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DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

UNPLANNED TEENAGE PREGNANCIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRESS: A CASE OF THE URBAN AREAS OF LESOTHO.

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE AWARD OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

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NUL

AUGUST 2022

**Certification**

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and approved as having met the requirements of the Department of Development Studies, Faculty of Humanities, National University of Lesotho for the award of Master of Arts in Development Studies.

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my Mother, Relebohile Mabote Aisevbonaye, who has been of paramount assistance in taking care of my financial needs since the beginning of my academic journey. Her encouraging words have helped me to overcome many challenges I faced both in personal and academic realms.

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## **ACRONYMS**

<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>STIs</b>	Sexually Transmitted Infections
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>BOS</b>	Bureau of Statistics
<b>NRCW</b>	National Research Centre for Women and Families
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of a Child
<b>ICPD</b>	International Conference on Population and Development
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>VTE</b>	Vocational Training and Education
<b>TSD</b>	Teaching Service Department
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>IPL</b>	International Poverty Line
<b>NGOs</b>	Nongovernmental Organizations
<b>MoET</b>	Ministry of Education and Training

## **Abstract**

The teenage phase is a stage in life between childhood and adulthood. It is a distinctive stage of human development at which good health prospects are founded. During this period, rapid physical, cognitive and psychosocial growth is experienced. This affects their thinking, decision making and how they interact with other people around them. At this stage, teenagers search for new personalities and discern their sexuality which in some instances leads to premature pregnancy and childbearing. Teenage pregnancy is a cause of concern in several sub-Saharan African countries including Lesotho, where the number of girls dropping out of school due to pregnancy and to raise new born babies rises. Teenage pregnancy is allied with socioeconomic challenges leading to different education and employment goals among teenage mothers. Such challenges include poverty, high underemployment/unemployment rates, high neighbourhood level income inequality rates and low educational achievements. Due to high poverty rates in Lesotho, teenagers residing in marginalised societies become desperate and make flawed choices that lead to instant pleasure. Upon discovery of pregnancy however, many are left to deal with the repercussions on their own. High mortality rates due to HIV/AIDS and Covid 19 have also rendered girls in Lesotho vulnerable to teenage pregnancy and premature marriages. The purpose of this study was to investigate the socio-economic factors that influenced teenagers' engagement in unsafe sexual acts, and how teenage pregnancy results in health, educational and economic costs. The study also investigated how pregnant teenagers are marginalised by the family, teachers and society. Premised on the qualitative research design, with the snowball and purposively sampled 25 respondents, the study used face-to-face interviews and focus group discussion for data collection. The data analysis has thus revealed a correlation between teenage pregnancy and poverty. The study has also found unplanned parenthood as having long-term adverse socio-economic impacts on adolescent mothers, thereby restricting their education and development prospects. It is, therefore, recommended that teenage girls should endeavour to complete their education, learn new functional skills, gain some work experience and design a future for themselves before starting a family.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Introduction

Teenage pregnancy is one of the pervasive problems affecting the social and economic empowerment of young women globally. In Sub-Saharan Africa, out of 1,000 women giving birth each year, 101 are teenage mothers aged from 15 to 19. In fifteen countries reported to have had the highest teenage pregnancy rates worldwide, fourteen of which are located in Sub-Saharan Africa, where 30 per cent of 20-24-year-old girls were reported to have given birth before the age of 18 years. Niger, Mozambique, Malawi, Uganda and Cameroon are among the countries with high teenage pregnancy rates reported (WHO, 2014). Within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region Namibia has been reported to have the highest teenage pregnancy rates (Indongo, 2020).

Consequences of teenage pregnancy are vast, ranging from obstetric, health, economic and social problems. Teenage mothers face disadvantageous prospects such as lower educational achievements and most quit school resulting in low income earnings, which exposes them to poverty and its perpetuation (Novella & Ripani, 2018). Children of teenage mothers also experience health complications and poverty. Various measures have been taken by governments and international organisations to better manage teenage pregnancy rates. Such efforts include revision of policies after the 1994 international conference on population and development (ICPD). Abstinence before marriage, encouraging girls to study beyond primary school, preventing premature marriage and coerced sex and the use of birth control were highlighted as major ways of curbing early pregnancies (Kali, 2021).

In Lesotho transformation of traditional livelihood patterns, gender roles and household structures as well as HIV/AIDS have impacted severely on children and teenagers' well-being (UNICEF, 2002). The Covid 19 pandemic has also had its share of detrimental effects on household livelihoods (BOS, 2021). Teenagers are often forgotten, with their voices not frequently heard by authorities. They have been exposed to poverty mainly depending on adults thus having long-term effects of poverty even into their future (BOS, 2020). The desire to escape

poverty leads teenage girls to easily be lured into coerced sexual relationships hence pregnancy. For most, pregnancy marks the end of their schooling and failure to enhance their livelihoods.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Females in African societies have long been disregarded for performing exceptionally in their studies and achieving prominent socio-economic statuses. Such disregard has recently begun to fade out making way for more girls to be resilient and self-sufficient. However, teenage pregnancy has persistently obstructed brilliant girls' education, with resultant retarding of their economic growth and development (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). It is estimated that approximately 17 million adolescents give birth annually and most of these births take place in least developed and developing nations (WHO, 2014). Phillips and Mbizvo (2016) offer that the need to thwart teenage pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa has increased over the years. Teenage pregnancy rates are highest in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Niger topping the list at 203.6 births per 100,000 teenage women. Mali (175.4), Angola (166.6), Mozambique (142.5) while is at Guinea (141.7) birth rates per 100,000 teenage women (World Atlas Fact Sheet, 2017; Ahinkhorah *et al.*, 2022).

Low and middle income countries are currently faced with high teenage pregnancy rates, coupled with adverse health and social consequences (WHO, 2014). Teenagers encounter psychological problems from social stigma; they thus suffer physical and domestic abuse, many of whom drop out of school and seldom resume their studies (Hodgkinson *et al.*, 2014). Atuyambe *et al.* (2005) view most adolescent girls as having difficulties seeing their future opportunities unfold, resulting in teenage pregnancy and motherhood rendering girls' future bleak. Motherhood may be attractive to teenage girls, with some viewing it as a way of gaining a social status. Despite this misconception it is noted that an adolescent who delays childbearing till adulthood enjoys motherhood (Arinsola *et al.*, 2013). She has more opportunities to acquire education and skills enabling her to better care for her family and compete more successfully in labour market than those who have had such responsibilities of motherhood during adolescence.

Adolescent mothers are women between the ages of 11 and 19 who fall pregnant and parent their children (National Research Centre for Women and Families, 2001). The gradual movements from childhood to adulthood create many changes in adolescents, such as physical, emotional and moral changes. Pregnant girls often drop out of school, limiting their opportunities for future

employment and perpetuating the poverty cycle cross generations. In Lesotho most girls quit their studies due to pregnancy and those fortunate enough to resume their studies face ridicule not only from the family, peers and society, but also from teachers (Molapo Adams & Zulu, 2014). The experiences of mockery discourage teenage mothers from aspiring to improve their lives.

The Education Act of Lesotho (1995) indicates that pregnant girls should be temporarily barred from school. Nonetheless, this Act was amended in 1995 for girls to be readmitted into school after giving birth. Regardless of this amendment, school-going mothers still face rejection and end up abandoning their studies and failing to be self-sufficient and resilient. Their humiliation sometimes stems from family members as culturally, only married women and their children are acknowledged in the family tree (Makatjane, 2002). In society, teenage mothers are also labelled as trash, and such hurtful experiences have long lasting impacts on them.

The majority of adolescent pregnancies that result in parenthood at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, Leoatle and Lebone High Schools, Lesotho today are unplanned and unwanted. Therefore, it is no surprise that such unplanned parenthood frequently creates considerable psychological and physical anguish, serious socio-economic consequences, and even mental health risks that are often ignored or misunderstood. Because of scrutiny, teenage mothers at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, Leoatle and Lebone High Schools have no or limited access to economic opportunities. With low academic achievements, poverty cycles in their families ensue. Early pregnancy and marriage before the age of 18 are two of the major predictors of child poverty among girls in Lesotho. More than 90 percent of girls who become pregnant before the age of 18 are multi-dimensionally poorer than 70 percent of those who do not (UNICEF, 2018).

While some teenage mothers can conquer their challenges and become productive, most remain trapped in deprivation. If granted opportunities, such as enrolment at vocational training centres, teenage mothers can better tackle the challenges facing them. The government should consider enhancing facilities at the already established Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers as the institution has inadequate funding to cater for the needs of teenage mothers and their children.

The Government should put in place enough instructors and rehabilitation structures to equip teenage mothers with livelihood skills and education.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Teenage pregnancy in Lesotho is a challenge as birth rates among teenagers in 2003-2018 were recorded at 94 per 1000 girls within the age range of 15-19 (UNFPA, 2021). According to the UNESCO's (2017) report, Lesotho is one of the top countries faced with escalated early and untimed pregnancies with 60 percent of girls aged 15-19 who are mothers or expectant of their first child. For the UNICEF (2021), early pregnancy that takes place out of wedlock is deemed immoral in most communities in Lesotho. Also reported is that many pregnant girls drop out of school due to parents' diversion of school fees to household needs including the upbringing of the unborn child. Teenage pregnancy rates are highest among girls from rural areas and low-income families, and many pregnant teenagers leave school for taking care of their prenatal and maternal needs (Lesotho Demographic Health Survey, 2014).

Additionally, (Molapo *et al.*, 2014) argue that school governing bodies prohibit pregnant teenagers from continuing their studies while pregnant for they could set a bad example for other pupils. They are also subjected to stringent educational conditions, as teachers claim not to be trained to educate pregnant learners or mothers (Phafoli & Van-Aswegen, 2007). After giving birth, most teen mothers shy away from returning to formal schools due to slander from family, society, teachers as well as students. This situation, therefore, discourages teen mothers from continuing their studies at formal schools (Akella & Jordan, 2014). Teenage pregnancy almost always means the end of formal schooling or training and restriction to future opportunities to improve a teenage mother's status. Most have limited education, limited job opportunities and choices for the future, hence highly dependent (Molapo *et al.*, 2014). Poverty, therefore, manifests itself across generations with more teenagers falling pregnant, contributing to high population growth rates, low income per capita and low productivity of the nation, due to unskilled labour, which eventually affects economic growth.



### **1.3 Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study was to assess the impact of teenage pregnancy on the socioeconomic well-being and progress in the studies of teenage mothers in Maseru and Berea, Lesotho.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What socio-economic factors lead adolescents to engage in premarital unsafe sex?
2. How does early and unplanned pregnancy affect teenage mothers' academic progress?
3. What treatment do teenagers receive from their teachers, peers and the family?

### **1.5 Research Objectives**

- a. To investigate socio-economic factors that influence adolescents' engagement in unsafe sexual practices;
- b. To study how early teenage pregnancy affects academic progress of learners;
- c. To assess treatment imposed on pregnant teenagers by teachers, parents and peers.

## **1.6 Definitions of Key Concepts**

### ***1.6.1 Teenage Pregnancy***

Teenage pregnancy is defined as pregnancy experienced below the age of 20 years (Ghose & John, 2017). The term is further described by Kassa, Belay and Ayele (2021) as conception in girls aged from 10 to 19 years. It often occurs in underprivileged societies globally, and is aggravated by poverty, lack of education and work opportunities.

### ***1.6.2 Poverty***

Poverty is the lack of resources that enable people to meet basic needs, including food, clothing and shelter. It is the inaccessibility of essential services such as health care, education, employment and recreational activities due to lack of financial resources. Extreme poverty is defined by the World Bank (WB) in terms of a metric called the International Poverty Line (IPL) with people surviving on less than US\$1.90 per day (Okalow, 2022).

### ***1.6.3 Socioeconomic Well-being***

Socioeconomic well-being is the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, income, skills development and employment. It is the process of economic and social transformation premised on cultural and environmental factors. Socioeconomic rank is often determined by assessing inequalities in access to resources, privilege, power and control (Kapur 2018).

#### ***1.6.4 Educational Progress***

According to de Ruyter, Oades and Waghid (2021), educational progress is documented growth in attaining knowledge and skills, including social/emotional development and life skills that correspond with the student's chronological age, developmental expectations and individual educational potential.

#### **1.7 Hypothesis**

Teenage pregnancy hinders the socioeconomic well-being and academic progress of teenage mothers. Poverty is the most frequently cited variable mentioned as a cause of pregnancy by the respondents. The findings of this study show that most of the respondents already come from deprived families and their desire to escape poverty has exposed them to vulnerability to coerced sex. This exposes them to immense pressure of providing for their needs and those of their children. Yet, they could hardly counter this problem because of having low education or no skills for being self-sufficient. Their academic progress is also negatively affected as most had to leave school and those who returned to formal schools had to repeat classes from which they dropped out due to pregnancy.

#### **1.8 Justification of the Study**

Early sexual encounters are increasing in Lesotho despite being a taboo to engage in such acts before marriage. Consequently, teenagers were infected with STIs. The girls often suffer the consequences, fall pregnant, and sometimes contract infections, while also being ridiculed by families, teachers and society. Moreover, they lose their schooling years and assume low-paying jobs. Research conducted in rural areas of Lesotho have attributed teenage pregnancy to child marriages which are acknowledged in rural societies. However, limited research has been carried

out to unravel the impact of teenage pregnancy on the socioeconomic and educational well-being of teenage mothers in urban areas of Lesotho. Many studies have also examined teenage mothers who have dropped out of school, excluding challenges such as marginalization from families, societies and teachers facing those who have resumed their studies. While the respondents are currently enrolled at schools, many of them mentioned being assisted by relatives in paying for their fees or being on the government scholarship programme. This indicates that though they might have resumed their studies, they still experience deprivation.

As mentioned earlier, poverty has been noted in this study as a cause and consequence of teenage pregnancy. Poverty has been considered by many respondents as the reason why they engaged in early coital relations. It is, therefore, crucial to address poverty by providing education for teenage mothers and their children, as well as ensuring adequate health care facilities, enforcing sanctions on societies that condone child marriages, improving child nutrition and empowering girls and women. This research aimed at informing policy makers of the detriment of teenage pregnancy, perpetuating poverty cycles across generations and children's exposure to persistent vulnerability. It is worth highlighting that scrutinising teenage mothers does not prevent teenage pregnancy, rather it results in teenage mothers' depression. Empowering and encouraging teenage mothers to acquire skills meant to enhance their livelihoods is crucial.

For those who are no longer interested in formal schooling, it is imperative to enroll at vocational schools catering for teenage mothers. These learning institutions should be established across the country as they have been noted as a harmonious learning environment for teenage mothers. Teenage mothers mentioned that they are not scrutinised in the Good shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers. The centre provides counselling sessions that make them resilient and vocational courses such as sewing and catering to equip teenage mothers with livelihood skills. This study shows how the poverty cycle is perpetuated by teenage pregnancy which has to date been overlooked. Various stakeholders are anticipated to pay attention social injustice and eradication of hunger. This study founded the contribution of socioeconomic challenges of teenagers to unplanned teenage pregnancies and educational advancement of teenage mothers as well as on the country's development as in its economic growth and people's achievement, that is, human development. Included is people's ability to live long healthy lives, being

knowledgeable while maintaining decent standards of living as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI).

### **1.9 Scope of the Study**

This study aims at studying the contribution socio-economic challenges of teenagers to unplanned teenage pregnancy and its impact on the academic progress of teenage mothers. The focus was on teenage girls, particularly mothers, not those with pregnancy experiences, yet having terminated pregnancy for various reasons. The researcher focused on teenage mothers because they are vulnerable as they have the responsibility of providing for their children. Failure to provide for the children's basic needs could potentially make such children experience early pregnancy too, hence perpetuating poverty across generations as explained by Myrdal's theory of circular cumulative causation. Because of persistent poverty, the desire for teenage girls to satisfy their basic needs as stated by Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs which exposes them to teenage pregnancy. Their children are also prone to experiencing the same problem, perpetuating poverty across generations. The overall sample of this study was 25 participants, 21 of whom are teenage mothers and four are teachers. The data were collected for a period of three weeks from teenage mothers enrolled at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers located at Sefikeng, in Berea district. Three teenage mothers attending Leoatle High School were interviewed and three more attending Lebone High School were interviewed. The data were also collected from four teachers of Lebone High School. The latter two schools are located in Maseru district.

### **1.10 Theoretical Framework**

#### ***1.10.1 Feminist Views on Adolescent Pregnancy***

Feminism is the belief of equality of males and females in social, economic and political settings (Podems, 2010). Originating in high-income countries, feminism has spread throughout the world being upheld by different institutions advocating women's rights (Jenkins *et al.*, 2019). The theory holds that women have since prehistoric times been restricted to household chores while men worked in the service sector. Women were thus deprived of rights to assume ownership of assets such as land and carrying out any form of business transaction without the

approval of males. Because of such segregation of roles, women have been barred from working in the public sector where they could increase their earnings (Meulders *et al.*, 2010). The feminist discourse states that women's reliance on men for their livelihoods results in women's being stuck in poverty and restrictions from making remarkable choices regarding their reproductive health, hence, prevailing teenage pregnancy and high poverty rate (Ahmad & Khan, 2020). Such reliance exposes teenage girls in Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, Leoatle and Lehone High Schools to coerced sexual relations that lead to unplanned pregnancies, resulting in deprived access to acquisition of livelihood skills.

Melo (2019) asserts that while poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, gender inequality has been identified as a major cause of poverty. Women experience difficulties relating to poverty when young and pregnant, lacking vocational qualifications or unrecognised contribution to household development. Chant (2015) views eminent gender division of labour which results in high-income jobs being dominated by men while lower-paying ones are for women. Unequal access to resources and women's limited power in defending their interests has been determined by their economic, legal and social statuses, which are usually low, thereby exacerbating poverty in females (Chant, 2006). Gender inequality hinders poverty reduction and endangers prospects of economic and human development in teenage mothers and all people. To achieve sustainable development, policy makers should strive for gendered development, from the youthful years of all human beings.

In Ngabaza's (2010) view, the desire to escape poverty makes young girls believe that their freedom lies in engaging in unsafe sex with older employed men who possess resources. Such grown-up men use the teenagers' vulnerability by making hardly fulfilled promises. More often than not, teenagers are left disappointed, due to pregnancy out of wedlock, health complications such as infection with sexually transmitted diseases (STIs), mental illness, as well as dropping out of school (Burgard & Lee-Rife, 2009). Following an early exit from school, pregnant adolescents lack required skills to compete in the labour market and generate income for their children, creating a vicious cycle of poverty across generations.

The feminist theory is used in this study to link how teenage mothers at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, Leoatle and Lehone High Schools interact within systems and devise solutions to such oppressive systems and structures. Pasque (2011) propounds that the

theory considers the women's life experiences and those of the entire human beings, particularly oppression. Hooks (2000) sees feminism as a movement aiming at ending sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. The feminist work on gender equality in education is an on-going research process drawing on this theory. The feminist theory is appropriate to this study as it deals with teenage mothers at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, Leoatle and Lebone High Schools who are often regarded as outcasts not only by their societies, but also by the educational system. The idea behind feminism is to link the dimensions of social life, social inequality and transformation (Pasque & Wimmer, 2011).

### ***1.10.2 Theory of Circular Cumulative Causation***

Lundahl (2021) refers to cumulative causation a self-reinforcing process during which an impulse to a system triggers further changes in the same direction as the original impulse. The author's view takes the system further away from its initial position in vicious cycles of change that may result in increase in advantages to some people and disadvantages to others. For Gunnar Myrdal, the theory of Circular Cumulative Causation holds that poverty persists due to complex interrelated vicious cycles each of which constitutes a chain of cause and effect relationship where one unfavourable circumstance leads to another creating a trickle-down effect (Berger, 2008). From the economic perspective, poverty spreads across generations through teenage pregnancy as follows: early pregnancies lead to increased birth rates, resulting in large families, low per capita income, poverty and low output per worker. Poverty also manifests itself through low income per capita, which results in low productivity, resulting in ill-health and inadequate housing (Lopes *et al.*, 2016).

The theory of cumulative causation explains how poverty spreads across societies, nations and regions. Cumulative causation is a self-reinforcing process during which an inclination to a system triggers further changes in the same direction as the original impulse. Thus, the system shifts further away from its initial position in vicious circles of change, resulting in increasing advantages for some people and disadvantages for others. The theory analyses the circular interdependence between social, economic and political forces (William & Davis, 2005). The theory was also used to explain race relations in the United States in the vicious circle of social determination, prejudice of the White population and low standards of living of Black people

could reinforce each other in a downward spiral. It showed that reduction in the living conditions of Black people could perpetuate White prejudice, hence institutional discriminatory processes and diminishing Black American's standards of living (William & Davis, 2005).

In Lesotho, pregnancy rates among the teenagers were recorded at 94 per 1,000 girls within the age range from 15 to 19 in 2003-2018 (UNFPA, 2021). According to the UNESCO (2017) report, Lesotho is one of the many low-income countries faced with early and untimed pregnancies with 60 percent of girls aged from 15 to 19 who are mothers or expectant with their first child. According to the UNICEF (2021), early pregnancy that takes place out of wedlock is deemed immoral in most communities in Lesotho. As such, many pregnant girls drop out of school, and their parents divert school fees to fund household needs required for the upbringing of the unborn child. Most parents of teenage mothers enrolled at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers could not keep the pregnant teenagers at schools while taking care of the pregnant girls' prenatal and maternal financial needs.

Furthermore, poverty has negative effects on children born from teenage pregnancy. When a child is born into a mother who is younger than 18, the child stands a risk of not accessing higher education. Many households living in poverty have been hindered from receiving quality education (United Nations Population Fund, 2013). Despite having equal educational opportunities for children raised by impoverished teenage mothers, the level of education received is mostly of low quality. Vocational learning centres could be important for training teen mothers on care taking of their babies and equipping them with skills economic development.

### **1.11 Conceptual Framework**

Teenage pregnancy in developing nations, including Lesotho has been identified as detrimental to the socioeconomic well-being and educational progress of teenage mothers. The theory of feminism holds that, while poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, gender inequality has been identified as a major cause of poverty. Young and pregnant women, lacking vocational qualifications or without any recognised contribution to household development encounter difficulties relating to poverty (Melo, 2019). Combating poverty would allow teenage girls to

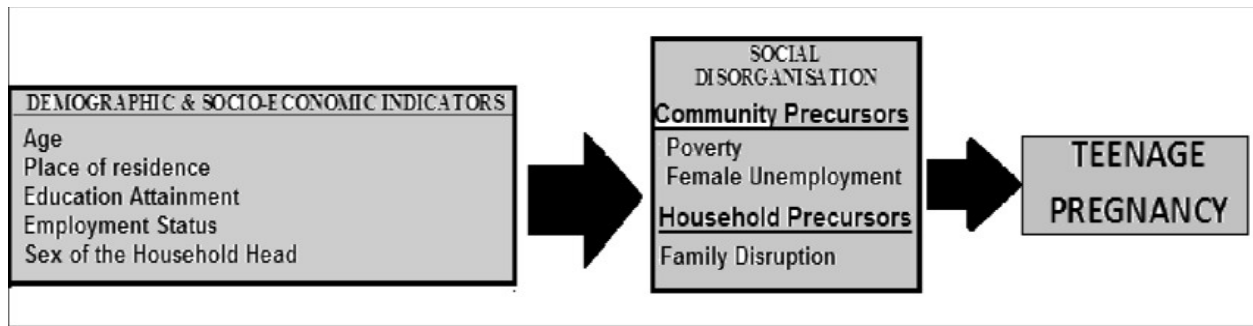
make rational choices regarding their reproductive health without fear of being denied of financial resources by their partners.

According to Mohlahatsa (2015), the spatial differences in economic development between societies, (communities) in Lesotho is ascribed to cumulative processes where developed societies gain advantage, maintain and expand economic resources, diminishing the development of deprived families in the neighbourhood, thus perpetrating unequal development of societies. On the face of it, social ills such as teenage pregnancy and high crime rates could arise or be reported. Ngabaza (2010) argues that the desire to escape poverty makes young girls believe that their freedom lies in engaging in unsafe sex with older employed men who possess resources. According to Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, deficiency of basic needs arises due to deprivation, and the more people are deprived from these essential needs, the more motivated they become to attain such. The theory maintains that people's most basic need is for physical survival, the feature which influences behaviour in certain ways (McLeod, 2018). Aspiring to fulfill survival needs, teenage girls tend to engage in coital relations with older men or boys from wealthy homes. Upon falling pregnant, some of these relations come to an end, resulting in their vulnerability and failure to provide for themselves and their children.

In Lesotho, variables such as low educational achievement, income inequalities in the neighbourhood, lack of health care services and poverty have been found to contribute to high teenage pregnancy rates and slow progress among teenage girls, most of whom would have to repeat classes (Letsie, 2021). Low socioeconomic statuses result in social disorganisation, thereby causing societal problems such as high teenage pregnancy rates. For satisfying their basic needs and escaping the poverty trap into which most of them were born, teenagers are easily lured into coital relations. Furthermore, teenage parents often struggle to provide for their children as they lack skills and education, enabling the vicious poverty cycle to continue across generations (Gokce *et al.*, 2007). The diagram (image) below illustrates the dependent variables found to have led to teenage pregnancies.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework of the relation



between dependent socioeconomic variables and independent variable of teenage pregnancy.

Source: Derived from Mkwanazi and Odimegwu (2016).

### 1.12 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to assess the contribution of socio-economic challenges of teenagers to unplanned teenage pregnancies and its impact on their educational progress. The desire of teenage girls to escape socioeconomic challenges such as poverty exposes them to vulnerability of transactional sex and resultantly teenage pregnancy. Due to pregnancy, their academic progress is hindered and they often lack skills that enable them to find better job opportunities.

This chapter has provided an overview of the theories of feminism and the circular cumulative causation. These theories have been used to explain how gender inequality exposes females and girls to vulnerability, resulting in teenage pregnancy. The ways in which teenage pregnancy is perpetuated across generations has been explained using the circular cumulative causation theory. A conceptual framework on factors that influence teenage pregnancy has also been considered in this chapter. The subsequent chapter discusses the socio-economic causes and impacts of teenage pregnancy on teenagers and developing countries. A discussion on ways in which teenage mothers are marginalized is also provided.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CAUSES AND IMPACTS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY ON DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides literature on the global teenage pregnancy rates and causes. Research on socio-economic factors that result in teenage pregnancy and its consequences on the economic and academic progress of teenage mothers in Lesotho is considered. A review of literature on global teenage pregnancy rates, consequences of teenage pregnancy, the importance of vocational learning institutions, teenage pregnancy in Lesotho and socio-economic factors resulting in teenage pregnancy in Lesotho is made. The chapter also examines marginalisation which teenage mothers receive from family, teachers and society. Further included in this chapter is the extent of the detriment of teenage pregnancy to the livelihoods of the girl child. Lastly, the role of vocational training centers in enhancing the livelihood skills of teenage mothers has been discussed.

#### **2.1 Global Teenage Pregnancy Rates and Contributing Factors**

Early pregnancy is a common global youth development issue, rampant in marginalized societies where girls are exposed to pressure to engage in early marriages and become mothers while still young (Kirchengast, 2016). Teenage pregnancy increases when girls are prohibited from exercising their right to making choices regarding their sexual and reproductive health, thus facing detrimental maternal health, child health and socioeconomic outcomes (Mohr, 2019). It is estimated that 90 percent of births among the girls aged from 15 to 19 in developing countries coexist with uneven distribution of power within families, as the household leading fathers are the final decision makers in all family aspects (Ndanu, 2019). Gupta & Mahy, 2003; Sahoo, 2011 opine that fathers of such teenagers often have the final say on whether their teenage daughters marry.

Odimegwu & Mkwanazi (2016) indicate that countries with consistent laws forbidding child marriage report 40 per cent less child marriages than those putting less emphasis on such. Additionally, the frequency with which adolescent child bearing transpires is reported at 25 per cent lower than in countries that do not enact these child protection laws (Santelli *et al.*, 2017). Recent studies reveal that adolescent mothers below the age of 15 are at high risk of encountering medical risks, poverty, unemployment, low educational achievements and single parenting (Santelli *et al.*, 2017).

According to the WHO (2018), 80 per cent of adolescent pregnancies take place in both developed and developing countries. This percentage is partly motivated by the fact that in some rural societies, teenage pregnancy is socially acceptable. Pregnancy in adolescents is, however, still prevalent in economically advanced countries, necessitating the need to revise policies that address premature parenting (WHO, 2018). ) According to the World Bank (2019) teenage pregnancy has been a cause of concern globally since prehistoric times, and has not only been confined to developing countries. An estimated sixteen million girls aged between 15 and 19 years and one million aged below 15 give birth every year worldwide.

The World Bank (2019) reveals that the global birth rates among 15-19-year-olds is 49 per 1,000 girls, while at national levels, births range from 1 to 299 per 1,000 girls. These high rates are experienced mostly in countries such as Niger, Liberia, Mali, Chad, Afghanistan, Uganda, Malawi, Guinea, Mozambique and Central African Republic. In these countries, 1,000 births per women aged from 15 to 19 are estimated at 233 in Niger and 132 in the Central African Republic. As opposed to developing countries, high income countries have low teenage birth rates, since early motherhood is demoralised and regarded as a societal issue that should be addressed. The greatest decline in adolescent birth rates was reported in South Asia at 70 percent, Central Asia at 63 percent and at 53 percent in the Middle East and North Africa. These declines have occurred due to income inequalities prevailing in these regions (Santelli *et al.*, 2017).

The vicious cycle of poverty for pregnant teenagers and their children starts with early child bearing among the impoverished teenagers, which is consequently followed by dropping out of school. For example, (Akanbi *et al.*, 2021) reveal that 68 percent of teenage mothers dropped out of traditional schools compared to 35 percent of non-pregnant teenagers who abandoned their

studies in Nigeria. Additionally, 68 percent and 70 percent of the pregnant teenagers had no financial support and could hardly access social and health services compared to 42.5 percent and 45 percent of non-pregnant teenagers in similar conditions in 2004. Currently, pregnancy rates in Nigeria have risen to an estimated 104 percent (Bolarinoa *et al.*, 2022).

## **2.2 Consequences of Teenage Pregnancy**

Teenage pregnancy has long lasting consequences for teenage parents, the child as well as the community at large. Many young mothers are at risk of stigmatisation and isolation from society, which restrict them from continuing with their studies, engaging in productive activities, thus narrowing their chances of escaping poverty. In most African countries, teenage pregnancy has shown to result in teenage mothers dropping out of school. Willans (2013) argue that South Africa remains an exception, where one third of teenage mothers resume their studies, however, this usually happens years after giving birth. The delay in resumption of studies leads to a high likelihood of attainment of low grades and loss of interest in further pursuance of studies. The financial strain of coping with the stress of raising a child without the support of the family adds strain to the teenage mother. It is worth noting that young women who give birth before marriage may be disowned by their families and left with the responsibility for raising the child by themselves. Nkosi & Pretorius (2019) found that unmarried pregnant adolescents may consider themselves to have no life because of being disowned.

Equally significant is that Mezmur *et al.* (2021) assert that adolescent mothers are still working out their own place in the world, while a baby poses the emotional burden, especially if the mother is on her own. According to the theory of circular cumulative causation, the daughters of adolescent mothers are also more likely to become adolescent mother's themselves. According to Odimegwu & Mkwanazi (2018), there has been a long debate over the economy and social effects of bearing a child as an adolescent. It cripples the mother's prospects for economic well-being in the years ahead. As Yaya *et al.* (2019) submitted, adolescent mothers and their children face an uncertain economic future. Taking the point further Mezmur *et al.* (2021) concluded that adolescent pregnancy has long-term adverse socioeconomic consequences for the mother.

Population growth rates are being escalated due to teenage pregnancy in society. Countless children are born to teenage mothers, causing strain on available government resources. Most

women who had children at a very young age have limited education, job opportunities and bleak future (Kassa *et al.*, 2018). For a young girl at secondary school, unwanted pregnancy can be catastrophic. Furthermore, such pregnancy often means the end of formal schooling or training, and is a restriction to future opportunities to improve her status (Kassa *et al.*, 2018).

Similarly, Coyne and Boulton (2009) describe the social consequences of adolescents' pregnancy as comprise of school drop-outs or interrupted education, vulnerability to participate in criminal activities, abortion, social ostracism, child neglects, abandonment and school adjustment problems for children born to adolescent mothers, adoption and lack of social security. Ogburn's (1995) theory of circular cumulative causation (Myrdal, 1987) notes that women whose mothers gave birth to them as adolescents are twice as likely as daughters of older mothers to begin their own childbearing early. In this view, the author further regarded adolescent mothers as likely to live in poverty and have fewer job possibilities and lower income.

Odimegwu *et al.* (2018) highlighted that young mothers are often poor because of being unmarried, that is having no husband to support the family. Birhanu *et al.* (2019) associated adolescent motherhood with adverse socio-economic conditions and poor earning opportunities for the adolescent mother. The severity of the social and economic consequences of adolescent child bearing could be compounded by the level of schooling, in which case a young woman's achievement is likely to be lowered depending on her family support if she and her baby are accepted (Birhanu *et al.*, 2019). Odu and Ayodele (2007) found out that early child-bearing is associated with parental marital status. Where parents live peacefully together, they can train and cater for their children, also monitoring and giving them sound moral instructions against any waywardness (da Costa *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, there is an association between negative social, economic and health consequences of early childbearing. Thus, research supports the view that social and economic disadvantages of families considerably account for the consequences (The National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy, 2010).

### **2.3 Protection of the Rights of Teenagers**

Reducing teenage pregnancies has long been a focal point on the development agenda. Though teenage pregnancy has declined in developed countries it remains a crisis in developing nations. There have been numerous efforts intended to limit high pregnancy rates such as the

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as well as the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and the African Agenda 2030. The 1992 Forum for African Women Educationalists supported policy reform with the intent to uplift the education of girls in Africa and to allow those that are pregnant to complete their studies. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms also endorsed education programmes aimed at sexuality, reproductive health and women's rights including awareness movements on unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (Odiegwu,*et al.*, 2019).

The Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) provides guidelines to governments regarding crucial elements for protection of boys and girls throughout their growth until they reach adulthood. From the human rights' perspective, it is worth noting the fundamental principles of CRC which may be threatened if teenagers bear children (International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2011). These principles include the right to education, social security and freedom from physical and mental violence as well as sexual exploitation. Protecting these rights is essential for development and poverty reduction (Lloyd & Mensh, 2010). The principles of CRC have been highlighted under the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. Both the CRC and ICPD emphasise the importance of eradicating child marriage and child pregnancy, where the latter encourages children, adolescents and youth, especially young women to continue with their education. This could equip them with better livelihood skills meant to deflect their attention from child bearing and marriages and reduce any resultant morbidity and mortality rates (UNICEF, 2003).

#### **2.4 The Importance of Vocational Learning Institutions in Reviving Livelihoods of Teenage Mothers in Lesotho**

Because of the prevailing high unemployment rates, vocational education is vital for teenage mothers to avoid any pressures of motherhood responsibilities. Highly valued for backing the transition from school to employment by policy makers and researchers UNESCO (2013), education and training enhance economic growth, innovation, sustainable employability and social cohesion (Ts'eane, 2018). Vocational training equips students with practical experience and technical skills in specific fields. It is seen as a social cohesion and transition system in which disaffected young people are reengaged. Vocational education not only builds a self-

reliant nation, but it also nurtures skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development (Lemartz, Haseloff & Eicker, 2016).

The main purpose of vocational training centres is to provide knowledge that can build a self-reliant society, hence serving the needs of vulnerable the youth. Technical, practical or vocational training plays a distinctive role in the future job market, giving teenage mothers the edge in competitive labour market by offering them skills, experience and clear progressing routes they need to succeed (Lolwa, n. d.). Vocational training is integral to the education system by developing teenage mothers' physical, social, intellectual, cultural and economic competence, that is enhancing self-reliance among its recipients (Mosebekoa, 2018). Through self-reliance vocational training is critical for reducing unemployment, combating poverty, thus leading to socio-economic development of the nation (African Union Commission, 2013).

According to the Ministry of Education and Training (2016), Vocational Training and Education (VTE) is an aspect of the education process that adds to general education, technologies and related sciences. Further noted are acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge related to occupations in different sectors of economic life (Mosebekoa, 2018). VTE thus upholds and involves many spheres of human development and activity. It incorporates skills training with academic education and individual character development. Meer (2007) associated VTE with the world of work, with its curriculum highlighting the attainment of employable skills. Its delivery of labour in fields such as entrepreneurship needed by Lesotho can create wealth, contributing to transition of poverty. VTE can be delivered at different levels of sophistication, thereby demonstrating its responsiveness to various industry-related needs and nurturing the needs of different learners from varying academic and socio-economic backgrounds while preparing them for gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods (Ntho, 2013).

## **2.5 Teenage Pregnancy in Lesotho**

For Lebina (2017), issues such as poverty, lack of parental control, demolished traditional family structures, low earnings of parents and low educational achievement of teenagers and their

parents, high neighbourhood inequality rates as well as limited knowledge about reproductive health are major causes of high teenage pregnancy rates in Lesotho. These issues are also experienced in other Sub-Saharan African countries. While a teenage pregnancy rate is rampant in rural areas, it has been witnessed in urban areas such as Berea and Maseru. Currently, multiple families from which the interviewed teenage mothers are raised are either headed by single mothers/fathers, guardians or other children. Parents occupy a prominent for solid foundation for their children's socialisation. Because of poverty, proper family structures have been demolished, leaving children to grow up in broken families.

The 2017 report by the UNESCO listed Lesotho among the countries with early and unintended pregnancies. Six out of ten girls aged from 15 to 19 are mothers or pregnant with their first child, placing Lesotho as the second after Namibia where seven out of ten girls fall pregnant. The stigma attached to early pregnancy has reportedly prohibited pregnant teenagers from seeking appropriate antenatal care in Lesotho. Many of them visit clinics late in their pregnancy due to lack of transport fare to health facilities and are also afraid to report their pregnancy to their parents. Others hide their pregnancy for fear of expulsion from school (UNFPA, 2021). High teenage pregnancy rates, compromise the achievement of sustainable development goals, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) which aims at ensuring equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG Report, 2021).

The Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers in Lesotho, which is one of the study areas serves the needs of vulnerable teenage mothers who dropped out of formal learning institutions due to pregnancy. The centre was initiated in the 1995 to address the dire socio-economic ills such as disrupted traditional family structures, the increased number of orphans and vulnerable children due to high Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) related deaths, youth unemployment and economic recession. The centre offers impoverished, ill young mothers a secure place to live, while learning to take care of themselves and their babies. Young mothers at this centre are also empowered to be resilient (Lesotho Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, n.d.).

The teenage mothers are also guided in becoming physically, emotionally and spiritually self-reliant. The training offered at this centre address the needs of vulnerable teenage mothers by



taking a holistic educational approach through daily living experiences. Unstructured, supervised social interactional activities involving mother and baby are also offered. Paramount among the services offered by the centre is psycho-social support and counselling as most teenage mothers come to the centre in a fragile psychological state. Structured classes include Mathematics, Sesotho and English. Vocational training covers such courses as farming, sewing, catering and decoration. Teenage mothers are also groomed on life skills as well as, child care and parenting skills (Lesotho Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, n.d.).

As stated earlier, the onset of pregnancy in teenagers is usually the end of education for a girl child, and this trend has become a social virus, particularly in the senior phase of a basic educational level. At the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, teenage mothers are granted the opportunity of academic and vocational education. Through a combination of both traditional schooling and vocational training, young mothers can continue their studies while gaining life skills for use to spawn income and sustain both their lives and those of their children (Lesotho Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, n.d.).

## **2.6 Socio-economic Factors that cause Teenage Pregnancy in Lesotho**

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory of motivation states that five categories of human needs dictate an individual's behaviour. The needs include psychological needs, safety needs, love needs and self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1987). The theory presents the needs in a pyramid shape, where basic needs are at the bottom of the pyramid and higher-level intangible needs are at the top. Individuals can only transcend to addressing higher-level needs when their basic needs are adequately fulfilled (McLeod, 2022). According to this theory, to attain the highest level of fulfilment that is, self-actualisation, one ought to start by fulfilling the deficiency needs. Failure to meet deficiency needs leads to harmful or unpleasant experiences (Uysal, Aydemir & Genc, 2017).

Unfulfilled experiences range from starvation, loneliness along with self-doubt and such experiences expose teenage girls to early untimed pregnancy. The desire to attain self-actualisation among teenagers has been noted for contributing to teenage pregnancy in Lesotho. Maslow's theory holds that difficult circumstances under which an individual's life could be can

affect certain needs, and eventually one's future (Maslow, 1987). In the context of high teenage pregnancy rates in Lesotho, teenagers' desire to meet their basic needs leads to their failure to anticipate the undesirable outcomes of early initiation of fecundity which often leads to life-long undesirable outcomes.

### **2. 6.1 Poverty**

Poverty has dual dynamics regarding teenage pregnancy because it is both a determinant and consequence of teenage pregnancy predominantly in developing countries. Many individual and environmental risk factors that lead to teenage pregnancy are linked to experiences of poverty (UNICEF & BOS, 2021). Letsie (2021) provides that the living conditions resulting from poverty such as lack of resources and support, as well as failure in making rational decisions due to deprivation from education and solid financial backing may lead to perceptions that the consequences of teenage pregnancy and early motherhood are easily maneuvered. Additionally, having a child may be regarded by teenagers as the only way to bring meaning into their lives (Tanner, 2013). For example, in Zimbabwe 33.6 percent of teenage girls from deprived families start child bearing as compared to 6.1 per cent from wealthy households (UNFPA, 2019).

Teenage pregnancy is often the initiation of a vicious complicated poverty cycle. Children raised in societies with high teenage pregnancy, have been found to start their lives from a disadvantaged point (UNESCO *et al.*, 2018). Krugar and Berthelon (2012) assert that negative effects on educational outcomes of the mother are stronger among the poor and uneducated families. Causes of teenage pregnancy vary across nations and societies. However, poverty has been pinned to high teenage pregnancy rates in developing countries. Teenage girls without any school uniform drop out of school because of poverty, in Lesotho. Once out of school such teenagers become bored and indulge in sex, sometimes even contract sexually transmitted infections (STIs), coupled with pregnancy (Molupe, 2019). In South Africa, the study by the Limpopo Province Administration pinpointed culture, gender inequality and gender stereotyping as major predictors of teenage pregnancy at the community level (Limpopo Pop. and Dev. Directorate, 2012).

Households run by women have a poverty rate of 55.2 percent, compared to 46.3 percent in households headed by men. One of the reasons is that women are denied equal opportunities in Lesotho as mainly patriarchal country (Kali, 2020).

### **2.6.2 High Underemployment/Unemployment**

Azevedo *et al.* (2012) state that teenage child bearing in developing countries has adverse effects on labour market output, especially in disadvantaged societies because teenage pregnancy transcends to children of adolescent mothers and both the teenage mother and her child are more likely to face low educational achievements. Molupe (2019) observed that teenage mothers usually leave their children with their grandparents and go to South Africa in search of employment as domestic workers. Because of scarcity of jobs, they are likely to engage in risky behaviour, which makes them prone to unemployment and low earnings (Herrera *et al.*, 2017). Besides, the UNICEF and BOS (2021) affirm that parents leave their homes in search of jobs in industrialised areas, leaving teenagers to assume adulthood roles. For survival and parental love, teenage girls fall prey to transactional sex, hence teenage pregnancy (Champion *et al.*, 2004). As a result, many teenagers find themselves in a vicious poverty cycle, facing compounded problems of poverty and chances of adolescent pregnancy, making them more susceptible to impoverishment and crippled prospects of their economic development (Molupe, 2020).

Without good employment prospects, there is no route out of poverty for young mothers in Lesotho. (Mohr, 2019) describes the life of young single mothers as being below society's expectations. According to (UNFPA, 2021), adolescent girls who become mothers suffer financial consequences, leading them to drop out of school and fail to financially provide adequate livelihoods for their children, thereby affecting them economically and socially. Consequently, (Mabeleng, 2019) indicates that adolescent motherhood is likely to have devastating effects on the mother's future.

### **2.6.3 High Inequality Rates of Neighbourhood Level Income**

According to the UNFPA (2021), teenage girls from deprived families are more likely to become pregnant and that even in developed countries, teenage pregnancy often occurs in underprivileged societies. In neighbourhoods such as Sea-point, Maseru there are high-income inequalities in the neighbourhood where teenagers desire a life free from deprivation and engage in transactional sexual relations with older men who give them money while exploiting them sexually (Ansell *et al.*, 2017). Many teenage girls engage in sexual relations aspire to escape

poverty and are, therefore, lured into early initiation of sex by older wealthy men with the promise of financial support and sometimes marriage. Differences in age and wealth often expose girls to having no say about their protection. The Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (2018) established that among 18-24-year-old females, 11 per cent had their sexual experience before they were aged 15 and 18, percent of their first encounter was either physically forced or coerced (Ministry of Social Development of Lesotho, 2020).

#### ***2.6.4 Low Educational Achievements***

Unless enlightened policy-makers do not provide suitable and congenial facilities for teen mothers continuing education as well as for the minding of their children while studying therefore early pregnancy very often means a blunted education (Letsie, 2021). Nkosi & Pretorius (2019) found that girls who become young mothers have long standing difficulties. For example, they become academic under achievers, performing less well in Arithmetic and English than in their measured intelligence. In Lesotho, many pregnant girls leave school either because familial investment in school fees is no longer prioritised or affordable, or because school authorities require them to drop out. Also due to the stigma, discrimination and condemnation from peers and teachers such teenager leave school (UNESCO *et al.*, 2018).

Research has shown challenges facing young mothers who were forced out of primary, secondary and high schools by pregnancy in many societies, especially having to further their studies at traditional schools post-partum (Phafoli, Awsegen & Alberts, 2007). Both schools and communities would not openly allow their return to school fearing, such young mother may negatively influence non-pregnant peers at school (Keogh *et al.*, 2018). Even when allowed to resume studies, they become subjected to ridicules from peers, teachers, the family as well as society, further undermining their achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) four which aims at ensuring inclusive education for all (Molapo *et al.*, 2014).

Sexual molestation also perpetuates early unwanted pregnancy, resulting in undesired sexual encounters. In the period ranging from 2016 to 2019 children in seven Sub-Saharan countries are reported to have been raped on the way to local shops, abused by teachers, many of whom have been forced into transactional relationships due to high poverty and costs of schooling (Keogh *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, in the rural areas of Lesotho, child marriages contribute to teenage

pregnancy as parents regard marrying off their children as a means of gaining wealth. As such, poverty puts the girl child in danger of sexual violence because it forces them to engage in transactional relationships, mostly with older men (World Vision, 2019).

The limited use of contraceptives also results in high teenage pregnancy rates due to low knowledge on birth control methods. Avetin *et al.*, (2021) point out that teenage pregnancy is encouraged by lack of access to sex education. Some parents are hesitant to avail sex education and contraception to their children, fear their children's misinterpreting it as permission to engage in sexual acts. Additionally, teenagers are shy to visit healthcare centres for contraceptives, thus staying away from using available health services. Ignorance is also aggravated by cultural taboos against discussing sex with parents, combined with real and perceived peer pressure. However, being sexually active results in unnecessary distress for many teenage girls (Morake, 2011).

### **2.7 Teenagers' Treatment by Teachers and Peers**

The study investigating the attitudes of teachers towards young mothers of pregnant teenagers in Lesotho Moliko (2010) unravelled that teachers have unenthusiastic attitudes towards teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers, particularly male teachers and older teachers. They recommend expulsion of pregnant teenagers from school, further destroying their self-confidence by unpleasant name calling. This strips them off their self-confidence, causing humiliation Avetin *et al.* (2021) observed that they end up withdrawing from recreational activities hosted by traditional schools, as a way of drawing less attention towards themselves. Molapo *et al.* (2014) revealed that teen mothers enrolled at traditional schools in Lesotho are often criticised for making wrong life choices. Such bullying has made some teen mothers quit school all together to avoid the embarrassment.

In addition, (Letsie, 2021) views that in Lesotho schools that readmit teenage mothers provide inadequate supporting for such returnees to school. Some schools go to the extent of banishing them from the school premises upon discovery of the pregnancy. As Chauke (2013) argued, teenage mothers enrolled at traditional schools are not supported by teachers. For example, if they miss classes due to ill health, the study found that teachers do not assist them in catching up with the missed lessons as the student's pregnancies are private matters with which they should

not interfere. Moliko (2010) revealed that teachers do not assist school-going teenage mothers, citing concerns of delay towards completing the syllabus. Other teachers argued that their support might be misinterpreted for encouraging pregnancy by pupils who are not pregnant (Letsie, 2021).

## **2.8 The Education Act of Lesotho and Socio-economic Development of Women**

Education in Lesotho is a human right that should be attainable to everyone. The Constitution of Lesotho (2001, Section 28) stipulates that Lesotho will ensure that education is accessible to everyone and shall adopt policies securing an education that is directed to the utmost development of human personality, dignity and strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental liberty. The Lesotho Education Act also holds that schools and teachers should ensure that all pupils are given educational opportunities and learning without discrimination (MOET, 2010).

However, teenage mothers in Lesotho remain sidelined from access to education as some are expelled from school, and where they are allowed to continue their studies, research reveals that they are marginalised. They lack support, resulting in their compromised progression and development prospects. High teenage pregnancy rates compromise the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims at ensuring equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG Report, 2021). The famous African proverb states:

*“If you educate a man, you are educating an individual but if you educate a woman you educate an entire nation” (Nyamidei, 2022).*

An educated woman can transmit education across generations. Allowing unmarginalised pregnant girls to continue their high school or vocational studies would contribute to the growth of teenage mothers, their households and nations. Creating policies and laws that ensure a harmonious learning environment for teenage mothers would also improve the education system and achievement of sustainable development. Education is crucial for achieving upward socio-economic mobility and escaping poverty.

This is seen as disadvantageous for a young woman and for society as a whole because education has become increasingly important to improving one's life. A woman who delays the birth of her first child until after her adolescent years may be able to significantly enhance her child's welfare as well as having a more direct role in determining the course of her own life (Nkosi & Pretorius, (2019). Yaya *et al.*, (2019) reported that girls who become pregnant during their statutory school years and decide to keep the baby make one statement about disliking school and another about their own needs in terms of self-value, creating a dilemma of what they really want to do. Parents of teenage mothers do not always offer appropriate help, nor do they know what to do. A significant factor of growing up, which the pregnant or parenting student is likely to miss out on, is an education from which her child or children could reap economic, emotional, intellectual and creativity benefits.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted high teenage pregnancy rates as a cause of concern, calling for an immediate global intervention. The reviewed literature has shown that teenage pregnancy is eminent in both developed and developing countries, particularly within underprivileged societies. The literature has also shown teenage pregnancy as a social issue that leads to intergenerational poverty and illnesses. The desire to escape poverty exposes teenage girls to massive vulnerability, leading to their early motherhood. The feminist theory has been used to explain the experiences of marginalization of teenage mothers in formal high schools in Lesotho. Education is essential for teenage mothers to acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to compete in the labour market. Vocational training centres such as the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers plays a pivotal role in enhancing the livelihoods of teenage mothers while ensuring that their children are well taken care of within the premises of the centre. The importance of protecting the rights of children for the attainment of inclusive development has also been discussed. A review on the education act of Lesotho and its contribution to the development of women has been looked into. The next chapter highlights the research methods and tools used to collect data from the study areas.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research design, research procedures, data collection procedures, selection of access, data analysis methods, sampling, ethical considerations and limitations to the study. The study generated qualitative data from the thoughts and experiences of the respondents through face to face interviews. Data were analysed using the qualitative research design.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The case study research method was used to derive data from participants in this study. According to Crowe *et al.* (2011), a case study approach is a qualitative research method used to obtain deep-rooted insight on a particular issue. The social problem of teenage pregnancy may be regarded as a result of irresponsible behaviour of the youth, yet the reasons for their falling victim to such incidences could be more complex. For example, using the case study research method, Dlamini(2019) revealed high teenage pregnancy rates resulting from sexual abuse by close relatives in Eswatini. In Zimbabwe, teenage pregnancy rates have been attributed to low socioeconomic backgrounds (Mtamunwara & Mutara, 2015). Furthermore, one in three girls in Eswatini is reported to have experienced sexual violence before the age of 18.

Hayashi *et al.* (2019) opine that the idea behind the case study approach is to carry out an in-depth investigation into a phenomenon in its original state, hence its appropriateness to this study. Daniel (2019) views case studies as used to explain, describe or explore phenomena that unfold on a daily basis. The case study research method was used to derive data from participants in this study. According to Crowe *et al.* (2011), a case study approach is a qualitative research method used to obtain deep-rooted insight on a particular issue. The social problem of teenage pregnancy may be regarded as a result of irresponsible behaviour of the youth, yet the reasons for their falling victim to such incidences could be more complex. For example, using the case study research method, Dlamini (2019) revealed high teenage pregnancy rates resulting



from sexual abuse by close relatives in Eswatini. In Zimbabwe, teenage pregnancy rates have been attributed to low socioeconomic backgrounds (Mtamunwara & Mutara, 2015). Furthermore, one in three girls in Eswatini is reported to have experienced sexual violence before the age of 18. Daniel (2019) opines that the idea behind the case study approach is to carry out an in-depth investigation into a phenomenon in its original state, hence its appropriateness to this study. Hayashi *et al.* (2019) view case studies as used to explain, describe or explore phenomena that unfold on a daily basis.

### **3.2 Study Areas**

The study was conducted at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers located at Sefikeng in the Berea District, at Lebone and Leoatle High Schools in the Maseru District, Lesotho. The Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers in Lesotho, which is one of the study areas serves the needs of vulnerable teenage mothers who dropped out of formal learning institutions due to pregnancy. The centre was initiated in the 1995 to address the dire socio-economic ills such as disrupted traditional family structures, the increased number of orphans and vulnerable children due to high Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) related deaths, youth unemployment and economic recession. The centre offers impoverished, ill young mothers a secure place to live, while learning to take care of themselves and their babies. Young mothers at this centre are also empowered to be resilient (Lesotho Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, n.d.).

The teenage mothers are also guided in becoming physically, emotionally and spiritually self-reliant. The training offered at this centre address the needs of vulnerable teenage mothers by taking a holistic educational approach through daily living experiences. Unstructured, supervised social interactional activities involving mother and baby are also offered. Paramount among the services offered by the centre is psycho-social support and counselling as most teenage mothers come to the centre in a fragile psychological state. Structured classes include Mathematics, Sesotho and English. Vocational training covers such courses as farming, sewing, catering and decoration. Teenage mothers are also groomed on life skills as well as, child care and parenting skills (Lesotho Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, n.d.).

As stated earlier, the onset of pregnancy in teenagers is usually the end of education for a girl child, and this trend has become a social virus, particularly in the senior phase of a basic educational level. At the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, teenage mothers are granted the opportunity of academic and vocational education. Through a combination of both traditional schooling and vocational training, young mothers can continue their studies while gaining life skills for use to spawn income and sustain both their lives and those of their children (Lesotho Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, n.d.).

### **3.3 Research Approach**

Qualitative research approach was used in this study to have an insight into the contribution of socioeconomic challenges of teenagers on teenage pregnancy and its impact on academic progress of teenage mothers. How marginalisation at schools, familial and societal levels affects the educational progress of teenage mothers was also studied. Premised on the feminist theory, this study conducted interviews only with females, the teenage mothers enrolled at high schools. Aspers and Corte (2019) posit that qualitative research involves collecting and analysing verbal or textual data to understand concepts, opinions and experiences. It can be used to collect in-depth information regarding a given problem as well as generating new ideas worth investigating.

Qualitative surveys ask for comments, feedback, suggestions and other forms of responses that are not easy to classify and tally as it is done in quantitative surveys. Qualitative research is used to understand how people experience the world (Ospina, 2004). The school-going teenage mothers' experiences were the main sources of the data, captured using open-ended questions through face-to-face interviews for this study. Open-ended questions allow respondents to answer based on their complete knowledge, feelings and understanding without limits. To capture the insight of teachers, focus group discussions were held.

### **3.4 Data Collection Tools and Procedures**

Face-to-face interviews were conducted, with open-ended questions asked to allow the respondents to freely express their views regarding their experiences of pregnancy and marginalisation at traditional schools, in families and society upon pregnancy and child bearing.

The researcher adopted a curious facilitator position rather than being interrogative for the teenage mothers freely express their feelings and experiences so that lived personal experiences of the respondents are understood. The researcher avoided the interrogative perspective for respondents not to feel like they are being accused for experiencing pregnancy at a young age.

A question guide of eight questions was also prepared by the researcher to gather information from teachers using focus group discussions. Focus group discussions involve gathering people from similar experiences to discuss a particular issue. It is a form of qualitative research which asks questions about perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and opinions (Baral, Uprety & Lamichhane, 2016). Differentiation between interviewees was established by giving each participant different fictitious names to secure anonymity. Nicknames were also used in place of the real names of teachers as they also demanded anonymity. Moreover, fictitious names were used in place of the real traditional school names for fear of the school's image being tarnished. Only Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers permitted its real name to be mentioned in this study. Anonymity was maintained for teenage mothers and teachers to freely discuss and provide detailed honest information on their respective experiences and view points as the subject being studied required sensitive information.

### **3.5 Sampling**

In this study, **15** respondents from the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers were selected using purposive sampling technique while the other **10** participants were selected using snowballing sampling technique. Snowball sampling technique was also used to access 10 participants from Lebone and Leoatle traditional High Schools. Of these 10, three teenage mothers were from Leoatle High School and three others were from Lebone High School. Four teachers were interviewed at Lebone High School and none from Leoatle High School participated in the study.

#### **3.5.1 Purposive Sampling**

Purposive sampling was found appropriate to this study as it produces results that are available in real time, because information acquired through this method is derived from a specific population sample. Regoli (2019) asserts that members of the sample group all have an appropriate level of understanding of the subject being evaluated, meaning there is less downtime involved. The researcher does not need to glean results as it is possible to ask targeted

questions that produce the exact answers required. Information collected in purposive sampling has low margin of error because it comes straight from the affected people, in this case teenage mothers. Purposive sampling method is commonly used when a limited number of respondents serve as primary sources of data hence its relevance to this study. It was therefore useful in this study as 25 respondents provided primary data. This method is both time saving and cost effective (Campbell, 2020). Participants accessed using this method think or act similarly in specific situations (Ames, 2019).

Dolisca et al. 2007 used the purposive sampling technique to study how farmers perceive a forest reserve in Haiti. A case study was first conducted to find out the socio-economic profile of the residents in that area using questionnaires and randomly selected informants. Purposive sampling was then used to select farmers to take part in focus group discussions. The results derived from the focus group discussions were used to design questionnaires where villagers were asked to rank the importance of each benefit derived from conservation. The findings revealed that farmers were environmentally aware and preferred economic as well as environmental benefits of the Haiti reserve (Daniel, 2019).

The homogeneous sampling category of purposive sampling technique was used in this study as (Polinkas *et al.*, 2016). It focuses on one particular subgroup in which all the sample members share similar characteristics, that is; early motherhood. Information captured using this method may involve emotional reactions, physical characteristics or household income levels. This method is appropriate to this study as it unravels the socioeconomic factors that result in early motherhood and how these affect their educational progress and future development prospects (Pudgett, 2016).

### **3.5.2 Snowball Sampling**

According to Taherdoost (2016) snowball sampling is a non probability sampling technique used to access hard to find populations. One respondent gives the researcher the name of another who also provides the name of the next. It is premised on the assumption that there is a link between an initial sample and other respondents in the same target population. It is applied in explorative, qualitative and descriptive research (Daniel, 2019). It is mainly used to conduct qualitative research through interviews. It is helpful in obtaining hard to find respondents, in marginalised societies or where a certain level of trust is required to initiate contact.

According to Woodley & Lockard (2016) the snowballing sampling technique was used a feminine research study in which the researcher sought to study the experiences of Black women lecturers in New Mexico's higher learning institutions. When the study was conducted, only 1.9 percent of Black Americans formed part of the overall population of New Mexico (Woolley, 2014). Based on the limited overall population demographics historically and limited numbers of Black people in universities in New Mexico, it was expected that the number of lecturers to draw conclusions on the study would be limited. The researcher; Woodley, began with two respondents who met the research requirements and when the two respondents were contacted, one refused to take part in the study. Woodley was able to access 30 percent referrals through one hairdresser within the Black community. This example shows that snowball sampling was crucial in identifying Black women educators in the study area by eliciting input from a Black hairstylist who had much cultural capital in the Black community.

Snowballing sampling technique was engaged in this study in the following manner. One of the students enrolled at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers referred the researcher to Leoatle High School where she knew one teenage mother, then that one mentioned another who mentioned another teenage mother at Leoatle High School. Teachers at Lebone High School were reluctant in participating in this study hence only those in Lebone took part in this study. The linear snowball sampling was engaged in this study as a straight line referral sequence was followed starting with one participant who provided another new participant (Simkus, 2022). Snowball sampling technique was used to access 10 participants from Lebone and Leoatle High Schools. Of these 10, three teenage mothers were from Leoatle High School and three others were from Lebone High School. Snowball sampling was relevant for this study as teenage mothers enrolled in high schools are strewn throughout schools and classes. Since teenage mothers are usually not free to talk about their sexual lives, especially to strangers, this sampling method was appropriate for this study as it is normally used to study hard to find information (Taherdoost, 2016).

### **3.6 Data**

The primary data were collected from respondents using face-to-face interviews through open-ended interview schedules/guides. Wagh (2020) asserts that primary data is derived from the

main sources using interviews, surveys and experiments, to mention a few. Also, its direct collection enhances reliability of data and after being analysed, primary data can be used as secondary data. When being collected in their original and independent state, data are regarded as authentic. The sources of primary data are often selected and made to meet specific requirements of the research (Driscoll & Brizee, 2017). However, these primary data could have had some shortcomings such as information bias and reliability, based on the accuracy of the respondent's information.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Method**

Eddles-Hirsch (2017) sees interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) as helping researchers to understand the personal experiences of a subject, for example, a person or a group of people concerning a major life event, an experience or a situation. This experience is the phenomenon that makes up the "P" in (IPA). Such a phenomenon may range from common experiences such as motherhood to someone experiencing life in a refugee camp. Analysing people's personal experiences, in this case socioeconomic factors influencing their early pregnancy as well as their experiences of marginalisation from teachers, family and society is significant, because of being subject-centred, focusing on experiences (Tuffour, 2017). While the recommended sample size for this data analysis method is **15**, the researcher went beyond the confines so as to capture more in-depth and insightful information from the target respondents.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was adopted in this study to analyse personal experiences of pain, making it suitable to study the socioeconomic hardships and marginalisation of the school-going teenage mothers. Rather than prescribing pre-existing theories and conceptions, IPA is useful for recounting lived experiences and making meaning of the participants' world in its original state (Mukuna, 2021). In this way, data could be regarded as important to respondents and how they view their own lives. As Pringle *et al.* (2011) posit, IPA adopts a hermeneutic position where researchers inquire and make meaning of the respondents' experiences. With such an approach, the researcher can capture the lived experiences of the respondent regarding the phenomenon under study.

Alase (2017) argues that the researcher makes meaning of the respondent's attempts to make sense of their experiences. With the IPA method, the researcher derives codes from data instead of using existing theories to identify codes that can be applied to data. The researcher notes the emerging codes and starts looking for patterns or themes in the codes. The themes are frequent patterns of meaning given by participants, for example, thoughts or ideas provided in responses. Themes often mark issues that are important to the respondent, that is; the research problem while also showing the meaning of the research problem to the participant (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Socio-economic variables influencing teenage pregnancy considered by this study were selected using socio-economic determinants of reproductive health. These include poverty, level of educational achievement, underemployment and neighbourhood level of income inequalities.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

In carrying out this study, ethical protocols were observed throughout. In the first place, ethical permission to conduct this study was granted by the National University of Lesotho. Permission to conduct the study was also granted by the Teaching Service Department (TDS). With such permission, the researchers approached and had the target participants fully informed of their right to anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary involvement. The participants were also informed of the aims and objectives which the study set out to achieve. Besides, possible shortcomings arising due to their partaking of this research were also communicated. These include questions which could trigger emotions related to the participants' experiences and too personal questions. For all these, the respondents were assured of their right to respond to at will and/or refrain from answering, if feeling somewhat uncomfortable. The Harvard style of referencing was used in this study to acknowledge credibility and validity of the sources and the years in which they were published.

### **3.9 Credibility, Transferability, Confirmability and Dependability**

Daniel (2019) asserts that credibility measures the accuracy and correctness of the study's findings. In qualitative research, credibility is ascertained by triangulation, prolonged engagement, with data, persistent observation, negative case analysis, member checks and referential adequacy. The pilot study conducted in this research and the three weeks period of the actual data collection allowed for the researcher's prolonged engagement with the participants. To ensure credibility through triangulation, the researcher interviewed teenage mothers from different school settings. The Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mother, which is a center

meant specifically for teenage mothers and their children, Leoatle and Lebone High Schools which are formal high schools that accommodate all teenagers. Credibility was further ensured by interviewing some of the teachers at Lebone High School. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be conveyed to other contexts. Transferability is affirmed by presenting evidence that the research findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times and populations (Sinclair *et al.*, 2018). The contextual findings from this study, for example age at which pregnancy was discovered can be used in other disciplines such as demography to draw information on aspects such as the prime age at which teenagers fall pregnant.

Confirmability on the other hand provides proof that the research is unbiased and not influenced by assumptions of the researcher. Confirmability is shown by detailing all the data analysis steps to demonstrate that the findings are not influenced by conscious or unconscious bias but precisely depict the participant's responses, while dependability demonstrates the consistency and reliability of the study results (Hanyashi *et al.*, 2019). Dependability is done by following the specific methods used for data collection, analysis, interpretation and providing adequate contextual information about each part, for the study to be theoretically reproduced by other researchers and draw consistent results. Tentatively, screening parameters can be used to solidify research dependability (Hanyashi *et al.*, 2019). Confirmability in this was confirmed by prior visits to the study areas where potential participants were located and a pilot study was conducted for the researcher to familiarise herself with the data collection process and depict the participants responses.

### **3.10 Limitations to the Study**

Although teenage mothers are present at primary schools, the study only focused on those studying at a high school level. Some participants at Leoatle High School were reluctant to participate in the study for fear of having their issues known by a stranger. To be granted permission to carry out the study in traditional high schools, the researcher had to ask for approval letters from the Teaching Service Department (TSD) which took days to access. Others would not respond to certain questions as they triggered some hurtful memories. Certain respondents claimed not to have opinions about certain aspects such as what they can recommend other teenagers to do when becoming pregnant. It was difficult to get the teachers'



insight into teenage pregnancy issues as most of them were not interested in taking part in the study. Mr Pule, who teaches at Lebone High School claimed that they are trained to teach children, not mothers therefore teenage mothers should go to private schools or vocational training centers which will better accommodate their needs.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the qualitative research design has been used to acquire data on the contribution of socioeconomic challenges of teenagers to unplanned pregnancies and its impact on their educational progress. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques have also been used for selection of the sample. Primary data were derived through face to face interviews. The interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method was used to analyse data. The next chapter presents the collected data. The chapter proffers the socio-economic challenges that cause teenage pregnancy, factors contributing to teenage mothers dropping out of school and the costs of teenage pregnancy.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF TEENAGERS TO UNPLANNED TEENAGE PREGNANCIES AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS IN THE BERA AND MASERU DISTRICTS

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the contribution of socio-economic challenges of teenagers to unplanned teenage pregnancies and its impacts on their Educational progress in the Berea and Maseru districts. The discussions in this chapter further include the reasons that caused teenage mothers to drop out of school. The discussion here includes marginalisation by teachers and peers, family and society. Lastly, economic, education and health costs of teenage pregnancy are considered.

The data was collected through face to face interviews from teenage mothers enrolled in Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers and six students enrolled in Leoatle and Lebone high schools. Focus group discussions were also conducted to get the teachers thoughts on the topic. This chapter is divided in the following themes: The socio-economic causes of teenage pregnancy; factors contributing to school drop out of pregnant teenagers and economic and health costs of teenage pregnancy. Based on the socio-economic causes of teenage pregnancy, these sub themes are discussed; poverty, low educational levels, underemployment and neighborhood level income inequality. These were included inductively as mentioned by many respondents as having contributed to their pregnancy.

#### **4.1 The Socio-economic Causes of Teenage Pregnancy**

Lesotho like many other developing countries has faced some social and economic challenges. Many people live in poverty some of whom have been forced some to engage in risky behaviour for money. Young girls from poor families often date old people for money as a result of which they fall into unplanned pregnancies. Some girls date their age mates and engage in sexual relationships without proper knowledge of using contraceptives, resulting in pregnancy. In the light of this, the following sections discuss the causes of teenage pregnancy in the study areas.

##### **4.1.1 Poverty**

Although poverty is reported to have decreased in Lesotho, it remains pervasive, with nearly half of the population living in poverty. About 75 per cent of the population are either

underprivileged or susceptible to poverty (BOS,2019). Poverty and inequality are high due to the country's disparities, realised by wage gaps and unequal access to quality basic services, thus leaving the impoverished susceptible to injustice, inequality and human abuse. Although poverty is reported to be rampant among people living in rural areas, female-headed households, the less educated, the unemployed and large families in the urban areas cannot be ignored (BOS, 2019).The findings from this study show that persistent poverty within Maseru and Berea has contributed to most of early pregnancy experiences. The following responses show that the desire to escape poverty has forced some teenage girls to practise unsafe or unprotected sex.

Anne, from Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers states:

*“I was born into poverty, that is the main reason why I fell pregnant. I dated an older man in exchange for financial assistance but was instead deceived into engaging in unprotected intercourse, leading to my pregnancy and illness”.*

*“Due to monetary hurdles I approached an older, wealthy man for financial assistance, got lured into an intimate relationship with the promise that I and my family would be financially taken care of. Unfortunately, this promise never transpired and I am left with a baby who needs to be well taken care of”.* Stated Bonang, from Good Shepherd Centre for teenage Mothers.

Participants Christina & Dorry, both from Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers further stated:

*“I am an orphan and was raised by my aunt who could barely make ends meet”.*

*“I wanted to have money, a smart phone and nice clothes like other children”.*

One of the participants enrolled at Lebone High School indicated that her parents could not provide for their basic needs. The respondent further reported having a baby with a boyfriend from a wealthy family as likely to bring her family out of poverty. She thought that marrying a boy from a well-off family would improve the lives of her family. She anticipated

establishing a shop with the money from dowry. However, the boyfriend did not marry her and she is now a government sponsee/beneficiary. Teenage pregnancy is often the initiation of a vicious complicated poverty cycle. Children raised in societies with high teenage pregnancy, have been found to start their lives from a disadvantaged point (UNESCO *et al.*, 2018). The eminent economic malfunctions faced by developing countries mean that teenagers living in poverty are prone to seeing their parents or guardians doing sexual acts in their presence due to lack of privacy, as some live in one-roomed houses without any privacy. Some of them could be expelled from home any time their parents want to be intimate, exposing teenage girls to more vulnerability. These findings are consistent with Allan Guttmacher Institute's (1999) view that girls raised in deprived households are more prone to early initiation of sex.

The research findings showed poverty as one of factors contributing to teenage girls' indulgence in sexual relationships. With most of such vulnerable girls being from underprivileged households, it can be noted from the qualitative results that some teenage girls are involved in sexual relationships for money to establish businesses to cater for their needs as well as raising up children. While some participants acknowledged different factors as contributing to early motherhood, many of them associate teenage pregnancy with high incidence of poverty. Maslow's theory holds that difficult circumstances under which an individual's life could be can affect certain needs, and eventually one's future (Maslow, 1987). In the context of high teenage pregnancy rates in Lesotho, teenagers' desire to meet their basic needs leads to their failure to anticipate the undesirable outcomes of early initiation of fecundity which often leads to life-long undesirable outcomes. Gunnar Myrdal's theory of Circular Cumulative Causation holds that poverty persists due to complex interrelated vicious cycles each of which constitutes a chain of cause and effect relationship where one unfavourable circumstance leads to another creating a trickle-down effect (Berger, 2008). From the economic perspective, poverty spreads across generations through teenage pregnancy as follows: early pregnancies lead to increased birth rates, resulting in large families, low per capita income, poverty and low output per worker. Poverty also manifests itself through low income per capita, which results in low productivity, resulting in ill-health and inadequate housing (Lopes *et al.*, 2016).

#### **4.1.2 Low Educational Levels**

The study findings have further attributed teenage pregnancy to low educational attainment among teenagers in the study areas. As participants Anne (from Good Shepherd Centre), Diana (from Good Shepherd Centre) and Gabriella (from Good Shepherd Centre) affirmed, a low educational level can contribute to teenage pregnancy. The following qualitative results illustrate:

*“I relied on my friends for sex related information because my parents never talked about it. I think they did not know how to talk about it”,* said Anne, from the Good Shepherd Centre for teenage mothers.

*“When I asked questions about sex, I was attacked by my parents. They called me disrespectful for asking such questions”* indicated Diana (from Good Shepherd Centre).

*Gertrude* (from Good Shepherd Centre) further says:

*“I asked my mother where babies come from one day and she told me my teachers would tell me”.*

Puseletso, a student at Leoatle High School indicated that she was raised by her grandmother who was not educated. Therefore, her grandmother never told her about the consequences of early sexual relationships. Instead, the grandmother used to tell her to stay away from boys because they would ruin her future. The grandmother never explained to me in detail.

It can be argued from the above research findings that lack of and low education, coupled with some cultural practices are contributing factors to early pregnancies among the respondents in the study areas. According to cultural beliefs among the Basotho and other African nations, it is a taboo to talk about sexual and reproductive health to young people. Such an attitude has resulted in many adolescents being misinformed by their peers and end up falling victim of early pregnancy. In addition, amendments have been made in school curricula in Lesotho and elsewhere in Africa yet teenage pregnancy remains high. The Department of Education (DoE) in South Africa has made efforts to incorporate Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) through the life skills programme in schools, insufficient training and experience among teachers remain challenges (UNFPA, n.d.).

According to Chowana et al.(2021)teachers find it complicated to implement the programme while facing scrutiny from parents, religious groups and society. In South Africa the perception that sexual education is a private matter and should not be part of public education remains predominant. Furthermore, due to the economic disproportions in the school system in countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia the same curricular content is not accessed by all pupils (Wangamati, 2020). Though the variety of different life skills curricula being implemented in schools has raised positive awareness on HIV/AIDS it does not hammer the importance of physical and mental wellness in youth.

The reproductive health programmes do not effectively meet the goals of the national policies which aim at promoting healthy behaviour and positive attitudes within the youth (Chowana *et al.*, 2021; UNFPA, n.d.). The participants further observed that failure of their parents to discuss sexual and reproductive health with them has contributed to their misfortunes. Had the parents been open to them about such issues, the early sexual relationships subsequent pregnancies could have been avoided.

#### ***4.1.3 Underemployment***

It is established from the collected data that underemployment results in teenage pregnancy.

Helen (from Good Shepherd Centre): *“Growing up, no one in my household had a prominent job so I had no inspiration to be a careerr woman”. “I thought success was only meant for certain people not, my family members”.*

Ikaneng (from Good Shepherd Centre): *“My sisters who went to university work as maids in South Africa because there are no jobs. This made me lose hope in studying hard and pursuing a career so becoming a mother was my way of getting social recognition”.*

Bokang from Leoatle High School reported that since her sister was employed in the informal sector, they could not assist her with money for contraceptive pills. Both are orphaned, with her sister struggling as a sole bread winner, she shied away from asking her sister for money for contraceptives.

The absence of immediate role models thriving in prominent careers make teenagers see pursuing careers as unattainable. They would, therefore, resort to other ways of social

recognition such as early motherhood, reducing their academic achievements and per capita household income. Feminism as the belief of equality of males and females in social, economic and political settings (Podems, 2010) affirms these findings in that women have since prehistoric times been restricted to household chores while men worked in the service sector (Jenkins *et al.*, 2019).

Women were thus deprived of rights to assume ownership of assets such as land and carrying out any form of business transaction without the approval of males. Because of such segregation of roles, women have been barred from working in the public sector where they could increase their earnings (Meulders *et al.*, 2010). The feminist discourse states that women's reliance on men for their livelihoods results in women's being stuck in poverty and restrictions from making remarkable choices regarding their reproductive health, hence, prevailing teenage pregnancy and high poverty rate (Ahmad & Khan, 2020).

#### ***4.1.4 Neighborhood Level Income Inequality***

Joalane (from Good Shepherd Centre): *“In my home village there is high neighbourhood level income inequality and I got intimidated by other teenagers who had all they wanted”. “I then decided dating a financially stable man would be the quickest way of escaping poverty”.*

Joalane from Good Shepherd Centre and Grace, a student from Lebone High School, mentioned that a neighbourhood level income inequality subjects teenage girls to pregnancy because they would envy her wealthy neighbours' material possessions. Thus, participant J believed the then boyfriend who proposed to date her would build a bigger house for her. She also disclosed her exposure to sexual acts at a tender age because her mother earned a living by selling home-made beer where drunken adults would engage in sexual acts in her presence. She reported having lived in a one-roomed house, with the parents in compromised positions, due to their low generated income, in which case they could not afford building more rooms for better privacy.

The study found out that teenage child bearing is common among deprived girls residing in areas where high levels of income inequality are eminent. Kefuoe, a student at the Good Shepherd Center and Grace, a student from Lebone High School argued that income inequality makes the impoverished believe they have limited chances of economic mobility, hence giving birth at a

young age instead of investing in their economic advancement. People living in low income households are vulnerable to falling victim to social ills such as teenage pregnancy. Premature exposure to sexual acts results in children being more curious on trying it. They further stated that due to inequality in terms of income distribution, they cannot afford essential health care services. Youth Survey (2018) established that among 18-24-year-old females, 11 per cent had their sexual experience before they were aged 15 and 18, percent of their first encounter was either physically forced or coerced (Ministry of Social Development of Lesotho, 2020).

According to the Feminist theory, unequal access to resources and women's limited power in defending their interests has been determined by their economic, legal and social statuses, which are usually low, thereby exacerbating poverty in females (Chant, 2006). Gender inequality hinders poverty reduction and endangers prospects of economic and human development in teenage mothers and all people. Due to unequal neighbourhood level income inequality, teenagers from deprived families often become trapped in a vicious poverty cycle, which trickles down across generations, resulting in more pregnancies. As Myrdal's Theory of Circular Cumulative Causation states, poverty persists due to complex interrelated vicious cycles each of which constitutes a chain of cause and effect relationship where one unfavourable circumstance leads to another creating a trickle-down effect (Berger, 2008).

#### **4.1.5 Peer Pressure**

Although socio-economic factors contribute to teenage pregnancy rates increasing, other behavioural factors such as peer pressure were mentioned as major causes of teenage pregnancy.

*Puseletso (from Leoatle High School) "my friends were a bad influence to me because they told me it is ok to be sexually active and that if I do not have sex with my boyfriend he will break up with me". "When I told him I was pregnant, he left".*

*Mpuse from Lebone High School "I dated an older employed man so he could give me all the material things I needed. "My friends told me that if I have a child with that man, he will take proper care of me". "Now he has left me and the baby".*

All sorts of information about sex and drugs is shared among peers and after gaining access to such, they feel the urge to try some of the things to gain popularity, disregarding the



repercussions of such practices. Adolescents are adventurous and want to remain popular at any cost. Additionally, the desire for easy life, lack of hard work and self-discipline has resulted in many girls taking paths that have bitter consequences. Letsie (2021) asserts that whilst many pregnancies are caused by peer pressure, guidance and advice are withheld from them, resulting in their easily falling victim to social ills which later hinder their potential of becoming productive and self-sufficient. In Basotho culture, talking about sexual and reproductive health with children is taboo and regarded as encouraging early sexual initiation if such is done (Letsie, 2021).

The majority of the teenage interviewees have cell phones through which they easily communicate with their peers and partners and can browse the internet for explicit information, motivating early sex. Teenagers argued that their parents or elders avoid the topic. Therefore, they blindly engage in sexual acts, without questioning the reliability of their friends' opinions. Similarly, Miller (2006) indicates that inadequate education on safe sex leads to a high influx of pregnancies. Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs maintains that people's most basic need is for physical survival, the feature which influences behaviour in certain ways (McLeod, 2018). Aspiring to fulfill survival needs, teenage girls tend to engage in coital relations with older men or boys from wealthy homes. Upon falling pregnant, some of these relations come to an end, resulting in their vulnerability and failure to provide for themselves and their children.

## **4.2 Factors Contributing to Teenage Mothers Dropping Out of School**

### ***4.2.1 Marginalisation by Teachers and Peers***

Respondent G revealed that at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers she had found a home away from home as the teachers at the traditional high school where she previously attended discriminated against her when the pregnancy started showing up. She reported being ridiculed, being called names by her teachers and counterparts. None of her friends in the traditional school wanted to be close to her anymore, with some of the teachers discouraging with demeaning names. She gradually lost self-confidence and eventually dropped out of school. Respondent G summarised her traditional schooling days as terrifying as everyone at school opined that she had brought shame onto herself. No one was apparently sympathetic to her at that school, to the extent that she became depressed, considering to commit suicide.

Respondent K stated that she was expelled from her traditional school, by the school governing body immediately after she and her parents had confirmed her pregnancy. She reported feeling embarrassed and thought she had no self-worth.

Neo, the student at Lebone High School stated that teachers sometimes made examples about her pregnancy experience as a way of warning other students against doing the same. She further said that other teachers refer to her as a grandmother because she has experienced child bearing.

Mpuse, currently attending at Leoatle High School, showed that some students thought pregnant teenagers were fragile, and they always had to be careful what they say in their presence.

Respondent H, however, reported never experiencing any form of discrimination from both her teachers and peers.

*“Things just carried on as they used to but I was rather compelled to drop out of school due to frequent sickness I endured”.*

Bokang, also the student at Leoatle High School, experienced no scrutiny from counterparts and teachers because they treated her just as they had done before she fell pregnant.

Teacher Mpeo from Lebone High School attested to the fact that teenage mothers become marginalised through expulsion from their traditional school. Their morale to acquire livelihood skills or further their education has been shuttered.

Teacher Pule from Lebone high school argued that they are only trained to teach children not mothers therefore it is difficult to deal with their constant excuses of why they fail attend to their allocated tasks.

The findings in this theme divulge that pregnant teenagers should stay at home and start devising ways of generating income for the baby. This gives them the impression that their academic life is doomed.

#### ***4.2.2 Marginalisation by Family and Society***

Participants Kefuoe & Ntaoleng, both from Good Shepherd Centre reported recurrent verbal abuse from their family members, which hindered them from performing well in their studies. In the ensuing, some teenagers would drop out of school because of lack of focus on their studies

and depression of being considered to be wasting school fees. They reported being marginalised by family members, which broke trust from their families, especially amid financial pressure emanating from having more mouths to feed. For the respondents Dianna, Emma, Fatima, Gertrude & Helen, society, on the other hand, has reportedly been highly judgmental about them. Some of their neighbours gossip about and consider teen mothers to be ill-mannered thus discouraging their children from interacting with them. While it is deemed shameful for girls to bear children before marriage, child marriage, as a norm, in some parts of Lesotho, has probably escalated early pregnancy rates. Some of the respondents mentioned their reason for falling pregnant as the desire to get married to their baby's fathers to avoid being ridiculed for not being married. This leads to teenage pregnancy and early parenting, with teenage mothers also dropping out of school and diminishing their chances of being fully equipped with livelihood skills. According to the feminist theory, marginalization of women exists in all sectors of the economy and in socialization agents, hindering women from contributing productively in the economy. To achieve a gendered development the feminist theory recommends non discrimination in various socialisation agents such as family for children to advance into other socialization agents as resilient beings.

Although some of the respondents were scrutinised by family members, others such as participants Anne (from Good Shepherd Centre), Bonang (from Good Shepherd Centre), Christina (from Good Shepherd Centre) & Rapelang, from Leoatle High School noted receiving immeasurable support from their family members from discovery of the pregnancy till now that they are enrolled at the centre. They stated that their parents have told them they should communicate their challenges with them, so as to find swift solutions. They further highlighted that their parents told them not to keep their problems to themselves; they should seek solutions timely to avoid any ripple effects.

### **4.3 Costs of Teenage Pregnancy**

#### ***4.3.1 Economic Costs of Teenage Pregnancy***

The teacher Mpuse of Lebone High School opined that teenage pregnancy not only affects the young mothers, but it also wears down the nation's economy. She further argued that most young mothers do not complete their high school or a university diploma. Early child bearing deters education and leads to high numbers of lost earnings, which adversely affects the entire nation's

economic development. Additionally, financial problems were mentioned by most teenage mothers, including the biggest challenge being that of providing food, clothing and paying school fees for their children.

Teenage pregnancy not only causes reduction in quality of life and workforce efficiency, but also imposes financial strain on the health sector and society. When teenagers fall pregnant, they drop out of school, resulting in few chances of finding employment and becoming more likely to live in poverty (Mturi & Moerane, 2005). It also brings about a decline in family income and heightens dependency ratio, forces teenage mothers to depend on parents or guardians to take care of them and their babies. Mydrall's theory of circular cumulative causation suggests this situation as worsening the poverty cycle already eminent within deprived communities, resulting in high poverty rates among teenage mothers. According to Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs, deficiency of basic needs arises due to deprivation, and the more people are deprived from these essential needs, the more motivated they become to attain such. The need to escape undesirable economic conditions lead teenage girls to engage in coital relations, hence teenage pregnancy.

#### ***4.3.2 Impact/Cost on Education***

Teacher Pule of Lebone High School stated pregnancy as the main reason why young mothers dropped out of traditional schools. Participants Anne, Diana, Emma, Fatima, Helen, Ikaneng, Joalane, Kefuoe & Neo shared the same sentiments, as they were highly ridiculed. The teacher further argued that abandoning studies due to teenage pregnancy imposes costs on taxes, productivity and earnings through increased public health care costs.

Furthermore, the study found early pregnancy as slowing down academic progress of teenage mothers as the participants who dropped out of the traditional school system have to repeat the grade which they left before.

*Anne "if I had not fallen pregnant I would have completed my high school studies and would probably be in university since I have always performed well in my studies".*

*Emma "Since I am interested in acquiring both technical and academic skills, if I got a scholarship I would like to go back to a traditional high school to complete my Grade 12, so I*

*can proceed to the National University of Lesotho to further my studies”. “However, I will have to repeat Grade 9 since I dropped out before writing final examinations”.*

*Fatima “though I was not suffering from any illnesses due to my pregnancy, I was expelled from school because my belly was becoming big”. “Now if I go back to a traditional high school I will have to repeat Grade 10”.*

Abandoning studies restricts teenage mothers from establishing a career, resulting in their dependence on other people and intensified vulnerability. Teenage pregnancy in Lesotho has been identified as detrimental to the socioeconomic well-being and educational progress of teenage mothers. The theory of feminism holds that, while poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon, gender inequality has been identified as a major cause of poverty. Young and pregnant women, lacking vocational qualifications or without any recognised contribution to household development encounter difficulties relating to poverty (Melo, 2019).

#### **4.3.3 Health Costs**

Participants Anne (Good Shepherd Centre, Fatima), Gertrude (Good Shepherd Centre, Helen (Good Shepherd Centre), Joalane (Good Shepherd Centre & Lomile (Leoatle High School) viewed their pregnancy as weighing much on their mental well-being. They admitted being grateful to have been part of the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers as they managed to escape scrutiny that constantly led to their depression. Participants Gertrude & Lomile reported having experienced severe health complications due to exposure to stress. Helen & Lomile reported having suffered depression because their baby’s fathers were threatening to harm them should they associate them with the pregnancy. Joalane reported having contracted sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in her early pregnancy stage, but was too afraid to tell anyone. Severe health complications result in increased government spending on health facilities which would not be the case if teenage pregnancy were at its minimum. The feminist discourse states that women’s reliance on men for their livelihoods results in women’s being stuck in poverty and restrictions from making remarkable choices regarding their reproductive health, hence, prevailing teenage pregnancy and high poverty rate (Ahmad & Khan, 2020). Such reliance

exposes teenage girls in Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, Leoatle and Lehone High Schools to coerced sexual relations that lead to unplanned pregnancies, resulting in deprived access to acquisition of livelihood skills.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher found that low socioeconomic factors contribute to teenage pregnancy, resultantly interrupting teenage mothers' academic progress. It was further noted that teenage mothers are mostly exposed to marginalisation both by teachers at traditional schools as well as at familial and societal levels leading them to drop out of school, hence delaying their educational progress. The researcher found that facilities such as the Good Shepherd Centre for teenage mothers are pivotal in enhancing the livelihoods of teenage mothers and provide a harmonious learning environment for both teenage mothers and their children. They also manage to escape marginalization from society and family and return to their communities having built resistance through counselling and equipped with skills from the courses offered in the centre. On the other hand, those enrolled in formal learning institutions face challenges of marginalization by teachers and peers. The next chapter presents the research findings and provides the recommendations to influence policy interventions particularly on ways in which the socio-economic challenges faced by teenagers can be addressed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research findings of the study. These are discussed in relation to the objectives of the study and the reviewed literature. The discussion is divided into three sections based on the objectives of the study. These are socioeconomic causes of teenage pregnancy, the impact of teenage pregnancy on academic progress and assessing the treatment imposed on teenage mothers by teachers, peers and society. The discussion reveals that low socio-economic factors such as poverty, low educational levels, underemployment and neighbourhood level income inequalities lead to teenage pregnancy. The findings also revealed that teenage pregnancy disrupts academic progress of teenage mothers and exposes them to marginalisation from teachers, peers, family and society.

#### **5.1 The Socio-economic causes of Teenage Pregnancy**

##### ***5.1.1 Poverty***

Poverty and deprived economic opportunities are directly linked to teenage pregnancy and premature motherhood. According to Perper et al. (2010), teenage pregnancy often occurs in underprivileged societies in both developed and developing countries. In this regard teenage pregnancy is linked to deprivation of economic opportunities in most African societies, including Lesotho. Therefore, premature motherhood has perpetuated poverty, social exclusion and high living costs among the affected people. Oke (2004) attests that many pregnant teenagers from underprivileged households end up dropping out of school. The same routine is likely to pass on to their children who would ultimately be trapped in a poverty cycle. This was affirmed by the teachers and the majority of teenage mothers interviewed. Most teenage mothers admitted that pregnancy was likely to be the end of their academic advancement as it had been the case with their parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

They highlighted that the majority of their female elders had hardly made it to their high school completion. The eminent economic malfunctions faced by developing countries mean that teenagers living in poverty are prone to seeing their parents or guardians doing sexual acts in their presence due to lack of privacy, as some live in one-roomed houses without any privacy. Some of them could be expelled from home any time their parents want to be intimate, exposing teenage girls to more vulnerability. These findings are consistent with Allan Guttmacher Institute's (1999) view that girls raised in deprived households are more prone to early initiation of sex.

### ***5.1.2 Low Educational Levels***

Socioeconomic background regarding parental education is important because educated parents are a reliable source of information for their children on reproductive health. Educated parents are also more likely to instill stronger preferences in their children to avoid pregnancy than those who are less educated (Molapo, 2014). Krugar and Berthelon (2012) assert that negative effects on educational outcomes of the mother are stronger among poor uneducated families. Young girls should be given adequate education which could shed light on various opportunities available to them. Amelida and Amardo (2011) affirmed this notion in that the living conditions resulting from poverty lead to failure in rational decision-making and due to derivation from proper education and financial backing, teenage girls are easily led into thinking early pregnancy and young motherhood can easily be maneuvered.

Molapo (2014) opines that lack of parental counselling and guidance, severe family dysfunction as well as parental negligence leave teenagers prone to premature pregnancy. Education should, therefore, be prioritised to enable teenagers to gain more knowledge on their sexuality rights and make informed decisions. Access to education is also prime for empowering girls so as to rationally address their challenges and avoid any impending poverty.

### ***5.1.3 Underemployment***

Underemployment of the parents of teenagers often results in low earnings, hence low socioeconomic status, which leaves teenagers prone to social ills such as sexual violence, societal and familial pressure to marry early for financial gain. Phillips and Mbvizo (2016) observed that teenage mothers are often deprived of economic empowerment and self-efficacy. Teenage girls should, therefore, be encouraged to pursue their studies, communicate with parents



and teachers on potential priorities so they can make informed decisions. Such exposure would aid them to beat the odds of stigmatisation. Further emotional support is crucial for grooming children to make them confident about their achievements. Molupe (2019) concurs that in Lesotho, parents usually leave their children with their grandparents and go to South Africa in search of better job opportunities and leave teenagers to assume adulthood roles.

In search of a means of survival and parental love, teenage girls fall prey to transactional sex, hence teenage pregnancy (Champion et al., 2004). Some adults take advantage of impoverished teenage girls' inability to buy contraceptives and promise to take care of their basic needs. Unsuspectingly, vulnerable teenagers engage in sexual relations with them. Such a power difference, that is unequal gender power in relationships, between adolescents and their adult partners undermines teenager's decision-making ability to either reject or negotiate for safer sexual practices (Social Work and Society Lesotho, 2018). Any coerced sex leaves many teenagers in a vicious poverty cycle, where problems of poverty compound the chances of adolescent pregnancy, making them more susceptible to impoverishment and crippling their prospects of economic advancement (Molupe, 2020).

#### ***5.1.4 Neighbourhood Level Income Inequality***

Improvements in livelihood opportunities of the youth should be put in place to lower the chances of early child bearing while improving economic outcomes. The study by Kearney and Levine (2016), also inspired by sociologist, William Wilson (1987), revealed that specific places are characterised by persistent poverty due to lack of opportunities, social isolation and exclusion from the job network. In such places, hopelessness brings about despair. Kearney and Levine further stated that when a poor young woman regards economic success as unattainable to her, chances are high that she will embrace motherhood. This concedes with some of the views of the teachers interviewed that women of low socio-economic status whose mothers have abandoned their high school studies stand a greater chance of giving birth as single mothers if they live in areas of high income inequalities (USAID, 2013).

When there is more hope for economic advancement, it is relatively more desirable to delay motherhood and invest in human or social capital. However, teenagers from higher

socioeconomic statuses are not less likely to experience pregnancy; they are more liable to counter it with an abortion. The theory of circular cumulative causation that income inequalities at neighbourhood level enable poverty to spread across generations because low per capita income leads to poverty results in low output per worker, resulting in ill-health and inadequate housing (Lopes *et al.*, 2016). The prevalence of these undesired living conditions according to Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs makes teenage girls more vulnerable and their desire to satisfy their basic needs results in them bearing children in exchange for essential needs.

### ***5.1.5 Peer Pressure***

This study found that teenagers rely on their friends for sex-related information, making them prone to teenage pregnancy. Albert (2007) confirms that several teenagers fall pregnant due to peer influence. They have been found to try gaining their friends' trust through trying out some of the risky behavior and end up regretting it. Most of them cite lack of knowledge about sex education and reliance on provision of such information from peers as the main reason why they fall pregnant. The majority of the teenage interviewees have cell phones through which they easily communicate with their peers and partners and can browse the internet for explicit information, motivating early sex. Teenagers argued that their parents or elders avoid the topic. Therefore, they blindly engage in sexual acts, without questioning the reliability of their friends' opinions. Letsie (2021) affirms that culture in Lesotho prohibits communication on sexual and reproductive health issues with children. This therefore leaves loopholes peers and partners of teenage girls to communicate false information.

Due to teenagers inability to verify certain facts they believe what has been communicated to them as true (Letsie, 2021). Similarly, Miller (2006) indicates that inadequate education on safe sex leads to a high influx of pregnancies. Unfulfilled experiences range from starvation, loneliness along with self-doubt and such experiences expose teenage girls to early untimed pregnancy. Unfulfilled experiences range from starvation, loneliness along with self-doubt and such experiences expose teenage girls to early untimed pregnancy. The desire to attain self-actualisation among teenagers has been noted for contributing to teenage pregnancy in Lesotho. Maslow's theory holds that difficult circumstances under which an individual's life could be can affect certain needs, and eventually one's future (Maslow, 1987). In the context of high teenage pregnancy rates in Lesotho, teenagers' desire to meet their basic needs leads to their failure to

anticipate the undesirable outcomes of early initiation of fecundity which often leads to life-long undesirable outcomes.

## **5.2 Reasons why Teenage Mothers Drop Out of School**

### ***5.2.1 Marginalisation by Teachers and Peers***

Expulsion from school has been highlighted as one of the major ways in which teenage mothers are marginalised by being verbally abused. Teenage mothers have not fully reached the age of adulthood, and should be treated leniently as their pregnancy has already subjected them to immense emotional trauma. Ridiculing them in front of their peers seems to some teachers as the best way to make other teenagers fear sexual relations. Teacher Mpeo (from Lebone High School) rebuked the idea by remarking that it has numerously proven ineffective as the number of pregnancy cases at her school increases each year. For the teacher, such ridicule does more harm than good as the teenage mothers become idle and might be lured into engaging in prostitution or early marriage and bearing even more children in their teenage years.

Pule, a teacher at Lebone High School had a different point of view that, teenage mothers should not be admitted into formal high schools as they are often hard to discipline. He further stated that they influence the other students in wayward ways. He recommended that they should attend private classes or vocational training centers to further their studies. Teenage mothers should, therefore, be encouraged to continue their studies and become resilient. The feminist theory prescribes inclusive nondiscriminatory participation of women in institutions for gender balanced development. Inclusive development includes marginalised people, sectors and countries in social, political and economic processes for improved human well-being social and environmental sustainability and empowerment (Gupta et al., 2015).

### ***5.2.2 Marginalisation by Family and Society***

Pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers deal with discrimination from the family and society. Pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers are assumed to be less likely to get married and build a stable family. They have limited support and live in emotionally abusive environments. In Lesotho, teenage pregnancy may be regarded as a rational life choice for some families and

societies as well as young women. As a result, many young girls engage in premarital sex to avoid being called “*mafetoa*”, a derogatory term given to unmarried women at 20 and above. Social and cultural shaming in Sesotho culture is instrumental in this regard (Tshehla, 2006). Some teenage mothers stated that when their parents found out about their pregnancies, they expelled them from their homes, causing more frustration to them. As a result, the teenage mothers felt despised and isolated and were often mentioned as examples of disobedient children who have ruined their future.

While it is deemed shameful for girls to bear children before marriage, child marriage, as a norm, in some parts of Lesotho, has probably escalated early pregnancy rates. Some of the respondents mentioned their reason for falling pregnant as the desire to get married to their baby’s fathers to avoid being ridiculed for not being married. This leads to teenage pregnancy and early parenting, with teenage mothers also dropping out of school and diminishing their chances of being fully equipped with livelihood skills. According to the feminist theory, marginalization of women exists in all sectors of the economy and in socialization agents, hindering women from contributing productively in the economy. To achieve a gendered development the feminist theory recommends non discrimination in various socialisation agents such as family for children to advance into other socialization agents as resilient beings.

### **5.3 Costs of Teenage Pregnancy**

Although statistics indicate that teenage pregnancy rates have decreased globally, more should be done in Lesotho as the country is losing a great deal of talented youngsters to this scourge. The impact of youth falling pregnant in schools leaves an ineradicable gap with regard to having a skilled and educated youth joining the labour force. Efforts in closing this gap require multiple forces such as the government, development organisations and schools in devising more practical lessons on reproductive health rather than only being theory based.

#### **5.3.1 Economic Costs**

The government works effortlessly to control birth rates, thus imposing extra burdens on public funds, leading to an economic deceleration. Teenage pregnancy not only causes reduction in quality of life and workforce efficiency, but also imposes financial strain on the health sector and society. When teenagers fall pregnant, they drop out of school, resulting in few chances of finding employment and becoming more likely to live in poverty (Mturi & Moerane, 2005). It

also brings about a decline in family income and heightens dependency ratio, forced teenage mothers to depend on parents or guardians to take care of them and their babies. Mydrall's theory of circular cumulative causation suggests this situation as worsening the poverty cycle already eminent within deprived communities. In this way, poverty spreads across generations.

There is a high association between teenage pregnancy and parenting as well as poverty because adolescents living in poverty are more likely to fall pregnant than those who do not. The adolescent parents fall within the lower wealth stratum, which is associated with many social problems and societal marginalisation. Evidence from this study also suggests that poverty rates are highest among adolescents with single parents with lower levels of education and those with fewer opportunities in the labour market, creating an endless poverty cycle (da Costa *et al.*, 2020). Teenage girls should, therefore, have their rights be protected and promoted to improve their economic status; so should be those of their children and families.

### **5.3.2 Health Costs**

Teenage mothers stated dealing with feelings of fear, denial and resentment as they have experienced some of the hardships due to pregnancy. Denial threatens the health of the young mother and her baby if the mother does not get proper medical care. They suffer self-esteem issues due to their changing body shape which can lead to depression, anxiety and sleeping disorders, guilt and lack of preparedness for parenting. Such illnesses are exacerbated by rejection of teenage mothers by their partners, family, teachers and society (UNESCO, 2018). They would be at a high risk of drug abuse and poor academic performance as well as experiencing trauma of poverty which easily transcends into an intergenerational poverty cycle according to the theory of circular cumulative causation.

### **5.3.3 Educational Costs**

The education of teenage mothers has been found to take the back seat as pregnancy issues lead to lagging academic performance, absenteeism and eventually dropping out of school. Teacher Mpeo affirmed that the girls barely return to school after giving birth, which means their educational levels remain at low standards. Many schools in Lesotho suspend or expel adolescent

mothers, rendering them shameful and stigmatized. Traditional schools usually discourage them from completing their high school studies. Irregular school attendance and scoring low marks due to motherhood often leads to girls dropping out of school, inevitably lowering their chances for future job opportunities and careers, and in turn, increasing youth unemployment rates. The eminent deprivation from various sectors of the economy as stipulated by the feminist theory illustrates that the exclusion of women in economic development is detrimental. It impedes teenage girls from their fundamental human right to education, exposing them to massive vulnerability. This makes it difficult for them to acquire the necessary skills to earn a living.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

This study focused on the social contexts typified by experiences of teenage pregnancy which have left teenage mothers marginalised because of dropping out of the academic system. The study thus set out to investigate the phenomena on the basis of which policies and programmes geared towards supporting such teenage mothers could be established. Of particular note of the study, are disadvantaged teenage girl/mothers at the Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, Lebone and Leoatle High Schools represent the population who should urgently be targeted for intervention because of being economically despaired and vulnerable. Regardless of socio-economic status, parents should be the immediate informants of teenagers on sexual and reproductive health, guide and counsel teenagers in ways that will enable them to make rational decisions. Initiation of robust vocational and entrepreneurship should be introduced in school curricula at primary school level to enable teenagers to earn a living with the skills they have acquired.

In addressing this issue the researcher recommends that:

**5.4.1** Parents and communities should take a leading role in informing teenagers and children on reproductive health and the responsibilities that early sexual relations bring about. Most of the interviewed teenage mothers reported that elders would hide crucial information that could have prevented them from engaging in such relationships from them. Parents should refrain from shifting the responsibility of reproductive health education for teenagers to health practitioners, teachers and the government. The family institution should be the first place to provide

counselling and guidance for teenager, channeling them towards being resilient and making rational decision. Adults should be responsible for sensitising their children to any possible risks facing children regardless of their age. Teenagers should also be involved in designing programmes for the prevention of teenage pregnancy.

**5.4.2** Vocational education should be offered at all formal schools to equip learners with skills for enabling them to earn the living. Unemployment rates, coupled with other economic pressures such as high inflation rates are on the rise. The government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) lack the capacity to employ all youth hence it is important for them to acquire artisanal skills and make a living out of those skills. To reduce premature exposure of teenagers to sexual encounters, parents and community leaders can be taught how to construct houses using readily available material such as sand bags, such that separate rooms are built for children and adults. These indigenous earth-bag constructions would enable adults to have privacy.

**5.4.3** The Government of Lesotho and the private sector should prioritise job creation for vulnerable families, both in the rural and urban areas of the country to tackle social ills such as transactional relations resulting in lifelong undesirable outcomes, such as STI infections, early pregnancy and mental health issues. People surviving on less than a dollar per day should be empowered economically, with more robust reproductive education being introduced to both schools and families on the importance of protecting girls. An evidence-based learning system intended to reduce both teenage pregnancies and injuries on infants should be introduced at schools to improve the lives of children and reduce the associated costs throughout the country. The government should also implement laws that protect the girl child. Modifying teenagers' attitudes towards sexuality and parenting requires changing their perceptions and challenging of taking care of a baby. Such initiatives could be done by proving an interactive hands-on curriculum pertaining to parenthood.

### **5.5 Reflections on the Findings Based on the Theory of Circular Cumulative Causation, Feminism and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

The findings of this study indicate that teenage pregnancy is slowly demolishing socio-economic development of Lesotho. This is due to teenagers, who should contribute to the economic growth of the country becoming a burden to the nation by teenage pregnancy. Socio-economic factors

such as poverty, underemployment, income inequality in the neighbourhood, peer pressure and low educational achievements predispose teenagers to early pregnancy. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory introduced five categories of human needs which influence people's behaviour. For an individual to transcend to satisfying higher-level needs, the theory indicates that basic needs should first be fulfilled. It is the desire to fulfil these needs that exposes teenage girls to pregnancy. The responsibilities that come with pregnancy perpetuate poverty they as teenage mothers lack skills and education, disabling them from adequately providing for their children.

In addition, according to Myrdal's theory of cumulative causation, poverty persists through interrelated vicious cycles which constitute a chain of cause and effect relationship where adverse circumstances lead to others, creating a trickle-down effect. Poverty, in this study, has been found to multiply across generations through teenage pregnancy. As such, teenage girls give birth and their children eventually become teenage parents; in the process, this cycle keeps on trickling down to the youngest generation due to socioeconomic pressures. They end up being marginalised by society, teachers, and peers. Their family member's perceptions about them also result in anguish. The challenges facing marginalised teenage mothers are best understood through the feminist theory which analyses gender inequality. This theory provides an insight into discrimination, oppression and patriarchy among others. Teenage pregnancy depicts massive scrutiny among teenage mothers and their children from the family, society, peers and teachers. Teenage mothers' educational progress has been found to be hindered by experiences of marginalisation by being despised by the family members, ridiculed by teachers, leading to their dropping out of formal schools, and being considered ill-mannered by society. Such experiences have contributed to their inability to acquire and improve their livelihood skills.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This study has unraveled socio-economic hurdles as contributing to teenage pregnancy in Lesotho, thereby rendering teenage mothers' prospects bleak. With lack of skills and steady income, teenage mothers and their children are also exposed to more vulnerability. Apart from human suffering due to food insecurity for teenage mothers, the country lose potentially unfulfilled talents which could otherwise contribute to the economic growth. Formal schools require teenage mothers to repeat the classes they were formerly in, prior to pregnancy, further slowing down their academic progress. Stakeholders in the Ministry of Education and Training



should study the dynamics of school mothers so as to cater for their educational advancement. Furthermore, laws that encourage teenage mothers to resume their studies need to be enacted through devising policies that make formal schools harmonious learning environments for teenage mothers.

Future research needs to be conducted on the interventions meant to address early unintended motherhood and reduce vulnerability of the girl child. The social justice and human rights interventions intended to resolve early motherhood need to be studied to efficiently address the socio-economic issues that lead to teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy interventions require collective efforts from families, teachers and communities to empower girls so they can enforce their stance freely, and make decisions that will benefit them in future, change their lives and enable them to lead dignified lives. In addressing poverty, creation of jobs for the vulnerable should be prioritized. Poverty exacerbates vulnerability of the girl child and teenagers at large hence the need for immediate government intervention.

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## Appendix

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter is to introduce Ms Aleke Aisevbonaye our postgraduate student in the Department of Development Studies, Faculty of Humanities at the National University of Lesotho, Roma. Ms Aisevbonaye is undertaking research leading to the production of a dissertation on *Unplanned Pregnancies and their Impact on Educational Progress: A Case Study of the Urban Areas of Lesotho*.

Therefore, we would like you to assist her with this study by having access to the information required to cover certain aspects of this topic. Be assured that any accessed information provided by you will be treated in the strictest confidential manner and for academic purposes only.

Any enquiries you may have concerning Ms Aisevbonaye's study, please direct them to me at the address and telephone numbers given in this letter.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance.

Yours sincerely,

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08/April/2022

## **Questionnaire prepared for teenage mothers**

The following questionnaire is carried out as part of a dissertation in pursuit of my master's degree of Development Studies at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), under the supervision of Professor Tšepiso Rantšo. The thesis of this paper is to study the impact of teenage pregnancy on the socioeconomic and educational progress of teenage mothers in schools: A case study of Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers, Leoatle and Lebone High Schools. The study was conducted only for academic purposes. Therefore the information provided was treated as anonymous as the respondents' names were not noted in the questionnaire. Nicknames will be used in place of the actual participants name to maintain anonymity.

1. Current Age

.....  
.....

2. Age at which pregnancy was discovered

.....  
.....

3. Residential area/Village

.....  
.....

4. What would you define teenage pregnancy as?

.....  
.....

5. In your opinion, what mainly causes high rates of pregnancy among adolescents?

.....  
.....

6. Do socio-economic factors such as poverty contribute to teenage pregnancy, and in what ways?

.....  
.....

7. What other factors contribute to teenage pregnancy?

.....  
.....

8. Did you use any form of birth control in the period you fell pregnant?

.....  
.....

9. Does residing in certain neighbourhoods result in teenage pregnancy?

.....  
.....

10. Do educational achievements of both teenagers and parents have an impact on a teenager's pregnancy?

.....  
.....

11. Did you experience any form of marginalization from your teachers, peers, family and society during your pregnancy? If yes, in what ways were you marginalized?



.....  
.....

12. Do social institutions such as family or society within which one is brought-up have an impact on one's sexual activity/behavior?

.....  
.....

13. Who does the responsibility of curbing teenage pregnancy lie with, teenagers, teachers or parents?

.....  
.....

14. What role do vocational institutions play in improving the livelihoods of teenage mothers?

.....  
.....

15. What skills have you learnt/acquired since joining Good Shepherd Centre for Teenage Mothers?

.....  
.....

16. How has Good Shepherd Center for Teenage Mothers changed your life?

.....  
.....

17. Would you encourage other teenage mothers to join the centre?

.....  
.....

18. What challenges have you encountered since joining the centre?

.....  
.....

19. What can be done by various stakeholders (Roman Catholic Church and/or the government) to improve the services provided by the centre?

.....  
.....

20. How do you plan on advancing the skills you have acquired from the centre for the improvement of your livelihood?

.....  
.....

21. What achievements have you seen teenage mothers who have previously been part of the centre achieve?

.....  
.....

**Thank you for your interest, time and information!**

**Focus group discussion questionnaire for teachers**

Good morning and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join us in discussing the impacts of teenage pregnancies on the socioeconomic and educational progress of teenagers. My name is AlekeAisevbonaye. I am from the National University of Lesotho, pursuing Master of Arts in Development Studies. This study is meant for academic purposes and the anonymity of respondents will be maintained. Your opinions are important in this study as they will aid in the success of the researcher’s dissertation and inform policy makers on what areas to prioritize, in dealing with teenage pregnancy and the ways in which teenage mothers can best be assisted in their learning process and acquiring of livelihood skills.

**Guidelines**

There is no right or wrong answer

There is no need to agree with the views of other respondents

The researcher will guide the discussion

1. In your opinion, what mainly causes high rates of pregnancy among adolescents in Lesotho?

.....  
.....

2. What challenges do you encounter in teaching teenage mothers?

.....  
.....

3. Why is it important for teenage mothers be allowed to pursue their studies in formal schools?

.....  
.....

4. Over the years that you started teaching teenage mothers, what can you say about their academic performance?

.....  
.....

5. In what ways are teenage mothers marginalized in your school?

.....  
.....

6. What impediments does teenage pregnancy have on teenagers' education, health and the economy?

.....  
.....

7. What interventions can be engaged in reducing teenage pregnancy?

.....  
.....

**Thank you for your interest, time and information!**