

**PERSPECTIVES OF LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS TOWARDS THE INCLUSION
OF PREGNANT LEARNERS IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION IN LADYBRAND
HIGH SCHOOLS**

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated the perspectives of learners and educators towards the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream schools in Ladybrand. The theoretical framework for this study is the Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1974 – 1979) in the 1970s. Urie Bronfenbrenner argues that to understand development, one must consider the entire Ecological System in which growth occurs. A purposive sample of 29 learners and nine educators was selected from two high schools in Ladybrand, Mantsopa Local Municipality of Thabo Mofutsanyane District in the Free State Province. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with educators and focus group discussions with learners. A thematic analysis was used to analyse the audio taped data from the transcribed interviews, guided by the respective research questions. The findings from this study illustrated that, educators' perspective is that pregnant learners hide pregnancy from them to avoid the associated bureaucratic process, including being accompanied by parents to school. The learners and educators agree that educators are not adequately equipped to deal with pregnant learners, especially in cases whereby the pregnancy is hidden from them. The study recommends educators to be offered appropriate support through proper training on how to work with pregnant learners and parenting teenagers. Such a strategy will help them to identify pregnant learners, to meet their health-related needs and to enable them to offer social and psychosocial support to learners in need. To close the gap of teachers lacking health related skills, they need to undergo training to offer social and psychological support to pregnant learners. Moreover, the study recommends that all girl learners be educated before and during pregnancy, regarding official pregnancy policy guidelines. Such strategies will hopefully create a conducive environment where girl learners will talk freely about their status and get the necessary support.

Key words: *Inclusion, girl learner, mainstream schools, teenage pregnancy, South Africa*

DECLARATION

I declare that *Perspectives of Learners and Educators Towards the Inclusion of Pregnant Learners in Mainstream Education in Ladybrand High Schools* is my own work, that it has never been submitted to any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by complete references.

Name: Palesa Sylvia Tsilo

Signed

Date.....

DEDICATION

This dissertation is specifically dedicated to my two children, Neo and Naledi for their undying love and support, my late mother, 'M'e Matau Mofoka, and my late husband, Ntate Tsilo Tsilo, for contributing to the success I have today.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACRC	-	AFRICAN CHARTER ON RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
AIDS	-	ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME
AU	-	AFRICAN UNION
CEDAW	-	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
CRC	-	CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF A CHILD
CSTL	-	CARE AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAM
DBE	-	DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION
DOB	-	DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION
DOH	-	DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EFA	-	EDUCATION FOR ALL
EUP	-	EARLY AND UNINTENDED PREGNANCY
HIV	-	HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS
NMDG	-	NATIONAL MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS
PPMLP	-	POLICY ON PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER PREGNANCY
R.S.A	-	REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
SASSA	-	SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY
SBST	-	SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM
SDG	-	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
SIAS	-	POLICY ON SCREENING, IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT

AND SUPPORT		
SMT	-	SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM
STI	-	SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTION
TOP	-	TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY
UN	-	UNITED NATIONS
WHO	-	WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

This study investigated the perspectives of learners and educators regarding the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education are considered key factors in supporting all students to function well in the classroom (Rojo-Ramos, Manzano-Redondo, Barrieros-Fernandez, Garcia-Gordillo & Adsuar (2021), for that reason, the study aimed at investigating and comparing how educators and non-pregnant learners respond to the policy of mainstreaming pregnant learners in schools. Non-pregnant learners also played an important role in the study, as they are considered regular learners who share a classroom with pregnant learners (Siddik & Kawai, 2020). To understand the topic better, educators' and learners' points of view were investigated further, regarding inclusion of pregnant learners and parenting teenagers in regular classrooms, as stated in the National Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in Schools. Moreover, the study aimed to understand the strategies teachers employ while working with both the pregnant learners and parenting teenagers, as well as non-pregnant learners and to further investigate if non-pregnant learners (boys and girls) have knowledge as to what is expected of learners when they get pregnant while still studying.

Inclusive education is defined as education that is expected to collaborate differences found between learners (Alfina & Anwar, 2020). It is about the value and well-being of all learners (Siddik & Kawai, 2020) and to understand it better, the most important issues considered to be at the heart of inclusive education are human rights, equal opportunities and social justice. Wherever learners are involved, the school is considered the appropriate environment to provide educational support and freedom to all learners, irrespective of their different learning needs. The educator therefore appears to be central to teaching and learning, hence, Prasetyo, Rachmadtullah, Samsudin, Achmad and Aliyyah (2021) believe that learning depends more on the educator's presence and the strategies employed to accommodate different learning

needs. Rojo-Ramos *et al.* (2021) add that, educators' preparation is also essential in an inclusive environment to reach higher quality education for every learner.

Linh and Azar (2019) and Hanur and Avir (2019). assert that inclusivity in education means that all students in the classroom are accommodated, and are given equal opportunities, without differentiating between gender, intelligence, nature, abilities, strengths and weaknesses. "Following a prolonged freedom struggle, South Africa transitioned to a democratic dispensation in the 1990s, with a constitutional framework. In this system, all laws and policies must conform to the values of the Constitution", (Kleinsmidt, Malope & Urban, 2023:109). Section 29 (1) (a) of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) Constitution (108 of 1996) points out that everyone has a right to basic education. This does not leave anyone out, whether pregnant or not.

Rojo-Ramos *et al.* (2021) suggest that, educators should pay attention to diversity, meaning that they will have to transform and adapt their classroom management (for example, seating arrangements) strategies, in order to successfully face learners' changing needs. They must be prepared to deal with an increasing diverse group of learners. Rojo-Ramos *et al.* (2021) further suggest that, to face an increasing heterogeneous cohort of learners, educators need to incorporate new and different strategies into teaching tasks. That adds more to educators' new responsibilities.

Inclusion and diversity are considered the most important factors aiming to provide quality education to all the learners, including pregnant learners (Taole, 2020). However, pregnant learners and parenting teenagers have their own exceptionalities (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011; World Health Organization, WHO) 2014), which may become barriers to effective participation in the classroom in comparison to their peers, and for that reason they need to be given appropriate support. According to Linh and Azar (2019), inclusive education aims to humanize and fight against discriminatory attitudes towards schools that refuse to accept learners with different learning needs. Likewise, International Conventions on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011).

As stated, the Integrated School Health Policy (Department of Health 2012), South Africa (SA), among other signatories to the Convention on the Rights of a child, made a pledge to prioritize the needs of children. However, ill-health and challenges, such as teenage pregnancy, still become barriers to children growing to be productive, capable citizens, who can positively contribute to their communities' growth and prosperity. The concern from both the minister of Education and the former minister of Health is that for learners to achieve their full potential, they must be healthy, and emotionally stable. Deputy Minister of Health, Dr. Sibongiseni Dlomo (DBE, 2022: nd), states that, "our children are a national asset and should be protected at all costs".

There are multiple stakeholders in education. Role players in management and prevention of teenage pregnancy, as stated by the National Policy includes, parents, educators, learners, communities, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the South African Police Services (SAPS), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Health and Social Development (Mathebula, Runhare & Mafumo, 2022). However, for the purpose of this study, research focused on stakeholders that are closely related to pregnant teenagers, namely: peers of pregnant learners and educators from three levels of the hierarchy, namely: Post Level 1(PL1), HODs and Principals. Strategies and interventions discovered could then be used to empower girls to reduce their vulnerability to early pregnancy and to provide guidance to teenage boys to help them avoid contributing to their female counterparts getting pregnant.

Stakeholders that are directly affected by unplanned pregnancies in the school environment are the principal and educators acting in *loco parentis* (in the place of a parent), learners and other staff members as they interact with the pregnant learners and parenting teenagers on a daily basis. Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel and Malinen (2012) suggest that mainstream schools should include values, such as equity, participation and inclusion. Palmer, de Klerk, Esau and Smit (2023) believe that it is the principal's responsibility to find solutions to challenges that may create social injustices whilst performing their leadership roles.

The following words were used interchangeably throughout the study: pregnant teenagers, pregnant school girls, pregnant adolescents, pregnant girls and pregnant learners, and the learners who are not pregnant, despite gender, were referred to as non-pregnant learners. Likewise, parenting teenagers, and teenage mothers are

referred to as teenage girls who gave birth, while early motherhood is regarded as the stage, which pregnant teenagers go through after giving birth. Other terms that were at some point used interchangeably, are a teacher and an educator, as well as a learner and a student.

1.2. Background to the study

The discussion in this chapter focused on inclusive education in the context of policy and practice in the Department of Basic Education (DBE) with focus on only two schools in the Free State Province of South Africa. During my stay in Ladybrand, I noticed abnormal behaviour of young girls from the ages of between 15 and 19 getting pregnant. I could see more of such pregnancy patterns in the township, a local clinic and hospital. Moreover, I could see a lot of young mothers queuing at the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) office. Ladybrand is a very small town and service providers are located close to each other, hence it was easy for me to notice teenage pregnancy patterns so easily. Visiting the clinic for the antenatal check-up, during my second pregnancy at the age of 31, I noticed that the majority of pregnant women were teenagers, though I could not confirm it.

Giving birth at the Ladybrand hospital gave me an opportunity to confirm my suspicion. Within three days of my stay in the Ladybrand hospital, I had a discussion with teenage mothers whom I was admitted with. I discovered that the majority of the girls were between 15 and 19 years and were learners. Some of those young mothers were already in their second maternity. Walking in the township I would also see a number of young pregnant girls walking on the streets. Again, there is a very popular bar in town where many youngsters are seen socialising, of which the majority of women are young girls. When I enquired about how they fund their drinking habit, I was told they use the SASSA child support grant to buy alcohol.

Research shows that no matter what measures are taken to curb the issue of teenage pregnancy, pregnancy still becomes a barrier to girls keeping-up with their studies, (Naong, 2011; WHO 2014; Runhare & Vandeyar 2011; Chigona & Chetty 2008; Salvi 2018; Guy-Evans 2020) and it often becomes a consequence of girls dropping out. With the kind of behaviour associated with the pregnancy of young girls in Ladybrand, the researcher sought to understand the perspectives of learners who attend school or the same class with pregnant learners and those of educators teaching in inclusive classrooms (having both pregnant learners and those who are not, as well as boys).

A report by the South African Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, Angie Motshega (The Department of Basic Education; DoE 2009:3), indicates that adolescent pregnancy undermines the Department's effort to ensure that adolescent girls remain in school to contribute to a quality life for all, and to drive them away from situations that normally lead to poverty. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2014) points out that a girl who has a child before the age of 18, seldom completes her high school education and, that makes it difficult for teen mothers to have a college qualification. Salvi (2018) concurs that teenage pregnancy is associated with the interruption of education and training, hindering development and success of teenage girls into the basic education system.

The policy regarding inclusion of pregnant learners already exists in South African Basic Education, and the researcher sought to find out if there is any way that the teenage pregnancy in Ladybrand schools impact the educators' teaching strategy and classroom management in an inclusive classroom, whether educators are properly trained and that the policy guidelines are properly introduced to educators and learners. The researcher addressed the following aspects: the background to the study, statement of the research problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of key terms, assumptions, delimitation of the study, limitations of the study and conclusion.

1.3. The statement of the research problem

According to Salvi (2018) teenage pregnancy becomes a barrier to pregnant girls. It prevents pregnant and parenting teenagers from enjoying their studies the way teenagers should and, prevents them from developing. There are many factors that contribute to gender gaps in enrollment and completion, but adolescent pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is a major contributor to dropout (Zuikowski *et al.* 2019). In many cases the birth of a child from a teenage mother marks the end of schooling for teen mothers. The high number of pregnancy-related school dropout among adolescent girls, likely contributes to the ongoing educational disadvantage, particularly in the secondary school grades, experienced by girls in the region (Vuong & Trung, 2021). Mutua, Mariki and Mogeni (2019) add that adolescent mothers find it difficult to go back to school after giving birth. The inability to complete education therefore, erode their

chances of occupying meaningful employment in their adulthood and eventually achieving socio economic freedom.

The South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) expects the schools, through its principals and educators, to take all reasonable steps to facilitate and assist learners to continue with their education during and after pregnancy (DBE 2018). In order to achieve this, educators are expected to encourage learners to continue with their education before and after delivery, and are expected to provide appropriate educational support where possible. The RSA (DBE, 2021), places ahead the rights of learners to education during and after pregnancy, which are guaranteed by the South African Constitution and are guided by the African Charter on the Rights of the Child (ACRC), which states in Article 11(6) that the Charter shall take appropriate measures to ensure that children who become pregnant before completing their education, shall have an opportunity to continue with their education on the basis of their individual ability.

Similarly, the Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy states that schools in the basic education system are expected to ensure the retention of pregnant learners for the duration of their pregnancy and makes provision for their absence during the term of their pregnancies (DBE, 2021). It is further stated that the learner may return to school, to the appropriate grade after giving birth to continue having the right to basic education. The school, its principal and educators are expected to take all reasonable steps to accommodate the learner's learning, health and maternal needs (DBE, 2021). In addition, Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010) posit that South Africa's current age promotion (progression) policy means that a girl who returns to school after pregnancy is likely to be placed in an age appropriate grade when she re-enrolls in school, but without the basic skills she needs in order to cope with the work for that grade. As any other learner with a specific learning need, she needs to be provided with special help and support if she if she is to progress at school.

The challenge is that educators must deal with pregnant learners and those who become mothers while still studying, in a way that accommodates their special needs. Educators are not adequately equipped to work with both pregnant and non-pregnant learners. Segalo (2020) believes that educators are only trained to teach didactic subject they specialize with. Furthermore, not all educators can take care of well-being

of pregnant learners. For them to create an inclusive environment, they need to employ appropriate strategies that will enable them to teach and assist the pregnant learners where possible. That must be done in such a way that the non-pregnant learners will not feel neglected in the process.

The underlying assumptions of inclusion is the belief that all students are part of or belong in the general education classroom (Gargiulo & Metcalf, 2016). However, Runhare and Vandeyar (2011) and WHO (2014) argue that pregnant learners and teen mothers have their own exceptionalities, which may become barriers to effective participation in the classroom in comparison to their peers, and for that reason they need to be given the appropriate support. The peers of pregnant learners may feel neglected with all the attention being put on the pregnant ones.

1.4. The purpose of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the perspectives of learners and educators on the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education and to provide recommendations for the management thereof. This was done by examining their behaviours and opinions that impact their actions towards the inclusion of learners who get pregnant before completing their high school education. DOE (2007) indicates that in July 2000, the Council of education ministers issued a statement stipulating that no pregnant learners may be expelled from schools, due to her pregnancy status, based on the Bill of Rights 1996; the policy was put in place to prohibit discrimination in education (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011). The study conducted by Round et al. (2016) discovered educators' attitudes to be of utmost importance in supporting every learner to function properly in the classroom. It is therefore necessary that educators find suitable teaching, as well as classroom management strategies to be able to function well in an inclusive classroom comprised of both pregnant and non-pregnant learners.

1.4.1. Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the perspectives of learners and educators on the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream schools in Ladybrand.

1.5. Research objectives

The secondary objectives for this study:

1.5.1 To examine learners and educators' knowledge and response to pregnancy policy guidelines.

1.5.2 To investigate how learners and educators' view the way pregnant learners are treated in their communities.

1.5.3 To determine how educators support the unplanned pregnancies of learners as well as their needs and interests in schools.

1.5.4 To provide recommendations for managing the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream schools

1.6. Research questions

1.6.1. Main research question

What are learners' and educators' perceptions regarding the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream schools in Ladybrand?

1.6.2. Research sub-questions

1.6.2.1. How do learners and educators respond to pregnancy policy guidelines?

1.6.2.2. What are learners' and educators' views regarding the treatment of pregnant learners in their communities?

1.6.2.3. How do teachers support learners' unplanned pregnancies, and their needs and interests in schools?

1.6.2.4 How may recommendations be made for managing the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream schools?

1.7. The significance of the study

This study aimed to determine the perspectives of learners and educators regarding the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream schools and to propose strategies for the management thereof. Educators must understand that working with learners with diverse learning needs in inclusive classrooms requires them as educators, to understand that they must provide equal opportunities for all learners (Prasetyo *et al.* 2021). Looking at the issue of compliance and preparedness regarding the support that pregnant learners and parenting teenagers need to progress with their studies and knowing how to implement policy principles and guidelines as a strategy to inclusive education, can help impact positively on the academic and social well-being of pregnant learners and teenage mothers.

1.8. Definition of key terms

This section outlines the terms, which are used in this study.

1.8.1. Teenage pregnancy is defined by (UNICEF 2020) as conceiving between the ages of 13 - 19 years old. The term usually refers to women who become pregnant, before reaching legal adulthood.

1.8.2. Adolescence is the period of developmental transition between childhood and adulthood. In Erik Erikson, stages of psychosocial development, is considered a stage between ages 12 – 18, which is called identity versus role confusion (Coleman, 2022). It also known as the stage that signals the onset of puberty (Eggan & Kauchak, 2016; Bruce & Keiper, 2013). Adolescence, according to Bruce and Keiper (2013:26), “is the period of developmental transition between childhood and adulthood involving multiple physical, intellectual personality, and social developmental changes”.

1.8.3. Inclusion is regarded as the approach that outlines the commitment to the provision of educational opportunities for learners who experience or had experienced barriers to learning. Inclusion is providing equal opportunities for all learners, including those with diverse and unique characteristics. (Rojo-Ramos *et al.* 2021).

1.8.4. Mainstream education is the practice of placing students with special education needs in a general education classroom during specific time periods, based on their skills (Morifi, 2018). Moreover, mainstream education settings should ensure that the needs of all learners are addressed and that all barriers which can potentially hinder their participation be removed.

1.9. Literature review

In this chapter the researcher first addressed Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory as a theoretical framework suitable for this study, and then, surveyed at the literature that is related to the research topic, focusing on the following points: Inclusion of pregnant learners and parenting teenagers in the basic education system, pregnancy policy guidelines and expectations, preparation of educators in order to meet the pregnant learners’ needs, as well as the implications of managing unplanned pregnancies on educators and non-pregnant learners.

According to Salvi (2018), there has been a concern over access to education in developing countries that has been a core theme of the development agenda. Imbosa,

Majanga, and Ouda, 2022, assert that in 2013, all countries that make up the African Union (AU) adopted Agenda 2063, which is a continent-wide economic and social development strategy, under which African governments commit to build Africa's 'human capital', which is regarded as its most precious resource, through sustained investments in education, including 'elimination of gender disparities at all levels of education.' Two years after the adoption of Agenda 2063, African governments joined other countries in adopting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a development agenda whose focus is to ensure that 'no one is left behind,' including a promise to ensure inclusive and quality education for all.

At the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, this concern informed Goal Two (Universal Education) and Goal Three (Gender Equality), expressing the need to promote universal access to education and to eliminate gender differences in education by 2015. Goal Three of the Nations Millennium Development Goals (NMDG), as stated by Loaiza and Liang (2013), is focused on empowering women and promoting gender equality. However, Biglari, Beiglary and Arthanari (2022) state that many countries have not successfully implemented the SDGs, due to several challenges, including an increase in the rate of teenage pregnancy. Salvi (2018), Ramodumo (2014) and WHO (2012), are of the view that teenage pregnancy has a negative impact on the social life of a teenage girl, and is among the main causes of teenage girls' dropout of school in Sub-Saharan Africa.

After the Republic of South Africa gained democracy in in 1994, there came a transformation that was brought about by the Constitution that was aiming to change South Africa for the better, rather than keeping things as they are. The education system, among other things, was one of the important aspects that were aimed at being transformed. Section 29 (1) (a) of the Republic of South Africa Constitution (108 of 1996), points out that everyone has a right to basic education. This does not leave anyone out, whether pregnant or not. Section 9 points out that everyone has the right to be protected against unfair discrimination. The constitutional themes of respect for equality, dignity and access to information and the ethical concepts that flow from them, such as autonomy, informed consent, fair treatment and non-discrimination must be reflected in South African laws and policies.

The Department of Education therefore, introduced a Learner Pregnancy Policy in 2007, as a means of assisting schools in prevention and management of learner pregnancies. DBE (2018) further reports that, the Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy has been developed to guide officials, principals, school management teams and educators – who are expected to be *in loco parentis* - in their response to learner pregnancy. According to DOE (2021), the policy addresses a number of issues that will guide the study going forward, and amongst them are: the high rates of pregnancy among learners; the familial and social context within which this occurs; options for reduction of unintended and unwanted pregnancies; management of it pre- and post-natal implications; limitation of associated stigma and discrimination; and most importantly, the retention and re-enrolment of learners who are / were pregnant in school. It is further stated that expulsion or exclusion of pregnant learners is prohibited.

Both the DOH (DOH, 2012) and the DBE, through their ministers, presented the Integrated School Health Policy to address health needs of learners (DBE, 2012). Section 29 (1) (a) of the Republic of SA Constitution (108 of 1996) points out that everyone has a right to basic education. This does not exclude anyone, whether pregnant or not. Section 9 points out that everyone has the right to be protected against unfair discrimination. Furthermore, on the same perspective, the Policy on Screening Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DoB, 2007), also indicates that parents and educators are paramount to the support for all the learners who require additional support to encourage their participation and inclusion in school (DBE, 2003).

As the Education Policy indicated (DBE 2009: 3), the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa (Minister Angie Motshekga) reported that South Africa has made huge progress since 1994 towards achieving gender equality in basic education. She added by further explaining that the Department has gone the extra mile in achieving gender equality to the extent that girls have become the majority of enrolment in secondary schools. However, pregnancy among adolescent learners had become one of the major concerns that interrupt the Department's plan to achieving the objectives. The Department aimed at having both girls and boys of school-going age to access basic education, and to remain in school until they complete matric.

Morifi (2018) agrees that early pregnancy among school adolescent girls is a major worrying factor, not only in South Africa, but in many Southern African emerging countries. Instead of learners making use of the opportunity provided to them by the Department, most adolescent girl learners fall pregnant even before they complete their high school education, but their constitutional right to education, as stated in Section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act no. 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), states that every child has a right to education.

Denying a child an opportunity to complete her education, due to her pregnancy or her previous pregnancy status, is a violation of basic human rights (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). On the contrary, the pregnancy policy in Mozambique indicates that for pregnant teenage girls to complete their education, they should be transferred to night classes (Salvi, 2018). It was further explained that although continuous in some respects, as it allows pregnant girls to remain in education and that the decree reflects a global tendency to see education and pregnancy, taking different directions.

The South African National Education Policy is committed to promoting gender equality at school and to facilitating the successful completion of every learner's schooling, including those who may fall pregnant and become a parent while at school. Although the drive towards equality has heavily impacted on the educational agenda, the experience of being pregnant or parenting while at school, remains influenced by broader discourses on adolescence, pregnancy, parenting, gender, and female sexuality, in general (Shefer, Bhana & Morrell, 2013). This tends to reproduce a negative representation of teenage pregnancy, and teenage mothers as deviant, thereby contributing to excluding young mothers from educational spaces, despite inclusive policies.

Imbosa et al. (2022) further explain that although it has become very popular that governments have chosen to keep teenage mothers in school, implementation of the relevant laws and policies are lacking, and monitoring of teenage mothers' re-entry to education, remains generally weak. That may be one of the reasons why educators are aware that learners should not be expelled when they get pregnant (Morifi, 2018), but it is possible that they do not know the actual policy and how it is implemented. Some governments, such as Uganda and Tanzania (Undie, Mackenzie, Birungi,

Barongo, Ahindukha & Omondi, 2015) still do not consider the right of the pregnant learners to education as essential, as they still have not fully adopted the re-entry policy. Such countries practiced expulsion policy and re-entry policy only at certain schools.

Jochim et al. (2021) however, have discovered that many parenting girls, who initially left school due to Early and Unintended Pregnancy (EUP), end up having multiple pregnancies. This shows that parenting girls are undermining the initiative by countries that are trying to comply with the re-entry policy, such as Malawi, Kenya and Zambia (Undie et al. 2015) by becoming barriers to their own education and development.

Imbosa et al. (2022) believe that government policies that discriminate against girls, based on pregnancy or marriage, violate international and human rights obligations and infringe national laws and constitutional rights. They are therefore regarded as undermining the national development agendas (Benders, 2012). In those countries, expulsion can be looked at like a symbol of direct violence against those students who become pregnant. In addition, teenage pregnancy is considered a public health matter and it is advisable that appropriate measures must be considered to prevent learners to be isolated, because that causes social exclusion (Gaoaketse, 2013).

1.10. Theoretical framework

The study is underpinned by the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Bronfenbrenner (1994) developed a system composed of five organised systems (Microsystem, mesosystems, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem) that supports and guides human growth, amongst which the school is found, and the school is considered an immediate environment that the child has a direct relationship with. Hence, it is expected to guide and support learners who fall pregnant to continue with their studies and to go back to school after giving birth. Parents on the other hand, are expected to persuade and encourage their teenage girls to continue with education and help them find a way back to school, post pregnancy.

To understand the inclusive education, one should look at the ecological theory and systematic thinking. Looking at Bronfenbrenner's model, the different levels of systems in the whole social context influence one another in a continuous process of dynamic balance, tension and interplay (Savolainen *et al.* 2012). Stakeholders, who are very

close to the child in the microsystem that are directly affected by unplanned pregnancies in the school environment are, the parents and siblings, principal and educators (acting in loco parentis), educators and other staff members as they interact with the pregnant learners and parenting teenagers on a daily basis. Aspects of the environments that adolescents are a part of, such the community and the school, are receiving more and more attention in recent years (Odiri & Anthonia, 2023).

According to Ngulube and Taole (2018), both conceptual and theoretical frameworks are fundamental to social research. The Ecological Systems Theory has been used to link psychological and educational theory to early curriculum and practice. At the centre of the theory is the developing child, and all that happens within and between the five ecological systems are done to benefit the child in the classroom (Guy-Evens, 2020). Children learn through interacting with their surroundings (Odiri & Anthonia, 2023) which is where they pick up particular behaviours.

1.10.1. South African framework for teenage pregnancy

DOE (2007) indicates that in July 2000, the Council of Education Ministers issued a statement stipulating that no pregnant learners may be expelled from schools due to their pregnancy status, (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011) based on the Bill of Rights, 1996; the Policy was put in place to prohibit discrimination in education. Unlike in the past where Apartheid left South Africa in a deeply unequal and dysfunctional education system and where women were not recognised to have any potential, the South African Education System (DBE, 2022) has now put in place an Education Policy that aims to make education accessible to all learners, including pregnant teenage learners. The South African Parliament passed the South African School Act no. 84 of 1996 to address the inequalities and discriminatory practices, which were used in the schools before 1994. Section 24 (1) of the SASA stipulates that no child must be discriminated against, based on her pregnancy status.

A report by the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, Angie Motshekga (DBE, 2017), indicates that adolescent pregnancy undermines the Department's effort to ensure that adolescent girls remain in school to contribute to a quality life for all and to drive them away from situations that normally lead to poverty. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2014) points out that a girl who has a child before the age of 18, hardly ever completes her high school education and that makes it difficult for teen

mothers to have a college qualification. Salvi (2018) concurs that teenage pregnancy is associated with the interruption of education and training, hindering development and success of teenage girls into the basic education system.

Drawing from the same perspective, (WHO 2014; Runhare & Vandeyar 2011; Chigona and Chetty 2008; Salvi 2018 & Guy-Evans 2020), report that parenthood and teenage pregnancy are the leading causes of dropping out of school among girls, especially in developing and African countries. One of the reasons discovered in this regard, is the lack of support that the learners are experiencing from both their parents and educators, and sometimes the humiliation and prejudice from their peers. Adhering to the Bill of Rights Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act no. 108 of 1996, regarding the children's right to education, the Department of Basic Education (DBE 2017) saw a need to mainstream pregnant learners and teenage mothers into the basic education system.

After having realised that the right to education for girls and women is an unfulfilled human right, the United Nations (UN) made a convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW). That convention was focused on the rights of a child (CRC) and the principle of gender equality with regards to educational access and completion that was supposed to have been fulfilled by 2015 (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011). United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), developed an agenda with a focus of ensuring that no child is left behind, with a promise to ensure inclusive and quality education for all (EFA) Imbosa et al. (2022) ; Mashishi & Makoelle, 2014).

Unintended pregnancies among teenage girls are said to be compromising the significant progress made by DBE in the fight against the learner dropout rate in the country. There are a lot of intervention that were made to ensure that girl learners stay in school until they complete matric. A report on learner-pregnancy-policy indicates that (DBE, 2022) the Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Dr. Reginah Mhaule, in collaboration with the Deputy Minister of Health, Dr. Sibongiseni Dlomo, officially launched the National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy as part of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in schools. The policy is regarded as an urgent solution to prevent EUP within the school environment. The

launch took place at Platinum Village Secondary School in Rustenburg, North-West Province, on 17 February 2022.

1.11. Assumptions

The researcher assumed that:

1.11.1. Ladybrand schools have teenage girls who are suitable to be part of the study.

1.11.2. All the participants would be cooperative

1.11.3. Participants would respond to the questions in an honest and candid manner.

1.11.4. Educators and learners had in one way or another experienced similar phenomena and would be willing to share these as part of the study.

1.11.5. Some non-verbal cues would be difficult to detect, as participants would be wearing masks during the interview, that is, if we end up having a face-to-face / contact interviews and focus group discussions.

1.11.6. Language usage would not be consistent in both schools, because both schools use different medium of instruction.

1.12. Research methodology

A qualitative approach within an interpretivist paradigm was adopted, based on the careful consideration of the aims and objectives of the study. According to Maree (2010:50), qualitative research is described as research that attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied. The study was therefore influenced by the interpretivist paradigm, which was chosen together with a qualitative approach, because they are compatible and they allow the participants to provide rich textual data (Aliyu, Singhry, Adamu & Abubakar, 2015) about the perspectives of educators and learners regarding mainstreaming of pregnant learners in regular classrooms.

A qualitative researcher aims to understand a central phenomenon, which is the concept explored in a qualitative research study (Forman, Creswell, Damschroder, Kowalski, & Krein, 2008). The researcher's questions sought to understand participants' experiences with the central phenomenon. The major qualitative designs include case study among others, whereby the researcher collects words and images relating to the central phenomenon.

The main types of qualitative data include the individual semi-structured and focus group interviews. The data are recorded by means of different instruments. For this study, an audio recording device was used. The text data were then transcribed for further analysis. The qualitative text analysis consists of coding the text segments by labels and then aggregating similar codes into themes. Data analysis is based on values and meanings that the participants perceive for the world. The structure of a qualitative report is flexible, but considerable space is devoted to data collection and findings (Maree, 2010:47). One of the greatest strengths of a qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions it yields.

1.12.1. Research paradigm

Interpretivism paradigm was selected to collect qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. According Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), interpretivism paradigm is related to the philosophical position of idealism, and is used to combine different methods, including social constructivism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics; the method of rejecting objectivist views, meaning that meaning exists independently in the world. Interpretivism paradigm was used to explore the research questions and objectives. Pervin and Mokhtar (2022) state that a paradigm establishes a researcher's world view, meaning that it contains the summary values and notions that shape how a researcher views the world and how he or she interprets and acts within it. The importance of a paradigm is that it represents what we think about the world and serves as a lens or organizing principles through which reality is interpreted (Lincoln & Guba, 1986:15). "A paradigm enables researchers to tell a coherent story by depicting a world that is meaningful and functional, but culturally subjective" (Schwartz & Ogilvy, 1979:1 quoted by Maree, 2010).

In order to have answers to the research questions, the researcher selected participants from two different levels within the education sector (learners and educators), based on Ryan's (2018) notion that truth and knowledge are subjective because of the differences in our culture and life experiences. The researcher's selection of participants was based on Berryman's (2019) believe that to develop facts, the researcher needs to consider the importance of social construction, language, shared consciousness and other social interactions. Berryman (2019) is of the opinion that, for qualitative researchers to find answers to qualitative questions, they need to

structure their research questions in a way that focuses on understanding “how and why.”

1.12.2. Research design

A research design is a plan or strategy, which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done (Maree, 2010:70). The selection of research design is based on the researcher’s philosophical assumptions and the design through which the research questions posed, are appropriately answered. Case study research is one of the qualitative research designs that was specifically selected in order to answer the research questions. Yin (1994) believes that, using case study methods within different contemporary reports in different fields, such as education whereby individuals are studied as the unit of analysis develops a rich and comprehensive understanding about people. Multiple sources and data gathering techniques are considered a key strength of a case study method, and for that reason it enabled the researcher to use semi-structured interviews for both individuals and groups.

1.12.3. The sampling procedure

Sampling is explained (Maree 2010) as a process used to select a portion of the population for the study. Due to its qualitative nature, the research is based on the purposive sampling in which participants are selected, based on the special characteristics that make them the holders of data needed for the study. Sampling decisions were made for the purpose of obtaining the richest data. As explained by Maree (2010), qualitative research usually contains a smaller sample size than quantitative research. The researcher used a non-probability sampling technique and purposive sampling to select educators and learners as participants from the two high schools located in Thabo Mofutsanyana District in the Free State Province. Maree (2010) purport that purposive sampling of participants is vital to the success of the focus group interview.

For purposive sampling to influenced the selection of participants means, that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them holders of the data needed for the study (Yin, 2016). For the study to produce the most relevant and plentiful data, the research selected grade 8,9 and 10 learners (9 boys &

20 girls) as well as grade 8,9 and 10 educators (3 males & 8 females). These groups of participants are regarded as holding rich information, based on what the study aimed to achieve. The researcher at interviewing students who still have two or more years of residence. The focus for selecting the participants was in Ladybrand, a small town within the Mantsopa Municipality. Through purposive sampling, as was previously indicated, a specific selection was utilized to select the educators and learners.

The researcher used the following criteria to select participants:

Learners must be registered and attending classes. They must be either in Grade 8, 9, or 10. Learners' group discussion must be made of both boys and girls. However, the number of girls must be greater than that of boys. The selection was performed without regard for number of learners per grade, as long each grade is represented. Pregnant learners must not be part of the participants' group.

Educators must be employed at one of the participating schools. Anyone who is a teaching staff member, whether an HOD, School Based Support Team (SBST) member or a principal is allowed to participate, if interested. According to South African Council of Educators (SACE) (2000), an educator is "any educator registered or professionally registered with the council." Educator participants, willing to participate, focus on both males and females teaching any grade between Grade 8, 9 or 10.

1.12.4. The research instrument

Semi-structured interviews were used in both individual and group interviews because it is more powerful than other types of interviews used in qualitative research (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Syam, (2022). Moreover, It allows the researcher to acquire an in-depth information and evidence from interviews while considering the focus of the study (Ruslin *et al.* 2022). Collection refers to naturally occurring or elicited data that can be based on talking, listening, and observing material data (Maree, 2010). Data were collected using different instruments. That was achieved using both Individual, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Data collected from the educators was done using interviews and focus groups were utilised to collect data from learners. Usually, semi-structured interviews are conducted face-to-face because of the importance of personal contact in qualitative interviews (Vogl, 2013), and to enable the researcher to watch the participants in the real world (Ruslin *et al.* 2022).

Focus group discussions were aimed at gaining information through group interaction. Yin (2016) states that focus groups encourage full participation and interaction among members. Members selected for both individual and focus group are appropriate because they have share common experiences or had shared some common views. Semi- structure interviews that were used for both individual and group interviews allows flexibility and adaptability for researchers to hold their track as compared to an unstructured interview, where its direction is not fully considere (Ruslin *et al.* 2022). Ruslin et al. (2022) believe that, the semi-structured interview could potentially enable qualitative researchers to amend their research questions throughout their studies while maintaining their track.

1.12.5. Data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research focuses on analysing written text. Although analysing qualitative data written text, it becomes very narrow as it includes other types of qualitative data such as observations, visual data and verbal communication (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Kiger and Varpio (2020) Thematic analysis was employed to analyse data. This method was chosen among others, because (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017) thematic analysis is a suitable first analytical method for novice qualitative researchers, and because of its flexibility, thematic analysis can be used within most theoretical frameworks.

1.13. Delimitation of the study

The research was done in two high schools in Ladybrand; one school in town and one school in the Manyatseng Location. Ladybrand is a small agricultural town with the population estimated to be less than 52 000, located in the Free State Province of South Africa, situated 18 kilometers from Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. It is just a few kilometers away from the Mohokare River, which separates Lesotho and South Africa. Ladybrand is one of five towns that form the Mantsopa Local Municipality in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. It was founded after the Basotho Wars in 1867 and was named after the Lady (Catharina) Brand, the wife of the President of the Orange Free State, Johannes Brand. Five towns situated in Mantsopa are: Ladybrand, Hob House, Tweespruit, Thaba-Phatswa and Excelsior. Ladybrand was selected for the effectiveness of the study, limiting itself to investigating the attitudes of non-pregnant learners and educators, as well as pregnant girls themselves where possible (though it was not a necessity).

1.14. Limitations of the study

Some parents might have been reluctant to give consent to their teenage girls to be part of the study, because of the sensitivity of the research topic. To overcome the problem, the researcher aimed at meeting parents face-to-face to explain the importance and the benefits, which learners would gain by being part of the study. Failing which, the principal would also be requested to negotiate on behalf of the researcher, because the principal already had a relationship with the parents, furthermore, the principal would explain that the learners were not forced, but would participate voluntarily.

1.15. Ethical considerations

Research ethics were observed. Ethical clearance was provided by the Central University of Technology (CUT) Research Ethics and Integrity committee, with reference number [D. FRIC. 19.03.11]. Permission was also granted by both the Free State Department of Education and the Ladybrand schools. All the conditions as set out by both the University and the Department of Education had to be complied with. Ethical clearance from both the Department of Education and Central University of Technology were listed as Appendix 1 and 2, respectively.

1.16. Chapter outline

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study

This chapter dealt with background related to the study and the following parts of the research: the purpose, the statement of the research problem, objectives and research problem, the significance of the study, definition of the key terms, the literature review, assumptions on the study, different aspects of research methodology, delimitation and limitation of the study, as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

This chapter reviewed previously published articles, books or related works on the topic. It could be from full scholarly articles/paper or a section of a scholarly work, such as a book.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter involved a system of methods that the researcher used on investigating matters relating to the study. The study was informed mostly by the interpretive paradigm. The reason for choosing a qualitative approach and interpretivist paradigm was because of their compatibility and ability to allow participants to provide rich data, useful for answering the research questions (Aliyu *et al.* 2015). This chapter looked at the research design and methodology by referring to the research design and instruments used in the study. Chapter 3 also presented information on the participants' selection, the data collection process, as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Data presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter focused on the research results and the analysis of obtained results. The chapter is divided into two parts: the first part is where findings are presented from data collected. The second part is where the results are discussed according to the themes selected.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presented the summary, recommendations and conclusion, based on the themes that emerged from the findings of the study, in Chapter 4. This chapter also provided feedback in the limitations of the study and made suggestions for further research. It finally concluded by providing a brief overall conclusion of the study.

1.17. Summary

This chapter has provided a background information regarding the selection of the topic for the study. The chapter contained the statement of the research problem, research questions, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study that were set in addressing the problem of adolescent pregnancy and issues related to girls going back to school after giving birth. Definition of key terms, delimitation and limitation of the study have also been stated. A brief overview of the following was also undertaken: Literature review, theoretical framework, South African framework for teenage pregnancy, research methodology, ethical considerations, as well as chapter overview.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter the researcher first addressed the Ecological Systems Theory's theoretical framework related to the study, and then looked at the literature that is related to the research topic, focusing on the following points: inclusion of pregnant girls and teenage mothers into the basic education system, pregnancy policy guidelines and expectations, preparation of educators to meet the pregnant learners' needs, and implications of management of unplanned pregnancies on the daily lives of educators and non-pregnant learners.

2.2. Theoretical framework

According to Ngulube and Taole (2018), both conceptual and theoretical frameworks are fundamental to social research. The researcher opted for Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory's theoretical framework as one of the tools of conceptualizing research.

2.2.1. Ecological Systems Theory

Generally, in the African set-up, the upbringing of a child is a collaborative enterprise entered into, not only by the parents, guardians and relatives, but the wider community. Hence, this study aimed to adopt Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of human development. This theory looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment (Guy-Evans, 2020). Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex 'layers' of the environment, each influencing a growing child's development. Bronfenbrenner recently renamed his systems theory "Bio Ecological System Theory" to emphasize that a child's own biology is a primary environment, fueling her development.

The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his/her immediate family / community, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his / her development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers (Ryan, 2001). It is therefore advised that to study a child's development, one must look not only at the child and her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well. Children learn through interacting with their surroundings (Odiri & Anthonia, 2023) which is where they pick up particular behaviours. Several studies demonstrated that the area in which young people reside has an impact on their sexual behavior (Odiri & Anthonia, 2019)

The Ecological Systems Theory ranges from the microsystem, which refers to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family to the macrosystem, which refers to the institution's patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs and bodies of knowledge. Paquette and Ryan (2001) argue that to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. A child comes from a family comprising of parents and siblings and neighbors, (forming the community), who contribute to the development of a child. It is explained in the SIAS (2014) that, learners are faced with challenges (referred to as barriers to learning and development) in the learning process, because of a broad range of experiences in the classroom, at school, at home, in the community and/or because of health conditions or disability.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) developed a system composed of five organised systems (microsystem, mesosystems, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem) that supports and guides human growth, amongst which the school is found, and the school is considered an immediate environment that the child has a direct relationship with, hence it is expected to guide and support learners who fall pregnant, as well as those who decide to go back to school after giving birth. Parents on the other hand, are expected to persuade and encourage their teenage girls to continue with their education and help them find a way back to school after their maternity leave so that they can complete their education. The school and parents are entitled to making sure that the children's right to education is protected.

Eggen and Kauchak (2016) demonstrates the ecological component of Bronfenbrenner's model, as it articulates that a person's development is the process

that is influenced by a different number of systems in the environment, which are related to an individual learner one way or another. These relationships are demonstrated in Figure 2.1. Each system is nested in a bigger system and every layer has a strong effect on a child's development. Ettekal and Mahoney (2017) alluded that these levels range from smaller proximal settings in which individuals directly interact to larger, distal settings that indirectly influence development.

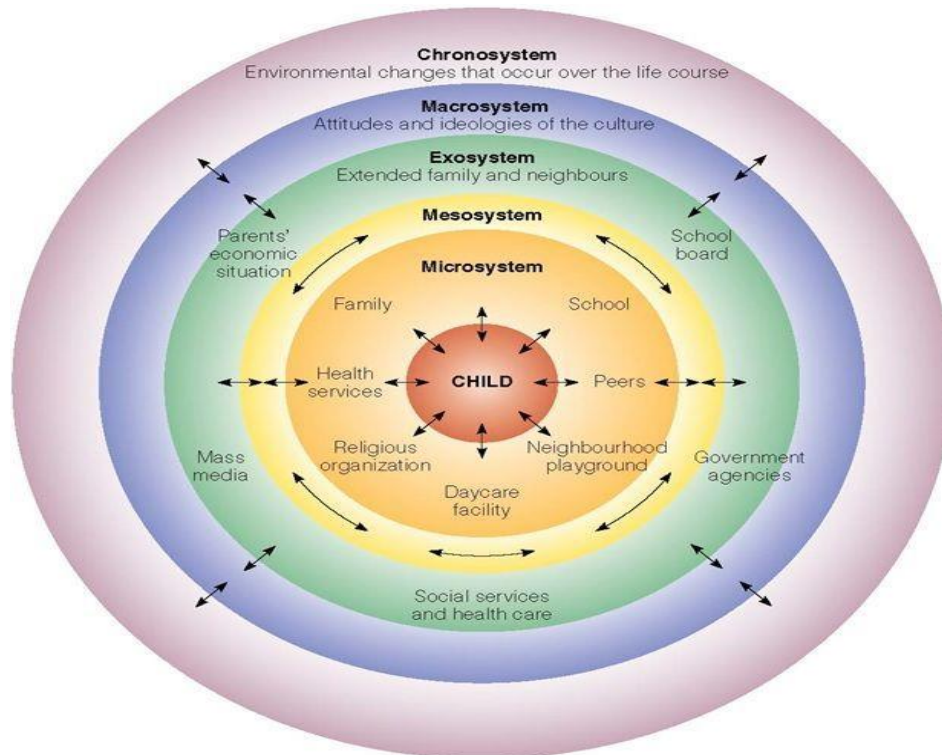


Figure 2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Guy-Evan 2020)

1.2.1.1. The microsystem

Guy-Evans (2020) defines a microsystem as the first level of Bronfenbrenner's theory, and other systems that have a direct contact with the child in their immediate environment, such as parents, siblings, educators and peers. It becomes the responsibility of a parent to see that a child at a deserving age, is enrolled at basic education until that child completes Grade 12. As previously indicated, the Department is aimed at having both girls and boys of school-going age to access basic education, and to remain in school until they complete matric (DBE, 2022). Growing up in most African families, it happens that a child has siblings and friends who interact directly with a growing child, either at home or at school. In a mainstream classroom, an educator facilitates teaching and learning, whereby a learner is expected to interact with the educator, as well as his / her peers.

In a case where a girl becomes pregnant while still at school, it becomes an issue of concern to the people around her (her siblings, peers, educators and parents). In most cases, parents are more concerned about the well-being and the educational success of their children. According to Jacobs *et al.* (2011), teenage pregnancy is strongly related to poor school performance, poverty, lack of parental control, family disintegration and inadequate sexual education. It is well known that dropout and pregnancy go hand in hand. A comprehensive management approach is needed.

According to Jacobs *et al.* (2011), the incidence of teenage pregnancy is inversely linked to socio economic development, which means teenage pregnancies are more common among poor people than among those who are financially better off. This one refers to the neighborhood as mesosystems surrounding the child and influencing what happens in the child's microsystem. If the child comes from a poor family background, it is more linked to the characteristics of the local community in which the family resides. Donald *et al.* (2010) claim that social problems occur in any society and have a very strong influence on all social problems affecting the children.

1.2.1.2. Microsystem

This relates to a child as an individual. In South Africa every child of a school-going age is expected to access basic education, which most happens at school. The Department aimed at having both girls and boys of a school-going age to access basic education, and to remain in school until they complete matric (DBE, 2022). Morifi (2018) agrees that early pregnancy among school adolescent girls is a major worrying factor, not only in South Africa, but in many Southern African emerging countries. Instead of learners making use of the opportunity provided to them by the governments, most adolescent girl learners fall pregnant even before they complete their high school education, but their constitutional right to education, as stated in Section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act no. 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), states that every child has a right to education.

Adhering to the Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act no. 108 of 1996, regarding the children's right to education, the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2017) saw a need to mainstreaming pregnant learners and teenage mothers into the basic education system. Morifi (2018) explains that pregnant

learners have legal rights in terms of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996, SASSA Act, 84 of 1996 and Management of the Learner Pregnancy in Public Schools.

1.2.1.3. The Mesosystems

The mesosystem encompasses the interaction between the child's microsystems, such as the interactions between the child's parents and teachers, or between school peers and siblings (Guy-Evans, 2020). A mesosystem is where a person's individual microsystems do not function independently, but are interconnected and assert influence upon one another. For instance, if a child's parents communicate with the child's teachers, this interaction may influence the child's development. Essentially, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems. According to the ecological systems theory, if the child's parents and teachers get along and have a good relationship, this should have positive effects on the child's development, compared to negative effects on development if the teachers and parents do not get along.

1.2.1.4. The exosystem

The exosystem is a component of the Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the 1970s. It incorporates other formal and informal social structures, which do not themselves contain the child, but indirectly influence them as they have an effect on of the microsystems. Examples of an exosystem include the neighborhood, parent's workplaces, parent's friends and the mass media. These are environments in which the child is not involved, and are external to their experience, but nonetheless affects them anyway.

1.2.1.5. The macrosystem

The macrosystem is a component of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory that focuses on how cultural elements affect a child's development, such as socio economic status, wealth, poverty, and ethnicity. Thus, the culture that individuals are immersed within may influence their beliefs and perceptions about events that transpire in life. In the study, the issue of focus was teenage pregnancy as a social issue that affects both pregnant learners and non-pregnant learners, both directly and indirectly.

1.2.1.6. The chronosystem

The fifth and final level of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is known as the chronosystem. This system consists of all the environmental changes that occur

over the lifetime, which influence development, including major life transitions, and historical events.

These can include normal life transitions, such as starting school, but can also include non-normative life transitions, such as parents getting a divorce or having to move to a new house. The Department of Education (2007) makes it clear that it is the responsibility of the education system to inform learners about their rights to education and support teachers in managing the effects of learner pregnancy in schools. Incidents, such as the Covid 19 pandemic is one of the examples of environmental changes in the chronosystem that affected teenage girls negatively. Lockdown level 5, which was the South African Government's strategy to reduce the spread of Covid 19 infections between the years 2020 and 2021, was one environmental change that contributed to a rising number of girls as young as 10 years of age getting pregnant. 23 226 teenage pregnancies were recorded by the Gauteng Department of Health between April 2020 and March 2021 (News 24, 17 August 2021).

To strengthen the development between the ecological systems in the education practice according to the theory, educators and parents should keep good communication with each other and work together to benefit the child. For the school to work well with learners, parental guidance is encouraged. Parents are the children's first educators. They should prepare their children for the school environment and for building good relationships with their educators and peers. Parents should keep contacting the school through the coordinating educator, mostly known as a register teacher, and educators should contact parents through the media chosen by the school management. It is both the educator and parent's responsibility to keep in contact to track the record of the learner's performance. If both parties have a positive relationship, they will be able to control the child to be the best that they can be.

Moreover, the school through its administration invites parents for parents' meetings or for one-on-one consultation, where parents and educators meet to discuss matters relating to the child's progress, behaviour, extra-curricular activities and any other developments or incidents affecting the child's well-being and educational development. Matters relating to a child's discipline and other socio economic factors affecting learners' performance and progress, such learner pregnancy, are handled by the SBST, whereby parents are called for a meeting to discuss those barriers and how

they should be handled. Other matters, such as infrastructure, school finances and other developments are handled by the School Governing Body (SGB), which is made up of the educators, the principal, the parents and a member of the community, who is not a parent.

Educators are considered the secondary parents of a learner, acting in “*loco parentis*.” Guy-Evens (2020) asserts that educators as learners’ secondary parents should also be understanding of the situations their learners’ families may be experiencing, including social and economic factors that are part of the various systems. According to the theory, if parents and educators have a good relationship, this should shape the child’s development in a positive way. Moreover, educators and parents working in collaboration towards the learner’s development is of utmost importance. A good relationship between educators and parents enhances the learning process.

According to Prasetyo (2021), inclusive education aims to humanize and guard against discriminatory attitudes towards educators (Linh & Azar, 2019), who fail to provide equal opportunities for every learner to learn in the classroom. If educators accommodate all learners without differentiating between gender, intelligence, physical and psychological abilities, social and economic factors as Bronfenbrenner’s systems theory indicates (Hanur & Avir, 2019), then educators support all learners’ proper functioning in the classroom. Meaning that learners who are pregnant will not be left out. Furthermore, on the same perspective, the SIAS Policy also indicates that parents and educators are paramount to the support for all the learners who require additional support to encourage their participation and inclusion in school (DBE, 2017).

Likewise, the child must also be active in their learning [sic], engaged both academically and socially. They must work as a team with their peers and get involved in meaningful learning experiences to enable positive development (Guy-Evens, 2020). As stated by Jacobs *et al.* (2011:187), “in a learner-centred classroom learners learn to discover knowledge for themselves. They discover that knowledge by reading books, discussing, doing projects, and conducting experiments. A discussion allows for a planned and systematic teaching and learning conversation between the educator and learners among learners.”

Discussions do not take place only at school, hence Guy-Evens (2020) suggests that, for a child to be active in his / her learning he / she must as be able to interact socially with peers, because discussions do not only serve the purpose of schooling, but also prepare learners for life.

2.3 Teenage pregnancy

Melgosa (2001) defines teenage years as the 13th through the 19th years of a person's life. When a person enters the second genital stage of psychological development, this stage of life is considered as additional, extremely sensitive, and significant aspect of their life. According to Odiri and Anthonia (2013) teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 make up around 20% of the global population. It is a crucial time in a person's life that heralds the onset of puberty and biological maturity. Similarly, Ukekwe (2001) regards teenage stage as the most important time in a person's life and, if not handled properly, especially for women, might have the most disastrous effects in later years, for instance, if the young girl engages in sexual activities, she is highly likely to fall pregnant.

Teenage pregnancy is defined as an unplanned and unwanted pregnancy that occurs in young girls between the ages of 13 and 19 (Odiri & Anthonia, 2023). In addition, (Alabi & Oni, 2017) define it as underage pregnancy, which occurs when a girl is between the ages of 13 and 19. Most of these births are found to be occurring as a result of a lack of knowledge about contraception, reproductive health, and the risks associated with pregnancy (Odiri & Anthonia, 2023). When a girl becomes pregnant it is understood to be an unwanted and unpleasant pregnancy because it happens before reaching sexual maturity (Oguguo, 1996). Being pregnant is described as by Clementine (2015) as the condition in which a girl has an embryo or fetus growing inside her womb. Commonly, pregnancy results from penetrative sex between a young girl and a boy who have reached puberty (Odiri & Anthonia, 2023), as a result the young girls' egg is being fertilized by puberty-aged male sperm. Odiri and Anthonia (2023) further explain that when a girl falls pregnant, her menstrual cycle will often stop until a girl gives birth.

Teenage pregnancy is a global concern as it negatively impacts the lives of a teenage girls (Reddy, Sewpaul & Jonas, 2016). According WHO (2019) and Cook and Cameron

(2015), it had been reported worldwide that, 16 million teenage girls give birth every year, accounting to about 11% of all births. It was reported that, the pregnancy rate among South African school going adolescent girls had increased terribly during lockdown level 5 of covid 19 whereby a rising number of girls as young as 10 years of age was noted getting pregnant.

23 226 teenage pregnancies were recorded by the Gauteng Department of Health between April 2020 and March 2021 (News 24, 17 August 2021). According to Holland, Hammond and Richmond (2023) pregnant women were more likely to acquire COVID-19 infection than the general population. They were at increased risk for hospitalization; ventilator-assisted breathing; and other subsequent maternal, fetal, and neonatal health issues. It was however stated that, the increase in morbidity increased in pregnancy, did not cause the increase in mortality (Holland *et al.* 2023).

Ramalepa, Ramokumba & Mosala-Chokwe (2020) report that teenage pregnancy is elevated by teenagers' sexual behaviors and their involvement in sexual activities, especially unsafe sex at a young age. According to Imbosa *et al.* (2022); Undie *et al.* (2015); WHO (2014); Runhare and Vandeyar (2011), pregnancy during adolescence is associated with interruption of education, preventing teenage girls' development and success. In addition, teenage pregnancy jeopardizes the teenage girl's right to a safe, successful transition to adulthood as it happens before the girl is physically, developmentally and socially ready (WHO, 2019).

Adolescent pregnancy and birth rates within Sub-Saharan Africa are reported to be the highest in the world (Toska, Laurenzi, Roberts, Cluver & Sherr, 2020), with countries such as Niger, Mali, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea to be in the top five, with rates of adolescent pregnancy to be above 140 births per 100,000 adolescent girls (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). Studies conducted reported that, recently Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the world (UNICEF, 2020; Kisambira & Schmid, 2022)

World Population Report (WPR) conducted by Kisambira and Schmid (2022) found out that in 2018, the regional teenage birth rate was more than the global average. 42 births per 1,000 girls, aged 15 – 19. It was also indicated in the report that the report that Sub-Saharan Africa reported 101 births per 1,000 girls within the same age range

(Kisambira and Schmid, 2022). That is not just happening recently, as in 2014 it was reported that Homa Bay Region in Kenya was known by high unintended pregnancy and teenage girls' school dropout rate (Undie *et al.* 2015). Homa Bay Country in Kenya, is an area described by a high unintended pregnancy and female school dropout rate. Although, there is such a high rate of teenage pregnancies in the Sub-Saharan Africa, Mathebula *et al.* (2022) report that unproductive policies in some countries make it difficult for pregnant learners to stay at school, and for parenting teenagers to go back to school after giving birth (Salvi, 2018)

Undie *et al.* (2015) and Imbosa *et al.* (2022) are of the believe that the most dominating factor is deficient knowledge in regard to re-entry policies among communities, which had caused so much destruction among stakeholders. Imbosa *et al.* (2022) also discovered from human rights watch that, 24 countries lack re-entry policy or law to guard against pregnant girls' right to education, which leads to irregular enforcement of compulsory education at school level. On the contrary, the population council in Kenya saw a need to employ a specific strategy for intensifying the awareness amongst schools and communities regarding the re-entry policy for out of school teen mothers (Undie *et al.* 2015).

Teenage girls across the African continent are faced with a serious challenge of unaccomplished educational goals, due to the systematic gender inequalities (Naong, 2011). Even though governments have put so much effort in ensuring that there are equal opportunities in the education system, there are still significant gender gaps in learning and skills achievement. South Africa (SA), just like other African countries, has been struggling with issues such as crime and violence, high unemployment, racial indifferences and inequality and the widespread the HIV, and on top of that there is yet another social crisis, that is, the rising numbers of girls who fall pregnant (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Letswalo, 2009; Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe, 2011).

According to the RSA Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2019:9), the rate of learner pregnancy in South Africa has become a major challenge for both national development and the basic education system. DBE (2019) explains that learner pregnancy becomes a very serious issue to be taken into consideration, as it affects the lives of thousands of young people in South Africa, that hinders their personal growth, as well as the pursuit of satisfying careers, which becomes a burden to South

African's socio economic scenery. This shows that small towns like Ladybrand, experiencing an increase in teenage pregnancy cases, which is hindering its personal growth, and puts more burden on its economic status that is already not in a good state.

Reddy, Sewpaul and Jonas (2016) state that teenage pregnancy is not just common in South Africa, but it also carries a great deal of high risk for both a teenage mother and the child, with an established infant Maternal Mortality Rate (iMMR) of 97.7 The Calamity of infant maternal mortality in the developing world is not just a health concern, but should be recognized as a human rights issue (Nanda, 2022). It is stated that the maternal deaths per 100 000 live births among South African teenagers in 2011 – 2012 (Reddy *et al.* 2016). It is furthermore stated that for all pregnant women in the country, the iMMR was 154.06 per 100 000 live births in 2011 – 2013 (Reddy *et al.* 2016). The maternal mortality rate is much lower in high income countries: 17 per 100 000 live births among all pregnant women.

A recent study by WHO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Bank Group (WBG) and United Nations Population Division (UNPD) 2019), discovered that 34 of 36 countries with a maternal mortality rate ranging from high, very high and extremely high are in Sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 1 in 4800 in Europe and North America. Loaiza and Liang (2013:4) add that when young girls get pregnant, they are also at the risk of getting sexually transmitted infections, and not just HIV, which may also contribute to the maternal mortality rate. South African adolescent girls experience high rates of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections including HIV (Twitty, Hitch, Marais, Sales, Sharp, Cloete, Lenka, Rani, Gause & Brown, 2023). HIV and STIs (Mnyipika, 2014) are reported to be widespread among teenagers owing to ignorance and peer pressure, among other factors.

Meda and Makura (2016) discovered that some girls get involved in premature sexual activities, because of surrendering to peer pressure. They further observed that girls claim that they indulge in sexual activities, because they want to belong and to appear to be cool in the eyes of their peers. What becomes more shocking is that other girls claim to have sex without a condom to satisfy their curiosity. This clearly shows that

they are at risk of not only contracting HIV/AIDS, but they are also exposed to teenage pregnancy.

Jonas, Crutzen, van den Borne, Sewpaul and Reddy (2016), affirm that teenage pregnancy in SA is on top of the list of results of unsafe sex, succeeding HIV and AIDS and STIs. What makes it worse is that young girls as young as 9 and 10 years of age were found to be sexually active (Jonas *et al.* 2016). In her address about the alarming rate of EUP in schools, Deputy Minister, Mhaule said that a holistic approach is necessary to keep female learners safe (DBE, 2022). According to DoH, more than 132, 000 girls aged between 10 and 19 years fell victims of EUP during 2020/2021. There was concern of the high numbers, which she explained to be unacceptable looking at many consequences brought about by EUP and for the fact that children from 10 to 14 years have given birth. The minister was more concerned with the fact that children so young giving birth, which indicates that they were exposed to statutory rape. She concluded that the Government need to put drastic measures in place to ensure that criminals who rape young girls pay for their crimes, said Minister Mhaule.

No matter what measures are taken to curb the issue of teenagers getting pregnant, pregnancy is still becoming a barrier to girls keeping up with their studies and, (Naong, 2011; WHO, 2014; Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011; Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Salvi, 2018; Guy-Evans, 2020) it often becomes a consequence of girls dropping out. On contrary, Undie *et al.* (2015) and Imbosa *et al.* (2022) are of the believe that the most dominating factor is deficient knowledge regarding re-entry policies among communities, girls, teachers, and school officials that girls can be retained during pregnancies and should go back to school after giving birth.

A report by the South African Minister of Basic Education in South Africa, Angie Motshega (The Department of Basic Education, DoE 2009:3), indicates that adolescent pregnancy undermines the Department's effort to ensure that adolescent girls remain in school to contribute to a quality life for all and to drive them away from situations that normally lead to poverty. The World Health Organization, WHO (2014) points out that a girl who has a child before the age of 18 hardly ever completes her high school education and that makes it difficult for teen mothers to have a college qualification. Salvi (2018) concurs that teenage pregnancy is associated with the

interruption of education and training hindering development and success of teenage girls into the basic education system.

Drawing from the same perspective (WHO, 2014; Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011; Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Salvi, 2018; Guy-Evans, 2020), it was reported that parenthood and teenage pregnancy are the leading causes of dropping out of school among girls, especially in developing and African countries. One of the reasons discovered in this regard is lack of support that the learners are experiencing from both their parents and educators, and sometimes the humiliation and prejudice from their peers. Adhering to the Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the RSA Act no. 108 of 1996, regarding the children's right to education, the Department of Basic Education (DBE 2017) saw a need to mainstreaming pregnant learners and teenage mothers into the basic education system.

After having realised that the right to education for girls and women is an unfulfilled human right, the United Nations (UN) made a convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW). That convention was focused on the rights of a child (CRC) and the principle of gender equality with regards to educational access and completion that was supposed to have been fulfilled by 2015 (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011). United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), developed an agenda with a focus of ensuring that no child is left behind, with a promise to ensure inclusive and quality education for all (EFA) Imbosa et al. (2022); Mashishi & Makoelle, 2014).

African governments have also planned to introduce comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health education and to address the high rates of teenage pregnancy across the continent that negatively affect girls' education Imbosa et al. (2022). The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 also being against the discrimination of girls in schools, based on pregnancy, designed a policy with guidelines that direct schools on how to mainstream pregnant learners and teenage mothers into the formal education system (DOE 2007). The rights of children in the South Africa Bill of Rights, which is part of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa are such that every child has the right to education, despite being pregnant or not (RSA, 1994).

To protect the rights of children to education, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional grouping, which South Africa is a part of, agreed to adopt the principle that girls who fall pregnant while at school, should be allowed to continue with their education and get appropriate support from appropriate stakeholders in schools (Principal, educators, as well as peers). Although all African Union countries have made human rights commitments to protect pregnant adolescents and parenting school girls' rights to education, it has been reported that pregnant adolescents and parenting adolescents are treated differently depending on in which country they live in (Imbosa *et al.* (2022). Hanur and Avif, 2018) explain that treating pregnant learners differently, compromises the aims of inclusive education that include humanizing and fighting discriminatory attitudes towards the schools, who reject students belonging to an inclusive classroom. That is especially regarding the arranged time that the girls should be absent from school, the procedure for withdrawal and re-entry, and the form of support available within schools and communities for pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers to remain in school Imbosa *et al.* (2022).

Chilisa (2002) discovered that the re-entry policies also violate girl mothers' right to education through an ideology that requires girls to temporarily withdraw from school when they are pregnant. Reviewing Botswana's re-entry policy (Chilisa, 2002), displays the difficulties in the re-admission of parenting teenagers to school. Similarly, there are some African countries, like Equatorial Guinea and Sierra Leone that are among the counties with a record of discriminating against pregnant teenage girls and parenting teenagers to the extent that they expel girls when they become pregnant and deny them the right to re-enter after giving birth Imbosa *et al.* (2022). On contrary, countries such as Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, and Gabon are amid the group of 26 African countries that have adopted "continuation" or "re-entry" policies, and strategies, to ensure that pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers can recommence their education during and post pregnancy.

2.4. Inclusion of pregnant learners into the basic education system

According to Salvi (2018), there has been a concern over access to education in developing countries, that has been a core theme of the development agenda. Imbosa *et al.* (2022) assert that in 2013, all counties that make up the African Union (AU), adopted Agenda 2063, which is a continent-wide economic and social development strategy, under which African governments are committed to build Africa's 'human

capital', which is regarded as its most precious resource, through sustained investments in education, including 'elimination of gender disparities at all levels of education.' Two years after the adoption of Agenda 2063, African governments joined other countries in adopting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a development agenda whose focus is to ensure that 'no one is left behind,' including a promise to ensure inclusive and quality education for all.

At the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000, this concern informed Goal Two (Universal Education) and Goal Three (Gender Equality), expressing the need to promote universal access to education and to eliminate gender differences in education by 2015. Goal Three of the Nations Millennium Development Goals (NMDG), as stated by Loaiza and Liang (2013), is focused on empowering women and promoting gender equality. However, Biglari, Beiglary and Arthanari (2022) state that many countries have not successfully implemented the SDGs, due to several challenges, including an increase in the rate of teenage pregnancy. Salvi (2018); Ramodumo (2014); WHO (2012), are of a view that teenage pregnancy has a negative impact on the social life of a teenage girl, and is among the main causes of teenage girls' dropout of schools in Sub-Saharan Africa.

After The Republic of South Africa gained democracy in in 1994, there came a transformation that was brought about by the Constitution that was aiming to change South Africa for the better, rather than keeping things as they are. The education system, among other things, was one of the important aspects that were aimed at being transformed. Section 29 (1) (a) of the Republic of South Africa Constitution (108 of 1996), points out that everyone has a right to basic education. This does not leave anyone out whether pregnant or not. Section (9) points out that everyone has the right to be protected against unfair discrimination. The Department of Education therefore introduced a learner pregnancy policy in 2007 as a means of assisting schools in the prevention and management of learner pregnancies.

The Department of Basic Education (2018) reports that the Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy has been developed to guide officials, principals, school management teams and educators – who are expected to be in loco parentis - in their response to learner pregnancy. According to DOE (2021), the Policy addresses a number of issues that will guide the study going forward, and amongst

them are: the high rates of pregnancy among learners; the familial and social context within which this occurs; options for reduction of unintended and unwanted pregnancies; management of its pre- and post-natal implications; limitation of associated stigma and discrimination; and most importantly the retention and re-enrolment of learners who are / were pregnant in school. It is further stated that expulsion or exclusion of pregnant learners is prohibited. As stated by Swearer and Hymel (2015), school contexts are important contributing factors to environments that either foster or inhibit bullying and discrimination behaviour. This is supported by (Guy-Evans, 2020) that the school in the mesosystem has a direct contact with the learner in her immediate environment, so she / he becomes actively involved in learning.

Both the Department of Health (DOH 2012) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE), through their ministers, presented the Integrated School Health Policy to address health needs of learners (DBE, 2017). Section 29 (1) (a) of the Republic of SA Constitution (108 of 1996) points out that everyone has a right to basic education. This does not leave anyone out whether pregnant or not. Section (9) points out that everyone has the right to be protected against unfair discrimination. Furthermore, on the same perspective, the SIAS Policy also indicates that parents and educators are paramount to the support for all the learners, who require additional support to encourage their participation and inclusion in school (DoB, 2007).

As the Education Policy indicated (DBE, 2009:3), the Minister of Basic Education (Minister Motshekga) reported that South Africa has made huge progress since 1994 towards achieving gender equality in basic education. She added by further explaining that the Department has gone the extra mile from achieving gender equality to the extent that girls have become the majority of enrolment in secondary schools. However, pregnancy among adolescent learners had become one of the major concerns that interrupted the Department's plan to achieve the objectives. The Department aimed at having both girls and boys of school-going age to access basic education, and to remain in school until they complete matric. Morifi (2018) agrees that early pregnancy among school adolescent girls is a major worrying factor, not only in South Africa, but in many Southern African emerging countries. Instead of learners making use of the opportunities provided to them by the Department, most adolescent girl learners fall pregnant even before they complete their high school education, but their constitutional right to education as stated in Section 28 of the Constitution of the

Republic of South Africa Act no. 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), states that every child has a right to education.

Denying that child an opportunity to complete her education, due to her pregnancy or her previous pregnancy status, is a violation of basic human rights (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). On the contrary, the pregnancy policy in Mozambique indicates that in order for pregnant teenage girls to complete their education, they should be transferred to night classes (Salvi, 2018). It was further explained that although continuous in some respects, as it allows pregnant girls to remain in education and that the decree reflects a global tendency to see education and pregnancy taking different directions.

The South African National Education Policy is committed to promote gender equality at school and to facilitate the successful completion of every learner's schooling, including those who may fall pregnant and parenting while at school. Although the drive towards equality has heavily impacted on the educational agenda, the experience of being pregnant or parenting while at school, remains influenced by broader discourses on adolescence, pregnancy, parenting, gender, and female sexuality in general (Shefer *et al.* 2013). This tends to reproduce a negative representation of teenage pregnancy, and teenage mothers as deviant, thereby contributing to excluding young mothers from educational spaces, despite inclusive policies.

Imbosa *et al.* (2022) further explains that although it has become very popular that governments have chosen to keep teenage mothers in school, implementation of the relevant laws and policies are lacking, and monitoring of teenage mothers' re-entry to education remains generally weak. That may be one of the reasons as to why educators are aware that learners should not be expelled when they get pregnant (Morifi 2018), but it is possible that they do not know about the actual policy and how it is implemented.

This means that some governments, such as Uganda and Tanzania (Undie *et al.* 2015) still do not consider the right of the pregnant learners to education as essential, as they still have not fully adopted the re-entry policy. Such countries practiced an expulsion policy and re-entry policy only in certain schools. Jochim *et al.* (2021) however, have discovered that many parenting girls, who initially left school due to early and

unintended pregnancy (EUP), end up having multiple pregnancies. This shows that parenting girls are undermining the initiative by countries that are trying to comply with the re-entry policy, such as Malawi, Kenya and Zambia (Undie *et al.* 2015) by becoming barriers to their own education and development.

Imbosa *et al.* (2022) explain that government policies that discriminate against girls on the basis of pregnancy or marriage, violate international and human rights obligations, and infringe on national laws and constitutional rights. They are therefore regarded as undermining the national development agendas. Benders (2012) believes that expulsion, despite its disadvantages to the teenage mother, is upheld through the state's organs, such as the moral imperatives of religion and the national socio economic environment. In those countries, expulsion can be looked at as a symbol of direct violence against those students who become pregnant. In addition, teenage pregnancy is considered a public health matter and it is advisable that appropriate measures have to be considered to prevent learners to be isolated, because that causes social exclusion (Gaoaketse, 2013).

As the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states, exclusion causes a threat to human dignity and equality. Based on this discussion, it looks like all the researchers have the same view of the learners' expulsion due to pregnancy, namely that it is wrong as it undermines the NMDG Goal Two that was aimed at promoting universal access to education by 2015. According to Hodes (2017), it was only during the second half of the 1990s when the South African Government put together the new laws to include the democratic principles of, among others, the right to health, education and gender equality. Women's organizations played a more powerful and influential role in mass politics from the 1980 onwards, with the intention to pursue gender equality as a key commitment (Loaiza & Liang, 2013).

DOE (2007) indicates that in July 2000, the council of education ministers issued a statement, stipulating that no pregnant learners may be expelled from schools due to her pregnancy status, (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011), based on the Bill of Rights 1996, the Policy is put in place to prohibit discrimination in education. Unlike in the past where Apartheid left South Africa in a deeply unequal and dysfunctional education system and where women were not recognised to have any potential, the South African Education System (DBE, 2022) has now put in place an education policy that aims to

make education accessible to all learners, including pregnant teenage learners. That is the aim of inclusive education that seeks to collaborate differences between learners with barriers to learning and regular learners (Alfina & Anwar, 2020).

Likewise, Linh and Azar (2019) and Prasetyo et al. (2021) believe that, to be able to accommodate all learners without discrimination, educators must understand learners' diverse and unique characteristics in inclusive classrooms. In that way, pregnancy as a barrier to learning and development of a girl child, will be eliminated. However, in Mozambique, the matter is treated differently, as in a study conducted (Salvi 2018) the recommendation was that girls should be transferred to night school and that their partners should be transferred along with them, if they are also students.

A study conducted on early marriage, pregnancy and girl child school dropout (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011) revealed that, as a consequence, the practical implications of transferring pregnant girls to night courses have the irrational effect of encouraging dropout (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011). In Tanzania, one of the girls who became pregnant claimed that when the principal discovered she was pregnant, he ordered her to leave the school immediately. In Malawi, the deputy head teacher was reported to have claimed that they did not allow a pregnant girl to continue with school, and they rather asked her to go home and return to school after the baby was born, because of the feeling that she could be ridiculed by fellow learners and that she is considered a bad influence (Imbosa *et al.* (2022). The expulsion is somehow made in a way as if they are protecting the pregnant learner.

Undie et al. (2015) conducted a study on the education sector's response to early and unintended pregnancy. The study focused on different countries' experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the findings revealed that some participants were of the view that having special schools for pregnant learners would enhance the implementation of the school re-entry policy by helping to ensure that the specific needs of such learners can be met. Participants used for collecting data were in favour of girls re-entering new schools, rather than the one they were withdrawn from when the pregnancy occurred, due to the fear that she would be prejudiced by learners and educators, and by the feeling that the girl re-entering the same school would affect their performance. Zuilkowski, Zulu, and Matafwali (2019), conducted a study on teachers' perspectives on the re-entry policy for adolescent mothers. The study discovered that Zambia

introduced a re-entry policy to ensure the right of pregnant learners to stay in school and return after delivery of their children. For some reason, the majority of girls who leave primary school, due to pregnancy, never return.

Studies on different Sub-Saharan countries (Tanzania and Uganda) by Undie et al. (2015) indicate that there is still some kind of consideration for pregnant and parenting school girls from the teachers and fellow learners. In most of the studies there is a sign of sympathy, showing that the pregnant and parenting school girls need to be treated accordingly and that can be well achieved if they are in their own space. One teacher's response in the study conducted in Tanzania, was that it would be best that the learner was transferred where the problem was not known, because the learner would be stigmatized when she returns and would not be able to study comfortably. The other educator had a feeling that a parenting learner coming back would be polluting other learners and inviting risk behavior.

Learners on the other hand, fear that they might envy her and end up also wanting to have children. Or that parenting teenagers might share their sexual experiences with their friends, which may influence other learners to try it out. On the same study conducted in Uganda (Undie *et al.* 2015), responses from both learners and educators regarding re-entry, were in favour of girls re-entering new schools, with the feeling that parenting learners would be made feel uncomfortable by non-pregnant learners calling her "mother", and that educators might ask her why she behaved like she did when she already has a child. That is why they encourage the parenting teenager to go for re-entry in another school, with the perception that re-entering learners would perform better in another school environment.

South Africa, as a democratic state, is reported to be handling that matter with caution. In preparation to addressing barriers to learning in the education system, it has adopted an inclusive education policy (Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012); Mashishi & Makoelle, 2014), to accommodate all learners and provide equal opportunities for all learners to learn (Linh & Azar, 2019). However, Palmer, Alexander and Ntsetso (2018) believe that, SMT (School Management Teams) members are still doubtful of how to provide adequate learning support to learners with barriers to learning due to social and academic factors.

Although some governments have initiated the need to alter and introduce some new policies and laws, Morifi (2018) believes the physical availability of policy documents does not necessarily translate into actual implementation and addressing learner pregnancy in South African schools. Zuilkowski et al. (2019) explain that Zambia has also introduced the re-entry policy, however, the development of Zambia's national re-entry policy was based on the alignment with global "education for all" movement. The implementation (Morifi, 2018) is hindered by among others, the fact that teachers lack knowledge and skills in recognising the curriculum that can be used to address a wide range of learning needs (Imbosa et al. (2022).

Morifi (2018) agrees that educators are only aware that learners should not be expelled from school, because of having fallen pregnant, but it is possible that they do not know the actual policy and how it is implemented. Morifi (2018) further explains that it maybe because in some instances, the implementation of the policy depended on the principal's interpretation of the policy. On the same perspective, Zuilkowski et al. (2019) conducted a study to investigate the educators' point of view on the re-entry policy in for adolescent mothers and discovered that Zambian re-entry policies appear to have been developed in central ministries and then handed down to schools and educators with limited information on aims and expectations of the policies.

2.5. Pregnancy policy guidelines

The document that was set out by the Department of Basic Education, to address the challenge of learner pregnancy in schools is called Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in schools. Its goals, guiding principles and themes have been prepared to reduce and manage the issue of learner pregnancy and its terrible impact on affected learners and more broadly the basic education system (DBE 2021:9). This Policy provides guidance on the reduction of unintended pregnancies, management of their pre- and post-natal consequences, limitation of associated stigma and discrimination on pregnant learners and the retention as well as re-enrolment of teenage mothers (former pregnant learners) in schools. As stated (Swearer & Hymel, 2015:506) "school contexts are important contributing factors to environments that either foster or inhibit bullying and discrimination behaviours." Moreover, the most important aspect considered in this Policy is a plan to eliminate gender disparities in the South African Basic Education System (DBE, 2021).

This policy's principles are informed by the Constitution, national legislation and regional and international conventions, as was previously outlined. These principles serve as a points of reference in terms of its interpretation and application. Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Makgabo Reginah Mhaule (DBE, 2022) explains that the principles serve a crucial role in preventing learners' pregnancy through access to comprehensive pregnancy prevention information and School Productive Health Services (SRHS). The principles are tabulated below:

Table 1. Guiding principles

Access to Education	“Every female learner of school age has the constitutional right to basic education and may not be denied access on the basis of her pregnancy”
Gender Equality	“Every learner has the right to gender equality and may not be discriminated against or denied access to basic education on the grounds of gender.” This policy focuses more on the needs of female learners and their vulnerability to gender based violence and abuse.
Access to Comprehensive Pregnancy Prevention	Every learner has the right to access the means of protection from unintended pregnancy, STIs or HIV before or after their pregnancy. This has also been stipulated in the Children's Act, 2005, and the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1996.
Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education	Every learner in the basic education system has the right to quality, age-appropriate Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), in order to make informed choices about their sexual health, orientation and safety.

<p>Access to Sexuality and Reproductive Health Services</p>	<p>“Every learner in the basic education system has the right to access Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (SRH), as set out in the Children’s Act, 2005”</p>
<p>Counselling, Care and Support</p>	<p>All pregnant learners and parenting teenagers in the basic education system have the right to access health and social services, including accessibility of appropriate counselling, care and support or referral of appropriate service providers.</p>
<p>Stigma and Discrimination</p>	<p>Every pregnant learner and teenage mothers will get fair treatment and be protected from all forms of stigma and discrimination</p>
<p>Dignity, Privacy and Confidentiality</p>	<p>“This policy will ensure the rights of every pregnant learner in the basic education to protection of their dignity, privacy and confidentiality regarding their pregnancy and related health. No person within the basic education system, regardless of their position or role, will disclose information relating to a pregnant learner without their consent or, if they are under the age of 12 years old, written consent of their parents or guardians”</p>
<p>Reasonable Accommodation</p>	<p>“Schools will ensure the retention of pregnant learners during the course of their pregnancies. After giving birth the learner may return to school, to the appropriate grade and will continue their basic education. The school, the principal, educators and staff will take all</p>

	reasonable steps to accommodate the learner's basic education, health and maternal needs"
Critical Partnerships	"The purpose of these critical partnerships is to enhance the DBE's efforts to create and sustain a supportive environment for pregnant learners and to counter potentially harmful cultural and social practices amongst learners in the schools and within the broader communities in which they live, that increase learners' risk of early and unintended pregnancies" (DBE, 2021: 15 -17)

(DBE 2021:17)

Looking at the guiding principles through the lens of the theoretical framework, there is so much influence from the Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (DBE, 2021). The guiding principles focus a lot on the constitutional rights of a learner to basic education, as well as policies supporting the learner's right to sexuality education. They also stipulate that learners who fall pregnant have right to termination of pregnancy, and that all pregnant learners are entitled to fair treatment, and to be protected against all forms of stigma and discrimination. All the stakeholders (systems) (Guy-Evans, 2020) interacting directly with the learner (microsystem), are highlighted, each with a specific part to play in supporting the child's development. Systems directly connected to the learner are: Learners in the school, parents, educators, principal, other staff and a broader community.

Reasonable accommodation, as stated (DBE 2021) among all the other guiding principles, caught the attention more. It stipulates that schools must ensure that

pregnant learners are retained in school during pregnancy, and that the principal, educators and other staff members take reasonable steps to support learners' basic education, health and maternal needs. If appropriately disseminated among the all the stakeholders (systems surrounding the growing child), it will fulfil all the desired results of prevention, management, care and support. Swearer and Hymel (2015) explain the school contexts are important contributing factors to environments that either foster or inhibit bullying and discriminating behaviours.

This Policy is supported by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which declares that children are entitled to the right to access basic education, whereby the pregnant learners, as well as parenting teenagers are supposed to be allowed to continue and complete their basic education. Jochim, Cluver and Meinck (2021) state that although the school policy aims at protecting the rights of pregnant learners and those with children, there is still a possibility that schools are likely to lose a number of girls, due to withdrawal during pregnancy. This shows that although the Department of Education came with means to curb the problem of pregnant learners' absenteeism or dropping out of school due to lack of provision for inclusion of affected learners, there is still a lot to be done to make it a success.

“The development of policy frameworks and programmes that allow pregnant and parenting teenagers to continue with their studies are fairly recent in most countries” (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011). Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde (2012) posit that since the attainment of democracy in South Africa in 1994, there has been a radical change of government policy from an apartheid framework to providing fair services to all South Africans. The provision of education for learners with special needs has been part of that process, as well as developing an inclusive education system that can be traced back to the formulating of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa 1996). Section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (the Bill of Rights) states that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education, which must be made available and accessible without reasonable doubt by the state, and that it may not discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on any ground, including disability.

Even though pregnancy is not a disability, pregnant learners at some point need to be supported, because of the conditions a mother can face as a result of her pregnancy.

Research shows that there are several pregnancy-related complications that can lead to long term disability (WHO, 2014). Health issues relating to pregnancy complications and some disabling conditions that a mother can face during pregnancy are among others: severe hemorrhages, diabetes, inflammatory disorders and hypertension. In addition, WHO (2014) states that the pregnancy complications may include unsafe abortions and the likelihood of young mothers falling pregnant for the second time and even more.

The framework for inclusive education was laid out in the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building and Inclusive and Training System (Department of Education 2001). Education White Paper 6, which addresses lifelong learning through education and training, also emphasises that all children and adolescents require support, respect and acceptance. Differences among teenage learners should be respected irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV status or pregnancy (Du Preez, Manyathi, Botha & Rabie, 2019).

The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, being against the discrimination of girls in schools based on pregnancy, designed a policy with guidelines that direct schools on how to mainstream pregnant learners and teenage mothers into formal education. This policy is called the Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in school (DBE, 2021). The measures and guidelines are provided so that the school, its principals and teachers can follow it in cases where a learner gets pregnant. However, Biglari, Beiglary and Arthanari (2022) argue that it is less clear as to how the school should deal with pregnant learners and parenting learners.

According to Mxotswa, Rembea and Chitsamatanga (2021), in every policy that is implemented, it is crucial to determine the extent to which the key stakeholders are familiar with the outcomes of the implemented policy. Hence, the Department of Education aims to ensure that learners, both boys and girls, are educated on preventative measure which involves parents and guardians, about the effect of indulging in sexual activities and to help and support them to make decisions that will not cause havoc to their health and that will not distract them from attaining their educational goals (DBE, 2017). According to Rieckmann (2017), The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) considers education a

first priority as it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development.

This is supported by the Bill of Rights, which is Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which states that every person in South Africa has the right to human dignity, equality and freedom (RSA, 1996). DoE (2007) anticipated the education system to achieve equal participation in schools, and for principals and educators to ensure that all learners receive enough information and guidance on the importance of school attendance and active participation. The advice is that students avoid getting pregnant by all costs, because (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016) they are not physically and emotionally ready for huge responsibilities, and for that reason Rieckmann (2017) believes that learners should be able to communicate about issues of health, including sexual and reproductive health and well-being. Schools are also responsible for making sure that learners stay in school, practicing healthy lifestyles and making informed decisions about their future health and educational prospects (DBE, 2021).

Runhare and Vandeyar (2011) put forward a basis for the argument that it would not be easy for the nations to achieve the target regarding Education for All by 2030, unless they strive to totally get rid of all gender related imbalances from both its education policy designs and schools' norms and values. This study found that educators could develop their competence by designing effective instruction in inclusive classrooms to benefit all students (Prasetyo *et al.* 2021), and that learning is so much dependent on the educator, as the educator is regarded a central figure in teaching and learning. For that reason, educators' positive attitudes towards inclusive education is very crucial (Rojo-Ramos *et al.* 2021). It will result in the attainment of the desired goals, and South Africa will eventually manage to get rid of past imbalances of gender inequality in education.

The DBE (2017) suggests that the guiding principles must therefore be an appropriate response in order to safeguard the educational interests of the learners and each situation should be assessed and evaluated on a regular basis. If educators practice the concept of inclusiveness based on the abilities and competences of every individual learner including those who are pregnant, they will be able to create a conducive environment and learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available to everyone

so that all the students can participate in classroom life (Rojo-Ramos *et al.* 2021). Many educators refer to the classroom as the community of learners where the educator and learners are committed to make a classroom environment a safe place where knowledge, skills and dispositions are developed over the school year, as supported by Bruce and Keiper (2013).

2.5.1. Policy alignment

The DBE's policy on the prevention and management of learner pregnancy in schools is aligned with the existing policies and strategies of other government departments in the social sector. It must be read and applied in conjunction with the following (DBE, 2021:11) policies that are aligned with the pregnancy policy that are presented on the table below:

Table 2. Policies aligned with the DBE's policy on the prevention and management of learner pregnancy in schools

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Constitution);
The South African School Act , 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996);
The South African School Act , 1996 (Act No. 84 of 1996);
Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act 1996 (Act No. 82 Of 19996);
The Employment of Educators Act, 1998 (Act No. 76 of 1996)
Promotion of Equality and Prevention of unfair Discrimination Act of 2000 (Act No. 4 of 2000)
The Criminal Law (Sexual Offenses and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007 (Act No. 32 of 2007) (Sexual Offenses Act)
Children's Act , 2005 (Act No. 38 of 2005)
Notice 361 of 2010 Department of Basic Education National Policy Act 27 of 1996 Policy on Learner Attendance
Integrated School Health Policy, 2012
National Contraception Clinical guidelines, 2012
Department of Basic Education National Policy on HIV, STIs and TB for Learners, Educators, School Support Staff and Officials in all Primary and Secondary Schools in the Basic Education Sector, 2017
The National Development Plan, 2030.

(DBE, 2021:13)

2.6. Attitudes of education stakeholders regarding inclusion of pregnant learners and parenting teenagers

Inclusion and diversity are considered the most important factors aiming to provide quality education to all the learners (Taole, 2020). As stated by Runhare and Vandeyar (2011) and Osita-Oleribe (2014), one of the interventions that is gaining international momentum to bridge the gap between male and female educational access, participating and completion, is the re-enrolment and continued enrolment of learners who could fall pregnant while at school. Many programmes have initiated to help young mothers and their infants by improving both immediate and longer range pregnancy outcomes and, more recently, to prevent the occurrence of pregnancy among risk teenagers (Morifi, 2018).

However, little attention has been directed towards understanding how pregnant learners learn in a classroom management strategy for successful inclusion. The researcher is curious to know if there are specific classroom management strategies that educators resort to in a classroom to accommodate pregnant learners' health and maternal needs, as well as to accommodate different learning needs. Rojo-Ramos *et al.* (2021) believe that educators' preparation is the most essential aspect in an inclusive environment to reach higher quality education for every learner. Many factors are said to contribute to the observed gender gap in enrolment and completion but, adolescent pregnancy is a dominating factor for teenage girls' dropout in Sub-Saharan Africa (Zuilkowski *et al.* 2019).

The perspective of Undie *et al.* (2015) is that Botswana's re-entry policy seemed to be overly controlled by the systems within which it was devised and the ongoing traditional customs that are biased against women in general. Morifi (2018) explains that in 2007, the Measures for the Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy (PPMLP) was announced and had a dual focus on the prevention of pregnancy and management of pregnancy where and when it happened.

In their findings, Runhare and Vandeyar (2011); and Salvi (2019) found that, socio-cultural beliefs of the Zimbabwean community on pregnancy were more influential to pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers participating and accessing education than

the official school policy. The study indicated that stakeholders at the schools where the study was conducted were found to have inadequate knowledge and political will to assist pregnant learners in Zimbabwe. On the contrary, the South African schools provided a more open response to teenage pregnancy than at the Zimbabwean school.

According to Forlin and Chambers (2011), in times when concealment was still common in South African schools, there were lots of issues involved that were neglecting the education system of the greater part of the South African community. Education was only compulsory for white learners, but not for learners from other ethnic groups (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Post the apartheid era, government implemented compulsory education for all South African children, and segregated schooling practices came to an end. There came a formation of One National Department of Education that replaced the former 9 district departments (Forlin & chamber, 2011). Dalton et al. (2012) add that South Africa decided to put in place an inclusive education policy in order to address barriers to learning.

Deferent types of policies and practices directed towards pregnant learners in Sub-Saharan Africa, under education sector policies for pregnant students and adolescent mothers (Undie *et al.* 2015) are outlined as: continuation, re-entry and expulsion, as presented in the table below.

Table 3. Different types of policies and practices available for pregnant students in Sub-Saharan Africa

Continuation policies	Re-entry policies	Expulsion policies
Are considered the most progressive policies, allowing pregnant learners to remain in school for as long as they would like, and not requiring compulsory leave after giving birth.	Necessitate a compulsory leave of absence before a student may re-enter school, often in a different school. However, re-entry policies differ, particularly in regard to the length of time girls must withdraw from school.	Immediately remove pregnant learners from the school system and offer no prospects of returning to school.

Undie *et al.* (2015)

Department of Basic Education (2021), South Africa, practices the continuation aspect of the policies [considered as retention and re-enrollment]. The purpose of the policy is to among others, provide guidance on the reduction of unintended pregnancy, management of its pre- and after-effects, limitation of associated stigma and discrimination against pregnant learners. Unlike in South Africa, where pregnant learners are allowed to stay in school for as long as they like during pregnancy and after giving birth, some countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa practice mostly the re-entry policies (Undie *et al.* 2015) However, it is done differently from country to country, as appears in the table below.

Table 4. An overview of the re-entry policies and conditions in the selected Sub-Saharan African countries

Country	Policy / practice	Re-entry condition
Botswana Action taken as a corrective measure	Re-entry Not known	The policy stipulated that pregnant girls are to be withdrawn from school and re-admitted to a different school not sooner than 12 months after giving birth. Learners are not allowed to sit for examination while pregnant of within six months of delivery.
Kenya Action taken as a corrective measure	Re-entry Not known	Girls may return to school (preferably) a different school) after giving birth. No specific time frame. Re-entry policy has never been properly implemented.
Malawi Action taken as a corrective measure	Re-entry A boy responsible gets equivalent suspension of 1 year. Repeated pregnancy is not tolerated	Girls are immediately suspended upon discovering of their pregnancy, for one year and will be allowed re-admission at the beginning of the next year. Counselling services to be offered to the girl and the

		responsible boy both upon withdrawal and at the point of re-entry.
Tanzania Action taken as corrective measure	Re-entry Mandatory disclosure of the boy or a man responsible for the pregnancy. Tanzania has a strict law against impregnating a minor under the age of 18. It is considered statutory rape and carries a harsh prison sentence of up to 30 years.	Re-entry 6 -12 months after giving birth, with a medical doctor's approval. Pregnant learner is allowed to seat for an examination if diagnosed within exam timeframe. Only one re-admission opportunity with a 6-12 months' timeframe after giving birth. With a medical doctor's approval.
Uganda Action taken as a corrective measure	Continuation Not known	Policy calls for pregnancy screening once per term. Pregnant learners are allowed to continue with their studies for as long as possible Linked to antenatal services, counselling services of pregnant girl, their families and the boy responsible for pregnancy. Pregnant learners are allowed to sit for national exams.
Zambia Action taken as a corrective measure	Re-entry Keeps track of re-entry. A boy responsible is also suspended for the same amount of time. However, the boy is suspended after the girl gives birth until she returns to school after 12 months.	Stipulates a leave of absence of 6-12 months after delivery. Both a pregnant learner and a boy responsible for pregnancy should go for counselling before withdrawal from school and at the time of re-entry.

		At the time of withdrawal from school, the parents and school admin sign an agreement stating that the girl will re-enter one year later.
South Africa	Continuation	No specific conditions for re-entry.
Action taken as a corrective measure	Not known	Pregnant learners are allowed to stay at school for as long as possible. And return to school soon after giving birth.

Undie *et al.* (2015)

Undie *et al.* (2015) explain that none of the countries listed above, except South Africa, exercise continuation practices or policies. However, the school health policy in Kenya contains a policy concept with a similar approach to that of the continuation practice.

Unlike in South Africa where the policy looks into protecting the rights of the pregnant learner against discrimination in education (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2017), findings of the study conducted in the Leribe District of Lesotho indicates the ill-treatment of learners by their own educators. Molapo, Adams, Zulu and Mabusela (2014) explain that young mothers experience among others: humiliation, hostility, condemnation, threats of termination, less encouragement and insensitivity, as well as a lack of support from their educators. Teaching and learning will not be as successful as expected without educators' support as educators' presence and positive attitudes are considered central to learning (Prasetyo, 2021). Round *et al.* (2016) share the same sentiments, considering educators' attitudes to be of outmost importance in supporting every learner to function properly in the classroom.

Lack of support, according to Ilias, Spyros and Dimitriadou (2021) and Saloviita and Schaffus (2016), from educators affect learners negatively, because educators' attitudes towards inclusive education is a key factor in supporting all students' proper functioning in the classroom. In addition, Molapo, Adams, Zulu and Mabusela (2014) believe that lack of support from teachers result in an unpleasant experience that might

affect their attendance and at times end up leading to dropouts. The researchers recommended that on returning to school, teenage mothers should be subjected to an integration programme and that educators should be adequately trained on to work with teenage mothers and to eliminate their prejudices against them. If educators are trained to work in an inclusive education, they will understand that with students' diverse characteristics, their responsibility is to provide equal opportunities for all students with different learning needs (Prasetyo, 2019).

In Erik Erikson, stages of psychosocial development, already signals identity versus role confusion as adolescents' characters already control their state of mind (Coleman, 2022), so that alone associated with pregnancy, complications are possible to lower the pregnant learner's self-esteem. Salvi (2018) claims teenage pregnancy is associated with continuous interruption of education and training in a conducive environment that is supposed to represent means of personal development and success. Prasetyo (2019) believes that schooling is constructed as a symbol of entrance to modernity, educators' understanding of diverse learners' learning needs will encourage active participation. On the other hand, (WHO 2014) pregnancy and parenthood are regarded as preventing those opportunities to which students would be exposed to if they completed education programmes. Teenage pregnancy changes a teenager's life forever and this change is mostly negative (Mashisi & Makoelle, 2014).

Human rights Watch reports show that, early pregnancy and childbearing can produce unfavorable effects, which are associated with the social and economic well-being of many teenage mothers who will be parenting children on their own Imbosa *et al.* (2022). Those financial and social challenges become barriers to continuing with formal education. The effects will therefore be examined, focusing on: the teenager schoolgirl, her family, her life, and her community.

2.7. Effects of teenage pregnancy on the life of the teenage schoolgirl

Considering the effects that teenage pregnancy has on the life of a school girl, Ramalepa *et al.* (2020) found that teenage pregnancy is reported to have negative impacts that are both medical and non-medical. Pregnancy and child bearing during teenage years are associated with increased health risks and well-being for both mother and the baby (Gaoaketse, 2013). Ramalepa *et al.* (2020), and WHO (2019) clarify that young adolescent pregnant girls (between ages of 10 -14) have

substantially higher maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality than adult women. The report by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) (2017) adds by indicating that children born to very young mothers are at risk of getting sick and dying. Meaning that the previous authors have the same view of risks involved with kids having kids, and the unfortunate part is that they are not the only ones being exposed to such risks.

To name but a few of the risks, (Ramalepa *et al.* 2020) reported the following impacts to be directly affecting teenage girls who get pregnant while still at school: emotional, physical, educational and economical. Their analogy is that the adolescent girls become mothers even before they could understand anything about themselves, hence Maree (2022) supported Eric Erickson's theory of personality development by merely defining the adolescent stage as the identity versus role confusion. In this instance, sexual identity refers to how young people think about themselves, as well as how they communicate their identity to others.

Some of them get involved in early marriages and produce more children (Birchall, 2018). Their young bodies may be able to conceive babies, but carrying a baby for the whole term may be extremely challenging (Maemeko, Nkengbeza & Chokomosi, 2018). Emeri and Olarenwaju (2022) assert that due to the risk factors associated with teenage pregnancy and child marriage, they should be reduced or completely eradicated in the society, as it does not only affect the girl child, but the entire society. Moreover, Yussif, Lassey, Ganyaglo, Kantelhardt and Keilstein (2017), believe that pregnancies and deliveries of adolescents are accompanied by more risks as compared to older women.

Health risks associated with conception, pregnancy and childbirth include such conditions as "toxaemia, anaemia, cephalopelvic disproportion, and hypertension" (Leppalahti, Gissler, Mentula & Heikinheimo, 2013). Raets, Ingelbrech and Benhalima (2023) add that, some women experience the prevalence of type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), which increases due to the rise in maternal obesity. According to Reddy, Sewpaul and Jonas (2016), teenage pregnancy often results in infant mortality, with considerable racial inconsistency where infant mortality was reported to be 34.4 per 1000 live births overall in 2015 (Stats SA, 2017).

According to Banke-Thomas, Kivuvani and Ameh (2017), adolescent pregnancy and motherhood have persisted to be a major health and social concern, because of its interconnection with higher mobility and mortality for both the mother and the child. A large portion of infant deaths however, could have been prevented, such deaths as the ones that are caused by factors, such as poor use of healthcare facilities, pregnant women visiting healthcare facilities very late in their pregnancy, lack of access to emergency transport services, and the poor quality of the health care services generally (Say, Chou, Gemmill, Tuncalp, Moller, Daniels, Gulmezoglu, Temmerman & Alkema 2014). In addition, WHO (2017) explains that the high number of maternal deaths in some areas of the world reflects inequities in access to health services, and indicates the gap between the rich and the poor. Similarly, Birchall (2018) adds that early marriage, pregnancy and school dropout are interlinked with socio economic inequalities and unequal gender norms.

Leppalahti et al. (2013) and Yussif (2017), evaluated that the obstetric outcome of pregnancies in adolescents, according to their results, the main complications, especially in very young girls were: preterm labour, anaemia, hypertensive disease, obstructed labour after premature rupture of the membranes and increased neonatal mortality and morbidity. Furthermore, antenatal care is often inadequate. Kyojuka, Murata, Fuksas, Yamaguchi, Kanno, Yasuda, Sato, Ogata, Endo, Hosoya and Yasumura (2021) and Indarti, Fattah, Dewi, Hasani, Mahdi and Surya (2020) relate to the obstetric complications discovered during their study were among others: Pre-eclampsia toxemia, eclampsia, premature onset of labour, low birth weight, premature delivery, neonatal morbidities like perinatal asphyxia, jaundice and respiratory distress syndrome, stillbirths and premature delivery. Increased neonatal morbidity and mortality were also seen in babies delivered to teenage mothers. Indarti *et al.* (2020) reiterates that, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers aged 17 years and below were the most vulnerable. It is further believed that the younger the mother, the higher the odds of her child dying as a neonate (Indarti *et al.* 2020).

One common pregnancy complication is health risks associated with unsafe abortions (Oduro & Otsin, 2014). Key findings revealed that primary reasons for opting for unsafe abortions are failure to access contraceptives, unplanned pregnancy and teenage girls fearing their parents' reaction, when they discover about their pregnancy. In-depth interviews on the study conducted in Malawi revealed the impact of unplanned

pregnancy on teenage girls and the stigma associated with getting pregnant that caused them to opt for unsafe termination of such pregnancies. Dunor and Urassa (2019) investigated major sources of sexuality and reproductive health (SRH) and observed that schools are major sources of SRH knowledge, which indicates that sexual education at school seems to be influential in the region, so much so that it improves sexual reproductive health of girls, and if utilized properly it could be a source of reducing teenage pregnancy.

These medical risks can be minimized if teenage mothers have access to good medical care, which is a challenge to those from poor neighborhoods. Risks for the young mother and her child are mostly associated with low a socio economic status, poor and inappropriate prenatal care and sometimes single parenting (Jacobs *et al.* 2011; Mutual *et al.* 2019). Pregnant teenage girls end up having a low self-image and they doubt their worth; they feel less human and seek warmth and attention. Runhare and Vandeyar (2011) discovered that teenage mothers often do not know how to make good decisions, they cannot set priorities for themselves, they cannot take a stand and stand firm on a decision. Teenage mothers feel lonely, powerless and experience more self-doubt than their peers do. The increased responsibility is overwhelming and therefore causes guilt and depression (Anglely, Divney, Magriples & Kershaw, 2015).

Erickson (1963) identifies adolescent stage as identity versus role confusion. Being a teenager and pregnant makes it worse, because pregnant teenagers feel rejection and prejudice by their peers in the mainstream, and their educators makes it difficult for most of them to bounce back and resume their studies post pregnancy (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011; Nkwemu, Jacobs, Mweemba, Sharma & Zulu, 2019); Reddy et al. (2014) are of the believe that interventions such as education about pregnancy care, increased antenatal clinic attendance, healthcare workers being more caring and sensitive to the needs of pregnant teenagers, and early bookings for delivery for ensuring healthy pregnancy outcomes, are needed to enable provision of better prenatal care for teenagers who fall pregnant. WHO (2019) believes that if appropriate care can be offered by skilled health professionals who have competency in sexual and reproductive health care, before during and after childbirth, it can save the lives of young women and new born babies.

2.8. Effect of pregnancy on a pregnant girl's family

When a girl gets pregnant, the first people to be affected are her family members. Issues of teenage pregnancy causes tension in both boys' and girls' families (Emeri & Olarenwaju, 2022). As is stipulated in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Guy-Evans, 2020), the assumption is that the two families should be collaborating for the best interest of learning at the centre of the pregnancy problem. However, Ncongwane (2018), investigated the burden of care experienced by families of parenting teenagers in Mpumalanga and discovered that, in a case where the boy rejects the pregnancy claiming not to be the father, the pregnant learner's family is left to live with the disappointment of taking care of the baby alone. Most parents react negatively in expression to anger, shame and disappointment about their daughter and for the fact that they have an additional member of the family to support, as they will have to support both the young mother and the newly born. Miller, Benson and Galbraith (2001) believe that the relationship between the pregnant teenager and her parents deteriorates and leads to the blockage of communication channels. Panday et al. (2011) confirm that in most cases the relationship with the father often shows rejection and distortion leaving the mother to be the only parent that the pregnant girl is overly dependent on. In contrast, Salvi (2019) discovered that in South Africa, especially in the black communities, compared with Zimbabwe and other African families, only few families reject their pregnant teenage girls. Meaning that after the initial reaction of parents, most rise to the challenge, providing both economic and psychological support in welcoming the new baby into the family, though there are still lots of doubts and bitterness, which still has to be dealt with.

Miller, Benson and Galbraith (2001) assume that a young girl's pregnancy in a family might reduce her parents' achievement expectations for her other children. For example, one daughter's childbearing may signal to her parents their inability to control their children's lives and future outcomes. Expectations for their other children may be surrendered accordingly if parents believe that they have little or no control over their children's lives. On the other hand, Paul (2013) still believes that there is however a possibility that the same parents may react differently because, the daughter for example, has had a child while she was a teenager, parents might have even higher and more demanding expectations on their other children. In addition, Ncongwane (2018) believes that parents get so disappointed when their teenage girl becomes pregnant, however they may perceive her siblings to have better potential for success.

A girl falling pregnant at a young age negatively affects her chances of succeeding in life (WHO, 2019), and for the fact that the teenage girl is not yet fully developed physically and socially, her right to safety and successfully transitioning to adulthood are compromised. Mothers may be motivated to prevent the repeat of in pregnancy cases in the family and might view the existing pregnancy as an opportunity to discuss ways of preventing pregnancy with their other children (Paul, 2013). Family support is particularly important to teenage mothers and has been found to have a positive influence on parenting behaviours and practices.

2.9. Effects of pregnancy on school life

Pregnancy has higher chances of causing an interruption to the usual way that girl conducts herself at school (Mashishi & Makoelle, 2014). There is a likelihood of teen mothers leaving school and ending up uneducated, therefore becoming part of the unemployed, dependent and poor statistics. The American statistics projects that only 41% of mothers who have children before the age of 18 ever complete secondary school, compared to 61% of young women who delay having children until they reach 21 (The National Campaign to prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2000:13). The girl's education is indeed disadvantaged by their pregnancies, yet there is often a chance to make up for the lost time later, but only if the education opportunities exist in the first place (Luttrell, 2014).

It is very unfortunate that those education opportunities do not exist in most schools. As a result, not many of young parenting teenagers bounce back after falling pregnant and resume their studies. It is however, interesting to bear in mind that South African research reflects on the number of pregnant teenage girls completing high school increasing from half to two thirds, and at least a third had gone on to higher education (Luttrell, 2014) This may be one of the after effects of the introduction of the Schools Act, which got rid of the expulsion of pregnant teenagers from schools.

Having a baby makes life difficult for a young mother as it separates her from her former friends, whose interests are now totally different (Imbosa *et al.* 2022). For teenage mothers in most cases, when they return to school after the baby is born, many of their old friends had either moved to a higher grade or are no longer interested in associating themselves with them, due to the stigma of pregnancy (Du Preez *et al.* 2019). The young mothers miss out a lot on social life as they had lost some of their friends they had before pregnancy. Matheolane and Makura (2020) define the social

role as the interpersonal relationships in the microsystem, examples being: the relationship between a teacher and a learner or, a learner and another learner in a classroom, or between a learner and a parent. Research further shows that forming new friends is a bit difficult for some of them because of time constraints, as most of their time outside of school is spent on childcare activities.

One of the factors affecting teenage mothers' ability to return to school are: lengthy periods of maternity leave, compound re-entry processes such as those that require medical certification, just like in Senegal, or letters to various education officials in Malawi, or strict conditions that girls have to apply for readmission to a different school Imbosa et al. (2022). Morifi (2018) believes that the implementation of the policy sometimes is dependent in some circles on the principal's interpretation of the policy, and that the Department of Education is not doing enough to ensure that fair implementation took place across the board. Furthermore, insufficient educator training needed to manage teaching in inclusive classrooms and lack of direct strategies that teachers should employ to be able to successfully manage teaching in an inclusive classroom affect teenage mothers' willingness to return to school or their ability to update their learning (Morifi, 2018).

2.10. Effects of pregnancy on the community

In most black communities there is a saying that the "child belongs to the community" (Matheolane & Makura, 2020), meaning that, African children conform to the rules and expectations of the community. So when a girl becomes pregnant that also has an effect on the community. Teenage pregnancy is regarded by many as a social problem (Maemeko *et al.* 2018) and it therefore has effects, not only for the life of the adolescent and her family, but the community as well. In some communities such as Zulu community, it is a custom that all adults assist in raising children in that community. However, the problem arises when the teenage girl starts to have more babies and that is when the community starts to gradually pull out of the support, and this therefore leads to poor living conditions. Hayward (2011) asserts that teenage pregnancy has led to the decline in cultural values and moral standards.

Several African communities used to promote the behaviour of girls remaining virgins until they are mature and ready to get married (George & Solomon, 2008). As the number of young school girls who become pregnant rises, the use of contraception

also becomes typical. Teenage pregnancy also affects the economy and quality of life of people in the community (Gcelu, 2019 & WHO, 2019). This causes the rising number of youth unemployment as some teenage mothers drop out of school before completing their high school education to take care of their babies. Ryan (2017) explains that others stop attending school due to lack of support from their families or because they find school to be too overwhelming. Gcelu (2019) and Ryan (2017) clearly agree on the fact that the learners cannot effectively manage to attend school and at the same time take care of their babies. So the support they get seems to be an important element for re-entry.

The black communities recognize teenage pregnancy as a taboo (Wright, Branscum, Maness, Larson & Taylor, 2019). Research on teenage pregnancy about Zulu communities in Kwazulu Natal (KZN) (Mpanza & Nzima, 2010) give evidence that sex before marriage and teenage pregnancy is still condemned. Communities stigmatize young women who seem to be sexually active before getting married (Levandowski, Kalilani-Phiri, Kachale, Awah, Kangaude & Mhango, 2012), and premarital and extramarital pregnancies were also discovered to be highly stigmatized in Malawi. Teenage mothers face blaming and shaming from other people, and that causes them in denial that they are pregnant from fear. This becomes a problem as it keeps most of them away from the doctor, clinic or antenatal class until the pregnancy is at an advanced stage.

2.11. Educators' view of supporting pregnant learners' need

Salvi (2019), affirms that, although relevant on a global scale, this point is particularly relevant to disadvantage and in context of development, where teenage pregnancy is often associated with gender inequalities. Morifi (2018) agrees by highlighting that teenage pregnancy appears to result in teenage mothers ending their schooling across Africa. The South African Government in responding to the challenge facing some African countries, tried to ensure pregnant learners complete their schooling and that it requires schools to accommodate the reasonable needs of such learners (DBE, 2018).

In South Africa, unlike in some African countries, girls usually continue their education after giving birth (Chigona & Chetty, 2008) and they delay completing their schooling rather than dropping out (Shefer *et al.* 2013). The example of the African country that

has a different view of the inclusion of pregnant learners in normal schools, is Mozambique, which has endorsed policy “GM/39/2003” with the aim of curbing the occurrence of teenage pregnancies in schools. That policy indicates that, “pregnant girls should be transferred to night courses together with their partners, if they are in the same school. If the partner is a staff member in the same school, he should be expelled immediately and reported to the police” (Salvi, 2018).

The Department of Education of South Africa made an initiative to put in place some policies and measures, which help to accommodate pregnant learners in school and for them to return after giving birth (DOE, 2007), although only about one third of teenage mothers return to school. Panday et al. (2009) noted that the delay in returning to school could reduce the level of performance and increase the likelihood of them failing a grade. A study by Potjo (2013) discovered that, educators’ views were that “pregnancy and motherhood do not necessarily end a teenage girls’ schooling; nonetheless for those who remain in school or return following childbirth, it does impact on their grades and at times their progress in school.”

The relationship between teenage pregnancy and education becomes very complicated. It is often the case that pregnancy negatively affects the educational performance of teenagers. For a pregnant woman to have a health pregnancy she has to attend an antenatal clinic (Guy-Evans, 2020). Pregnancy in teenage girls itself is associated with some health complications, due to their immature bodies (WHO, 2019). Emotional and social difficulties often lead to a teenage girl missing school or losing focus on educational activities. When the baby is born, the life of a teenage school girl changes completely as she has to dedicate most of her time to the newborn (Stoner, Rucinski, Edwards, Selin, Hughes, Wang, Agyei, Gomez-Olive, MacPhail, Kahn & Pettifor, 2019). Parenting, just like schooling, requires focus as the baby is so fragile and needs to be taken care of, and among other things, measures be taken for an antenatal clinic, which often requires frequent visits.

Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) claim that parenting teenagers often have poor parenting skills. Responding to a baby’s needs becomes frustrating and requires proper guidance from their parents, and the absent support of the partner causes more frustration. Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) therefore confirm that pregnancy on its own is not a problem, but how to deal with pregnancy. This is believed that if teenagers

receive enough support from parents and share the parenting responsibilities with their partners, they can manage to continue with schooling and obtain good results (Potjo, 2013). Grant and Hallman (2008) believe that if a parenting teenager has enough resources and skills to balance between parenting and schooling, a caregiver at home to help with taking care of the baby, and that the parenting teenager is motivated enough to focus on her studies, chances are that she will succeed.

Many educators seem to be concerned about the growing rate of teenage pregnancy, not only in secondary schools, but also in the education system (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). What makes them more worried is the fact that children as young as 9 to 10 years old are seen to be getting pregnant. They feel like the Government should do something about it (Jonas *et al.* 2016). Morifi (2019) is concerned that South Africa is faced with an escalating number of schoolgirl pregnancies. He goes further to explain that, “the fact by itself and the manner in which pregnancies are dealt with, hinders the eradication of gender inequalities in education.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of Universal Primary Education and Gender Equality in education are also negatively affected. Imbosa *et al.* (2022) clarify that pregnant teenagers experience significant stress that could negatively impact on their physical state, if not managed. Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) investigating perceptions of educators regarding the influence of teenage pregnancy on education. According to Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) educators were of the opinion that pregnant teenage learners usually find it difficult to reveal their pregnancy status to parents, so they usually depend on educators to talk to their parents on their behalf.

Teachers themselves are also experiencing psychological stress from negotiating with parents, disclosure to the unborn child’s father, peer rejection and isolation, pregnant girls having to leave school, stigmatisation and fear (Potjo, 2013). Their emotional experiences are often affected by the guidance and support they get from educators and family. Referring to the Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, it shows that the interaction between factors in the child’s maturing biology, her immediate family or community environment and the societal landscape, fuel and steer her development (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Educators perceived school attendance to be mostly affected by teenage pregnancy. In their discussion with the researcher, they explained that school attendance is also disturbed by babysitting arrangements and health of the

child, because in most cases learners do not have anyone to look after their babies, so they must juggle being at school and also having to take care of the child, which is overwhelming for them.

2.12. Management of unplanned pregnancies of teenage girls at school

The Department of Basic Education's Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in schools (which is referred to as Policy) is set out as a central role in the social sector's collective response to the challenge of learner pregnancy in South African schools (DBE, 2021). That document sets out the Policy, its goals, guiding principles and themes to reduce and manage the influence on pregnant learners and on the whole education system. DBE (2021) further explains that the purpose of this Policy is to among others, provide guidance on reducing unintended pregnancies, management of their pre- and post-natal after-effects, limitation of associated stigma and discrimination against pregnant learners, and most importantly the retention and re-enrolment of pregnant learners to school. The other purpose is "to ensure accessibility of information on prevention, care, counselling and support, framework for impact mitigation, the choice of termination of pregnancy (CToP) and guidance for systematic management and implementation."

The re-entry policy for girls who drop out of school after becoming pregnant while still at school, becomes a global concern (Omwancha, 2012). Thwala, Okeke, Matse, and Ugwuanyi (2022) add that they have discovered that the number of teenage boys recorded to be the dropouts are far less as compared to that of teenage girls. According to Imbosa et al. (2022), the African Continent has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the world, as United Nations records thousands of girls become pregnant at the time when they must be still learning. Naong (2011) remarks that the problem of teenage pregnancy among school girls has become a serious point of concern in many African countries and an obstacle to the elimination of gender disparities in education, more so on a continent that is severely damaged by the disorder of HIV/AIDS.

It is evident that the consequences of girls dropping out of school cannot be underestimated. The impact it has is explained by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory that the interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, her immediate family or community environment and the societal landscape fuel and steer her development (Shelton, 2018), and it is further explained that changes of conflict in

any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. Guy-Evans (2020) explains that for a child to develop well, the five systems interrelate, meaning, a child's development depends on the relationship that a child has with people around her/him. Parental involvement is encouraging for active participation in school and the educators are encouraged to support the learning of learners for better development.

The support that a learner receives from both the educator and her family positively influences the pregnant learner to return to school after giving birth. The collaboration between the family and the school will encourage the learner's return to school after giving birth and to continue with her studies. The educator receiving appropriate training will enable her / him to employ suitable strategies to be able to conduct lessons in an inclusive classroom. With suitable strategies in place, the educator will be able to encourage active participation of all learners, regardless of their different learning abilities.

Kenya introduced a new policy in 1994 to enable adolescent mothers to continue studying in school after giving birth (Omwancha, 2012). Undie et al. (2015) further explain that in 2014 the population council had implemented a project with the focus of increasing the demand for secondary school education in Homa Bay Country, Kenya, which is an area which is described by high unintended pregnancies and female school dropout rates. Bash-Taqi, Watson, Akwara, Adibayo and Chandra-Mouli (2020) state that President Ernest Bai Koroma made a public declaration in 2012 in regard to the reduction of teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone, and that regardless of the financial constraints, the government in partner with other stakeholders successfully implemented the national strategy on retention of pregnant teenagers. It was reported that the president saw the need to stop all the factors associated with pregnancy even before they could spread further. He claimed that if the underlying factors are not controlled in time, it will be difficult to eradicate such factors.

The author is of the opinion that the president realized that when a child becomes a mother, the young mother will not be able to take care of the baby and that will further expose the baby and the young mother to a vicious cycle of poverty (Bash-Taqi *et al.* 2020). Looking at the issue of dropout, they believe that when girls dropout, the tendency for them to return to school will be limited pointing out "we have less and less families coming out of poverty cycle because most of the families coming out of poverty

cycle because most of the families were very vulnerable and so were the children” (Bash-Taqi *et al.* 2020). If we can deal with the issue of pregnancy in school, the way that the Sierra Leone president did, we will be able to overcome the problem of pregnancy in totality.

The Department of Education (RSA, 2007) concurs that to manage unplanned pregnancies at school where prevention measures fail and learners end up falling pregnant, the education system is obliged to balance interests of a pregnant learner against those of their peers, with the aim of supporting and helping the pregnant learner. The father of the child must also be guided regarding his responsibilities if he is also a learner. It is further stated the staff members and parents who are affected by the pregnancy also need to be guided. For teachers to be qualified, they go through education training where they are guided as to how they should manage teaching and learning, as well as dealing with learner behaviour (the question is whether they get trained to handle those learners that get pregnant while at school, and whether they are offered enough skills to deal with learner pregnancy challenges).

For educators to deal with pregnant learners means that they are supposed to have knowledge of health services, as pregnancy is associated with some health risks. Segalo (2020) argues that, teachers are trained to be prepared to teach didactic subjects that they specialize in, and not all teachers can take care of the well-being of pregnant learners. It becomes worse helping pregnant learners, especially when they encounter complications during their pregnancy, which will be a challenge.

Some indicators of pregnancy, as indicated by Salvi (2018) are tiredness, feeling dizzy, swollen breasts, constipation or gas, feeling sick in the stomach (morning sickness), frequent urination, headaches, cramps in the lower stomach, and many more. For the educators to be able to assist learners should they experience any of the problems associated with pregnancy, they need to have undergone training in the health related field. Educators will be entitled to account for whatever the consequences of their actions in trying to help beyond their scope of work, according to the South African School Act (SASA) Act 84 of 1996, as well as the South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act 31 of 200. This is indicated in the Educator Labour Relations Council (ELRC) (2003).

Savolainen et al. (2012) recommend that to understand inclusive education, one should look at ecological theories and systematic thinking. Looking at Bronfenbrenner's model, the different levels of systems in the whole social context influence one another in a continuous process of dynamic balance, tension and interplay. Stakeholders that are directly affected by unplanned pregnancies in the school environment are the principal and educators (acting in loco parentis), students and other staff members, as they interact with the pregnant learners and parenting teenagers on daily basis.

Savolainen et al. (2012) suggest that mainstream schools should include values, such as equity, participation and inclusion. This is supported by the Bill of Rights, which is Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which states that every person in South Africa has the right to human dignity, equality and freedom (RSA, 1996). The rights of a pregnant learner as a citizen of South Africa are not left behind. Morifi (2018) explains that pregnant learners have legal rights in terms of the Constitution of South Africa of 1996, SASA Act 84 of 1996 and Management of the Learner Pregnancy in Public Schools.

In their report, Mutua et al. (2019) state that teenage pregnancy and parenthood are regarded as the leading causes of dropping out of schools amongst girls. In addition, Salvi (2018); Mashishi and Makoelle (2014) posit, that when teenagers become pregnant, their lives rarely change for better and therefore negatively affect their future. Her education may end, her future dreams of becoming a better person with a good education and chances of getting a better job evaporate and they end up vulnerable to poverty and dependent on their parents or other people for survival. Morifi (2018), annotates that the rights of these young girls to education are violated by pregnancy and childbirth, with dangerous consequences in terms of sexual and reproductive health, posing high development costs for populations, particularly in continuing the cycle of poverty. Mutua *et al.* (2019) add that adolescent mothers find it difficult to go back to school after giving birth.

It was reported by the Department of Basic Education (2009) that adolescent pregnancy undermines the Department's effort to ensure that adolescent girls remain in school to contribute to a quality life for all and to drive them away from situations that normally leads to poverty. For adolescent mothers not finding jobs, it will make life

difficult for both the adolescent mothers and their babies. Panday et al. (2009:49) state, “early childbearing may not necessarily lead to poverty, but it certainly may worsen the economic situation of young women”. Jacobs *et al.* (2011:382) and Mutua *et al.* (2019) add by highlighting that the incidence of teenage pregnancy is inversely linked to socio economic development, which means teenage pregnancies are more common among poor people than among those who are financially better off.

Morifi (2018) explains that the pregnancy rate among school girls in the rural areas of Kwazulu-Natal is twice the national average of 6.5%. He further shows that “rural places in South Africa, especially among the predominantly black communities, are affected more than those in the urban areas.” Panday et al. (2009) agree that pregnancies are higher in schools located in poorer neighborhoods, hence the research will be conducted at a considered poor neighborhood in the Free State Province of South Africa. Hence, pregnancy is considered a barrier to learning for if it was not for pregnancy, a teenage girl was going to be able to contribute to her well-being and that of her family members.

Vandeyar and Runhare (2011) agree that teenage pregnancy, which is one of the major reasons for leaving school before the end of Grade 12, happens mostly in developing and African countries. Naong (2011) argues that teenage pregnancy is associated with a lack of motivation to complete school. Pregnant learners at times end up fearing to go back to school after giving birth, or even to continue attending classes during pregnancy, because of the discriminatory remarks from both their peers and educators (Undie *et al.* 2015).

Naong (2011) argues that exploring various reasons for dropout and return, the findings were leaners repeating grades, as well as being the primary caregiver of the child is also strongly associated with the likelihood of dropping out when pregnant. WHO (2004) discovered family stability and connection are other factors influencing the decision to leave or remain at school after giving birth (WHO, 2014). This confirms the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory that the interactions between the child and immediate family will influence her development.

2.13. Summary

To study the attitudes of educators and learners towards inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education, the researcher began first by looking at inclusion of pregnant learners and parenting teenagers in the basic education system, pregnancy policy guidelines and expectations, management of unplanned pregnancies in schools, as well as implications of management of unplanned pregnancies on the daily lives of educators. Following will be Chapter 3, which deals with research methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Methodology is considered a study of methods, which analyses the different methods used in research (Aliyu *et al.* 2015). This describes research design of the investigation. It presents the techniques used to collect data from the field, outlining aspects, such as the research paradigm, the research design, the study population and sample size, the sampling procedure, the research instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis technique and data management, and ethical issues.

3.2. Qualitative approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach within an interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative design was selected because it gives the researcher an opportunity to interact with the study participants in order to understand their viewpoints and experiences regarding the study under investigation. Qualitative research allows the researcher to meet face-to-face with the participants which gives the researcher an opportunity to observe and document verbal and non-verbal language of the participants and the analysis of such language becomes the integral part of the interpretive analysis. Holloway and Wheeler (as quoted by Maree 2010:51) states: “Qualitative research typically studies people or systems by interacting with and observing the participants in their natural environment and focusing on their meanings and interpretations”. Stahl and King (2020) explain that one of the unique qualities of qualitative research is that it provides researchers with process-based and narrated stories that all form data more closely related to human experience.

3.3. Research paradigm

The study was further informed by the interpretivist paradigm because it allows participants to make meaning of the phenomena. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) are of the opinion that Interpretivism is more concerned with in depth variables and factors related a context, it considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they

create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena. Qualitative research aims to provide specific understanding to a phenomenon based on the ones experiencing it with less generalization. Interpretivist paradigm is therefore, more focused on people's intentions, beliefs, values and reasons (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The interpretivist paradigm was used in order to fulfil the aim of the study which was to investigate the perspectives of learners and educators towards the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education. Pham (2018) believes that interpretivist researchers cannot only describe objects, human or events, but also needs to deeply understand them in a social context. Hence the researcher decided to investigate the matter regarding the pregnancy of students in a school setting in order to understand how the pregnancy issues are handled in each school. Interpretive research paradigm is closely associated with Qualitative research approach, that why the researcher was motivated to use this approach.

According to Maree (2010), interpretivism is rooted in hermeneutics, which is explained to be the study of the theory and practice of interpretation. It is further stated that interpretive studies generally seek to understand the topic through the meaning assigned to it by the people. Pham (2018) believes that interpretivist researchers can not only describe objects, human or events, but also deeply understand them in a social context. The researcher had applied the use of the research techniques to understand how people interpret and understand their social environment (Maree, 2010). It is further explained that researchers can also conduct these types of research in a natural setting through utilization of such key methodologies as grounded theory, among others. (Joffe as quoted by Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The reason for choosing a qualitative approach and interpretivist paradigm was because of their compatibility and ability to allow participants to provide rich data, useful for answering the research questions as supported by (Aliyu *et al.* 2015). Ngulube and Taole (2018) explain that the researcher comes to understand the behaviours and the meanings associated with them through the interactions with the study participants. That is because the interconnection between the research and the research subject is more concerned with the meaning, voice, standpoint, experience, thoughts and feelings by an individual (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). Aliyu *et al.* (2015),

Ngulube and Taole (2018) and Junjie and Yingxin (2022) further explain that what people think, feel and see is important, as people experience reality in different ways.

3.4. Research design

Maree (2010:70) defines a research design as “a plan or a strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done. This study used the case study research design. The study was done as a case study of two schools in Ladybrand. Ladybrand was selected, because it is one of the small towns in Free State where the teenage pregnancy rate among learners is high. This case study enabled the objectives of this study to be easily fulfilled. The aim as supported by (Maree:2010) was to gain greater insight and understanding of dynamics of having both pregnant and non-pregnant learners in the mainstream classroom. Bromley (as quoted by Maree 2010:75) states: “the case study is a systematic enquiry into an event or set of events of related procedures, to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest.”

The researcher opted for a case study design because the study particularly focused on a case relating to teenager learners’ pregnancy at the two selected schools in Ladybrand. The case study assisted the researcher to have an intensive study of the participants to completely understand their perceptions and attitudes regarding the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream classrooms. As it was pointed out by Yin (1994), case studies are intensive, and because data gathered were of a qualitative nature, tools utilized in data collection involved face-to-face interviews, for individual educators as well as well focus groups for learners. The researcher believed using a case study was useful in producing the desired results as it has been used in various reports in psychology and education whereby researchers (Yin, 1994; & Forman *et al.* 2008) studied the individual as a unit of analysis in which a case study method was used to develop rich and holistic understanding about people and their viewpoints.

Maree (2010) states that the characteristics of a case study from an interpretivist perspective strive towards a holistic understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study. A qualitative approach and an interpretivism paradigm, which the study adopted, both enabled participants to freely express their views about

the behaviours and perceptions that they have regarding the phenomena (inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education), which happens to be the core objective of this study. Maree (2010) assumes that placing participants in their social contexts creates an opportunity to understand the perceptions they have of what happens around them.

This design was appropriate for the study, because from an interpretivist perspective, the typical characteristics of case studies is that they strive towards a comprehensive understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation and how they make meaning of a phenomenon under study” (Maree 2010:75). Yin (1994) points out that case study methods are used within different contemporary reports in different fields, such as education whereby individuals are studied as the unit of analysis to develop a rich and comprehensive understanding about people. Interviews were opted to obtain rich descriptive data that help an interviewer to understand the participants’ construction of knowledge and social reality (Maree, 2010:87,91). Moreover, focus groups encourage full participation and interaction among members.

Research shows that case study is one of the major qualitative designs, whereby the researcher collects words and images relating to the central phenomenon (Forman, 2008). However, one of the challenges of using case study design is that, the results of case study can be influenced by the researcher’s bias. Such a drawback can be defeated by complying with the researcher ethics as it has been indicated by FSDOE that the researcher’s feeling may not be allowed to influence research findings. And for the fact that as researchers we know that trustworthiness and reliability are essential aspects of a good qualitative research.

3.5. The population and sample

3.5.1. The population

The population comprised of educators who have taught pregnant learners and non-pregnant learners and who have experienced being in the same class with pregnant girls in two selected schools in Ladybrand. Ladybrand is a small agricultural town with the population estimated to be less than 52 000, located in the Free State Province of South Africa, situated 18 kilometers from Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. It is just a few kilometers away from the Mokokare River, which separates Lesotho and South Africa.

Ladybrand is one of five towns that form the Mantsopa Local Municipality in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. There are only Four high schools found in Ladybrand, three public and one private. There are two schools in town and 2 in the township. The two schools that are located in town consist of a mixed race and dominated by the white educators. The participants were selected from one school in town and one from the township, whereby English and Afrikaans as well as Sesotho and English are both used as medium of instruction respectively.

The sample for this study was selected based on the population. The selection in this regard was based on the idea that in purposive sampling, researchers rely on their judgement when selecting members of the population to participate in their survey (Maree, 2010). Educators and learners are considered information rich, because they interact directly with pregnant learners on a day-to-day basis. Yin (2016) believes that in order for the study to produce the most relevant and plentiful data, researchers have to select the right people that are considered information rich, given the topic of the study. Maree (2010) further explained that the decision on sampling is reached for the explicit purpose of obtaining possible rich source of information to answer the research question. For that reason, the researcher found educators who teach the selected grades, as well as non- pregnant learner in those grades information rich.

3.5.2. The sample

Initially, 29 Grade 8 to 10 learners (18 from school L and 11 from school S) were selected. The sample comprised of both boys and girl learners. Learners from Grade 8 to 10 were selected from two schools in Ladybrand, because of the believe that learners in Grade 8 to 10 can participate comprehensively in the study and produce the desired results. Grade 8 ,9 and 10 were selected because they are the ones who are easily available at any time of the school term except in the fourth quarter. I solemnly promised that I would abide by the ethical code and conditions presented by the department of Education that state. It was stipulated under the research conditions that; it is my responsibility to secure permission from the schools that I selected. Each school had its own conditions. However, from the two schools that I visited, I was informed that grade 11 learners in the fourth term are preparing for the year ahead. It was easy for me to understand from my teaching experience in school I knew that it would be as easy to get participants in the lower grades than in the higher grades

(grade 11 and 12). I had learned from being a high school educator that the grade 11 in most schools prepare the content for grade 12 in their fourth term of grade 11.

The grade 12 were totally excluded from participating due to the nature of work involved in their phase of study. I had been exposed to the high school curriculum and to my knowledge, the grade 12s have the shortest contact time compared to other grades. As a result, it makes sense not to include them in the study as they are not available anytime of the term. In grade 12, teaching and learning involves a lot of processes such as attending workshops, sleepaway camps and trial examinations among others.

The number selected was influenced by the idea that the number in qualitative research is usually smaller in size than in quantitative research studies (Maree, 2010). The number of boys were less than that of girls because girls are directly affected by teenage pregnancy, even though boys are also affected, and are sometimes responsible for the pregnancies, and for the fact that boy learners had also experienced being in the same class with pregnant learners. 11 Grade 8 to 10 educators (six from school L and five from school S, both educator participants comprised of five females and one male and three females and two males respectively) were selected. The total number of participants were forty (N=40). The researcher did not consider the hierarchy when selecting participants, hence the educators' participants were made up of educators from different ranks (Principals, HODs and Post Level (PL) 1 educators).

3.6. The sampling procedure

According to Maree (2010), sampling is a process that is used in selecting a portion of the population, to make statistical references from them and estimate characteristics of the whole population for the study. As stated earlier, participants were purposively selected to participate in this study. The school through the HODs and SBST members, prepared learners and educators who could be available to join the study discussions. The preparation for data collection was done in advance to see who could be available, since the discussions with learners were arranged to be after school. However, interviews with educators were conducted during school hours using individual educators' free periods. It was stipulated by the Free State Department of Education (FSDOE) under the conditions of conducting research in the (FSDOE) that collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition of teaching and learning process.

3.7. The research instrument

According to Thabane (2015) appropriate instruments that can be used to collect data from an interpretive paradigm is through the use of, Interviews, document analysis and literature review.

3.7.1. Interviews

“An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and to learn about ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participants” (Maree, 2010:87). The researcher decided to use interviews as a data collection instrument with the purpose of obtaining rich descriptive data that will help the researcher understand the participants’ construction of knowledge and social reality as explained by (Maree, 2010). Interviews are considered best in gathering qualitative data because they provide the researcher with an opportunity to gather direct and immediate data. Thabane (2015), recommends that interviews are used in gathering qualitative data as they are considered the best research instruments for collecting data. For the purpose of this study, a researcher organised a schedule of question (appendix 8) that was used for both learners and educators.

3.7.1.1. Types of interviews

Three main types of interviews are; Structured, semi-structures and Unstructured. Interviews for this study were opted for both learners and educators. However, for the purposed of this study the researcher decided to interview learners and educators separately. Interviews for the educators was done face-to-face for each individual educator. Semi-structured interview that requires attentiveness from the researcher towards the participants’ responses that might lead to the new line of enquiry related to the phenomena under study by exploring and probing.

Maree (2010), further advices the researcher to be careful not to be overclouded by responses that may generate irrelevant data that shifts from the aim of the study. When same thing happened during the interviews, especially with learners, the interviewer quickly guided the participants back to the focus of the interview. The interviews with

learners were done through a focus group. There are different ways in which interviews in qualitative research can be administered; That involves the use of emails, telephone and self-administered questionnaires, individual, face-to-face as well as face-to-face group interviews (focus group). However, this decided to use only face-to-face, individual as well as group interviews. Interviews were guided by a list of questions that were found under the schedule of questions. During the interviews the researcher used the taper recorder to store data that was later transcribed and then later used for data analysis.

3.7.1.2. Individual, semi-structured

In this study, individual semi-structured interviews were utilised. Maree (2010) elucidates that a face-to-face interview is considered the method with the highest response rate, and that one advantage is that the interviewer can assist participants with issues that are not clear to them. Usually, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face, and because of the importance of personal contact in qualitative interviews as stated by (Vogl, 2013). Face-to-face interviews are regarded as structured interviews conducted by a trained interviewer who uses a standardized set of responses for recording participants' responses. The preparation for data collection was done a week before the interviews to see who could be available and when individual semi-structured interviews with educators were conducted during school hours (school S and school L). It was arranged in both schools that I worked with HODs, who volunteered to facilitate the interview process, in terms of arranging my meetings and preparing the venues. The researcher was willing to interview educators who were willing to volunteered to participate and had only 4 from each school. However, the number of participants ended up increasing to 5 and 6 educators from school S and L respectively.

Educators were selected based on their qualifications not on any position they hold in the school, and for the fact that they have been exposed to having pregnant learners in their schools. That resulted to having principals participating willingly as part of the teaching staff who also had experience of working with pregnant learners. All educators chose the time slots on which they could all be available for convenience. In both schools, we made a list of all participants, the time on which each of them should avail themselves and duration of each interview. The interview process was easy to manage because of that arrangement. The other thing that made it more

manageable was that I had an assistant who facilitated the interviews in terms of time keeping as well as the HOD who made it easy for me to work with all the other educators.

Interviews started on a Monday at school S where our first participant's time slot was at 09:00am. The interviews were scheduled to take 20 minutes for each individual participant. Our first participant was a little reserved and took only 15 minutes. All the other interviews thereafter, took 20 minutes and more because the interviewer engaged more with the participants to elicit more responses. It came to my attention that using both Sesotho and English encouraged our participants to be more eager to engage. Interviews with all four educators at school S took approximately one hour and 30 minutes. One-one-one Interviews were conducted the same in school L as was in school S. the only difference is that, in school S, interviews were conducted in English because educators involved were Afrikaans speaking. The only way I could communicate with them was through English language.

In school L, interviews were held in different classrooms. Educators who were part of the study arranged their classrooms for the interviews to take place. HOD in school L arranged the interviews to be held when learners were done writing the tests so they could all avail themselves. Participants in that school were made of 6 educators (1 male and 5 females), and one of them was a principal for the school who also was more than willing to participate in the study. While all educators arranged for the interviews to be held in their classrooms, the female principal also invited us to interview her from her office. All one-on-one interviews took approximately 20 minutes as scheduled. Audio tape was used to record the interviews as it was agreed upon.

Individual interviews were semi-structured and suitable because in semi-structured interviews questions are loosely structured, and allows new ideas to be brought up from what the interviewee says during the interview. It allowed the researcher to directly engage with each individual, understand different in which they express their views and make follow-up where needed. Each participant was given enough time to respond to the interviews questions to the best of her/his ability. It became easy for participants to respond without being interrupted by other participants. One-on-one interviews gives a person a strong sense of confidentiality as the researcher and her assistant were the only people exposed to the information shared in the interview room.

Data collected from individual educators and focus groups were recorded, using a tape recorder. The use of a voice recorder was agreed upon between the researcher and the participants. Where the focus groups were involved, the researcher had an assistant who assisted with making sure that the recording was successfully undertaken, and under the strict adherence to Covid 19 regulations. Due to the seating arrangement where every learner had to be seated at and 1 metre distance from each other, the researcher's assistant walked from learner to learner to record the responses from each participant. That enabled the researcher to successfully facilitate data collection, to ask questions, make follow-ups and observe the non-verbal cues from participants. Data collection discussions were completed in a period of five working days.

3.7.1.3. Focus group

The focus group was aimed at gaining information and perspectives about the topic. According to Yin (2016), the groups are said to be focused, because the individuals selected for discussions either previously have had common experiences or had shared some common views. The focus group interview is, according to Maree (2010), a strategy that is based on the assumption that group interaction will produce a widening range of responses. Maree (2010) goes on explaining that the purposive sampling of participants is vital to the success of the focus group interview, hence the interviewer opted for a bigger number than anticipated, just in case other participants may not have been available on the day of the discussion.

Participants selected for the focus group were made up of learners that were still attending the two selected schools. The selected participants were a representation of the boys and girls of each school that were selected, based on their age and gender. There were two focus groups; one from school S and the other from school L. The two schools were selected based on the information that it is not advisable to select just one focus group, as the intention is to seek different perspectives (Maree, 2010:90). For the focus group to be successful in terms of information, the researcher encouraged full participation and interaction among learner participants and probing to keep the discussion active and to clarify where needed. According to Smit and Cillers (2019), the rationale for the focus group method is to provide a socially-oriented interaction, similar to a real-life situation, in which to participate freely, influence one

another, build on one another's responses and as a result stimulate a collective and team generated thoughts, feelings and experiences.

The focus group discussions from both schools were conducted, each on a date agreed upon between the researcher and the SBST members who happened to be both HODs. The researcher arrived an hour before classes ended. Immediately after classes ended learners who volunteered to be participating in the discussion were gathered next to a venue that was already prepared for the focus group gathering to take place. Likewise, the same preparation for interviews with educators was done in advance to see who will be available and when. The interviews with educators were easily arranged as they were for individual educators. Interviews were conducted on different days and time slots. All the interview schedules were controlled by educators' free periods on their respective timetables. Interviews in school S were conducted in the HODs office, while in school L interviews were held in each educator's organized classroom.

3.8. Data collection procedures

The permission was granted from the Department of Basic Education to collect data from three schools in Ladybrand. It was stipulated in the letter that the period of data collection was valid from the date of signature (27/08/2021) to the 30th September 2021. It was made clear on annexure A, under the conditions for conducting research in the FSDOE, that, researchers should not conduct research during the fourth term of the year (October to December). Unfortunately, the letter arrived late and an arrangement had to be made with the schools to come later than the 30th. Each of the three schools made a special arrangement to schedule the visits at a convenient time as per school. School S and school L scheduled for 20th to 23th September, because the 24th was a holiday (Heritage Day), but only school S's learners and educators managed to attend, since school L were still busy with 3rd term assessments. Another arrangement was made to go back to school L in the following week (starting from 27th September 2021).

All data were collected on the premises of two public schools, however the initial plan was to use three schools. In the third school (L), only learners were available for interviews, as educators were not available due to the vaccination process and the submission of marks. Data collected from learners' focus groups were therefore

considered invalid since only the learners were interviewed, instead of learners and educators as was initially planned. Data with learners were collected during school time, however in both schools it was arranged that I had to be schools at 14h00 on selected days when they were done with their studies. According to Maree (2010), all participants must be able to congregate in the same place at the same time. In each school there was one educator who was making sure that all learners are at the venue by the time the researcher arrived. The researcher arranged with the educators to organize more than an anticipated number of learners, in case some learners are absent on the day of the data collection.

The arrangement resulted in the number of students being different from one school to another, for example the number of learner participants in school L were 18, while in school S number of learners participating in the study were 11. An audio tape was used as had been recommended by Butler-Kisber (2010) that in individual and or group interviews, it is advisable to use an audio tape, because it is said to be less engaging and therefore allows an interviewer to ask questions and at the same time manage to keep notes. An interviewer was therefore engaged in the conversation without losing sight from the participants. Butler- Kisber (2010) further explains that continuous contact with the participants during the interviews is considered of a great importance as the researcher could have a further observation or even see a need to ask questions either as a guide to the interview process or as a follow-up to the participants' responses.

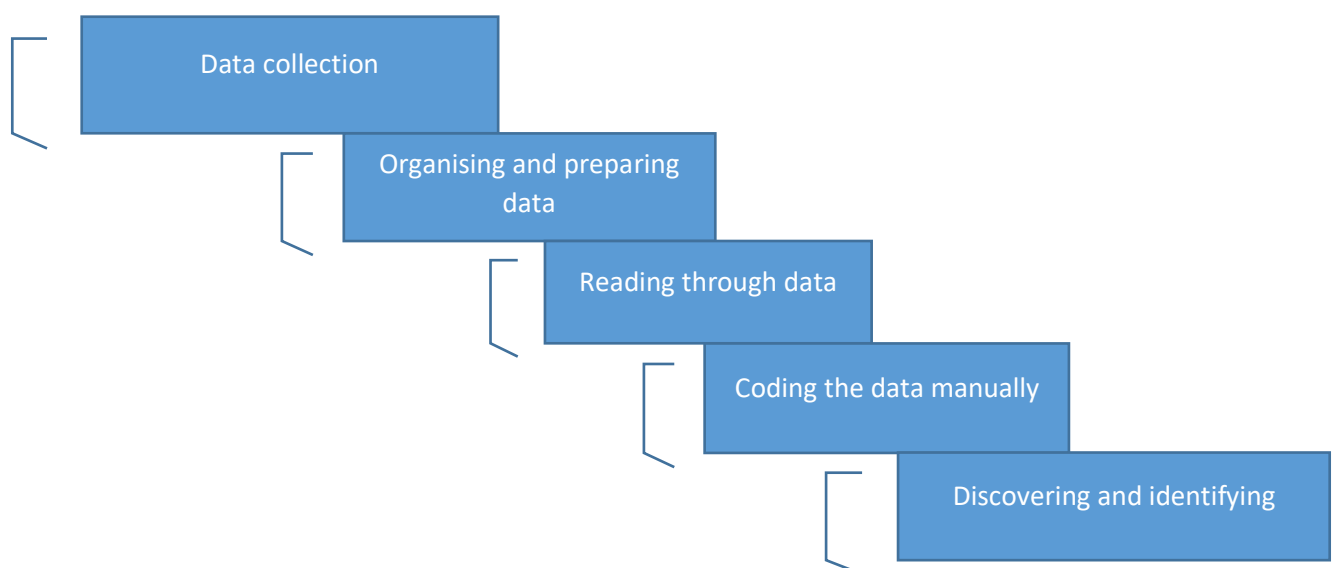
3.9. Data analysis

Kiger and Varpio (2020) defines thematic analysis as method of qualitative analysis that is useful and accessible for qualitative researches. This method of data analysis is said to be widely used yet frequently misunderstood (Kiger & Varpio (2020)). In this process, large amounts of data collected are decreased to make it better understandable. There was a large amount of overwhelming data generated from both individual, semi-structured interviews, as well as focus group interviews. However, data collected from the focus group were more overwhelming. Similarly, Kiger and Varpio (2020) believe that deciding on which analytical technique to choose for analyzing data is one of the challenges student researchers face.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze data. This method was chosen among others, because (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017) thematic analysis is a suitable first analytical method for novice qualitative researchers, and because of its flexibility, thematic analysis can be used within most theoretical frameworks, as it is defined as a powerful, yet flexible method for analyzing qualitative data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This flexibility, alongside its accessibility, makes thematic analysis particularly suitable for those new to qualitative research (Terry *et al.* 2017 & Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis is considered a 'go to' method that researchers should use for analysing and synthesising qualitative data, such as individual interviews and focus groups (Forbes, 2021).

Terry *et al.* (2017) and Kiger and Varpio (2020) stated that thematic analysis is an appropriate and powerful method to use when seeking to understand a set of experiences, thoughts or behaviours across a data set. Since it is designed to seek common or shared meanings and experiences, it is less suited for examining unique meaning or experiences from a single person or data item. Finally, because of its relevance to other methods of qualitative research, the steps of thematic analysis are like those of grounded theory ethnography, and other qualitative methodologies that also rely on coding and searching data sets for themes as part of their process (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The figure 3.1 illustrates the data analysis process.

Figure 3.1 data analysis process



3.10. Ethical issues

Research ethics were observed. Ethical clearance was provided by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee [01/06/16] in view of the CUT Research Ethics and Integrity Framework, 2016, with reference number [D. FRIC. 19.03.11]. The permission was also granted by both the Free State Department of Education and the schools. All the conditions as set by both the University and the Department of Education had to be complied with.

Accompanying the department application to collect data in schools were a few attachments as requested. They were: the research questions, questionnaires and focus group questions, letters to the principal and the educators, ethical clearance from the University's Research Department, proof of registration, parental consent forms, as well as learners' assent forms. The consent forms were designed to be send to the parents of minor students, accompanying it was all the information regarding the research, including the research topic and the selected questions that were directed to all learner participants.

3.10.1. Prolonged engagement

The searcher reserved five days to visit both schools. She spent one day at each school for focus group discussions with learners, and three days to interview educators. As arranged, the time was enough for learners and educators to discuss about the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education. Characteristics and elements of teenage pregnancy that happened to be closely related to the study problem identified and focused on. Lincoln and Guba (1986), states "in-depth pursuit of those elements found to be especially salient through prolonged engagement".

3.10.2. Persistent observation

During the interviews the researcher was accompanied by a field worker (Ms Victoria), who assisted by handling audio recording and translating from English to Sesotho where clarity was required, while the researcher was focused on the interview itself, including taking notes and observing non-verbal cues. As explained by Shenton (2004), observations form major data collection strategies for qualitative research.

3.10.3. Peer debriefing

“This is a process exposing a researcher to a disinterested professional peer to keep the inquirer honest and assist in developing working hypotheses” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The researcher discovered that in one setting, educators were more comfortable to communicate using indigenous language than English language. The researcher was surprised as she expected educators to be eager to use English as the medium of instruction predominantly used for teaching and learning as well as for assessing learners. Peer debriefing is described by Shenton (2004), as peer scrutiny of research project whereby the opportunity for scrutiny of the project by colleagues, peers and academics is usually allowed.

3.10.4. Negative case analysis

Negative case or deviant case analysis is a “critical analytical strategy for ensuring validity in qualitative research” (Hanson, 2017). According to Thabane (2015), negative case analysis as those cases that emerged from data analysis but do not support the findings of the research. It was discovered in the findings that both schools protect the rights of learners to education, on contrary there are instances whereby pregnant learners are not allowed to attend classes if they are not accompanied by parents for the duration of the time they spend in school pregnant. According to Shenton (2004:67) “one form of negative case analysis may be the researcher refining a hypothesis until it addresses all cases within the data.

3.10.5. Member checks

Member check is explained as the process of informally testing information by soliciting reactions of participants to the researcher’s reconstruction of what she has been told or found out to the reconstruction offered by other responded or sources, and a terminal, formal testing of the final case report with the representative couple of stakeholders (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Shenton (2004) explains that Guba and Lincoln consider member check as the most important provision that can be made to strengthen the credibility of the study. Checks relating to accuracy of the data was made from the beginning of the data collecting process, during the process and at the end of data collection process. Expressions (such as emotions) were accurately captured through the use of a tape recorder.

3.10.6. Informed consent and voluntary participation

It was stated under the ethical requirements (appendix 1) of the FSDOE that, the researcher conducting research in the department would be expected adhere to, among others, secure actual permission and interests of all involved in the study. It was also stated that where participants are minors, the researcher is expected to request a consent from parents or guardians of such minors. Child involvement in scientific research requires parent/guardian approval, which is known as a parental consent, and child's approval, which is known as assent (Al-Sheyab, Alomari, Khabour, Shattnawi & Alzoubi, 2019). Since learner participants were all minors, parental permission was obtained from parents / guardians of all learners through both schools' SMTs (appendix 6: Consent letter for parents or guardians). The letter was addressed as: parental or guardian permission form for research involving a minor. The following information was stated on the parental consent form for the purpose of transparency. The title of the study was well stated; Name, surname and contact details of the researcher; purpose of the research; procedure to be followed; time duration of the study; statement of confidentiality; voluntary participation as well as termination of participation.

Parents were given an assurance that the study would not harm the learners in any way and that learners wouldn't experience any discomfort by participating in the study. It was also stated that the child's participation is voluntary and that if at any point during the study she or he wishes to terminate the session can do so. Finally, the researcher provided her contact details to ensure that the study becomes as transparent as possible. Parents were requested to call the researcher for clarity, if there is anything they don't understand or in case they have questions regarding their children's participation in the study. Even if the permission was granted by the participants and parents or guardians of minors to be subjects of the study, learners were also made aware of their rights with reference to participating in the research, at the beginning of the discussions. There was that clause stating that, they have a right to disagree or withdraw from the interview should they feel that they do not feel free to answer the questions asked, or if they feel that they are no longer interested to participate.

Learners were also requested to provide consent to show that they understand and agree to participate in the research. All parents and guardians signed the consent forms to allow their children to participate in the research. Likewise, all learners' consent forms prior to commencement of focus group discussions, were signed. The

researcher had to gain the trust and co-operation of all the participants with the assurance that the information collected would be private and confidential.

3.10.7. Trustworthiness

Stahl and King (2020) posit that qualitative researcher provides the research narrated data that is very close to human experience. It is further stated that the degree of trust in the person narrating the story is the same degree of trust attributed to the telling itself (Stahl & King 2020). It is therefore recommended that a researcher conducting a study using qualitative research approach considers the importance of building trust. Lincoln and Guba (as quoted by Thabane 2015:78) state “the trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth”. The four measures of research trustworthiness namely; credibility (an attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented), transferability (to provide enough detail of context of the fieldwork to show that findings are applicable), dependability (to enable the study to be repeated in the future) and confirmability (to demonstrate the findings emerged from the participants and not by researcher’s influence) were addressed (Shenton 2003). Shenton (2004) further advises students undertaking a qualitative enquiry to follow that model that ensures trustworthiness in research.

3.10.7.1. Credibility

According to Shenton (2004: 64), is an internal validity in which researchers seek to ensure that their study measures or tests what is actually intended. Lincoln and Guba (as quoted by Lincoln and Guba 1986) Recommends, “in order to ensure credibility of the research results in this study, the following must be considered; prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and member checks”.

3.10.7.2. Dependability is defined as that “part of audit that examines the process results in a dependability judgement” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). According to Thabane (2015) external audit is the process that does not involve the presence of a researcher. Shenton (2004) recommends that the researcher should at least make it possible for other researchers to repeat the study in the future. In this study the researcher made recommendations of how the same research if used in the future can still produce the same results. The researcher elaborated how the findings of this study can be achieved

if the study is conducted again using individual (face-to-face) and focus group data collection methods.

3.10.7.3. Confirmability is defined as part of the audit that is concerned with the product (data and reconstruction of such data) resulting in confirmability judgement” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). To achieve confirmability, it is advisable that the researcher makes demonstrations of how findings emerged from the data and that findings were not influenced by the researcher’s personal interest. The techniques used in this study for establishing confirmability are among others, triangulation, which the researcher used in context to reduce the effects of the researcher bias. According to Shenton (1986), the concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator’s comparable concern to objectivity.

3.10.7.4. Transferability is referred to by (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) as a “narrative developed about the context so that judgement about the degree of fit or similarity maybe made by others who wish to use the results of the findings somewhere else”. The researcher Provided sufficient details regarding the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to other situations or whether the findings can be justifiable enough to be used in other settings.

3.10.8. Role of a researcher

The role of a researcher according to (Maree 2010) is to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon with the intention to develop an understanding of what is being studied. In order to conduct research with learners and educators, the researcher has to obtain the permission from the institution from which she is studying. The ethical clearance was granted by faculty Research and Innovation Committee (10/06/16) in review of CUT research Ethics and Integrity Framework, 2016 with reference number [D.FRIC.19.03.11]. It was state that as a researcher focusing primarily on human being, I was expected to be ethically responsible for, others protecting the rights and welfare of the participants. During the focus group discussions with the learners, I noticed that I had to be firm in addressing the rights of each participant, the rights of their educators as well as those of pregnant learners who were a focus of the study.

One of the aspects that were considered ethical was for the researcher to all she could to gain trust and co-operation of all the participants with assurance that all information collected would be kept confidential. For the purpose of focus group, I had to set few rules before we could start with the discussions to make sure the I create the atmosphere conducive for every learner to be able to feel free to participate. All that information was stated under the schedule of questions (appendix 7). The researcher had to assure the learners that the research is not done to harm or humiliate anyone and that if anyone of them is pregnant, she must know that the comments or question that would come up in the study would not be personally directed to her as an individual.

The rights of all the participants were respected and to show consideration and respect, as a researcher, I adhered to maintaining moral responsibility towards the participants and made sure that the rights of all the participants as well as their privacy and sensitivity were protected to ensure trust and to ensure that there would not be any biasness towards any participating group or individuals. To ensure voluntary participation, all the participants were asked if they consent to participating in the study and if they also consent to having their conversation recorded. Before questions were disseminated, the researcher explained that she would be questions regarding the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education, and if the participants feel uncomfortable in answering some of the questions they should kindly indicate.

Participants were informed that their participation would be voluntary and that the data collected would be conducted with the consent of the department of Education and external institution which in that case was my university (CUT) where data collected would be used as evidence to my study, for future reference of other post graduate students and for research purpose. It was also indicated that a researcher is expected to submit a bound copy of the document to the FSDOE and the other copy will be send to each respective school.

3.10.9. Data management

In order to have data well managed, the researcher adhered to the research ethical conditions prescribed by both the FSDOE and CUT (Appendix 1 and appendix 2). The confidentiality of participants in this study was guaranteed during the interviews with educators and focus group discussions with learners. Recording and transcripts of the

research findings were kept strictly private. The researcher made sure that the study sites and participants names remained anonymous. All data were encrypted to protect the names of the schools, educators and learners who in the study. It is the researcher's responsibility to consider how they are going to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the participants. It is reasonable for participants to expect a certain level of anonymity. According to Badampudi, Fotrousi, Cartaxo, and Usman (2022), reporting ethical issues is important to improve the reliability of the research results

For the participants to feel at ease, they were made aware of the important part of the research ethics, which is confidentiality, and as explained by Harding (2013:3), confidentiality is considered a key ethical requirement of any research project. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study as was promised everything that we discussed would stay between us and would only be used for the purpose of the study and nothing else. In a case where the respondents' responses include names of other people, for the purpose of anonymity, pseudonyms were used to enhance participants' privacy and freedom of speech. As explained by Jefford and Moore (2008), participants are more likely to provide a reliable and honest response when they are insured confidentiality and anonymity.

The issue of anonymity was negotiated with the research participants before the interviews started. For all the participants, F was used to represent females and M was used to represent the male participants. The schools were given letters S and L, respectively. The principals from both schools were identified as LFP1 and SMP1, meaning the female principal from school L and male principal from school S. So female educators from school S are identified as SF1, SF2, SF3, SF4, etc. A male educator was identified as SM1. Likewise, the female educators from school L were identified by LF1, LF2, LF3, LF4 and the male educators was identified as LM1. The same process was followed to give identity to the learners/students. Female students from the S school were identified as SFS1, SFS2, SFS3, SFS4, etc., whereas male students were SMS1, SMS2, SMS3, etc. Female students from the L school were identified as LFS1, LFS2, LFS3, LFS4, etc. and the male students as, LMS1, LMS2, LMS3, etc.

3.11. Summary

This chapter provided an understanding of the methodology adopted during the study, as well as the aspects of trustworthiness (internal validation, external validation, reliability and objectivity) of data. It also helped with preparation of findings and interpretation of results, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter dealt with the methodological approach, research design, research instruments, the population, as well as the sample used for data capturing. This chapter deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation, based on the research questions. Semi-structured interview questions were formulated and used to investigate the perspectives of learners and educators towards inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education. The purpose of the study was to investigate the implications of inclusion of pregnant teenagers and the standpoint of non-pregnant learners and educators.

4.2. Data presentation and analysis

The study investigated the perspectives of learners and educators towards inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education in Ladybrand High Schools. The presentation and analysis of the data are structured under both, the study's main research question and three research sub-questions. All data collected from the research questions and that which were orchestrated from the follow-up questions were used for the data analysis procedure. Uprety (2009:115) explains data analysis as a process of assessing data as they are collected, assorted, formulating additional questions, verifying data and drawing conclusions. The findings discovered in this study were divided into data sets containing data received from both individual, face-to-face interviews from educators and focus group interviews from learners.

In this study Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. During the conceptual phase of this study, qualitative data were collected. That involved both individual and focus group interviews, which were

conducted from two schools in Ladybrand. All the participants selected (learners and educators) were found surrounding the children’s microsystem. Twenty-nine (29) learners and nine (11) educators were interviewed (as indicated on table 4.1) using focus group and face-to-face individual interviews, respectively. Interviews schedules were controlled by the individual School Management Team (SMT), based on availability of selected individual participants. In each school, there was one member of the SBST whom the researcher was reporting to for all the processes involving data collection. Coincidentally, both members happened to also be HODs.

English language was used as the medium of instruction during the interviews, however, the researcher had to code-switch between Sesotho and English language in one school. That was due to the fact that the majority of the participants were comfortable using their mother tongue (Sesotho) as the language they communicate better in. The researcher then translated the data collected from Sesotho to English. However, during the focus group discussions, the researcher’s assistant assisted with clarifying some of the English words that participants could not understand.

Table 5. Summary of the biographical information of participants

School	Position/ Grade	Number of participants	Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
S	Educator	5	2	3	5
L	Educator	6	1	5	6
S	8 -10	11	3	8	11
L	8 – 10	18	6	12	18
Total		40	12	28	40

During the interviews the researcher had an assistant (Ms V), who assisted by handling audio recording and translating from English to Sesotho where clarity was required, while the researcher was focused on the interview itself, including taking notes and observing non-verbal cues.

Data which were collected were constructed to address the research questions and the same data were analysed using thematic analysis (Uprety, 2009), which involves organising the data from the field descriptive notes under various themes and sub-themes.

The researcher outlined how data was captured using the identified research instruments and how they were analysed in this chapter. Maree (2016:109) explains qualitative data analysis as a process involving back and forth movement, interconnecting data collecting, analysis and reporting. Qualitative data analysis involves a range of approaches, processes and procedures whereby the researcher extracts some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation from the qualitative data collected from the participants. Research shows that themes can be generated using either an inductive or deductive approach (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Crabtree and Miller (as quoted by Fereday 2006:89) state, “connecting codes is the process of discovering themes and patterns in the data.” Data were presented in conjunction with the research questions as was shown in the first chapter. Blum, Stenfors and Palmgren (2020) consider this kind of approach as a qualitative synthesis in a form of deductive thematic analysis.

The first question sought to investigate if there is a difference in which way the pregnant learners are treated, compared to their peers who are not pregnant. The second question set out to find out if educators and learners are aware of the pregnancy policy guidelines that are put in place for learners who get pregnant while they are still at school. The third question focused on the treatment that pregnant learners get from their fellow learners, educators and the society. The fourth question required the educators and learners to look into the educators’ preparedness to meet pregnant learners’ needs. The fifth and last question was aimed at exploring the procedures which are normally followed when realising that a learner in school is pregnant.

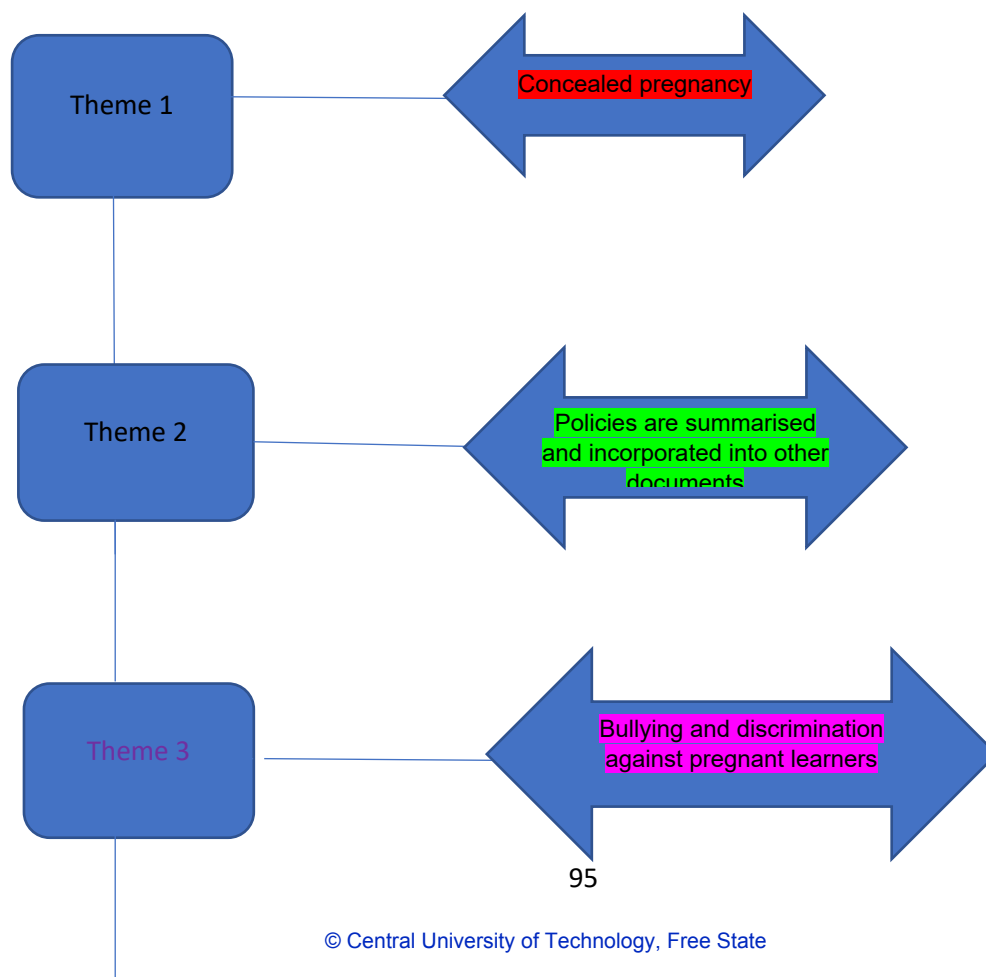
Participants from both schools were selected based on their knowledge and experiences. The selection was based on the information that educators had experienced working with pregnant learners. The aim was to gather different perspectives of their experiences to get to objective findings. Both individual and focus group interviews were recorded using an audio tape recorder as was stated in Chapter 3. Butler-Kisber (2010:30) recommends the use of an audio tape in both individual and or group interviews, because it is said to be less engaging and therefore allows an interviewer to ask questions and at the same time manage to keep notes. It is considered very vital to take notes so that a researcher can ask additional questions and review responses at the end of an interview (Maree, 2010:89). Another advice is

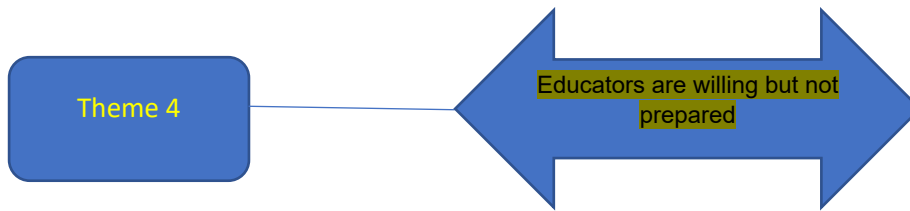
to take down a written record of the responses for the purpose of data analysis. However, to be ethically considerate the researcher had to ask permission from the participants to give their consent to be recorded.

The data that were organised through the data sets were used to identify similarities and differences in order to look at the themes that emerged. “Themes can be generated inductively or deductively” (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Themes are considered active constructed meanings derived from a data set that answers a research question, as compared to just summarising or categorising codes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The following diagram presents four themes and findings as captured from participants’ response to the questions asked. Themes emerged from the four research questions that are combined from the 1 main research question and the 3 sub-research questions. According to Forman, Creswell, Damschroder, Kowalski, and Krein (2008), the researcher had to identify recurrent themes and patterns in the data. Furthermore, compare and contrast across cases in terms of themes and diversity of perspectives on these themes.

Figure 4.1. Themes that emerged from the discussions.





4.2.1. Research question 1: What is your opinion concerning teaching in a classroom that has both pregnant and non-pregnant learners, do you address them the same? The research questions asked throughout the whole interview were used to investigate the perspectives that the educators and learners have towards inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education, particularly in Ladybrand schools. The initial question was employed to investigate if there is a difference in which the pregnant learners are treated compared to their peers who are not pregnant. This research question was directed to both male and female participants from both school S and school L. Responses from both learner and educator participants all pointed to the same direction. Although they were narrated differently from focus group to individual interviews, they all indicated that it is difficult to differentiate a pregnant learner from a non-pregnant learner. It is reported that when learners get pregnant, they hide the pregnancy from other learners and educators. There are different reasons as to why the pregnant learners hide pregnancy status, but that can cause a problem. The challenge is where a girl has to be given immediate assistance because she is delicate. That will be a challenge to treat the matter as an emergency of her concealed pregnancy status.

The issue that emerged from participants' narratives under the research question 1: participants' responses were discussed under the following the theme: 4.2.1.1 Concealed pregnancies.

4.2.1.1. Concealed pregnancies

Kost (2013) discovered that not all unintended pregnancies end up in birth. Some unintended pregnancies end up in birth while some end up in abortion or fetal loss. So the expectation is that the results may not be as consistent as expected, because some pregnancy cases may have lasted only for a short period. Some may end in abortion and others in miscarriage.

Most of the participants seemed uneasy at first to respond to the first question. Most of them were trying to narrate their different experiences regarding the pregnancy cases they came across, based on their teaching experiences. In most of the teachers' experiences the learners did not volunteer to inform the educators about their pregnancy status. It is stipulated under the guiding principles 5.8 (DBE 2021) that every pregnant learner in mainstream education has the right to protection of her dignity, privacy and confidentiality, regarding her pregnancy and related health. It is further stated that no person within the basic education system, regardless of their position or role, will disclose information relating to a pregnant learner without their written consent or, if they are under the age of 12 years old, the written consent of their parents or guardians.

The pregnancy cases which the educators discovered without hearing through rumors, were already at their advanced stages. So educators responding to whether they treated pregnant learners the same way they did to non-pregnant learners, was somehow intricate. The participants, in particular participants SF1, SM1, LM1, LF1, expressed concepts in their narratives that it is not easy to deduce whether they treated pregnant learners different from other non-pregnant learners, because in most instances the pregnancy was concealed. Most of the educators do not realise that a teenage girl is pregnant, until such time that another learner or another teacher suspects it.

Participant LF3 is a Head of Department (HOD), and a member of SBST at school L, who is also a former Life Orientation (LO) educator. As a member of SBST, she is one of the educators who deals directly with cases of teenage pregnancy at school L. Participant LF3 explained how she normally finds out about the learner pregnancy, *"usuallyI'm like the mother of the school, learners usually open-up with me, the girls that I talked to told me that, in Grade 9 if I can't remember whether it is last year or a year before that, that there were learners who were pregnant but actually left school in Grade 9, but I teach only Grade 10, 11 and 12. Sometimes the learners hide it so well or they go to another school or anything like that, so we are not aware of everything."*

In a study conducted in Uganda, when asked to raise their viewpoint about re-entry of pregnant learners (Undie *et al.* 2015), responses from both learners and educators regarding re-entry were in favour of girls re-entering new schools, with the feeling that parenting learners would be made feel uncomfortable by non-pregnant learners calling her “mother”, and that educators might ask her why she behaved like a child when she already has a child. That is why they encourage the parenting teenager to go for re-entry in another school, with the perception that re-entering learners would perform better in another school environment.

Participant SF1 explained her experiences just to add on what is said by participant LF3, *“Sometimes the pregnancy is concealed, I don’t even notice that the learner is pregnant until another teachers talks about that particular learner’s pregnancy status. Otherwise I teach them the same (yes I teach them the same way).”*

The researcher feels like the responses from participants LF1 and SF3 are influenced by the fact that the state of pregnancy was able to be seen easily by educators, or if the learners or their parents could volunteer to inform the school. According to participant LFP1, *“very often they hide it, so a learner, a friend usually comes or if a parent knows about it they usually come, but they are scared of the parents. When they get pregnant they don’t want to go to their parents, so they go to their friends and then more often we find out from a friend.”*

Participant LF3 who happened to be the Head of Department (HOD), as well as a member of SBST added on SF1’s narrative that shows that the students never volunteer to reveal the pregnancy. She pointed out, *“so what we could do is that if I hear a rumour that a learner is pregnant I call them immediately to me and ask them if it’s true, if it’s not true and then they will usually open up and tell me it’s true.”* The fact that a pregnant learner did not volunteer to tell an educator means that her right to dignity, privacy and confidentiality had been violated. As stipulated in the guiding principles (DBE, 2021:17), “No person within the basic education system, regardless of their position or role, will disclose information relating to a pregnant learner without their consent or, if they are under the age of 12 years old, with the written consent of their parents or guardians”

Likewise, participant SM1 supported participant SF1's narrative, *"If its somehow not able to be seen by anyone else, I address them as they are.... the same, but if it's close to 9 months or more no"*.

This clearly shows that teachers would have been more considerate towards pregnant learners only if they knew their pregnancy status, and that they would show compassion as they know it is at a late stage of pregnancy, whereby a learner becomes more vulnerable. This is evident by the response from participant SM1, as a male educator who also feels that the pregnant person at a late stage of pregnancy needs extra care, hence he said that at this stage a parent of a pregnant learner needs to always be near her. He indicated, *"but if it's close to 9 months or more no, ehh otherwise...we call the parents. Even if it's difficult sometimes we just tell them to go home ehh we apply the policy of the school that's that."*

On the other hand, participant LM1 spelt out, *"Ehh in my experience we do, (as he responded to whether or not they address both pregnant and non-pregnant learners the same way) most of the time we are unaware of girls being pregnant, cos most of them it's their first pregnancy so it doesn't show until quite late um... Many of the learners do not feel comfortable to announce it. so normally there is one or two teachers working especially with them so the rest of us just continue as normal. So we are most of the time unaware of it. It's not made public so we address them the same way, same situation."* This shows that there is compliance in this school, because the case not being made public means that students' privacy is taken into consideration.

Participant LF2 also responded to the research question by saying, *"Yes I do. Normally we don't know whether a learner is pregnant or not because there is a committee that handles that so you know when the learners are at school, we teach them. We normally don't know what all the different circumstances is."* According to Prasetyo (2021), it would be important that educators do a needs analysis to recognize learners' different needs in an inclusive classroom setting, but the challenge is that conducting a needs analysis may not be easily achieved since, not every pregnancy in most cases is revealed until such time that it automatically shows.

The response from participant LFP1 when asked what they do when they see that a schoolgirl is pregnant, explained that they do have such case from time to time. She also explained that they have a pregnancy policy, and that helps them follow the correct

steps. She indicates that at their school they do not exclude pregnant learners, but they assist them by also going into details at home because they need to work with what they have at school and what they have at home.

Participant LFP1 explained, *“there is no exclusion, you know like I said. We do not ostracize or anything, we handle them as if they are just another learner at school, and we keep a close contact with them to know if there is anything we can do to help with, not only scholastically but also at social and socio economic level.*

“It’s like this inclusive education that we have, if there are 30 learners in the same class and there is a pregnant learner we don’t always know how to handle it. We call other people to come and help us because it’s difficult to treat everybody different according to their needs, while you have a whole class in front of you that can turn disruptive and so yah, as far as possible we try and treat them the same. But yes if there is ...they fall ill or something like that, then it’s difficult”, explains participant LF2

Participant LF1 added, *“No I think yah..... there are so many situations and socio economic issues yah, so I think we dealing with so many ... so much. It is difficult... You don’t wanna take someone out and make them seem special, it sounds horrible. You want to support them, but what about the kid whose mother passed on yesterday and she is back at school, I try to treat them equal and fair cos for kids to be first that’s the main thing.*

Participant SF3 made it clear that there is no difference in the manner in which she addresses her students whether pregnant or not, especially where teaching and learning are involved. But the situation is handled differently where activities become more physical, as she seems to be more considerate towards the pregnant girl learner. She elucidated, *“I address them the same, especially when we engage in teaching and learning. However, when I was teaching Life Orientation (LO) there were some activities they could not do like, running, jumping and throwing balls. When we do strenuous activities, we could only let them watch.”*

Participant SF2 just like participant SF3 indicated that though they do not plan to give pregnant learners any special attention different to that of non-pregnant girl learners, there are instances where they cannot ignore the fact that they need to be treated

differently. This is how participant SF2 responded to her teaching in an inclusive classroom, which appears to be a challenge. To overcome the challenge educators should be able to prepare to reach higher quality education for every learner, they should be aware of difficulties and barriers, and they should be motivated for change (Prasetyo, 2021).

Participant SF2, “Ehh not always ..., not always hobane hakere bana ba pregnant o tshwanetse hore o ba fe space sa bona [*Not always, because they need special consideration in terms of space*] ... like seating plan hakere? [*like seating plan right?*] Eeh o tshwanetse hore ore considerate towards their condition meaning that you must arrange the desks in a way that they will be comfortable. [*they need to be considered when arranging desks, they should have a comfortable space*].

Educators from both schools pointed out to the SBST for being the committee that deals specifically with issues, which educators in their capacity as just educators cannot be able to handle. Hence, they do not even notice when a learner is pregnant. However, where they are aware that the learner is pregnant, they consider the capabilities of such learner. Rojo-Ramos *et al.* (2021) indicates that educators must transform and adapt their classroom management strategies to face the changing needs of learners. Learners are still addressed the same way except where the pregnancy is showing, which in most cases is at an advanced stage. That is when they realise that pregnant learners will no longer be able to do some activities the same way that their non-pregnant peers would.

Treatment also changes where teachers notice that things like discovering that the seating arrangement is no longer suitable for the current pregnancy status. That is evident by what is indicated by participant SF2. “*Pregnant learners need special consideration in terms of space... like seating plan right! Ehh they need a special consideration when coming to seating arrangement that will suit their pregnancy condition*”. Where the reaction from the teachers is negative, it is just out of caring. Educators just like parents, get disappointed when a learner gets pregnant as they are concerned that pregnancy complicates the process of teaching and learners and it hinders progress.

Participant LM1 explained, *“I think if we treat them differently its more in a sense of actually caring about and concerned about... than discriminating against them and things like that you know [his eyes brightens] yah I think normally if a learner is pregnant, our initial way of acting is we are going to be angry or disappointed in the learner.”* A female learner from same school is of the same perspective that the reaction from teachers is sometimes influenced by the expectations they had of a learner. Participant LFS7, a female learner participant, explained, *“Ma’am, I think they react negatively from them because they feel disappointed. Yes, ma’am they feel disappointed and look down on them.”*

Participant LF1 disclosed, *“Ehh... since I have been here, we had a couple of pregnant girls and as far as I know... we try not to make an exception cos, once you make an exception... she explains that she does not treat pregnant learners differently from other learners just because of their pregnancy status, she continues, it becomes very difficult cos where do you draw the line? Cos now if a pregnant girl gets this special treatment, how can a sick boy not get the same? Ehh... but normally if there are different circumstances caused by pregnancy complications, we become lenient.”*

Participant LF1, a female educator from school L, revealed that making exceptions for pregnant girls makes it appear as if others are discriminated against. She explained that as teachers they should be careful not to divert all the attention to pregnant learners, while forgetting that there are other learners (non-pregnant) in the same class. She indicated that the very same learners might be going through some social issues, which make them vulnerable as well. By having pregnant learners either in the same class or same school, no one will ever notice that others also need assistance in one way or another. That may be the reason why Rojo-Ramos *et al.* (2021) advise that educators must pay attention to diversity, in order for educators to face the growth of increasingly heterogeneous groups of learners; they have to incorporate new responsibilities into classroom management.

Data collected under research question 1 divulge that educators are careful not to support pregnant learners on the expense of other learners. The response from participant LF1 shows that she is worried that she might lose the rest of the students trying to support one student who is pregnant. If an educator has a positive attitude towards inclusive education (Subban & Mahlo, 2017), supporting all learners’ proper

functioning in the classroom would not be a problem. To achieve this successfully, educators will have to transform and adapt their classroom management strategies to face the changing needs (Rojo-Ramos, 2021), so they must be prepared to experience an increasing diversity within their classrooms.

Pregnancy is just a status that only lasts for nine months, but other social problems can be more intense than pregnancy so what is said by participant LF1 may need careful consideration. That is the reason Prasetyo et al. (2021) point out the importance of educators understanding learners' diverse and unique characteristics in inclusive classrooms, for them to provide equal opportunities for all learners. Without exception, all learners must be treated according to their needs, abilities, strengths and weaknesses (Rojo-Ramos et al., 2021).

4.2.2. Research question 2: How do you deal with pregnancy policy guidelines that are currently put in place for learners who fall pregnant while still at school?

The second question was derived from the research sub-question 1. It was set out to find out if educators are aware of the pregnancy policy guidelines that are put in place for learners who get pregnant while they are still at school. Open-ended questions were directed to the educators who were first to be interviewed, then the same question was also utilized in the focus group with the learners in both schools. Data collected here reflect the uncertainty of the participants as to whether there is an existing pregnancy policy, because they had never seen the copies of the actual policy.

Participant LF1 responded, *"Ahh to be quite honest I am not. The reason being, because we have specific team that deal with and they are more trying in that area so, I'm sorry to say that I'm not."*

Participant LF2 said, *"I just know that they should continue with their education as far as possible but as I said, the school handles that, and as long as the learner is healthy and can continue with the work then we just continue with classes."* Participant LM1 stipulated, *"No. I am not aware of the policy guidelines; I think we should maybe know; we should have it in our file. So if something happens to a girl you know, maybe she is pregnant..."* Most of them talked about being aware of what is always done when there is a pregnant learner at school, but do not really know where that is coming from, or whether it is the right thing to do.

Some educators and learners assumed there is a policy, because they always see the procedure taken by the office, dealing with matters such as pregnancy of teenage girls and other related stuff. While some teachers believe it is totally out of their scope of work to be dealing with matters relating to pregnancy and related guidelines, since they never know when learners are pregnant. They also believe that even though they teach all learners, those pregnant and those who are not, their task is only to teach and that there is a committee that deals specifically with pregnancy. Therefore, those are the ones that should know exactly what the guidelines are and what they entail. Segalo (2020) explains that, in general, educators are trained to be prepared to teach didactic subjects that they specialise in, and not all teachers can take care of the well-being of pregnant learners.

Although there is a challenge when coming to teachers familiarising themselves with the policy and its guidelines, participants from both schools understand there is an SBST committee that is found in each school, that is mandated to deal with cases of pregnancy and other matters that need serious attention beyond the scope of teaching and learning (DBE, 2019). Although the policy guidelines are from the Department of Basic Education, each school has its own way of dealing with the matter. For instance, participant SM1 indicated that when they realise that the learner is pregnant, they expect to see the parent of a pregnant learner accompanying her to school every day to see that she does not encounter any problems and to be available. Should it happen that a pregnant learner needs medical attention a parent should be present to see to it that the pregnant girl receives the attention needed. They need to make sure that even when they call the ambulance a parent is there to see that she was not neglected.

Participant SM1 *“we don’t let the parent to deny her the learner an opportunity to study, we let the parent to be available so that if anything happens, let’s say a child suddenly happen to collapse or time of delivering is about to happen, then we call the ambulance... We work together towards that.”*

Themes that emerged were discussed under section 4.2.2.1 and 4.2.2.2 below. Most of the responses were of the view that knowing the policy guideline was a responsibility of the SBST and they are the ones who are in possession of different school policies, not just the Pregnancy Policy.

4.2.2.1. Policies are summarised and incorporated in other documents

Participant LFP1 from school L explained that there is an educator who works with pregnant learners, specifically on the SBST. When asked if teachers are aware of the policy and how they respond to such policies Participant LFP1 said, *“okay we need to know that in education, all of all, our policies to be transparent we have them in place whenever anyone comes to ask for them, we say you know what, here are our policies. So usually in the beginning of the year we introduce our entry level teachers, and off course as well I’ve been here for 32 years now. I go through the policies every year so that the people can be aware of what we do, we do not go in-depth, but we want them all to know [listen, this is what happens to a child when she falls pregnant, and this is how we are handling the situation].”*

She further explained that they cannot be oblivious, and said only a few people know. She said, *“we have it on our staff...in our staff guide, we have a guide for staff, we also incorporate our policies.”*

Responding from the same question, participant SMP1 from school S also indicates that teachers are aware. Participant SMP1 said, *“when we admit students the admission is accompanied by the code of conduct This code of conduct summarises the policies ..., it talks about things such as pregnancy. What is expected from the parent and what is expected from the side of the learner, so it includes other things like a dressing code.”* He further explained that they also address the issue of policies, especially with parents when they have parents meeting. He explained that some of the things that they discuss in the meetings with parents are the frustrations about things that are happening, affecting their policies, and that are caused by parents themselves.

When asked if the parents are also aware Participant SMP1 said, *“yes, they are aware but now some of the parents you know... most likely will be acting the way they act knowing well what they are supposed to do.”* He goes on saying that parents are just trying to be difficult unnecessarily. Both principals from two different schools explained how the issue of policy is dealt with at their different schools.

Participant LF3 is one of the female educators in the high school located in town. Responding to the research question regarding the pregnancy policy guidelines, she

responded as follows, *“Yes I inform usually the teacher as well about ... She asked if she must talk about all the policies because she has access to all the policies. She continued, Yes, all the policies are available in the office and I believe that it’s available in our union pages as well as... I think they are all aware, but regarding pregnancy usually we would.....we’ve got so much committees in school so each one deals with different stuff like the.... School as management team, we get all the policies so we just go revise them... But with pregnancy, they are aware of the pregnancy policy and I do make them aware so they would know what’s going on and how to deal with it. Meaning if something goes wrong then they would... teachers are aware.”* said participant LF3

The question of whether the educators are aware of the policy guidelines will be discussed under the following theme: 4.2.2.1 Policies are the responsibility of the SBST

This interview was with one of the female educators (Participant LF3), who is also an HOD, as well as the member of the SBST. SBST members are responsible for (Masango, 2013) offering different internal support structures to meet the needs of teachers who are involved with inclusive education. She was being asked if teachers are aware of the pregnancy policy guidelines.

Participant LF3 is one of the female educators in the school located in town and as was stipulated in the previous chapter that data were collected in two schools, one in town and the other one in the location. Participant LF3 is the lady that almost every educator in the school L was referring to when they say that there is an office that particularly focuses on matters affecting learners out of the scope of teaching and learning. Not only teachers talk about the office of participant LF3 as being responsible, participant LFP1 also explains that they have a teacher who works with pregnant girls specifically on the SBST. Participant SF1 supports the fact that policies are there to guide them. SF1 *“Yes, there are copies here at school which guide us.”*

As stated, participants were allowed to respond using the language they feel comfortable using. So participant SF4 from one of the public schools located in the location explained with the very same phenomenon that the policy dealing with the pregnancy of teenage girls in school is mostly dealt with by the office of the SBST. SF4

responded, *“Ka tsebo yaka ke hore diteng fileng ya SBST as a committee e sebetsanang le taba ya di pregnancy and the stuff. Policy yeno ka hara master file ya SBST but then, tse ding ke tse re di hlaloeswang as stuff members hakere” [to my knowledge all the policies are dealt with by SBST].*

Participant SF4 also agreed with participant LF3 that they get informed by such policies so that if something happens they will at least be able to know how they should respond. SF4 added, *“They keep them in their files, but some they just tell us verbally just to have an idea of what they are.”* Another female educator from the same school as participant LF3 showed her main concern is seeing that learners are in class and that they remain healthy so that they can continue with their schoolwork. She feels that it is best for her to focus on what was assigned to her, and leave the rest to the office responsible for other matters.

Participant LF2, *“I just know that they should continue with their education as far as possible but as I said, the school handles that, and as long as the learner is healthy and can continue with the work then we just continue with classes”.*

Participant LF1 believes that teachers that are appointed to work with teenage pregnancy are the best to deal with the matter, hence she does not see anything wrong that she does not know any policy guidelines relating to learner pregnancy in schools or her school in particular. Participant LF1 annotated, *“Ahh to be quite honest I am not. The reason being, because we have specific team that deal with and they are more trying in that area so, I’m sorry to say that I’m not”.*

Participant SM1 showed that he is aware of the guidelines, especially the way pregnancy is dealt with at his school. When responding to Question 1 where he was asked if there is a difference in which the pregnant learners are treated comparing to their peers who are not pregnant, he explained that *“only if the pregnancy is already showing especially if the pregnancy is at a late stage”.* He revealed that, *“a learner must be accompanied by a parent to and from school every day until the learner gives birth”.* That is how he explained the different treatment that the pregnant learner is getting, as compared to non-pregnant learners.

Responding to the issue of pregnancy policy guidelines, participant SM1 further explained to indicate that he is aware that learners should not be denied their right to education as Section 29 (1) (a) of the Republic of SA Constitution (108 of 1996) points out; that everyone has a right to basic education. This does not leave anyone out whether pregnant or not. Section 9 points out that everyone has the right to be protected against unfair discrimination. Furthermore, on the same perspective, the SIAS policy also indicates that parents and educators are paramount to the support for all the learners who require additional support to encourage their participation and inclusion in school (DoB, 2007).

Participant SM1 *“we don’t let the parent to deny her the opportunity to study, we let the parent to be available so that if anything happens let’s say a child suddenly happen to collapse or time of delivering is about to happen then we call the ambulance. We do that, and we inform also... the person who is going to be responsible to look after a child it’s a parent. It means both of us educator and the parent need to be together. We work together towards that.”*

On the other hand, another male educator (LM1), though from a different school showed that he is not familiar with the policy guidelines and what is expected of them as educators dealing with pregnant girls in their classes or school in general.

Participant LM1 stipulates, *“No. I am not aware of the policy guidelines. “So I know for example, one girl last year. She was in Grade 10 and she was pregnant when she ehh... she fell pregnant and she missed the few tests and anything... I think they gave her an absentee mark then penalized her because she wasn’t here at school and anything... But I’m not actually... don’t have knowledge about the procedural issues or staff like that. We’re actually interested to know that.”*

He then shared his experience that he thought could have been better had he known how to act or what to expect, and he showed that if they were made aware, it would be easy for them as they would then know what to expect. He explained how he reacted to having a distraction in his class from the teenage girl who could not stop going to the bathroom while he was in class teaching. This is how he explained it, *“I think we should maybe know; we should have it in our file. So if something happens to a girl you know, maybe she is pregnant, she is sitting in my class, she is asking to go the*

bathroom the whole time because she is nauseous. I don't know that she's pregnant and I get angry because I think she wants to walk around the whole time but, actually she is pregnant. It will be good if we have something like that, so we can just if something happens so we can see how we can act just like a guideline".

It seemed that all the educators interviewed, except the one who is a member of the SBST (Participants LF3 and SF1), were just aware that there are policies, but have not seen them. They also knew that there is one policy that deals specifically with the issue of girls who get pregnant while still studying. However, as most responses indicated they do not have such policy copies. Those who know just know how their particular school deals with the matter. This shows that there is still a lot that needs to be done in terms of familiarising the educators with the guidelines. This is evidenced by the responses below:

Participant LF2, *"Ehh I believe they are available in the office"*, participant SF2 *"not all of them, not all of them because ehh ... I am aware of the policies that we use here at school and I know that they aligned with the national policy for pregnancy in our schools"*.

Participant SF4, *"Eya mme. Ke familiar feela ka ya skolong mona ha ke soka keya in details hoya department tsa education"*. [*I am familiar with the policies though I'm only familiar with only the ones that are found in school, I have never gone through detailed information of other policies found at the department*].

4.2.3. Research question 3: What treatment do pregnant learners get from their fellow learners, educators and the society?

Responding to the third question which was derived from research sub-question 2, where educators were asked if they are aware of the treatment that pregnant learners get from their fellow learners, educators and the society, they were filled with different emotions. Based on the educators' different experiences, the researcher discovered that there are different perspectives regarding the treatment of pregnant learners in schools. Although some educators try to make us believe that the treatment towards pregnant learners never changes from before they get pregnant, the issue of bullying and discrimination kept emerging.

Data collected reflect on the fact that though some students try to show support to those that are pregnant, the dominating behaviour in most schools and the community is that pregnant learners are treated differently, despite the policy guiding principles. (DBE, 2021) It is stated in the guiding principles that, no one in the school context, being it the educator, any staff member or peers of pregnant learners, is expected to discriminate, humiliate or abuse a pregnant learner physically, emotionally or psychologically, based on their pregnancy or post-pregnancy status (DBE, 2021)

It has been discovered that pregnant learners are prejudiced and called names by some learners, educators and some members of the society. This notion seems to be more significant in the location schools than in town. Swearer and Hymel (2015:504) quote, “bullying and discrimination are significant and long-standing social issues facing students, educators, and adults.” Treatment of pregnant learners were demonstrated under the following themes: 4.2.3.1. Bullying and discrimination against pregnant girls, 4.2.3.2 Societal concerns: lack of support from society.

4.2.3.1. Bullying and discrimination against pregnant learners

SF1 responding to the question of how pregnant school girls are treated, said, *“Yes I am aware ...yes am aware... ‘what I know is that we... we shouldn’t discriminate them, because the law gave them the right to be at school so we shouldn’t discriminate.”*

An educator (LF1) from school L, which is one of the high schools in town, explained that even though some people try to show support to learners who get pregnant in schools, there is always a stigma attached to teenage pregnancy. She showed that the stigma is different in her school due to diversity in such school. She further indicated that learners in her school are more accepting, as compared to learners from other schools in the same area.

Though not every learner can be accepting to the fact that some girls get pregnant, some learners will be against the issue of their peers getting pregnant. LF1 explained that some girls show support to their friends by throwing her a baby shower, just as they would do when their friend is celebrating a birthday; they still show support to encourage her to be strong so she can sustain the pregnancy and continue with her studies. LF1 said, *“I know this is not a question but we’ve had pregnant girls and kids*

actually at school ehh...had a baby shower for a friend...yes. That's how they are, not that we encourage pregnancy, but she is pregnant, her friends support her."

On a different perspective LF1 construed, *"As we are working with learners, I suppose there is always.....I don't want to say bullying, but I'm sure there is some [takes a deep breath] stigma regarding that um... I have been teaching at a different school as well, and I found that our area and our schools specifically, ehh... we are very diverse and so many different cultures and so our learners are quite accepting ehh I think more so than other schools. But obviously they are instances where learners are mean"*.

In a study conducted in Uganda by Undies et al. (2015), participants were in favour of pregnant girls or those who gave birth re-entering new schools, rather than remaining at the ones at which pregnancy occurred. The suggestion was informed by the concerns regarding stigma and discrimination from educators and learners. The concern was that educators and learners can make a girl's life uncomfortable, especially by calling her names. This shows that there is still a lot to do to make sure that pregnant learners are protected against any form of discrimination in schools. Molapo *et al.* (2014) support this by adding that on returning to school, parenting teenagers should be subjected to an integration programme and that educators should be given a proper training in how to work with pregnant teenagers and those who already gave birth to eliminate the prejudice against them.

LFS5 in support to the fact that pregnant learners are discriminated against, said, *"a lot of people will say they don't care and anything but as soon as they move away from that, they'll be talking about you in such a bad manner behind your back. They'll be coming to you and say "nah ...we support and everything" and that's the problem so like yah."*

LM1 added, *"Yah that's what I'm saying, ahh there are learners who will tease other learners and discriminate against them if they get pregnant. They'll always be people who say stuff and I know. Again one or two teachers will also make eh a remark about it eh but yah again others will make positive comment about hhh so yah I think they are definitely treated... I won't say differently but learners will treat them ehh ugly say eh... I know one of the learners said to other learners that she must keep her legs closed. Learners can sometimes be horrible, in the things, the remarks that they make,*

they just say stuff and I don't think they know the big impact they can have on a person, the comments they have".

SF2 focused on what she saw from the society. She sees the society as not being supportive to the pregnant learners. However, she also talks about the influence that the teachers have on non-pregnant learners. She deciphers that educators always encourage non-pregnant learners to be kind and supportive to their fellow learners. It is the right thing to do because, (Jacobs *et al.* 2012) the educator is expected not only to respect and protect the human rights of learners, but also to inculcate in learners a culture of tolerance and respect for other people's human rights.

"Ehh...from the society I can say that sometimes society se ba bona ka tsela yeo ekareng ke bana ba loso. Ketla cho jwalo. Maybe ha ba bafe support kapa ba bua jwang jwang but here at school, re leka ho ruta bana ba rona hore ba lekana ba tshwane kaofela, hahona nix and then we also teach our learners that they must assist us as educators to take care of such learners".

[ehh...from the society, I can say that sometimes society see them as wilds kids. I feel like they don't give them support but, here at school we teach our students that they are not different and that they should assist us by taking care of each other especially those whose who are pregnant], said SF2.

One female learner from school L, LFS8 supported that narrative from SF2 by saying that they should not be quick to judge, as they do not know what will happen to them in the future. This shows maturity of knowing that she likes to treat others the way she would like to be treated, if she was in the same situation.

LM8 added, *"what if that learner was raped? And now we look at her as if she did something wrong."* LMS1 explained how people react in disgust towards a learner who is pregnant, LMS1 stated, *"A lot of people will say they don't care and anything, but as soon as they move away from that they'll be talking about you in such a bad manner behind your back. They'll be coming to you and say "nah ...we support and everything" and that's the problem so like yah."*

LFS8 added that their fellow learners should not dwell on their mistakes, especially when sometimes it is not even their fault that they got pregnant. She said, *"But then,*

but then also sometimes I think the girl should tell herself ... she should make up her mind on how she reacts to the responses people give her, cos not all situations are the same. Some girls get raped and things, so sometimes it's not their fault that they fell pregnant at the young age."

This shows that even students at their age understand that their peers sometime go through a lot of challenges that they cannot control. Moreover, some of those situations involve child abuse and gender-based violence. Unlike in South Africa, where there is not yet a strict law against impregnating a teenager, Undie et al. (2015) discovered that in Tanzania, there is a strict law against impregnating a minor under the age of 18. It is considered statutory rape and carries a harsh prison sentence of up to 30 years. In some countries like Uganda, it is mandatory to disclose if it is a boy or a man responsible for the pregnancy.

SF4 supports the statement made by SF1 that they had never heard anything negative nor seen anything negative from the way educators and fellow learners treat their pregnant counterparts. It appears the different treatment comes from the society, though she further explained that the society and parents are only concerned about certain issues. The society is concerned about their way of life as the community, and the parents on the other side are also worried that their children may be subjected to peer pressure, meaning that they may be tempted to also fall pregnant. As stated by Meda and Makura (2016), some girls get involved in premature sexual activities as a result of surrendering to peer pressure.

She (SF4) elucidated, *"dia fapana di comment tse tswang di community but when coming to teachers and learners, hake soka ke utlwa hoba le a negative whatever kappa a negative treatment. Ehh community ke taba ya di concerns, concerns le taba ya tradition, our norms, our morals and stuff. Batswadi ba concerned hore na how do we deal le bana ba pregnant ka classeng because now... maemong asa tlwaelehang e resa tlwaelang ho sebeta ka ona nako tsohle. And then babang esale batswadi bale concern ka taba ya di morals tsa bona hore na hore jwale ka classing with her tummy and na bana ba bang ba mo sheba jwang le taba ya hore na ba ba dumele hore ba fitisetsa thuto e nngwe baneng ba bang ba bona, ba babang ba bana ba ntse bale banyane so ke... dia fapana di comment tse tswang di community but when coming to*

teachers and learners, hake soka ke utlwa hoba le a negative whatever kapa a negative treatment.”

[comments differ especially from the community. The community is more concerned about the issues such as those relating to tradition, norms and morale. As for the learners and educators, I had never heard any negative comment nor seen any negative treatment. Some parents just like other community members are more concerned about their kids' morals especially of those who are still young and not yet pregnant. They seem worried that those who are pregnant might have negative impact on their kids, and that they are worried that kids may also fall pregnant], says SF4.

Participant LFP1, with so many years' experience as a teacher, explained that in her 32 years has never seen teachers treating a pregnant learner different, but she realised some teachers only got irritated when there is a pregnant learner who becomes an attention seeker like one that they once had at their school. She explained, *“they are aware that they are pregnant and the society does not always get it.”* She continues explaining that the society does not approve it, but at school they try to keep it as calm as possible. She illustrated, *“the child is pregnant and I have to say, the learners in our school, they accept it. I'm sure that they go ... but they never ostracize a learner or heat out at a learner.”*

Participant LFP1 responding to the question about the treatment that pregnant learners get from their fellow learners, educators and the society, had more experience. Based on her teaching experience in Ladybrand, she clearly has more inside information than other teachers do, as many of them were mentored by her. This is evidence that she holds more information. She goes as far as explaining about the first time that they had a pregnant learner in their school.

LFP1 elaborated, *“the first time we had a pregnant learner was in 1996, as you know... the first time, the first time that we had a pregnant learner at the school and the parents wanted to keep it hush, hush, and she was in her final year of exams. You know in the Afrikaans society, ijoh ... [her eyes opens wide]”. LFP1 continued explaining, “if a girl fell pregnant ey... its very bad... but I mean it's been, it has changed a lot. So in 1996, the parents wanted to ask to make her write in a different venue and I say nonsense, we are not going to do that. We have to treat all of them the same.”*

This shows that parents are worried about their kids falling pregnant, because they feel that they are still young, and that they deserve to get educated without any distractions. Educators and learners on the other hand, appear not to have discriminated against the pregnant learners; that is from the view of the educators who have been interviewed responding to the question that was asked about the treatment that pregnant learners get from their fellow learners, educators and the society. Data show that educators are more concerned about the future of all the learners, and because they regard the pregnant learners as more vulnerable, they even encourage other learners to be considerate and compassionate towards the pregnant learners. It is stated under the guiding principles that, “every pregnant learner and those with babies will be protected from all forms of stigma and discrimination” (DBE, 2021:17).

4.2.4. Research question 4: how do you think educators are able to support the needs and interests of pregnant learners?

The Department of Basic Education, through the Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in schools, under the guiding principle 5.9, expects the schools through its principal, educators and other staff members to support the interests of pregnant learners in the education system (DBE, 2021). It is further stated that it is expected that the school ensures retention of pregnant learners during their pregnancy, as well as making provision for their absence during the term of their pregnancy. Educators’ abilities to be able to accommodate learners with different abilities, are considered one of the most important variables (Prasetyo, 2021).

Question 4 was derived from research sub-question 3. The responses from all educators point out to the fact that educators as parents of the learners in real parents’ absence, are always concerned about the progress of learners, especially those already in Grade 12. They worry that pregnancy becomes a barrier to development of such learners, as at some point they must miss school for various reasons relating to pregnancy. The theme that emerged during the discussion relating to the research question 4, that was seeking to find out if educators have got enough skills and resources to help in accommodating the pregnant learners’ basic education, health and maternal needs, was that educators are willing, but they are restricted by not knowing how to. The answers related to the questions under investigation will be further explored under theme 4.2.4.1 Educators are willing, but are not prepared.

4.2.4.1 Educators are willing, but are not prepared

SMP1, when asked if educators are prepared to assist pregnant learners, he responded, *“you know actually, like we’ve got like, the committee that has been appointed dealing with such critical issues. So here we have SBST. So then normally when we establish this committee we just look at the interests of the individual people who will be willing to participate ... yes that are willing to support, and they are going extra mile. But the challenge is they also need to undergo particular training of some sort.”*

This shows that whether teachers are prepared or not, the committee will always be there as it is mandated to deal with pregnancy of teenage girls and other issues, which need attention. SMP1 explained that the committee is selected based on their willingness. Although the committee members are willing, the fear is that they are not trained to take care of pregnant learners, as they are only trained as educators. He further explained, *“what they do is to maybe align themselves with the policy of the school to advice parents and learners accordingly.”*

LFP1 on the other hand responded just like LF1, by saying, *“we treat them like any other learner, we are not going to put her on a spotlight, or on the spot. We have many female teachers, most of our teachers are female teachers, and they know how to treat a pregnant girl. So in other words, if they see something uncomfortable, they know what to do, but no special treatment. They are female, they, most of them have been pregnant before or have children. The only problem is when a pregnant girl act out. We had a girl here...”* A male learner from school L (LMS8) argues that some teachers have had children before. He even believes that some might have also have had kids while still at school, hence he says, *“Ehh maam, some teachers, even though they are disappointed, they don’t ... I feel like they also understand because some might have been in the same situation while they were still growing up.”*

SMP1 agreed that as for a certain support, *“yes they do give them support, which will also add another load of work on them, because they will have to have meetings with the pregnant learner, taking care of this learner and other learners at the same time they also have to attend classes. They always have to be there assisting...they are*

unable to do teaching well at the same time become nurses, you also become like social workers and psychologists...

LF1 added, *“No I think yah..... we don’t have enough knowledge of that, but then again there are so many situations and socio economic issues yah, so I think we dealing with so many ... so much. It is difficult to ... You want to support them but, what about the kid whose mother passed on yesterday and she is back at school so we try to be really.... well I do I try...”*

LM1, a male educator from school L puts across his willingness to help pregnant learners, if only he could receive proper training to help him know how to deal with pregnant learners. *“No. no we are willing to; I think teachers are... most teachers are willing to but... we don’t have that knowledge or training or stuff like that to ... maybe handle that situation with correct attitude.”*

LF2 responded in support to LM1, *“ehh...I don’t really think so, it’s like this inclusive education that we have, if there are 30 learners in the same class and there is a pregnant learner we don’t always know how to handle it. We call other people to come and help us, because it’s difficult to treat everybody different according to their needs, while you have a whole class in front of you that can turn disruptive and so yah, as far as possible we try and treat them the same. But yes if there is ...they fall ill or something like that, then it’s difficult.”*

Educators try to be considerate even though they do not know exactly what to do. They are willing to help pregnant learners, but it is not easy to focus their attention to only the needs of pregnant learners. LF1 was of the opinion that some learners are still dealing with other social issues like coming to school hungry, having a sick parent at home, staying in a child headed home, dealing with drug addiction and other social problems they encounter as different individuals. Therefore, educators also have to consider the feelings and challenges of other learners in the same class with a pregnant learner.

Molapo et al. (2014) suggest that, educators should be given proper training in how to work in an inclusive classroom. Educators receiving appropriate training will be able to employ suitable strategies to be able to conduct lessons in an inclusive classroom

(Morifi, 2018). With appropriate training and suitable education program in place, educators will be able to encourage active participation of all learners, regardless of their different learning abilities.

LF1 explained, *“ehh...in my opinion for my experience, we do try and accommodate them, then also it is, it is unfortunately their choice to fall pregnant. So we do ...we do go a bit of an extra mile, but only to a certain point, ehh for instance, if they have a test that they have to write, it has to be written, otherwise they all have to hand in a doctor’s note. We will not move a test for that one student, but if it is a task that we could do in class, we would accommodate them to do it at a later stage like the oral work yah or project.”*

Round et al. (2016) believe that educators should plan carefully as lack of planning will lead to them not achieving students’ learning objectives. Teaching strategies for inclusive classrooms must be able to accommodate diverse learning needs.

SF4 said, *“ahh mme... you know how difficult it is... Ahh, when coming to male teachers it really because some of them are still young. We now have young educators who some are same age range as some of our learners. At times male educators are not comfortable having pregnant learners in their classes. They complain that the way some pregnant learners seat is infuriating and that sometimes their skirts cover them only to a certain extend. So they ask female educators to assist in talking to pregnant learners, and to advise them on how to conduct themselves when they are in class.”*

SF4 continued, *furthermore, they are worried that the desks seem not to be suitable for pregnant learner to use. They would ask that the female educators arrange the table and a suitable chair. Female educators on the other hand, don’t worry that much, they are a little bit understanding.”*

SF4 stated that, the readiness depends more on the gender. She believes that males react differently from female educators. From the way she said it, it looks just like she is just considering educators’ personal experiences, due to gender and age, and not any kind of training they received. However, the researcher believes it is important that all educators are trained to be able to teach in an inclusive classroom. Linh and Azar (2019) feel that all educators should be prepared to teach in a mainstream classroom. They further explain that inclusive education accommodates all learners and provides

equal opportunities for every learner to learn in the classroom, without differentiating between gender, intelligence, nature, physical and psychological aspects.

When asked if there is anything she can say regarding pregnancy issues in schools or at the area they live in, LF2 pointed out that there is so much pressure placed on educators. Responding to the question she said, *“That’s a difficult question because you know, your personal life is your personal life. If you choose to be pregnant at the age of 16 or 14 or 10 yes I know that some learners are being raped and a lot of social issues or social problems in our town and in our schools and so, ehh... but yah teachers are so caught up in what they do, so they don’t really focus on all the social problems as well. I feel there is other people [sic] that should focus on social problems, we are just focusing on the education and that the learner should progress...”*

She further explained that she feels teachers can do well in their scope of work if only they can be allowed to focus on only teaching and related tasks. Furthermore, that social issues should also be handled by people responsible and capable in that field. The researcher’s viewpoint is that teachers seem to be overwhelmed, they already have a lot to deal with and they also have to deal with having pregnant learners that they are willing to help, but do not know how to help. Palmer, Alexander and Ntsetso (2018) researching about the capability of SMT members working with learners with barriers to learning, found out that SMT members are incapable of a creating a suitable learning environment for learners with barriers to learning. As it was explained by (Salvi ,2018) teenage pregnancy becomes a barrier to pregnant girls, hindering their development and success.

Educators try to accommodate pregnant learners and all the other issues involved, but it becomes just too much for them. The reason is that they were only trained as educators, but are also dealing with health and maternal needs of pregnant learners, because it is a serious concern. Some educators voiced out their concern that the resources in their schools are not meant to accommodate the needs of pregnant learners. An example is that the seating arrangement itself does not make provision for when learners become pregnant. Jacobs *et al.* (2011) believe that there is no classroom seating arrangement that will perfectly suit all activities in classes. The issue of classroom settings goes beyond just learning activities, it involves considering the physical needs of a pregnant learner in terms of seating space. Jacobs *et al.* (2011)

continue to explain that most South African schools still have old fixed furniture. They consider the immovable furniture a limiting factor that requires an educator to be very innovative, but the truth remains that a pregnant learner with a growing stomach will need specific consideration.

The researcher, after examining the responses from both the educators and learners, unearthed that there is a gap that needs to be filled. There is an issue of educators receiving training relating to assisting pregnant learners in schools, as well as making sure that schools have appropriate resources, such as desks and chairs.

The responses that the researcher came across when handling the fifth question, which was aimed at exploring the procedures which schools normally follow when realising that a learner in school is pregnant, were influenced by the context in which the participants were interviewed at, since each school deals with this matter differently. From the responses emerged two themes: 5.2.5.1 Identify and call a learner and parent to discuss the pregnancy condition, 5.2.5.2 Parents must accompany a pregnant learner to school and 5.2.5.3 Let the SBST committee handle the matter as mandated.

SF1, a female teacher from school S, which is situated in the location, pointed out that in their school when they discovered that a teenage girl is pregnant, the first step is to call her to confirm their suspicion, before making any decision. If she confirms it, they then explain the procedure that needs to be followed going forward.

SF1 elucidated, *“We call the learner and ask her if she is pregnant and tell her the conditions about the pregnancy, that she must be accompanied when she comes to school and then she should bring the clinic card and then... (she takes deep breath) yes that’s it.”*

The researcher asked if learners are being made aware that they should go to the clinic. She said *“yes they are made aware. That happens to be one of the conditions as stipulated in the guiding principles of our school.”*

SM1 added, *“ehh normally we identify them, once we identify, we call the parents and then inform the parent about that and then the parent will... when time goes then they will arrange what to do.”*

He further explained that, personally he cannot identify a pregnant learner, but there are some teachers who can differentiate between the pregnant and non-pregnant adolescents. That may be since those teachers are females; therefore, they are better experienced when coming to female matters. He also stipulated the importance of parents disclosing their girls' pregnancy status to the school, and that the school makes sure that they talk to parents about the matter during parents' meetings. This means that parents are informed of what should happen in case a schoolgirl gets pregnant.

SM1 stated, *“In most cases...but on my side is difficult to identify, but most of female teachers they [sic] can tell you. But we encourage them to let us know even we... also during parents meeting we tell them to inform the school if they find out that the child is pregnant. But because they are the teenagers I have been told that sometimes they don't... they are not aware they are pregnant unless they have been... a teacher can identify them and say “wena, there is something with you... Mmm.”* However, is this not considered a violation of a pregnant learner's right to privacy, because it was made clear that if the learner did not give consent or parents did not report the pregnancy at school (DBE 2021), whoever does it might be acting unlawfully.

The statement made by SM1 is supported by the female colleague (SF4) in the same school who explained that she is one of the teachers that are gifted at recognising students who are pregnant. She indicated that in most cases when she suspected that a girl learner is pregnant, she would be correct, though she would discover that the pregnancy is already at a late stage of five to seven months. This is what she said, *“Ke na le leihlo la ho bona bana ba pregnant ... kore that what God gave me. Etlaba nna ke tlabe ke ba jwetsa learner no 5 mang mang ka block 5 leke le mo shebe...e ene ka nnete otlaba le bo ma 5 months / 7 months.”* [I have an eye for recognising the pregnant girls, that's what I'm gifted on. I always tell other teachers about learners I suspect is pregnant, and in most cases it is indeed true however, I notice that when I do discover it's sometimes as late as 5 or 7 months.]

It is surprising how the issue of pregnancy is somehow handled by the parents. Parents of the pregnant learners seem not to be cooperating with the school as expected. As mentioned earlier, parents are expected to report the pregnancy cases to the school management so that the school can take appropriate measures. For unknown reasons though, parents never inform the school. Some respondents believe that sometimes it is since parents are also not aware. However, other educators believe that sometimes, it is due to negligence and ignorance from parents. Alternatively, sometimes parents are intentionally hiding information, because they want their kids to continue going to school like normal, hence SMP1 opined that parents are being difficult unnecessarily.

SF4 further explained, *“E mong haba mobitsa ba mmotsa otlare, “e ke mme waka o naitse hale soka lere letho kenne ketle skolong,” until ha re tsebe neng. So ha ngwana ya jwalo a identifauwe e seya ho komiti ya SBST. Komiti ya SBST e bitsa ngwana, and then ngwana... E mong o tla hana ebe nyaneneng ba kopa hore motswadi a tle. Jwale ba se ba tsamaya ka procedure. Motswadi a fihle, ba re, “mme o tseba maemo?” e mong a re eya, e mong a re onaso hlokomele. E mong tjhe o tla bua ka tsela ya buang ka yona. So haesele confirmed hore ngwana o pregnant skolo se kopa file yahae ya cliniking hore ho shejwe na ontsa tsamaya jwang ebe nthwe confirmed. Ba etsa copy e tsamayang le file ya ngwana.*

[one learner when asked why she didn't tell teachers about her pregnancy situation, she'll tell teachers that her mother told her to let it lie low, and continue going to school for as long as the teachers are not aware. In addition to SF4's information about parents deliberately hiding their daughters' pregnancy status, SMP1 explained, “the department policies will be saying what is says, but they want to come up with something that is outside of the policy.”

SF4 continued explaining the procedure that is followed when the learner gets pregnant while still studying, *“So when the SBST has identified such a learner, they'll call the learner and then ... at times other learner will deny that she is pregnant. The parent will then be summoned to school. That's the procedure. At different circumstances parents will respond differently. One will say she knows, the other one will say that she was not aware, while the other one might respond just the way she chooses to. If it has been confirmed that the teenager is pregnant, the school would ask her to bring her clinic file so that they note all that is necessary to know. They would then make a copy that would be linked to her school file.”*

“E tlameile ebe hona le motho ya mo tlelang on daily basis. Ha hona le di extra class ele le grade 12. Motho yeo odula ho fihlela ka nako yeno. Ka break ha baya dining hall, motho yenwa ke yenwa pela dining hall. So eseba di arrangement tse etswang ke SBST le motswadi ho so sa kene the entire staff. E seba taba ya komiti eno le motswadi le ngwana. Ke tsona procedure tse etsahalang. Motswadi o tla bitswa a dulelwe fatshe e tsebahale. E mong motswadi che o bontshwa hore yena wa sebetsa ha hona motho yatla tlela ngwana, a ba kopa komiti le skolo ba lokolle ngwana a tsebe hoya hae a qete, o tlatla the following year. Eba noted because nako ye ya admission committee e sebetsang ka yona ka nako ya ha selemo se fela, ha ngwana a fihla ho tlameuwe ho uwe back to SBST hore wa kgutlela selemong se tlang? Ke tsona procedure.”

[The procedure followed at our school is that, they should be someone that accompanies her to school every morning. If a learner is a grade 12 learner, and she is supposed to attend extra classes, that person must stay until the classes are over. When they go to the dining hall during break session, that person is always by her sight. So this matter becomes now between only the three parties (SBST committee, parent and learner). The parent will be called and there will be a clear discussion as to what is expected of them. One parent will explain that she is working therefore, it won't be easy for her to come to school to accompany her daughter, as a result she will suggest that the learner will have to stay home until she feels fit enough to come back to school (which might be the following year). Then it will be noted by the admission committee, which only handle the matter when the year ends. Then when she comes back after giving birth they'd go back to the SBST file to confirm that it was note that she'd come back the following year. That is the procedure.]”

LM1 appeared not to know anything concerning the policy guidelines, which needs to be considered when dealing with pregnant teenagers in schools. He explained how he would deal with handling the matter related to pregnant learners. His statement holds a sense of compassion and support that he gives to his learners who are pregnant. LM1 clarified, *“Ohh I would speak to them and first of all find out if she is all alone in this or if the father is part of it, because most of the time the father disappears. They'll leave town or they don't want anything to do with her anymore, so the first thing is to find out if she has a support base (is the father there? Is the grandmother willing to help?) available or she is on her own now and then...”*

He continued, *“If she is on her own, we will sort things out about how we as teachers not necessarily for us as school but, a few individual teachers can assess and help her out ehh... The next step I’ll try to take is to also motivate them saying maybe you didn’t expect it to happen in your life now and maybe it’s going to make your life a bit difficult now but I think you know... everyone can be a mother, if it happens to you, embrace it, not to see it as a negative thing that happened realising that you now actual have someone’s life in your hands and you can have...”*

LFP1 supported the statement made by a male teacher from the same school by saying, *“so we embrace them. It’s a child so we cannot throw them in throw them into the adult world. Even though they I think they do know they are the course of their own situation.”* She added in the same perspective, *“but you know what, it is what it is in that life. So it happens and we can’t say that it will not happen to my own kids. So we really embrace them, and most of the time they work with us.”*

The positivity in her voice said a lot in non-spoken words. The researcher has a feeling that the relationship between the principal and students in that school is like that of a mother and her own kids, not overlooking the educators. Their tone of voice when talking about their students says a lot about the way their students behave. The reason for saying this is that even when a rebellious child is in trouble, a parent gives her as much support as needed. In the process of trying to discipline such a child, a parent will keep on showing her the right direction so that she does not get lost for good.

LFP1 gave her own perspective as to what they do; the procedure that they normally follow when they find out that the learner in their school is pregnant. LFP1 reported, *“we deal with it immediately. We call the child and say, we are aware of the situation, okay. She continued explaining, “this is now what we are going to do, especially with reference to the Grade 12 learners. There is a lot of paperwork that goes into... when a learner, when a learner misses something because a pregnancy or having given labour or whatever. There are a lot of forms that we need to fill in and submit to the Department of Education. So we encourage the learners to be back to school as soon as possible. If she is well, if the baby is well, so that we can cover all the gaps. So they know exactly what to do.”*

To add on LFP1's perspective, SMP1 explained that he knows what the policy says about learners coming back to school immediately after giving birth to catch up on the work missed. However, he sounded very emotional and said, *"the other disturbing issue is the issue of maternity, normally like now, the maternity like professionals you know that we are having the maternity leave whereby now a colleague who is pregnant stays home for four months. But these learners you find like now, they only like two days and they come back to school."*

SMP1 explained further, *"so like now as a leader you ask yourself a question, like now is this learner fit to come back to school?"* He further explained that they need them to bring the doctor's medical certificate to attest that the learner is free to go back to school. However, he explained that in most cases when they do, they are not comfortable, they are not relaxed, and something is not well. SMP1 expressed his feeling, *"it is also affecting me indirectly, you find that a child needs support, but question is what support will we give this learner? because parents have decided now that the child must come back to school. So it becomes now beyond your power as a principal of the school. Because I have to adhere to the policies of SASA, so we're just guided by those policies. He goes on asking, "if parents have decided then, who am I, what should I do?"*

SMP1 from the school S clarified the procedure even more thoroughly. He says that according to the policy they are not supposed to chase the pregnant girls out of the school, but rather they have to come up with some support measures. He clarified, *"clearly the support measure is a joined venture that requires parental involvement."* He explained that parents have to avail themselves every day to support the learner so that in case there is an emergency, they can work together to see how they can both assist each other in that regard. The parent in school S was given options. SFP1 pointed out the available option, *"like now that was first option SMP1 said, whereby now the parent has to come to school every day accompanying the learner. When the learner must go to the exam room, the parent must also be around in case there is an emergency we are able to act immediately."*

SMP1 further explained, *"second option is that the parent can be advised that the learner can just stay at home so that the following year she can return back to school maybe like now, to finish maybe the grade that the learner is in."* He went on explaining

that most of the time, the parent takes this option of accompanying the learner to school. This shows that learners in school S are getting support from their parents to make sure that learners continue with their education. As mentioned by Morifi (2018) and Panday et al. (2009), pregnancy in most cases happens to teenage girls in poor and struggling small towns or villages. Jacobs et al. (2011) add that teenage pregnancy is strongly related to poor school performance, poverty, lack of parental control, family disintegration and inadequate sex education. That tends to become a vicious cycle, because parents are already struggling to even take care of the kids that they already have. Those who avail themselves are in most cases unemployed, hence they will be available to attend school with the pregnant learner.

SMP1 further explained, *“that becomes more of a challenge where you find that a parent is not even working, she survives by social [sic]. So a child having a child is going to make things worse, because now the parent has a doubled responsibility or burden, taking care of both a young mother and her baby.”*

LFP1 supported SMP1 on the issue of support, though in their school the matter is handled differently. In their school, they let the learner handle the matter without a parent’s assistance at school although they still follow up on what the learner’s home situation is like. They determine whether it is a supportive situation or do they need to intervene in making sure that the learner continues with her studies as expected. LFP1 indicated that there is no exclusion, *“you know like I said we do not ostracize or anything, we handle them as if they are just another learner at school. We keep a close contact with them to know if there is anything we can help with not only scholastically, but also at the social and socio-economic level”*.

Unlike the two teachers and (SF4 and LM1) LF1, LF2 and SF4s’, their responses take a different turn in that in their experiences the matter is normally handled differently. Instead of calling the learner whom they suspect is pregnant, they let the team (SBST) responsible in dealing with pregnancies in school, handle the matter.

MS1 explained, *“the school by the School Based Support Team is here as well. They also know regarding the marks, the minus one that is written on a computer to indicate an absent mark, but then we have all the evidence, so they need not be unsure about that.”* The way the pregnancy of girl learners is dealt with, indicates that at least the

learners know, even though it shows that only those that are already pregnant are made aware of it. Therefore, it is possible that when other learners claim not to know anything, the possibility is that it is true as learners when asked about the policy, indicated that they are not aware. Although they claim not to know anything about the policy, they know what procedures are followed when a girl is pregnant at her particular school.

LF1 indicated, *“me personally? According to me, the procedure we follow is, I go to my fellow colleague that is in charge with that so that she will be the person I inform and then she normally contacts the parents if they are aware of this...and then she deals with the learner specifically and further that it continues as normal, so this one educator will be aware of the circumstances say morning sickness that keeps her away from school for a long time. She might inform us ehh...but other than that it’s normally just ... this one colleague the person who is aware that deals with that fact of a learner.”*

LF2 went further to express her experiences in support to LF1’s statement, *“Yah err... sure, learners don’t inform I think the class teachers, learners inform the school, and the school doesn’t really tell the person that the learner is pregnant or what. I think err... [takes deep breath] ehh we just treat them the same whether that... we don’t know whether they are pregnant. You know we don’t know whether a learner is smoking dagga or not smoking dagga, because it’s not hanging on, we don’t hang it on a big, I mean... But yah the committee that works with that knows that, yes.”*

She had a different perspective, though she also agreed with the information from the previous participant (LF2) and still explained that it is the responsibility of the SBST. It sometimes still becomes difficult for that even the SBST members to identify those teenage school girls who are pregnant. At some point, it was discovered that both the pregnant girl and her mother knew, but they decided to hide it from the school, and that makes it difficult for the SBST to follow the right procedure or take appropriate measures as per their specific school code of conduct. What makes it even more difficult is the fact that there is already a huge number of learners at a public school, especially girl learners.

SF4, responding to the question about what procedure is followed when a girl is discovered to be pregnant, said, *“Ok mme ahh... ka nako enngwe komiti kabo yona*

hae soka e bona ngwana, ba bangata hakere! Hae soka e bonahala, motswadi e mong owa thola...kore batswadi ba re etsetsa lonya la hore a thole ka ngwana ho fihlela ngwana a ba be le ngwana. Ontsa tla skolong, o tla nyamela few days feela haa kgutla retla utlwa hore o na le ngwana.” [Ok mme ahh...sometimes it becomes difficult for the committee as well to identify the pregnant learners. It is therefore the responsibility of a parent to inform the school if their child is pregnant, though Some parents deliberately hide the pregnancy from the school management. At times they hide it to the level where a teenage girl gives birth. If a teenage girl becomes pregnant during winter season. It becomes easier for them to hide under massive jerseys and jackets. You will then hear from their fellow learners that the learner has a child as she gave birth during the weekend.]

4.3. Research Findings

From the interviews with learners, educators and principals, the researcher uncovered four themes – 1. concealed pregnancies, 2. Policies are summarised and incorporated into other documents, 3. Bullying and discrimination against pregnant learners, 4. Educators willing but not prepared,

4.3.1. Concealed pregnancies

The results revealed that there have been reported cases of pregnancy among teenage school girls in Ladybrand schools. The principals from both schools indicated that there had been cases of pregnancy among school girls. However, they both pointed out that it is difficult to identify such learners, because learners hide the pregnancy, especially at an early stage. Although each school has its own ways of dealing with issues such as pregnancy, it is evident that they are both guided by the guiding principles found on the Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in schools. DOE (2021:9) provides clear information on the importance of the policy that guides how to reduce unintended pregnancies, manage its pre and post-natal consequences, try to limit stigma and discrimination experienced by pregnant adolescents, and to reserve and re-enroll affected learners back in schools. As stated (Swearer & Hymel, 2015:506), “school contexts are important contributing factors to environments that either foster or inhibit bullying and discrimination behaviours.”

It also shows that the school principals, as well as educators are sensitive towards compliance with the guidelines provided by the DBE’s Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy, (DBE 2021) which is referred to as the Policy.

Referring from the data gathered from the interviews with educators (PL1, HODs and Principals), it was discovered that the participants were aware that learners should not be deprived of the opportunity to continue studying while pregnant.

The only difference is the way it is done in both schools; in school S the learner is allowed to continue studying, but the parent, especially the mother must accompany the pregnant girl learner to school on a daily basis from the time when her pregnancy status has been discovered. Whereas in the school L learners are allowed to continue going to school just as they used to. LFP1 explained that they allow the student to be herself until such time that she feels she can no longer manage to attend classes, and that is when they release the learner. She explained that they do not abandon the learner; they rather keep a close eye on her, just in case she needs careful attention. However, she would not be treated differently.

The Policy under 6.1.6, which talks about elimination of discrimination and abuse, indicates that, “no educator, school staff member or fellow learners may discriminate against, humiliate and abuse a learner physically, emotionally or psychologically based on pregnancy or post pregnancy status” (RSA DBE: 2021). Section 29 (1) (a) of the Republic of SA Constitution (108 of 1996) also points out that everyone has a right to basic education. This does not leave anyone out, whether pregnant or not. Section (9) points out that everyone has the right to be protected against unfair discrimination. Hence, all educators from both schools indicated that they would not deny any pregnant learner an opportunity to continue studying during and post pregnancy, because that will be a violation of her rights to education. It is also important to refer to The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 as it also speaks against the discrimination of girls in schools on the basis of pregnancy (DOE 2007).

Both the educators and principals posit that in both the present and previous cases that they had experienced learner pregnancies, there was not even a single girl who volunteered to tell the educators or the principals about their pregnancy status. In most cases, teachers would hear it from other learners or from an educator who is gifted at identifying pregnancy of women at an early stage. The pregnancies in most cases, are hidden and that makes it difficult to identify. Matshotyana (2010) believes that the adolescent girls sometimes hide their pregnancy status, due to pressure coming from their parents. She explains that some parents would force the pregnant girl to leave

home, as they would be embarrassed to have their daughter pregnant at that young age. The students hide it so well that by time when teachers notice, it is already at a late stage of five to seven months.

This clearly indicates that it is difficult for the educators and other stakeholders to offer the necessary support to pregnant learners if a pregnant girl decides not to disclose her pregnancy status to educators. Even in most cases, it is their peers, who are reported to be the ones who inform the educators about the status of their fellow learners, who are pregnant. It is wrong and regarded a violation of pregnant learners' right to dignity, privacy and confidentiality, because the pregnant girl did not give a consent to it. (As stipulated on the guiding principle, Table 1) that the Policy is aimed at ensuring that the rights of every pregnant learner to protection of their dignity, privacy and confidentiality, regarding their pregnancy and related health in their basic education, are fulfilled (DBE, 2019). It states that no person is allowed to disclose information relating to a pregnant learner without their consent.

The issue of reporting has to be given a serious consideration, hence it is recommended that either the guiding principles be revised or that the right platform created or formed, whereby pregnant girls will be free to open up and discuss matters relating to their pregnancy status. Alternatively, the establishment of an office is recommended that will be occupied by a selected member of the SBST, who will be selected based on certain criteria; firstly, age appropriate (peer), as we are aware that the pregnant teenagers are able to open up to their peers. Secondly, that the age appropriate member of the SBST has to be someone friendly, who also practices an open door policy as the intention will be to assist in redressing the issue of miscommunication that exists between educators and pregnant girls, and to enhance trust (Guy-Evans, 2020). An establishment of peer educators in schools seems to be more appropriate, because youth interacts better with their peers than older people, and for the fact that they are a microsystem having a direct influence with a learner in her immediate environment. Hence, the American Psychology Association (2019) describes peer education as a promising approach by the health department agency in its review of effective intervention, regarding teenage pregnancy.

It is regarded a responsibility of the parent to inform educators or the school when their child is pregnant, due to certain procedures, which need to be followed. Amongst the

procedures, one that is most important, is that a pregnant learner will be asked to bring a clinic card so that they can link it to the learner's file at school. The issue of a clinic card is applied to both students from school S and school L. However, learning from data collected in school S, teachers explain that pregnant learners are also expected to be accompanied by their parents, in case the pregnant learner experiences challenges relating to pregnancy. Matshotyana (2010:18) recommends that the family of the pregnant girl intervenes and provides support if the pregnant girl encounters a problem during pregnancy.

Educators in school S fear that they will not be able to assist a learner if anything happens that either might be caused by her pregnancy status or that causes a threat to the unborn child. Reddy, Sewpaul and Jonas (2016) state that teenage pregnancy is not just common in South Africa, but it also carries a great deal of high risk for both a teenage mother and the child, with an established infant Maternal Mortality Rate (iMMR) of 97.7 deaths per 100 000 live births among South African teenagers in 2011 – 2012. Educators are afraid that if something happens to the pregnant teenage girl or her unborn baby, the school will be held accountable. That is why it is advisable to have a parent at the school to assist her. The DoE (2007) suggests that, "the guiding principles must therefore be an appropriate response in order to safeguard the educational interests of the learner and each situation should be assessed and evaluated on a regular basis".

The clinic card helps to identify the stage at which a learner is. The member of SBST, who is responsible for the pregnant learner and everything that happens to her is followed, still considering the guiding principles that (DBE, 2019) talks about the dignity and constitutional rights of every learner, pregnant or not, that should not be prejudiced against, including rights to education, equality and privacy. Data revealed that parental involvement is needed more in an instance where a learner gets pregnant while still at school. It has been discovered that parents do support their pregnant children, especially in school S where the parents are expected to accompany the learner to school.

To my surprise, the SASA Act 84 of 1996, points to a different perspective of parental involvement. It states that parents' obligation is to see to it that they send their children to school as soon as they turn four and half. This portrays a contradiction to the

practices found in school S and compared to what is found in the literature. The issue of compliance has to be taken into consideration, or maybe the gap in the literature, whereby it has to be specified that pregnant learners have to be accompanied by parents on a daily basis, and that it has to be specific as to how it should be carried out.

SMP1 postulated that parents have to accompany their pregnant girls to school on a daily basis from the time the girl was discovered to be pregnant. However, that has to be communicated with parents as to what should happen and how that will be handled going forward. The school however, sometimes gets disappointed where parents encourage their pregnant girls to hide their pregnancy status, because they want their children to continue attending school as normal. They also pointed out that in some instances parents are also in the dark about their young girl being pregnant.

LFP explained that in their school, they treat the pregnancy cases as normal as possible, because they do not want to give them special attention on the expense of other learners. Whereas the principal from school S indicated that they need to have parents present so that they can work together towards making sure that a learner has support from both educators and parents. He referred to that as a joined venture, whereby educators and parents both have to be available in case there is an emergency. The SASA Act of 1996 defines a parent as a person legally entitled to custody of a learner or a person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of parent or guardian of a learner towards the learners' education at school. Amongst the obligations of parents to school, as stipulated by the SASA Act of 1996, there is nowhere stated that a parent should accompany the child to school under any circumstance. Hence, the act of *in loco parentis* that is entitled to an educator.

It sounds so unusual to discover that the parents at school S are expected to attend school by accompanying their pregnant girls, and that instead of working as a supporting stimulus, it becomes a burden to the school system. Parental involvement should uplift teachers (Maluleke, 2014), but the principal from school S is worried that parents of pregnant learners, who are spending so much time at school, invades the privacy that the school have, as well as compromising other learners' right to privacy.

On the other hand, some learners explained that if it was up to them, they would advise that the girl stays at home for the duration of their pregnancy and come back to repeat that grade the following year. They further explained that it is not because they are discriminating against pregnant girls. It is because they believe that pregnancy brings so much pressure on the pregnant girls, which also becomes a barrier to learning and development of such a learner and that it also becomes a distraction to others. They are also of the view that pregnancy becomes a burden to the parents as well, because parents have to leave everything they are doing at home and start accompanying the pregnant girl to school on a daily basis.

Ladybrand is one of the underprivileged communities in the Free State Province. According to DOE (1997:12), learners from families where one or more of the breadwinners are unemployed or poorly paid, are already likely to leave school early, in order to work and supplement the family income. Therefore, the learner from this kind of a social status getting pregnant, adds more to poverty and underdevelopment.

The principals and educators also mentioned the fact that some parents in Ladybrand are already struggling to even take care of the teenage girl alone, so her being pregnant means that parents are going to have double responsibility and which becomes a burden. It has been reported (DBE 1997:12) that “the most obvious result of poverty, often caused by unemployment and other economic inequalities, is the inability of families to meet the basic needs.” It clearly shows that the changing economic status of such a place is difficult to fulfil, because the future of every community to build a stronger generation and a brighter future, depends mostly on the youth.

Although teenage pregnancy may be seen as a temporary barrier to learning and development, it is likely to cause permanent damage, both emotionally and physically. Consequences of learner pregnancy may even escalate to affect future endeavors of the baby born from a young mother. It is therefore recommended that a number of strategies be deployed to prevent such barriers from causing learning breakdown or excluding learners from the system (DBE, 1997:11).

The principal from school S raised a concern of him being a male makes it difficult to know how it feels to be pregnant, although he noticed that it becomes difficult for

learners to go back to school immediately after giving birth. He suspects that the learners do not heal completely before coming back to school. He voiced his concern that learners come back to school as soon as they have given birth. His worry was that female educators spend four months on maternity leave when they are pregnant, but teenage girls as young and vulnerable as them, are recommended to come back to school soon after having a baby. This shows that even though he is concerned with the educational achievement of such a child, he is more concerned of the health status of such a learner. WHO (2019) believes that it is important to improve maternal health through identifying and addressing barriers that limit availability and access to quality maternal health services at all levels of the health system.

SMP1 is of the opinion that if the law requires women to be given four months' maternity leave, pregnant learners should also be given enough time to heal, and to make sure that they have done all that has to be done to know that their children will be taken care of before going back to school. The principal mentioned that if it were in his power, he would not allow the young mother to come back to school immediately after birth. However, as he said the Policy stipulates that learners should come back to school soon after giving birth to finish the grade they left before they completed it (DBE, 2021).

The concern from the principal should clearly be given serious consideration. This got me thinking as to what is really the reason behind pregnant women being given a certain period off work and other activities to focus on their pregnancy status. The compassion from the male principal's voice shows how concerned he was regarding a girl coming back to school so soon as she may need more time to heal. The question arising from this will be, what is the use of her coming back to school if she is not coping? That will clearly affect them both physically and emotionally and end up becoming a barrier to their progress and success.

4.3.2. Policies are summarised and incorporated into other documents

When asked about the Policy or the guiding principles, some educators mentioned that they know there is a policy and believe that copies are in the SBST file in each school. They further explained that it is because the SBST is the team that deals directly with pregnancy of learners in schools. Educators believe that teaching and learning should continue as normal, whether there are pregnant or non-pregnant learners concerned,

because there are other learners besides the pregnant ones who also need to be considered, and that their rights to education should also not be violated against. Principals on the other hand, clarified that policies are indeed available and are discussed with educators, parents and learners. This point however raised a concern to the researcher, and adds a question of who to believe, because educators mentioned not to have been exposed to the pregnancy policy. Whereas, principals claim to be discussing the policies with educators, parents and learners. Learners also deny the claim that they have been included in the discussion, regarding them becoming pregnant while still studying.

Trying to understand the information better from the data collected during the interviews, it appeared that those policies, when discussed with educators, are just summarised and incorporated into other policies and are sometimes included in the staff guide. With parents, they are discussed during parents' meetings, whereas with learners, policies are discussed more with those that are already pregnant. Principals claim that the policies are discussed with the intention of informing teachers about what is expected of them in case there are learners who get pregnant. It is reported that teachers are made aware of who to consult if there is a pregnancy related matter that needs attention. I discovered that in both schools, the matters relating to pregnancy of girls in schools, have to be reported to the SBST. Schools established school-based support teams to respond to health and other barriers faced by vulnerable children, as encouraged by the National School Health Policy and Implementation Guidelines (DoH, 2002).

Information provided by principals stipulates that parents and learners are also made aware of their responsibilities during and post pregnancy. However, non-pregnant learners claim not to know anything about the pregnancy policy or its guidelines, they are aware that some learners, namely their peers, become pregnant, and that there are procedures followed like calling their parents. Moreover, non-pregnant learners are aware that such learners are never expelled from school; and they seem to not know what informs such procedures. Students at school L said that they just knew that students should keep going to school, because they should not be denied the opportunity to study.

Students from school S experienced it differently. They only know that the pregnant girls continue attending classes even if they are pregnant, but the difference is that they are accompanied by their parents to school every day. They just seemed concerned that they are no longer free, as they sometimes find themselves being overcrowded by parents, who spend time seated by the doorway of the classrooms. Non-pregnant learners complained of being burdened by such acts. They explained that they do not feel good seeing parents coming to school every day, as if they are also part of them, and that parents in the process suffer as they were supposed to be focusing on their own lives.

When asked about how pregnant learners are treated by the educators, the community and fellow learners, learners explained that parents and teachers get disappointed at pregnant learners, because they expected to see every learner succeeding in life. Most non-pregnant learners explained that they feel it is better that pregnant learners are advised to stay at home during pregnancy until after the baby is born. They explained that it is because they felt that pregnancy itself becomes just too much for them and their young bodies. Most learners explained that they would not treat pregnant learners badly, because they know that they still have rights to education and that they should be respected (RSA, 1997).

Both students and educators mentioned the fact that they cannot judge those who are pregnant, as they do not know the circumstance under which those girls fell pregnant. They mentioned the fact that some students may have been raped or molested, and that if they judge them, they would be putting a lot of pressure on the pregnant girls. A female teacher from school S mentioned that they advised other learners not to discriminate against their fellow pregnant learners, and that they should be kind to them and help them where needed. As indicated in the literature on the Bill of Rights 1996, the Policy is put in place to prohibit discrimination in education (Runhare & Vandeyar, 2011). This shows that though the non-pregnant learners claimed not to be aware of the policy and its guiding principles, they are nonetheless compassionate towards their fellow pregnant learners and the way they should be treated.

The impression I had before conducting the research, regarding the bullying of pregnant learners, was that they would be bullied by their peers more than other community members, but this shows even though many studies indicate that bullying

is indeed a problem, it is a totally different case with Ladybrand schools, hence Hymel and Swearer (2015) believe that some environments may be more conducive to bullying than others. However, the researcher finds it surprising that discrimination in that context is found to be more dominant among the community members than among adolescents themselves, because Graig and Pepler (cited by Swearer & Hymel 2015) stated that bullying had long been identified as a peer-group phenomenon.

4.3.3. Bullying and discrimination

Educators stipulated that society does not tolerate pregnancy of teenage girls as much as they do. The community look at this matter from a different perspective. They explained that the society views the pregnant girls as “loose”. Parents as part of the community, at some point, get worried that their kids, who they belief are still under control, get exposed to immoral behaviour that might impact them negatively. The LFP1 added that some parents from the society believe that other young girls end up falling pregnant, because one senior learner, who happened to be her role model, fell pregnant. Parents believe that to non-pregnant learners, pregnancy appears to be a cool act. I believe that it is easy for the young girls to imitate what their role models do.

All the stakeholders mentioned there are important systems found to be interacting directly with the growing child. The expectation was that learners, educators and the society would protect the learners from all the possible factors that may contribute to the learners falling pregnant. The theoretical framework from Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), lays a foundation that all the stakeholders interacting directly with the growing child, are expected to positively contribute to the development of a child (Shelton, 2018). The society is concerned about the growing number of girls getting pregnant in Ladybrand schools; they should consult with educators to find way to solve the problem. Guy-Evans (2020) believes if a child’s parents communicate with the child’s teachers, this interaction may influence the child’s development. Essentially, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems. According to the ecological systems theory, if the child’s parents and teachers get along and have a good relationship, this should have positive effects on the child’s development, compared to negative effects on development if the teachers and parents do not get along. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers (Ryan, 2001).

Vocabulary.com defines a role model as someone worth of imitation, someone others look up to as a good example, and that person is said to be representing an inspirational ideal, as well as someone who inspires others to imitate their good behaviour. If that particular someone behaves badly, he / she is considered a negative or bad role model, which is exactly what parents fear, because young girls will not be able to judge or differentiate the bad from the good behaviour. Hence, I get worried when I come across a section in the Policy that a young girl as young as 12 years of age is expected to make an informed decision about her future health and future prospects (DBE, 2021). I feel like the Policy must be reviewed, focusing more on the age, because learners at this age are still too young and confused to even know who they are. That is why Eric Erickson's theory of personality development defines the adolescent stage as the identity versus role confusion (Maree, 2022).

Educators mentioned that they tried too hard to persuade the learners to focus more on their education prospects, as they can still have fun after completing their studies, and that they will still manage to have fun and do whatever they want, including having kids. They further explained that as their initial purpose of being in school is teaching and learning, they always try to help learners obtain good marks and become good citizens. They would teach each learner the same way they do others, to make sure that teaching and learning run smoothly. It is only in a case where learners are engaged in strenuous physical activities, when they are given priority. They are therefore not allowed to get physically involved.

Educators claim that they could only help to a certain extend though, but where the handling goes beyond teaching and learning, they report or refer pregnant learners to SBST members as they are the ones responsible for handling such matters. However, the SBST members are also selected on voluntary bases. They are selected from a group of educators who are willing. A male HOD school S explained that members of SBST is selected from a group of educators who have only been trained as educators and not nurses, psychologists and counsellors. Educators believe that they go beyond their call of duty to see that pregnant learners are assisted, if they do need help. Educators and principals said that working with pregnant learners is very overwhelming, and maybe it is because they are not trained to work in that field. Educators all explained that they are always willing to help, although they are not prepared and therefore lack adequate skills to work with pregnant learners.

That becomes especially difficult to male educators, because they do not have the experience, even on a personal level. One male educator then shared his experience that he thought could have assisted better, had he known how to act or what to expect in a case where he has a pregnant learner in his class. This is what LM1 said when asked if he has knowledge of the pregnancy policy guidelines, *“I think we should maybe know; we should have it in our file. So if something happens to a girl you know, maybe she is pregnant, she is sitting in my class, she is asking to go the bathroom the whole time because she is nauseous. I don’t know that she’s pregnant and I get angry because I think she wants to walk around the whole time but, actually she is pregnant. It will be good if we have something like that, so we can just if something happens so we can see how we can act just like a guideline.*

An educator from school L, who is an HOD and a member of SBST however, explained that she does not expect female educators not to know how to deal with pregnant learners, because most of the teachers are females and she expects them to know how pregnant learners are handled. She further explained that the possibility is that they have been pregnant before or have kids that they are raising. On the same perspective, learners mentioned that some educators might have also had kids at a young age, so they expect them to be able to support pregnant girls to proceed and succeed in life.

Molefe (2015) explains that it is stated in the Education Policy Act, no. 27 of 1997 (RSA, 1996b) that one of the roles of an educator is being a community leader, a citizen and pastoral care giver. Hence, educators are expected to offer the support no matter the circumstances. It is about the value and well-being of all learners (Armstrong, Armstrong & Barton, 2016) and to understand it better, the most important issues considered to be at the heart of inclusive education are human rights, equal opportunities and social justice.

As stated by DBE (2021:10), this policy affirms the right of a pregnant learner to remain in school during her pregnancy and to return to school as soon as possible after giving birth, as is appropriate for both the learner and her child. Participant SM1 became very emotional when he talked of his experience of having parenting teenagers returning to school soon after giving birth. His concern was that he feels the students come back

to school not ready and not fully recovered. His concern was that the time given to his pregnant colleagues to stay at home (maternity leave) to recover from pregnancy complications or to take care of issues concerning pre and post-natal matters is an average of four months. Therefore, my take in this matter is that the Department of Health has a legal liability to set aside four months for women to spend as a maternity leave. I therefore think that the issue of learners going back to school immediately after giving birth has to be investigated further.

Opinions of some learners from both schools, are that pregnant girls should be encouraged to stay home and come back to school the following year, was said in so many different ways. Most of the non-pregnant learners said that they feel that the teenagers are still too young to be bearing the burden of being pregnant, and as a result they feel it is better for her to be at home where she will be able to get immediate assistance if it happens that she gets complications. Their concern was more on the fact that they feel their bodies as teenagers are still immature to carry a baby, so staying at home for the duration of the pregnancy seemed a reasonable suggestion to them.

Their argument is supported by Eggen and Kauchak (2016) who argue that, even though physical development during adolescence causes the impression that adolescents are physically mature, they are physically and emotionally not ready for huge responsibilities. Although Pregnancy could be regarded as the period of well-being and a joyful phase in a female's life Carrying a child at a young age is a huge responsibility filled with many frustrations (Abedian, Soltani, Mokhber & Esmaily, 2015). Delahaije, Dirksen, Peeters and Smits (2013) explain that, Anxiety and depression are common disorders in pregnancy and postpartum, and the psychological changes negatively influence both mother and fetus. They further explain that women can experience disabling conditions during and after their pregnancy. Nasreen, Kabir, Forsell, and Edhborg, (2011) believe depression becomes severe during the third trimester and can continue in the postpartum period

However, one female learner at school L raised a point for discussion by her peers where she suggested that they discuss the issue of abortion as the solution to avert distraction from the pregnant teenagers. She said that she considers pregnancy at that age a mistake encountered, due to disturbed hormones, and that if the young pregnant

girl should undergo an abortion, she will be able to carry on with her studies. The issue of abortion became a very critical topic of discussion that seemed of mutual interest to both focus groups. However, teachers and the principal in school S are of the opinion that they do not normally see that much of a change in the way the pregnant learners act or become after getting pregnant. They mentioned the fact that if they are left to continue being students and just are kept an eye on for when they might need help, they always continue and do well with their studies.

In the discussion with learners at school S, most learners were against the issue of terminating the pregnancy, because they felt that it might affect the future endeavors of the learner who underwent an abortion. The reason for them being against the issue of abortion was that abortion might affect the young girl both emotionally and physically to the extent that when she gets married in the future, she may struggle to have kids, and that will affect her marital relationship. I learned a lot in the discussion relating to abortion. One girl learner participant mentioned the fact that if the girl undergoes an abortion, she will not know if in future, it happens that she cannot bear children, that something went wrong during termination or if it is because she became barren. She even went further to say that, it will not be nice for her to be called names as people, especially the in-laws, always do when someone is married, but does not have kids.

From that discussion, I learned that children's thinking ability should not be undermined. Although what they discussed was mostly influenced by indigenous knowledge, I could see that they are conscious of what is happening around them. I noticed that they are not aware that the issue of abortion appears in the document that focuses on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in schools, whereby it is mentioned that, "the policy seeks to ensure accessible provision of policy aligned information on prevention, care, counselling and support, frameworks for impact mitigation, the choice of termination of pregnancy (CToP) as well as guidelines for systematic management and implementation (DBE, 2021:9)". It all makes sense when they say they do not know anything about the pregnancy policy and the content found in the document.

What is also surprising is that the Policy also commits the DBE and other (role players) stakeholders to provide Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), which aims to ensure that learners gain knowledge and skills to make conscious, healthy and

respectful choices about relationships and sexuality (DBE, 2021:9). Students pointed out that the only time they receive information relating to pregnancy is when they are pregnant. It shows that for learners who never get pregnant, this information coming from the Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy in schools, is never known. If the information is only offered to students who are pregnant, it is clear that the target of reducing numbers of learners who get pregnant will not be easily reached. It is also senseless to mention the issue of prevention as one of the aims of the Policy, because I noticed that prevention is not that much encouraged in either of the schools where data were collected.

4.3.4. Educators are willing but not trained

The female teacher further explained that when doing physical activities during the LO lesson, they protect pregnant learners not to take part in strenuous activities, such as running, jumping and throwing balls. She explained that she would rather let her just watch others doing such activities. This shows that teachers are aware that pregnant girls are vulnerable and that they should be treated carefully, considering the fact that something wrong may happen to her if she does physical activities that require a lot of body movement. The educator seemed to be doing that, only based on her understanding that the pregnant girl's body may be delicate and not because she was informed by clear guidelines from the Policy.

This shows that there is still a lot that needs to be done to make sure that teachers are well informed about how certain activities should be conducted with pregnant learners, and that it is important that the girls are given an appropriate platform to report their pregnancy status. Teachers should not be left to guess if girls are pregnant or not and that is confusing educators, as their suspicion cannot always be right. Using their own discretion to detect a learner's pregnancy may be causing discomfort even to themselves, as they are not sure if what they are doing is right or wrong. However, they always try to do what is the best for the interest of the learner.

4.4. Summary

This chapter presented the empirical data that I gathered through both focus group and individual interviews, as well as observations made through both processes. Data gathered were based on the major purpose, which was perspectives that learners and educators have towards having pregnant learners included in mainstream classrooms.

Closely related to that was the need to understand and compare, though not focus on for this study in particular, but it was important to compare responses from both selected participants from the school situated in town and the other situated on the location, regarding mainstreaming pregnant learners in normal classrooms. I, though subconsciously, made distinctions between the views and perceptions of the study participants and my own interpretations and reflections. Data were presented and analysed following six themes that emerged during the discussion, namely: unidentified / hidden pregnancies, policies summarised and incorporated into other documents, bullying and discrimination against pregnant learners, educators willing, but not prepared, identify and call parents and learners to discuss pregnancy condition, parents accompany pregnant learners to school and the committee working with pregnant learners.

The general picture presented from the data gathered was that there were more similarities than differences in the manner in which pregnancy was perceived in both schools. However, the way this issue is dealt with in families and the community is not that different for all the learners, the reason being that the majority of learners come from the same community, even though they go to different schools (the school in town and the school in the location).

This chapter concluded that the issue regarding pregnancy of learners in the two schools in Ladybrand is treated differently from school to school, however, each school puts forwards the interests and rights of the learner in the decision they make regarding pregnancy of learners in their schools. The interests of both schools is to see that all learners progress from grade to grade and that they become good citizens, who will contribute to the development of their small town. The only difference is in the way it is handled. In both schools, when they discover that a girl is pregnant, the management through the responsible office, will require the learner to bring the clinic card that shows how far the pregnancy is. The difference will be that pregnant girl in the school situated in town is allowed to attend as normal, while the pregnant girl in the school located in the location would be required to be accompanied by her parent on a daily basis from the time her pregnancy is discovered.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study. It incorporates all the issues that emerged throughout the study, some from the researcher's interaction with the participants to the researchers' own views and experiences. The intention was to get more insight on the research questions. Finally, this chapter deals with drawing conclusion for this study.

5.2. Summary of the study

This chapter summarizes the conclusions and recommendations emanating from this study. It begins with looking at the summary of the topic's aims and objectives, its rationale and a synopsis of the literature findings. It includes the discussions presented, according to the research questions and the outcomes of the study. The special contribution that this study has, are presented in this chapter. Lastly, the recommendations were made.

Chapter 1 stated the aim of the research study, which is investigating the perspectives of learners and educators towards inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education in Ladybrand high schools. The main research question was:

What are teachers' perceptions regarding the inclusion of pregnant learners and pregnant mothers into the basic education system? There were also sub-questions that were formulated to give more clarity to the key research question.

Chapter 2 focused on the literature that is related to the research topic. In Chapter 3, there was a discussion on the research design and method used to make sense of how the research questions in Chapter 1 have been dealt with, using appropriate data collection methods. Chapter 4 presented data collection and analysis of data, which were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, which were applied in both individual participants, as well as in focus groups. Chapter 5 summarises the study, further addresses recommendations and then states the conclusion.

The research topic for this study is: *Perceptions of learners and educators towards inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education in Ladybrand high schools.*

Role players interviewed in the previous chapter were learners, educators (PL1, HODs and Principals).

There are six themes, which emerged from the focus group interviews that were conducted with 29 learners, as well as the 11 one-on-one interviews with educators (8 PL1 educators, 2 HODs and 2 principals). The interviews were held in two high schools in Ladybrand (Mantsopa Municipality). As requested before the interviews, these participants presented their authentic responses on the questions, which were directed to them. All the participants were very open to respond to the first question, which was: If there was a pregnant learner in the school and they knew, and other non-pregnant learners, would they treat them the same?

As indicated from the previous chapters, pregnant learners hide pregnancy from educators to avoid the processes that need to be followed from both schools, including being accompanied by parents to school on a daily basis. The responses from both learners, educators and principals were that they would not be able to answer the question regarding whether they treat pregnant and non-pregnant learners the same, unless there was a formal procedure that is followed for the learner to report when she is pregnant. Answering that question was hindered by the norm that happens to be known in both schools, that it is difficult to tell if the learner is pregnant or not, therefore they cannot earnestly say whether they treat them the same or not.

However, some educators explained that even if they knew, they feel like there will not be a need for the pregnant learners to be treated differently, because they are still students after all. Therefore, they must do everything that has to be done by other non-pregnant learners, particularly teaching and learning activities. The only difference was said to be if they are not feeling well. Although it was stressed that it should be clear that the treatment will not be special to the pregnant learner only. The female teacher from school L indicated that the treatment would still apply to a boy learner who is sick the same as a non-pregnant learner who misses some of the school activities, because she was sick. The advice would be that they all bring a doctor's note that indicates that the learner was unfit to attend classes on that particular day, because she or he was not feeling well.

Teachers indicated that in most cases, students hide their pregnancy status, because they know there are processes they need to follow like having to bring their clinic cards so that the school would know what to expect from such a learner. In the other school, one of the processes they avoid, is for their parents to know, because they would be

required to be accompanied by parents to school on a daily basis. One thing both schools have in common is to allow the pregnant girls to attend classes till such time that they feel they can no longer manage to attend classes. That is because they know that the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 and the PPMLP allow learners to continue with their studies, even when they pregnant, as it is stated that no child will be denied an opportunity to attend classes, because she is pregnant.

Learners and educators feel that not much attention is given by the school management and SBST to make sure that they are aware of the pregnancy policy. The principals' responses to the question, when asked if teachers and educators are aware of the pregnancy policies in both schools, the principals responded that they should be aware, because policies are incorporated into other documents and summarised.

5.3. Conclusions from the findings

The study made the following key conclusions based on the research questions:

5.3.1. Research question 1: If there are both pregnant and non-pregnant learners in your class, do you address them the same?

The perspectives that the educators and learners have towards inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education, particularly in Ladybrand schools. The initial question was employed to investigate if pregnant learners are treated differently from other learners in the same classroom or school who are not pregnant. This research question was directed to both male and female participants from both school S and school L. Responses from both learner and educator participants all revealed that when learners get pregnant they usually don't disclose their pregnancy status.

5.3.1.1. Concealed pregnancies

In most cases when teenagers hide their pregnancy status, it is discovered that the information comes from their peers. The American Psychology Association (2019) explains that sometimes the nature of girls' problems is invisible, hence some of those problems may go unnoticed by teachers. There is the gap in the manner in which they report. It is not clear whether the students who report their peers report the matter willingly, or whether it is based on the agreement that they both had to make sure that the matter is reported. That appears as a violation of the pregnant girl's privacy even

if it cannot be intentional, because it is stated in the Policy for Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy that (DBE, 2021) reporting should be done with the consent from the pregnant girl. It is therefore recommended that girls be given a suitable platform that will be formalised to be the appropriate space where pregnant learners will feel comfortable to report their pregnancy status.

The issue of reporting has to be given serious consideration, hence it is recommended that either the guiding principles be revised or that the right platform be created or formed, whereby pregnant girls will be free to open up and discuss matters relating to their pregnancy status. Another recommendation is for the establishment of the office that will be occupied by a selected member of the SBST, who will be selected based on certain criteria; firstly, age appropriate (peer), as we are aware that the pregnant teenagers are able to open up to their peers.

Secondly, that the age appropriate member of the SBST has to be someone friendly, who also practices an open door policy as the intention will be to assist in redressing the issue of miscommunication that exists between educators and pregnant girls, and to enhance trust. Guy-Evans (2020) believes that a school, just like a family (found in the child's microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's theory) has a direct contact with the learner in her immediate environment, so it is important that the environment becomes conducive for teaching and learning, especially in an inclusive classroom. An establishment of peer educators in schools seems to be more appropriate, because youth interact better with their peers than older people. Hence, the American Psychology Association (2019) describes peer education as a promising approach by the Health Department Agency in its review of effective intervention about teenage pregnancy.

5.3.2. Research question 2: Are you aware of the pregnancy policy guidelines that are currently put in place for learners who get pregnant while still at school?

5.3.2.1. Policies are summarised and incorporated into other documents

It has been discovered that principals and SBST members responsible for handling matters, such as adolescent pregnancy in schools, are more exposed than other teachers to the Policy dealing with pregnancy of the teenagers. It is evident by the data collected that show teachers only explaining that they are aware that there is a policy,

although they really do not know what it entails. The students also deny having been sensitised about the policy that is used to regulate the way they should be treated in school in case they fall pregnant. Learners reported that they only know some of the procedures followed when a girl gets pregnant from one school to another. The recommendation is therefore that the issue of policy should be handled the same way in all the schools.

It will be helpful, especially for the prevention part of the policy, to educate the learners, both pregnant and non-pregnant girls, as well as boys about pregnancy and the procedures that are followed when a learner gets pregnant while still at school. That will help more in the fight against pregnancy of teenage girls if it is not handled a secret, as all the stakeholders explained that there are girls who are already pregnant. It is as if the schools only wait for the girls to get pregnant so that they will deal with after effects and damage control. That will definitely be “crying over the spilt milk.”

5.3.3. Research question 3: Are you aware of the treatment that pregnant learners get from their fellow learners, educators and the society?

5.3.3.1. Bullying and discrimination against pregnant learners

It was the researcher’s perception that the pregnant girl will be bullied by her peers at school, especially those who are not pregnant, but data collected revealed that pregnant girls are mostly discriminated by the members of society. Parents of non-pregnant girls are the ones who are mostly concerned. Their fear is that those who are pregnant will be badly influencing the non-pregnant girls to also end up being pregnant. The same concern appeared to be expressed by parents who participated in a study (Undie *et al.* 2015), whereby parents were concerned that if pregnant learners re-enroll in the same school, she might share her sexual experiences with other learners, who may be tempted to try the same thing.

It is advised that parents get as close to their children as possible, teach them the way of life and discuss challenges facing their children (especially girls). They also have to discuss possible ways to avoid and deal with existing challenges, such as peer pressure. As parents, it is our responsibilities to educate our children about their bodies and how it changes through stages, especially from childhood to adolescent stage. The exciting news about this is that opportunities abound when teaching adolescents

because of their newly developing cognitive skills, social interactions and the awareness of the world around them (Bruce & Keiper, 2013:4).

5.3.4. Research question 4: In your opinion do you think educators are skilled to support the needs and interests of pregnant learners?

5.3.4.1. Educators willing but not prepared

Teachers explained during their interviews that they are always willing to assist all the learners in whatever they encounter while at school. They are well aware of their legal responsibilities to take on some of the duties and responsibilities of a parent in the parent's absence. However, they encounter problems, as they do not know how they should go about assisting pregnant learners. Educators claimed that sometimes they do not know that some girls are pregnant until at a later stage, and even when educators do recognise that a girl is having difficulties, they often do not know what to do or where to turn to help her, especially if the problem is complex (American Psychology Association, 2019).

For the educators to be able to assist learners should they experience any of the problems associated with pregnancy, they need to have undergone training in the health-related field. Educators will be entitled to account for whatever the consequences of their actions in trying to help beyond their scope of work, that is according to the South African School Act (SASA) Act 84 of 1996, as well as the South African Council for Educators (SACE) Act 31 of 200. That has also been indicated in the Educator Labour Relations Council (ELRC) Act 146 of 1993.

It was discovered that there were some similarities in which the matter of pregnancy of learners in both schools is handled. The way the matter is handled involves the parents of the affected learners. As stated in the Policy, parents are the ones who should inform the school of the pregnancy status of their daughter. The discovery is however different from what is expected of parents. The perspectives of educators are that parents hardly ever inform the school about the pregnancy status of their young daughters. The educators and principals from both schools have a feeling that parents never report about their girls being pregnant, because they are trying to avoid processes, which have to be followed as a matter of compliance.

The theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory explain that, both the parents and educators are entitled to protecting the children's right to education. The theory recognises the two stakeholders as very important to the child's development as they both interact directly with the learner (Guy-Evans, 2020). However, from the results, it shows that both parents and educators failed to play their part in the child's microsystem, as well as in their own mesosystem. The expectation that parents and educators should protect the learners' rights to education, failed in that regard.

The recommendation here is that parents, just like learners, should be sensitised to the procedure that they should follow, in the event that their girls get pregnant while still registered as students. I recommend that the information should be presented through the use of pamphlets. It should be summarized to enable parents to understand the content in the pamphlet. In that way, I believe parents will be able to discuss with their children, both male and female, the consequences of being pregnant or even impregnating other students while still studying. I feel that it is important that parents discuss it with both boys and girls, because it was discovered that at some point, parents of a boy who impregnated his girlfriend were the ones who accompanied her to school where it was needed for parents to be available at school from the time it was discovered that the girl is pregnant.

Data collected in both schools appear to be similar in some instances, however, there are also other instances where it differs. The similarity in the case of how the cases of pregnancies are handled, is that in both schools there are people who are selected specifically for dealing with pregnancy of adolescent girl learners in schools. Those selected educators are the members of the SBST. My recommendation regarding the committee that deals with pregnant learners is that it should also incorporate an age appropriate group of learners that will work hand-in-hand with educators. From the data collected, I discovered that educators feel more comfortable discussing their grievances with their peers than with educators. This is evident by the responses from the educators and principals that though there is that team that deals with the issue of pregnancy in schools, students hardly ever report to the educators when they are pregnant.

It is discovered that educators in most cases, get information concerning the pregnancy of other learners from their peers and not the pregnant girls themselves. Although it is important that educators discover that there are girls who are pregnant in order to support them in every way possible, the manner in which they discover the pregnancy is legally wrong. As stated in the policy guidelines, reporting about the pregnancy status of a pregnant learner without her written consent or a consent from her parent, regardless of whether trying to help or not, is legally wrong, and therefore considered a violation of the pregnant learner's right to privacy (DBE, 2019).

5.4. Recommendations

Recommendation for this study are provided based on the findings of the study.

5.4.1. Recommendations from the study

The perspectives of learners and educators (principals included) have been documented in the findings of this study. There are stated problems in this study, which need a serious consideration of policy makers, the SBST, and school management. To discover issues concerning stakeholders in the school environment, who may be affected by learner pregnancy and inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education, there are number of recommendations. It is recommended that:

Learners must be encouraged to disclose their status as soon as they discover that they are pregnant. Disclosing their pregnancy status will enable educators to offer them the necessary support. When educators know that they are dealing with pregnant learners, they will seek information about processes to follow and people to consult when they encounter pregnancy-related complications. Educators must assist students (through the use of SBST), but to receive the necessary support, learners have to meet educators halfway by trusting them to be able to consult and connect them with the right people who will then be made available by the school management.

The school through the department of education is advised to establish a conducive environment and offer services that will be user friendly for teenage girls to feel free to engage and open-up. It should be a place where they will be able to talk about their pregnancy status and the challenges they encounter during pregnancy, particularly those which, hinder their education progress. This may influence the pregnant girls to be eager to reveal their pregnancy status to the educators as well as their peers.

All the educators pay attention to the policy guidelines as provided by the Department of Basic Education, and do away with ignorance that seems to be prevailing among educators, because they mentioned that they are not aware of such guidelines. It is further recommended educators discuss policies with all learners, not only those who are pregnant. Thus, non-pregnant learners and boys must be included in the discussions. They will help in the prevention of teenage pregnancy, and with measures to be followed in a case where girls are discovered to be pregnant.

The recommendation is that the Basic Education system should extend its programmes to consider skills training for all the educators, who are expected to assist pregnant learners. They should be equipped with appropriate skills to add up to the teaching and learning skills, which they acquired to become professional educators. Alternatively, it is recommended that the Department of Basic Education employ a group of EAs (Educators' Assistants), who will be particularly employed to assist pregnant learners where necessary. Having EAs employed to assist pregnant learners will not only assist pregnant girls, but it will also help those parents who have to accompany their kids to school from the time they are discovered to be pregnant.

The study continues to recommend that the school continue providing detailed information on sexuality education and reproduction even to those who are already pregnant, putting into consideration that being pregnant does not mean that they have adequate knowledge of sexuality education. We may need to consider that the girl made a mistake and care to help her correct that mistake, not to be repeated in the future. From the data collected, it is evident that some of the pregnant girls are likely to fall pregnant again in her teen years. Offering them enough knowledge will help them avoid repeating the same mistake. To curb teenage pregnancy, peer educator collaborative approach will also play a vital role by educating learners who are not yet pregnant to avoid getting pregnant. That will be done using a number of strategies that will be selected based on age groups that will be selected.

The recommendation from the study is that the school encourage the establishment of peer educator support groups to also support their pregnant peers. The model will be called peer educator collaborative approach. Peer educators can be trained to assist their peers in different ways such as assisting their pregnant and parenting peers to cope with the pressure of work missed during their absence from classes. They may

help them with projects and work missed, due to complications they encounter during pregnancy. Encourage pregnant girls to continue with education during pregnancy and after giving birth. Encourage the community, especially parents and guardians, as well as peers of pregnant girls to support pregnant learners and to avoid all forms of discrimination, which sometimes lead to girls dropping out of school. Discrimination has bad implications on the lives of pregnant teenagers.

It is further recommended that we go back to basics and encourage community engagement in matters involving adolescents and to report or discourage older men to take care of our children without taking advantage of them. Where the community see young girls being exposed to matters relating sexual abuse or child molestation, they are advised to report the matter to the relevant authority. That can be done as a collaborative approach involving different stakeholders such as, social development, the police and other law officials, parents and department of health. A collaborative approach can be used to help the department of education curb the issue of adolescent pregnancy.

5.4.2. Recommendations for further study

The investigative nature of this study means that a direction for further research should be used. The study was conducted among the educators on three levels of the school's hierarchy (PL1s, HODs and Principals), and learners who are not pregnant, as well as boys, but who have had a chance to be in an environment where there are pregnant learners. The study was conducted in Ladybrand, a small town outside Bloemfontein in the Free State Province. The researcher recommends that the study is done further, and that for further study the following aspects should be considered:

- Pregnant girls and those who already have kids should be included in the population. That will enable the researcher to hear about their views, challenges and experiences at first hand.
- The age range of my study was targeted at adolescent girls from the ages 13 to 17 years. The discovery from the literature however, shows that since the start of Covid 19 pandemic, girls as young as 10 years appeared to have fallen pregnant at an alarming rate. Therefore, the recommendation is that the age of the study under investigation for further study, should include children from the ages of 10 upwards.

- Since the investigation has now recommended to include children from ages of 10 years, it is also recommended that the study digs deeper into finding out how the young girls are getting pregnant and who are the fathers of those kids. This will bring to light as to whether those kids are impregnated by the boys their age or not. After the discovery, the necessary action will be encouraged, to make sure that perpetrators account for the damage they caused to the young innocent girls.
- Lastly, it is recommended that men are encouraged to take part in the fight against teenage pregnancy by being included or literally being the majority participants in the future study. In that manner teenage pregnancy rates are likely to be reduced. Involving men will be beneficial to the study, as it will be looking at the possible cause of the teenage pregnancy. There is a Sesotho proverb that says, “banna ba tentshana tsheya” (men can help give each other direction); it may be pointing in the right direction to have men handle the project of eradicating teenage pregnancy and all the possible causes. Science shows that for a woman to fall pregnant, a man becomes part of the equation.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter focused attention to the summary of the study, conclusion and recommendations. The study findings lead to the conclusions that it becomes difficult for educators to work with pregnant learners, firstly for the reason that learners hide their pregnancy from both their peers and educators. Secondly, because educators are not equipped with appropriate skills to work with both pregnant and non-pregnant learners. It was further discovered that classroom seating arrangement in schools is only made to accommodate regular learners. When a learner gets pregnant the seating arrangement no longer accommodates her. The study therefore recommends that the schools find ways in which to encourage pregnant girls to disclose their pregnancy status, and that educators be adequately trained to teach in a classroom that has both pregnant and non-pregnant learners.

It is also important that the department of education finds suitable strategies to accommodate the changing needs of pregnant learners in the school environment. The study noted that the pregnancy rate among school going girls has increased terribly during lockdown level 5 of covid 19. Hence the researcher feels the need for the study

be researched further, to find a solution to the rising problem of learners as young as 10 years of age getting pregnant in South Africa.

From the findings of this study, the suggestion is that learners should be put in the forefront of the policy and be informed of guidelines of such a policy otherwise; the target of the Department of Basic Education, through the use of that policy to curb pregnancy of teenage girls in the basic education, will not be easily fulfilled.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical requirements: free state department of education

The scientific research enterprise is built on a foundation of trust and that the reports by others are valid. The reports should reflect an honest attempt by the researcher to describe the world accurately and without bias; this trust will endure only if the researcher devotes himself or herself to exemplifying and transmitting the values associated with ethical research conduct.

There are many ethical issues to be taken into serious consideration when conducting research. The Free State Department of Education believes that the researchers conducting research in this department would, amongst others, adhere to the following ethical conduct:

1. Be aware of having the responsibility to secure the actual permission and interests of all those involved in the study.
2. Not misuse any of the information discovered.
3. Moral responsibility maintained towards the participants.
4. Embracing corporate social responsibility.
5. Protecting the rights of people in the study as well as their privacy and sensitivity.
6. Confidentiality of those involved in the observation must be carried out, keeping their anonymity and privacy secure.
7. Follow the ethical clearance guideline of the institution that granted such.
8. Reliability.
9. Informing the participants about the importance of the research
10. Values of trust, fairness and integrity are maintained in the study.
11. The value of transparency is considered.
12. The research is committed to delivering the intended promise as informed by the objectives.
13. The research accentuate the values of reputation and respect.
14. I will not conduct research at the school where I am teaching.
15. I am not listed in the national register of sexual offenders.

RESEARCHER: INITIALS AND SURNAME
P.S Tsilo

SIGNATURE: 

DATE: 11/08/2021

SUPERVISOR: INITIALS AND SURNAME _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Appendix 2: CUT Ethical clearance



RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

Date: 16 August 2019

This is to confirm that:

Applicant's Name and student number	P S Tsilo 215105621
Supervisor's Name for Student Project	Prof A Makura
Level of Qualification for Student's Project	M.Ed
Title of research project	Perspectives of learners and educators towards the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education in Ladybrand High Schools.

Ethical clearance has been provided by the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee [01/06/16] in view of the CUT Research Ethics and Integrity Framework, 2016 with reference number [D. FRIC. 19.03.11]

All conditions as set out below have to be met as set out in your LS 262 a form.

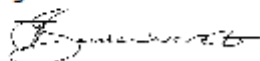
Ethical considerations

As this research focuses primarily on human beings you will be ethically responsible for:

- protecting the rights and welfare of the participants;
- gaining the trust and co-operation of all the participants with the assurance that the information collected would be kept confidential;
- informing the participants from the outset that their participation will be voluntary, and that the data collected will be conducted with the consent of the Department of Education and/or external Institutions where data will be collected/generated with the prior arrangement with the respective principals/line managers of the schools/institutions;
- respecting the confidentiality of the data.

We wish you success with your research project.

Regards



Prof JW Badenhorst
(Chairperson: Ethics committee representative: Research with humans)
Faculty of Humanities

Appendix 3: Approved letter from the Free State district office

Enquiries: MZ Thango (Tel. 082 537 2654)
Rat. Research Permission: PS Tsilo
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za

Ms P.S.Tsilo
7204 Mogoera Street
Rocklands
Bloemfontein
9323



Dear Ms. Tsilo

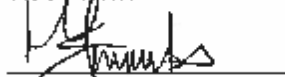
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the Central University of Technology are as follows:

- 1) **Topic:** Perspectives of learners and educators towards Inclusion of Pregnant learners in mainstream education
- 2) **List of schools Involved:** Ladybrand High School, Lereng High School and Sehlabeng High School.
- 3) **Target population:** 30 Learners from Grade 8-11 and 9 Educators teaching Grade 8-11.
- 4) **Period of research:** From the date of signature of this letter until 30 September 2021. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project within the approved period, you will be required to apply for an extension. The researcher is also expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
- 5) **Conditions:** Please note that the permission granted is subject to the following conditions:
 - The collection of data must not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - A bound copy of the research document must be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein.
 - You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
- 6) **Financial implications:** Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

We wish you all the best with your research project.

Yours in education



Mr. MZANQWY JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 27/08/2021

RESEARCH PERMIT FOR THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

Director of Planning, Research & Policy Directorate Private Bag 102025, Bloemfontein, 9401 - Thuto House, Room 101, 1st Floor, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

Appendix 4: Letter to the Principals



Central University of Technology
Private Bag x20539
Bloemfontein
9300

03/06/2021

The Principal
Ladybrand High School
26 Collins St, Ladybrand
9745

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Dear Principal

My name is Palesa Tsilo, and I am Master of Education student at the Central University of Technology (CUT) in Bloemfontein campus. The research I wish to conduct for my masters' dissertation involves perspectives of Learners and Educators towards Inclusion of Pregnant Learners in Mainstream Education in Ladybrand High Schools. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Alfred Makura (CUT Free State) and co-supervisor Prof June Palmer (CUT Free State)

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach 10 learners (3 boys and 7 girls) and 3 educators to provide participants for this project.

I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes copies of consent forms to be used in the research process as well as a copy of approval letter which I received from the CUT research ethics committee.

I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research upon completion of the study. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 072 044 1810 and palesastsilo@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and consideration

Yours sincerely



Palesa Tsilo

Central University of Technology



Central University of Technology
Private Bag x20539
Bloemfontein
9300

03/06/2021

The Principal
Sehlabeng High School
Manyatseng,
Ladybrand
9745

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

Dear Principal

My name is Palesa Tsilo, and I am Master of Education student at the Central University of Technology (CUT) in Bloemfontein campus. The research I wish to conduct for my masters' dissertation involves perspectives of Learners and Educators towards Inclusion of Pregnant Learners in Mainstream Education in Ladybrand High Schools. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Alfred Makura (CUT Free State) and co-supervisor Prof June Palmer (CUT Free State)

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I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research upon completion of the study. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 072 044 1810 and palesastsilo@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and consideration

Yours sincerely



Palesa Tsilo

Central University of Technology

Appendix 5: Letter to the educators



Central University of Technology
Private Bag x20539
Bloemfontein
9300

03/06/2021

The Educator
Ladybrand High School
26 Collins St, Ladybrand
9745

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN MY RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Educator

My name is Palesa Tsilo, and I am Master of Education student at the Central University of Technology (CUT) in Bloemfontein campus. As part of the program, I will be conducting a research study to learn more about how recent learners and educators experience the inclusion of pregnant learners. The research I wish to conduct for my masters' dissertation involves perspectives of Learners and Educators towards Inclusion of Pregnant Learners in Mainstream Education in Ladybrand High Schools. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Alfred Makura (CUT Bloemfontein Free State) and co-supervisor Prof June Palmer (CUT Bloemfontein Free State), and I would like to invite you to be part of my study. Below is some information to help you make an informed decision.

Why I'm doing this study:

I am really interested in how educators feel about inclusion of pregnant teenagers in mainstream education. I would like to learn more about your experiences interacting with both pregnant and parenting learners and how does that impact your daily operations in teaching and learning environment. I would also like to find out more about your views on the pregnancy policy and the role it plays in seeing that the pregnant learners are accommodated without any discrimination. And the help you as educators receive to see to it that you comply with the pregnancy policy guidelines. I will be sharing my findings with principals and the Department of Basic Education to

help them understand how students benefit from the pregnancy policy guidelines and what could be done to make the working with pregnant learners even better.

What will happen to you if you are in the study?

If you participate in this study, I will ask you to meet with me for 1 hour – long interview to talk about inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education and your experience teaching pregnant learners. If possible I would also like to hang out in your class where there is a pregnant learner to see what a day is like for you.

Will any part of the study hurt you or help you?

This study won't hurt you in any way, and may not help you either, however, it will provide a chance for you to talk about your experiences being around pregnant learners and your role in making sure that both academic and social life of the pregnant teenager in your care go smooth. Your opinions will be helpful to the school and other teachers teaching pregnant learners and to pregnant learners themselves to achieve their goals. You may not be around for the change that may occur as a result of this study, but by sharing your experience you can help us better understand how the pregnancy policy serve the needs of pregnant learners and the whole school community.

Who will know that you are in the study?

It may not be a secret that you are participating in the study, but I promise to keep whatever we discuss as confidential as you also won't know what we discuss with other participants.

I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes copies of consent forms to be used in the research process as well as a copy of approval letter which I received from the CUT research ethics committee. I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research upon completion of the study. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 072 044 1810 and palesastsilo@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and consideration

Yours sincerely

Palesa Tsilo Central University of Technology

Signature of the participant:



Date: 03/06/2021



Central University of Technology
Private Bag x20539
Bloemfontein
9300

03/06/2021

The Educator
Sehlabeng High School
Manyatseng, Ladybrand
9745

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN MY RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Educator

My name is Palesa Tsilo, and I am Master of Education student at the Central University of Technology (CUT) in Bloemfontein campus. As part of the program, I will be conducting a research study to learn more about how recent learners and educators experience the inclusion of pregnant learners. The research I wish to conduct for my masters' dissertation involves perspectives of Learners and Educators towards Inclusion of Pregnant Learners in Mainstream Education in Ladybrand High Schools. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Alfred Makura (CUT Bloemfontein Free State) and co-supervisor Prof June Palmer (CUT Bloemfontein Free State), and I would like to invite you to be part of my study. Below is some information to help you make an informed decision.

Why I'm doing this study:

I am really interested in how educators feel about inclusion of pregnant teenagers in mainstream education. I would like to learn more about your experiences interacting with both pregnant and parenting learners and how does that impact your daily operations in teaching and learning environment. I would also like to find out more about your views on the pregnancy policy and the role it plays in seeing that the pregnant learners are accommodated without any discrimination. And the help you as educators receive to see to it that you comply with the pregnancy policy guidelines. I will be sharing my findings with principals and the Department of Basic Education to

help them understand how students benefit from the pregnancy policy guidelines and what could be done to make the working with pregnant learners even better.

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This study won't hurt you in any way, and may not help you either, however, it will provide a chance for you to talk about your experiences being around pregnant learners and your role in making sure that both academic and social life of the pregnant teenager in your care go smooth. Your opinions will be helpful to the school and other teachers teaching pregnant learners and to pregnant learners themselves to achieve their goals. You may not be around for the change that may occur as a result of this study, but by sharing your experience you can help us better understand how the pregnancy policy serve the needs of pregnant learners and the whole school community.

Who will know that you are in the study?

It may not be a secret that you are participating in the study, but I promise to keep whatever we discuss as confidential as you also won't know what we discuss with other participants.

I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes copies of consent forms to be used in the research process as well as a copy of approval letter which I received form the CUT research ethics committee. I undertake to provide the Department of Education with a bound copy of the full research upon completion of the study. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 072 044 1810 and palesastsilo@gmail.com

Thank you for your time and consideration

Yours sincerely

Palesa Tsilo Central University of Technology

Signature of the participant: 

Date: 03/06/2021

Appendix 6: A consent letter from the parents



Central University of Technology
Private Bag x20539
Bloemfontein
9300

Parental or Guardian Permission Form for Research Involving a Minor

Title of Project: Perspectives of Learners and Educators towards Inclusion of Pregnant Learners in Mainstream Education in Ladybrand High Schools

Researcher: Palesa S. Tsilo, Masters (Education Department)

Your permission is being sought to have your child participate in this study. I request that you read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not to give your permission.

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to investigate and document the perspectives (point of view) of high school learners and educators on the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education in Ladybrand high schools. This will be done by examining their behaviors and opinions, specific attitudes through which they think about the issue of giving learners who get pregnant before completing high school education a chance to complete their education just like any other student.

Procedure to be followed: During the focus groups discussions your child will be asked questions in a group (with peer learners) that will guide them to what the research is aiming for. In the process the voice recorder will be used to keep record of what the researcher might miss during the focus group discuss for valid recording of data.

Discomfort / risks: There are no foreseeable dangers or discomforts to either you or your child in this study.

Incentives / benefits for participation: There are no direct benefits except a little token of appreciation for your child participating in the study. However, this study will increase our knowledge on inclusive education and all the issues around it.

Time duration of participants: Participation in the study will not exceed 2 hours per session.

Statement of confidentiality: All records are kept confidential and will be available only to professional researchers and the department of Basic Education. If the results of this study are published, the data will be presented in group form and individual children will not be identified as their real names will not be used in the study.

Voluntary participation: Your child's participation is voluntary. If you feel your child has in any way been coerced into participation, please inform the researcher or the principal. I also ask that you read this letter with your child and discuss the issue of voluntary participation. At the time of the study your child will once again be reminded of this by the researcher.

Termination of participation: If at any point during the study you or your child wishes to terminate the session, you can do so.

Questions or concerns regarding participation in this research should be directed to: Mrs Palesa Tsilo (072 0441810)

This research has been reviewed and approved by Central University of Technology research council. If at any time during or after the study your child experiences any physical or emotional discomfort that is a result of his / her participation, or if you have any questions about the study or its outcomes, please feel free to contact me.

SIGNING THE FORM BELOW WILL ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY DURING SCHOOL HOURS WITHOUT YOUR PRESENCE. Please return by If you do not sign and return this form, the researcher will understand that you do not wish to allow your child to participate.

Parent Signature Box

*I, the parent or guardian of,
a minor.....*

*Years of age, permit his / her participation in a program of research named above
and being conducted by Palesa S. Tsilo.*

.....
Signature of parent or guardian

.....
Date

.....
Please print your name here.

Student Signature Box

*I, agree to participate in the
program of research named above and understand that my participation is voluntary.*

.....
Signature of Student

.....
Date

.....
Please print your name here.

Appendix 7: Schedule of questions



SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS

The collection of data was carried out with the support of set of questions. The aim of this study was to investigate the perspectives of high school learners and educators (PL1 and Principals) on the inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education in Ladybrand high schools. The following questions were explored:

Research question 1: What is your opinion concerning teaching in a classroom that has both pregnant and non-pregnant learners, do you address them the same?

Research question 2: How do you deal with pregnancy policy guidelines that are currently put in place for learners who get pregnant while still at school?

Research question 3: What treatment do pregnant learners get from their fellow learners, educators and the society?

Research question 4: How do you think educators able to support the needs and interests of pregnant learners?

Introduction:

Introduction is applicable to all the participating stakeholders (educators, learners and educators).

Greetings. My name is Palesa Tsilo, and I am Master of Education student at the Central University of Technology (CUT), Bloemfontein campus. Please note that this interview is going to be recorded if you don't mind, if you do, you may recuse yourself.

- Are we consented into this arrangement?
- I am going to ask you questions about inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education, if you feel uncomfortable in answering some of my questions please recuse yourself.

Questions to the principals (as part of educators)

Here are my questions:

1. What is your opinion of having pregnant learners in your school?
2. How do you and your subordinate educators respond to the pregnancy policy?
3. Do you think educators are to support the needs and interests of pregnant learners?

Questions to the educators

Here are my questions

Research question 1: What is your opinion concerning teaching in a classroom that has both pregnant and non-pregnant learners, do you address them the same?

Research question 2: How do you deal with pregnancy policy guidelines that are currently put in place for learners who get pregnant while still at school?

Research question 3: What treatment do pregnant learners get from their fellow learners, educators and the society?

Research question 4: how do think educators are able to support the needs and interests of pregnant learners?

Questions to the learners

I am about to talk about teenage pregnancy. Please trust me, for I am not doing this to hurt anyone but, my study talks about teenage pregnancy as a public concern. My intension is to help even those who have personally been affected by teenage pregnancy to know that they are protected and that this information will remain here (between me and you), and will only be used for the purpose of the study. Please feel free to participate freely in this study. I would like us to respect each other and each person's opinion. Let's also avoid calling people's names. I am going to give you code names (fictitious names) that we will use throughout this interview. Your names will be F1 (female), F2 etc. and M1(male), M2 etc., so before responding please tell us your given name. Please know that I love you and I am doing this to help all of you.

- Are we consented into this arrangement?
- I am going to ask you questions about inclusion of pregnant learners in mainstream education, if you feel uncomfortable in answering some of my questions please indicate.

Here are my questions:

1. Please tell me, how do you feel when there are students among you that you know are pregnant?
 2. What do you understand about the pregnancy policy guidelines that are currently in place for you as learners in case you get pregnant while at school?
 3. In your view, how do teachers, parents and community react when they see teenagers getting pregnant while still at school?
 4. How do you think educators are able to support the needs and interests of pregnant learners?
- ❖ In general, what can you say about this issue that we are discussing today?

Appendix 8: Certificate of Editing

Michelle Woolley
WRITER EDITOR PROOFREADER TRANSLATOR
Bachelor of Library and Information Science: B.Bibl.
Reference & Research Librarian
Bachelor of Arts Honours in Translation Studies and Editing

Associate Member of Professional EDITORS' Guild (PEG)

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

This letter certifies that I have edited the Dissertation detailed below.

Title:

PERSPECTIVES OF LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS TOWARDS THE INCLUSION
OF PREGNANT LEARNERS IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION IN LADYBRAND
HIGH SCHOOLS

Author:

PALESA SYLVIA TSILO
(Student No: 215105621)

Regards
Michelle Woolley



Date: 18/03/2023

michellewoolley12@gmail.com
083 298 2077



Appendix 9: Plagiarism report

Perspectives of Learners and Educators: Tsilo PS

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9 Francesca Salvi. "In the making: constructing in-school pregnancy in Mozambique", Gender and Education, 2016