana Education Service
GET Fund:	Ghana Education Trust Fund
GEU:	Girl Education Unit
GIMPA:	Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration
GSS:	Ghana Statistical Service
GTEC:	Ghana Tertiary Education Commission
HND:	Higher National Diploma
IPS:	Institute of Professional Studies
JHS:	Junior high school
KNUST:	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MOE:	Ministry of Education

NCTE:	National Council for Tertiary Education
NCWD:	National Council for Women and Development
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
OAU:	Organization of Africa Union
SD:	Standard Deviation
SFG:	School Feeding Programme
SHS:	Senior High School
SPSS:	Statistical Product and Service Solution
UENR:	University of Energy and Natural Resources
UESD:	University of Environment and Sustainable Development
UHAS:	University of Health and Allied Sciences
UMAT:	University of mines and Technology
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UPSA:	University of Professional Studies, Accra

## ABSTRACT

The study explored the experiences of adolescent student mothers at Bawjiase Senior High School in the Central Region of Ghana. Using purposive and snowballing sampling technique, twelve teenage student mothers, five teachers, and five parents were sampled for the study. Data was collected using interviews guide and data collected was thematically analysed. The study findings highlight the absence of comprehensive sex education, economic pressure, negative peer influence, negative cultural norms, indecent exposure to social media and mental health issues as some of the factors contributing to adolescent pregnancy. Based on the research results, it was suggested that the provision of counselling, accommodation for teachers to help easy monitoring of students in the boarding house, peer support networks, stream-lined re-admission processes and family collaboration to minimize the effect on adolescent mothers. It is suggested that Ghana Education Service through the heads of institution implement comprehensive sex education programs and use flexible timetable to make room for student mothers. Moreover, Non-Governmental organisations should collaborate with the Ministry of Education and The Girl Child Education of the Ghana Education Service to establish external support systems that provide the necessary assistance to adolescent mothers who return to school after child birth.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Adolescent stage is characterized by substantial growth rate that mark the complex moment of complex transformation and become even more intricate when pregnancy involved. Sub-Saharan African adolescents have one of the highest birth rates that accounts for a greater proportion of the overall fertility in many countries in the region (UNFPA, 2015) as compared to those in other regions of the world. “It is estimated that 12 million females in under developed countries produce babies during their pubescent age. The greater proportions of early motherhood are often found in sub-Saharan Africa. This is where birth rates among teenagers reach over 200 births per 1000 girls aged 15–19, compared to those in other regions which are quite lower. Central African Republic, Niger, Chad, Angola, and Mali are countries that were highest on the list of countries with most juvenile birth rate above 178. In a decade spanning 2010 to 2020, over 45 percent of women between 20–24 years reported having given birth for the first time by age 18” (UNICEF,2020).

“It is also been reported that, about 777,000 of the total births occur in adolescent girls below 15 years every year in developing countries” (UNFPA, 2020). The worlds population of adolescents continues to increase, and estimates indicate that the number of adolescent pregnancies will increase worldwide by 2030, with the greater proportional increases in West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa (UNFPA, 2020). “Various factors are recorded as major contributors to adolescent pregnancies include societal and traditional norms such as early marriage” (Rutaremw, 2018), childbirth as allotment of maturity, and a means to elicit societal respect (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2020).

More so, sexual abuse and living in vdistraught communities (Brahmbhatt *et al.*, 2014), lower educational levels (Faisal-Cury *et al.*, 2017; Raj, 2019), and pressure from age mates (Mushwansa, Monareng, Richter, & Muller, 2015) results in teenage pregnancies. “Other barometers that have been found to cause early birth by teenagers are adolescent sexual behaviors such as unprotected sex and absence of the use of contraceptives” (Hindin & Fatusi, 2018), “early sexual beginning, recurring sexual intercourse, and alcohol drinking” (Panova, Kulikov, Berchtold, & Suris, 2018). Given a boost to, family-related disperse such as divorce or non-intact family structure (Panova *et al.*, 2019), antiquity of maternal and sibling adolescent pregnancy (Akella & Jordan, 2018), and poor family financial status (Akella & Jordan, 2018; Nyovani, Zulu, & Ciera, 2017) have all been noted as causative factors of teenage pregnancy. Chandra –Mouli *et al* (2019) have also asserts to media influence on adolescent early sexual behaviour as a set-in factor accounting for adolescent pregnancy.

As stated by Gyesaw (2020), “the phenomenon is not different in Ghana. Adolescents here represent 24 percent of the overall population and of all registered birth in the country in 2019, 30percent of them were adolescents and 14 percent of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 years had begun childbearing” (Gyesaw, & Ankomah, 2020). “Antenatal care registrants record of the Ghana Health Service report on 115 pregnancy cases among teenagers between the ages of 10 and14, whereas 5,474 cases happened among teenagers between the ages of 14-19 years, and this was an increase from 5,518 to 5,564 teenage pregnancy cases documented in 2018 and 2019 correspondingly. 15.0 percent was chronicled in the Volta Region, while Brong Ahafo and Eastern regions registered 14 percent correspondingly.



Upper West, Central and Western regions also recorded 13percent correspondingly, Ashanti's and Northern regions had 11 percent correspondingly with Greater Accra Region recording the lowest adolescent pregnancy rate of 6 percent” (Awuni 2019).

“The first half of 2020 alone recorded 57,000 teenage pregnancies and a total of 9,100 adolescents got pregnant in the Ashanti Region of Ghana in the same year under review” (GNA, 2021). This exhibits a sharp increase in the incidence of teenage pregnancy in the region from 2018 to 2019. “With rural-urban variations, the percentage of women aged 15 to 19 (18%) who are based in rural communities had begun childbearing as of 2019” (GSS *et al.*, 2020). However, in 2020, the percentage of teenage pregnancy was highest in the Western Region (19%) with Greater Accra still maintaining the lowest percentage (GSS *et al.*, 2020).

According to Antenatal care registrants of the Ghana Health Service report at the Awutu Senya District Health Directorate for 2023, Bawjiase recorded a total 115 pregnancy case of teenagers between the ages of 10 to 14 years, whereas 1,274 cases were recorded among teenagers between 14-19 years, and this was an increase from 875 to 1,274 teenage pregnancy cases documented in 2022 and 2023 correspondingly. “Teenage pregnancies in some Ghanaian communities continues to be heavily associated with discredit, disruption of academic work or withdrawal, and a limited chance of advancement for the mother and the child” (Ananga, 2011; FAWE Ghana, 2015). Most well-intentioned people blame the pregnancy of young school-going girls on their risky attitude to engaging in undesirable sexual activities prematurely because social conventions suggest that it should not happen. “Even though pregnancy and motherhood do not always interrupt a schoolgirl’s education, they do introduce a new set of circumstances that influence future decisions related to the girls’ education” (Grant & Hallman, 2018).

“In developing countries, being a mother and of school-going age has numerous consequences in the lives of those mothers and their children as they, get and blackballed and relegated to the margins of society by their peers and teachers” (Britwum, *et al.* 2018). As reported by Ghana Education Service (GES, 2020), “a school girl’s pregnancy can have a negative impact on the mother and child by limiting her educational achievement and economic stability as well as making her prone to single parenthood” (Britwum, *et al.* 2018). According to FAWE Ghana, 2018, “the single, pregnant teenager or school-girl finds herself during a multifaceted crisis dominated by the physical and emotional reality of pregnancy, the interruption of normal psychological development and physiological, a possible change in education and career pursuits, as well as in kinship support and parental, an increase in medical risks during pregnancy, and premature assumption of the adult role with its associated responsibilities” (FAWE Ghana, 2018). This also places a teenager at an economic and educational disadvantage (Britwum, *et al.* 2018). Due to this, the teenage girl may take quite a longer period to complete her studies, and may, therefore, be financially inactive for a longer part of her life. Again, she may also fail to complete her education, may have to make ends meet with support from her relatives and struggle to find proper employment. As published by Britwum, *et al.* (2018), “the presence of a teenage mother in a classroom is not only a threat to their academic achievement, but also to the overall academic performance of the class, as well as the classroom harmony”. It is sad to note that in most Ghanaian communities, women are expected to shuttle their needs and desire to those of their children and family (FAWE, 2018). By this, students with children have to struggle combining the roles of motherhood and studentship vis-à-vis the education of their children.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

“Adolescent pregnancy, whether intended or unintended, has adverse effects on the individual, community, and national development” (Grant & Hallman, 2018). “Adolescent student-mothers might enthusiastically take on both roles of mother and student, however, undertaking these two roles, even in ideal conditions, can create conflicting demands” (Springer, Parker, & LevitenReid, 2019). “Embracing the daunting task of motherhood and schooling without compromising the activities of either of them is a great task for student mothers” (Brahmbhatt et al, 2018). “About 90 percent of adolescent student mothers often leave school to take their children for postnatal care or medical checkups” (Mohase, 2016; Lynch, 2018; Bhana, 2018 Musili, 2018).

These young mothers transcend adulthood without the customary support of kinship groups and community institutions (Awusabo-Asare *et. al.*, 2017). This situation imposes a large burden on their shoulders to strike a balance between academic work, motherhood, and crucial stage of development. “Most at times, they experience bad emotional pressures and receive negative feedback from the academic setting, implying that education is the priority” (Moghadam *et. al.*, 2018)

The Ghana Statistical Service (2018) reported that “12 percent of girls between 15 and 19 years have ever given birth and one out of every ten births that occur in the country is from an adolescent girl”. The Bawjiase Township recorded 1,540 and this constitutes approximately 15.7 percent of the total recorded cases of teenage pregnancies (Awutu Senya East Health Directorate, 2019). This phenomenon has been identified as the greatest challenge facing teenage mothers (Magnani, Macintyre, Mehyrar & Brown, 2018). “Though pregnancy and childbirth are mostly happy events, to most adolescents, due to unplanned pregnancy and lack of support, this

whole experience becomes a nightmare” (Antwi-Bosiakoh, 2013). The incidence of teenage motherhood in Ghanaian schools needs research that develops and refines theories and practices related to adolescent maternal roles and academic activities (Manzini 2001; Otoo-Oyortey & Pobi 2003; Awusabo-Asare et al. 2017; UNFPA, 2018). This phenomenon is still understudied in Ghana and has set the stage as a springboard for the present study.

Beyond this gap, adolescent student mothers in the district seem not too passionate about their academic work, and some of them appear to be unhappy on campus. Similarly, “the available reports on the phenomenon are dominant and be a major challenge to dwindling girl child education in the study area” (Zango, 2013).

Despite investments in adolescents’ education through senior high school, it appears adolescent student mothers face challenges that lead to pregnancy while in school. Those who go back to school after delivering encounter harsher conditions and therefore increase their vulnerability. They go through stigma and discrimination, financial problems lack of support system and health concerns. This study, therefore sought to explore the challenges of adolescent student mothers and how they cope with the challenges they encounter in Awutu Senya East District Senior High Schools of the Central region.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the adolescent motherhood and its support systems at the Bawjiase Senior High School, in the Central Region of Ghana.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. ascertain the factors underlying to student motherhood at the Bawjiase Senior High School
2. examine the challenges that student mothers encounter at the Bawjiase Senior High School.
3. analyse the perceived effects of the challenges on student mothers at the Bawjiase Senior High School.
4. assess the various support systems available to student mothers at the Bawjiase Senior High school.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the underlying factors contributing to adolescent motherhood at Bawjiase Senior High School?
2. What challenges do adolescent student mothers encounter within the school environment?
3. How does the challenges affect adolescent student mothers at Bawjiase Senior High School?
4. What support systems are in place to assist student mothers at Bawjiase Senior High School?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study offers invaluable information to the school authorities and staff at Bawjiase Senior High School, the Girls Education Unit of the Ghana Education Service, parents and Non-Governmental Organizations, enabling them to gain a profound understanding of the challenges faced by adolescent student mothers and how these students navigate these obstacles within the school environment.

The findings of this research hold relevance for the Girls Education Unit at the Awutu Senya East Education Directorate, as the government and NGOs can employ this knowledge to formulate strategies that promote the education of adolescent student mothers.

Additionally, the study can guide school counselors and other educational stakeholders in the Awutu Senya East District, providing them with an informed perspective on how to best support these students.

The research would serve as reference materials for students and teachers alike. Finally, the study's outcomes can lay a foundational groundwork for future research in the area, offering a baseline for further exploration of related topics.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

This research was delimited by its geographic and sample parameters. The study exclusively focuses on Bawjiase, a community situated in the Awutu Senya West District of the Central Region. The research's scope is confined solely to this specific location. Some of the issues that are taken into consideration are as follows: the underlying factors contributing to adolescent motherhood at Bawjiase Senior High School; the challenges adolescent student mothers encounter within the school environment; how the challenges affect adolescent student-mothers at Bawjiase Senior High School; and support systems in place to assist student-mothers at Bawjiase Senior High School. The study's sample consists of teenage mothers attending Bawjiase Senior High School, and it also includes their parents. These delimitations are necessary to maintain the research's focus and manage the scope of the investigation effectively.

## **1.8 Organisation of the Study**

The study is structured into five distinct chapters. The Chapter One introduces the research, outlining the background, problem statement, the purpose of the study, objectives, the research questions, significance, and delimitations of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of relevant literature, exploring topics such as factors affecting student pregnancies, parental involvement in education, the impact of teenage pregnancy, preventive measures, challenges encountered by teenage-mothers and the support systems in place.

The chapter emphasizes the Ecology of Human Development theory as the guiding theoretical framework for the study. The third chapter deals with the methodology of the study. This encompassed the philosophical approach, research design, setting, population, sampling procedure, method of data collection, data collection procedure, and method of data analysis. The Chapter Four covers the findings and discussion. The last Chapter focuses on a summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations, and areas for further research.

## **1.9 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Barrier:** It is any standing block that hinders for the female child to assess higher education.

**Gender equality:** It is the equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for males and females

**Higher education:** It refers to institution that has distinct, equipment physical structures, teaching learning materials, and pedagogical professionals who impart knowledge and skills to people.

**Opportunity cost:** It is the ‘non-financial’ elements that serve as obstacles to achieving a higher education for women and influence student's ability to pursue their educational goals

**Patriarchy:** It is how men are dominated in a society at the expense of women

**Socio-cultural factors:** It is the customs, tradition, and practices that prevent women from accessing higher education.

**The direct cost of education:** it is the economic factors that directly prevents women from getting quality basic education which translates into the percentage of female involved in higher education.





## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on a review of relevant literature for the study under the following sub-topics: Theoretical framework, Challenges faced by teenage mothers, Factors that account for pregnancy among students, Parental involvement in their children's education, Effects of teenage pregnancy, Preventive measures of teenage pregnancy and Support systems available to teenage school mothers.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

##### **2.1.1 The Ecology of Human Development**

“The challenges and support system of adolescent mothers at the Bawjiase Senior High School are explained through the lens of the Ecological System professed by Urie Bronfenbrenner” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The Ecology of Human Development according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), “is the ‘scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation throughout the life course between a growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which one lives’”. According to Bronfenbrenner, this is affected by relations that exist between these settings and by larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.

“He developed this theory to understand human development within the context of the relationships that form a person’s environment” (Johnson, 2008). According Bronfenbrenner (1995) “the environment is made up of five intertwined systems which interact and affect and or be affected by an individual’s development”. Based

on the theory, individual's interaction with these systems can either be negative or positive. The systems are the micro, meso, exo, macro, and chronosystems.

The microsystem is explained as “the pattern of roles, activities and interpersonal relationships experienced by a developing person in a given setting and contains other people with distinctive characteristics of personality, temperament, and systems of beliefs” (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). “The microsystem is the child's closest environment and includes structures which she maintains close physical contact. Structures in the microsystem include the family, neighborhood, peers, school, or church group” (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009).

According to Bronfenbrenner, “the mesosystem consists of the interrelationships, linkages and processes between the microsystems and how they affect or influence the behaviour and the development of the child. The relationship between the child's home and school; and church and school, among others is an example”. (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

According Bronfenbrenner (1995), “the ecosystem is made up of larger social systems and comprises decisions and events and contingencies over which individuals have no influence. However, it impacts the development of a person either directly or indirectly e.g. the relationship between the parent's workplace and the home (Johnson, 2008).

‘This is significant because such events have an impact on the environment in which the child grows’. Bronfenbrenner (1995) explains the macrosystem to comprise “the overarching pattern of micro, meso, and ecosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other broader social context, regarding belief systems, lifestyles, resources, opportunities, life course options, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems. These include cultural norms and values as

well as policies and how they influence the child. In addition, cultural values affect individuals and influence them to behave in particular ways” (Corcoran, Franklin, & Bennett, 2000).

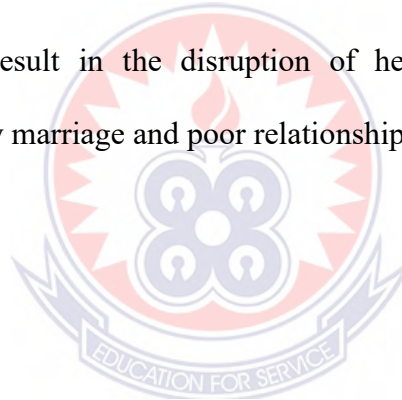
“The chronosystem is a description of the stream, evolution or development of external systems in time” (Johnson, 2008). This can cover either a longer or shorter period. It also explains those changes in the systems over time that influence or affects the development and behavior of the child (Johnson, 2008). A typical example is the death of a breadwinner and its impact on the life of the child.

Applying the theory to the study, these systems (micro, meso, Exo, macro, and chronosystems) interact with the teenager to influence the risk of pregnancy and the challenges that comes with it. By this, the teenager’s immediate environment thus the microsystem, could first put her at risk of teenage pregnancy. Factors interacting with the teenager’s microsystem may include the following: spouse, parents, peers, school, neighborhood, church group, and hospital. For instance, negative influence on peers can force the teenage girls in Senior High School to indulge in sexual activity which could otherwise result in pregnancy. The teenage mother’s mesosystem is the various systems in her immediate environment, which interact to affect the teenage mother. For instance, the relationship between a teenage-mother’s school and home could interact to affect the education of the teenage-mother. Thus, in the school, the poor academic performance of a teenage mother may result in parents criticizing and withdrawing them. This may result to teenage mothers dropping out of school which could put them at risk of repeat pregnancies.

The Exosystem of the teenage mother is the possibilities over which the teenage mother had absolutely no influence, however, may affect the teenage-mother. In other

words, the Exosystem is the relationship between the teenage mothers' home and their parent's workplace. For instance, the stress and pressure from the spouse's workplace were found to result in the abuse of teenage mothers.

The macrosystem is made up of cultural norms and societal values and governmental policies and how they influence the teenage mother. For instance, if policies are not enacted to support the teenage-mother once she gets pregnant, it could result in significant challenges for the mother. This could put her at risk of repeat pregnancies due to transactional sex to raise funds to support her child. The fifth system, the chronosystem, encompasses changes over time, could also interact with the teenage mother. For instance, when the student-mother immediately realizes an unintended pregnancy, it could result in the disruption of her schooling and which could eventually lead to early marriage and poor relationships with family and friends.



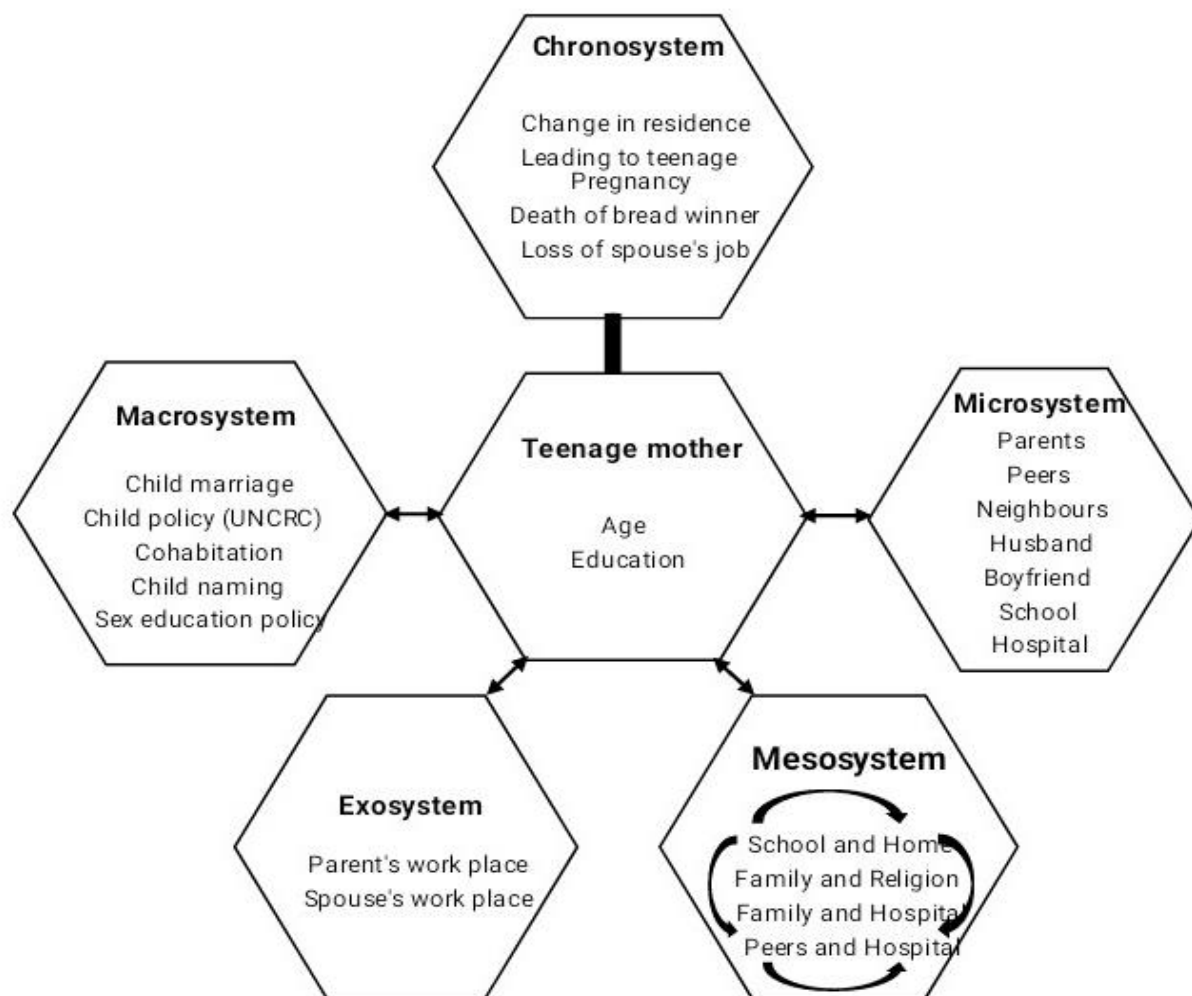


Figure 1. An ecological model showing how the nested systems in the teenage mother's environment interact to influence the risk of pregnancy

### 2.1.2 Usefulness of the Theory

“The Ecological Systems Theory is very important in assisting to gain thorough understanding of the experiences of the teenage-mothers from a multi-faceted perspective” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This is so because this theory “takes cognisance of all the factors that influences a phenomenon from the micro to the macrosystems. For this reason, the theory assists me to understand the contributory factors that causes teenage pregnancies by highlighting those elements within the micro, meso, and macrosystems or family, peers, school, community, policy that could result in

teenage pregnancies and or put teenage mothers at risk of repeated pregnancies” (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

The theory also helped to recognise the causative factors that culminates for pregnancies among adolescent students at the Bawjiase Senior High School. More so, the theory helped my understanding of the challenges teenage mothers encounter after their pregnancies as a result of their interactions with the various systems. Finally, the theory was very helpful in identifying various support systems in the various systems thus micro, meso, and macrosystems where resources could be generated to support the teenage mother daily livelihood. This helped to provide suggestions that prevent subsequent pregnancies as well as identify barriers to utilizing the support available to teenage mothers with repeat pregnancies.

## **2.2 Challenges Faced by Teenage Mothers**

Teenage pregnancy has several adverse effects on the individual actors, community, and the society at large. “Teenage mothers in sub-Saharan Africa, are greatly disadvantaged and face many challenges during pregnancy and early motherhood” (UNFPA, 2020). As suggested by Cook and Cameron (2015), “young women who have babies are less likely to finish high school, as compared to their colleagues who delay childbearing”. Furthermore, “adolescent mothers are more likely to have children who have poorer behavioral, health, and educational outcomes, and are more likely to be poor as adults” (Cook & Cameron, 2015).

According to Partington, Steber, Blair, and Cisler (2016), “child birth may be challenging and harmful to both the child and mother as compared to single students due to the increased socio-economic impacts”. Moreover, “teenage mothers are less likely to return to school or complete high school as compared to those without a

child. This places them at a greater risk of poverty and dependence on societal welfare in the long-term” (Maravilla et al., 2017). There is also existing literature that has established a positive correlation between teenage pregnancy and educational attainment. This was reflected in a quantitative study in Ghana by Apanga et al., (2015) who revealed that factors that predicted an increase in teenage pregnancy such as poverty and school dropouts also predicted truancy, grade repetition, and reduced study hours among teenage mothers. This was supported by Biney and Nyarko (2017) who added that “teenage motherhood harmed the educational attainment of teenage girls”.

In addition, a qualitative study in Ghana by Owusu-Addo, Owusu-Addo and Morhe (2016), on the health information-seeking behaviour among teenagers revealed “that pregnant teenagers were mostly unaware of their pregnancy which was a terrible and frustrating experience, as it had to take another person to inform them of the pregnancy”. In addition to their findings, participants felt unprepared both psychologically and physically for labour since they were unaware of what to expect due to a lack of information. The authors further attributed teenagers’ fear of accessing information on how to take care of their babies to intimidation because they are mixed up with older women during antenatal and postnatal visits. The authors also added that the negative attitudes of health care professionals towards teenage mothers limited their ability to access information both before and after childbirth. Lastly, many adolescent mothers refused to seek information due to social stigma and fear of being asked to abort their babies.

Furthermore, a qualitative study in the Volta Region in Ghana by Sperrle (2022), revealed “that teenage-mothers faced a lot of financial difficulties as a result of abandonment by parents, boyfriends and other close relations due to anger and



perception of shame brought on them by the pregnancy”. In addition, “the teenage mother’s economic challenge get worse due to her inability to engage in economic activity to earn income. This is due to the fact that she must care baby but the community and others are unwillingness to engage with her. Other challenges include emotional, rejection, shame and psychological problems, educational constraints, and cultural and religious challenges resulting from the community norms that classify teenage sexual activity and pregnancy as unacceptable” (Sperrle, 2022).

Another study by Watts, Mimmie, Liamputtong and Mcmichael (2018) on the experiences of African-Australian teenage mothers in Melbourne, Australia, revealed “that teenage-mothers faced numerous difficulties that affected their everyday lives. Some of these difficulties included managing the competing demands of work, school and raising their babies and the feelings of shame and embarrassment due to stigmatisation by the community and coping with increased responsibilities following the birth of the baby”. Boath, Henshaw, and Bradley (2017), in their qualitative study on meeting the challenges of teenage mothers with postpartum depression in Trent, UK, also reported that “teenage-mothers felt devalued due to people judging them for being mothers at an early age, as well as being perceived as bad mothers”.

According Bradley, 2017, some studies have found good and positive. According to him, some positive effects of teenage pregnancy on the lives of teenage motherhood includes feeling stronger, having a meaningful life, maturity, and independence, becoming more responsible due to having a child they were responsible for, and considering a career and education (Bradley 2017). However, a recent study by Chan *et al.* (2020) on suicidal ideation among teenage mothers revealed that pregnant adolescents were at a greater risk of suicide. The authors further added that depression, societal pressures, and expectations may buttress their findings of



significantly more suicidal ideation among pregnant adolescents. This finding was supported by a quantitative study in the United States on teenage pregnancy and mental health which revealed that teenage mothers were at greater risk of depression and behavioral disorders (Corcoran, 2016).

### **2.3 Factors that Account for Pregnancy among Students**

This is a multifaceted issue that affects the lives and future of young women worldwide. Some of the factors that accounts for pregnancies among female students include but not limited to knowledge on the use of contraceptives, peer pressure and social norms, age discrepancy in relationship, sexual abuse, inadequate parental guidance and economic factors.

#### **2.3.1 Knowledge of Teenage Mothers on Contraceptive Use**

Unplanned pregnancy has a direct link with low sexual health knowledge (Watts, Mimmie, Liamputtong & Carolan, 2018). Thus, “the knowledge of teenage mothers on the use of contraceptives plays a significant role in reducing the risk of pregnancies”. However, “teenage mothers have been found to use contraception less than those who were never pregnant” (Parkes, Wight, Henderson, Stephenson, & Strange, 2019). Attempts have been made in the past to attribute this to a lack of knowledge, limited access to contraceptives, lack of control over contraceptive decisions, side effects of contraceptives, and violent and coercive sexual relationships (Macleod & Tracey, 2010).

However, a previous study by Awusabo-Asare, Biddlecom, Kumi-Kyereme and Patterson (2006) posited that “adolescents may be aware of contraceptives but might not be cognisant of how to use them”. Findings from a qualitative study that sought to find out the contraception knowledge among African-Australian women who had

experienced teenage pregnancy revealed that “teenage mothers had little knowledge of sexual health and contraception, resulting in their pregnancies” (Watts *et al.*, 2018).

“Those who even knew about contraceptives did not know how contraceptives work. In addition, it was also observed that many teenagers refused to use contraceptives due to the following reasons: becoming infertile, having an irregular menstrual cycle, gaining weight, getting cancer, and having to wait for about seven years before being able to conceive again” (Watts *et al.*, 2018). These findings were confirmed in a study conducted by Ochako *et al.* (2020) in Kenya on barriers to modern contraceptives. The researchers found that “the main barriers to contraceptive use were due to misconceptions and myths, which included infertility and other negative health consequences” (Ochako *et al.*, 2020). To buttress this, UNFPA (2020) reported that “30 percent of sexually active teenagers did not use any contraception”.

Also, a cross-sectional analytic study conducted by Samba, Mbonile, Obure and Mahande (2018) to assess sexual behaviour, contraceptive knowledge, and contraceptive use among female undergraduate students of Muhimbili and Dar-es Salaam Universities in Tanzania, revealed that “respondents had poor knowledge on contraceptives resulting in low usage of contraceptives”. They also reported that “many respondents were sexually active, with the majority starting sexual activity at a young age. Of the sample of 281 young girls, 15.8 percent were pregnant. From this, 27 percent had unwanted pregnancies and 54.6 percent had an induced abortion” (Obure and Mahande, 2018).

Furthermore, Taffa, Haimanot, Desalegn, Tesfaye, and Mohammed (2017) also conducted a survey in Ethiopia with 246 families and 343 high school students, to assess the awareness of both groups on family life education and the level of parent-

adolescent communication on issues regarding young people's sexuality. The study showed that "the knowledge of young people on contraceptives and sexuality was inadequate to minimize the risk of teenage pregnancy" (Taffa *et al.*, 2017). They also attributed the lack of knowledge of adolescents to poor education from their parents. This was because "93 percent of the parents sampled did not approve of premarital sex and many of them were not comfortable educating their wards on adolescent sexuality and contraceptive use. Thus, leaving their wards to figure out changes they go through during adolescence on their own" (Taffa *et al.*, 2017).

Widman, Choukas-Bradley, Noar, Nesi and Garrett (2018) reported that "parent-adolescent communication on issues relating to their sexual and reproductive health served as a protective factor for safer sex among youth as well as the risks of unintended pregnancy" (Widman *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, an analysis of data on married and unmarried adolescents from 16 diverse countries conducted by Chandra-Mouli, Camacho, and Michaud (2019) revealed that "sexual activity among adolescents increased from mid to late adolescence" (Mouli *et al.*, 2019). However, they posited that although adolescents had some knowledge of using contraceptives, they faced some barriers concerning accessibility. These include contraceptive methods not being available to adolescents, laws, and policies preventing unmarried adolescents from being provided with these contraceptives, and stigma surrounding the use of contraceptives by adolescents.

In addition, Chandra-Mouli *et al.* (2019) reported that adolescents who had a poor understanding of how contraceptives were used were at risk of pregnancies. However, they suggested "that the knowledge and awareness of contraception did not necessarily translate into use" (Mouli *et al.*, 2019). In a study using a cluster randomised trial in 40 reproductive health clinics in the United States, Harper *et al.*

(2015) suggested that “unintended pregnancy rates could be reduced through counselling on long-term contraception and access to these contraceptives during family planning visits”. This is supported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which recommended “increasing access to contraceptive use as an approach to reducing unintended pregnancies” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

Furthermore, Finer and Philbin (2017), analysed data from the national survey of family growth in the United States and found that “sexual activity among younger teenagers was nonconsensual and thus, called for education on family planning as well as making contraceptive methods available before teenagers become more sexually active” (Finer *et al.*, 2017) . In addition, a cohort study in the United States by Chan et al (2016) revealed that “not using a long-acting contraceptive within three months of delivery, increased the chances of repeated pregnancies” (Chan *et al.*, 2016). Also, another cohort study in the United States found that “early initiation of contraception and more postpartum follow-up visits will decrease the chances of repeated pregnancies among teenage mothers” (Damle *et al.*, 2019). Baldwin and Edelman (2018) also corroborated these findings by adding that “the risk of repeat pregnancies is reduced when contraceptives are initiated earlier after childbirth” (Baldwin *et al.*, 2018). Collier (2014), in a cross-sectional study in Brazil, also concluded that “prevention of repeated pregnancies is a complex issue that required not only dissemination of information, but also, requires teenage mothers to get access to contraceptives, adequate healthcare, and education” (Collier, 2014). The United Nations Commission for Human Rights posits that “unimpeded access to family planning and reproductive health services is a fundamental right that contributes to the advancement of women worldwide” (Dick, 2015).

A human rights approach to curbing teen pregnancy, therefore, entails working with governments to remove the obstacles that prevent teenagers from exercising their rights. This entails “addressing the roots of the problem, which include poverty, sexual violence and coercion, child marriage, and lack of access to education on sexual and reproductive health as well as information on contraception” (UNFPA, 2020).

### **2.3.2 Adolescent Knowledge of Contraceptives**

“Adolescents may lack knowledge of, or access to, conventional methods of preventing pregnancy, as they may be too embarrassed or frightened to seek such information” (Turner, 2017). “Contraception for teenagers presents a huge challenge for the clinician. In 1998, the government of the United Kingdom set a target to halve the under-18 pregnancy rate by 2010. The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (TPS) was established to achieve this. The pregnancy rate, although falling, rose slightly in 2007, to 41.7 per 1000 women” (Turner, 2017). “Young women often think of contraceptives either as 'the pill' or condoms and have little knowledge about other methods. They are heavily influenced by negative, second-hand stories about methods of contraception from their friends and the media. Prejudices are extremely difficult to overcome. Concern about side effects, for example, weight gain and acne, often affect choice. Missing up to three pills a month is common, and in this age group, the figure is likely to be higher” (Quist-Adade, 2017). Restarting after the pill-free week, having to hide pills, drug interactions, and difficulty getting repeat prescriptions can all lead to method failure. “In the United States, according to the (2012) National Surveys of Family Growth, sexually active adolescent women wishing to avoid pregnancy were less likely than those of other ages to use contraceptives (18 percent of 15- to 19-year-

olds used no contraceptives, versus 10.7 percent average for women ages 15 to 44).

“More than 80 percent of teen pregnancies are unintended.

Over half of the unintended pregnancies were associated with women not using contraceptives, most of the rest were due to inconsistent or incorrect use of contraceptives. Again, 23 percent of sexually active young women in a 2012 Seventeen magazine poll admitted to having had unprotected sex with a partner who did not use a condom, while 70 percent of girls in a 2012 PARADE poll claimed it was embarrassing to buy birth control or request information from a doctor” (Heaman, 2018). In a study for The Guttmacher Institute, researchers found that “from a comparative perspective, however, teenage pregnancy rates in the United States are less nuanced than one might initially assume”. Since timing and levels of sexual activity are quite similar across Sweden, France, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States, the high United States rates arise primarily because of less, and possibly less effective, contraceptive use by sexually active teenagers.” Thus, the cause for the discrepancy between rich nations can be traced largely to contraceptive-based issues. Among teens in the UK seeking an abortion, a study found that “the rate of contraceptive use was roughly the same for teens as for older women” (Luster, 2019).

In other cases, “contraception is used, but proves to be inadequate. Inexperienced adolescents may use condoms incorrectly, forget to take oral contraceptives or fail to use the contraceptives they had previously chosen. Contraceptive failure rates are higher for teenagers, particularly poor ones, than for older users. Long-acting contraceptives such as intrauterine devices, subcutaneous contraceptive implants, and contraceptive injections (such as Depo-Provera and Combined injectable contraceptives), which prevent pregnancy for months or years at a time, are more

effective in women who have trouble remembering to take pills or using barrier methods consistently” (Davis, 2017).

### **2.3.3 Age Discrepancy in Relationships**

According to the conservative lobbying organisation Family Research Council, studies in the US indicate that the age discrepancy between teenage girls and the men who impregnate them is an important contributing factor to teenage pregnancy (Harper *et al*, 2015). Teenage girls in relationships with older boys, and in particular with adult men, are more likely to become pregnant than teenage girls in relationships with boys their age. They are also more likely to carry the baby to term rather than have an abortion” (Harper *et al*, 2015). A review of California’s (2016) vital statistics found that “men older than high school age fathered 77 percent of all births to high school-aged girls (ages 16—18), and 51 percent of births to junior high school-aged girls (15 and younger). Men over age 25 fathered twice as many children of teenage mothers than boys under age 18, and men over age 20 fathered five times as many children of junior high school aged girls as did junior high school-aged boys” (Johnson, 2018). A 2016 Washington state study of 535 adolescent mothers found that “62 percent of the mothers had a history of being raped or sexually molested by men whose ages averaged 27 years” (Johnson, 2018). This study found that, “compared with non-abused mothers, abused adolescent mothers-initiated sex earlier, had sex with much older partners and engaged in riskier, more frequent, and promiscuous sex. Studies by the Population Reference Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics found that about two-thirds of children born to teenage girls in the United States are fathered by adult men aged 20 or older” (Johnson, 2018).



### 2.3.4 Sexual Abuse and Dating Violence

In 2019, Studies from South Africa revealed “that rape accounts for about 11-20 pregnancies in teenagers, while about 60percent of teenage mothers had sexual experiences which were unwanted before their pregnancies” (Attride-Stirling, 2020). Majority of first-intercourse experiences among females are reported to be non-voluntary especially before age 15; according to the Guttmacher Institute, “before age 15, 60percent of girls who had sex were coerced by their male counterparts who on average were six years and more their older. Studies also reveals that in every five teenage fathers in South Africa admitted forcing girls to have sex with them” (Attride-Stirling, 2020). In industrialized countries, multiple studies have indicated a strong linkages between early childhood sexual abuse and subsequent teenage pregnancy. “As young girls, up to 70percent of women who gave birth between the ages of 13 and 19 were molested; whereas 25percent of women who did not give birth as teens were molested” (Attride-Stirling, 2020).

According to Turner (2017), “sexual intercourse between a minor and an adult in some countries is not considered consensual under the law”. This is so because a minor is believed to lack the competence and maturity and to make an informed decision to engage in fully consensual sex with an adult. Sex with a minor is therefore considered statutory rape in those countries. By contrast, in most European countries, once an individual reaches the age of consent, he or she can legally have sexual intercourse with adults. It is believed that generally, although there may be certain limitations, reaching the age of consent enables a juvenile to consent to sex with any partner who has also reached that age. For this reason, “the statutory definition of rape is limited to sex with a person under the minimum age of consent. What really



constitutes to statutory rape is ultimately differed by jurisdiction” (Montgomery, 2019).

Studies have also indicated that “adolescent girls are often in abusive relationships at the time of their conceiving” (Attride-Stirling, 2020). They have also reported that “knowledge of their pregnancy has often intensified violent and controlling behaviours on part of their boyfriends” (Attride-Stirling, 2020). “Women under age 18 are twice more likely to be beaten by their child's father than women over age 18” (Montgomery, 2019). A UK study found that “70percent of women who gave birth in their teens had experienced adolescent domestic violence” (Attride-Stirling, 2020). Similar results have been found in studies in the United States. A Washington State study found “70percent of teenage mothers had been beaten by their boyfriends, 51percent had experienced attempts of birth control sabotage within the last year, and 21 percent experienced school or work sabotage” (Montgomery, 2019).

In a study of 379 pregnant or parenting teens and 95 teenage girls without children, “62percent of the girls aged 11—15 years and 56percent of girls aged 16—19 years reported experiencing domestic violence at the hands of their partners. Moreover, 51percent of the girls reported experiencing at least one instance where their boyfriend attempted to sabotage their efforts to use birth control” (Montgomery, 2019)

### **2.3.5 Socio-economic Factors**

Within the research field and among social agencies teenage pregnancy has been defined predominantly as a social problem according to Montgomery (2019). “Poverty is associated with increased rates of teenage pregnancy. Economically poor countries such as Niger and Bangladesh have far more teenage mothers compared

with economically rich countries such as Switzerland and Japan” (Turner, 2017). In the UK, “around half of all pregnancies under 18s are concentrated among the 30percent most deprived population, with only 14 percent occurring among the 30 percent least deprived” (Montgomery, 2019).

### **2.3.6 Childhood Environment**

“Women exposed to abuse, domestic violence, and family strife in childhood are more likely to become pregnant as teenagers, and the risk of becoming pregnant as a teenager increases with the number of adverse childhood experiences” (Lambert, 2018). According to Parkes (2019), “one-third of teenage pregnancies could be prevented by eliminating exposure to abuse, violence, and family strife”. He noted that “family dysfunction has enduring and unfavorable health consequences for women during the adolescent years, the childbearing years, and beyond. When the family environment does not include adverse childhood experiences, becoming pregnant as an adolescent does not appear to raise the likelihood of long-term, negative psychosocial consequences” (Parkes, 2019). Research have also revealed that “boys from battered mother homes with or who experienced physical violence directly, were more likely to impregnate a girl” (Parkes, 2019).

Research have also revealed that “girls whose fathers left the family early in their lives had the highest rates of early sexual intercourse and prone to adolescent pregnancy” (Baldwin et al, 2018). However, “girls whose fathers left them at a later age had a lower rate of early sexual activity, and the lowest rates are found in girls whose fathers were present throughout their childhood” (Baldwin *et al*, 2018). Even when the researchers took into account other factors that could have contributed to early sexual activity and pregnancy, such as behavioral problems and life adversity, “early father-absent girls were still about five times more likely in the United States

and three times more likely in New Zealand to become pregnant as adolescents than were father present girls” (Baldwin, 2018). Low educational expectations have been identified as a risk factor (Kim, 2019). “A girl is also more likely to become a teenage parent if her mother or older sister gave birth in her teens” (Mattson, 2017). “A majority of respondents in a 2015 Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies survey attributed the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy to a breakdown of communication between parents and child and also to inadequate parental supervision” (Moncloa, Marilyn, Elizabeth, Gong, Faye & Estella, 2016). Foster care youth are more likely than their peers to become pregnant as teenagers. The National Casey Alumni Study, which surveyed foster care alumni from 23 communities across the United States, found that the birth rate for girls in foster care was more than double the rate of their peers outside the foster care system. A University of Chicago study of youth transitioning out of foster care in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin found that “nearly half of the females had been pregnant by age 19” (Kim, 2019).

### **2.3.7 Media Influence**

A study conducted by Quist-Adade (2017) revealed that “adolescents who were more exposed to sexuality in the media were also more likely to engage in the sexual activity themselves”. According to the researcher, “teens exposed to the most sexual content on TV are 6 times as likely as teens watching less of this material to become pregnant before they reach age 20”. Grant and Hallman (2018) have shown that in most cases “the birth of a baby marks the end of schooling for teen mothers. Some factors influence whether or not a teen mother can continue schooling after the birth of the baby”. “Most of the factors depend on the girls' ability to manage logistics and finances associated with mothering and schooling simultaneously” (Kaufman *et al.*, 2011). In the 2018 Commission on Gender Equity report to the South African

Ministry of Education, it was stated that “several complaints had been received from pregnant learners concerning how their schools had been treating them. Some forms of discrimination which included suspension from the class were reported” (Ministry of Education, 2018). “Although it may not be legal to refuse pregnant girls an opportunity to complete schooling since education is their fundamental human right (UNESCO 2013), authors like Grant and Hallman (2018) and Wolpe (2014), as cited in Banerjee et al, (2019), have both lamented that “some school committees in South Africa are often not ready to allow the girls to continue attending classes for fear of influencing other girls and encourage them also to become pregnant” (Kaufman *et al.*, 2011). These tendencies are still exhibited in many public schools all over Africa. “Some teen-mothers are of the opinion that teachers do not understand their predicaments and they are therefore expected to perform and behave just like the other students in their respective grades or classes. For instance, teenage mothers are sometimes mocked and ridiculed in the presence of their classmates whenever they do not satisfy the class requirements. Sadly, when a teen mother argue with another student, the other students usually ridicule and cast insinuation on the teen mother's situation” (Banerjee *et al.* 2019).

#### **2.4 Parental Involvement in their Children's Education**

“Social capital and social control are increased in schools when parental involvement is significant. Social capital is parents' skills and information, which increase the more they spend time in schools” (Hill & Taylor, 2004). These rises in social capital in schools makes parents more likely to be able to assist their children in school related activities. “Interactions with teaching staffs and stakeholders in schools help teach parents schools expectations for behavior and homework. Moreover, they also learn how to assist their child with their home assignments. When parents spends

quality time at school, it helps them to meet other parents who provide information on school policies and other co-curricular or extra-curricular activities” (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). By this, they learn from other parents considered as the best by teachers. Parents learn school expectations for their children from teachers. They also learn strategies increase their children’s academic achievement. “When parents and the school work together to create expectations for students, social control for parents therefore occurs” (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

The expectations are then conveyed to students both at home and at school. Parent involvement has been shown to positively impact student behaviour. “Parents who were described as involved provided a rich learning environment at home, had more cooperative children, exhibited more self-control, and were more socially engaged than less involved parents” (McWayne, *et al.*, 2004). Their children were also more successful academically. Conversely, parents who were less involved reported they had more barriers to helping their child, including increased stress in the family. “By engaging in educational activities with their children at home such as supporting homework and modeling reading behaviour, parents communicate clear expectations for achievement, while integrating school curriculum goals within the home” (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Parental involvement can also impact teacher behaviour and attitudes. A 2004 study found that “teachers believed parents who volunteered at school cared more about their child’s education than parents who did not volunteer at school” (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Teachers may also pay more attention to children whose parents are involved in the school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994). Additionally, “teachers’ attitudes about teaching changed when parents were involved in the school” (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001). Research shows

that “family involvement also benefits teachers. They report more positive feelings about teaching and their schools when there is more parent involvement in the school” (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001).

In recent times, policymakers and researchers alike have made several educational reform a high priority in the United States (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Relationship between school and family is one aspect of education that has received particular attention as it pertains to student success. In 2001, United States Congress passed the ‘No Child Left behind Act’ to eliminate inequalities in the educational system by enforcing various states within the US to set achievement standards for students of all backgrounds to attain. Parental involvement is a major emphasis of this act is, and for this reason, many schools are required to spend part of their funding on programs and activities that promote parental participations in all forms (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). At a joint congress session in February 2009, President Obama stated, “In the end, there is no programme or policy that can substitute for a mother or father who will attend those parent/teacher conferences, or help with homework after dinner, or turn off the TV, put away the video games, and read to their child. I speak to you not just as a President, but as a father when I say that responsibility for our children's education must begin at home” (Fan and Chen, 2001). These agenda reveals a conviction held by teachers, administrators, parents, and students across the United States, that is, the belief that crucial for children’s academic success is parental involvement. With so much emphasis placed on the school-family relationship, it should seem obvious that “increased parental involvement would lead to greater academic achievement, and a substantial amount of research suggests that it does”

(Dearing, Simpkins, Kreider & Weiss, 2006; Barnard, 2004). The overall findings however, have been inconsistent, for many researchers have found negative or weak results (Hill et al. 2004; Bobbett *et al.* 1995). In an analysis of 41 evaluations of school programs designed to increase parental involvement, Mattingly *et al.* (2002) found that while the majority held these programmes in a positive light, few could show empirical evidence that increased parental involvement improved student achievement.

Similar to parental participation, “academic excellence has been operationalised differently across studies, which may also be a contributory agent to the inconsistencies in various findings. Though academic excellence has often been verified using indicators that focus on a specific academic discipline such as scores in mathematics or reading” (Simpkins et al., 2006). Desimone (1999) posits that “parental inclusion is mostly indicative of student grade point average”. Fan and Chen (2001) opines that GPA is a more suitable indicator of achievement and may therefore be more consistent. Accordingly, in estimating the effect of parental inclusion on learner’s academic improvement, the latter should thus be measured using GPA. “Involvement may appear differently in families; therefore, it is important to assess how parents view their role in relation to their children’s academic success and learning” (Desimone, 1999).

The present study was designed to explore and gain insights into how parents perceived their involvement in the education of teenage mothers. This assessment involved measuring parental self-efficacy, their motivation for getting involved, how they defined their roles, and their interpretation of school's general invitations. “Self-efficacy refers to the extent to which they believe in their ability to positively impact their children's academic progress, essentially gauging their effectiveness in



influencing their children's educational outcomes” (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992). “Parents’ decision to be involved refers to what they believe should and can do concerning their child’s education” (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). In deciding to become involved parents need to understand their roles. “Their role construction is defined as what parents believe they need to do about their child’s educational outcomes. Role construction incorporates their beliefs about child development and support at home and how it influences their child’s academic success. Role construction also takes into consideration parents’ experiences with people and groups outside of the home, particularly school-related individuals” (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007).

According to Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (2014), “Parent or guardians thoughts of school invitation refer to the school climate that is, how informed they are and how welcome they feel of student progress and the school events” (Dempsey *et al*, 2005). A welcoming, positive, and trustworthy school climate has been found to foster and support parent involvement. The rate to which parents get involved in the educational process of their children is by and large due to their motivational beliefs the about the impact of their involvement on the progress of their children. The model by Hoover- Dempsey, and colleagues (2005) posits that “the active participation of parents in the education of their children is motivated by the parents’ sense of efficacy in assisting their children to perform creditably well at school and their role construction for involvement”. When parents strongly accepts their contributory roles they make in the educational Prowers of their children, they might be more ready to take part in their learning activities. Over the years, motivational researchers have bickered that people are more likely to partake in activities in which they believe they can achieve success. This belief, according to



Bandura (1977), is a central determining factor of behaviour. According to Bandura et al. (1999), “it is the belief that a person has in their ability to deliver an outcome that is observed as the cornerstone of human agency”. “Self-efficacy is an essential component or ingredient in decisions regarding the goals one opts to act on as well as effort and tenacity in working toward the achievement of those goals” (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura, Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Brissie, (1992)’s Self-efficacy theory insinuates, therefore, “that parents decide to participate partly because of their thinking and belief about the outcome that is likely to follow their actions”. This implies that parents make up their minds to be actively involved when they are lured and convinced that their efforts are going to be appreciated. In connection with parental involvement, it transforms into a parental belief that they have the skills and knowledge to help their children, that they can teach or help their children, and that they can provide additional resources for their children if the need arises (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). For instance, Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman & Iver, (1993) and Furstenberg (1993) indicated that “parents are more likely to employ activities such as enrolling their children in after-school programs, taking them to the library, exposing them to them the dangers in the community, among others if they strongly believe that their actions will surely have a positive effect on them”. On the other hand, “parents who do not believe that they could control their children’s lives and their environments are less likely to influence their behaviors.

Several research previously undertaken have established that, parental efficacy is a necessary predictor of parental involvement” (Ames, DeStefano, Watkins & Sheldon, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 1992, 1997, 2005). “Parents who heavily accepts that they have the tendencies of bringing a change in the education of their children are

more likely to be involved in their learning activities” (Hoover-Dempsey, *et al.*, 1992). Bandura and associates (1996) for instance, postulates that “parents with high efficacious rate or highly efficient for managing and advancing middle school children’s academic development were more likely than lower efficacious parents to support children’s educational activities and develop students’ self- management skills for effective learning” (Bandura *et al.*, 1996). Shumow and Lomax (2002) observed that “a broad measure of parental efficacy predicted parental involvement and parental monitoring of students. Parents’ involvement and monitoring of their children’s success, also, predicted measures of students’ academic success, such as grades, use of remedial, regular, or advanced courses, and school behaviour” (Shumow *et al.*, 2002).

Aside high parental involvement which has been viewed to be an advantage of parental involvement, “parental role construction is another parental characteristic that has been scrutinised. Parental role construction has been defined as the beliefs parents hold about what they are supposed to do in connection with their children’s education and the patterns of parental behaviour that follow those behaviours” (HooverDempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2005). According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), “when parents see such participation as one of their obligations as parents, they are more likely to partake in their children’s education. Role construction for involvement is triggered or activated by the assertion parents have about the development of their children, what parents are to do to effectively raise their children, and what parents would have to do at home to assist their children to excel in school” (Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 1995).

Currently, research on role construction has provided numerous evidence about the importance parents attach to their decisions to be involved in their children’s

schooling. For instance, Grolnick (1997) revealed that “positive connections exist between the beliefs parents have about their active role in the education of their children and their involvement in intellectually challenging activities with their children” (Grolnick, 1997). Drummond and Stipek (2004), in their research work, posits that “parental participational practices were inspired by the parental role construction”. In the research of Sheldon (2002), it is noted that role construction predicted both parents’ home and school-based engagement activities. For both types of involvement, the more parents believe that all parents should be engaged in the education of their children; the more likely they are to be involved themselves. Studies in different cultures have reported similar findings. For instance, Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) have stated “that the knowledge that Latino-Americans have about the befitting roles in the education of children informs them about how they have to get involved, the extent to which they have to be involved, and the meanings they have to put into school invitations to involvement” (Chrispeels, 2001).

“Boath et al (2013) has also posited that parents whose children perform very well at the secondary school level in Latino migrant families hold an active role in the construction of involvement in their children’s education” (Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2005). Griffith (1996) looked at different kinds of school environments and how satisfied parents were. School climate and being informed were strongly related to parental satisfaction, with empowerment close behind. Interestingly enough, there was no a significant relation between parent involvement and parent satisfaction. Griffith found that “parents whose educational expectations for their children were high were also more involved in school activities than parents with lower educational expectations” (Griffith, 1996).

## **2.5 Effects of Teenage Pregnancy**

“Teenage pregnancy, a pressing social issue worldwide, which exerts profound impact not only on adolescent mother but also on the child and their immediate family” (Dassah *et al.*, 2024). “The ramifications of early parenthood resonate across various spheres of life including physical health, emotional wellbeing, educational pursuits and socioeconomic in stability” (Sedziafia *et al.*, 2018)

“Understanding the multifaced consequences of teenage pregnancy is vital for devising effective interventions and support systems to mitigate its adverse effects on individuals and communities” (Finer & Zolna, 2016)

### **2.5.1 Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on the Academic Performance of Teenage**

#### **Mothers in Senior High Schools**

A number of studies have highlighted on the effects of early childbearing on the life of all adolescents in Sub-Sahara Africa, including Ghana. However, the outcome of teenage pregnancy can be vastly different, depending on the context (Falk, Outhunt, Magnuson, Schollin, & Nilsson, 2006 as cited in Day, 2019). As a result of the inextricable link between poverty and childbearing. “Poverty is now recognised as both a cause and a consequence of early motherhood” (Kinky, 2017). However, the common agreement is that since teenage motherhood is mostly implanted (Cassel, 2017, Descombe & Martyn, 202), and often coincides with other transitions such as schooling, “it can result in negative effects for teenage mothers and more specifically, for the child” (Ashcraft & Lang, 2002; Parkes, 2019).

There is complicated evidence on the health issues associated with pregnancy at teenage. “Whereas some research suggest that pregnancy before the age of 20 carries more health risks than pregnancies at older ages, other authorities suggest that the

greatest risk is for those at a younger age, if any at all” (Park, 2018). “Health risk associated with physiological immaturity includes toxemia, cephalous-pelvic disproportion, hypertension, and vena rectal or urethral fistulae and placenta abruption” (Blum, 2007; Joyce *et al*, 2019). Estimates provided by IJNFPA (2017) reveals that “the risk of death after pregnancy for women aged 15-19 is twice that of those aged 20-24”. Annually according to UNFPA (2017), up to 70,000 (15-19) years old girls worldwide die due to pregnancy and childbirth-related complications. In sub-Saharan Africa, the health consequences of early pregnancy are 600 times higher than in the developed countries (Joyce *et al*, 2019). “Most of the health risks associated with early motherhood can be prevented through timely and good-quality antenatal care”. The health outcomes of pregnancy are worse for women aged 15-19 because of these main reasons (UNFPA, 2017).

According to Long (2016), in a knowledge-based economy, “education is very important and serves as a security future employment. By placing limits on their educational achievement and economic stability and predisposing them to challenging parenthood and marital instability in the future, teenage pregnancy can have a profound impact on young mothers and their children” (Long, 2016). “The price of adolescent pregnancy is the loss of innate potentials” (UNFPA, 2017) because teenagers become mothers without the necessary knowledge, skills and networks to cope with the demands of parenthood. Educational years for teenage mothers tend to be proportionally lower compared to those who did not become pregnant, hence their first child after 20 years of age (Growth *et al*, 2018). Growth *et al*, (2018) further opines that “the impact of teenage pregnancy on young women's educational achievement is driven by the timing of the pregnancy and how the young woman and her family respond to the pregnancy”.

The long-standing practice of early pregnant girls going to live with relations had been replaced by pregnant girls remaining in their homes, to raise the child and continuing to raise their children and continuing to attend school (Wiemann, Ricket, Berenson & Volk 2015). “Adolescents who gets pregnant are, therefore, highly visible in the community, in school, and their families” (Wiemann *et al*; 2015), after erroneously leading to the conclusion that teenage pregnancy is increasing. “Despite the normalisation of teenage pregnancy in Black and Colored Communities in South Africa in part related to high prevalence, and to some extent, cultured acceptance previously, early childbearing is highly stigmatized” (Wolpe, 2014).

Girls report the fear, trauma, embarrassment and shame of having to reveal early pregnancy to peers, family and partners. More so, teenage pregnancy also affects the future marriages of young women. Research carried out in the United States have reported that teen mothers are more likely to be single parents and if married, experience high divorce rates according to UNFA (2017). According to Gouws & Kruger (2014), “teen mothers face many challenges in trying to complete their schooling because over and above their academic work, just like their peers, they are mothers first. The challenges may be exacerbated because as teenagers they are in a crucial phase of their lives as experiencing the integration of their identifications, abilities, and opportunities available in society Counselling and childcare facilities for young teen mothers on their return to school may lessen their challenges and therefore, be able to concentrate and perform well in their academic work” (Gouws *et al.*, 2014)

There are no strong policies to deal with any molesting, teasing, mockery or marginalisation of teen mothers in schools. These remarks may affect the comfort of teen mothers and may force them to drop out. Grant and Hallman (2018) postulates

that “the resources available within the family, both social and economic play critical role in determining whether or not a teen mother can resume schooling following childbirth” (Grant *et al.*, 2018). Kaufman (2011) opines that “whereas most families try to provide the basic needs of the newborn child, quite a good number are born into conditions of limited resources with uncertain ties to a larger kin network that might be expected to contribute to healthcare, clothing, or education”. Grant and Hallman (2018) showed that higher rates of pregnancy are observed among poor young women, indicating that poverty inhibits the schooling of girls both directly and indirectly. Maternal and prenatal health is of particular concern among teens who are pregnant or parenting. The worldwide incidence of premature birth and low birth weight is higher among adolescent mothers. According to Kaufman (2011), In a rural hospital in West Bengal, India, teenage mothers between the ages of 15-19 years old were more likely to have preterm delivery, anemia, and low birth weight than mothers between 20-24 years old (Kaufman, 2011). Research indicates that pregnant teens are less likely to receive prenatal care, often seeking it in the third trimester, if at all. The Guttmacher Institute reports that one-third of pregnant teens receive insufficient prenatal care and that their children are more likely to suffer from health issues in childhood or be hospitalized than those born to older women (Mason, 2016). Young mothers who are given high-quality maternity care have significantly healthier babies than those that do not (Tsikouras *et al.*, 2016). Many of the health-issues associated with teenage mothers, do not have health insurance, appear to result from a lack of access to high-quality medical care. Many pregnant teens are at risk of nutritional deficiencies from poor eating habits common in adolescence, including attempts to lose weight through dieting, skipping meals, food faddism, snacking, and



consumption of fast food. Inadequate nutrition during pregnancy is an even more marked problem among teenagers in developing countries (Tsikouras *et al*, 2016).

According to DeJonge (2017), complications associated with pregnancy result in the deaths of an estimated 70,000 teen girls in developing countries globally each year. DeJonge (2017) opines that “Teenage mothers and their babies are also at greater risk of contracting HIV. The World Health Organization estimates that the risk of death associated with pregnancy is twice as great for women between 15 and 19 years than for those between the ages of 20 and 24”. He further explains that the maternal mortality rate can be up to five times higher for girls aged between 10 and 14 than for women of about twenty years of age.

“Illegal abortion also holds many risks for teenage girls in areas such as sub-Saharan Africa. Risks for medical complications are greater for girls 14 years of age and younger, as an underdeveloped pelvis can lead to difficulties in childbirth. Obstructed labour is normally dealt with by Caesarean section in industrialized nations; however, in developing regions where medical services might be unavailable, it can lead to eclampsia, obstetric fistula, infant mortality, or maternal death. For mothers in their late teens, age in itself is not a risk factor, and poor outcomes are associated more with socioeconomic factors rather than with biology” (DeJonge,2017).

According to Adu-Gyamfi (2014), “several researches have examined the medical, socioeconomic and psychological effects of pregnancy and its associated parenthood on teenagers”. Life outcomes for teenage mothers and their children vary. “However, other factors such as social and economic support and poverty, may be more important than the age of the mother at birth. Many solutions to counteract the more negative findings have been proposed. Teenage parents who can rely on family and community support, social services, and child-care support are more likely to continue



their education and get higher-paying jobs as they progress with their education. Being a young mother in an industrialized country can affect one's education” (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014). “Teen mothers are more likely to drop out of high school. Recent studies, though, have found that many of these mothers had already dropped out of school before becoming pregnant, but those in schools at the time of their pregnancy were as likely to graduate as their peers” (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014). “One study in 2014 found that women who gave birth during their teens completed secondary-level schooling 10-12% as often and pursued post-secondary education 14-29% as often as women who waited until age 30” (Biney, 2017). Young motherhood can affect employment and social class (Schrag, 2014). Less than one-third of teenage mothers do not receive any form of child support, vastly increasing the likelihood of turning to the government for assistance (Turner, 2017). “The correlation between earlier childbearing and failure to complete high school reduces career opportunities for many young women. One study found that, in 2010, 60% of teenage mothers were impoverished at the time of giving birth” (Eliason, 2014).

Additional research according to Eliason (2014) revealed that “nearly 50% of all adolescent mothers sought social assistance within the first five years of their child's life” (Eliason, 2014). A study of 100 teenage mothers in the United Kingdom found that “only 11% received a salary, while the remaining 89% were unemployed” (Parkes, 2019). Most British teenage mothers live in poverty, with nearly half in the bottom fifth of the income distribution. Teenage women who are pregnant or mothers are seven times more likely to commit suicide than other teenagers (Biney, 2017). Professor John Ermisch at the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Essex University and Dr. Roger Ingham, director of the Center of Sexual Health at Southampton University found that “comparing teenage mothers with other girls with

similarly deprived social-economic profiles, bad school experiences, and low educational aspirations, the difference in their respective life chances was negligible” (Biney, 2017). Teenage motherhood may make economic sense for young women with less money, some research suggests. For instance, long-term studies conducted by Bhandarkar et al., (2019) as cited by Pettigrew *et al.* (2018), found that by age 35, former teen moms had earned more in income, paid more in taxes, were substantially less likely to live in poverty, and collected less in public assistance than similarly poor women who waited until their 20s to have babies. Women who became mothers in their teens were freed from child-raising duties by their late 20s and early 30s to pursue employment while poorer women who waited to become mothers were still stuck at home watching their young children ended up paying more in taxes than they had collected and in welfare (DeJonge, 2017). “Eight years earlier, the federally commissioned report "Kids Having Kids" also contained a similar finding, though it was buried: "Adolescent child bearers fare slightly better than later-childbearing counterparts in terms of their overall economic welfare” (DeJonge, 2017).

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, “nearly 1 in every 4 teen mothers will experience another pregnancy within two years of having their first child” (Nadeem, 2018). Pregnancy and child birth significantly increases the chance that these mothers to become high school dropout and as many as half of them have to go on welfare (Nadeem, 2018). “Many teen parents do not have the intellectual or emotional maturity that is needed to provide for another life. Often, these pregnancies are hidden for months resulting in a lack of adequate prenatal care and dangerous outcomes for the babies. Factors that determine which mothers are more likely to have a closely spaced repeat birth include marriage and education: the likelihood

decreases with the level of education of the young woman — or her parents — and increases if she gets married” (Nadeem, 2018).

### **2.5.2 Effects of Teenage Motherhood on the Child and other Family Members**

“Early motherhood can affect the psychosocial development of the infant” (Johnson, 2018). According to Johnson (2018), children born of teenage mothers are more likely to be born prematurely with lower birth weight, which predisposes them to many other lifelong health conditions. These hardships does not stop at birth for the children. “The children are at higher risk and are usually plagued by language, intellectual, and socio-emotional delays” (Taffa, 2017). Children born to teen mothers are often challenged by developmental disabilities and behavioral issues are often increased in their daily lives. One study by Aslam, (2017) suggested that “adolescent mothers are less likely to stimulate their infant through affectionate behaviours such as touch, smiling, and verbal communication, or to be sensitive and accepting toward his or her needs” (Aslam, 2017). Another by Pettigrew *et al.*, (2018) revealed that “those who had more social support were less likely to show anger toward their children” (Pettigrew *et al.*, 2018). “Poor academic performance of the children of teenage mothers has also been noted, with many of them being more likely than average to fail to graduate from secondary school, be held back a grade level, or score lower on standardized tests” (Nadeem, 2018). “Daughters born to adolescent parents are more likely to become teen mothers themselves. A son born to a young woman in her teens is three times more likely to serve time in prison” (Pettigrew *et al.*, 2018). “Teen pregnancy and motherhood can influence younger siblings” (Biney, 2017). One study by Treffer, (2013) found that “the younger sisters of teen mothers were less likely to emphasise the importance of education and employment and more likely to accept human sexual behaviour, parenting, and marriage at younger ages; younger

brothers, too, were found to be more tolerant of non-marital and early births, in addition to being more susceptible to high-risk behaviours” (Treffer, 2013). “If the younger sisters of teenage parents babysit the children, they have an increased risk of getting pregnant themselves” (Biney, 2017).

## **2.6 Preventive Measures of Teenage Pregnancy**

“Many health educators have argued that comprehensive sex education would effectively reduce the number of teenage pregnancies, although their opponents argue that such education encourages more and earlier sexual activity” (Awusabo-Asare, 2016).

“The Dutch approach to preventing teenage pregnancy has often been seen as a model by other countries. The curriculum focuses on values, attitudes, communication, and negotiation skills, as well as biological aspects of reproduction. The media has encouraged open dialogue and the healthcare system guarantees confidentiality and a non-judgmental approach” (Treffers, 2013). According to Turner (2017), “in the UK, the teenage pregnancy strategy, which was run first by the Department of Health and is now based out of the Children, Young People and Families directorate in the Department for Children, Schools, and Families, works on several levels to reduce teenage pregnancy and increase the social inclusion of teenage mothers and their families by: joined up action, making sure branches of government and health and education services work together effectively”. “The strategies include the prevention of teenage pregnancy through better sex education and improving contraceptive and advice services for young people, involving young people in service design, supporting the parents of teenagers to talk to them about sex and relationships, and targeting high risk groups” (Treffers, 2013). The strategies further proposed better support for teenage mothers, including helping them to return to school, advice, and

support, work with young fathers, better child care and increasing the availability of supported housing.

According to Turner (2017), “Teenage pregnancy strategies have had mixed success. Although teenage pregnancies have fallen overall, they have not fallen consistently in every region, and in some areas, they have increased”. In the United States, the topic of sex education is the subject of much contentious debate. Some schools provide "abstinence-only" education and virginity pledges are increasingly popular Turner (2017). According to Birungi (2020), “Columbia University found that 88 percent of those who pledge abstinence have premarital sex anyway”. “Most public schools offer abstinence-plus programmes that support abstinence but also offer advice about contraceptives. A team of researchers and educators in California have published a list of best practices in the prevention of teen pregnancy, in addition to the previously mentioned concepts, working to instill belief in a successful future, male involvement in the prevention process, and designing culturally relevant interventions. On September 30, 2010, The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approved 155 million dollars in new funding for comprehensive sex education programs designed to prevent teenage pregnancy. The money is being awarded "to states, nonprofit organizations, school districts, universities, and others” (Turner 2017).

These grants will support the replication of teen pregnancy prevention programs that are effective through rigorous research as well as the testing of new, innovative approaches to combating teen pregnancy. For teens who choose to engage in sexual activity, the primary mode of preventing teen pregnancy becomes the correct use of contraceptives. In the States, one policy initiative that has been used to increase rates of contraceptive use is Title X: Title X of the 1970 Public Health Service act provides family planning services for those who do not qualify for Medicaid by distributing

"funding to a network of public, private, and non-profit entities to provide services on a sliding scale based on income. Studies indicate that, internationally, success in reducing teen pregnancy rates is directly correlated with the kind of access that Title X provides: "What appears crucial to success is that adolescents know where they can go to obtain information and services, can get there easily and are assured of receiving confidential, nonjudgmental care and that these services and contraceptive supplies are free or cost very little (Varga, 2018). In addressing high rates of unplanned teen pregnancies, scholars agree that the problem must be confronted from both biological and cultural contexts Turner (2017). In the developing world, "programmes of reproductive health aimed at teenagers are often small-scale and not centrally coordinated, although some countries such as Sri Lanka have a systematic policy framework for teaching about sex within schools" (Ahorlu, 2015). Nongovernmental agencies such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Marie Stopes International provide contraceptive advice for young women worldwide according to Turner (2017). "Laws against child marriage have reduced but not eliminated the practice. Improved female literacy and educational prospects have led to an increase in the age at first birth in areas such as Iran, Indonesia, and the Indian state of Kerala" (Pfeiffer, 2015).

## **2.7 Support Systems Available to Teenage Mothers**

"For a teenager who needs to act as parent herself, parenting can be extremely difficult" (Schrag & Schmidt Tieszen, 2014). "Social support systems is, therefore, an important component of the emotional and physical well-being of the teenage mothers especially, right after childbirth" (Negron, Martin, Almog, Balbierz, & Howell, 2013). Many women undoubtedly finds it extremely challenging to meet the daunting demands of early motherhood (Negron *et al.*, 2013) and specifically for teenage

mothers with repeated pregnancies, it may be extremely difficult to gain the needed attention and support. This makes their experience of motherhood more challenging (Negron *et al.*, 2013). Turner (2017) supports these findings by assenting that “teenage mothers are at greater psychosocial risk and needed unique attention and care”. They also added that “teenage mothers may experience postpartum challenges differently from adult mothers and thus, need more support”.

Moreover, a quantitative study by Wiemann, Agurcia, Rickert, Berenson, and Volk (2006) in the United States on absent fathers as providers, reveal that “the fathers’ presence, as well as their financial support, led to the minimisation of stress for the teenage mother. However, they also added that paternal support for the baby is affected by the level of involvement of the father in the decision-making process during the pregnancy” (Nadeem and Romo, 2018). On the contrary, it was revealed that many teenage mothers depend on their parents for support. The authors further posits that “there are higher levels of teenage life satisfaction and positive parenting skills when teenage mothers have a close relationship with their mothers”. Cheng and Pickler (2019), also suggest that “women during the postpartum period goes through a range of psychological stressors and for that matter, the lack social support for women could result in depression and exposure to other risks”. These assertions were however confirmed by Turner (2017) who stated that “social support after childbirth is essential for the teenage mother as it reduced the risk of postpartum depression”.

Thus, “providing teenage mothers with social support is an effective way to help women cope with these stressors. The greater risks of postpartum depression are often due to the incidence of repeat pregnancies as identified by Maravilla *et al.* (2017). Ahorlu, Pfeiffer, and Obrist (2015) opines that “the absence of economic and social support for the teenage mother may pose a greater risk than even the pregnancy



itself”. Sims and Luster (2012) after conducting a cohort study in the United States reported that “personal resources for teenage mothers in terms of support and motivation decreased the risk of having another pregnancy”. These findings were confirmed in a mixed study by Apanga et al (2015) on an adolescent girl’s resilience to teenage pregnancy and motherhood in Begoro, Ghan, who revealed that “access to financial resources and support for teenage mothers helped them to secure their health and that of their babies as well as cope with pregnancy and motherhood. She further added that parents are an important source of economic support for girls and thus, should be empowered to support teenage mothers”.

Secondary data analysis from a case-control study conducted by Lennon and Heaman (2015) in Manitoba, Canada, on factors associated with family resilience during pregnancy among inner-city women, emphasized the importance of family support in building the resilience of teenage mothers. They further added “that women with low interpersonal support were six times more likely to have low resilience”. Similarly, Brosh, Weigel, and Evans (2009) also suggested that “support from families was a positive factor in furthering the career development of adolescents”. Also, De Jonge (2017), in a study on support for teenage mothers established the need for the support of health workers. She further added that “due to the difficulty in detecting mental health problems among teenage mothers, they required more support and information on mental health and these services should be made available to them”. In addition, DeVito (2010) conducted a study on how adolescent mothers feel about becoming a parent and reported that “many teenagers felt unprepared to adapt to the responsibility of being a parent”. She also added that “without support, guidance, and adequate knowledge, teenage mothers may feel confused and overwhelmed in their new role as a parent”.



Therefore, they need support from peers who understand and can identify with their new role as a parent. This support will provide the teenage-mothers with a sense of acceptance, socialization, and stability. Furthermore, utilizing secondary data from the Northeastern United States to analyze the impact of parenting stress and social support on child development. Huang, Costeines, Kaufman, and Ayala (2014) asserts that “lack of social support and high level of stress on teenage mothers is associated with negative mental health status, which also negatively impacts the development of their children”. Angley, Divney, Magriples, and Kershaw (2015) in a longitudinal study on social support, family functioning, and parenting competence in adolescent parents also found that “a strong support structure during the postpartum period increased the level of parental competence for the adolescent mother”.

## **2.8 Summary**

The study reviewed various aspects related to adolescent pregnancy and eventual premature motherhood in secondary schools. The challenges that accounts for pregnancies among girls in senior high schools, especially in poor countries such as Ghana, remain extremely basic. They include inadequate knowledge on contraceptives, age discrepancies in relationships, sexual abuse and dating violence. Also, socioeconomic factors such as childhood environment and media influence accounts for pregnancies among students of Senior High Schools. Therefore, before any intervention programs can be considered which support systems include government educational policies and non – governmental organizations, the challenges faced by adolescent student mothers, such as those listed in this study should be addressed. To examine the relationship between these factors and the challenges adolescent mothers go through, the researcher concluded the section with a brief overview of the conceptual framework for the study, stating key areas of interest.

From the literature reviewed it can be realised that many scholars have talked about challenges faced by adolescent mothers. However, there is still a gap on the support systems available for these students in senior high schools. This study sought to explore Adolescent motherhood and its support systems at the Bawjiase Senior High School.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter details the methodology adopted for the study, and discusses the researcher's philosophical stance, the research approach and design, study area, population, sample, and the sampling technique. Additionally, it outlines the methods and procedures employed for data collection, methods of data analysis, to trustworthiness, and ethical consideration.

#### 3.1 Research Philosophy

The study adopted the interpretivist research paradigm. The adoption of the interpretivist research paradigm in this study was well-justified for several compelling reasons (Creswel, 2013). First and foremost, the interpretive paradigm is particularly suited for investigations that aim to comprehend and give meaning to complex life experiences (Allnock, 2013). In the context of this research, which delves into the challenges and support systems of teenage mothers in an educational setting, understanding the nuances and intricacies of these experiences is paramount. The interpretive paradigm provides the necessary framework to explore the multifaceted nature of these challenges and the support mechanisms through the lens of the individuals involved.

Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm aligns with the belief that social reality is not an objective, fixed entity but rather a subjective and context-dependent construct. This perspective acknowledges that the experiences and perceptions of individuals are central to shaping their reality (Creswell, 2013). In the case of this study, the subjective experiences of both the teenage mothers and their parents are vital in

comprehending the dynamics of their involvement in education. Notably, the interpretive paradigm emphasizes the importance of meaningful interactions between researchers and study participants (Denscombe, 2010). This approach ensures that the voices and perspectives of those directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation are not only acknowledged but also actively sought out. By engaging in a dialogue with the research participants, the study can capture their unique experiences and viewpoints, thereby enriching the research findings.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The research approach adopted for this study was qualitative and is rooted in the interpretive paradigm. Weber (2012) suggests that a qualitative approach is best suited when the goal is to understand situations from the perspective of the individuals under study, as opposed to explaining their behavior through cause-and-effect relationships. This assertion forms the foundation for selecting a qualitative approach in this study. As articulated by Corbin and Strauss (2008), qualitative research is a process that involves the examination and interpretation of data to uncover meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge. In this perspective, both data and meaning naturally emerge from the study setting. According to Mason (2016), all qualitative research methodologies share common characteristics: a) They are grounded in an interpretivist perspective, emphasizing the exploration of how phenomena are interpreted, understood, experienced, generated, or constructed; b) They utilize research approaches that are adaptable and attuned to the social context in which the study is conducted and c) They employ analytical methodologies that account for complexity, intricacy, and context in the research process.

Therefore, the qualitative research approach aligns with the goals of this study, which seeks to understand the experiences and perspectives of the participants in the context of teenage mothers' challenges and support systems.

### **3.3 Research Design**

A research design is a specific plan or protocol that provides a structured approach to conducting a study, enabling the researcher to operationalize the conceptual hypothesis (Creswell, 2013; Babbie & Mouton, 2011). In this study, the descriptive phenomenological design was chosen as the research plan due to its alignment with the philosophical underpinnings of the research. As noted by Adzahlie-Mensah, Agordah, and Abrefa (2017), the development of a comprehensive research design serves multiple purposes. It helps in organizing thoughts, delineating the study's boundaries, enhancing the reliability of the data, and preventing the formulation of misleading or incomplete conclusions. The phenomenological design proved valuable in delving into the profound meaning of the experiences of the individuals involved and providing a detailed description of the phenomenon (Brosh et al, 2009; Babbie, 2008). This design facilitated access to the world of experiences of teenage student mothers, allowing for an in-depth exploration of their lives. The descriptive phenomenological design is in harmony with the interpretive philosophical assumption about social reality. It was selected for its capacity to elicit the perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of the challenges faced by teenage student mothers while emphasizing the depth, breadth, and richness of their experiences. This design not only enables the researcher to capture a comprehensive description of the subjective experiences of adolescent student mothers but also offers valuable insights into the phenomenon under study.

### 3.4 Study Area

The study was conducted at Bawjiase Senior High School, situated in the Awutu Senya West District, one of the twenty-two districts in the Central Region of Ghana. Historically, this district was originally part of the larger Awutu Senya District until it was officially split into Awutu Senya West and Awutu Senya East on June 28, 2012.

The district's capital is Awutu Breku. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, the district's population stood at 161,460, representing approximately 3.9 percent of the total population of the Central Region. Within this population, there are 78,219 males and 83,241 females. The urban-rural distribution is fairly balanced, with 48 percent residing in urban areas and 52 percent in rural areas. The demographic profile of the district is characterized by a youthful population, accounting for 41.7 percent, which is illustrated by a broad-based population pyramid that narrows towards the elderly age groups, making up only 6.5 percent. The total age dependency ratio for the district is 90.8 percent, with a higher age dependency ratio for males 92.3 percent compared to females 89.3 percent.

The main economic activities of the people in the district are agriculture, fishing, and agro-processing, with a significant portion of the population engaged in these sectors. The main crops grown in the Awutu Senya East District are cassava, maize, plantain, pineapple, oil palm, and cocoa, with about 70% of the district having semi-deciduous forests where cocoa and oil palm are the major crops cultivated. The district is known for its rich soil, which supports the growth of various crops such as yam, rice, maize, cassava, groundnut, cowpea, and sorghum. The district's agricultural activities focus on improving production efficiency, yield, post-harvest management, and promoting agriculture as a viable business among the youth

The main construction materials for outer walls of dwelling units in the district are cement, clay bricks, and mud bricks, with 81.6% of dwellings in urban areas using cement. The district has a diverse social composition, with various religious and ethnic groups represented. The district is also home to historical and natural sites, such as the Good Hope Fort and forests with potential for tourism development. The district's development plan focuses on improving access to quality education, healthcare, water, and sanitation, as well as promoting economic growth and job creation. The district's vision is to become an attractive center for modernized agriculture, brisk commerce, and a knowledge-based society.

The Awutu Senya East District, located in the Central Region of Ghana, has a strong focus on education, with a General Assembly (GA) Membership of 37 and 24 Electoral Areas. The district is rich in historical and natural sites, including the Good Hope Fort and forests with potential for canopy walkways and golf courses. However, there are challenges such as youth unemployment, illegal sand winning and logging, lack of engineered landfill sites, and inadequate educational and health infrastructure. In terms of educational supervision, a study conducted in the Awutu Senya East municipality revealed that supervisors undertake brief visits and instructional supervision is carried out daily, weekly, and monthly. However, there are issues such as supervisors' lack of confidence, inadequate resources, poor communication skills, and low knowledge of supervisory practices. The district has a high proportion of the population below 15 years (41.7%), indicating the need for quality education to cater to the young population<sup>1</sup>. The district also has a sex ratio of 89:100, indicating a slightly higher number of females than males.



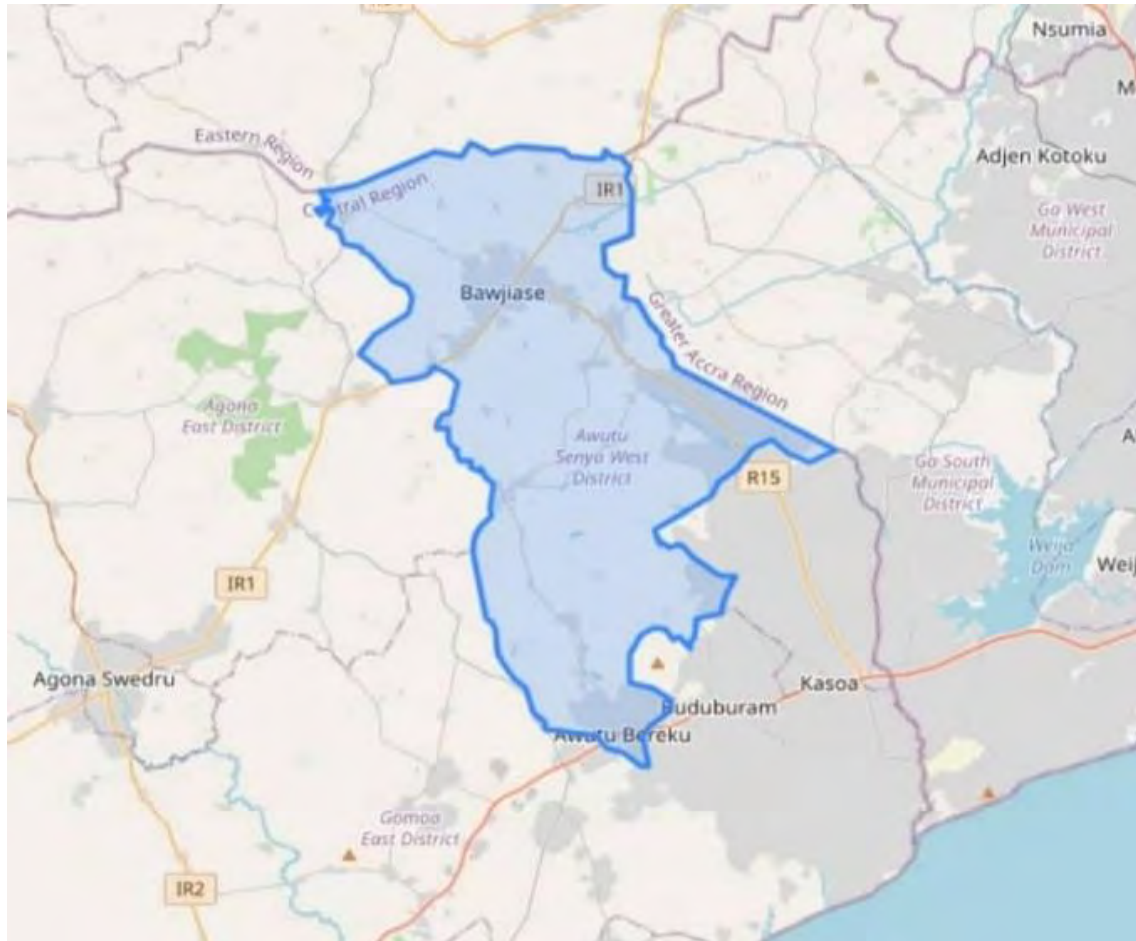


Figure 1 shows the map of Awutu Bawjiase in the Awutu Senya District of the Central Region.

In conclusion, while the Awutu Senya East District has potential in terms of historical and natural sites, there are significant challenges in areas such as education, employment, and infrastructure. There is a need for improved supervisory practices in education and addressing the issues of youth unemployment and inadequate infrastructure

### 3.5 Population

A population, as defined by Houser (2019), encompasses a complete group of individuals, events, cases, or objects that exhibit observable characteristics. The target population, following Houser (2019), refers to the entirety of real or hypothetical



individuals, events, or objects that the researcher aims to encompass in the study's findings. This population constitutes the broadest group of potential participants in the study, as elucidated by Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010), representing the entire group from which pertinent information is to be gathered. It is the population from which the deliberate selection of a sample is made with specific intent. Chigona et al (2018) emphasize that the population is the group of primary interest, for whom the research findings will hold relevance. The overall study population was all girls between the ages of 15 to 20 years.

In the context of this study, the accessible population encompasses all adolescent student mothers attending Bawjiase Senior High School, as well as their parents and the teachers of the mentioned school. The rationale for focusing on teenage student mothers lies in the fact that they are more likely to encounter challenges in balancing academic responsibilities with maternal roles, in contrast to their peers who have not experienced childbirth while continuing their education. By concentrating on adolescent student mothers, the study aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences. It is worth noting that the exact number of teenage student mothers was unknown, as such records were not maintained by the schools.

### **3.6 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The study involved a sample size of 22 participants, comprising 12 teenage student mothers, 5 teachers responsible for instructing these students, and 5 parents. To determine the sample, specific inclusion criteria were established. First, teenage student mothers aged 15 to 20 years who had given birth while still attending Bawjiase Senior High School were selected for the study. Second, teenage student mothers with children under the age of five years who were simultaneously

continuing their education at Bawjiase Senior High School were chosen. The study's objectives necessitated the inclusion of specific participant groups, each contributing valuable insights. Adolescent student mothers offered firsthand accounts of their academic journeys, challenges, and coping strategies. Parents provided a different perspective, sharing their roles in supporting their daughters' education and their concerns. Teachers offered observations and insights into the academic performance and experiences of adolescent student mothers. These diverse perspectives, aligned with the interpretivism paradigm, enriched the understanding of the challenges and support systems for teenage mothers in Bawjiase Senior High School.

The study employed the purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify its participants. Specifically, students were selected with a deliberate intent from various classes and houses within the study area. The active involvement of house masters, mistresses, school counselors, and form masters and mistresses played a crucial role in identifying teenage student mothers for the study. The choice of the purposive and snowball sampling techniques for participant selection was guided by the unique characteristics of the study's population and the research objectives. These techniques are widely recognized and have been employed in qualitative research to gather in-depth information from specific and often hard-to-reach populations (Creswell et. al, 2017). Purposive sampling, as described by Palinkas *et al.* (2015), involves the deliberate selection of participants who possess the essential knowledge and experiences required for the study. In the context of this research, it was crucial to engage with teenage student mothers who could provide comprehensive insights into the challenges they face. The involvement of house masters, mistresses, school counselors, and form masters and mistresses in the selection process ensured that individuals with firsthand knowledge of the teenage student mothers were included in

the study. This approach is consistent with the recommendations of Palinkas *et al.* (2015), who advocate for the use of purposive sampling to identify participants who can contribute rich data. The snowball sampling technique was an effective choice for expanding the participant pool. This technique allows for the identification of additional participants through the referrals of those initially selected. In this study, teenage student mothers themselves played a pivotal role in identifying others who shared similar experiences.

This iterative process continued until a sufficient number of participants, in this case, 12 adolescent student mothers, were included in the study. Snowball sampling is commonly employed in studies involving hidden or marginalised populations and aligns with the study's focus on a specific and potentially hard-to-reach group. These techniques ensured that the sample size remained manageable while capturing the rich and diverse perspectives of the target population.

### **3.7 Instruments for Data Collection**

In qualitative research, the choice of data collection methods is paramount to capturing rich, context-specific information, aligning with the interpretivist standpoint embraced by the researcher. Data for this study was gathered through in-depth, face-to-face, semi structured interviews with the participants, specifically designed to conduct in-depth interviews. The use of in-depth interviews is justified due to the following reasons: Firstly, in-depth interviews are well-suited to exploring and understanding the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings attributed to phenomena by the participants themselves. As interpretivism seeks to delve into the depth of human experiences and the co-construction of social realities, in-depth interviews offer a direct avenue for participants to articulate their narratives, emotions, and interpretations of the challenges and support systems related to teenage

motherhood within the school context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, in-depth interviews support the idea that social reality is co-constructed through meaningful interactions and interpretations, and their open-ended nature empowers participants to freely express their perspectives (Silverman, 2010). Lastly, these interviews uncover nuanced aspects of participants' lives and the social phenomena they encounter, emphasizing understanding within a specific context (Merriam, 2009)

The interview guide was organized into two sections for each of the study participants: Section A and Section B. Section A was focused on collecting socio-demographic data about the participants, while Section B was tailored to address the research questions. In Section B, a comprehensive exploration of the academic experiences, as well as the psychological and social challenges faced by teenage student mothers, was conducted. Furthermore, this section delved into the coping strategies employed by these students to navigate these challenges.

The interviews began with central questions and progressed into more specific inquiries. Probing questions were used based on the participants' responses to delve deeper into their experiences. Ultimately, the utilization of in-depth interviews was a methodologically sound decision for this study within the interpretivist paradigm. This approach allowed the researcher to connect with the participants in a manner that closely adhered to the interpretivist principles of delving into subjective experiences, comprehending the co-construction of social realities, and peeling back the intricate layers of the research topic.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research encompasses multiple dimensions, including credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability, which collectively

ensure the validity and rigor of the study's findings. Credibility, as a crucial component of qualitative research, is related to the validity of the study. In this research, credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the teenage student mothers during the interview process. The researcher's six-week presence in the field allowed for the building of rapport and the development of a trusting relationship with the participants. Member checks were conducted to further ensure credibility. The participants had the opportunity to verify whether the written and recorded information accurately represented their responses, strengthening the validity of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer Examination is another valuable method to check the validity of the study's findings. Colleagues with extensive research backgrounds were provided with the study findings and asked to review and offer feedback on the raw data, contributing to the credibility of the research (Maxwell, 2013). Transferability pertains to the extent to which the research findings can be applied to similar contexts or situations.

To enhance transferability, the researcher included thick descriptions, offering readers ample contextual information about the study area to facilitate the application of the findings in comparable scenarios (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Utilizing direct quotations from the interviews in presenting the research findings not only added authenticity but also enhanced the uniqueness of the data, contributing to the credibility and reliability of the study, as highlighted by Lochmiller (2021). By implementing these strategies, this study enhances the trustworthiness of its findings, assuring readers that the results genuinely reflect the experiences of the participants and are applicable to similar settings or situations.

### **3.9 Data Collection Procedure**

The study relied on primary data collected from teenage student mothers, focusing on their demographics, academic experiences, psychological and social challenges, and coping strategies. Permission to conduct the research at the Bawjiase Senior High School was obtained through an introductory letter from the Head of Department of Social Studies Education at the University of Education, Winneba, which was sent to the school's Headmaster for approval. Interviews were conducted at specific times and locations, lasting between 45 to 60 minutes, in accordance with participants' schedules. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed into audio files for data entry. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached, indicating that new data being collected was no longer emerging from the interviews.

The data collection process involved several steps. Firstly, a 10-day community entry process was initiated, during which the researcher engaged with the school authorities and the adolescent student mother participants to establish rapport with them. The participants proposed their preferred interview times, which were then incorporated into a data collection plan. This plan was communicated to the school authorities for administrative purposes.

Secondly, a 30-day period was allocated for actual data gathering. Each interview session began with a self-introduction in which the research purpose, confidentiality measures, and interview duration were explained. Consent was obtained from the interviewees to record the interviews, and their understanding and agreement were documented. Participants were informed that the interaction might continue for one to two months, and they could be contacted for clarification or verification of their responses during the study. After each interview, the recorded sessions and field notes

were stored confidentially. Data collection was conducted in accordance with the availability of the participants.

### **3.10 Data Analysis Methods**

The data for this study was analyzed thematically, conducted using thematic analysis, which was chosen due to its effectiveness in organizing and understanding qualitative data within the interpretivist research paradigm. Thematic analysis involves several essential steps, as outlined by Lochmiller (2021), including familiarization, coding, theme generation, and theme review, theme defining, and reporting. The process began with the immersion in and transcription of the data, allowing the researcher to become familiar with the participants' responses. After this, data coding was performed to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in the data, which helped in the generation of themes. This method facilitated the exploration of the complex layers of the research topic and the understanding of the participants' subjective experiences, aligning with the interpretivist standpoint (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018). Thematic analysis was a suitable choice for this study, as it allowed for a rigorous examination of the data, enabling the researcher to capture the rich narratives and multifaceted insights related to the challenges and support systems for teenage student mothers.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

The ethical considerations in this study were meticulously adhered to in accordance with established research ethics principles. In line with ethical guidelines, informed consent was diligently sought from all participants. The students were not compelled to participate; instead, their affirmative agreement, referred to as consent, was obtained prior to the commencement of the interview. Given that some participants were under 18 years old, this approach ensured that the research process respected



their autonomy. For teenage mothers over 18 years old, the study was thoroughly explained, and their consent, both written and oral, was obtained (American Psychological Association, 2017). The teachers and parents who participated in the study were appropriately informed about the research's significance, which encouraged their enthusiastic participation and ensured that they provided relevant and meaningful responses. To safeguard participants' privacy and maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used instead of actual names when reporting the findings. This approach ensured that the identities of the research participants remained undisclosed, respecting their privacy and upholding ethical standards (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Transparency was maintained throughout the research process by clearly explaining the purpose of the study to the participants.

They provided information willingly without any form of coercion or pressure. Caregivers' consent (written and oral) was obtained before interviewing their children, which is essential for minors. For participants aged 18 to 20, their consent (written or oral) was taken since they are considered adults under the law. To maintain academic integrity and ethical standards, the study avoided plagiarism by appropriately acknowledging and referencing all sources.

### **3.13 Summary**

This chapter centred on the methodology adopted for the study. The methodology embraced the interpretivist research paradigm, aligned with the overarching qualitative research approach. The instrument used for data collection was an interview guide. A total of 12 teenage student mothers, 5 teachers, and 5 parents were sampled for the study. A purposive and snowball sampling technique was used to select participants, ensuring the richness and relevance of data. Interviews, lasting 45 to 60 minutes, were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. Ethical



considerations were meticulously followed, with informed consent obtained from all participants. Credibility and trustworthiness were established through prolonged engagement, peer examination, and member checks. The study respected confidentiality and privacy by using pseudonyms and maintained ethical research conduct by avoiding plagiarism and providing appropriate consent.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of the study, including the analysis of the data collected through interviews with adolescent student mothers, their parents, and teachers at Bawjiase Senior High School. The primary aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the findings related to the research objectives. It explores the various factors contributing to adolescent pregnancy among students, identifies the challenges faced by teenage mothers, assesses the effect of teenage motherhood on their academic performance, and evaluates the support systems available to these students. The results are discussed to shed light on the experiences of teenage mothers in the school setting and to provide insights into the implications for their education and well-being. The chapter begins with a summary of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, providing context for the subsequent discussion. Following this, the findings are organized into sections that correspond to each research objective. The results are presented through thematic analysis, with direct quotations from the interviews to enrich the data and add depth to the understanding of the challenges and support systems experienced by teenage mothers.

#### **4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Table provides a comprehensive overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants, categorizing them into student mothers, parents, and teachers. This analysis delves into the distribution within these categories, shedding light on the diverse composition of the sample. In terms of sex distribution, all the 12 student mothers were female, aligning with the study's focus on teenage mothers due to the

prevalence of female adolescents in this context (UNFPA, 2020). Student mothers were categorized into specific age ranges. Data gathered is presented in Table 1

**Table 1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Variables	Category	Teenage Mothers		Parents (F)		Teachers (F)	
		(F)	Percentage	(F)	Percentage	(F)	Percentage
<b>Participants</b>	Sampled size	12	<b>54.55</b>	5	<b>22.73</b>	5	<b>22.73</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	-	<b>0</b>	1	<b>4.55</b>	1	<b>4.55</b>
	Female	12	<b>54.55</b>	4	<b>18.18</b>	4	<b>18.18</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>54.55</b>				
<b>Age range</b>	15 – 16	2	<b>9.09</b>	-		-	
	17 – 18	8	<b>36.36</b>	-		-	
	19 – 21	2	<b>9.09</b>	-		-	
	30 – 35	-		-		2	<b>9.09</b>
	36 – 45	-		1	<b>4.55</b>	3	<b>13.64</b>
	46 – 50	-		3	<b>13.64</b>	-	
	50 and above	-		1	<b>4.55</b>	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>54.55</b>					
<b>Class distribution</b>	SHS 1	2	<b>9.09</b>	-		-	
	SHS 2	4	<b>18.18</b>	-		-	
	SHS 3	6	<b>27.27</b>	-		-	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>54.55</b>				
<b>Residential Status</b>	DAY	7	<b>31.82</b>				
	BOARDING	5	<b>22.73</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>54.55</b>				
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	3	<b>13.64</b>				
	Single parent	9	<b>40.91</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>54.55</b>				

*Source: Field Data (2023)*

There were 2 participants aged 15-16, 8 participants aged 17-18, and 2 participants aged 19-21. These age ranges are in line with the typical ages of high school students.

Student mothers' age at childbirth is a critical variable. The ages at which these teenage mothers gave birth to their children ranged from 15 to 18 years. This information is essential for comprehending the context of their motherhood experiences and challenges. Student mothers are distributed across the three high school classes. Specifically, 2 participants were in SHS 1, 4 are in SHS 2, and 6 were in SHS 3. This distribution implies that the experiences of student mothers varied at different stages of their high school journey. Among student mothers, 7 are day students, and 5 are boarding students. This distribution may influence the availability of support and resources for student mothers, as boarding students may have access to different forms of support than day students. The marital status of student mothers is a noteworthy variable. Among student mothers, 9 are single, and 3 are married. This variable is crucial for understanding the marital status of student mothers, which can significantly impact their experiences and challenges in balancing education and motherhood.

For parents, there are 4 females and 1 male. This gender distribution suggests a higher involvement of mothers in their children's education, which is consistent with existing research highlighting the central role of mothers in this context (Hoover-Dempsey *et al.*, 2005). The greater representation of mothers among parents might indicate their primary responsibility for the well-being and education of their children. For teachers, there are 1 male and 4 females. The age range for teachers indicates that 2 of them fell within the 30-35 age range, and 3 teachers is in the 36-45 age range.

In summary, the analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of student mothers, parents, and teachers provides an understanding of their respective roles and the potential influences on the experiences of student mothers for the study.

## **4.2 Factors underlying Adolescent Pregnancy at the Bawjiase Senior High School**

The first objective of the study sought to explore the factors underlying adolescent pregnancy at the Bawjiase Senior High School. This objective was achieved by gathering data from the 12 student mothers who had firsthand experience with adolescent pregnancy during their time at the school. By focusing on this group, the research aimed to uncover the specific factors that led to their pregnancies, thus shedding light on the underlying factors that needed to be addressed. The thematic analysis of the results provides valuable insights into the factors of adolescent pregnancy among students at the Bawjiase Senior High School. Emerging themes encompass a lack of comprehensive sex education, economic challenges, peer influence, cultural norms and early societal expectations, exposure to social media, susceptibility to substance abuse, and mental health concerns.

### **4.2.1 Limited Sex Education**

The first theme that emerged was the glaring absence of comprehensive sex education in both the school curriculum and the home environment. The greater majority of participants (8) expressed their frustration at the lack of access to accurate information and resources. TM A emphasized how she had to rely on unreliable sources and ended up with misconceptions. She narrated:

I was misguided by the limited knowledge I got while growing up, "I started having strange feelings when I turned 15, but I lacked the knowledge to deal with it. I entered into exploring my sexual desires unknowingly before I realized I was into it that I couldn't stop. (Field Data, 2022)

TM B lamented: *"Even at home, it's something you cannot talk about. We didn't have access to accurate information, and we believed myths. I was ignorant, and this led to this life-changing experience."* TM C added, *"Our school's approach to sex education was non-existent. We didn't know where to get contraceptives or how to protect*

*ourselves. It's frustrating because a little education could have prevented my pregnancy."*

It is evident from their narratives that improved access to sex education and resources could have played a pivotal role in averting these pregnancies. TM A's narrative illustrates how the absence of a comprehensive sex education left her and others grappling with their emerging sexuality without the necessary information to make informed choices. This lack of guidance led to unintended exploration of their sexual desires.

#### **4.2.2 Economic Hardships**

Economic difficulties emerged as a significant factor contributing to adolescent pregnancies among high school student mothers in Ghana. Some participants shared their experiences of feeling pressured by their boyfriends into engaging in sexual relationships as a way to sustain their relationships. Participant G expressed, *"Our family was struggling financially, and I felt compelled to stay in my relationship. My boyfriend insisted on sex, and I felt that agreeing to have sex with him might bring some form of assistance to our family's difficult situation."* TM L narrated:

Poverty was the driving force behind my situation. If I had received assistance from a generous individual, my circumstances would be entirely different. A family friend noticed my struggles to afford basic school necessities, so he began providing support. During school breaks, he would invite me to assist with household tasks. This arrangement commenced during our first year in high school. Subsequently, in our second year, he expressed a romantic interest in me. I initially resisted, but his persistent pressure became overwhelming.

*(Field Data, 2022)*

#### **4.2.3 Peer Pressure**

A substantial number of participants 7 also highlighted the significant influence of peer pressure on their decisions. They expressed that their friends played a crucial role

in pushing them towards relationships and sexual involvement. TM J recalled a particular incident when her friends' excitement about their relationships influenced her to conform. She explained:

I remember a day when my friends were all excited about their relationships, and they kept telling me how great it was. I felt left out and thought I had to do the same to fit in. So, I ended up dating, trying to prove myself, and this is how I found myself in a situation where my boyfriend started having sex with me. (Field Data, 2022)

TM K recalled a similar experience, sharing:

I remember a time when my friends in the neighborhood were discussing their relationships. They portrayed it as the only path to acceptance and happiness. I didn't want to stand out or feel left out, so I decided to join them. I didn't know much about protecting myself, and I ended up getting pregnant after having sex with him only twice. It was a shock when I realized it. (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.2.4 Cultural Norms and Early Expectations**

A subset of teenage mothers (3) in the study disclosed that they were married off at a young age, typically between 15-17 years, as a result of cultural norms and family expectations. Interestingly, their husbands, after initial reluctance, agreed to support their pursuit of education once they expressed a strong desire to continue schooling after completing their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). TM E recounted her experience, stating:

In our culture, it's common for girls to be married off early. I got married at 15 and got pregnant at age 16 last year, but I was determined to finish my education. My husband initially hesitated, but I convinced him to let me go back to school after the BECE. It wasn't easy, but I managed (Field Data, 2022)

Similarly, TM L shared her perspective, saying:

Early marriage was the expectation in my community. I got married at 17. After in gave birth that was just 7 months ago, my husband wanted me to stay out of school but I insisted on continuing my education. My husband saw my determination and

eventually allowed me to return to school after my BECE. It is a challenging journey, but I am committed. (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.2.5 Social Media Exposure**

Some participants raised concerns about the fact that they were exposed to explicit content and other sexual material on social media platforms. This exposure, they felt, contributed to their curiosity and subsequent engagement in sexual activities. The participants were troubled by the ease with which explicit content could be accessed online and how it influenced their behaviours and decisions in the realm of sexuality.

TM D shared her experience:

I didn't know this stuff when I was younger. I started having sex really early. A male friend I used to study with would show me some sexy stuff on the internet, and I didn't tell my parents about it. That's how I got pregnant. I wish someone had taught me about all the bad things that could happen.

(Field Data, 2022) TM

G added:

"I've seen how social media affects how we act sexually. Seeing sexy stuff online made me curious, so I tried things early. People like me should learn how to use the internet safely and know what's okay and not okay."

#### **4.2.6 Being Lured by Substance Use and Mental Health Issues**

A few participants revealed that they were lured into substance use, often unknowingly, through drinks or other means, and that this played a significant role in their experiences of becoming pregnant during adolescence. This, coupled with their struggles related to mental health issues, created a challenging situation that contributed to unintended pregnancies. TM B shared:

Yeah, it's not like we wanted any of this to happen. I got lured into drinking, and it made everything so blurry. And it wasn't just the drinking; I was dealing with a lot inside my head too. Sometimes I was so down, I didn't care about anything. I think that's why I did things I regret now. When I look back at how it all happened, I sometimes feel so



ashamed of myself. I didn't know better, and I wish someone had reached out to help me through those tough times. (Field Data, 2022)

TM C shared a similar view:

I can relate to that. It's tough when you're going through a lot, and it feels like the world is against you. I found myself turning to the opposite sex for comfort, thinking they could help me. But it only led to more trouble, and I ended up in a situation I never imagined. It's not something to be ashamed of, really. I didn't have the knowledge or support I needed. (Field Data, 2022)

The findings of this study resonate with previous research conducted in Ghana, which has consistently emphasized the negative consequences of inadequate sex education. For instance, the Ghana Adolescent Reproductive Health Project (GHARHP) reported that the lack of comprehensive sex education in schools and communities contributed to high teenage pregnancy rates (Doku et al., 2012). This study aligns with GHARHP's findings, as it underscores the significance of comprehensive sex education in preventing adolescent pregnancies. Research conducted in other sub-Saharan African countries has also highlighted the association between economic challenges and early sexual activity, which is a consistent theme in the current study. A study by Sedgh et al. (2015) emphasized the link between economic instability and early sexual initiation. Similarly, research by Chirwa et al. (2018) found that financial constraints were a contributing factor to adolescent pregnancies in sub-Saharan Africa. These studies align with the present findings and underline the pressing need for interventions addressing economic pressures among young girls in the region.

The influence of peer pressure on adolescents' decisions has been documented in studies from various regions, including sub-Saharan Africa. Research by Patton et al. (2018) and Mmari et al. (2010) has highlighted how peers shape adolescents' behavior, particularly in the context of romantic relationships and sexual activity.

These studies resonate with the current findings, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing the role of peer influence in preventing adolescent pregnancies.

Cultural traditions and societal expectations regarding early marriage have also been explored in previous research. Studies conducted by Bennett et al. (2019) and Mensah et al. (2018) have shown that cultural norms can strongly influence the timing of marriage for young girls. These studies align with the participants' experiences shared in this study and highlight the significance of allowing young girls to continue their education even after early marriage.

The influence of social media exposure on adolescents' sexual behaviors is a well documented concern. Research conducted by Smith & Anderson (2018) and Ybarra et al. (2014) has consistently highlighted the significant influence of online content, including explicit material, on young people's sexual behaviors. These studies support the participants' concerns about the influence of social media exposure and the need to educate adolescents on safe internet use. The relationship between substance use, mental health challenges, and early sexual initiation has been explored in previous research. Substance use and mental health problems have been shown to increase the risk of early sexual activity and unintended pregnancies among adolescents. This is consistent with the experiences shared by the participants in this study. Research by Smith & Anderson (2018) and Ybarra et al. (2014) align with these findings and underscore the importance of addressing substance use and mental health issues among adolescents.

### **4.3 Challenges that Student Mothers Encounter at the Bawjiase Senior High School**

The second objective aimed to identify the specific challenges that adolescent student mothers encounter in Bawjiase Senior High School. This objective primarily sought data from the 12 student mothers who shared their personal experiences and challenges. The identified challenges encompassed issues related to social stigma, lack of childcare support, financial strain, emotional stress, physical problems, ineffectiveness in maternal roles, and role conflicts. Their firsthand accounts were invaluable in understanding the unique difficulties they faced while managing their roles as students and young mothers.

#### **4.3.1 Social Stigma**

The majority of teenage mothers (10), expressed the challenging experiences they faced due to social stigma related to their situation. Their stories shed light on the stigma and judgment they encountered. These young mothers returned to school with their babies, only to find themselves looked upon differently by both peers and teachers. Hurtful comments, gossip, and disapproval became a part of their daily lives, casting a shadow of shame. TM A shared her experience:

I remember how people looked at me differently when I returned to school with my baby. It was like I was suddenly a different person in their eyes. Some of my classmates would make hurtful comments or gossip about me behind my back. It hurt a lot, and it made me feel ashamed. But I decided that I wouldn't let their judgment define me. I had to be strong for my child and myself.

*(Field Data, 2022)* Similarly,

TM B recounted:

When I first came back to school after giving birth, it was tough. I felt the judgment and disapproval from some of my teachers. They assumed that I wouldn't be able to focus on my studies or that I would be a distraction to the other students. I had to work twice as hard to prove that I was

serious about my education. It was hard, but I was determined not to let their stigma hold me back. (Field Data, 2022)

In the view of Teenage Mother C, the fear of judgment was so daunting that it led to a delay in her return to school. She explained:

I was so afraid of the stigma that I delayed going back to school for a while. I felt like everyone would look down on me. And when I finally did return, I had to face those judgmental glances and whispers. (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.3.2 Lack of Childcare Support**

Nine participants shared their challenges stemming from the inadequate childcare support available to them. Their experiences underscored the complexities of balancing their roles as both students and mothers. In the words of Teenage Mother G:

I wish there were better childcare options for student mothers like me. I had to leave my baby with my younger siblings when I went to school. They did their best, but it wasn't ideal. There were days when I had to miss classes because no one could watch my child, and that hurt my academic progress. I desperately needed more support for childcare. (Field Data, 2022)

Similarly, Teenage Mother C expressed:

It is a constant juggling act. I try to arrange my class schedule around when I can get someone to look after my child. There are days when I have to skip important classes because I couldn't find anyone to help. (Field Data, 2022)

These teenage mothers' accounts shed light on the challenges they face in balancing their education and childcare responsibilities. The absence of suitable childcare options creates stress and hampers their academic progress, as they often must make difficult choices between attending classes and caring for their children.

### 4.3.3 Financial Strain

Several participants (9) shared their significant financial struggles, which further complicate their roles as both students and mothers. One participant, TM F, highlighted the burdensome financial situation she finds herself in. She mentioned:

I'm facing a significant financial struggle. My boyfriend, who used to provide some financial help, has withdrawn his support. He doesn't send money anymore, and it's hard to rely on him. Additionally, my parents have just informed me that they'll be sharing the money they used to give me with my baby back home. They expect me to manage with the reduced financial assistance while I'm on campus. It's a challenging situation. (Field Data, 2022)

Similarly, Teenage Mother A expressed the difficulties she faces due to financial strain, stating

It's like I'm on my own. What's really hard is that my parents are not well-off either. They can't help much financially. So, I often find myself struggling to buy essential items for my baby, like diapers, baby food, and clothes. It's heartbreaking when I can't meet my baby's basic needs, and it adds to the stress of being a student mother. (Field Data, 2022)

### 4.3.4 Emotional Stress

Emotional stress was a predominant challenge for many teenage mothers who are also students. Their emotional experiences highlight the overwhelming pressure they face in balancing their academic responsibilities and motherhood. Teenage Mother H articulated this struggle, saying:

The pressure of being both a student and a mother is incredibly overwhelming. I'm constantly worried about my baby and my grades. It feels like I'm expected to excel in both areas, and I'm afraid of falling short. I often feel like an outsider among my peers. This has taken a toll on my mental health. I've battled depression and anxiety, and there are days when I doubt my abilities as a mother and a student. It's a lonely and emotionally draining journey. (Field Data, 2022)

Similarly, Teenage Mother I shared her feelings of isolation and judgment as she navigates the challenging task of balancing school and motherhood. She described: *"It's not easy when you're constantly trying to prove yourself to both your peers and yourself."*

*It feels like there's very little understanding of what I go through every day."* Teenage Mother E emphasized the emotional toll of juggling academics and motherhood, highlighting the constant fear of not measuring up and the social isolation she experiences. She expressed:

*The emotional stress has led to moments of self-doubt, and there are days when I struggle with anxiety. I wish there was more support for the emotional aspect of being a teenage mother and a student. (Field Data, 2022)*

#### **4.3.5 Physical Problems**

Physical problems became a prevalent concern among the majority of teenage mothers, impacting their ability to fulfill both their student and mother roles effectively. TM A described her physical challenges, stating:

I faced several physical issues during my journey as a teenage mother. Backaches were a constant companion, making it uncomfortable to sit through long school hours. Morning sickness was a daily struggle, and I often had to rush to the bathroom during classes. The physical exhaustion from both school and taking care of my baby at night added to the challenges. (Field Data, 2022)

Health problems related to pregnancy further compounded the physical strain for these young mothers. *"Pregnancy brought a range of health problems for me,"* shared one teenage mother. She (TM C) explained:

*"I had severe headaches, lower back pain, and heartburn. These physical discomforts made it hard to focus on my studies. I also struggled with dizziness and frequent fatigue, which made it tough to be an active student. These health issues added to the stress of being a young mother."*

Childbirth, too, presented its own set of physical challenges, as highlighted by some Teenage Mothers. According to TM H:

Childbirth was a physically exhausting experience for me. I had a long and painful labor followed by a cesarean section. The recovery was tough, and I struggled with postpartum pain and mobility issues. It was a challenging phase both physically and emotionally, I still suffer from the complications though. (Field Data, 2022)

Postpartum and breastfeeding introduced yet another layer of physical issues. Teenage Mother K shared her experience, saying:

After having my baby, things got really tough. I went through a lot of ups and downs with my emotions. I also had postpartum depression, which made me feel very tired and stressed. Taking care of my baby and trying to breastfeed was hard, and it made everything even more overwhelming. It's a lot to handle, especially when I'm also trying to keep up with school. (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.3.6 Ineffectiveness in Maternal Role**

Ineffectiveness in maternal role is a common concern among teenage mothers, with some expressing cognitive incompetency and practical skill incompetency. TM H highlighted her cognitive challenges, sharing:

I often feel like I lack the essential knowledge for motherhood. There are so many things I didn't know about taking care of a baby, like proper feeding, changing diapers, and understanding their needs. It can be overwhelming, and I sometimes doubt if I'm doing it right. (Field Data, 2022)

Conversely, TM C emphasized the practical skill incompetency she experiences, stating:

Practical skills in the maternal role have been a real challenge for me. I often feel like I lack the skills to care for my baby effectively. Things like changing diapers, soothing a crying baby, or even preparing baby food seem like daunting tasks. It's frustrating when I can't do these things confidently. (Field Data, 2022)



#### 4.3.7 Growing Weight of Responsibilities and Its Consequences

Teenage mothers' responses depict the tangible consequences of the increasing burden of responsibility on them, affecting their time, energy, and personal interests. They mentioned that financial demands of childcare also contribute to the limitations they experience in maintaining their previous lifestyle. TM C expressed her difficulties, stating:

For me I am a day student. Lack of time and energy has been a major challenge for me. I'm always exhausted, trying to balance school and taking care of my baby. There's hardly any time for personal interests or self-care. It's emotionally draining when you don't have the energy to do the things you used to enjoy. My life has become a continuous cycle of responsibilities.  
(Field Data, 2022)

Furthermore, some of these teen mothers highlighted that responsibilities also bring about restrictions on spending on personal interests. As pointed out by TM D:

I've experienced significant restrictions on spending on personal interests since becoming a teenage mother. The costs of baby essentials are high, and most of my financial resources go into that. I rarely have the means to spend on things I used to enjoy, like going out with friends or treating myself to small luxuries. It's a significant change in my lifestyle, and it can be tough to accept.

(Field Data, 2022)

#### 4.3.8 Role Conflict

Role conflict was stressed as a significant challenge faced by some teenage mothers. They explained that, it often manifests as a constant struggle to balance their dual roles as both students and mothers while navigating the complexities of adolescence.

TM A who is a 'boarder' shared her personal experience, revealing:

I often find myself torn between my roles as a student and a mother. There are times when I'm in class, but my mind is at home, worrying about my child. It's a constant struggle to meet the expectations of both roles. (Field Data, 2022)



Similarly, TM C shed light on this internal conflict, saying:

The conflict between my maternal and adolescent roles is a daily battle. I want to experience the things teenagers my age does, but I also have the responsibility of caring for my baby. It's tough when I see my peers going out or having fun, and I'm at home with my child. I often feel like I've had to grow up too quickly. (Field Data, 2022)

These firsthand accounts emphasize the delicate balancing act that teenage mothers undertake as they grapple with their roles as students and caregivers, all while navigating the unique challenges of adolescence.

From the foregoing results, adolescent student mothers face a myriad of complex challenges that have significant implications for their education and well-being. Social stigma, as emphasized in the study by Smith et al. (2018), “is a pervasive issue”. The return of these young mothers to school with their infants often leads to discrimination and judgment from peers and educators. The financial strain reported by the participants in this study is consistent with prior research showing that teenage mothers often face financial difficulties, especially when partners withdraw financial support (Gupta et al., 2008). Similarly, “the lack of childcare support echoes existing studies indicating that inadequate access to childcare can hinder teenage mothers' educational pursuits and create additional stress” (Mollborn, 2017).

Physical health problems during pregnancy and the postpartum period were highlighted by teenage mothers. Studies such as "Health and Mental Health Needs of Pregnant Adolescents" (Siegel, Brandon, & Cook, 2015) have highlighted the physical discomforts associated with teenage pregnancy. The physical problems mentioned by teenage mothers in this study, including backaches, morning sickness, and postpartum complications, align with the physical health challenges identified in this earlier research. “The ineffectiveness in the maternal role, both cognitively and in

practical skills, reflects studies that emphasize the need for comprehensive maternal education and support for teenage mothers” (Katz-Wise et al., 2012). Finally, “the role conflict expressed by teenage mothers in this study aligns with broader research that explores the challenges of balancing the roles of a student and a mother simultaneously” (Sisson, Kuhn, & Fulton, 2016).

In summary, the findings of this study resonate with a wealth of existing research, collectively emphasizing the complex and multifaceted challenges faced by teenage student mothers. These findings further underscore the urgent need for targeted support and interventions to help these young mothers overcome these challenges and achieve their educational and personal goals.

#### **4.4 Influence of Teenage Motherhood on the Academic Performance of Adolescent Student Mothers in Bawjiase Senior High School.**

This objective sought to gather data from both student mothers and teachers of these teenage mothers. From the student mothers' perspective, the data unveiled a consistent narrative of academic challenges stemming from the responsibilities and stressors associated with motherhood.

##### **4.4.1 Academic Time Management**

When participants were asked how teenage motherhood has affected their academic performance at Bawjiase Senior High School, they consistently emphasized the challenges of maintaining a balance. Most student participants expressed that being a teenage mother had a significant impact on their academic performance, describing it as a continuous juggling act. TM A shared:

Being a day student with a baby who's 1-year-old is quite challenging. I have to wake up very early to get myself and my baby ready for school. Once I return home in the evening, I need to attend to her needs and complete

household chores. It's a struggle to find quality study time (Field Data, 2022)

TM E recounted:

I've found that my state has significantly impacted my academic performance. It's like a constant juggling act. I've had to miss classes on days when my baby wasn't well, and this, in turn, has affected how well I understand some topics in the subjects I read. (Field Data, 2022)

Similarly, TM G added that, *"When my 8-month-old gets sick, I have to miss school to take care of her. It's hard to catch up on the lessons I've missed, and I often feel I'm left behind."*

#### **4.4.2 Difficulty in Concentration and limited study time**

TM A expressed the demanding nature of her situation, stating:

Balancing my studies with taking care of my child has been incredibly challenging. There are days when my baby demands a lot of attention, and it's hard to concentrate on my schoolwork. I often have to complete assignments late at night, and that leaves me feeling exhausted. It's a constant struggle to divide my time between studying and childcare (Field Data, 2022)

TM H explained, *"Being a boarder with a 1-year-old, it's hard to focus on schoolwork when I know my baby is in another part of the school. The separation makes it difficult to concentrate in class."* TM B discussed her academic journey with candor, saying:

Keeping up with my studies while taking care of my child has been a real test of my abilities. I've had to find ways to study with a baby in my arms or while my child naps. It's not always easy, and there are days when I miss out on lessons or assignments. But I'm determined to complete my education and provide a better future for my child (Field Data, 2022)

TM L concurred, adding, *"My grades have also seen a decline because I can't devote as much time to studying as I'm used to. It's a noticeable change in my academic performance."*

#### **4.4.3 Sleep Deprivation**

The study revealed a significant discovery concerning the academic performance of teenage mothers with babies under one-year-old. It was particularly evident that this challenge of sleep deprivation had a more pronounced impact on day students who had to return home after school. TM F, a teenage mother with a 6-month-old baby, expressed her struggle:

I can barely get any sleep with my baby waking up several times at night. It's taking a toll on my concentration in class. I've even fallen behind on assignments because of the sleepless nights (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.4.4 Pressure to Succeed**

Other teenage mothers also expressed the desire to succeed, which puts immense pressure on them and significantly affects their academic performance on campus.

TM

C shared her experience, stating:

The weight of academic success is even heavier when you have a 1-year-old child. I constantly feel the need to excel in school to ensure a brighter future for my baby.

TM K further elaborated on this theme, saying,

As a boarder with a one and half year-old child, the pressure to succeed is immense. I carry the responsibility of not letting my family or my child down, and it's always at the forefront of my mind (Field Data, 2022)

The desire to secure a better future for their children and meet the expectations of their families adds a considerable burden to these teenage mothers, further complicating their academic journey. Their responses underlined the tangible impact

of motherhood on attendance and academic achievements, reflecting the unique challenges faced by teenage mothers in managing their dual roles

### **Teachers' Perspective on the Academic Path of Teenage Mothers**

Additionally, teachers were included to provide an external perspective on the academic performance of these students. The combination of these two sources of data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of teenage motherhood on academic achievement in the school context.

#### **4.4.5 Increased Absenteeism**

Several teachers noted that teenage student mothers tend to have higher rates of absenteeism compared to their peers. For instance, Teacher 3 mentioned:

I've observed that teenage mothers often miss more classes than other students. It's understandable, given their childcare responsibilities, but this can directly impact their academic progress. They sometimes struggle to catch up with missed lessons (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.4.6 Difficulty in Concentration**

Teachers emphasized that teenage student mothers often find it challenging to concentrate in class due to the emotional and physical demands of motherhood.

Teacher

2 stated:

I've noticed that some of these young mothers have difficulty concentrating in class. They are frequently tired, and their minds might be preoccupied with their child's well-being. This affects their ability to engage fully in the learning process (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.4.7 Decline in Overall Performance**

Teachers reported a noticeable decline in the overall academic performance of teenage student mothers. Teacher 5 shared:

When I compare the academic performance of student mothers to their performance before motherhood, I can see that there is often a decline. Their grades may not be as high as they once were, and it's evident that they are struggling to maintain the same level of achievement (Field Data, 2022)

The responses of both teenage mothers and teachers underscore the challenges faced by these students. Teenage mothers expressed the struggle of balancing motherhood with academics, experiencing difficulties in concentration, limited study time, and effects of sleep deprivation. These challenges align with the observations of teachers who noted increased absenteeism and a decline in academic performance among teenage mothers.

Both groups agree that the dual role of being a student and a mother presented significant obstacles to academic success, emphasizing the need for additional support and resources to help these students manage their responsibilities and excel in their studies.

The experiences and challenges reported in this study closely mirror those documented in existing research, underlining the universal nature of these issues. One common thread in the findings is the theme of increased absenteeism among teenage student mothers. This aligns with multiple studies that have identified higher rates of absenteeism as a significant challenge faced by young mothers. Research conducted by Smith et al. (2016) and Johnson and Williams (2014) found that “teenage mothers often struggle to maintain consistent attendance due to childcare responsibilities and health-related issues, which directly impacts their academic progress”. Similarly, the current study at Bawjiase Senior High School notes that teenage mothers face similar challenges and frequently miss classes.

Another resonance in the findings is the difficulty in concentration reported by teenage mothers and noted by teachers. This theme mirrors the research by Anderson and Mitchell (2018) and Garcia and Torres (2015), which emphasized that “the emotional and physical demands of motherhood can lead to difficulty concentrating in the classroom”. The feelings of exhaustion and preoccupation with the well-being of their children, as indicated in this study, are recurring challenges that young mothers face in various educational settings. Moreover, the decline in overall academic performance among teenage student mothers is a consistent finding across multiple studies. Research by Davis and Moore (2017) and Taylor et al. (2019) highlighted that “the transition to motherhood often results in lower grades and decreased academic performance”. The teachers' reports in the current study regarding a noticeable decline in academic performance align with these previous research findings, underscoring the long-term impact of teenage motherhood on educational outcomes.

Overall, this study provides further validation of the challenges and consequences associated with teenage motherhood on academic achievement, and the findings are consistent with previous research. It is evident that the struggles faced by teenage student mothers at Bawjiase Senior High School are not unique to this context but are part of a broader pattern observed in different settings. These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive support systems, tailored educational strategies, and policies that can address the multifaceted challenges faced by teenage mothers, allowing them to achieve their educational goals and build better futures for themselves and their children.



#### **4.5 Various Support Systems in Place to Assist Adolescent Student Mothers at Bawjiase Senior High School**

The final objective of the study was to evaluate the support systems available to adolescent student mothers in both the school and home environments. To achieve this objective, data were collected from multiple sources, including the student mothers themselves, teachers, and parents. Each group provided valuable insights into the support mechanisms that exist within their respective domains, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the support systems available to teenage mothers. These responses were categorized into the following thematic areas:

##### **4.5.1 Seamless Re-Admission Process**

The school's approach to re-admission for teenage mothers who have taken a break due to childbirth received praise from the teacher respondents selected for the study.

Teacher 3 appreciated the straightforward re-admission process, stating:

One aspect I appreciate is the straightforward process of readmission for teenage mothers who have to take a break due to childbirth. The school has streamlined the process, making it easier for them to return to their education after giving birth. This approach is beneficial as it minimizes disruptions in their academic journey and helps them pick up where they left off. I believe this supportive approach positively influences their determination to continue their education despite the challenges they face (Field Data, 2022)

Teacher 4 added that the school's new educational policy ensures that teenage mothers face no penalties for taking a break due to motherhood. Teacher 4 noted:

One notable feature of our school's approach is that the new educational policy ensures that teenage mothers are not penalized for taking a break due to motherhood. There is no repetition of a class, regardless of whether they have written their promotion exams or not. This provides them with the choice to decide when they are ready to return and continue their education. The school's stance on this matter makes it clear that they are committed to supporting these



students, valuing their education, and providing an environment where they can return without unnecessary obstacles (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.5.2 Role of the Counseling Unit**

Teacher participants acknowledged the significance of the school's existing support systems. Teacher 1 noted:

The school has provided access to a counselling unit with professional counselors for student mothers, which is a significant support system. They also have access to flexible scheduling options to help manage their academic and motherhood responsibilities effectively (Field Data, 2022)

According to some teacher participants, this recognition highlights the importance of emotional support and flexible scheduling, which positively impacts the well-being and academic performance of teenage mothers. Teacher 2 emphasized:

I've seen improvements in academic performance among student mothers who have utilized these support systems. They appear less stressed and more focused during class. The emotional support they receive from the counselor is vital for their well-being (Field Data, 2022)

Some student participants provided insights into the role of the counseling unit. They acknowledged that while the counseling unit provides essential emotional support, it also underlines the absence of tailored programs for teenage mothers within the school.

According to TM C:

The issue is, the school doesn't have specific programs for teenage mothers, but I've found the counseling unit to be a source of encouragement and advice. They're always ready to listen and offer emotional support, which keeps me going when things get tough (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.5.3 Accommodating Teachers**

Some teenage mothers emphasized the supportive role played by specific teachers: In the view of TM A, she stated:

Well, the school doesn't have a lot in place. However, there are a few teachers who understand our situation, and they've been really helpful. They go the extra mile to make themselves available after regular class hours to explain things to us. It's been a lifeline when we miss class due to our responsibilities as mothers. (Field Data, 2022)

Similarly, TM B noted:

Some teachers have been accommodating when it comes to missed classes due to childcare emergencies. They understand that as a mother, unexpected situations can arise, and they work with me to catch up on missed coursework (Field Data, 2022)

TM C discussed specific instances where the school demonstrated accommodation:

I remember a time when I had a particularly tough day with my baby, and I couldn't attend a crucial class. I informed my teacher about the situation when I reported the following week and she understood my plight and gave me the materials I missed and even offered to schedule extra time for me to go through the lesson (Field Data, 2022)

#### ***4.5.4 Peer Support and Study Groups***

The study findings unveiled the profound nature of peer support among student mothers, who openly shared their personal experiences.

These narratives illuminated the diverse and multifaceted ways in which this network of support significantly contributes to their overall educational journey. Notably, the establishment of study groups and the sharing of class notes and materials, exemplified by TM C, serve as a valuable academic safety net. TM C noted:

We often form study groups among us, which really helps. We share notes and study materials, so if one of us misses a class because of childcare, we can still stay updated with the coursework. It's like having a backup system in place (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.5.5 Peer Encouragement and Parenting Advice**

Furthermore, the teenage mother participants emphasized the significance of emotional support, as articulated by TM J. Within their closely-knit group, they provide one another with emotional solace, attentively listening to each other's

challenges, offering guidance, and simply being a supportive presence. TM J shared the following:

Sometimes, it's not just about the academics. We provide emotional support. We listen to each other's struggles and offer advice or simply a shoulder to lean on. It makes a huge difference in staying motivated and positive (Field Data, 2022)

Among the teenage mothers, the study revealed that peer encouragement and motivation played a pivotal role in the experiences of student mothers, a sentiment expressed by five participants. This sentiment is underscored by TM D, who emphasized that within their group, they actively exchange valuable parenting tips and tricks. TM D noted:

We exchange parenting tips and tricks. We're all going through similar situations, so we help each other with advice on managing our babies' needs, schedules, and development. It's like a little parenting club within our group (Field Data, 2022)

#### **4.5.6 Family Support and Collaboration**

A prominent theme that emerges from the parental perspective in the study is the theme of "Family Support and Collaboration." Four parent participants underscored the significance of offering love, care, and active involvement in assisting their adolescent daughters in harmonizing their educational pursuits and motherhood responsibilities. This collective support was exemplified in a multitude of ways, with parents taking turns to oversee their daughters' infants and contributing to domestic chores.

In the words of Parent, A:

We demonstrate our love and care. While she's at school, we alternate in looking after her baby. She devotes herself to her studies during the baby's nap times, and we provide assistance with household tasks (Field Data, 2022)

Parent B expanded upon the idea, stating:

We restructured our daily routines to align with her school schedule. We also contribute to caring for her child while she's engaged in her studies. Collaboration and teamwork play a pivotal role in this dynamic (Field Data, 2022)

Similarly, Parent C emphasized their role in providing emotional support and practical assistance, noting,

We offer reassurance and counsel to alleviate her stress. We actively participate in household chores and ensure that she has the time and space to concentrate on her studies.

#### **4.5.7 Family Adaptation and Assistance**

Parents shared insights into their adaptation to the unique situation of their daughters being adolescent student mothers, highlighting their commitment to being flexible and creating a supportive environment that accommodates the needs of their daughters and grandchildren. For instance, Parent D emphasized the adaptability she has embraced, stating,

I've learned to be flexible and put her education first. We help take care of her baby when she's in class and ensure she gets time for self-study (Field Data, 2022)

Parent E underscored her provision of financial support and the assurance that her home serves as a safe and supportive space, stating:

I provide financial support and make sure she has what she needs. Our home is a safe and supportive place, and we are always there to help (Field Data, 2022)

This financial assistance and the establishment of a secure home environment offer crucial backing for their daughter's educational journey.

#### **4.5.8 Challenges with School Policies and Need for External Support**

A prominent theme that emerged from the study was the challenges associated with school policies and the need for external support in managing academic and

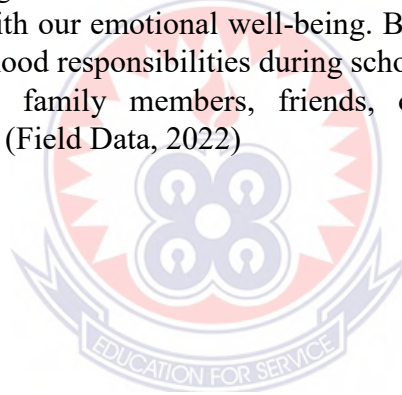
motherhood responsibilities. Teenage mothers, as well as teacher participants, highlighted the school's stringent policy that prohibits babies from being on campus.

According to Teacher 4:

Babies are not allowed on campus, except for day students who can continue their maternal duties at home. Boarders do not have their babies with them on campus but can check on them at home when necessary (Field Data, 2022)

This policy posed a significant challenge for teenage mothers, such as TM F, who expressed her concern:

To be honest, our school doesn't allow us to bring our babies with us. It's a strict policy, and it can be challenging. So, we don't have on-site childcare or the ability to have our babies with us during the school day. We do get some encouragement and advice from the counseling unit, which helps with our emotional well-being. But for managing our motherhood responsibilities during school hours, we mainly rely on family members, friends, or outside daycare services (Field Data, 2022)



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study key findings, the conclusions drawn, and recommendations made. Additionally, it identifies potential areas for future research. In the pursuit of understanding the challenges and support systems experienced by adolescent student mothers at Bawjiase Senior High School in the Central Region of Ghana. The study employed an interpretivist research paradigm.

This research paradigm was complemented by a qualitative research approach, which sought to delve into the lived experiences of teenage student mothers and their academic journeys within the school environment. The study's specific objectives encompassed exploring the factors underlying adolescent pregnancy, identifying the challenges faced by adolescent student mothers, assessing the impact of teenage motherhood on academic performance, and evaluating the support systems available to them.

In-depth interviews served as the primary method of data collection, involving 12 teenage student mothers, 5 teachers, and 5 parents. These participants were selected through a purposive and snowball sampling technique, ensuring the relevance and richness of the data collected. Each interview, lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes, was recorded, transcribed, and subjected to thematic analysis.

#### 5.1 Key Findings

1. The study revealed a spectrum of key factors contributing to adolescent pregnancies among students. They include encompass the absence of comprehensive sex education, economic hardships, peer pressure, conformity

to cultural norms, the influence of social media exposure, and the struggles related to substance use and mental health issues.

2. The study identified an array of substantial challenges faced by adolescent student mothers. These encompassed social stigma, stemming from societal judgment and stereotypes, lack of sufficient childcare support, financial hardships resulting from limited resources, emotional stress due to the constant balancing of academic and motherhood responsibilities, physical health issues such as fatigue and discomfort, maternal role inefficiencies, which included cognitive and practical skill challenges, the increasing weight of responsibilities, and the persistent internal conflicts arising from the delicate balance of being both students and mothers. These challenges collectively painted a comprehensive picture of the multifaceted obstacles that these young mothers navigate in their educational journey.
3. Student mothers consistently grappled with difficulties in academic time management, concentration, and sleep deprivation, all of which had adverse effects on their academic achievements. Additionally, the pressure to excel for the benefit of their children further compounded their academic responsibilities. Teachers corroborated these challenges, noting increased absenteeism, concentration difficulties, and a marked decline in the overall academic performance of teenage student mothers.
4. The study revealed a range of support systems aimed at assisting student mothers in their educational journey at the Bawjiase Senior High School. These support mechanisms encompassed a smooth re-admission process for student mothers returning to school after childbirth, the counseling unit's role



in delivering emotional support and flexible scheduling options, accommodating teachers who understood the unique challenges faced by student mothers, the formation of peer support networks and study groups among student mothers, the exchange of peer encouragement and parenting tips within this network, and substantial family support and collaboration from parents who actively engaged in assisting their daughters in balancing motherhood responsibilities with education.

5. Nonetheless, certain challenges were revealed due to school policies that prohibited babies from being on campus, necessitating external support arrangements.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The conclusions are based on the study objectives and major or key findings.

1. Adolescent student mothers confront a wide range of challenges in their pursuit of education. These obstacles encompass the negative impact of social stigma, the absence of comprehensive support systems, the adverse effects of teenage motherhood on academic performance, and the various available support mechanisms.
2. These young mothers face intricate challenges that necessitate a deeper understanding as the initial step toward providing the essential support and resources for their empowerment.

This study highlights the dire need for the provision of on-campus childcare services, flexibility in school schedules, and mentorship programs tailored to the distinct challenges of teenage mothers. By embracing these measures, we can collectively work towards breaking the cycle of limited educational opportunities for these young mothers, ensuring their access to quality education, and nurturing an environment

where they can thrive academically and personally. By addressing their unique needs, we pave the way for a generation of educated, empowered women who can contribute significantly to their communities, breaking the cycle of early pregnancies, and ultimately, uplifting society as a whole.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to address the challenges faced by adolescent student mothers and improve their overall wellbeing and educational outcomes:

1. The Ministry of Education (MoE) should take the lead in developing and implementing comprehensive sex education programs in all educational institutions. This initiative should include age-appropriate curricula and resources that address issues related to sexual health, family planning, and responsible decision-making.
2. The Conference of Heads of Assisted Senior High Schools (CHASS) should work in collaboration with MoE to implement flexible scheduling options for student mothers in their member schools. This might involve offering remedial classes or developing part-time schooling programs to accommodate the needs of adolescent mothers.
3. Non-Governmental Organisations should be contacted to provide funding and expertise to support the mental health and counseling services recommended for student mothers. They can also collaborate with schools to organize awareness campaigns, workshops, and training sessions aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination against adolescent mothers.
4. A collective effort from all stakeholders, including CHASS MoE, GES, and

NGOs, should be directed towards creating an environment where adolescent mothers are not stigmatized. This can be achieved through educational campaigns, workshops, and policies that promote empathy, understanding, and inclusivity.

5. NGOs can collaborate with the MoE and GES to establish external support systems that provide resources and services for adolescent mothers. This may include partnerships with organizations that offer parenting classes, financial assistance, and childcare services.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

The study is not without its limitations. Firstly, the sample size is relatively small, which is a common limitation in qualitative research. Secondly, there is a possibility of participants providing inaccurate or socially desirable responses during the interviews, which is an inherent challenge in qualitative studies. Additionally, the time and resource constraints associated with conducting fieldwork and interviews in the study area were limitations. Moreover, the willingness of participants to engage in lengthy interviews was a potential challenge. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the experiences of teenage mothers in senior high schools.

#### **5.4 Suggestion for Further Studies**

Further studies can investigate the long-term educational and socioeconomic outcomes of adolescent student mothers to assess the lasting impact of their experiences and the effectiveness of support systems. Future research should explore cross-cultural differences in the experiences of adolescent student mothers, considering variations in societal norms, educational policies, and support structures across different countries. An in-depth examination of mental health interventions and their impact on the wellbeing and academic performance of adolescent student

mothers is also warranted, providing insights into effective strategies for promoting their mental health.



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## APPENDIX A INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT MOTHERS

### Section A- Socio-demographic Characteristics

Gender : \_\_\_\_\_

Age Range : \_\_\_\_\_

Age at Childbirth : \_\_\_\_\_

High School Class : \_\_\_\_\_

Student Status : \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status : \_\_\_\_\_

### Section B- Understanding the Experiences of Adolescent Student Mothers

#### ❖ Objective 1 Factors Underlying Adolescent Pregnancy

1. Can you share your personal experience and the circumstances that led to your adolescent pregnancy while you were at Bawjiase Senior High School?
2. Were there specific factors or challenges within the school environment that contributed to your pregnancy?
3. How do you think the school's policies and support systems could be improved to address these underlying factors?

#### ❖ Objective 2 Specific Challenges Faced by Adolescent Student Mothers

4. Could you describe the specific challenges you encountered as an adolescent student mother at Bawjiase Senior High School?
5. Are there any specific instances or situations that stand out as particularly challenging during your time at the school?

#### ❖ Objective 3 Influence of Teenage Motherhood on Academic Performance

6. How has being a teenage mother affected your academic performance at Bawjiase Senior High School?
7. What challenges have you faced in keeping up with your studies while taking care of your child?
8. Have you noticed any changes in your grades or attendance since becoming a mother?

❖ **Objective 4 Various Support Systems for Adolescent Student Mothers**

9. What support systems or services have you personally utilized within the school to help you manage your academic and motherhood responsibilities?
10. Can you describe any specific instances where the school has been accommodating or supportive of your situation?
11. What support or accommodations do you feel would help improve your academic performance as a teenage mother?





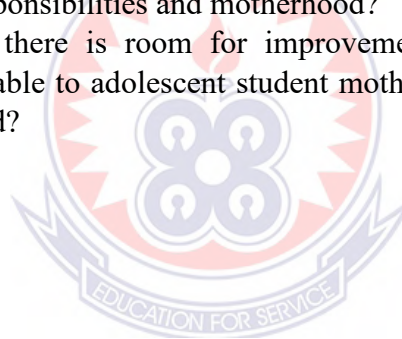
## APPENDIX B INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS

### Section A- Socio-demographic Characteristics

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section B- Parental Perspectives on the Challenges Faced by Adolescent Mothers and Their Support Systems at Bawjiase Senior High School

1. Could you share your thoughts on the challenges that your daughter, as an adolescent mother, has faced while attending Bawjiase Senior High School?
2. Have you noticed any specific challenges that she has encountered related to her studies or personal life while being a student mother?
3. In your view, what types of support systems or resources are available to assist adolescent student mothers at the school?
4. Have you been involved in seeking or providing support to your daughter during her high school journey as a teenage mother?
5. How do you see your role as a parent in helping your daughter balance her educational responsibilities and motherhood?
6. Do you think there is room for improvement in the support systems or resources available to adolescent student mothers, and if so, what changes do you recommend?



## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

#### Section A- Socio-demographic Characteristics

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age Range: \_\_\_\_\_

Role in Education: \_\_\_\_\_

#### SECTION B - Influence of Teenage Motherhood on Academic Performance of Adolescent Student Mothers

1. Have you observed any changes in the academic performance of student mothers since they became teenage mothers?
2. Are there specific challenges that you've noticed in their academic progress due to their motherhood responsibilities?
3. In your experience, what support strategies or accommodations, if any, have been effective in helping student mothers maintain their academic performance?
4. What support systems or resources are available within the school to assist adolescent student mothers in balancing their academic and motherhood responsibilities?
5. Have you observed any school initiatives or programs that have been particularly beneficial to student mothers?
6. How has the school environment contributed to creating a supportive atmosphere for teenage mothers?
7. In your opinion, are there any areas where the school could improve its support for adolescent student mothers?

## APPENDIX D

### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

