

**TEENAGE MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATIONAL
SETTINGS: AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE**

by

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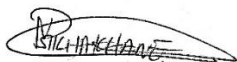
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Teenage Mothers' Experiences in Mainstream Educational Settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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- My ancestors for their enduring protection throughout this journey. I am deeply indebted to them.
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Mrs Hlengiwe Zondo, who, despite being a young mother herself, remained persistent and determined to create a better life for me. Your strength, courage, and unwavering love have shaped the woman I am today. I also dedicate this work to my late grandmother, MaNxumalo Sikhakhane, whose continuous love and support flowed through my mother to me, keeping us grounded, guided, and strong. This achievement is a reflection of the foundation you both built.

ABSTRACT

Teenage motherhood had become a major problem in South Africa, where the majority of teenage mothers and their children were placed in precarious circumstances, which caused most of them to drop out of school. The study aimed to explore teenage mothers' understanding of education and teenage pregnancy, explore the challenges they experienced in mainstream educational settings, and explore the support available to them from schools, families, and communities within mainstream educational settings. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research methodology. The participants were purposefully selected to elicit rich and informative insights. They were fifteen teenage mothers aged between 13–19 years who were enrolled in schools and lived within the confines of the UMzinyathi district, Nqutu town. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews with individual participants and two focus group discussions with selected participants from the participating schools. The interviews were face-to-face, guided by open-ended questions. The findings revealed that there was a high level of stigma towards teenage mothers and inadequate educational support. The study showed that teenage mothers were aware of how pregnancy affected their education and the challenge of balancing school with parenting. Their academic performance suffered due to these dual responsibilities, which were further exacerbated by financial issues and limited support services. The study recommended comprehensive support systems to assist teenage mothers within educational environments. Schools were advised to integrate awareness campaigns and peer education programs to reduce stigma for teenage mothers. Accessible healthcare, social services, and inclusive education workshops for teachers, along with government day-care programs, were considered essential to lower absenteeism and ensure equal educational opportunities.

Key terms: educational setting; inclusion; inclusive education; mainstream education; stigma; support; teenage motherhood; teenage pregnancy

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms/Abbreviations	Full Form
DSD	Department of Social Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
P.	Participant
Sch.	School
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation
Yrs.	Years

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings. The study explored how teenage mothers were supported and accommodated in inclusive education settings or learning environments in KwaZulu-Natal province, Mzinyathi district. In this study, the concept "inclusive educational settings" refers to mainstream schools that are expected, in line with Education White Paper 6 (2001), to accommodate and support all learners regardless of their educational or social barriers, including teenage mothers. This chapter covered the background to the study, statement of the problem, sub-research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, rationale for the study, theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, delimitation of the study, definition of terms, and chapter outlines.

Teenage is a stage of development in childhood that is ranging from thirteen to nineteen years of age. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024), revealed that since 2019, it was estimated that about 21 million girls aged 15–19 years in developing regions became pregnant and approximately 12 million of them gave birth annually. From the social problem of teenage pregnancy, which was found to be alarming, teenagers often did not complete the stage of childhood but became parents in their early stages of development. It was often said that there were consequences of being a teenage parent that included the destruction of the future of teenagers (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018).

Some other challenges related to teenage parenting may have included handling a situation where people around them were judging teenage mothers in society (Dimo, 2019). This may have affected how they parented their children. Musyima, Mutiso, Nyamia, ebuenyi and Ndetie (2020) believed rejection from families may have led to depression and/or other related problems.

More experiences pointed out by some mothers in the study conducted by Govender, Naidoo and Taylor (2020) were the integration of raising and looking after the baby and

finishing schooling. Support from family, school, friends and services in the community may have helped the teenage mothers to overcome the challenges they came across in parenting. Lack of education and information about reproduction and peer pressure was assumed to have been the cause that most teenagers became parents in their teenage years.

Teenage mothers, according to Laurenzi, Gordon, Abrahams, Du Toit, Bradshaw, Brand, Melendez-Torres, Tomlinson, Ross, Servili and Carvajal-Aguirre (2020) were vulnerable to many social problems more than usual. Moreover, Chulakarn and Chaimongkol (2021) were of the view that teenage mothers were more likely to lack knowledge about upbringing of their children when compared to older parents. More experiences of teenage motherhood needed to be investigated.

In many developed countries such as North America and Western Europe, teenage motherhood was associated with many social issues, which included amongst others, lower educational levels and higher rate of poverty (Save a Child report, 2011). In these developed regions, teenage mothers tended to be unmarried, and adolescent births were seen as an issue and carried a social stigma in many communities and cultures. Teenage motherhood in these countries was usually outside marriage and not welcome by family and society (Save a Child report, 2011).

Teenage motherhood was associated with many experiences which may have been positive or negative (Kumi-Kyereme, Mariwah & Tampah-Naah, 2022). Becoming a teenage mother came with several difficulties, such as the inability to pursue further education (Kumi-Kyereme et al., 2022).

Additionally, the study by Tull (2020) in Kenya indicated that teenage mothers might return to school after giving birth. Tull (2020) believed that girls who left school early due to teen pregnancy were unfairly barred from the educational system. The re-entry policy may have been implemented in Kenyan schools to promote inclusive education and boosted the enrolment of girls, but if the policy were disregarded and unseen, it would not achieve its goal of promoting social justice. Her comprehension of how the re-entry policy

for girls was put into practice was crucial since it aimed to end the social injustice or exclusion of girls from Kenya's educational system.

According to Naidoo, Muthukrishna, and Nkabinde (2021), who performed their study in KwaZulu- Natal, asserted that teenage motherhood had been framed as an economic and social concern in South Africa, they discovered that there had been an increase in awareness of this topic in recent years. These were the result of a narrative inquiry conducted with seven adolescent mothers in a rural secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, on their experiences with both motherhood and schooling. The study shed light on how young mothers positioned themselves through their own tales, and how prevailing social narratives positioned them.

According to the findings, prevailing pathologising discourses about deviance, shame, and stigma impacted on the social realities of young mothers, who only got a little assistance from the school in navigating barriers to curriculum access and quality education. Although members of the community and extended families offered support networks, these were brittle in an environment of deprivation and poverty. The results of the study conducted by Naidoo et al. (2021) did, however, demonstrate that young mothers exhibited resilience and agency in the ways they negotiated challenges and committed to finishing their secondary education, even while teenage motherhood and parenting were still stigmatised in the specific educational setting.

Furthermore, the study *“The journey into motherhood and schooling: narratives of teenage mothers in the South African context”*, promoted interventions that were framed by a social justice education agenda to support young mothers who had returned to school (Naidoo et al. 2021). A different study conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal Ugu district by Govender et al. (2020), discovered that teenage mothers also had financial difficulties, challenges enrolling their children in school, and social shame.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teenage motherhood continues to affect the educational experiences of many school-going learners in South Africa. Although policies such as the South African Schools Act

and the DBE learner pregnancy guidelines promote access to education for pregnant learners and teenage mothers, many still experience stigma, absenteeism, poor academic performance, and limited educational support in mainstream schools. Existing studies have focused largely on teenage pregnancy as a social problem; however, limited research has explored how teenage mothers experience inclusion and support within mainstream educational settings, particularly in rural KwaZulu-Natal schools. This study, therefore, sought to explore teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings from an inclusive education perspective. Recent studies continue to demonstrate that teenage motherhood remains a challenge within South African schools. According to Mkhize and Cele (2025), teenage mothers in rural schools continue to experience interrupted learning, emotional distress, and exclusion from peer networks. Similarly, Dlamini and Ndlovu (2026) found that school-going teenage mothers often struggle to balance motherhood and academic responsibilities due to insufficient institutional support systems.

Teenage motherhood is associated with many experiences which may be positive or negative (Kumi-Kyereme, Mariwah & Tampah-Naah, 2022). Becoming a teenage mother comes with several challenges, such as the inability to pursue further education (Kumi-Kyereme et al., 2022). Teenage mothers are vulnerable to many social problems more than usual (Laurenziet al., 2020). The issue of teenage parenthood in South Africa has risen drastically with most teenage mothers and their children found in vulnerable situations leading to most of them dropping out of school. There is a huge gap between their lives at home and at school, for instance, some teenage mothers are obliged to provide proper health care for their children by taking them to clinics regularly. They are also mandated to ensure that their children are registered with Home Affairs and are provided with their daily physiological needs. Most of these requirements are done during school days, which means that teenage mothers who do not have extra support at home would have to be absent from school on regular basis. This study attempted to answer the following main research question:

What are teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings?

1.3 SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To answer the study's main research question, the following sub-research questions were posed:

1. How do teenage mothers understand education and teenage pregnancy?
2. What challenges do teenage mothers experience in inclusive mainstream educational settings?
3. What support is available for the teenage mothers in inclusive mainstream educational settings?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore teenage mothers' understanding of education and teenage pregnancy.
2. Investigate the challenges that are experienced by teenage mothers in inclusive educational settings.
3. To explore the support that is available for teenage mothers in inclusive educational settings.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Many government stakeholders, including the Department of Education, will benefit from the findings of this study because teachers would learn how to deal with situations involving teenage mothers in the mainstream inclusive educational setting. The issues that teenage mothers are encountering would be made known to school stakeholders, such as the School Governing Body (SGB), parents, teachers, School Management Team (SMT), and the Department of Education (DoE), and they would be urged to support them.

The information from this study may be used by the authorities and policymakers in the DoE to develop policies that would require full inclusion of adolescent mothers in educational settings. Other researchers may also utilise this study's findings as a starting point for additional research in the field.

The study may be used by other departments, such as Social Development, to determine how best to assist teens. The Department of Health may also develop policies to help teen mothers maintain their postpartum and infant health needs without interfering with their time in school.

1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The concept “rationale” is best defined by Creswell (2018:102), providing a systematic justification of the extent of the research problem, its pervasiveness and relevance in the current matrix of other social and experiential problems. In simple terms, rationale for the study refers to what motivates the researcher to undertake a specific study. The interest to undertake a study can stem from simple curiosity, from hunch or an intuition, personal experience, professional experience or involvement in the area (Blaike & Priest: 2019). The present researcher had a child at a young age while in Grade 12. The experience of raising a child while studying perpetuated her interest in embarking on this study and to further understand the phenomenon of inclusivity as she identified the gap during secondary school journey as a teenage mother. The researcher was of the view that much still needed to be done to reach full inclusivity in the educational setting in South Africa, as there had not been support in schools to ensure teenage mothers were included within the learning context.

The researcher’s career choice within the field of education, as an educator, was influenced by her observation in a community wherein there was a high dropout rate among teenage mothers and those who continued with schooling, their performance mostly dropped drastically. Lack of support among teenage mothers by schools had been identified by Govender et al., (2020) in their study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal. They highlighted the challenging experiences faced by teenage mothers in balancing schooling and motherhood, and most were compelled to discontinue their formal education due to insufficient institutional support, which rendered continued enrollment unsustainable.

While conducting a literature review to gain familiarity with the existing scholarship on teenage motherhood as a social phenomenon, the researcher observed a notable gap that there were no studies that directly addressed the inclusion of teenage mothers. This

absence was particularly significant, given that teenage mothers were frequently disadvantaged by the circumstances surrounding early parenthood.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework offers a reliable foundation from which the research problem could be appropriately understood (Nkoane and Phori, 2019). This study was informed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory (1979):

Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems

This ecological systems theory offers a helpful framework for comprehending the family as an ever-evolving social unit whose members must constantly accept and adjust to both internal and external constraints (Ahmed 2024). Bronfenbrenner indicates that the theory offers a dynamic rather than static perspective of how family's function and the influence that family members have on one another, and that it is interactive and reciprocal, in response to the question on the difficulties faced by teen mothers. The obstacles that teen mothers face at home, at school, and in the community are related to using this idea. According to Darling, Cassidy and Ballard (2022), happy families can handle change, speak frequently, get along well, and work effectively together. Understanding the family also entails considering how it functions within a wider environment. For example, the dynamics of family life are influenced by the dynamics of the extended family, the community, and the neighborhood. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), the school becomes a component of the larger milieu in which families operate.

The ecological model developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is appropriate for this study since it includes several levels of analysis, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

- **Microsystem**

The family, education, and workplaces are all parts of the microsystem, which has a direct impact on the individual. The relationships between students and teachers are just two examples of the microsystems' structures that directly present difficulties to the

adolescent mother. Numerous variables contribute to the difficulties teen mothers experience in their academic lives (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

- **Mesosystems**

According to Bronfenbrenner, these microsystems' components are connected to the mesosystem through interactions with teachers and family members. The links between the microsystems' structures and other structures are part of the mesosystem. The teen mother faces difficulty at school because of her relationships and interactions with neighbors, school friends, and church members.

- **Exosystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1998) this level entails the external environments that affect an individual indirectly, without direct involvement, for example, a person affected by parents' workplace or social networks, community resources or lack of, government policies or economic systems and media influences.

- **Macrosystem**

Broader neighborhood and community elements that have an impact on families inside the macrosystem, which consists of cultural, political, and economic pressures, are included in the exosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1993). The difficulties faced by teen mothers can be appreciated considering this.

- **Chronosystem**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory highlights how macrosystem factors such as policies, cultural norms, and resource availability, flow down to influence individual development. For adolescent mothers, these structural and cultural conditions create significant barriers, particularly within educational contexts. The chronosystem adds a temporal dimension, recognizing that both personal changes like puberty, family loss and broader sociocultural shifts like evolving gender roles, media influences, socioeconomic transitions, shape experiences over time. Yang and Sanborn (2021) emphasize that the

chronosystem accounts for both continuity and change in individual traits and environmental conditions, including the quickening pace of daily life.

This study argues that applying systems theory to this study of teen mothers emphasizes the interplay between immediate microsystems, for example, family, school, peers and larger societal structures. The study further argues that the challenges faced by young mothers in educational settings emerge from a complex interaction of personal development, family dynamics, institutional practices, policy frameworks, and shifting cultural standards.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the USA, it seems teenage pregnancy and teenage parenthood, whether inside or outside of marriage, was an unacceptable and a modern social problem since the 1970's (Save a child report, 2011). In developing countries, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO 2019), the rate of teenagers who are giving birth is alarming because almost ninety-five percent of teenage births are experienced.

According to the World Health Organization (2019), nearly sixteen million adolescent girls aged fifteen to nineteen, along with girls under sixteen, give birth annually in developing regions. This phenomenon is not confined to low-income countries alone but is also evident in middle- and high-income contexts, underscoring its global relevance. Teenage motherhood often coincides with limited educational attainment, which restricts the acquisition of skills necessary for stable employment. As a result, young mothers face systemic barriers to economic participation, perpetuating cycles of poverty across generations. The United Nations Population Fund (2013) emphasizes that this dynamic reinforces structural inequalities, as diminished opportunities for teenage parents hinder social mobility and exacerbate socioeconomic disparities. Thus, adolescent pregnancy is not merely a health issue but a critical factor in sustaining poverty and inequality worldwide.

The rate of teenage parenthood in some African countries is found to be high and the factors influencing this challenge are under research investigations to design appropriate

interventions (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). Furthermore, Yakubu and Salisu (2018) mention that most of the African countries, especially in sub-Saharan more female teenage parents are living in high poverty-stricken homes. In some of the African countries in the rural areas mostly in developing countries, teenagers get married at a younger age and become parents in their teen years (UNFPA, 2013). According to Kassa, Anowajolu and Yalew (2018) these challenges are compounded by forced marriages out of their consent.

According to the World Health Organization (2018), adolescent mothers often experience profound psychological and social turmoil. In moments of heightened anxiety, they may resort to impulsive or ill-considered decisions that carry long-term consequences. Such circumstances can significantly influence their parenting practices and, ultimately, the developmental environment provided for their children.

Teenage mothers face challenges in managing motherhood and learning but remain hopeful and determined to succeed. A study by Dhaka and Musese (2019) found that teenage mothers often experience feelings of stress, regret, and guilt. Many parents are unemployed or from low-income households, leading to feelings of regret for falling pregnant at a young age. Teenage mothers also feel guilty for leaving their children at home, which affects their concentration and performance in school.

South Africa has a significant teenage birth problem, with 97,000 teenage mothers giving birth in 2017. The number of female teenage parents is increasing, with a 78% rise in 2018 in Mpumalanga. The high percentage of teenage births is attributed to attitudes towards contraceptives and social pressure. Some observers suggest that government support grants may be an incentive for young girls to give birth.

The findings of Naidoo, Muthukrishna, and Nkabinde (2019) shed light on the challenges faced by teenage mothers in South Africa, revealing pervasive narratives of deviance, shame, and stigma that shape their social realities. While policy frameworks such as the South African Schools Act of 1996 and the Bill of Rights protect the reproductive rights of teenage mothers, implementation gaps persist, leading to continued marginalization within the education system. As highlighted by Amod, Halana, and Smith (2021), teenage

mothers often encounter stigmatization from teachers, healthcare staff, and community members, hindering their access to education and support services.

The overall lack of support from caregivers, school managers, and educators exacerbates the difficulties faced by teenage mothers in accessing education. Malatji et al. (2023) emphasized the inadequacy of support mechanisms, which often fall short of legislative and policy requirements.

However, there are instances of educators showing empathy and providing support to teenage mothers reintegrating into the school system after pregnancy. Despite the existence of sympathetic educators, the level of support provided remains inconsistent and discretionary, failing to meet the needs of teenage mothers striving to complete their education amidst the challenges of motherhood.

Malatji, Dube, Nkala-Dlamini, and Shumba (2023) found that some educators offered extended consultation times and subject-specific advice to facilitate the reintegration process. Similarly, Bhana et al. (2020) reported educators demonstrating understanding and support for learners with pregnancy-related challenges, resulting in improved academic performance.

Again, Inclusive Education initiatives strive to integrate learners with various learning barriers into mainstream educational settings. Educators play a crucial role in identifying and addressing the needs of teenage mothers within the school environment, offering support to ensure their inclusion in the curriculum and overcoming obstacles associated with parenthood. However, exclusionary practices extend beyond South Africa, as evidenced by Ruzibiza's (2021) study on pregnant teenagers and teen mothers in Mahama refugee camp, Rwanda. Despite policies encouraging pregnant teenagers to continue their education, many still face dropout rates due to societal stigmatization and lack of adequate support.

There is a lack of research on teenage parenthood and inclusive education in South Africa, and female teenage parents are often single-handedly raised due to denial and rejection. They are also unemployable due to their child status.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Daniel, Harland and Wald (2024) highlight research methodology as the procedures that are followed in the process of implementing a research plan.

1.9.1 Research Approach

This study employed the qualitative research approach, from which the researcher got the meaning through the experiences of teenage mothers on educational support, inclusion in educational setting and the challenges they are facing. In this qualitative research approach, data was interpreted holistically inclusive of the participants as a totality rather than focusing on one entity. For example, when the researcher drew upon individuals experience, the phenomenon under study became embedded in the breadth of their knowledge and in the ways, they perceived and defined themselves. Moreover, Ezer, and Aksüt (2021) add that qualitative research approach expresses the study of human behaviour and attitudes within their natural contexts.

1.9.2 Research Design

Qualitative research design was used in this study to investigate teenage mothers' experiences in inclusive educational settings. A study's design has a purpose to make sure the data collected answered the research question as clearly and effectively as feasible (Quashie, 2022:2). According to Tomaszewski, Zarestky and Gonzalez (2020) the purpose of qualitative research, the role of the researcher, the stages of the research, and methods of data analysis should, be defined either explicitly or implicitly.

This study employed phenomenological and descriptive research designs. A phenomenological research design is concerned with the issue of how people interpret their surroundings and how the philosopher should exclude perceptions from their interpretation of those surroundings (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2020). According to Siedlecki

(2020), the descriptive design is the general description of the subjects of the study. The current researcher generated concepts about the subject and characterized the phenomenon under study using a descriptive research design (Siedlecki, 2020).

1.9.3 Population and Sampling

Population

Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020) define population as the primary source of data collection where information is gathered through observation and/or interviews. According to Casteel and Bridier (2021), from a population, a researcher could recruit the participants where they would conduct a pilot, testing the research tool.

Sampling

A sample refers to a small group of research participants selected from a large group, which is the population, with the view to determining the characteristics of the large group (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). Moreso, Lakens (2022) points out that the sample size is an important feature of any study in which the goal is to make conclusion about a population. From the larger population, a sample of teenage mothers was selected from the areas of Umzinyathi district, Nqutu town in Kwa-Zulu Natal province. The researcher's choice of this area was influenced by the trend of teenage pregnancy she has noticed during her teaching practice.

1.9.4 Data Collection Technique

The method of data collection is defined by Taherdoost (2021) as a process of gathering information and measuring it, whereby research questions are answered and the results are evaluated. In addition, Stenius (2021) asserts that the goal of data collection is to capture evidence that translates to rich data analysis and allows the building of a convincing and credible answer to questions that are being posed. This study used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) as data collection methods, discussed in full in Chapter 3 of this study.

1.9.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis is used to answer the research question and to form theories for future references. The method of data analysis involves making sense of the data collected. It involves interpreting and converting useful data. This study followed Tesch's eight steps of data analysis as described by Chewe and Mathibe-Neke (2024). It was important for this researcher to be familiar with the data and go deeper into understanding it (Mezmir 2020). Prior to data analysis, the researcher transcribed all the audio recorded interviews verbatim and transcribed data to identify the themes, sub-themes, and categories that emerged from the data.

1.9.6 Ethical Considerations

Lebelo (2021) defines ethics as "a set of rules by which individuals and societies maintain moral standards in their lives" because ethics informs our moral decisions when doing research studies. The following elements were used in this study: informed consent and assent, confidentiality and anonymity, beneficence, and participant debriefing. Informed consent is defined by Maluleke, Worku and Muchie (2023) as the way of ensuring that the participants who part-take in the study comprehend what they are consenting to participate in. In addition, Maluleke et al. (2023) assert that before they participate in the research study, they should be informed about the study for them to consent. Brynard et al., as cited in Van Zyl (2020), highlights the ethical imperative that all participants must be fully informed about the anticipated procedures and potential outcomes of the study. Furthermore, they highlight that participants are required to provide written consent, signifying their authorization for the researcher to proceed. More detail about ethical considerations would be provided in chapter 3 of this study.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study faced several challenges that limited the knowledge that could be gathered about teenage mothers attending school. Many of them were unavailable during working hours because they were in class, and after school they often had household responsibilities that prevented them from participating in interviews. This created

significant setbacks for the research. Even when interviews were scheduled during school holidays, some participants felt that their free time was being taken away—time they needed for household chores or to spend with their children. On top of these scheduling difficulties, the researcher also struggled with financial constraints, as traveling from one school to another for interviews proved costly.

1.10.1 Overcoming the Limitations

The researcher reduced participant concerns by maintaining punctuality during interviews and consistently honoring scheduled appointments. By working efficiently, she managed to offset the reduced time caused by school closures, ensuring that the study still yielded sufficient and relevant data. To keep participants comfortable, she accommodated those who needed to reschedule their interviews. Despite financial constraints, she remained committed to the project and successfully obtained bursaries provided by the hosting institution.

1.11 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal's UMzinyathi district at the Nqutu high schools and the outcomes were not generalized to the entire district or province. The remote location of Nqutu may have had an impact on adolescent mothers' perceptions of inclusivity in educational settings. The study's use of the qualitative research method also limited the information gathered, as opposed to the use of mixed methods where a wider range of information would have been gathered.

1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts, central to the research topic, were clarified to enhance understanding of the entire research process.

1.12.1 Teenagers

The concept 'teenage' is defined as a transition stage from childhood to adulthood, which generates issues of independence and self-identity (Ando, Nishida, Yamasaki, Koike, Morimoto Hoshino Kanata Fujikawa, Endo, Usami and Furukawa 2019).

Ochen Chi and Lawoko (2019) define a teenager/ adolescent as ranging between the ages of thirteen and nineteen years, where these individuals are mostly independent of parental approval. Furthermore, they argue that some of the individuals who were in the late teenager are fully self-supporting with children and are classified as young adults (Nap, Hoefman, de Jong, Lovink, Glimmerveen, Lewis and Hanson 2020). In the context of this study, teenagers refer to teen mothers who are still attending school.

1.12.2. Teenage Parents

Ochen Chi and Lawoko (2019) define a teenage parent as a person with a child who is between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, belongs to a high-risk group, and can benefit from parental assistance. Teenage parents are regarded by Cook and Cameron (2020) as being more susceptible to social issues than usual. Cook and Cameron (2020) use the terms "teen parent " and "adolescent parent" interchangeably.

For this study, a teen parent is defined as a mother between the ages of 16 and 19, regardless of whether she had children under the aforementioned ages or not.

1.12.3 Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is defined as pregnancy occurring in adolescents aged 13–19 years. According to the World Health Organization (2024), adolescent mothers face heightened health risks and socio-economic challenges. The APA Dictionary of Psychology (2018) similarly defines it as pregnancy during adolescence. Molokoane (2018) similarly defines it as pregnancy among girls aged 13–19, often unplanned and linked to school dropout and poverty. Globally, adolescence is recognized as the period between 10–19 years, within which adolescent pregnancy remains a significant challenge (Springer, 2019)."

1.12.4 Inclusive Education

The term "inclusive education" refers to establishing and guaranteeing every child's right to attendance, engagement, and success in their neighborhood public school .The goal of inclusive education is to ensure that all children and youth have access to great educational opportunities and outcomes To attain this goal, neighborhood schools must

increase their capacity to remove obstacles to presence, participation, and achievement (Slee 2018).

1.12.5 Challenges

Challenges are described by Raising Children Network (2017:478) as concerns that a teenage mother may have regarding juggling work/school and family life, obtaining a job, finding cheap childcare, and maintaining contact with social networks (i.e., friends and family as support networks). These difficulties affect how she raises her children. The difficulties adolescent moms have in their daily lives that are related to how they raise their children are referred to in this study as challenges.

1.12.6 Experiences

In Malesa (2018), "experience" is referred to as the feeling of change or any process that a person is aware of and actively participates in while it takes place. This can relate to two separate states, namely a lived experience that is experienced moment by moment and an appraised experience that is open to interpretation. Experience in this context refers to the conscious, lived, and evaluated processes or events that adolescent women encounter when raising their children.

1.13 THESIS OUTLINE

Chapter 1: This chapter provided and discussed the background to the study, statement of the problem, sub-research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, rationale for the study, theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, delimitation of the study, definition of terms, and the chapter outline.

Chapter 2: This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the study.

Chapter 3: This chapter discusses research methodology, approach and design. It also discusses the study population, sampling, sampling techniques, data collecting methods, data preparation, data collection instruments, piloting, and data analysis.

Chapter 4: This chapter provides and presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter presents the conclusions of the study, makes recommendations and suggests further investigations into the topic studied and concludes the study.

1.14 CONCLUSION

Teenagers are in the development stage of their life where they are transforming from childhood to adulthood, having a high rise in teenage mothers seemed to be a process that would significantly affect the life of a teenager including, their education in the mainstream, which the study aimed to investigate. This chapter provided an overview of the study by presenting the background and contextual foundation, articulating the statement of the problem, and outlining the research questions and objectives. It further highlighted the significance of the study, introduced the theoretical framework underpinning the investigation, and offered a preliminary review of relevant literature. In addition, the chapter briefly discussed the research methodology, acknowledged the limitations inherent in the study, and addressed the ethical considerations guiding the research process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an extensive review of the literature concerning teenage motherhood, a phenomenon of significant societal and scholarly interest. As emphasized by Kumar (2019), the literature review is an indispensable component of the research process, providing invaluable insights across various stages of inquiry. Its importance spans multiple dimensions, including the provision of a theoretical framework, establishment of connections with existing scholarships, demonstration of the researcher's contributions, and integration of new findings into the existing body of knowledge. By synthesizing and interrogating the existing literature, this chapter lays a solid foundation for the subsequent phases of the research, contributing to a richer understanding of teenage motherhood within the educational domain and paving the way for more effective interventions and support mechanisms aimed at promoting their inclusion and academic success. Although international studies have explored teenage motherhood extensively, the experiences of teenage mothers differ across social, cultural, and educational contexts. This chapter therefore adopts a funnel approach, beginning with global perspectives before narrowing the discussion to African and South African contexts. Attention is given to how mainstream schools support or exclude teenage mothers within inclusive education frameworks.

In conducting this literature review, the researcher meticulously examined academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and both published and unpublished dissertations pertinent to the research questions at the core of this study. While numerous investigations had delved into the experiences of teenage mothers attending school, this study stood out by focusing on their encounters within mainstream educational settings and their inclusion within them. Overall, this chapter reviewed the related literature under three main themes that were developed from the study's sub-research questions, as specified in section 1.3 of Chapter 1. The said themes were teenage mothers' understanding of teenage pregnancy and its effect on education,

challenges experienced by teenage mothers in mainstream educational settings, and support available for teenage mothers in mainstream education setups.

2.2 TEENAGE MOTHERS' UNDERSTANDING AND EFFECTS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY ON EDUCATION

The relevance of literature on teenage mothers is particularly salient when exploring their experiences within the educational landscape, particularly regarding inclusive education. By immersing themselves in this corpus of scholarship, researchers can extract profound insights into the multifaceted challenges, opportunities, and complexities that shape the educational journeys of teenage mothers. In the study conducted by Dhaka and Musese (2019), teenage mothers found it challenging to balance the responsibilities of parenthood and education. They showed resilience on the surface by remaining optimistic and focused on their goals of finishing secondary school and pursuing further education despite the difficulties they faced. According to this study, teenage mothers felt anxious, stressed, regretful, and guilty all the time. Their parents mostly depended on subsistence farming and many of them were unemployed. Others, however, were from low-income families and got little to no financial assistance. Dhaka and Muses (2019), found out that teenage mothers voiced regret over being pregnant when still in school, which they referred to as a "mistake." However, persistent remorse was communicated by humiliating and embarrassing their families for being pregnant.

According to Dhaka and Muses (2019). Teenage mothers attending boarding schools also said that their attendance at school was unaffected by illness, According to people who live with their children, when they were their ill, school disruptions frequently happened since no one was generally willing to take them to the clinic or hospital These teenage mothers concurred that they frequently found it harder to focus and pay attention, particularly when their children were sick. Furthermore, young mothers indicated that they were frequently the targets of constant ridicule from peers, society, and their teachers in the form of taunting and offensive remarks.

Literature pertaining to teenage mothers' understanding of teenage pregnancy and its effect on education was reviewed in this chapter, with reference to a few countries of the world.

2.2.1 Teenage Motherhood in the USA and Canada

In the United States, teenage pregnancy, and parenthood, whether occurring within or outside of marriage, emerged as a significant and modern social concern as early as the 1970s, as highlighted in the Save a Child report (2011). El Kazdough, El-Ammari, Bouftini, El Fakir, & El Achhab, (2019) highlighted a declining trend in teenage pregnancy and female teenage parenthood in the U.S., attributing this shift to factors such as decreased sexual activity among teenagers, increased sexual awareness, and a greater propensity for contraceptive usage to control birth rates. Conversely, in developing countries, the prevalence of teenage childbirth remained alarmingly high, with approximately ninety-five percent of teenage births occurring in these regions, as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), echoing the findings of El Kazdough, et Al. (2019).

Moreover, Hawkins (2018) advocated clinicians to prioritize assisting teenagers in developing healthy relationships, particularly given that some individuals initiated their sexual lives during adolescence. This suggested a shift towards young people's exercise agency in decisions concerning parenthood. Notably, the rate of teenage childbirth in the United States and Canada had shown a decline, a trend attributed to the widespread and effective use of contraceptives, particularly in urban areas. However, in rural areas, particularly small towns, the incidence of teenage childbirth remained comparatively higher (WHO, 2011).

This juxtaposition between developed and developing countries underscored the complex interplay of socio-cultural factors, access to healthcare, and education regarding reproductive health. While strides had been made in reducing teenage pregnancy rates in some regions, challenges persisted, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas. Efforts to address teenage pregnancy and parenthood must therefore be multifaceted, encompassing comprehensive sex education, access to contraceptives, and support systems for young parents. By understanding the nuances of teenage pregnancy trends

across different contexts, policymakers and practitioners can tailor interventions to effectively address this multifaceted issue and mitigate its societal impact.

2.2.2 Teenage Mothers in Europe, Asia and Australia

Teenage motherhood represents a significant social concern in the United Kingdom (UK), prompting the implementation of various strategies aimed at mitigating its impact (Ellis-Sloan & Tamplin 2019). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011), the decline in the teenage birth rate was attributed to factors such as abstinence and effective contraceptive use across all racial groups, coupled with the stigmatization associated with teenage motherhood. However, despite these efforts, early marriage in rural areas continued to contribute to adolescent motherhood, reflecting a complex interplay of socio-cultural factors (Save a Child report, 2011).

In countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and South Korea, urbanization and industrialization have coincided with a decline in teenage births (Save a Child report, 2011). Similarly, Thailand had implemented measures to educate teenagers about the risks associated with teenage motherhood and sexually transmitted diseases (WHO, 2011). However, Australia stood out with the highest teenage birth rate among comparable countries, providing a unique opportunity to study the outcomes of teenage parenthood in a context where stigmas were less pervasive (Save a Child report, 2011).

The consequences of teenage motherhood extended beyond the individual to encompass societal implications, affecting not only the teenage mother but also her child and family (Black, Fleming, & Rome, 2012). Teenage mothers often faced stigma and rejection from parents and peers, exacerbating the challenges they encountered. This issue was prevalent not only in the USA but also in developing regions worldwide, where millions of teenage girls gave birth annually, perpetuating cycles of poverty due to limited educational and employment opportunities (WHO, 2019; UNFPA, 2013).

In the United Kingdom, teenage parents, particularly girls, faced the added challenge of raising their children single-handedly, as highlighted by Elis-Sloan (2019). This placed significant demands on teenage mothers, impacting their well-being and prospects for the

future. Erfina, Widyawati, McKenna, Reisenhofer & Ismail (2019) investigated the lived experiences of African Australian teenage mothers in Melbourne, Australia, revealing the complex interplay of societal expectations and personal aspirations. While motherhood was often considered a significant aspect of women's lives, teenage motherhood had adverse social and health consequences.

Even with the seeming advantages of becoming a mother, teenager mothers had several difficulties, such as greater responsibility, a lack of community support, and feelings of embarrassment and shame (Erfina et al., 2019). The study's limitations, including a small sample size and a wide age range, highlighted the need for more research to clarify the complexities of teenage motherhood and guided efficient interventions and support systems, even though it offered insightful information about the experiences of teenage mothers.

2.2.3 Teenage Motherhood in Other African Countries

Teenage parenthood represents a significant social issue in many African countries, with several factors influencing its prevalence and impact. While efforts are underway to understand these dynamics and design appropriate interventions, challenges persist, particularly in addressing the socio-economic disparities that exacerbate the problem (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). Sub-Saharan African nations, in particular, grapple with high rates of teenage parenthood, often intertwined with poverty and early marriage practices prevalent in rural areas (UNFPA, 2013).

Limited access to comprehensive sexual education and prevalent misconceptions about sexuality further hinder efforts to prevent teenage births, as noted in countries like Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi, and Uganda (Ahinkorah 2022). The consequences of teenage motherhood are profound, extending beyond the individual to impact the quality of life for both mother and child (Dinku, Tilahun, and Teshome & Belachew 2018). Despite being viewed as a symbol of fertility in some societies, teenage parenthood presents numerous challenges, including educational disruption and economic insecurity (Save a Child report, 2011).

In contexts such as Ghana and South Africa, where teenage mothers face considerable barriers to re-engaging with education, efforts to support their return to school are essential (Malatji, Dube, & Nkala-Dlamini, 2020; Groves, Gebrekristos, McNaughton Reyes, Moodley, D., Raziano & Maman 2022). These efforts require a multi-faceted approach, addressing institutional support, family dynamics, and societal attitudes towards teenage parenthood.

Research exploring the lived experiences of teenage mothers' sheds light on the diverse challenges and resilience exhibited by this population (Bouknight-Bates 2021; Groves et al., 2022). While some teenage mothers navigate their circumstances with support from family and community, others face stigma and limited opportunities for advancement. Understanding the factors that contribute to resilience among teenage mothers such as access to resources and emotional support, is critical in informing interventions aimed at promoting their well-being and educational attainment (Groves et al., 2022).

However, the intricacies of adolescent parenthood need sophisticated strategies that take into account both the underlying socioeconomic circumstances that make teenage mothers vulnerable as well as their immediate needs. A comprehensive approach to addressing teenage parenthood in African nations must include comprehensive sex education, access to reproductive health care, and economic empowerment programs (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018; UNFPA, 2013).

Furthermore, efforts to support teenage mothers' educational aspirations must be accompanied by broader social and policy changes aimed at addressing gender inequality and promoting opportunities for young women. By investing in the education and empowerment of teenage mothers, African countries can break the cycle of poverty and improve the prospects for future generations.

2.2.4 Teenage Motherhood in South Africa

The prevalence of teenage parenthood in South Africa is a pressing issue, with statistics indicating a significant increase in the number of teenage mothers in recent years (Daily News, 2018). Naidoo, et al, (2021) underscored the multifaceted challenges posed by

teenage parenthood, affecting not only the teenagers themselves but also their babies and immediate families. This trend was particularly pronounced in regions like Mpumalanga, where a staggering seventy-eight percent rise in teenage pregnancy rates was reported in 2018, prompting a call for all-inclusive interventions to address the associated challenges.

Despite the gravity of the issue, there remains a dearth of research on teenage parenthood and its intersection with inclusive education in South Africa. York (2018) emphasized the importance of research in providing insights into the experiences of teenage parents within the school system. In South Africa, many young girls find themselves raising their babies alone due to rejection and denial by the other parent, leading to significant social and economic hardships. Furthermore, the legal framework in South Africa prohibits the employment of individuals under the age of eighteen, exacerbating the economic challenges faced by teenage parents.

The education system in South Africa presents additional hurdles for teenage mothers, often leading to high dropout rates (Naidoo, Muthukrishna, & Nkabinde, (2021). El Kazadouh, et al. (2019) identified peer pressure, societal influences, and a decline in values related to sexuality as contributing factors to teenage parenthood; further exacerbating school exclusion and dropout rates. Consequently, many teenage parents found themselves marginalised and vulnerable to social issues such as substance abuse and homelessness.

Previous studies had emphasized the significant prevalence of teenage births in South Africa, with societal attitudes and healthcare practices playing a role in perpetuating the problem (HSRC, 2009). The perception of teenage pregnancy as a rite of passage to womanhood, coupled with the availability of government incentives such as child support grants, contributes to the high incidence of adolescent births. Ndwandwe (2023) further explored the challenges faced by school-going teenage mothers in Mpumalanga, uncovering financial constraints, lack of parental support, and stigmatization as significant barriers to their educational and personal development.

The results of Ndwandwe's study illustrated the intricate interactions between several elements that contributed to the difficulties teenage mothers encountered, underlining the necessity of a comprehensive strategy to promote their academic success and general well-being. The study shed light on the different levels of influencing teenage mothers' experiences, ranging from personal to social aspects, by using an ecological systems perspective. However, the study's findings were limited in their generalisability due to its small sample size and localised nature, necessitating additional research to examine the subtleties of teenage parenthood in various South African contexts.

To address the challenges of teenage parenthood in South Africa comprehensive approach that encompasses research, policy interventions, and community support is required. By understanding the complex dynamics underlying teenage parenthood, stakeholders can develop targeted strategies to support the educational and socio-economic empowerment of teenage mothers, ultimately contributing to their well-being and that of their children. Cultural stigma and socio-economic inequalities from the broader societal context influencing teenage motherhood. Mkhize and Cele (2025) described how rural teenage mothers face peer exclusion rooted in entrenched cultural norms. These macrosystem forces often undermines progressive policies like the School Act, limiting their impact.

2.3 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY TEENAGE MOTHERS IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Education is not a static good to be seen in a vacuum, but rather as an inherent mechanism that maintains its fundamental value as a human right. Every individual has the right to a high-quality education and the capacity to ensure the long-term security of their human rights. Adangabe, Emmauela, and Tigtig (2021) looked at the academic difficulties faced by teenage mothers. According to the study, adolescent mothers who were enrolled in school had several challenges, such as inadequate financial assistance, ineffective time management, low self-esteem, emotional instability, and stigma. The study also found that most adolescent mothers in school used cognitive decision-making,

comprehension, constructive cognitive restructuring, and direct problem-solving to deal with the difficulties they encountered.

Some people worry about low self-esteem because it prevents them from making the right decisions for their education and their lives. Adangabe et al. (2021) claimed that low self-esteem was a major contributing factor to subpar academic performance. Teenage mothers frequently talk about how they feel unreachable, unworthy, or unhelpful to their family. Stigma is embarrassment or shame attached to anything that is considered socially undesirable, and it is an indication of social unacceptability.

Being a teenage mother carries a real and ongoing stigma. To prevent them from contaminating others with their adolescent sexuality, advocates claim that prejudice against teenage mothers frequently leads to harsh social stigma, that they are morally disturbed, and frequently compelled to sit in different courses (Adangabe et al., 2021). As these young women attempt to balance their roles as mothers and learners, they face stigmatisation and discrimination. These young mothers are often traumatised by society, particularly school, due to the difficult responsibilities of parenting and the social disgrace. Teachers, parents, peers, and society can all be ridiculous (Adangabe et al., 2021). This severe treatment at school leaves young mothers with emotional scars and, more importantly, a drab future.

Poor time management of teenage mothers was also one of the struggles found in the study. According to Adangabe et al. (2021), juggling school and family obligations would leave many youngsters feeling depressed and exhausted. Additionally, they found that social, economic, and cultural factors often compel girls to make tough decisions as young mothers, and that teenage parenthood was a key factor in females dropping out of school. This resulted from their intended positions being denied because of time and educational constraints. Additionally, they found that adolescent mothers found it challenging to juggle their education and parenting obligations after giving birth, making it challenging for them to return to school. All of this indicated that teenage mothers experience stress because stress arises when a person's objective structures clash, particularly when they are devoted to two or more goals that cannot be achieved at the

same time. In this instance, the teenage mother has difficulty juggling, learning and mothering.

Another significant factor contributing to adolescent mother's ' school dropout was poverty. According to Adangabe et al. (2021) Teenage mothers faced social problems due to limited educational and employment opportunities, which led to poverty and financial difficulties. They also believed that young mothers had historically faced increased socioeconomic hardship, a lack of social and physical resources, and mental health issues". Furthermore, the research found that females from the poorest households were less likely than boys to go to school. Therefore, poverty served as a "plausible excuse" for school disruption for most Zambian female dropouts. With the direct and indirect costs of education, including transportation to and from school, school fees, school uniforms and other extracurricular payments, it became difficult to meet the needs of both the adolescent mother and her children. Girls' dropout rates were similarly influenced by poverty.

Teenage mothers who struggled with schoolwork due to the number of absences were often seen dealing with issues involving their children, such as when they were ill or when parents were taking them to the doctor. According to Adangabe et al. (2021), as many pregnant teenagers were already not enrolled in school, it was challenging to get children to different health facilities for checkups (postnatal exam). The adolescent mothers missed the remainder of the day's classes as a result. From the information presented above, with the exclusion of any personal excuses like illness, it was reasonable to predict that a teenage mother would miss one day of school each month owing to issues involving her children. According to these researchers, teenage mothers tended to drop out of school permanently because they struggled to balance their school obligations and childcare, and young mothers often dropped out during or soon after pregnancy due to the numerous absences took to raise their children. Additionally, the researchers discovered that having children as a teenager had a detrimental effect on education, saying, "Many teenage mothers' drop out of school, diminishing their prospects of employment and making it harder for these women and their children to earn a steady wage." (Adangabe et al., 2021). They further explained that even for the teenage mothers

who can cope with going back to school, they would still struggle to meet their educational goals due to other factors that come to play, such as low self-esteem, stigma and mental health issues.

Gatsinzi (2021) examined the lived experiences, educational perspectives, and perceived consequences of pregnancy, perceived means of obtaining additional education, and perceived strategies to prevent teen pregnancy. The researcher discovered that because formal schooling did not give parents the time to attend and assist their children, it was seen as unachievable. Depression, loneliness, self-denial, guilt, and a sense of hatred were among the psychological repercussions. Social impacts included loneliness, derision, disdain, loss of parental love, living alone (self-accommodation), and denial by family or parents. Economic impacts included hawking, housemaid duties, and hard labour for survival. According to Gatsinzi (2021), the effects of education included school dropout and lack of sponsorship. They also hinted that the teenage mothers' lived experiences were tragic and included issues such as domestic violence, torture, pregnancy concealment, careless parenting, and ignorance of legal rights, contempt, suicide commitment, hard living, and self-accommodation. According to Gatsinzi (2021), the perceptions that could guarantee teenage mothers to continue their studies were education sponsorship, start-up funding, and sponsorship for the infants in daycare centers.

According to Gatsinzi (2021), parents must be aware of their daughters' requirements, provide guidance on men's tricks and temptations, offer counselling services, facilitate conversations in the girls' forum, identify temptations, eradicate poverty, and punish offenders. These researchers concluded that pregnancy had psychological effects of depression, loneliness, and self-denial; social effects of parental expulsion and denial; economic effects of hard living and doing manual labour for survival; educational effects of dropout and study retardation; and teenage mothers lived a sorrowful experience of living alone without support and attempting suicide. These findings were based on the outcomes of their study on the lived experiences and perceptions of education of out-of-school teenage mothers (Gatsinzi, 2021). They concluded that teenage mothers lived a

sorrowful and unsupported experience that led them to being school dropouts (Gatsinzi 2021).

Velazquez (2020) investigated and pinpointed obstacles and resources that helped these adolescent mothers on their path to seeking higher education by conducting semi-structured interviews with six participants. Finding the resources and obstacles as a teenage mother pursuing higher education was a particular focus of the data analysis. These obstacles and resources came from both inside and outside of the educational system, as well as from the organisation of the schools.

Being a teenage Latina mother carries a stigma that further isolates and obscures the current situation's reality. A Latina who becomes pregnant as a teenager must deal with the shame and lack of resources that come with it, which is basically reproductive punishment. Reproductive punishment for these adolescent Latina mothers takes many forms, from exclusion from high school and mainstream classrooms to deprivation of resources necessary for adolescent mothers. The reality of these adolescent Latina mothers' reproductive subjugation is this reproductive punishment. "The control and exploitation of women, girls, and individuals through their bodies, sexuality, labour, and reproduction" is known as reproductive oppression (Velazquez (2020).

Given that these adolescent Latina mothers do not receive enough resources, Velazquez (2020) shows that reproductive oppression and reproductive punishment are reciprocal. This lack of sufficient resources is particularly evident in the resources offered to these adolescent Latina mothers in their educational institutions. An adolescent who becomes pregnant is frequently considered by the school as a student whose additional help as a teen parent is not recognised. An individual who is not a mother requires different types of support than a young adolescent mother. According to Velazquez, a teenage mother who is also a student requires additional resources to help her graduate and pursue further education. For instance, she needs the freedom to skip classes to attend possible doctor's appointments or daycare. These adolescent mothers are virtually being forced out of school because there are not enough resources accessible to them; they are not getting additional assistance. In a society where education equates to financial

advancement, these adolescent Latina mothers suffer from the long-term consequences of not receiving a proper education due to a lack of resources and assistance, which can ultimately lead to poverty (Velazquez 2020).

Furthermore, a 2019 study by Dhaka and Musese found that many of their parents work full-time in semiskilled to unskilled jobs (farms), leaving young mothers with little to no time for their education because they must take care of their children after school. Dhaka and Musese (2019) assert that the difficulties of juggling motherhood and education at the same time, as well as the absence of support from family members in raising their children, are risk factors for school dropouts, claim). From Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective, the stigma experienced by teenage mothers can be understood within the microsystem and mesosystem, where interactions with teachers, peers, and family members directly shape learners' educational experiences.

2.4 SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR TEENAGE MOTHERS IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION SETUPS

Inclusive education initiatives strive to integrate learners with various learning barriers into mainstream educational settings. Educators play a crucial role in identifying and addressing the needs of teenage mothers within the school environment, offering support to ensure their inclusion in the curriculum and overcoming obstacles associated with parenthood (Park, Holloway 2018). However, exclusionary practices extend beyond South Africa, as evidenced by Ruzibiza's (2021) study on pregnant teenagers and teen mothers in Mahama refugee camp, Rwanda. Despite policies encouraging pregnant teenagers to continue their education, many still face dropout rates due to societal stigmatization and lack of adequate support.

The findings of Naidoo, Muthukrishna, and Nkabinde (2019) shed light on the challenges faced by teenage mothers in South Africa, revealing pervasive narratives of deviance, shame, and stigma that shape their social realities. While policy frameworks such as the South African Schools Act of 1996 and the Bill of Rights protect the reproductive rights of teenage mothers, implementation gaps persist, leading to continued marginalization within the education system. As highlighted by Amod, Halana, and Smith (2021), teenage

mothers often encounter stigmatization from teachers, healthcare staff, and community members, hindering their access to education and support services.

Despite these challenges, there are instances of educators showing empathy and providing support to teenage mothers reintegrating into the school system after pregnancy. Malatji, Dube, Nkala-Dlamini, and Shumba (2023) found that some educators offered extended consultation times and subject-specific advice to facilitate the reintegration process. Similarly, Nakalanzi (2018) reported educators demonstrating understanding and support for learners with pregnancy-related challenges, resulting in improved academic performance.

However, the overall lack of support from caregivers, school managers, and educators exacerbates the difficulties faced by teenage mothers in accessing education. Malatji et al. (2023) emphasized the inadequacy of support mechanisms, which often fall short of legislative and policy requirements. Despite the existence of sympathetic educators, the level of support provided remains inconsistent and discretionary, failing to meet the needs of teenage mothers striving to complete their education amidst the challenges of motherhood.

To address these shortcomings, there is a pressing need for collaborative efforts between schools, families, and communities to create inclusive environments that affirm the rights and dignity of teenage mothers. Partnerships with organizations such as faith-based groups and NGOs can enhance support networks and foster a culture of acceptance and inclusion within educational settings. By recognizing the agency and resilience of teenage mothers, interventions can be framed within a social justice education agenda, prioritizing their holistic well-being and educational advancement.

According to a 2019 study by Erfina, Widyawati, Reisenhofer, and Ismail, lack of support, educational attainment, and financial distress were other factors that contributed to adolescent parenthood. Some young mothers' experiences were greatly impacted by practical issues with housing, transportation, and financial burden (Erfina et al. 2019). Some teenage mothers regretted having a child while still in school since they were unable to complete their degree because of a lack of support, which made it harder for

them to find employment and increased their financial burden. Teenage mothers found it extremely challenging to meet the demands of their unborn children, pursued further education, and formed friendships (Erfina et al. 2019). They also disclosed that young mothers cited having a newborn as the reason they wanted to finish school, stating that they would do so to give their children the greatest possible future (Erfina et al. 2019). Nevertheless, they discovered that most of the adolescent mothers dropped out of school and that there were still no laws in place to help new mothers complete their education. In fact, learning that a child was pregnant could result in expulsion from school in Africa (Erfina et al. 2019).

In an urban informal settlement in Kenya, Mukabana, Abuya, Kabiru, and Ajayi (2024) evaluated the factors that helped and hindered school re-entry for parenting girls. Additionally, they discovered that the main obstacles to school re-entry were childcare obligations, poverty, stigma and discrimination, and parental support withdrawal. However, re-entry was thought to have been facilitated by the desire for a better future, strong support networks, and involving instructors and students to make schools less unfriendly for parenting girls (Mukabana et al., 2024). Due to their parents' busy schedules and inability to pay for daycare centers, the girls were mostly responsible for childcare duties (Mukabana et al 2024). As demonstrated by prior studies, they also discovered that childcare help was highlighted as a facilitator of school re-entry. Many adolescent parents gave up on their academic aspirations to concentrate on raising their children due to a lack of childcare support (Mukabana et al., 2024).

In addition, Mukabana et al. (2024) discussed the stigma and discrimination that adolescent mothers faced rather than receiving assistance in a traditional school setting. Teenage mothers were afraid of being stigmatised and subjected to discrimination by their peers, teachers, and community, even if the school re-entry policy allowed them to return to class after giving birth (Mukabana et al 2024). They said that the fear of stigma and prejudice among adolescent mothers was not unjustified, but rather primarily stemmed from their experiences as pregnant adolescent mothers attending school or as parents of adolescent mothers who had returned to school. Up to six months into their pregnancies, some adolescent mothers made an effort to continue their education,

though the school environment turned against them. Some described being taunted and bullied by students. Some avoided them, choosing not to sit near them, while others simply gossiped about them. Pregnant girls had occasionally left school due to bullying (Mukabana et al., 2024). Teachers were not the only ones that bullied and victimised students. They felt that the shame and embarrassment brought on by frequent taunting where the main reasons why parenting teenagers did not go back to school and never felt encouraged (Mukabana et al., 2024).

According to Ruzibiza (2021), some teenage mothers remained attending school for a time with the help and encouragement of Save the Children, but they finally stopped when they were much farther along in their pregnancies because it was difficult for them to keep up with their peers without the help of the teachers. They started to consider returning to school after delivering birth, but their families did not encourage them. They stated that in addition to receiving additional responsibilities, families did not provide any assistance, and those who returned to school, found it challenging to balance caring for their children with attending classes (Ruzibiza 2021).

Malatji, Dube, Nkala-Dlamini, and Shumba (2023), in their study sought to understand their experiences regarding the various strategies they used to navigate the school system after their re-entry into the system post-pregnancy for teenage mothers, despite the fact that the majority of research indicated that there was a lack of support in educational settings to help them adjust back in school. Demonstration of how teachers' lack of empathy in the face of learner-related pregnancy or postpartum complications is often highlighted in mainstream literature.

The study's researchers discovered that some teachers had empathy for the learning challenges of the youngsters. Through longer consultation times and the provision of subject-specific counsel, when necessary, the educators made it possible for the young mothers to reintegrate. Malatji et al. (2023) added that teenage girls may face many difficulties because of unplanned pregnancy and motherhood, especially if they desired to return to school to finish their education after giving birth. The lack of assistance from careers, school administrators, and teachers made the situation worse. The level of

support offered was insufficient and not streamlined in accordance with current legislation and policy frameworks, even though our survey revealed that some educators were understanding and supportive of the teenage mothers' desire for education. At microsystem level, teenage mothers face ridicule and stigma which undermines their persistence in school. Ndwandwe (2023). Highlights how financial constraints and lack of parental support integrate the theoretical framework exacerbate these challenges. Teacher empathy emerges as critical protective factor, with Mukabana et. Al. (2024) emphasising the role of supportive educators in Kenya, a context with parallels to South Africa.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while the challenges faced by teenage mothers in accessing education are significant, there are opportunities for positive change through coordinated efforts and policy reforms. By fostering empathy, understanding, and institutional support, educators and stakeholders can empower teenage mothers to overcome barriers and fulfill their educational aspirations, eventually promoting social equity and inclusion within the education system. This chapter reviewed literature under the following themes: teenage mother's understanding of teenage pregnancy and its effects on education; challenges experienced by teenage mothers in the mainstream education and support available for teenage mothers in mainstream educational settings. The following chapter presents detailed descriptions of the research methodology.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the experiences of teenage mothers in a mainstream educational context. The researcher examined whether teenage mothers were included in the learning environment in KwaZulu-Natal's Mzinyathi district. This chapter described the methods and techniques that were employed. The chapter focused on the research paradigm, research approach, design, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

According to Kamal (2019), a paradigm is a set of beliefs about the way in which particular problems exist and a set of agreements on how such problems can be investigated. The interpretivism research paradigm was used in this investigation. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), interpretivism is a paradigm that is more focused on context-related elements and the degree of variation. It views humans as distinct from physical phenomena because they are thought to be incapable of being investigated in a manner that is comparable to that of physical phenomena. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), interpretivism considers variations in cultures, situations, and eras that give rise to various social realities. In addition, interpretivism as a paradigm assumes that reality is subjective and can differ depending on different individuals (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Therefore, this can lead to the understanding that research participants would not provide general interpretations (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022).

Additionally, as the data were primarily dependent on a particular context, point of view, and values, the interpretivist paradigm was less likely to generalise the data collected and analysed (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), interpretivism is a research paradigm that may be perfect for revealing the hidden causes of something that is connected to subjective issues or for highly complex social processes like socio-cultural issues, conflicts, and challenges, where qualitative data may be distorted, erroneous, or difficult to comprehend.

The researcher used the interpretivism paradigm as it enabled her to gain further insight through seeking experiences and perceptions of teenage mothers in the mainstream educational setting. Multiple sources above had discussed that interpretivism is a research paradigm that assists the researcher to get to the core of the investigated matter without generalising. Interpretivism acknowledges that individuals may be different, which means they would have different views.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study employed a qualitative research approach to understand the obstacles faced by adolescent mothers who are included in the educational system and received support for their education. When using a qualitative research approach, data is analysed holistically, meaning that the participants are seen as a whole rather than as a single entity. For instance, when one draws on people's experiences, the phenomenon under investigation is deeply ingrained in the person's knowledge base and sense of who they are.

According to de Vos, Maciejewski, Bodin, Norström, Schlüter and Tengö (2021) the qualitative research approach expresses the study of human behaviour and attitudes in their natural contexts. Further, Creswell and Báez (2020), Savin-Baden and Major (2023), and Fuster Guillen (2019) share the same perspective on the underlined essential elements of a qualitative study. The significance of people's lives, experiences, and the context of their world is what qualitative researchers are most interested in. The researcher's primary area of interest in this study was the significance of the adolescent mothers' experiences with educational help. In this qualitative research, the researcher reflected on her role in the research study (Mason-Bish, 2019) and her cultural background and individual experiences, as these things influenced the study and how it was interpreted. It was crucial that the researcher emphasised that her background did not affect the course of the research investigation. The researcher, who was also a certified educator, kept in mind that the participants she interviewed were not her students, so she could not pretend to be both an educator and a researcher at the same

time. Additionally, the accuracy of the research findings was not hampered by the researcher's emotions, sentiments, or assumptions (Labaki, 2020).

A holistic account is often a qualitative researcher's attempt to take a complex picture of the research problem that is under study (Priya, 2021). In doing so, the researcher created a more comprehensive and expansive picture of the issue. This study was carried out by using a comprehensive strategy. Given the aforementioned qualities of the qualitative approach that entails the study of people and their natural environments, and their behaviour and experiences, the researcher concluded that this research approach was relevant to accomplishing the study's goals (Priya 2021). The researcher gained insight from adolescent mothers' experiences with educational support and the challenges they encountered by using a qualitative study style.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research design was used in this study to investigate teenage mothers' experiences in inclusive educational settings. A study's design has a purpose to make sure the data collected answered the research question as clearly and effectively as feasible (Quashie, 2022:2). The purpose of qualitative research, the role of the researcher, the stages of the research, and methods of data analysis are all described, either explicitly or implicitly, according to Ravitch and Carl (2019).

According to Bouchrika (2020), there are several ways to tell if a study were well-designed at a glance. In this regard, the following four qualities of good design were discussed: **It is impartial**, when the outcomes are as impartial and objective as feasible, a good research design is in play. **It is true**, if the design were sound, these tools would be correct and appropriate, producing excellent data. The design of the research also provides instruments and procedures to measure findings. **It is trustworthy**, when done correctly, research design could enable studies to produce results that are consistent across experiments. In this sense, a solid study design offered the chance to establish standards for data collection and result analysis. **It is generalisable**. Since a generalised design may be applied to any study, demographic, or setting, it should cover every part of the

study with the same measurement of accuracy (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The researcher in this study used a phenomenological research design.

3.4.1 Phenomenological Research Design

A philosophy known as phenomenological research design is concerned with the issue of how people interpret their surroundings and, more specifically, how the philosopher should exclude perceptions from their interpretation of those surroundings (Hammersley, 2022). According to the phenomenologist (Williams, 2021), human behaviour is a result of how people see the world. The phenomenologist makes an effort to understand things from that person's perspective to understand the significance of that person's behaviour (Rasid, Djafar & Santoso, 2021). A general description of the phenomenon as perceived through the eyes of those who have personally encountered it serves as the study's output (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). This research design was applied to allow the researcher to gain insight into the experiences of teenage mothers in mainstream educational settings.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.5.1 Population

Mfulwane (2023) asserts that population refers to a group that has exact characteristics which the researcher is interested in to conduct research to achieve new knowledge. Mays and Pope (2020) define population as the primary source of data collection, where information is gathered through observation and/or interviews. According to Williams-McBean (2019), population is where the researcher can recruit the participants where she conducted a pilot testing of the research tool and the sample on which the study would be conducted.

The population for this study was all the female teenage parents who attended inclusive mainstream schools in the Umzinyathi district of the Kwa-Zulu Natal province and the Nqutu town.

3.5.2 Sample and Sampling Strategies

A sample is a small group of research participants selected from a larger population (Casteel & Bridier 2021). Lakens (2022) points out that any study's sample size is a crucial factor in drawing conclusions about a community. The research used a combination of convenience and purposive sampling. This was pertinent because the sample was chosen from a population that was easily accessible to participate in the study. The selection of the sample procedures was in line with the methodological approach suggested by Moser and Kortjen (2018:24). A sample of fifteen (n=15) adolescent mothers was drawn from four (n=4) inclusive mainstream schools located in the Umzinyathi region and Nqutu town of KwaZulu-Natal Province because they were deemed rich participants.

The participants ranged in age from 15 to 18 years, with the distribution as follows: four (n=4) aged 15, three (n=3) aged 16, six (n=6) aged 17, and two (n=2) aged 18. Representation across the schools was uneven, with School A contributing two (n=2) participants, School B five (n=5), School C four (n=4), and School D four (n=4). In terms of geographical origin, two participants each were drawn from Luvisi, Mfihlelwane, Magala, and Ndwandwe villages, while four participants originated from Patsoane and Sqhema villages.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

For this study, data was collected firstly through semi- structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) Karatsareas (2022) defines semi-structured interviews as a qualitative method used to collect data from the participants. **Semi-structured interviews** are useful for exploring complex issues, gaining in-depth insights, and identifying patterns and themes (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi & Syam ,2022). Afshar and Hafez (2021) claim that the semi-structured interviews allow participants to freely express their various points of view and give the researcher the chance to probe and understand developing notions and reactions. According to Afshar and Hafez (2021), semi-structured interviews also provide the interviewer with the chance to respond to the participants' individual experiences. More data was collected through **Focus Group**

Discussions (FGDs). The focus group interview is a structured discussion aimed at gathering insight and perceptions on a topic of interest, conducted in a relaxed and non-judgemental setting so the participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions (Abayomi & Daniels, 2021).

To keep the conversation focused and on track and to ensure that all key questions were covered, the researcher designed an Interview Guide that helped her maintain consistency across interviews, reduced bias, and increased efficiency. FGDs' Guide was also designed to allow for more accurate data collection and analysis. The two data collection instruments are discussed next.

3.6.1 Data Collection Instruments

The Interview Guide was designed with open-ended questions prepared to be posed to the school-going teenage mother participants. The Interview Guide was structured around three central questions, each with a set of probing questions designed to elicit detailed insights into the experiences of teenage mothers within educational contexts. The first question, *"What are the challenges that a teenage mother experiences in an educational context?"*, was expanded into seven probing questions that explored various dimensions of the participants' lives, including their experiences before motherhood, the role of family and friends in their situation, the impact of motherhood on academic progress, changes in social life, current challenges faced as school-going mothers, and the influence of motherhood on family relationships. The second guiding question, *"What support is available for you at home and in various institutions such as the Department of Education?"*, was accompanied by four probing questions focusing on the forms of support received from family members and professionals, as well as the types of support the participants wished they had received. The third question, *"How do you deal with possible daily challenges of being a teenage mother who is still at school?"*, included probing questions that sought to understand coping strategies and to gather advice that participants would offer to teenagers who were not yet mothers. Collectively, these questions provided a framework for examining the experiences of teenage mothers in educational settings, highlighting both challenges and sources of support (Appendix F)

The FGDs' Guide was structured around a set of three open-ended questions that served as the foundation for semi-structured interviews. This guide served as a framework to ensure that relevant questions were posed consistently, thereby facilitating the collection of data aligned with the study's objectives. Probing questions were employed as necessary to elicit deeper insights, contingent upon whether participants' initial responses adequately addressed the intended focus of each guiding question (Appendix H). These two instruments were piloted before they could be used for the main study.

3.6.2 Piloting

According to Nkemdirim Okere, Pinto and Suther (2025) pilot studies evaluate the feasibility of methods and procedures to be used in larger-scale studies. In addition, using pilot studies can help to estimate effect sizes to plan sample sizes and duration of the interview (Nkemdirim Okere, et al. 2025).

For this study, a pilot study was conducted to assess the viability of the preferred data gathering tools. The goal of the pilot study was to determine whether the interview questions were in line with the objectives of the study (Teresi, Yu, Stewart & Hays ,2022)., and to assess the feasibility of data collection instruments that were preferred for this study. A pilot study was conducted with three participants from three different schools to check for and alleviate potential ambiguities to refine the research instruments ensuring that it is written in a clear and easy to understand language for the targeted group. Most importantly, the primary objective of this pilot was to assess the clarity and comprehensibility of the interview questions from the participants' perspective. Additionally, the pilot study assessed the flexibility of the interview protocol, allowing the researcher to gauge its adaptability to diverse contexts. By selecting participants from different schools, the researcher aimed to enhance the instrument's versatility, thereby increasing its suitability for teenage mothers from varied mainstream educational backgrounds. The participants of the pilot study were not included in the main study, nor the results from the pilot study in the main findings of the study.

3.6.3 Semi-Structured Interview Procedure

Prior to conducting the interviews, the Department of Social Development (DSD) and Child Welfare workers were contacted by the researcher to seek permission to conduct the study in their organisations, and agency databases was searched for information about the sample. The researcher visited the schools to set up meetings with potential participants and arranged a suitable venue for the interviews with the school management. This preliminary visit enabled the researcher to establish a rapport with the school administrators and ensured that the interview process did not disrupt the normal functioning of the school. By making these arrangements in advance, the researcher ensured a smooth and efficient data collection process.

The interviews were conducted in a natural school setting, which were safe, quiet, clean and conducive environments, where they were also observed on how they behaved and responded to the questions and the researcher allotted sufficient time for each participant to share their experiences and perspectives without feeling rushed. This involved carefully managing the interview schedule to avoid keeping other participants waiting. The researcher prioritised flexibility, recognising that each participant's availability and schedule varied. By doing so, the researcher collected rich and meaningful data while also respecting the participants' time.

To accommodate teenage mothers with varying schedules, the researcher conducted interviews at times that suited them best. For those unavailable during school hours, interviews were arranged before classes or after school hours. The researcher worked around the participants' schedules to avoid inconveniencing them or disrupting their tasks. By being flexible and considerate of the participants' needs, the researcher created a comfortable and supportive environment that fostered open and honest sharing. The researcher played a crucial role in achieving the study's objective, guiding the participant's narrative, and maintaining control over the storytelling process, using an Interview Guide. English was the language utilised throughout the interviews. However, because the population of the area was mostly Zulu speaking, the participants were

allowed to communicate in the language that they understood better and were competent in.

The researcher recorded the sessions with prior permission sought from and granted by the study participants. During the interview, the researcher used the communication techniques and skills described by De Vos, Maciejewski, Bodin, Norström, Schlüter and Ten ö (2021), such as paraphrasing, timing, seeking clarification, tracking, and probing. After every session, the researcher thanked the participants to show respect and appreciation for their time and input. After the interview, the researcher reviewed the transcribed data from the recordings and notes, analysed and coded data for theme and patterns. She then verified accuracy and clarified any unclear points with participants for member checking. Finally, the researcher organised and stored the data securely.

3.6.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The researcher had proper preparations prior to the focus group meetings to ensure that, there was proper planning for the focus group discussions. Focus group facilitation called for a significant deal of aptitude, experience, and understanding regarding group dynamics, communication strategies, and the most effective study-related tactics (Abayomi & Daniels 2021). To encourage meaningful conversation, the researcher ensured an outstanding capacity to make all participants feel welcome. Culture-specific factors were carefully considered while the researcher decided on the ideal location for a focus group interview. The environment was convenient and accessible to accommodate the participants' individual demands. The focus group discussion venue was conducive and easily accessible for the participants (Adler, Salanterä, & Zumstein-Shaha, 2019). The researcher employed FGDs to elicit a range of perspectives from participants. While individual responses may sometimes be incomplete due to omissions or lapses in memory, the collective nature of FGDs fostered a dynamic exchange in which participants were prompted and reminded one another of relevant experiences. Two focus group discussions were conducted. The first group consisted of seven participants, while the second group consisted of eight participants. Participants were grouped according to school accessibility and availability. This interactive process enhanced the depth and

comprehensiveness of the data by enabling participants to build upon each other's contributions, thereby capturing insights that would have otherwise remained unarticulated.

- **Rationale for Triangulation**

This study used both the semi- structured face- to- face interviews and FGDs because it sought to triangulate the data collected. According to Noble and Heale (2019), research triangulation refers to the process that helps to increase the credibility and validity of research. In other words, research triangulation aims at validating the results of a study. Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021) defined triangulation in social science research as the process of studying a social phenomenon by combining data from divergent sources. Sorjonen, Nilsonne, and Melin (2024) defined triangulation as the use of multiple theories, data, methods, and observers in research to study one phenomenon. The data triangulation in this study, helped in confirming the research findings, decreased deficiencies from one method, provided more insights, quickly noticed and eliminated inconsistent data, and increased validity and credibility of the study (Natow 2020). The researcher compared findings obtained from semi-structured interviews with those obtained from focus group discussions to identify similarities, differences, and recurring patterns. This strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The method of data analysis involves making sense of the data collected (Wiltshire and Ronkainen 2021). It involves interpreting and converting the useful data. The data analysis is used to answer the research question and to form theories for future references (Islam and Aldaihani 2022). Prior to data analysis, the researcher transcribed verbatim, all the audio-recorded data obtained from interviews. It was important for the researcher to be familiar with the data and go deeper into understanding it (Creswell, 2021). Thereafter, the researcher familiarised herself with transcribed data to identify the themes, sub-themes, and categorised them as they emerged. The researcher adhered to Tesch's eight-step data analysis framework as outlined by Mphasha, Mothiba, and Skaal (2022). In the initial phase, the researcher engaged in an intensive review of the raw data

transcripts and written field notes, carefully examining them to gain a holistic sense of the material. During this process, preliminary insights and reflections were documented, particularly those that aligned with the study's sub-research questions and objectives. This iterative engagement required repeated readings of both the transcribed interviews and the fieldwork notes to ensure a comprehensive understanding and to facilitate the identification of emerging patterns and themes. The researcher began by choosing one of the most compelling interview transcripts and highlighted the significance of the data it contained.

- Then carefully annotated each paragraph, breaking down the information and organizing it into topics based on similarities.
- Themes were distilled into concise codes, which were placed alongside the relevant sections of text.
- These themes were further grouped according to their relationships with one another.
- Once the categories were refined, the researcher shortened them into codes and arranged these alphabetically.
- With the data properly structured, an initial analysis was conducted.
- Finally, the prepared data was documented, and verification was carried out to ensure the findings were accurate and meaningful.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is discussed by Kyngäs, Kääriäinen and Elo (2020) as where authenticity is concerned with the ability of researchers to accurately depict the diverse realities that exist in the data collected from participants. Tracy (2019) asserts that data is confirmed following analysis. This was done to make sure that the data that had been analysed matched the data that were first gathered. The researcher used the procedure of proofreading to compare the raw text and the interpretation of the data twice. According to Kyngäs, et al. (2020) validating data entails, among other things, ensuring its dependability, trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. These in this

study were used to check if the data collection technique were reliable, and to ensure the quality of the study.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility, according to Rose and Johnson (2020), refers to whether the study's conclusions are believed by the participants and the reader of the final report. Furthermore, credibility is defined by Kyngäs, et al (2020) as confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. Additionally, credibility is an implicational phrase used to explain the suitability of what participants say and the researcher's presentation (King Keohane & Verba 2021). The trustworthiness of the researcher's explanation of the significance of the data she collected was further checked by the analysis and interpretation of the data, (Manda (2023). Peer researchers were involved in the researcher's application of the study's credibility. Severin and Chatasemway (2021) note that, this is the permission given to a person to participate in the research by posing questions regarding the qualitative study in order to confirm that the findings presented are understandable to the people and not just to the researcher. The researcher, with guidance from the supervisor, asked the peer researchers in the support group to conduct a peer review and analyze the data to verify the accuracy of the findings.

3.8.2 Dependability

Dependability is defined by Janis (2022) as the degree to which the researcher can duplicate the research findings with comparable participants in a new research topic. The research design and its implementation, the operational details of data collection, and the reflective assessment of the project are all examples of dependability in research, which is preferred to reliability (Janis 2022). Dependability indicates that the findings are consistent and could be replicated (Kyngäs, et al 2020). The researcher used the services of an independent coder to compare the transcripts with his field data to ensure that the study produced the same results if it were duplicated.

3.8.3 Transferability

Transferability means that the findings are also applicable in other contexts (Kyngäs, et al 2020). According to Kyngäs et al. (2020), transferability is an evaluation of the quality of the research in which the investigator asks, "How far am I able to claim that the results of findings from my research are true for or relevant to the wider population on a different context?" Drisko (2024) emphasises the need of making sure that the results of the qualitative study may be extended and used to other scenarios. According to Drisko (2024), the question, "to what extent can the study findings be generalised to other individuals or group context or setting," is addressed by transferability, To ensure and accomplish transferability in this qualitative research study, the researcher applied highlight and description of sampling strategies as employed by Liamputtong on Liamputtong Gupta, Chipchase and Ceprnja (2022)

3.8.4 Confirmability

According to Mfundisi, (2019), conformability is the degree of objectivity or the amount to which study participants, as opposed to the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest, impact the study's conclusions. Confirmability describes the degree of neutrality or, in other words, the extent to which the findings of a study reflect the respondents' opinions and experiences rather than the researchers' biases, motivations, or interests (Kyngäs, et al 2020). The confirmability of this study was boosted by Triangulation to minimize the impact of researcher bias (Noble and Heale 2019). All interviews for this project were recorded and allowed for data verification. Additionally, transcripts were prepared to improve data validation. The researcher continued to consult with her supervisor about the findings to ensure the study's validity.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Shaw, Howe, Beazer, and Carr (2020) define ethics as traditional actions that differentiate between right and wrong. According to Taquette and Borges da Matta Souza (2022), ethics is known as "normal behaviours" that guide our acts regarding what is and is not appropriate in our social interactions. According to Lebelo (2021), ethics is "a set of rules

by which individuals and societies maintain moral standards in their lives" since it influences our moral judgements when conducting research. For ethical considerations, this study employed the following components: beneficence, participant debriefing, Confidentiality and anonymity, and informed consent and assent.

3.9.1 Informed Consent

Maluleke, Worku, and Muchie (2023) define informed consent as a way to make sure study participants understand what they are agreeing to participate in. Furthermore, Millum and Bromwich (2021) argue that it is the right of each participant to be informed about the research project before consenting to participate. Klykken (2022) stresses that each participant in the study should sign consent forms permitting the researcher to use them in her study. The researcher also asked the participants' parents or carers for permission while they got ready and assented from the participants in cases where the participants were less than 18 years of age. The researcher sought permission from the participants to use an audio recorder to record the interviews.

The participants' parents and carers were informed about the nature and goal of the study, and the option for their children to withdraw if they felt uncomfortable about it. Since some of the participants were minors, this is consistent with the assent form. The researcher prepared the informed consent and the assent forms for the teenage mothers and their parents or caregivers. However, for teenage mothers to comprehend the purpose of the study, a verbal explanation was also provided. Consent letters were distributed to primary caregivers for them to review and sign and teenage mothers were given assent letters to read and sign as evidence of their voluntary participation in the study.

3.9.2 Permission

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained permission from authorities, including the ethical clearance from the Institution of Higher Learning under which this study was conducted. The researcher introduced herself to the school principals and requested the permission to recruit learner participants. The principals were provided with both the

background and the purpose of the study to give them the leverage to take informed decisions on permitting the researcher to have access to the participants.

3.9.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Because participants in qualitative research share more of their experiences, feelings, and opinions that must be kept as private as possible, confidentiality is absolutely essential. According to Kang and Hwang (2023), the idea of confidentiality implies that the research data and the participants stay secret unless the participants have granted consent for their disclosure. According to Sim Waterfield (2019), the researcher should only know the participants' identities after the study has been completed. Kang and Hwang (2023) emphasize the protection of participants' confidentiality so that their identity participants were given pseudonyms.is unknown. To conceal their identity in this study,

Transcripts of data, including written copies and audio recorders of interviews, were locked in a safe, secure, and secret location to protect the sensitive information of participants. The researcher ensured that participant information was not shared with persons outside of the research project, and the researcher informed participants about this when preparing them for the study.

3.9.4 Beneficence

According to Avant and Swetz (2020), beneficence is defined as the duty to extend advantages and limit damages that may occur during the study. Brear and Gordon (2021)'s description of beneficence is that the participant may face costs and feel uncomfortable about sharing some information; thus, the researcher should minimise the costs of participation in the research. The present researcher was mindful of all potential consequences of the study. Participants were informed that there is no incentive paid to them for participating in the study. The researcher informed the participants that the study was conducted for academic purposes and that No information would be shared unless with the supervisor. The information about the study, and they were expected to do, were shared with them so that they could make informed decision about their participation in the study.

3.9.5 Participant Debriefing

Seelandt, Walker and Kolbe (2021) define the debriefing of participants as the objective of ensuring no harm, which includes the intervention organised for the participants after the interviews in case there would a need. Additionally, Butler Copnell and Hall (2019) describe the debriefing of participants as a technique to determine whether they need any help, lest lack of, and would result in withdrawal from resentment or irritation over the interview. The researcher arranged that, following the interviews, referrals would be made for a social worker's intervention or another relevant professional to provide debriefing, where needed.

3.10 CONCLUSION

The techniques and procedures employed to present and analyse the data were outlined in this chapter. The chapter provided a comprehensive account of the research paradigm, approach, and design, as well as the characteristics of the population and the sampling strategies adopted. It further detailed the processes of data collection and analysis, ensuring that the methodological choices were logically aligned with the objectives of the study. Considerable attention was also given to trustworthiness, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, alongside a discussion of the ethical principles that guided the research process. Collectively, these elements established the methodological foundation upon which the study rested.

The subsequent chapter moves beyond methodological considerations to present and critically discuss the empirical findings. This transition marks a shift from describing how the research was conducted to interpreting what the research revealed, thereby situating the results within the broader theoretical and practical contexts of the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings. The study investigated how teenage mothers were supported and accommodated in inclusive education settings or learning environments in KwaZulu-Natal province, Mzinyathi district.

This chapter attempted to answer the study's main research question: "*What are teenage mothers' experiences in the mainstream educational settings?*" In an attempt to answer this research question, the researcher used three sub-questions, which were developed in Chapter 1. These were: How do teenage mothers understand education and teenage pregnancy? What challenges do teenage mothers experience in inclusive mainstream educational settings? What support is available for teenage mothers in inclusive mainstream educational settings?

Fifteen (n=15) participants who were purposively selected from four (n=4) mainstream secondary schools in the Umzinyathi region and Nqutu town in Kwa-Zulu Natal province had participated in this study. To maintain their anonymity, codes such as P-1 (referring to Participant 1) and Sch-A (referring to School A) were used throughout the data presentation and analysis processes.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 4.1 presents the biographic characteristics of the 15 participants drawn from four schools (Sch.-A to Sch.-D). All participants experienced childbirth during adolescence, with ages ranging from 15 to 18 years, and the majority between 15 and 17 years. This indicates that early teenage childbearing is a central feature of the sample. At the time of childbirth, most participants were enrolled in Grades 10 and 11, with fewer in Grades 9 and 12. This suggests that pregnancy occurred primarily during the middle to upper secondary school phase, a critical stage for academic progression and preparation for final examinations.

Table 4.1: Biographic Information for Participants

Participants	School	Age at childbirth	Place of residence	Grade at the child's birth
P-1	Sch.-A	17 yrs	Luvisi area	11
P-2	Sch.-A	15 yrs	Luvisi area	9
P-3	Sch.-B	17 yrs	Mfihlelwane village	11
P-4	Sch.-B	15 yrs	Mfihlelwane village	10
P-5	Sch.-B	17 yrs	Patsaona village	11
P-6	Sch.-B	17 yrs	Patsoana village	11
P-7	Sch.-B	16 yrs	Patsoana village	10
P-8	Sch.-C	18 yrs	Nondweni village	12
P-9	Sch.-C	15 yrs	Nondweni village	9
P-10	Sch.-C	17 yrs	Magala village	10
P-11	Sch.-C	17 yrs	SqHEMA area	11
P-12	Sch.-D	18 yrs	Magala village	11
P-13	Sch.-D	15 yrs	Maduladula area	10
P-14	Sch.-D	16 yrs	Maduladula area	10
P-15	Sch.-D	16 yrs	Patsoana area	10

Source: Author own computation

In terms of place of residence, participants were drawn from several rural communities, including Luvisi, Mfihlelwane, Patsoana, Nondweni, Magala, SoHEMA, and Maduladula areas. Patsoana and Nondweni appear more frequently in the sample, indicating stronger representation from these communities. Although participants were distributed across different villages, they shared similar rural socio-economic contexts, which provided a coherent basis for analysing their educational experiences and the broader implications of adolescent childbirth within these communities.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF THE ANALYSED DATA

This chapter provides the findings of the study, substantiated by the verbatim responses from the study's participants. These findings were analysed, interpreted, and presented. The researcher used two data collection instruments to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings. The recorded data collected from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher familiarised herself with the audio-recorded

transcribed data to verify that the transcription was complete and accurate, and to immerse herself in the data, gaining a deeper and more holistic understanding of participants' perspectives, emotions, and meanings. During this process, the researcher ensured that relevant themes, sub-themes, and categories were identified as they succinctly emerged from the transcribed data.

4.3.1 Presentation of Data from Semi-Structured Interviews

Teenage mothers in mainstream educational settings often encounter numerous challenges that hinder their academic performance and overall educational experience. The subsequent section presents the study's findings and the sub-themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The findings are presented in tandem with the study's sub-research questions and/or objectives.

4.3.1.1 Teenage Mothers' Understanding and Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on Education

The researcher aimed to investigate the teenage mothers' understanding of the impact of motherhood on their academic performance, specifically, to see if the teenage mothers could balance their roles as parents and as learners. The researcher scrutinised the academic performance of these teenage mothers before and after having children. The following themes had emerged under the above objective of the study:

(a) Teenage pregnancy and academic decline

The findings had suggested that teenage mothers experienced a significant decline in their academic performance, because they struggled to understand the huge responsibilities they had brought upon themselves by becoming pregnant whilst still attending school. Frequent absenteeism, for instance, was a common issue, as teenage mothers needed to attend healthcare facilities, care for their children, and manage household responsibilities. This, in turn, affected their ability to complete schoolwork, including homework and research-related assignments. P-2, Sch-A said:

“After having a baby, my results really dropped because now I must take care of the baby and do my house chores. I was only able to attend to my schoolwork after all the chores were done and the baby was asleep. In most cases, it will already be late, and I will also be tired, so my concentration will also be poor.” P-2, Sch-A

P-11, Sch-D, shared her experiences and said:

“Having a child while still at school is extremely hard, even worse when you are still young and trying to learn yourself. For me, it was extremely hard. I couldn’t keep up with being a mother while still attending school, even my results started dropping, and at home there was no support as they believed my results dropped because I was busy with boys.” P-11, Sch-D

(b) Difficulty balancing roles and responsibilities

The findings revealed that teenage mothers were struggling to manage their school responsibilities, home chores, and childcare responsibilities.

“Life became hard for me after giving birth. My mother was going to stay with my child at home, but she got a part-time job. I struggled a lot to keep up with school and being a mother, so my mother advised me to take a gap year and look after the child since she needed to work for us to have something after all. I also took that advice, as I could also see that I was struggling both in school and at home. I went back to school the following year when the child was no longer breastfeeding. Which took off some of the stress, but it is still hard.” P2 SCH- A

The researcher found that teenage mothers faced the daunting task of balancing multiple roles and responsibilities, including those of learner, mother, and caregiver. This balancing act often resulted in a significant decrease in the time and energy available for academic pursuits. The added responsibilities of childcare and household chores led to late nights, fatigue, decreased motivation, and mental health problems.

“I found it very hard to balance schoolwork, motherhood, and home responsibilities. I spent a lot of my time concentrating on my responsibilities as a mother, because I only stayed home for two weeks after giving birth and went back to school. When I get home, I will have to do my chores like cleaning and fetching water and also attend to a child. I barely had time for my schoolwork because by the time the child sleeps, I would also be tired. P-10, SCH-C

P-7 SCH-B, continued to say,

“I do not get enough time to study, I will always plan to quickly do my chores when I get home and get the baby to sleep fast, but that is just a wish, there is always something to do when you have a baby and not enough time to study at night. As soon as you get home, it feels like you must pay back because they were taking care of your baby when you were at school.” P-7 SCH-B

4.3.1.2 Challenges Experienced by Teenage Mothers in Inclusive Mainstream Educational Settings

The research found that teenage mothers were experiencing multiple challenges in mainstream education, such as limited access to parental support, inadequate academic support, stigma and social isolation, balancing academic and parenting responsibilities, socio-emotional challenges, and financial hardship.

(a) Guilt feelings and uncertainties

Teenage mothers were faced with a sudden change, which was overwhelming to them. They also felt they had no one to talk to because at home, they would remind them it was their choice that led them to their current situation, and at school, teachers were also occupied with their day-to-day work. Teenage mothers often lacked access to social workers, counselors, and other support services that could help them navigate the emotional and psychological challenges of parenthood, especially at their youthful age. P-8, Sch.-C said:

“Having a child at a young age really disturbed me, from when I first found out that I was pregnant until now. I sometimes just sit alone with no one to talk to, just thinking, even my sisters exclude me, and I cannot talk to them because I brought shame by giving birth at my age. I wish I could get a chance to apologise to my mom, but I don’t even know how to approach her. I sometimes even wish I had aborted. I am always thinking and weighing the impact of actions. Sometimes I feel I should just drop out of school because I feel like a burden.” P-8, Sch.-C

During the interview, P-13, Sch.-D started to cry when the researcher suggested pausing the interview. The participant insisted that the researcher continued. Though her parents had never voiced that, and they even helped her by taking care of her child when she was at school, she still needed a lot of emotional support and guidance to be able to deal with the psychological challenges she was facing, just feeling like a disappointment to her parents. She continued to say:

“I always wanted to be a respectful and well-behaved child, my parents would be proud of, but now I always feel like when they look at me, they just see disappointment.” P-13, Sch.-D

(b) Inadequate Academic Support

The participant revealed that when they were absent from school, the teachers did not go back to the topic they missed. They just had to catch up on their own as the lessons continued. The participants continued to say they sometimes borrowed classmates’ books to copy notes given on the days they were not at school and asked them to explain them during break time. The statements below reflect the direct words that were uttered by the participants:

“In times when I was absent, when I came back, the teachers continued with the lessons. They did not go back to give me the information I missed. I had to go to the learner that I know to be performing better in class to assist me with notes, so that I could catch up.” P-8, Sch.-C

The absence of inclusive academic support, such as catch-up classes or individual tutoring, could exacerbate the learning gaps experienced by teenage mothers who missed school due to childcare responsibilities.

(c) Stigma and Social Isolation

This study found that teenage mothers experienced stigmas from peers and members of the community. The findings of this study revealed that social isolation and rejection of teenage mothers made them feel ashamed of themselves and unaccepted by the community.

“Starting with my friends, those who did not have children became distant. In the community, most were gossiping about me, but I tried to ignore everything.” P-5, Sch- B

Teenage mothers experienced social exclusion and stigma from their peers, leading to feelings of isolation and marginalization. They lost friends as they deemed them a bad influence, so they started to isolate themselves from them. The parents were also too strict on some, and they were not allowed to go out, which led to them being isolated, as they had to stay home with their babies after school. P-1, Sch-A stated that:

“I am always at home to take care of or look after the child after school, so social life is now dead as I am prohibited from socialising at home.” P-1, Sch-A

As this study found, the stigmatization was not only by peers and community, but the teenage mothers' families were also guilty of the act, as the teenage mothers revealed that they were being scrutinised and treated negatively. P-4, Sch-B revealed that:

“My relationship with my family has changed a lot; I can't even disappear for a moment, as I will be immediately accused of looking for another baby and ruining my life even more.” P-4, Sch-B

(d) Socio-emotional Challenges

It was revealed in the findings of this study that teenage mothers experienced socio-emotional challenges and emotional distress. These challenges could further exacerbate the difficulties they faced in maintaining their academic performance and overall well-being. The following verbal quotes reflect what the participants had said:

“Becoming a parent brought unexpected challenges to my family relationships. I felt judged and criticised, which made me withdraw and defensive around them. Unfortunately, my family, especially my peers, also distanced themselves, leaving me feeling alone and distressed. This strained dynamic affected my overall well-being and ability to cope with being a new mother”. P-4, Sch.-B

“My sisters and I used to be very close, but ever since I had a child they exclude me in lots of things, I stay with my younger sister, we are renting in one room near to the school during school days, at times I will be in my study table maybe doing homework and I would hear her talking to our older sister over the phone about me and not even caring that I can hear. They have created all sorts of nicknames for me, and our older sister will be telling the younger sister not to listen to a person who brought shame to the family by giving birth at a young age. It always makes me sad and anxious, as we used to be very close, but now it is them against me. P-8, Sch.-C

(e) Financial Hardship

Teenage mothers often faced significant financial challenges, including the need to prioritise their child's basic needs over their own educational expenses. One participant said she was even scared to ask for anything at home because when she requested something, they said she must choose whether they provided for her or her baby.

P-13, Sch-D shared:

“I don’t have a school jersey, but I cannot ask for it at home because I know that I will be asked to choose what is more important between the school jersey and my baby’s needs.” P-13, Sch-D

The research found this to be one of the reasons the learners’ marks dropped, as the teenage mothers were afraid to ask for their educational needs at home and were trying to prioritise their baby’s needs. Teenage mothers in mainstream educational settings faced numerous challenges that could negatively impact their academic performance and overall educational experience. It was essential for educational institutions to recognise these challenges and provide the necessary support and resources to help teenage mothers succeed academically and personally.

Furthermore, P12-SCH-D asserted that:

“When the schools opened, we went to collect stationery, and there was a shortage of 2 quire exercise books, and we were required to buy them ourselves. I didn’t have money for them and covers. I have been financially dependent on foster-care money since my parents were both late until last year; now, without that financial help, I am really struggling. My aunt does help with the child, but every time I mention anything that requires money at school, it becomes a problem, as she is also dependent on her husband. So now I am just grateful that they are assisting me with the baby.” P12-SCH-D

Another participant in school A expressed how she was also struggling to meet her school needs as she was not financially stable, and neither was her baby’s father, since they were still both school going.

Since the father of my child and I are still attending school, we had no plans for how we would take care of the baby; we relied on our parents, who are also struggling with us. I was even more affected as my family was the one that stayed with the baby. Both my parents were so angry with me that I couldn’t even ask for anything I needed, even if it was for school, because they complained that they couldn’t do things for the baby and me while taking

care of my other siblings. I don't blame them as I know things are not well financially, I just must compromise and borrow from my schoolmates". P-2 SCH-A.

4.3.1.3 Support available for teenage mothers in mainstream education setups

The following sections present the study's findings regarding the support that various sub-themes had emerged from the transcribed and analysed data gathered through the semi-structured interviews. These findings are presented to respond to the study's sub-research question: What support is available for teenage mothers in inclusive mainstream educational settings?

(a) Inadequate Support Systems

The support system for the teenage mothers was the network of people or staff members who were there for the learners with special educational needs in school. The main system at the school level was called the school-Based Support Team (SBST), which played a crucial role in supporting learners, teachers, and the broader school community to address various educational needs and redressed barriers to learning. These included providing support for school-going teenage mothers. The teenage mothers stated that they did not have enough support in the mainstream educational setting to properly include them in learning and ensured that their educational needs were met.

As P-5 SCH-B stated:

"In our school we have time after normal school our where we can sit as group with other learners and study together, but most teachers they leave during that time so we just have to rely on other learners to catch-up, if you are absent maybe had to go to clinic check-ups they will be not catch-up classes for you it is up to you as a learners to look for information you must have missed during that day." P-5 SCH-B

P- 9 SCH-C, explained that teachers are often busy and do not have time for one-on-one with them, she continued to say,

“Sometimes when you are behind because you had to miss school since the clinic check-ups are during school days, it becomes hard to approach teachers and tell them you don’t understand because you were absent because in most time, they will tell you they are busy with something else. I normally just go to the learners that are performing well in class and copy their notes during break time and hope to get time to go through them.” P- 9 SCH-C

However, some schools (Sch-C and Sch-D) implemented inclusive and supportive environments that catered to the needs of teenage mothers. The following sub-themes attest to the findings about the support that was offered by the said schools.

(b) Emotional and Social Support

The participants had uniformly spoken highly of the assistance they got from their teachers and the principals in their schools. P-15, Sch-D, who was in a child-headed family, stated:

“I get a lot of support from the principal. I can go to him when I have something troubling me and he always has the best advice. I didn’t have food, because I had an issue with my card, so I didn’t get the R350 social relief grant for the unemployed youth, and he was able to assist me.” P-15, Sch-D

The researcher also found that the learners found it easier to talk to the principal than to their parents as they felt less judged by him. Principals and teachers played a critical role in supporting teenage mothers by providing a safe and non-judgmental space to discuss their concerns and challenges, and the teenage mothers reported feeling more comfortable discussing their personal issues with their principal and teachers than with their parents.

“It is hard to express my feeling when I am speaking to my mother, I feel like I have disappointed a lot and she is still taking care of my baby. I even find it easy to speak to our school principal when I have problems, he always gives the best advice and doesn’t make me feel judged”. P-8 Sch-C

(c) Academic Support and curriculum adaptations

Schools provided flexible academic support that adapted the curriculum to help teenage mothers balance their academic and parenting responsibilities. For example, the schools offered weekend classes, extended school hours, and individualised tutoring to support teenage mothers who needed to miss school due to childcare responsibilities. These adaptations helped teenage mothers stay on top of their schoolwork and reduced feelings of anxiety and stress. The researcher found that the principal and the teachers stayed extra hours with learners after school, and not only were they concentrating on Grade 12 learners, but most learners stayed and did their homework and studied either individually, in groups, or with the help of teachers and the principal. During school holidays, they had days where learners went to school, and the teachers and principal also attended to give extra support. P-15, Sch-D states:

“When I became a mother, my biggest priority became my child; even my results dropped a lot. I had to even change schools, and it became a little better. When I was in my previous school, I could not even focus on school, thinking about all the things I needed to do after school and the well-being of my child. As much as I still have all those responsibilities, at least my new school has an extra two hours where we are studying after school and doing homework under the guidance of our school principals, but it is better because when I get home, I can fully concentrate on my house chores and the baby even when I get tired I would have studies already and did my home-work” P-15, Sch-D

This shows that the support from the school may be considered important in making life easier for teenage mothers.

4.4 PRESENTATION OF DATA COLLECTED FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The research had two focus groups constituted by the selected participants to corroborate or substantiate the data collected through the semi-structured interviews. Focus group discussions were crucial to this empirical research because they offered deep,

comprehensive insights into the common experiences, viewpoints, and attitudes of participants in a social setting. Focus groups, as opposed to one-on-one interviews, provided interactive discussion where members disputed perspectives, built on one another's ideas, and co-constructed meaning. This frequently revealed underlying dynamics and attitudes that did not come to light in other data collection approaches. Because of the detailed data that was produced by this collective engagement, focus groups were an invaluable instrument for investigating complicated social issues and drawing conclusions that were supported by evidence.

Table 4.2: Findings from Focus Group Discussions

Sub-research questions	Findings
How do teenage mothers understand education and teenage pregnancy, and its effect on education?	Teenage mothers perceive a teenage pregnancy as a life-altering event that significantly increases life's challenges. They reported difficulties in balancing their lives, citing instances where they had to discontinue their education due to pregnancy-related stigma and safety concerns. Many were forced to leave school upon visible pregnancy, while others had to stop at seven months of gestation due to perceived risks associated with continued schooling. This disruption highlights the complex interplay between social, educational, and personal factors influencing teenage mothers' lives.
What challenges do teenage mothers experience in inclusive mainstream educational settings?	Teenage mothers in mainstream educational settings encountered numerous challenges, including social isolation and ridicule from both teachers and peers. They struggled to balance academic responsibilities with motherhood, citing the dual demands as overwhelming. The teenage mothers reported that their schoolwork suffered due to the exhaustion resulting from fulfilling domestic duties upon returning home, often leading to inadequate study time. Furthermore, some participants

	shared experiences of being mocked by teachers in class, being used as examples of "unruly" behaviour, and being unfairly blamed for classroom disruptions, exacerbating their feelings of marginalization and stigma.
What support is available for the teenage mothers in inclusive mainstream educational settings?	The participants highlighted significant gaps in support for teenage mothers within the school system. They reported limited access to school-based social workers and perceived teachers as being too preoccupied to provide adequate support. Furthermore, the participants noted a lack of remedial lessons or catch-up classes to compensate for missed school time due to prenatal and postnatal clinic appointments. Instead, they relied on peers to share missed information, which may be incomplete or inaccurate. Additionally, some participants expressed fear of disclosing the true reasons for their absences, citing concerns about potential ridicule from teachers and peers, further exacerbating their vulnerability and isolation. This underscores the need for more comprehensive and targeted support systems to address the unique challenges faced by teenage mothers in mainstream education. However, there are some teachers who are willing to assist, though the learner must go to the educator themselves to ask for assistance where they don't understand after looking for information from peers.

Source: Author own computation

Table 4.4.1 above illustrates that becoming a teenage mother can be a transformative experience that poses substantial obstacles, affecting both education and social relationships. The stigma and safety concerns surrounding teenage pregnancy often led to school dropout, underlining the intricate relationships between societal, academic, and personal factors. Teenage mothers in traditional school settings encountered various

hurdles, including feelings of isolation, teasing from teachers and classmates, and struggles to juggle schoolwork and parenting responsibilities.

The research highlighted notable shortcomings in the support provided to teenage mothers within the educational system. These gaps included insufficient access to school counselors, inadequate assistance from teachers, and a lack of supplementary classes to help them catch up on missed work. As a result, teenage mothers frequently depended on their peers for information and were hesitant to reveal the genuine reasons for their absences, fearing ridicule. This emphasized the necessity for tailored support systems that catered to the distinct needs of teenage mothers, enabling them to thrive academically and personally.

The results of the research conducted during the focus group discussions were consistent with the results the researcher obtained during the semi-structured interviews. This study focuses group discussions, and the semi-structured interviews' findings provided rich insight into teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings. The qualitative approach allowed in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives, revealing their challenges in the school setting, and the support they had and wished to have.

4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher discusses the findings in accordance with the pre-determined themes that emerged from the study's sub-research questions and objectives. According to Ayton and Tess (2023), the discussion of findings section in qualitative research refers to the process of analysing, interpreting, and synthesising data to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. They continue to assert that the discussion of findings revisits the study's aim, research questions, and objectives, presenting implications of a broader academic literature base.

4.5.1 Teenage Mothers' Understanding and Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on Education

The present study revealed that teenage mothers had come to an understanding that a teenage pregnancy significantly impacted their educational journey. They recognised that balancing school and parenting responsibilities was crucial, and that neglecting either role had consequences. Through their experiences, they had gained insight into the challenges of managing dual roles and the importance of finding strategies to meet both academic and parenting demands. As a result, they had developed a deeper understanding of their need for support systems to help them succeed in both areas.

The study by Adangabe, Emmanuella, and Tigtig (2021) revealed that teenage mothers demonstrated an understanding of the impact of pregnancy on their educational journey. They recognised the multifaceted challenges they faced, including financial constraints, time management struggles, self-esteem issues, emotional issues, and emotional turmoil. All these put these teenage mothers under a lot of emotional distress and eventually affected their academic performances as they struggled to juggle everything. The study by Sobngwi-Tambekou, Tsague-Agnoux, Fezeu and Ndonko (2022), further revealed that teenage mothers were less likely to finish school because of added responsibility, which included taking care of their babies and extra financial stress. They further revealed that teenage mothers often had to manage childcare responsibilities, which were overwhelming and left little time for their studies, resulting in marks dropping and demotivating others to even drop out of school.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory illuminated the complexities of teenage mothers' understanding of pregnancy and education. At the microsystem level, they navigated the understanding of balancing parenting and school responsibilities while dealing with financial difficulties, whilst the mesosystem highlighted the interplay between their communities, which influenced their access to resources. The societal norms shaped their experiences, including stigma and support. This ecological perspective highlighted the need for comprehensive support structures to facilitate teenage mothers' educational journey.

4.5.2 Challenges Experienced by Teenage Mothers in Inclusive Mainstream Educational Settings

The findings from this study revealed that teenage mothers in inclusive educational settings encountered numerous challenges that hindered their academic progress and overall well-being. They often faced significant challenges in balancing school and parenting responsibilities, leading to a decline in their academic performance. After becoming parents, they struggled to manage their dual roles, juggling school expectations with parenting demands. This balancing act was overwhelming, making it difficult for them to fulfill their responsibilities at home and in school. As a result, their academic performance suffered.

The study by Paril (2022) revealed that the increase in responsibilities was one of the challenges of teenage mothers. Paril further explained that teenage mothers found it difficult to meet the multiple needs of the baby, did house chores, and went to school. Significantly, research has shown that disrupted education was a common consequence of early parenthood, particularly for teenage mothers. The challenges of balancing parenting and education were intensified by limited financial resources, which affected access to educational opportunities and support services (The Professional Counselor, 2021). The researcher found that the challenges the teenage mothers were facing were the result of the system, such as family, community, and schools, as they were expected to continue with everything as normal, though they had this major added role of motherhood.

Another significant obstacle that the current study had revealed was the limited access to support services, such as social workers, within the school environment. These learners often required psychological support and emotional care to cope with the sudden and overwhelming changes they faced. However, teachers, who were already burdened with their own responsibilities, struggled to provide adequate support to every learner, leaving teenage mothers feeling isolated and unsupported. Furthermore, teenage mothers often experienced inadequate academic support, which exacerbated their struggles. Despite teachers' efforts, they did not revisit past lessons indefinitely, given their time constraints.

As a result, learners relied heavily on peers for updates and note-taking, leading to absenteeism and difficulties in balancing academic and parenting responsibilities. Babedi (2021) supports this by revealing that it was important to note that peer support played a huge role in helping teenage mothers cope with challenges, though family and teachers' support was still a more significant factor in many cases.

The findings of this study revealed stigma as a thorny issue. Teenage mothers frequently face stigma and social isolation. In Maleka 2020, stigma was viewed as a process based on the social construction of identity. Stigmatised people were described as those who did not have full social acceptance and constantly needed to adjust their social identities (Sumbane & Makua, 2023). They were often socially excluded by peers and family members, who viewed them as a bad influence. Communities regarded teenagers who fell pregnant as immoral and, as a result, these teenagers tended to hide themselves from people in general, as well as from peers, and this often led to depression when they lost contact with friends (Ndlovu, Makoni & Gundani, 2021). This exclusion made it difficult for them to find study buddies or receive support outside of school, further hindering their academic progress. According to Maleka (2020), labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination can all occur at the same time and were considered components of stigma. Stigmatisation and marginalisation of teenage mothers were serious issues of concern in South Africa, which were often ignored. Despite several programmes being implemented to eliminate and deconstruct stigma, there was evidence that stigma still existed and had very serious negative repercussions on the mental health status of young mothers (Mogamedi & Mudau, 2024).

The findings from the present study indicated that the competing demands of school and parenting responsibilities also took a significant toll on teenage mothers' mental health, leading to stress, anxiety, and burnout. In a study conducted in California by Vaca (2020), the majority of the participants reported that balancing work, school, and being a teen mother was extremely challenging and stressful. Teenage mothers often prioritised their babies' needs over their own, leading to exhaustion and poor academic performance. As a result, their academic results suffered because they could only focus on their studies after caring for their children (Alhassan et al., 2023). Financial hardships further

compounded these challenges, forcing teenage mothers to make difficult choices between their school needs and their babies' needs, often with limited support or resources available to them.

It was clear that the challenges faced by teenage mothers in inclusive education mainstream educational settings were multifaceted and influenced by various ecological systems. The struggles to balance motherhood and education were compounded by limited support services from social workers and financial difficulties. The pervasive stigma and social isolation further exacerbated mental well-being concerns and burnout. This ecological perspective highlighted the need for comprehensive support systems that addressed the complex, interconnected challenges faced by teenage mothers, encompassing individual, relational, and societal factors.

4.5.3 Support Available for Teenage Mothers in Mainstream Education Setups

The study's findings highlighted the complexities of the experiences of teenage mothers in school, revealing a nuanced interplay between challenges and support systems. Despite facing numerous difficulties, the participants reported receiving substantial support from teachers, who served as a crucial emotional outlet. The teachers' approachability and willingness to listen to the teenage mothers' concerns, despite their own busy schedules, were particularly noteworthy. This support was especially valuable given the emotional turmoil that often accompanied teenage motherhood. However, the study by Naidoo, Muthukrishna and Nkabinde (2021) showed that the school offered the teenage mothers little assistance in overcoming obstacles to curriculum access and high-quality education. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that despite the stigma associated with adolescent parenthood and parenting in the specific educational setting, the teenage mother's exhibited resilience and agency in overcoming obstacles and resolved to finish secondary school.

The study also underlined the pivotal role of the school principals in providing additional support to teenage mothers, particularly those from child-headed families who faced significant socio-economic challenges. The principals' efforts to secure support for these learners, who often relied on themselves for basic needs such as food, demonstrate a

commitment to creating a nurturing environment that acknowledged the unique difficulties faced by teenage mothers. In a study by Malatji, Dube and Nkala-Dlamini (2023), they revealed that some teachers were also in support of the teenage mothers and other learners participating in educational groups. They further added that most participants complained that due to motherhood responsibilities, they were often confronted with time constraints, which significantly affected the time they needed to do their schoolwork.

In terms of academic support, the study found that the school offered a range of resources that helped teenage mothers manage their schoolwork. The provision of study groups, homework sessions, and extra classes with teachers, as well as peer support, enabled these learners to stay on top of their academic responsibilities. The young mothers sought to make up for the lost time through participating in peer educational groups held in the school after hours (Malatji et al., 2023). This support structure allowed teenage mothers to complete their homework during school hours, thereby reducing the burden on them when they returned home to care for their babies. The teenage mothers expressed deep appreciation for these arrangements, which they felt significantly alleviated some of the pressures they faced, making their lives slightly more manageable. Although the research found some teachers were sympathetic and supportive of the teenage mothers' interest in education, the level of support provided was inadequate. Malatje et al. (2023) supported this finding when they stated that the support teachers were receiving was not enough and was not streamlined as per the existing legislative and policy framework.

Reflecting on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, the support available for teenage mothers in the mainstream educational setting highlighted the importance of interconnected systems. Approachable teachers provided crucial guidance, while principals' additional support addressed specific needs, particularly for those from child-headed families. The peer study groups fostered a sense of community, and extra classes monitored by teachers and principals demonstrated the school's commitment to supporting teenage mothers. This ecological perspective positively impacted teenage mothers' educational experiences, emphasising the need for continued collaborations and resource allocation to ensure success.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the findings of the study derived from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions. These findings were analysed, interpreted, and presented under the sub-themes that emerged from the study's sub-research questions and/or objectives. The next chapter provides the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study, as previously mentioned, was to explore teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings. The study investigated how teenage mothers were supported and accommodated in inclusive education settings or learning environments, specifically within the KwaZulu-Natal province, in the Mzinyathi district. This chapter provided a summary of the theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology used in the study, findings, and responses to sub-research questions. The chapter also discussed the limitations of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework provided a foundation for understanding research problems and guided the development of a thesis, literature review, and other elements. An epistemological conviction that knowledge and human experience were contextually formed within a network of interacting systems was reflected in the researcher's choice of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as the guiding framework. This theoretical approach was consistent with the researcher's idea that people did not develop in a vacuum; rather, they were impacted by a variety of environmental layers, from more general societal and policy contexts to more proximate settings like family and school. As a result, the framework validated the researcher's viewpoint of the interconnected roles that settings, observers, and individuals played in influencing educational and developmental outcomes.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provided a dynamic perspective on family dynamics and the influence of family members on each other. This theory addressed the difficulties faced by teen mothers at home, school, and in the community. Happy families handled change, communicated frequently, and worked effectively together. The theory also considered the family's function within a wider environment, including the school. The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem were all levels of analysis that impacted the adolescent mother. The mesosystem connected the

microsystems' structures to other structures, while the exosystem included cultural, political, and economic pressures. Understanding these levels of analysis helped address the challenges faced by teen mothers.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explained that policies, access to resources, and cultural norms influenced other macrosystems, causing difficulties for teenage mothers. Changes across time, such as family members' passing or internal disorders, also impacted teenage mothers and their school. Essa (2011) suggested the chronosystems theory, considering socioeconomic changes and daily life pace. Systems theory, which examined the systems directly impacting young mothers, included interactions with schools, families, policies, resources, and cultural standards.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Research that explored the lived experiences of teenage mothers revealed a combination of challenges, resilience, and coping strategies shaped by diverse social, economic, and cultural contexts (Bouknight-Bates, 2021; Groves et al., 2022). Access to resources, family and community support, and emotional stability were central to resilience and educational persistence among teenage mothers (Groves et al., 2022). Broader interventions such as comprehensive sex education, reproductive health services, and economic empowerment initiatives were deemed essential to mitigate the root causes of teenage pregnancy and parenthood across African countries (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018; UNFPA, 2013).

In South Africa, the prevalence of teenage parenthood continued to rise, with significant social and educational implications. Reports such as Daily News (2018) and Naidoo et al. (2021) noted the sharp increase in teenage pregnancies, especially in regions like Mpumalanga, and highlighted the multidimensional effects on teenage mothers, their families, and communities. Many teenage mothers faced economic hardship due to legal and social barriers, including restrictions on underage employment and limited family support (York, 2018; Naidoo, Muthukrishna, & Nkabinde, 2021). Contributing factors, such as peer pressure, poverty, and shifting moral values, further exacerbated school exclusion, and dropout (El Kazadouh et al., 2019). Societal attitudes that viewed teenage

pregnancy as a rite of passage or exploited government child grants perpetuated the issue (HSRC, 2009). Ndwandwe (2023) emphasized that financial constraints, stigmatization, and lack of parental support remained key barriers to educational attainment for school-going teenage mothers in South Africa.

Several studies addressed the psychosocial and academic challenges faced by teenage mothers. Adangabe, Emmauela, and Tigtig (2021) found that teenage mothers faced low self-esteem, stigma, emotional distress, poor time management, and financial instability. These factors, compounded by motherhood responsibilities, led to absenteeism and high dropout rates. Similarly, Gatsinzi (2021) identified that teenage mothers experienced depression, loneliness, and rejection, often resorting to menial labor to survive. Both studies underscored that continued education was viewed as difficult due to the absence of institutional and familial support.

Velazquez (2020) added a critical dimension by discussing reproductive oppression, emphasizing that teenage Latina mothers faced systemic discrimination and deprivation of educational resources, which led to long-term social and economic exclusion. This aligned with findings by Dhaka and Musese (2019), who observed that many teenage mothers in rural contexts dropped out of school due to the dual burden of childcare and academic responsibilities. The literature consistently pointed to stigma and discrimination as major barriers to teenage mothers' educational re-entry and success. Studies by Mukabana et al. (2024) and Ruzibiza (2021) in Kenya and Rwanda, respectively, revealed that teenage mothers often faced ridicule, bullying, and exclusion from their peers and teachers, despite policies supporting their school re-entry. The lack of childcare facilities and withdrawal of parental support further complicated their return to education.

Within South Africa, despite the existence of progressive legal frameworks, such as the South African Schools Act (1996) and the Bill of Rights, implementation gaps persisted, leading to continued marginalization (Naidoo, Muthukrishna, & Nkabinde, 2019). Teachers and healthcare providers often perpetuated stigma rather than provided support (Amod, Halana, & Smith, 2021). Nevertheless, some research highlighted positive practices. Malatji, Dube, Nkala-Dlamini, and Shumba (2023) and Nakalanzi (2018) found

examples of empathetic educators who extended consultation times and individualized assistance to help teenage mothers reintegrate into school successfully.

Globally, studies such as those by Erfina, Widyawati, Reisenhofer, and Ismail (2019) demonstrated that economic strain, lack of housing, and insufficient policy support contributed to teenage mothers discontinuing their education. Yet, some teenage mothers expressed motivation to pursue further education to secure better futures for their children. Across all these studies, scholars advocated for holistic and inclusive approaches that combined educational, social, and policy interventions. Effective support necessitated collaboration among schools, families, communities, and NGOs to foster inclusive, empathetic, and adaptable learning environments (Park & Holloway, 2018; Mukabana et al., 2024; Malatji et al., 2023). Such strategies were essential for upholding the educational rights and dignity of teenage mothers while fostering their long-term well-being and empowerment.

5.4 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

For the present study, the researcher had employed a qualitative research methodology because the researcher had wanted to comprehend the challenges experienced by teenage mothers who were enrolled in school and received educational support by conducting a qualitative study. Data was analysed holistically when employing a qualitative research approach, which viewed the participants as a whole rather than as a single entity. Drawing on people's experiences, for example, allowed the researcher in this study to examine a phenomenon that was firmly embedded in the person's knowledge base and sense of self.

The main advantage of using a qualitative research methodology was that it had allowed for the analysis of human attitudes observed in natural settings. In-depth investigation of intricate phenomena, rich, contextual data, adaptability in modifying the study, the capacity to identify underlying causes, and comprehension of human experiences, beliefs, and motivations all of which frequently defied quantitative analysis were further benefits of qualitative research (de Vos, et al. 2021). By elucidating underlying issues and providing context, qualitative research methodologies had effectively supplemented

quantitative research and facilitated the development of deeper insights (Lim, 2025). The importance of people's lives, experiences, and the context of their environment were the main concerns of qualitative researchers. The importance of the teenage mothers' experiences with educational assistance was the researcher's main focus in this study. Furthermore, the study and its interpretation were influenced by the researcher's cultural background and individual experiences, simultaneously guarding against bias. The researcher, however, had made it clear that her experience had no bearing on the study's findings and how it was conducted.

The quantitative research technique had been the alternative research methodology that the investigator had employed. However, the drawbacks of quantitative research included its limited capacity to capture qualitative elements such as emotions and experiences, its dependence on large sample sizes, which could have been resource-intensive, its inability to explain "why" correlations existed, and its lack of depth and context in understanding phenomena (Taherdoost, 2022). Moreover, analytical rigidity in quantitative research could have led to simplistic interpretations and the potential for manipulative testing, where experimental conditions were altered to support desired outcomes (Luoma & Hietanen, 2025). It would have negated the study's goal and prevented the researcher from gaining a deeper comprehension of it.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study's limitations ultimately affected the information gathered about teenage mothers who attended school: Some adolescent mothers had to go home and took care of other matters after school, which caused them to be unavailable, which was a major hindrance to this research. Some participants felt cheated out of their spare time, which they could have used to catch up on home chores and spent time with their children. For the interviews during school days, teenage mothers were dubious about being interviewed during school breaks since it was their time to unwind and have lunch. As a result of travelling to KZN and between schools for interviews, the researcher encountered financial limitations.

5.5.1 Overcoming Limitations of the Study

The researcher ensured to arrive on time for interviews and kept appointments with participants to reduce participant anxiety. The challenge of having less time due to school closures was successfully addressed by working faster to collect enough relevant data for the study. The researcher made accommodations to ensure the comfort of individuals who rescheduled their interview appointments for other dates. By obtaining a bursary, the researcher overcame the difficulties brought on by financial constraints and did everything in her power to guarantee that the study produced high-quality data.

5.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following sections discussed the summary of the findings based on pre-determined themes from the study's sub-research questions and objectives, revisiting the study's aim, research questions, and objectives, and presenting implications from a broader academic literature base.

5.6.1 The First Research Sub-Question: How do Teenage Mothers Understand Education and Teenage Pregnancy?

Teenage mothers understand the significant impact of pregnancy on their educational journey, recognizing the importance of balancing school and parenting responsibilities. They face financial constraints, time management struggles, self-esteem issues, and emotional turmoil, which affect their academic performance. The added responsibility of caring for babies and financial stress can lead to decreased marks and demotivation. Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory highlights the complexities of teenage mothers' understanding of pregnancy and education, emphasising the need for comprehensive support structures to facilitate their educational journey. This ecological perspective underscores the importance of addressing societal norms and stigma in balancing parental responsibilities.

The researcher evaluated the perspectives of teenage mothers to answer the sub-research question, "How do teenage mothers understand education and teenage pregnancy, and its effect on education?" The researcher discovered that teenage mothers

believe that being pregnant while still in their teens is a life-changing experience that makes living much more difficult. They talked about how hard it was to balance their lives, including times when they had to stop going to school because of the shame associated with pregnancy and safety worries. Many were compelled to drop out of school when they became pregnant, while others were forced to do so at seven months because of the perceived risks of continuing their education. This disruption draws attention to the intricate interactions between personal, societal, and educational issues that affect the lives of teenage mothers.

5.6.2 The Second Research Sub-Question: What Challenges do Teenage Mothers Experience in Inclusive Mainstream Educational Settings?

This study highlighted the challenges faced by teenage mothers in inclusive educational settings, including balancing school and parenting responsibilities, which can lead to a decline in their academic performance. The increased responsibilities of a baby, house chores, and school can be overwhelming, making it difficult for them to fulfill their responsibilities at home and in school. Limited financial resources can also exacerbate these challenges, as they are expected to continue with their motherhood role. Study by Paril (2022) highlights the need for support services like social workers within the school environment, as teachers may struggle to provide adequate support. This leads to teenage mothers feeling isolated and unsupported, leading to absenteeism and difficulties in balancing academic and parenting responsibilities.

Stigma, a process based on social construction of identity, is another significant issue faced by teenage mothers. It is often viewed as a process based on the social construction of identity and can lead to social exclusion and depression. The competing demands of school and parenting also significantly impact teenage mothers' mental health, leading to stress, anxiety, and burnout. Financial hardships further compound these challenges, forcing teenage mothers to make difficult choices between their school needs and their babies' needs. The study highlights the need for comprehensive support systems that address the complex, interconnected challenges faced by teenage mothers, encompassing individual, relational, and societal factors.

5.6.3 The Third Research Sub-Question: What Support is Available for the Teenage Mothers in Inclusive Mainstream Educational Settings?

The study revealed the complex experiences of teenage mothers in school, highlighting the interplay between challenges and support systems. Teachers provide substantial emotional support, but schools often offer little assistance in overcoming obstacles to curriculum access and high-quality education. Despite the stigma associated with adolescent parenthood, teenage mothers exhibit resilience and agency in overcoming obstacles. School principals play a pivotal role in providing additional support, particularly for child-headed families facing socio-economic challenges. The school offers resources like study groups, homework sessions, extra classes, and peer support to help teenage mothers manage their academic responsibilities. However, the level of support provided is inadequate, and the existing legislative and policy framework needs improvement. The ecological systems theory highlights the importance of interconnected systems, with approachable teachers providing guidance and principals providing additional support. This ecological perspective positively impacts teenage mothers' educational experiences, emphasizing the need for continued collaboration and resource allocation to ensure success.

The analysis further revealed significant shortcomings in the support provided to teenage mothers in the school system. Participants indicated that access to school-based workers is limited, and teachers often appeared too busy to offer necessary assistance. The absence of remedial lessons or catch-up classes for time lost due to prenatal and postnatal appointments was also noted, leading students to depend on peers for information, which could be unreliable. Additionally, there were fears about revealing the true reasons for their absences due to potential ridicule from teachers and classmates, which heightened their feelings of vulnerability and isolation. This situation emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive support systems tailored to the unique challenges teenage mothers face in mainstream education. Despite this, some teachers are open to aiding students, but students must proactively seek help from educators after consulting with peers.

5.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study indicated that teenage mothers acknowledge the significant impact of pregnancy on their education, recognizing the need to balance school and parenting. They experience challenges in managing these dual roles, which negatively affects their academic performance, compounded by financial difficulties and limited support services. The intricate interplay of support systems, including teacher support and peer resources, plays a crucial role in helping them cope with their responsibilities. The findings stressed the importance of comprehensive support systems to address the multifaceted challenges facing teenage mothers in educational settings.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory enabled the researcher to analyse teenage mothers' experiences holistically by examining how family relationships, school environments, social attitudes, and educational policies interacted to shape participants' inclusion within mainstream schools. However, the theory's broad systems occasionally overlapped, making it difficult to isolate the influence of individual environmental factors. The experiences of teenage mothers in KwaZulu-Natal can be understood through Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. At the **microsystem** level, peer ridicule and parental withdrawal directly undermine educational persistence, while empathetic teachers provide critical support. The **mesosystem** reveals weak linkages between home and school, where poor communication exacerbates absenteeism. At the **exosystem** level, limited childcare facilities and restrictive employment conditions indirectly constrain teenage mothers' ability to remain in school. The **macrosystem** highlights the tension between progressive policies and cultural stigma, which perpetuate exclusion despite legal protections. Finally, the **chronosystem** underscores how rising teenage pregnancies and shifting socio-economic conditions reshape the educational experiences of teenage mothers over time.

The theory highlighted the vital role of interconnected systems in providing support, where approachable teachers offer guidance, principals address specific needs, especially for those from child-headed families, and peer study groups foster community. Extra classes supported by the school further demonstrate a commitment to these mothers. This

ecological perspective accentuated the importance of ongoing collaboration and resource allocation to enhance the educational experiences of teenage mothers. Overall, an ecological perspective highlights the necessity for continued collaboration and resource allocation to enhance the educational journeys of teenage mothers.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study provided the following recommendations.

Addressing Discrimination by Teachers

Schools should implement mandatory sensitisation and professional development programmes for educators to address discriminatory attitudes and practices towards teenage mothers. Teachers must be trained to adopt non-judgmental, supportive approaches that uphold the learners' dignity and promote their academic success. Clear reporting and accountability structures should be established to deal with cases of bias or exclusion by staff, always ensuring that educators model inclusivity and respect.

Discrimination and Stigma by Fellow Learners

To reduce stigma from fellow learners, schools should integrate awareness campaigns and peer education programmes that promote empathy, tolerance, and inclusion. Workshops, assemblies, and life orientation lessons can be used to address myths and negative perceptions surrounding teenage motherhood. Schools should also establish peer support groups where teenage mothers can share experiences and find solidarity, helping to create a culture of acceptance among students.

Health Care Services that Reduce Absenteeism

Schools should collaborate with local clinics and health departments to provide accessible, adolescent-friendly health care services on or near school premises. Regular visits by nurses or mobile clinics can help teenage mothers access prenatal and post-natal care, counselling, and family planning services without missing school. Health services should be confidential and supportive, focusing on both physical and mental well-being to minimise absenteeism and dropout rates.

Social Services at a School Level

Each school should have access to a qualified social worker or counsellor who can provide psychosocial support to teenage mothers. Social services should include counselling, referrals to external agencies, and assistance with social grants or childcare arrangements. Collaboration between the school, community organisations, and the Department of Social Development could ensure that teenage mothers receive holistic support to balance their academic and parenting responsibilities.

Policies that Enforce Inclusion of Teenage Mothers

The Department of Education should strengthen and enforce policies that guarantee the right of teenage mothers to continue and complete their education. Schools must have clear guidelines outlining procedures for re-admission after childbirth, flexible timetables, and academic catch-up programmes. Implementation of these policies should be monitored to ensure compliance, and schools that violate inclusion principles should face appropriate consequences.

Extra Workshops for Teachers on Inclusive Education

Regular workshops and continuous professional development sessions should be organised for teachers to deepen their understanding of inclusive education, particularly concerning the needs of teenage mothers. These workshops should focus on developing empathy, classroom management strategies for diverse learners, and adapting teaching methods to accommodate learners with parenting responsibilities. Empowered teachers can create supportive classroom environments that promote both learning and emotional well-being.

Government Daycare/Crèche Programs in or Around Schools

The government should prioritise the establishment of daycare or crèche facilities in or near schools to support teenage mothers. These facilities would enable learners to attend school regularly, knowing their children are safe and cared for in close proximity. Partnerships with NGOs, local municipalities, and the private sector can strengthen the

sustainability of such programmes. Accessible childcare is essential to reducing absenteeism and ensuring teenage mothers have equal opportunities for educational success.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the conclusions and recommendations of the study under investigations which will be presented by summarizing the theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology used in the study, findings and responses to research questions; also discussing the limitations of the study summary and conclusions and recommendations. Teenage mothers recognise the substantial influence of pregnancy on their education and the necessity of striking a balance between school and parenthood, as suggested by the study's findings. In addition to financial hardships and a lack of support services, they struggle to balance these two responsibilities, which have a detrimental impact on their academic achievement. Their ability to manage their obligations is greatly aided by the complex interactions between support networks, such as peer and teacher resources. The results emphasise the value of all-encompassing support networks in addressing the complex issues that adolescent mothers encounter in school environments.

Teenage mothers face discrimination in schools, which can be addressed through mandatory sensitisation and professional development programs. Schools should also integrate awareness campaigns and peer education programs to reduce stigma. Accessible healthcare services, social services, and policies should be enforced to ensure their inclusion. Teachers should receive workshops on inclusive education and government daycare/crèche programs to support their needs. These measures can help reduce absenteeism and ensure equal opportunities for educational success for teenage mothers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Proof of Registration



APPENDIX A: PROOF OF REGISTRATION



STUDY ALERT

STUDENT NAME :
7942 ANTONIO STREET
CENTRAL VIEW
LOTUS GROVE EXT 25
PRETORIA WEST
0183

STUDENT NUMBER : 2400-240-0
REGISTRATION NAME : MR P MOKGAM
REGISTRATION NO. : 0601575413
DATE : 2024-03-27

DEAR STUDENT

I wish to inform you that your registration has been accepted for the academic year indicated below. Kindly activate your UNISA mylife (<https://myunisa.ac.za/portals>) account for future communication purposes and access to research resources.

NAME : MR P MOKGAM (MOKGAM) (NAME)
TITLE : MR P MOKGAM'S EXPERIENCE IN DISTANCE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS- AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE
SUPERVISOR : DR KE MALAMASA (MALAMASA@unisa.ac.za)
ACADEMIC YEAR : 2024
TYPE: DISSERTATION
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A statement of account will be sent to you shortly.

You must re-register and pay annually between January and March of each year until such time that you can submit your dissertation/thesis for examination. Students registering for the first time for a dissertation or thesis must complete a research proposal in their first year of study. Contact your supervisor/s immediately after registration.

If you intend submitting your dissertation/thesis for examination please refer to the link:
https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/apply_for_admission/masterware-a-doctoral-degree/masterware-a-doctoral-research-examination-process for the process you need to follow and the relevant dates to take into consideration. Should you submit for examination after end of February, you must re-register and pay your rate for the current academic year.

Please access the information with regard to your personal libraries on the following link:
<https://bit.ly/shampyr>

Information on the compulsory online African Academic Student Development Programme is available on:
<https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/apply-for-admission/masterware-a-doctoral-degree/academic-research-support>

Yours faithfully,

PROF MR MOKGAM
Acting Registrar





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Appendix B: Permission Consent to Parents



APPENDIX B: PERMISSION CONSENT TO PARENTS

Dear Parent

Your daughter is invited to participate in a study entitled "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective."

I am undertaking this study as part of my Master's research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of teenage mothers in the mainstream educational setting and the possible benefits of the study are the improvement of policies when it comes to implementation of inclusivity in mainstream educational setting for teenage mothers. I am asking permission to include your child in this study because her participation will assist in the investigation. I expect to have 15 other children participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

- Take part in an interview
- Take part in a group interview

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are that the policy makers and implementers will have information to work on to better inclusive education implementation for teenage mothers. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's

The benefits of this study are the findings will help to inform policy markers and implementers where there are gaps when in including teenage mothers in a school setting.

Potential risks are the teenage mothers might have to recall the unsettling experiences they went through.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

If you have questions about this study please ask me or my study supervisor, Dr MK Malahlela, Department of Inclusive education, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is 0833526899 and my e-mail is 54263468@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The e-mail of my supervisor is malahmk@unisa.ac.za. Permission for the study has already been given by Principal and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child:

Sincerely

Parent/guardian's name (print)

Parent/guardian's signature:

Date:

SILONDILE SIKHAHANE

Researcher's name (print)

Researcher's signature

Date:

Appendix C: Assent Letter to Teenage Mothers



APPENDIX C: ASSENT LETTER TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Title of the research: "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective."

Dear _____

Date _____

I am doing a study on experiences of teenage mothers in the educational setting, as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways that your teachers can use to implement inclusivity for teenage mothers in school better. This may help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study.

I would like to interview you about your experiences as a school going teenage mother. Answering the questions will not take more than 10 minutes.

I will write a report on the study but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Participation is voluntary and you do not have to be part of this study if you don't want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time without penalty. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

The benefits of this study are that I will be able to assist policy makers and implementers in better understanding where the teenage mothers feel the gap in implementation of inclusivity.

Potential risks are that you might need to recall the experiences you have lived both pleasant and unpleasant.

You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult call me at 0833526899.

Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Researcher: Ms Silondile Sikhakhane

Phone number: 0833526899

Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

WRITTEN ASSENT

Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

WRITTEN ASSENT

I have read this letter which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

Learner's name (print): Learner's signature: Date:

Witness's name (print) Witness's signature Date:

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

Parent/guardian's name (print) Parent/guardian's signature: Date:

SILONDILE SIKHAKHANE
Researcher's name (print) Researcher's signature: Date:

Appendix D: Permission Letter to the KZN DOE



APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE KZN DOE

Request for permission to conduct research at UMzinyathi District schools

Title of the research: "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective."

Date _____

Name of the person to who you address the request

Department of the person

Contact details of the person (tel and email address)

Dear _____

I, Silondile Sikhakhane am doing research under supervision of Dr. MK Malahlela a senior lecture in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a Master's degree at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Masters and PhD UNISA Bursary for Master's degree research. We are requesting a permission to conduct research to learners under your district in a study entitled "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective."

The aim of the study is to investigate the experiences of teenage mothers in the educational setting regarding inclusion.

Your department has been selected because they is not much data collected on this topic in the areas covered by UMzinyathi District.

The study will entail sampling school going teenage mothers who will be interviewed individually and in a focus group about their experiences as school going teenage mothers.

The benefits of this study are that it will assist policy makers and implementers to improve the policy for the better in inclusion of teenage mothers in the educational settings

Potential risks will not be there for the department.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail summary of the finding which would be shared with the participants electronically.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Silondile Sikhakhane', is written over a light blue rectangular stamp.

SILONDILE SIKHAKHANE

UNISA MASTER'S STUDENT (RESEARCHER)

Appendix E: Permission Letter to the School Principals



APPENDIX E: PERMISSION LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Request for permission to conduct research at _____

Title of the research: "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective."

Date _____

Name of the person to who you address the request

Department of the person

Contact details of the person (tel and email address)

Dear _____

I, Silondile Sikhakhane am doing research under supervision of Dr. MK Malahlela a senior lecture in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a Master's degree at the University of South Africa. We have funding from Masters and PhD UNISA Bursary for Master's degree research. We are requesting a permission to conduct research to learners under your district in a study entitled "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective."

The aim of the study is to investigate the experiences of teenage mothers in the educational setting regarding inclusion.

Your school has been selected because they is not much data collected on this topic in the where your school is located.

The study will entail sampling school going teenage mothers who will be interviewed individually and in a focus group about their experiences as school going teenage mothers.

The benefits of this study are that it will assist policy markers and implementers to improve the policy for the better in inclusion of teenage mothers in the educational settings

Potential risks will not be there for the school.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail summary of the finding which would be shared with the participants electronically.

Yours sincerely

SILONDILE SIKHAKHANE

UNISA

MASTER'S

STUDENT

(RESEARCHER)

Appendix F: Interview Questions



APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the challenges that a teenage mother experience in educational context?	a) Share with me how life was before you became a mother b) What role do you think your family played in you becoming a teenage mother that is still at school? c) What role did your friends played in you becoming a teenage mother that is still at school? d) How did being a teenage mother affect your school progress? e) How was your social life affected when you became a mother? f) What challenges do you experience now as a school going teenage mother? g) How does being a teenage mother affect your relationship with your family?
2. What support is available for you at home and various institutions such as department of education	a) What form of support do you get from your family members? b) What form would you have wished to get from your family? c) What support did you get from professionals such as educators? d) What form would you have wished to get from

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	professionals?
3. What support is available for the teenage mothers in inclusive mainstream educational settings?	a) How do you deal with possible daily challenges of being a teenage mother who is still at school? b) Based on your experience, what advice can you give to any teenagers who are not mother?

Appendix G: Focus Group Assent



APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP ASSENT

Date _____

Title: "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective."

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Silondile Sikhakhane and I am doing research under the supervision of Dr. MK Malahlela, a senior lecture in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a master's degree at the University of South Africa. We have funding UNISA Masters and PhD bursary. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective."

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could assist policy markers and implementers to improve the policy for the better in inclusion of teenage mothers in the educational settings

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you meet the criteria of what the study need to be able to get the relevant experieces of teenage mothers in school.

I obtained your contact details from _____

the study will have about 20 participant and maximum on 6 people in a focus group

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Describe the participant's actual role in the study.

The study involves focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The focus group might take about 20 minutes with about 6-8 people per group.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent/assent form.

You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The benefits of this study are that I will be able to assist policy markers and implementers in better understanding where the teenage mothers feel the gab in implementation of inclusivity.

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ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

Potential risks are that you might need to recall the experiences you have lived both pleasant and unpleasant. You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research **OR** Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give if you prefer to remain anonymous. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings to ensure confidentiality.

If relevant, identify who will have access to the data and how these individuals will maintain confidentiality, your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Focus group is where we have a group of people together in an interview at the same time and place, and while every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no payment and incentives towards the participants.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the CEDU ERC, UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Silondile Sikhakhane on 0833526899 or email silondilesikhakhanr@gmail.com. It will be available late 2025.

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr MK Malahlela at 012 481 2755 or malahmk@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

SILONDILE SIKHAKHANE

CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the focus group.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print) _____

Researcher's signature

Date

Appendix H: Focus Group Questions



APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What are the challenges that a teenage mother experience in educational context?
2. What support is available for you at home and various institutions such as department of education?
3. What support is available for the teenage mothers in inclusive mainstream educational settings?

Appendix I: Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreement



APPENDIX I: CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

Confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement.

I, _____, the principal/Deputy/DH of _____ declare on the _____ of _____ 2024, that I will not disclose whether verbally or in writing any information which might lead to the identities of learners who will be participating in the study titled "Teenage mothers' experiences in mainstream educational settings: An Inclusive Education Perspective.", to any other party for any other purpose during or after the course of this study.

Signature: _____

Name (print): _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Appendix J: EDITING CERTIFICATE

**THOTHI**
WRITING AND EDITING SOLUTIONS

Registration Number: 2018/1578658/07

Certificate

This serves to certify that:

Silondile Sikhakhane

Who has written a **DISSERTATION** with a Title:

**Teenage Mothers' Experiences In Mainstream Educational Settings: An Inclusive
Education Perspective**

As a requirement for a **DEGREE: MASTER**

At The

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA (UNISA)

In the

Department of Inclusive Education (Humanities)

has requested the editorial services of Thothi Writing and Editing Solutions (Pty) Ltd to edit this document, which has been edited to the standard required by an institution of Higher Learning. The company confirms that the content has not been tampered with and guarantees the standard of English Language in the document as acceptable.



Date: 17/02/2026.

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