Principals' Perceptions of Teenage Pregnancy in Selected High Schools in the Qacha's Nek District, Lesotho

By

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this dissertation has been read and approved as having met the requirements of the Faculty of Education, National University of Lesotho for the award of Masters in Education (M. ED).

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this study on, Principals' Perceptions of Teenage Pregnancy in Selected High Schools in the Qacha's Nek District, Lesotho is wholly original. It has never been submitted for a degree or examination at any university for academic purposes, and all sources utilised have been identified and acknowledged with detailed citations.

Pulane Regina Majoro-Teke

July 2023

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Nkutu Joseph Teke, my daughter Mankopane Veronica Teke, my late son Makhoathi Teke (may he rest in peace), my late mother Malibuseng Majoro (may she rest in peace), and most importantly, my twin sister Puleng (may she rest in peace), who died at the crucial point in my research when I was analysing data.

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All friends and colleagues, thank you so much.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

WHO   World Health Organisation

UNFPA   United Nations Population Fund

UNESCO   United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNAIDS   Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

MOH   Ministry of Health

UN   United Nations

US   United States

MOET   Ministry of Education and Training

LBSE   Life Skills Based Sexuality Education

CGPU   Child and Gender Protection Unit

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This study investigated school principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's Nek district in Lesotho. A qualitative approach that used semi-structured interviews was employed to gather data from 10 principals who were intentionally selected from 10 high schools in the Qacha's Nek district. The findings of the study revealed that teenage pregnancy is a serious issue experienced in many schools in Lesotho. The study also established that when teenage pregnancy occurs in schools, it interferes with teaching and learning because teachers do not have knowledge and skills required to deal with pregnant learners. Also, teenage pregnancy has a negative impact on the education of girls who fall pregnant at school because they encounter challenges such as, missing school on a regular basis, poor school performance, stigmatisation and discrimination which often result in girls dropping out of school.

The study has also established that there is no national policy that guides schools on how to deal with teenage pregnancy. As a result, schools appear to be dealing with the issue of learners' pregnancies differently. The study, therefore, recommends that the Ministry of Education and Training develops a national policy that guides schools on dealing with learners' pregnancies. It is also recommended that the implementation of Life Skills-Based Sexuality Education in schools be improved by providing teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to manage this programme effectively, and support students with sexual difficulties affecting them in their everyday lives.

Keywords: Perception, School principal, Teenager, Teenage pregnancy

CHAPTER ONE: STUDY BACKGROUD

1.1   INTRODUCTION

One of the concerns facing modern society is adolescent pregnancy since it affects the health and finances of young mothers and their children (Undiyaundeye, Agba & Mandeun, 2015; World Health Orgnisation [WHO], 2019). Learning institutions have also begun to acknowledge that teenage pregnancy is a problem caused by factors far beyond poor behavioural problems. Teenage pregnancy results in female learners leaving or being expelled from learning institutions before they complete their studies (Birshall, 2018). As a result, many of these institutions are beginning to see this as a serious challenge that needs to be addressed (Soba, 2020). It is on this basis that this study was conceptualised. The study examined the school principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy in Lesotho schools. As such, this chapter introduces the study. The chapter presents the background to the study, problem statement, the purpose of the research, the research questions, research aim and objectives, and significance of the study. Thereafter, theoretical background, research methodology and the layout of the chapters are presented.

1.2   BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Teenage girls between the ages of 13 and 19 who become pregnant are said to be experiencing teenage pregnancy (Kanku & Mash, 2010). However, recent research has evidenced that young girls aged 10 years have become pregnant. Statistics from South Africa, which show that 34, 587 teenagers gave birth in 2020, and that 688 of them were between the ages of 9 and 10, have proven this (Bhengu, 2021). Teenage pregnancy is considered a worldwide problem experienced in low and middle-income countries as well as high-income countries (Jonas, Crutzen, Vanden Borne, Sewpaul & Reddy, 2016). According to WHO (2020) statistics, each year, approximately 21 million girls aged 15 to19 in underdeveloped regions become pregnant, and about 12 million of them give birth (Louiza & Liang, 2013). Of these numbers, 20% occur in developed countries, whereas 80% are in underdeveloped ones. Additionally, statistics show that 36.4 million women worldwide become pregnant and give birth to children before turning the age of 18, which accounts for nearly 95% of teenage pregnancies (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2013).

According to Louiza and Liang (2013), Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in 2013. In this region, half of all mothers were under the age of 20.

Odimegwu and Mkwananzi (2016), confirmed that annually, out of 1000 teenage girls in the Sub-Saharan region, 101 girls are likely to give birth. According to this report, the number of teenage pregnancies in the Sub-Sahara region almost doubles the global average. In addition, Louiza and Liang (2013) also pointed out that, Niger, Mozambique, Malawi, Uganda, and Cameroon were among the 14 Sub-Saharan African nations where more than 30% of new mothers were under the age of 18 years old.

Lesotho is one of the Sub–Saharan countries that is also experiencing a problem of teenage pregnancy. In Lesotho, for instance, 60 percent of females between the ages of 15 and 19 are mothers or will soon become parents, according to a 2017 report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), making it one of the top countries for early and unwanted pregnancies (UNFPA, 2021). Also, compared to most Sub–Saharan countries, Lesotho has more girls than boys enrolled in schools. However, the enrolment of girls in school education decreases as the education levels increase. This indicates that girls drop out of school more than boys as they progress through the education system. The decrease in girls' enrollment in schools has been attributed to many factors, including teenage pregnancy (UNESCO, 2012). This girls' dropout also appears to tally with the ages identified as critical for teenage pregnancy (15 to 19 years). For example, the Lesotho Demographic and Health Survey of 2014 indicates that about 19 percent of women in Lesotho start having children between the ages of 15 and 19. According to figures from the Lesotho Ministry of Health, this 19 percent includes 4% of women who will be expecting their first child and 15% of women who will have a child by the time they reach 19 (Ministry of Health, [MOH], 2016).

1.2.1 Causes of Teenage Pregnancy

Several factors contribute to teenage pregnancy. According to Nkosi and Pretorius (2019), the main causes of teenage pregnancy are exposure to westernized society, mobile phones, sexualized media, a desire for money and social prestige, sugar daddies, and a lack of family communication about sex. Other factors associated with teenage pregnancy include poverty, peer pressure, a lack of education about sexual and reproductive health, unfavourable cultural norms, and inadequate parental guidance, especially in poor and developing countries. (Dunor, 2015).

1.2.2 Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on Learners

Teenage pregnancy poses severe challenges to many underaged girls, particularly those who cannot complete secondary education. Most of these girls, particularly those in developing countries with limited health facilities and resources, often face health problems related to pregnancy and delivery, which sometimes lead to fatal complications (WHO, 2006). Other than that, teenage pregnancy, especially for teenage learners, results in social and educational problems, such as being stigmatised and discriminated against at school and in their communities. This is worsened by gender norms and practices that often disadvantage women and force girls to drop out of school in the early stages of their pregnancies and not return to school after they have delivered (World Bank, 2019). This suggests that teenage pregnancy contributes to the decline of school-going girls and lowers girls' opportunities to acquire high education qualifications. It again decreases the skilled social capital that, results in high poverty rates and other poor life outcomes among children of teenage mothers (Chawatu, 2016).

1.2.3 Strategies for Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy in Schools

Teenage pregnancy can result in a bleak future for many young girls if left unattended. Either prevention or support can address teenage pregnancy. Ramulumo and Pitsoe's (2013) view is that the school management teams have to manage learner pregnancy and to ensure compliance with the learner pregnancy policy where there is one. Mothiba and Maputla (2012) also believe that, comprehensive sexuality education programmes that can be implemented in schools to address concerns of sexuality and reproductive health are among the techniques that could be used to prevent learner pregnancy. Through this education, girls can be equipped with knowledge and skills they need to make mature sex decisions. Teenagers can also receive support from agencies that can assist them in coping with unplanned pregnancies and how they affect their health, social and economic concerns (Hayward, 2011).

Some countries in the developed world, including the United States, the Netherlands, and Brazil, address teenage pregnancy through a variety of teenage pregnancy prevention programmes, such as school–based sex education (Brown, 2013). In some countries, these prevention programs have borne fruitful results. For instance, the adolescent birth rate is three and a half times lower in Germany, where sex education is extensively taught and intended to improve students' literacy and other developmental requirements. Additionally, Germany has an about four and a half times lower rate of teenage abortions. A mandatory sex education curriculum in France also starts when learners are 13 years old, and parents are not permitted to remove their adolescent children from the programme (United Nations, 2012). In addition,

three times less teenage pregnancies occur in France than in the United States. (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), 2012; United Nations, 2012).

In Africa, a few countries are also making efforts to fight teenage pregnancy. Such countries include Kenya, South Africa, and Lesotho. The Kenyan education system has introduced a policy that protects pregnant female learners from school expulsion or suspension. Although, the policy gives learners the right to continue their education, schools do not recognise or implement it because when teachers and administrators learn about girls' pregnancies, still expel from school (Njoka, 2016).

According to Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod and Mabusela (2009), efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy in South African schools have included peer education programmes, mass media, school-based sex education, and others. The country has also introduced a policy on preventing and managing learner pregnancy. However, despite all these efforts, South Africa is still faced with teenage pregnancy challenges because most of the school management teams are not even aware of the policy and other efforts taken by the government. As a result, this policy is not implemented in schools. In addition, schools do not have institutional-based policies on managing pregnancy for learners (Ramulumo, 2014).

In Lesotho, some efforts have been made towards a fight against teenage pregnancy. For example, the Ministry of Education has introduced sex education across the school system as part of the national curriculum to discourage teenage pregnancies, early unintended marriages, and new HIV infections (Mputsoe, 2021). However, there has not been any policy in the Lesotho education system on teenage pregnancy. This has been evidenced by a study on a situational analysis of early and unintended pregnancy undertaken in 2018 confirmed that the absence of a policy in Lesotho is a notable gap in the fight against learner pregnancy, prevention and management (Selibeng, 2020).

While there is a general understanding among education stakeholders about the importance of girls accessing education and being retained in schools until they complete their basic education, a lack of a policy on learner pregnancy still disadvantages these girls in some ways as individual schools and school proprietors deal with cases of pregnancies in different ways. Girls are sometimes expelled or suspended from schools once their pregnancies are noticed (Selibeng, 2020).

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

As discussed in the preceding sections, teenage pregnancy is a global challenge that is most pronounced in low and medium-income countries. About 95 percent of pregnancies occur in developing countries (Louisa & Liang, 2013). Like other developing countries, Lesotho is vulnerable to teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy, especially among girls who are in school, is one of the main issues that Lesotho's education stakeholders are concerned about. The idea that teenagers engage in sexual activity without a clear knowledge of the consequences is at the heart of this concern (Moliko, 2010). In addition, the health studies carried out in Lesotho have confirmed that teenage pregnancy is high in this country (Ntjabane, 2013; Phafoli, Van Aswagen & Alberts, 2007). The latest statistics, by Lesotho's 2014 Demographic and Health Survey, indicate that the proportion of teenagers who became pregnant between 2004 and 2009 was 20 percent and 19 percent in 2014 (MOH, 2016). These statistics show that teenage pregnancy in Lesotho has held steady over the years, and this suggests unfavourable life conditions for these girls and their children in the future.

The most worrying aspect is how teenage pregnancy affects the educational achievement of those who become pregnant (Chang'ach, 2012). In most cases, when a female learner becomes pregnant, the chances she has to continue with her education during pregnancy and after delivery are very limited. Pregnant students in some schools in Africa are stigmatized, and often this stigma starts at the top with the principal, who usually expels such a student while a person who impregnated her is left to run amok. Also, this punishment to the female learner is often inconsiderate whether the sexual conduct that resulted in the pregnancy was coerced or voluntary (Quist-Adade, 2017). Mpanza and Nzima (2010) also stated that the majority of institutions are resistant to allow pregnant students to complete their education because it is conventional wisdom that pregnant teenagers should not attend school.

Moliko (2010) observed that in every academic year in Lesotho, many girls in high school (secondary education) leave the educational system due to pregnancies. Lebina (2017) too has observed that despite the scaling up of health services provided in schools, there are still school-going girls who fall pregnant. This gives the impression that, with regard to managing teenage pregnancy, health education offered in schools is not effective.

Another problem associated with teenage pregnancy is that when girls (young mothers) return to school after they had delivered, they often face a challenge of balancing between taking care of the newly born baby and their studies. This results in the girl's academic performance being

negatively affected. Often, this poor performance discourages these learners, and they end up giving up their education to pursue early marriages or economic activities for survival (Wall-Wieler, Roos & Nickel, 2016).

Since teenage pregnancy is a phenomenon which does not only affect teenagers who experience it but also the schools as well as teenager's guardians or parents, it is essential that the education sector plays an important role and collaborates with other sectors to ensure girl child right to education by preventing and managing learner pregnancy (Selibeng, 2020). It is believed that educational environments present a chance to give high school students the knowledge and abilities that can help them improve their sexual and reproductive health (Taylor et al., 2014). That is, if schools provide interventions that combine reproductive health and sex education, unplanned teenage pregnancies could be reduced because learners would be empowered to say no to sex and encouraged to postpone sex to the appropriate time. For those who choose to engage in sexual activity, these interventions could also result in and encourage safe sex behaviours (Kohler, Manhart & Lafferty, 2008; Undiyaundeye et al., 2015).

Different studies have investigated the issue of teenage pregnancy and how it is dealt with in Lesotho schools. For example, Moliko (2010) investigated teachers' perceptions of teenage pregnancy, while Molapo, Adams, Zulu and Mabusela (2014) study focused on school-going mothers' experiences. Mabeleng (2019)'s study investigated factors influencing adolescent fertility in Lesotho, while Thekiso (2016) studied the marginalization of school-going mothers in high schools. However, there has been a limited focus on school principals and teenage pregnancy in Lesotho. As a result, little is known about how school principals deal with this issue. As such, the question of principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy still needs to be dealt with because principals are key to the implementation and management of policies in schools. Also, this information would be necessary to the policymakers and other important education stakeholders in Lesotho who aspire to see a situation where teenage pregnancy in Lesotho schools reduces dramatically. Therefore, the focus of this study was to investigate how principals perceive the issue of learners' pregnancies.

1.4   RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's Nek district of Lesotho. Therefore, the main question of this study was: What are the perceptions of principals about teenage pregnancy? The questions that were asked to collect data that would provide answers for this question were as follows:

1. How do principals understand teenage pregnancy?
2. How do principals deal with teenage pregnancy?
3. What are the challenges of teenage pregnancy in schools?
4. What role should schools play in mitigating teenage pregnancy?

1.5   RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to collect information on the perceptions of principals about teenage pregnancy. So, the objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To establish principals' understanding of teenage pregnancy.
2. To examine how principals deal with teenage pregnancy.
3. To establish the challenges of teenage pregnancy in schools.
4. To identify the role that schools should play in mitigating teenage pregnancy.

1.6   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will enable stakeholders in the education sector to formulate programmes, models, guidelines and strategies that could provide necessary information to learners to educate and guide them on how to prevent early and unwanted pregnancies. The study will also contribute towards informing education policy-makers and stakeholders to develop education policies on managing teenage pregnancies in schools. The information might also help generate good morals and values among learners in schools and their communities. The investigation could further contribute to the body of knowledge about the problems related to teenage pregnancies in educational settings.

1.7   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study has adopted Purkey and Siegel (2002) 's Invitational Leadership Theory as a theoretical framework. The goal of the invitational leadership theory is to invite all interested parties to success. It entails conveying encouraging signals to people in order to help them feel appreciated, competent, accountable, and worthwhile. Policies, programs, procedures, and physical settings of the institutions are frequently used to convey the messages (Lynch, 2015). The theory also takes a holistic approach and emphasises behaviours that support the notion that everyone is intrinsically motivated. According to this theory, leadership purposefully cultivates a friendly, cooperative, and collaborative school culture by conveying helpful

messages that support students in realising their full potential (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). As such, this theory provides the basis to explore principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The interpretivist paradigm underpins this study. This paradigm holds the view that people's perceptions of reality and knowledge are shaped by their experiences and how they are understood in particular cultural and historical contexts (Ryan, 2018). Fundamentally, the interpretivism paradigm enables researchers to see the world via participants' perspectives and experiences. The interpretivist paradigm also encourages researchers to build and interpret their understanding from collected data in order to find solutions to their research questions (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Additionally, this research study has followed the qualitative research approach to explore school principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy. This approach is described by Punch (2015) as a kind of social science study that gathers and analyses non-numerical data in an attempt to derive meaning from the data to better understand social life through study participants.

Additionally, a case study research design was adopted in this study. In case study research, a specific event, circumstance, organization, or social group is thoroughly and comprehensively examined (Schoch, 2020). In order for the researcher to get insight into the participants' life experiences, perspectives, or opinions, face-to-face, one-on-one semi-structured interviews that were audio-recorded were used in this study (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Purposive selection, which is defined as the deliberate selection of informants based on their capacity to illuminate a certain theme, concept, or phenomena, was used to select the participants from the high schools in the Qacha's Nek district (Robinson, 2014). Thematic analysis was also used in this research study to analyse the data that had been gathered. Throughout the analytic process, several themes and sub-themes arose, and they were coded, arranged, and interpreted to create meaning from the gathered data.

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined, as they are understood and used in this study.

1.9.1 Perception

According to Mcdonald (2011), perception involves how one sees the world. Schacter (2011), defines perception as the recognition and interpretation of sensory information, including a person's reaction to it. Also, Cambridge Business English Dictionary (2020) defines it as a

thought, belief, or opinion that is frequently held by many people and based on how things seem. In the context of this study, perception is used to describe the principals' attitudes and beliefs on teenage pregnancy.

1.9. 2 School principal

A principal is defined as the school leader who sets the school's tone (Williamson, 2011). Williamson (2011) goes on to say that principals are active in all facets of their school's operations, from overseeing the daily operations to collaborating with employees and parents, to put a common vision into action. Lynch (2021) also defines a principal as the head of the school who is in charge of all its activities as well as maintaining its various systems. A principal in this study refers to the head of a school who is in charge of all daily operations, including decision-making.

1.9.3 Teenager

The term, teenager, is best understood in the context of the adolescent growth stage. According to Bell (2016), teenager and adolescent are frequently used interchangeably. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2017) defines adolescence as a period of life between the ages of 10 and 19 that is marked by physical development, emotional, psychological, and behavioural changes, resulting in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence, according to Steinberg (2014), is a developmental stage that occurs between childhood and adulthood and can be distinguished by the biological, cognitive, psychological, and social changes that take place during this time. In this study, a person between the ages of 13 and 19 is referred to as a teenager or adolescent.

1.9.4 Teenage pregnancy

When a female between the ages of 13 and 19 gets pregnant before finishing high school, the situation is referred to as teenage pregnancy. This female would have few or no skills to enable her financial dependence; she would be living at home with her parents and entirely dependent on them, and she would be mentally and emotionally immature (Segen's Medical Dictionary, 2011). Cook and Cameron (2015) claim that the phrase, teenage pregnancy, is frequently used to refer to young women who fall pregnant before reaching their country's specific legal adulthood age. For this study, teenage pregnancy entails the case where a female learner aged between 13 and 19 in secondary school conceives a baby, and the educational progress of such a learner becomes negatively affected.

1.10 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This study is structured into five chapters:

Chapter 1 provides an overview of this study. The chapter explores the background to the study, the problem statement, the research purpose and questions, the research aim and the objectives, and significance of the study. The chapter also provides the theoretical framework, research methodology and the outline of the study.

Chapter 2 reports on the literature that was reviewed for this study. The chapter covers the theoretical background of this study and reviews existing studies relating to teenage pregnancy.

Chapter 3. This chapter describes the research methodology that was used in this study. It presents the research paradigm that oriented this study, research approach, research design, population and the selection of participants, data collection methods and instruments. Additionally, ethical considerations and trustworthiness are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4. This chapter presents the results from the analysis of the data that was collected through the interviews in this study and analysed using a thematic approach.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of this study, draws conclusions, describes the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for further studies.

1.11 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced and gave an overview of this study. The chapter described the background to the study, the problem statement, the significance of the study and research questions and the objectives. It also gave an overview of the theoretical framework and the research methodology. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework and the literature reviewed for this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to investigate school principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's Nek District. This chapter outlines the review of the related literature. The chapter is organised into four main sections: the Introduction (this section), Theoretical Framework, Existing related studies, and Chapter Summary.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INVITATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

This study was guided by the invitational leadership theory by Purkey & Siegel (2002). Invitational leadership, at its core, is a theory of practice that examines the entire environment in which leaders operate (Purkey & Siegel 2003). Purkey (2003) further states that as a theory of practice, it is a powerful technique for conveying considerate, appropriate messages meant to call forth the achievement of the greatest human potential as well as for detecting and altering those forces that undermine and destroy potential. The purpose of invitational leadership is to engage with all aspects of human existence and chance, in order to enrich, fulfill, and reinforce people's lives. The invitations are essentially communications sent to people to let them know they are capable, accountable, and valuable (Day, Harris & Hadfield, 2001).

Purkey (2003) also asserts that a fundamental and somewhat radical assumption of invitational leadership theory relates to human motivation. This radical assumption asserts that there is only one kind of human motivation, an internal and continuous incentive that every person has all the time, in all places, and during all activities. Invitational leaders assume that motivation is a force that comes from within each person. Therefore, inviting leaders call on people to kindly consider themselves as capable of taking on difficult tasks, conquering hurdles, and achieving great things in order to unleash each person's natural energy.

In this study, the principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy were examined using this theory, which has the capacity to recognize factors that undermine potential. In order to deal with the issue of teenage pregnancy in secondary schools, principals need to be invitational leaders who aim to ensure that the entire school environment is conducive to learning. As school leaders, the principals have to devise means and strategies for teenage learners to realise that they possess the human potential and are motivated enough to overcome such challenges as

engaging in early and unintended pregnancies. Even those learners who fall pregnant while still at school should be empowered to observe that they have capabilities that, even in their state of pregnancy, they can still complete their secondary education.

The invitational leadership theory was also found suitable to form the basis of this study because it encourages school leaders to build inclusive learning environments where learners can reflect on decisions they make and how these decisions are likely to affect their present and future. Such environments may help prevent teenage pregnancy. Fundamentally, this model seeks to invite and ensure that everyone succeeds in terms of schooling and that the environments that are created are inclusive, and ensure that no learner is left behind or falls through the cracks (drops out) of the system (McKnight & Martin, 2015; Stillion & Siegel, 2005).

2.2.1 Four Guiding Principles of Invitational Leadership Theory

Purkey and Novak (2016) argue that in order to change a school environment, a leader must understand and apply the four essential elements or principles of invitational leadership theory. These elements are optimism, respect, trust, and intentionality. Describing these essential elements of principles, Day et al. (2001) define optimism as a belief in people's capacity for growth and development, respect as the recognition of each person's inherent worth, and trust as having confidence in everyone's potential, honesty, and obligations. On the other hand, Purkey and Siegel (2003) define intentionality as the conscious decision to take actions that will help one carry out and accomplish the established goals. These fundamental principles are discussed further hereafter.

Optimism: Of these four principles of the invitational leadership model, optimism is considered to be the very basic to all of them. This is because an optimistic leader views challenges as chance to demonstrate skills and perceives what initially looks impossible to be only a difficulty (Stillion & Siegel, 2005). Stillion and Siegel (2005) further view the optimistic leader as one who embraces challenges and change, expecting the outcomes to be positive.

Since teenage pregnancy is generally viewed as a big challenge in schools, optimism serves as a key and appropriate component that would guide school principals to be positive in addressing learner pregnancies so that they could be reduced. Also, the school principals would not consider teenage pregnancy as a challenge that cannot be dealt with but a problem that invites them to exercise their capabilities.

Respect: Respect is one of the basic requirements of every human nature. People should be treated with respect if they have skills and are exceptionally helpful and responsible (Purkey, 1992). Stillion and Siegel (2005) affirm that demonstrating respect for companies and school communities creates a welcoming, inclusive environment where everyone can prosper. In the context of this study, it is essential that school principals deal with the issue of teenage pregnancy with respect so that those who happen to fall pregnant cannot leave school before completing their secondary education.

Trust: Trust is also an essential component of invitational leadership theory closely related to Respect. It requires having faith in our own and other people's skills, morals, and obligations (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). According to Burns' (2007) analysis of trust, it is the foundation of an effective team. Teamwork is completely worthless without trust. In the current study, trust plays a significant role because the issue of teenage pregnancy requires principals who build a strong team of teachers and other stakeholders. This can enable learners to view a school as a place where they could be assisted to shape their lives for the better, by making right decisions concerning sex. Additionally, in order to succeed in their plans to mitigate teenage pregnancy, school principals should consider trust as key aspect.

Intentionality: According to Stillion and Siegel (2005), every success of individuals depends on the knowledge of the set goals and the clarity of how they should be achieved. Purkey (1992) adds that intentionality can be useful in leadership since it serves as constant reminder of what is truly important in providing for people. This component plays a crucial role in this study because the school principals are expected to set clear teenage pregnancy management strategies that are intended to help reduce learners' pregnancies.

2.2.2 Five Dimensions of the Inviting Leadership Framework

Purkey and Novak (2016) have identified five areas from the invitational leadership theory that form a framework for successful school leadership. These areas are places, policies, programmes, processes, and people. Purkey and Siegel (2013) assert that the five Ps, as they are sometimes known, help to foster a supportive learning environment and, ultimately, a healthy and effective organization.

Places: According to Purkey (2003), places facilitate change since they are the elements of any environment that are most obvious and observable. They have the potential for rapid growth. As a result, school administrators can endeavor to improve the perceptions of their institutions and foster an environment and culture where all students are motivated and take their education

seriously. This limits learners' opportunities to be involved in activities that can result in unplanned pregnancies. Hansen (1998) contends that when schools have a healthy school climate, they demonstrate an atmosphere that promotes decision-making, and this is defined by involvement, cooperation, and collaboration among teams, organisations, and communities.

Policies: Fowler (2004) proclaims that invitational leaders must ensure that school policies are in place to restrict, contain, and suppress all originality in people, regardless of whether they create positive and innovative opportunities for the school. Thus, invitational leaders should develop policies that foster a positive school culture that pursues win-win outcomes. This encourages a way of thinking about how to make human connections mutually beneficial (Covey, 1989).

In relation to this study, school principals are expected to provide guidelines that support schools in their attempts to control the incidence or rate of teenage pregnancies. These policies should set forth specific instructions for the methods the school employs to prevent pregnancies as well as the decision-making procedures used when teenage pregnancies occur.

Appealing programmes: This is yet another element of the framework for inviting leadership that determines an organization's success or failure (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). School leaders are often blamed for providing a limited range of programmes, most of which are exclusive to a certain calibre of learners and are not invitational. Such programmes do not motivate some learners to participate. Consequently, learners develop a sense of exclusion and being disregarded and, as a result, develop a sense of being not an essential part of a school (Burns, 2007; Hansen, 1998). With regard to this study, principals should ensure that the school's programmes are inclusive, inviting, and motivating all learners to participate in school life. This will keep all learners fully preoccupied with activities that interest them, providing them with limited opportunities to think of non-school related activities such as engaging in sexual activities that often lead to early and unintended pregnancies.

Processes: How the principal manages processes in a school significantly influences the school's success (Purkey & Siegel, 2013; Stillion & Siegel, 2005). For instance, some leaders take full control over a school, so anything they say or do must be accepted by subordinates. Cleveland (2002) observes that such leadership style often results in other members of the school community (teachers and learners) believing that a school belongs to the principal alone and that their participation is unimportant. Cleveland (2002) further argues that such a

management style turns to restrict the participation of others, with a deal of 'take it or leave it'. Cleveland (2002) observes that this does not work.

In contrast, inviting leaders actively engage all parties in decision-making procedures in order to establish a vibrant school culture (Burns, 2007). School principals who follow this model can open a platform where all stakeholders, including teachers and learners, can openly express their views about issues concerning them and the school. This allows the entire school community to develop a sense of belonging and a warranted role to participate in the school activities such as planning for school improvement and other related change activities.

People: People are another visible component of a school. They are the most essential element influencing school success (Purkey & Siegel, 2013). As observed by Burns and Martin (2010), people express confidence in their ability to influence the development of a positive school culture. According to Hansen (1998), investing in people can lead to lasting transformation. This investment should include developing concordant relationships among students, parents, teachers and administrators to enhance the overall ambience and quality of instruction (Kelly, Brown, Butler, Gittens, Taylor & Zeller, 1998). Burns (2007) adds that the likelihood of helping a person become a member of a successful team increases when they are included in tasks that need teamwork and successful results. People are central to this study because whatever plans and decisions are made in any school, people are always involved in the implementation.

The "Five Ps," which make up the framework of the invitational leadership theory, are crucial in general because they offer invitational school leaders an almost infinite number of options to address leadership and management issues comprehensively. Additionally, the theory and practice of invitational leadership theory is essential since it is grounded in real-world experience and serves as a practical example that managers may utilise to demonstrate the importance of caring for both themselves and others in reliable ways (Schmidt, 1997).

2.3   RESEARCH ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY

There has been a lot of research conducted on teenage pregnancy. Studies have investigated this phenomenon from a variety of perspectives, including the factors contributing to teenage pregnancy, the effects of teenage pregnancy on teaching and learning, and strategies used in schools to mitigate teenage pregnancy.

2.3.1 Schools' Views on Teenage Pregnancy

When it comes to secondary education context, teenage pregnancy remains a challenge that disrupts teaching and learning. This disruption is caused by pregnant learners who miss classes, sleep during teaching time and cannot do physical training as the curriculum demands (Simelane, 2019). Some studies have established that school principals and teachers hold a negative attitude towards pregnant learners, and as a result, they are likely to provide ineffective support concerning teaching and learning. Undie, Mackenzie, Birungi, Barongo, Ahindukha and Omondi (2015) reported that the principals who participated in their studies viewed teenage pregnancy as some form of disability. In addition, these principals were concerned about the reputations their schools suffered because of teenage pregnancy. They further complained that their local communities accused them of promoting immorality in their schools because of the rising numbers of teenage pregnancies. These principals appeared to be more concerned about the reputation teenage pregnancy had on their schools and professionalism than how they could curb this problem. Teachers who participated in Du Preez, Botha, Rabie and Manyathi 's study (2019) also raised similar complaints about being trained and employed as teachers rather than midwives. These studies were supported by Sibeko's study (2012), which established that teachers felt overburdened by a surge in adolescent pregnancy and unplanned births in their schools.

2.3.2 Factors Contributing to Teenage Pregnancy

Other studies explored factors influencing teenage pregnancies in schools such as limited knowledge relating to sexual matters and family planning, poverty, peer pressure, a lack of parental guidance, and a lack of knowledge.

Limited knowledge relating to sexuality and related matters

Lack of knowledge on sexual matters also results in teenage pregnancy. As teenagers grow up, their curiosity about knowing more about sex increases to the extent that they feel pressure to practice it. Supporting this view, Manzi et al. (2018) argue that teenagers, who have limited information and are not adequately guided about sexuality and related matters, are more likely to be misinformed and end up making poor decisions about sex.

Mataboge, Beukes and Nolte (2014) also claim that limited access to information about sex and sexuality is associated with less knowledge of the use of contraceptives and pregnancy prevention. WHO (2012) also associates teenage pregnancy with limited knowledge among teenagers on the services available for reproductive health.

Additionally, according to WHO (2020), many nations' limited knowledge of sexuality education amongst teenagers contributes to their lack of understanding of sexuality and family planning as well as their inability to put such information into effect. Thus, a lack of knowledge is often the cause of teenage risky behaviour and poor decision-making (Mchunu, Peltzer, Tutshana & Seutlwadi, 2012).

Limited access to contraceptives

Teenage pregnancy is further linked to limited access to contraceptives. Kagolo's (2022) study found low use of contraceptives among teenagers. Other studies have supported these findings by listing a range of factors that are responsible for the low use of contraceptives. These include but are not limited to the teenagers':

- Limited physical access to services that provide contraceptives;
- Low knowledge about contraceptives and their use
- reluctance to admit that they are sexually active and, as a result, feeling embarrassed to seek contraception (Kagolo, 2022; Kassa, Arowajolu, Odukogbe & Alemayeku, 2018);
- Negative attitudes they experience from nurses towards them when they seek services from the health centres (Mardi, Ebadi, Shahbazi & Moghadam, 2018).

These findings are also supported by WHO (2020), which predicts that 225 million women in underdeveloped countries cannot postpone or stop having children because they do not use any form of contraception.

Poverty

Nyangaresi, Injendi and Majanga 's study (2021), have also established that high poverty levels in most families expose teenage girls to premature sexual activities with older males who can meet their social demands, which their parents cannot afford. These findings are further supported by the study conducted by Manzi et al. (2018), which revealed that children whose parents fail to provide for their basic needs often become victims of teenage pregnancy or early child marriages. Bantebya, Kyoheirwe and Watson's (2015) study on teenagers from low-income families confirmed that teenagers from poor socio-economic backgrounds deprecate and perceive themselves as inferior to others. As a result, they engage in early sexual encounters in an effort to attract other people's interest and recognition. Thus, these young girls are more likely to become pregnant. Thobejane (2015) further revealed that teenagers who engage with older males in exchange for presents like cash and clothes come from low-income

families. This was further supported by Ajala (2014), whose findings pointed out that teenagers from the poorest families are more likely to become pregnant than those from wealthy families.

Peer pressure

The results that emerged from the study by Thobejane (2015) indicated that almost 100% of respondents in the study stated that they had friends who played an important role in their decisions to engage in sexual activities. For example, about 80 percent of Thobejane's (2015) study respondents indicated that their friends influenced their decisions to engage in sexual behaviour. Isuku's (2015) and Mwinga's (2012) view is that peer pressure can affect a typical teenager's concept of sexuality to the extent that teenagers tend to engage in sexual behaviours because they want to be acceptable to their peers. In Alhassan's (2015) study, more than 29 percent of pregnant teenagers claimed that they had felt pressure to have sex by their peers, and as a way of maintaining friendships and ensuring that they fit in with their peers, they started engaging in sexual activities. In support, Hoskins and Simons (2015), have observed that the chances of teenagers, who associate with peers who participate in risky sexual behaviour, engaging in similar activities, are increased. Peer pressure, according to Mogotsi (2021), significantly influences teenagers' sexual decisions since these teenagers frequently ask their peers for sex advice, even when the advice they receive may not be accurate.

Lack of parental guidance

Some studies have established that, in some instances, teenage pregnancy occurs due to a lack of parental guidance. According to the findings, some parents and guardians are unwilling to educate children about teenage pregnancies and sexual behaviour or fail to comprehend the need for sexuality education. Therefore, teenagers are frequently given inadequate guidance during their adolescent era of development (Ahorlu, Pfeiffer & Obrist, 2015). Bastien, Kajula and Muhwezi's (2011) study discovered that most parents were uncomfortable discussing sexuality issues with their teenage daughters. The study suggests that the reluctance shown by parents and guardians could be due to both parents and guardians believing that sexual discussions can make their girls become sexually active. Bornstein (2012) further established that some parents believed that engaging in sexual discussions with their children could be misinterpreted by children as permitting them or encouraging them to engage in sexual activities. Otengah and Tabitha (2018) found similar results that some parents perceived sexuality as a sensitive topic. Therefore, any discussions about sexuality between parents and children were shameful, immoral, inappropriate, and unacceptable. These studies concluded that this lack of communication between parents and children limits parents' opportunities to

know their children, perceive any changes in their children, or even allow children to express their concerns regarding sexuality to their parents (Pardun, L'Engle & Brown, 2015). According to Simelane (2019), some parents cannot guide their children because of the limited time they spend with them. Most of the time, these parents live away from home because of work-related issues. Such parents spend relatively little time with their children. As a result, they fail to find time to guide their teenage girls on issues relating to sexual behaviour. A similar view has been made by Bhengu (2016), who observed that parents who are often absent from home are unable to have sexuality-related conversations with their children. As a result, teenage girls often end up making decisions about sex, based on misinformation. These studies have established that parent-child communication can also contribute significantly to teenage pregnancy.

Social media

Weiss (2012) observes the influence of social media on teenagers' sexual behaviour. Glamorous television and magazine shots of famous pregnant teenagers can influence teenagers to engage in sexual activity. For example, Gyan's (2013) study has established that media contributes significantly to teenage pregnancy because it portrays sex as effortless, enjoyable and glamorous and makes it seem as though everyone is engaging in it. As a result, teenagers become easily hooked to sex. Fung and Zhimin (2015) also discovered that exposure to pornography influences adolescents' thoughts and behaviour, inspiring them to engage in inappropriate sexual desires. Vulnerable teenagers can become psychologically addicted and develop sexual disorders. Bedzo and Manorkey (2019) have further established that most teenagers use the internet at least once daily to listen to sexually explicit music or chat about sex with people they do not know on their mobile phones. As this study indicated, sex has become the most popular subject that young people are exposed to on the internet. Similarly, the rates of unplanned sexual activities of these young people are on the rise. Basically, many of the research studies on this topic, that have been analysed have shown that there is a direct link between the quantity of sexual content that children see and their level of sexual behaviour or their future plans to have sex (Pardun et al., 2015).

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse also can cause unintended pregnancy. Raj and Bochmer (2013) argue that more than one-third of girls' population in several countries claim that their first sexual contact was forced upon them. Mogotsi (2021), whose study established that many teenagers were experiencing traumatizing events that include forced sex, supports these claims. Additionally,

Franjie (2018) asserts that teenage pregnancies are frequently caused by teenagers being tricked, forced, or bullied into having sex.

Abuse of Alcohol and Drugs

Maemeko, Nkengbesa and Chokomosi (2018) and Madlala, Sibaya and Ngxogo (2018) have observed that alcohol and drug abuse were also responsible for teenage pregnancy. The results of Maemeko et al. (2018) show that the participating students acknowledged that when under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, they frequently make poor judgements and get pregnant. According to Madlala et al. (2018), who support this claim, the majority of the young people who participated in their study stated that the use of alcohol and drugs was the primary cause of unprotected intercourse, which resulted in teenage pregnancy. They alleged that when they use drugs and alcoholic drink, their judgement is impaired and they usually make irrational choices.

2.3.3   Effects of Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage Pregnancy has been found to have a negative impact on teenage girls who fall pregnant at school. Pradham, Wynter and Fisher's (2019) study on the association between education and teenage pregnancy in poor and lower-middle-income countries found that teenage pregnancy prevents females from accomplishing academic objectives and from optimising their human capital. Related results in Gyan's (2013) study revealed that teenage pregnancy reduced many life opportunities for young girls, such as education, employment and better income because these girls, drop out of school, are stigmatized and discriminated, and perform poorly academically.

School Dropout

According to Nkosi and Pretorius (2019), girls who are pregnant frequently leave school because of their erratic attendance patterns and low academic performance. In a similar manner, Chang'ach (2012) established school dropout, interrupted education, and school advancement difficulties for teenage mothers being the most salient consequences of teenage pregnancy. Other studies, such as one by Maemeko et al. (2018), have shown that teenagers who become pregnant end up quitting school because they are afraid of and embarrassed by their peers. Gyan (2013) concurs with Maemeko et al. (2018) that the majority of girls leave school before giving birth and do not go back afterward.

Stigmatisation and discrimination

Stigmatization and discrimination were also revealed as some of the challenges pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers face in school during and after pregnancy upon their return to school (Clowes, D'Amand & Nkani, 2012). Afrose, Chattopadhyay, Habib and Rashid (2015) explained that in their study, pregnant teenagers reported being stigmatised and discriminated at school and in the communities in which they lived. Afrose et al. (2015) further state that teenage girls encounter the highest stigma during their pregnancies, particularly when their pregnancy status is visible to everyone. This issue of stigmatisation has also been confirmed in Shefer, Bhana and Morrel's (2013) study. This study reports on a male teacher who openly expressed distaste for pregnant learners who look nasty in their big tummies in front of other learners. The results that emerged from the study carried out in Namibia by Maluli and Bali (2014) affirmed that even some learners tend to stigmatise and ridicule pregnant learners through hurtful comments, excluding them from their work group as well as in their playing teams. The study indicated that the participating learners suggested that all these make pregnant learners feel uncomfortable at school. This has been supported by Walker and Holtfreter (2019) who believe that pregnant teenagers are likely to be stigmatized and experience social isolation and abuse.

Poor academic performance

Teenage pregnancy has a negative effect on academic achievement for the students who experience it, which is another effect on education (Soba, 2020). According to Maemeko et al. (2018), when adolescent mothers choose to continue with education, their academic performance typically suffers dramatically. This is supported by the findings of the study conducted by Malahlela (2012) which revealed that teenage pregnancy has a negative effect on learner attendance, emotional behaviour, and academic performance because pregnant students usually miss classes as they need to visit clinics frequently. The study by Maemeko et al. (2018) reveals comparable findings, demonstrating how teenage pregnancy has a negative impact on the education of expectant mothers and teenagers who are raising children.

2.3.4 Schools' Role in Mitigating Teenage Pregnancy

Since many young people experience their first sexual encounters while in school, this setting provides a crucial chance to educate them about sexual and reproductive health (Bhengu, 2016). According to Onyeka, Miettola, Vaskilampi and Llika (2011), schools can act as change agents and are crucial in helping female students avoid getting pregnant. This is due to the fact

that teachers are among the most significant stakeholders in raising awareness of the effects of sexual risk-taking behaviours that could result in, among other things, unwanted pregnancy because of their access to students. When it comes to supplying students with trustworthy knowledge on sexual and reproductive health issues, teachers are regarded as key people. The results of the study by Fung and Zhimin (2015) showed that there are a variety of ways to prevent and lower the rate of adolescent pregnancies in schools. These centred on providing sex education, treating students differently in light of their age differences, and collaborating with other community stakeholders like nurses, social workers, educational psychologists, and religious figures

Further, Ichita, Enwetji and Chinyere (2015) opine that integrating sex education into all secondary school classes will assist teach teenagers on how to have healthy sexual behaviour, enabling them to avoid becoming pregnant at a young age. Teenagers could also learn about the advantages of sexual abstinence before marriage through sex education. Similarly, the study by Soba (2020) found that one of the strategies that can be used in the majority of developing countries to address the issue of adolescent pregnancy is the inclusion of sex education. The technique has been successful in reducing teenage girl pregnancies in developing countries like Kenya and Nigeria. Additionally, sex education, according to Ingham (2012), provides students with awareness about the drawbacks of starting sexual activity early in life.

Indingo (2020) encourages the establishment of programmes that promote parent-teenage discussion on reproductive issues, beginning in early adolescence. These programmes should aim to build girls' skills that would enable them to deal with issues of sex and unplanned pregnancy. Teenagers who have not yet begun sexual relationships are especially encouraged to learn about abstinence in schools (Fung & Zhimin, 2015). Undiyaundeye et al. (2015) promote the Dutch approach, which is a model used in many countries to prevent teenage pregnancy. This model highlights that the curriculum should put a strong emphasis on ethics, attitudes, communication, negotiation skills, and reproductive biology.

Based on all these studies that have been evaluated about teenage pregnancy, it is evident that there is limited data about how principals perceive the issue of teenage pregnancy. As such, this study examined the perceptions of principals on teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's nek district.

2.4   SUMMARY

This chapter reported on the literature that was reviewed for this study. This literature included the theoretical framework underpinning the study, namely, the invitational leadership theory. Studies that have been carried in this area, have been presented and discussed. The role that could be played by schools to mitigate teenage pregnancy has also been explained. In the following chapter, the research methodology that was used in this study is presented.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's Nek district. The previous chapter focused on the literature that was reviewed for this study. The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodology that was adopted in this study. Braun and Clarke (2013) claim that methodology offers a framework for making a number of choices regarding the research. These include how participants are chosen, data gathering techniques, analysis that is appropriate for the study, and the researcher's participation in the study. Thus, the study paradigm, research approach, research design, population and participant selection, as well as data collection techniques and tools, are presented in this chapter. Additionally, ethical considerations and trustworthiness are presented.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The orientation of this study is the interpretivist research paradigm. According to Ling & Ling (2017), a paradigm is a way of thinking, a higher-order manner of categorizing an approach, or a logic that supports all parts of an understanding of research, from the purpose or reason for the research through the end results and conduct of the research. Thanh and Thanh (2015) add that paradigms help researchers uncover reality by examining and comprehending participants' perspectives on the subject under study. Interpretivism contends that people's experiences and perceptions shape their interpretation of reality, making truth and knowledge subjective as well as historically and culturally placed (Ryan, 2018).

Additionally, interpretivism, sometimes referred to as the inner perspective, aims to comprehend people's lived experiences from the perspective of individuals themselves. It also recognizes that people's experiences and perceptions of reality are subjective, therefore there may be various viewpoints on reality rather than just one truth as positivism would have it (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). Additionally, according to Hays and Singh (2012), interpretivism views knowledge as neutral because the criteria used to assess the reliability of research findings are created by individuals and incorporate some degree of subjectivity. It is also essential to remember that interpretive researchers use techniques that produce qualitative

data; they do not rely on numerical data, despite the possibility that they may be involved. Observations, field notes, personal notes, open-ended interviews with varied degrees of structure, documentation, and other types of data collecting techniques are some examples of data gathering methods that provide qualitative data (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Thus, the interpretivist paradigm helped the researcher better comprehend the situation and gather important data concerning teenage pregnancies. Additionally, interpretivism allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the principals' perspectives through casual conversations and interviews (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

3.3   RESEARCH APPROACH

The study used a qualitative approach. According to Moser and Korstjens (2017), qualitative research refers to a study that focuses on exploring and offering insights into issues that exist in the actual world. Aspers and Corte (2019) go on to describe it as an iterative process whereby the scientific community is better understood by creating new, meaningful distinctions as a result of getting closer to the phenomenon being examined. Because the qualitative approach efficiently addresses delicate subjects including domestic abuse, teenage pregnancy, sexual dysfunction, and others, it was determined that it was appropriate to apply it in this study (Roller & Laurakas, 2015). Furthermore, a qualitative research methodology was applied, as described by Basias and Pollalis (2018), to elucidate insights and thoroughly analyse people's experiences. In essence, the researcher is at the centre of the data collection process in the qualitative approach, and in the end, the researcher truly serves as the instrument for data collection. This proximity of the researcher to the study's subjects and participants offers the chance to establish a complete understanding that will be useful for a careful analysis and interpretation of the findings (Roller & Laurakas, 2015). This approach made it easier for the researcher to have casual interactions with the participants, which led to their open expression of opinions and sharing of their perceptions of teen pregnancy.

3.4   RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to understand how school principals perceive teenage pregnancy, a case study method was used in this study. In its nature, a case study is a type of research methodology that is used to produce a thorough comprehensive understanding of a difficult subject in its actual context (Crowe, Creswell, Roberson, Huby & Sheikh, 2011). Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson and Razavieh (2010) further state that a case study offers a comprehensive account of a specific unit, site, class, policy, programme, process, institution, or community. A case study approach has the

advantages of being applicable to complicated current human circumstances in real life, offering in-depth data, connecting to the average reader's experience, and fostering understanding of these situations (Krusenvik, 2016). In the view of Ary et al. (2010), a case study's potential for depth, which entails a desire to comprehend the entire subject in its entirety, is its biggest advantage. Furthermore, case studies can offer an opportunity for an investigator to gain understanding of fundamental aspects of human behaviour. Therefore, using a case study allowed the researcher to conduct a thorough investigation into how the school principals view teenage pregnancy.

3.5 PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND THE POPULATION

A population of a study is described as the entire set of units under consideration for which conclusions are to be made based on the study while a sample is part of the population studied. The population to which a researcher tends to apply the results is known as the target population (Ling & Ling, 2017). The principals of all the schools in the Qacha's Nek district were the study's intended population. It should be noted that only a small number of individuals can take part in a study because qualitative research is so in-depth. This is due to the fact that the goal of qualitative investigations is to obtain depth of information by carefully examining each participant's experiences related to the research issue (Hennink et.al, 2020). Purposive selection was employed in this study. This method of selection involves deliberately choosing individuals who fit particular criteria that the researcher feels are crucial to the study. This indicates that in order to develop a thorough understanding of the study concerns, the researcher actively seeks out people who are knowledgeable about those issues (Hennink et. al, 2020).

Creswell and Plano Clark share the same belief that intentional selection of participants entails locating and choosing people who have particular knowledge of, or experience with a topic of interest. Based on the justification provided, 10 principals from 10 different schools were specifically chosen to take part in this study. These school principals were selected because they were perceived as resourceful people who are knowledgeable about issues relating to teenage pregnancy in the schools and the role that is being played by the school management to address these issues.

3.6 DATA COLLETION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

One of the most crucial phases of doing the research is data collection. Even with the best research design, a researcher may not be able to finish the project if they are unable to get the

necessary data (Kabir, 2016). Rule and John (2011) define data collection as the procedure the researcher employs to gather data in order to find the answers to the study questions. The primary goal of data collection in any study, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), is to obtain data that can be used to answer the research questions. Before collecting data for this study, the researcher sought permission from the Faculty of Education of the National University of Lesotho and such permission was granted. The faculty provided a letter of introduction (see appendix B), which was then given to the principals. The researcher also made appointments to meet the principals to brief them about the purpose of the study and to request them to participate in the study. After that the researcher made arrangements concerning dates, times and places to meet for interviews.

3.6.1 Methods

Ten principals of high schools in the Qacha's Nek district were chosen for this study, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data from them. This method is connected to the qualitative approach, which by definition looks into what occurs in typical environments where people live or work. The interviews are frequently employed and are created with certain crucial elements to approximate regular talks (Hammersley, 2013). According to DenJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), a semi-structured interview is a conversation between a researcher and a participant that is aided by follow-up inquiries, probes, and remarks while being directed by a flexible interview technique. The main purpose of employing semi-structured interviews for data generation is to learn more about the subject of interest from key informants who have relevant personal experiences, attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. In addition to offering trustworthy, comparable data, they also give the informants the flexibility to voice their opinions in their own words (Kabir, 2016; DenJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

3.6.1 Instruments

This study used an interview protocol as an instrument for data collection. An interview protocol is an instrument that consists of questions that guide a conversation between the researcher and the interviewee. Additionally, they allow the researcher to collect unstructured data, probe into private and delicate matters, and study participants' ideas, feelings, and beliefs about a given topic (DenJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In this study, the interview schedule was constructed by developing the main and probing questions that were going to be asked. The researcher had to ensure that these questions were in line with the objectives of the study.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

The gathered information was examined using thematic analysis. The practice of finding patterns or themes in qualitative data is called thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis, according to Clarke and Braun (2017), is a technique for locating, examining, and interpreting meaningful patterns (themes) within qualitative data. A theme is explained by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) as a pattern that highlights something important or fascinating about the data or research issue.

In essence, thematic analysis offers simple, organised methods for extracting codes and themes from qualitative data. These codes are the smallest analytical units that can identify intriguing aspects of the data that are pertinent to the study's research questions. They are viewed as the foundational elements for themes or patterns of meaning, supported by a main organising idea (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The most generally used methodology for performing thematic analysis, according to Michelle and Varpio (2020), entails a six-step procedure, including familiarising oneself with the data, creating initial codes, looking for themes, reviewing themes, defining and labelling themes, and publishing the report.

When analysing the qualitative data thematically, the initial step taken by the researcher is to familiarise herself or himself with the entire body of data generated through the interviews or any other qualitative methods of data collection (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). After familiarisation work, researchers can start making notes on prospective data items of interest, questions, relationships between data items, and other early ideas or themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The final stage of analysis is about identifying, arranging, and naming the themes. The interpretation of data is taken into account in the last stage of analysis, which entails giving the data meaning and considering the lessons learnt (Potjo, 2012; Creswell, 2009).

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethics is a system of moral principles concerned with how closely research practices comply to their commitments to professional, legal, and social obligations to the participants (Polit & Beck, 2012). Additionally, research ethics are defined as carrying out what is morally and legally correct in research (Parveen and Showkat, 2017). According to Parveen and Showkat (2017), research ethics are actually standards of behaviour that set boundaries between what is appropriate and what is not in research. Ethical considerations were taken into account in this study, and they are explained below.

3.8.1 Upholding the Principle of 'Do no harm'

It is crucial that researchers uphold the highest ethical standards when doing research. Fundamentally, ethics is the application of a set of moral standards to avoid harming or hurting other people, to advance goodness, to respect and to act fairly (Forrester, 2010). This implies that a researcher must assume sole responsibility for the ethical conduct of his or her own research when carrying out a study. The researcher's primary job is to ensure the participants' safety, dignity, rights, and wellbeing (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). Kang and Hwang (2021) assert that ethical conduct is required of researchers in order to safeguard and protect participants' wellbeing and limit any potential injury, mental or bodily discomfort, social harm, and danger. Ethical behaviours reduce the possibility of negligence accusations. Ciuk and Latusek (2018) concur that it is preferable to minimise harm when performing qualitative research. This is the case because researchers have the ability to place people in situations that could produce psychological harm displayed as anxiety, despair, shame, guilt, and loss of confidence. The researcher in this study had to take all required precautions to protect the participants from danger, including maintaining anonymity and giving all pertinent study-related information.

3.8.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In the view of Forrester (2010), informed consent means that participants are aware of the research purpose, what the research hopes to achieve, what is required of them and whether there is any potential harm if they choose to participate. Informed consent, according to Forrester (2010), means that participants are aware of the research's aim, what it hopes to accomplish, what is expected of them, and whether or not there is any risk of damage if they choose to participate. Wiles (2012) emphasises that obtaining participants' informed consent entails offering them full disclosure of the details of the study project and a chance to choose whether or not to participate. This implies that participants must be properly informed of the questions that will be asked, the purposes for which the data will be used, and any potential implications. Additionally, it requires that participants must give clear, active, and written consent before participating in the study. This includes recognising their rights to access their own information and the freedom to stop participating at any time. In other words, the process of obtaining informed permission can be seen of as a contract between the participant and the researcher (Fleming, 2018).

Therefore, the researcher went above and beyond with this study to guarantee that participants' rights were upheld. The participants were made aware of the study's objectives and assured that any information they deemed private would remain secret. Additionally, the participants were made aware that they were under no obligation to take part and might stop at any point if they felt uncomfortable. The participants were even requested to sign a consent letter (see appendix C) in order to confirm that they were willing to participate in the study.

3.8.3 Confidentiality in Research Ethics

The agreement between a researcher and participant that states that all private and sensitive information will be treated with the utmost care is known as confidentiality in research (Bos, 2020). This means that participants have the right to refuse participation and to prevent their information from being published or disseminated if they believe that their private and sensitive information has not been treated with care (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). Bell (2010) also underlines the significance of guaranteeing anonymity to prevent participant identification under any circumstances.

The process of anonymisation, which involves using pseudonyms for study participants, organisations, and locations or other means of hiding participants' real identity, is the main safeguard that researchers utilise to prevent participants from unintentionally violating confidentiality (Wiles, 2012). According to Leedy and Omrod (2010), maintaining participant anonymity means using pseudonyms in place of their real names and making sure they are not mentioned by name in any published work. Thus, in this study, anonymity was preserved by using pseudonyms, avoiding the use of identifying information, and guaranteeing that no one had access to the information participants supplied.

3.9   TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is a concept of establishing the truth as well as the value of the study (Boudah, 2011). For assessment of trustworthiness, this study adhered to the four alternatives proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are among the alternatives. To make sure that the data gathered was credible, the researcher in this study thought it imperative to take these possibilities into account. The discussion of these four options is provided below.

3.9.1 Credibility

The most crucial factor is the study's credibility, or faith in the validity of the research and, consequently, the conclusions (Polit & Beck, 2014). Credibility in qualitative research, according to Ary et al. (2010), refers to the veracity of the investigation's conclusions. The extent to which the researcher has demonstrated confidence in the results in light of the research methodology, participants, and context is another factor in credibility. Connelly (2016) illustrates that specific strategies are employed to build trustworthiness. Peer-debriefing, member checking, persistent observation, persistent involvement with participants, and reflective journaling are a few of them. Additionally, there should be proof that the data was repeatedly questioned and looked at.

Peer-briefing is the process by which coworkers or peers receive the raw data and the researcher's interpretation or justification. Following discussions, reviewers will decide if they believe the interpretation to be acceptable. On the other hand, member checks occur when a researcher asks participants to review and assess field notes or tape recordings for accuracy and meaning after the data collecting period (Ary et al., 2010). In this study, peer-debriefing and member checks were found to be helpful in determining whether the themes were accurate according to the participants. The collected and transcribed data was sent back to the participants for verification and the participants confirmed that it was indeed what they had shared during the interviews.

3.9.2 Transferability

Another term that is frequently used in qualitative research to increase the reliability of the findings is transferability. Transferability is essentially the extent to which conclusions from a qualitative study may be applied or extended to different situations or to different groups (Ary et al., 2010). According to Polit and Beck (2014), the ability to extrapolate is referred to as transferability. It is predicated on the justification that results can be extrapolated or applied to different contexts or groups.

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability is the term used for the data's consistency through time and under various study situations (Polit & Beck, 2014). According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a study must demonstrate to its readers that if it were to be repeated with the same participants in the same situation, the findings would be the same. In general, trustworthy outcomes persuade the reader that the outcomes are dependable and consistent. In order to assure the accuracy of the findings

addressing the participants' perspectives on adolescent pregnancy, data for this study was collected using audio recorders, and verbatim transcriptions of the participants' responses were employed.

3.9.4 Confirmability

The degree of bias-freeness in the research's processes and result interpretation is known as confirmability. The primary concern of qualitative researchers is whether other people conducting similar study could confirm the information they gather and the conclusions they reach (Ary et al., 2010). Cope (2014) further emphasises that confirmability denotes that the findings are the outcome of the inquiry's primary emphasis and are founded on the researcher's beliefs. Therefore, confirmability tries to guarantee that the data given by participants is not the researcher's subjective interpretation.

3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter presented study's methodology. It explained a detailed description of the study's research paradigm, research design, and research methodology. The chapter also covered how data was generated, how participants and the population were chosen, and the procedure for data generation. The ethical issues and reliability of the research were also covered. The study's findings are presented in the next chapter

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's Nek district. The data collection and analysis procedures were covered in detail in the preceding chapter. The study followed the qualitative approach, and in order to collect data, semi-structured interviews were used. Thematic analysis of the data was done using Braun and Clarke's six-phase or step-by-step framework (2013). The results of this analysis are presented in this chapter. Following is the chapter's organisational structure: introduction (this section), participants' profiles, findings' presentation and summary.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

About 10 principals participated in this study. Their age range was between 47 and 58 years, and their school leadership experience ranged from 7 and 20 years. In terms of gender, 3 of these principals were men, while 7 were women. All the 3 male principals came from government-owned schools while the 7 females came from church-owned schools. These principals were interviewed about their perceptions of teenage pregnancy in schools, and their responses were analysed thematically. At the stage of analysis, the principals' identities were disguised by assigning each one a pseudo-code. As such, the participants were labelled Participant 1 to Participant 10 respectively. The findings of this study are presented in accordance with the themes that emerged from data analysis

4.3 FINDINGS

The following themes emerged from the analysis of data that was generated for this study: (1) principals' understanding of teenage pregnancy, (2) factors influencing teenage pregnancy, (3) challenges of teenage pregnancy, (4) views on how teenage pregnancy is dealt with in schools, and (5) strategies for managing teenage pregnancy in schools. Thus, the findings are presented in line with these themes.

4.3.1 Principals' Understanding of Teenage Pregnancy

The findings that are presented in this section emerged from the analysis of the principals' responses to the question about their understanding of teenage pregnancy. The themes that emerged from this question are about their interpretation of teenage pregnancy and the experiences of these principals on teenage pregnancy.

Interpretation of teenage pregnancy by principals

The findings revealed that all principals (10) who were interviewed held a common understanding of teenage pregnancy. According to the responses of these principals, teenage pregnancy refers to a pregnancy, which occurs in young girls whose ages range from 13 to 19 years. They also observed that there are some cases where young girls become pregnant before they reach 13 years of age. So, this definition should not be taken to be exclusive of these cases. The following are some of the responses from these principals:

> *I do understand what teenage pregnancy is because I deal with teenagers on a daily basis at my work. Teenage pregnancy is a situation where a young girl at the age of 13 to 19 falls pregnant. Some of these girls fall pregnant even before they reach 13 years. Therefore, they too fall under this category* **(Participant 1).**

> I *understand teenage pregnancy to be a situation where girls who are not yet 20 years become pregnant. Of late, they fall pregnant from the age of 10. We do not know what's really happening* **(Participant 4)**.

> *Teenage pregnancy is nothing but when a girl who is between 13 and 19 becomes pregnant* **(Participant 8).**

Thus, the principals in this study appeared to have a common understanding of teenage pregnancy. Their definition was in line with Kanku and Mash (2010), who view teenage pregnancy happening to a teenager or under aged girl, usually between the ages of 13 and 19.

Experiences of the principals regarding teenage pregnancy

In addition to the interpretation of teenage pregnancy, the principals shared their experiences of teenage pregnancy from schools. According to these principals when teenage pregnancy occurs in their schools, it affects everyone in that school. One participant explained this by saying:

> *Learners do fall pregnant in this school and when it happens, it affects everyone at school. Even as we speak now, there are two pregnant learners in my school; one is in grade 10 while the other is in grade 11. At the end of the year, the one who is in grade 11 is supposed to write the final exams, I'm not even sure (shrugging his shoulders) if she will remain in school until then because most of them just disappear* **(Participant 10).**

The participants also explained that teenagers who become pregnant at school are often rejected and isolated by some teachers and learners of a school. With teachers' rejection and isolation, these principals explained that teachers often complain that they do not have any training on how to handle pregnant learners. Accordingly, these teachers claim that, they do not know how to work with pregnant learners, as a result, the learners' schoolwork is often negatively affected. With regard to this, this is what one principal said:

> *I understand teenage pregnancy because learners in this school are teenagers and some of the girls fall pregnant before they complete their studies here. When it happens, it becomes so sad on the part of this learner. This is because some teachers respond negatively to this situation. They complain that they do not know how to deal with such learners when it comes to taking disciplinary actions. Also, these teachers have raised complaints that pregnancy affects teaching and learning* **(Participant 4).**

Thus, because of limited knowledge and skills, these teachers find it difficult to manage the behaviour of a pregnant learner. As result, the behaviour of such learners often deteriorates and interferes with teaching and learning. These principals also explained that other members of a school community are also usually concerned about the image of the school being tarnished by learners' pregnancies. This is how one principal said it:

> *Every year there is a pregnant learner in our school. Last year alone we had 4 pregnant learners. Some of the teachers were not happy about this and they even suggested that we amend the school policy that would force these learners to stay at home until they have delivered. These teachers believed that it was no use keeping them because their performance was likely to deteriorate* **(Participant 5)**.

One participant had a different experience regarding teenage pregnancy in his school**.** This principal indicated that at his school learners rarely fall pregnant, rather, the most common problem they face was early marriage. He stated that the community where the school is located has a great influence on early child marriage. This is how this principal explained:

> *We have very rare cases of learners who fall pregnant at our school. What is most common here is early marriage, which I believe results from the influence of the community here. However, my suspicion is that they marry their children early to hide pregnancy* **(Participant 8).**

Generally, the findings show that the principals who participated in this study had a common understanding of teenage pregnancies and their consequences for a school and a learner. Their experiences of this phenomenon are that it interferes with teaching and learning and the general school management, as it provokes teachers and learners' negative attitude towards pregnant learners.

4.3.2 Factors Influencing Teenage Pregnancy

The findings of this study further revealed that a number of factors contribute to teenage pregnancy. The following factors were identified contributing to teenage pregnancy: poverty, peer pressure, lack of parental guidance, limited knowledge, social media exposure, child-headed families, and unprotected sex.

Poverty

It was established in this study that poverty is one of the main contributing factors to teenage pregnancy. All the principals indicated that most of the learners who fall pregnant have a background of poverty-stricken families. Their view was that most teenage learners engage in sexual activities with older men who have money because their parents cannot provide for some of their needs. They further pointed out that the naivety of these teenagers makes them fail to realise the riskiness of having an affair with older men. This is how some participants shared their views:

> *There is a high rate of poverty in our country, which I think might be driving some of these young girls to engage in unprotected sex because more often they have affairs with older men who give them money in exchange for sex. At this school, we had a case where a girl who was staying at our boarding residences fell pregnant. She claimed that her parents were not providing her with enough money to buy cosmetics and other school needs. So, she was forced to have sex with an older man who in turn gave her money to cater for her needs* **(Participant 3).**

> *Many parents are not working, so they are not able to provide for their children's needs. As a result, these children opt to gain money by engaging in sexual activities with older men* **(Participant 10).**

This finding suggests that some children do not choose to engage in sexual activities, but they are forced by circumstances such as the poverty they and their families experience. Dubik, Aniteye and Richter (2022) have also established that the economic hardships of some parents

are the cause of teenage pregnancy, explaining that some teenage girls provide their families with the money they receive from their boyfriends in exchange for sex.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure too appeared to be one of the major contributing factors to teenage pregnancy. The participants in this study claimed that some teenagers fall pregnant because they want to explore sexual activities so that their peers may accept them. These participants also explained that most teenagers tend to believe in everything that their peers tell them, especially if parents or teachers at school do not provide them with the right information concerning sex. The following quotes are what the participants said:

> *I think the main contributing factor is peer pressure. Some teenagers engage in sexual relationships because their peers are pushing them. They just imitate what their friends do, not knowing that some of them use contraceptives and other preventative measures* **(Participant 1).**

> *Even pressure contributes a lot to teenage pregnancy. Some learners cannot make their own decisions and depend on their friends. Such teenagers tend to do whatever their friends tell them without considering the consequences of their actions* **(Participant 6).**

Other principals (2) claimed that sometimes girls advise each other that in order to be loved or to please a boyfriend, one must engage in sexual activities. This is how one of these principals put it:

> *These kids discuss many things with their peers. They even advise each other that in order to be loved by their boyfriends, they have to engage in sex, they also do not bother to use contraceptives* **(Participant 8).**

These principals believed that peer pressure plays a major role in influencing teenage learners' sexual activities. It also became evident from this study that those teenagers who have experienced sex push others into the same behaviour. The views of the participants in this study align with Thobejane (2015)'s finding that most teenagers fall pregnant because of the influence of their peers who sometimes do not know much about the contraceptives. Generally, it could be argued that teenagers who associate with peers who take part in risky behaviour increase the chances to engage in similar activities (Hoskins & Simons, 2015).

Lack of parental guidance

This study also revealed that lack of parental guidance on sex related matters leads to teenage pregnancy. The participants in this study indicated that parents do not provide any guidance on sexual matters to their children. They indicated that this is because the Basotho culture considers discussing sex with children a taboo, making it difficult for these parents to talk about it with their children. They further pointed out that, some parents work far from their children, leaving them alone at home or with the elderly. As a result, such children do not receive any guidance on sex and sexuality matters. The following are the quotes from some of the participants:

> *Lack of communication about sex between parents and their children leads to teenage pregnancy. Most parents are shy to discuss sex with their children, as a result, children lack knowledge and sometimes, they learn from their peers* **(Participant 2).**

> *The other problem is that parents do not take any initiative to discuss sex with their children because sex is taboo according to the Basotho culture. Again, some parents work far away from their kids and have no time to talk to their children* **(Participant 7).**

> *Most of these teenagers stay alone or with elderly at home because their parents have gone out of the country to find jobs. In the absence of their parents, they feel free to do anything like. They even allow their boyfriends to visit them in their homes, and that is when they engage in sexual activities* **(Participant 9).**

This finding suggests that if parents were to stay close to their children, they would be able to control and guide their sexual behaviour. However, the same result shows that there are cultural issues that possibly prevent these parents from talking openly about sex with children. Nambambi and Mofune (2011) have also confirmed that talking about sexuality-related issues is traditionally regarded as taboo in many African cultures.

This study further established that teenagers who live in child-headed families are more vulnerable to teenage pregnancy. This may be due to some other factors such as poverty, peer pressure, sexual abuse, and sometimes they engage in such activities as drug abuse, which may push them into having sex. The participants also claimed that because of the increased unemployment rate in Lesotho, most parents go to South Africa to find jobs, leaving the eldest

children to play the role of adults, taking care of other siblings in the family. One of the participants shared the following view:

> *Much as these children are young, you will agree with me that they find themselves parenting other kids in the family. This has come because of high unemployment rate in our country where some parents are forced to migrate to South Africa to find work, leaving children alone. Can you just imagine what happens when these children are left alone with nobody to provide supervision? Some even end up using drugs because their peers guide them, so, it's highly possible that unplanned pregnancies can occur* **(Participant 5).**

Other participants indicated that in some instances, children become heads of the families because they are orphans and have no guardians. Therefore, in the absence of parents and guardians, these children can do anything since nobody is monitoring their behaviour. Some of these kids end up dating older men who will provide for their families. This is how these participants shared their views:

> *Some of these children are forced by circumstances to head the families. Some of them have lost their parents through death while some parents have left to find jobs in the urban cities or neighbouring countries. In this kind of families where there is nobody to provide guidance, it is highly possible that such children will engage in unacceptable behaviour which include sexual activities and drug abuse* **(Participant 7).**

> *It's so unfortunate that some children have to stay alone and take care of their siblings while their parents are away to search for jobs. In other cases, children are orphans and have no relatives willing to look after them. This means that these children are responsible for their own families and have to ensure that their siblings have some bread on the table, so, they find themselves having to exchange sex for money which may lead to unplanned pregnancy* **(Participant 8).**

From these responses, it can be seen that some children have the responsibility of taking care of their siblings and in some instances with no assistance from relatives and neighbours. As such, they end up engaging in risky behaviours which may lead to teenage pregnancy. Also, it can be argued that children who are left alone without an adult figure to provide advice and guidance on sexual issues are more likely to be exposed to unprotected sex leading to early and unintended pregnancies.

Limited knowledge about sex

The participants in this study further highlighted limited knowledge about sex as another factor contributing to teenage pregnancy. According to these participants, teenagers do not receive enough education about sex from teachers and parents. This view seems to also point back to sex and the Basotho culture which regards discussing sex with children a taboo. Therefore, parents and other adults (teachers for example) are prevented by their culture to share any information on sex with their children. Two of these participants explained this by saying:

> *I think these learners lack enough knowledge about sex and sexuality and this lack of knowledge results in them making wrong decisions about sex issues when they are faced with such situations* **(Participant 1).**

> *Even though we may believe that today young people are exposed to many things including sex, our experiences with teenage pregnancies say otherwise. Most of our learners seem to lack knowledge relating to sex issues; they engage in sexual relationships without knowing the consequences; and this says that we should reevaluate our assumptions relating to teenagers and sex* **(Participant 10).**

Other participants also blamed the Life Skills Based Sexuality Education (LBSE) programme that is not efficiently implemented by teachers, who feel ashamed to talk openly about sex to their learners. These participants explained that teachers who teach LBSE have not been trained to teach this programme. As a result, they lack the skills and confidence to offer it. This is how one of the principals put it:

> *It is true that LBSE is being offered in schools to address issues like sex and others, but the main problem is that teachers who offer it did not go through any training. Hence, some of them are still shy to share information relating to sex with young people. Basotho will remain Basotho, whether one is a teacher or not, culture will always be dominant* **(Participant 7).**

The general observation about this finding is that the participants believed that teenagers' lack of knowledge or limited knowledge about sex and sexuality put them at risk of becoming pregnant. These participants valued sex education as a potential to influence healthy lifestyles of these young people. The views of these participants tally with what Mbelwa and Isangula (2012) claim, that appropriate knowledge about sex and sexuality is key to good beliefs and attitudes towards sex. Therefore, poor knowledge of sex health-related issues as well as

improper use of contraceptives pose a risk to young people. Thus, teenagers end up having a lack of knowledge about sex leading, to poor attitudes towards sex and use of contraceptives, increasing the chances of pregnancy.

Exposure to media. In this study, teenagers' exposure to the media was also mentioned as one of the contributing factors to teenage pregnancy. The participants explained that teenagers have too much access to the internet, magazines, television, and cell phones, as a result, they end up imitating the behaviour of some of the celebrities they may come across. They further stated that they even copy the dress code of some celebrities who sometimes expose their bodies and seduce men. Also, the participants claimed that these learners imitate so many things which they see on Facebook which they access daily through their mobile phones. This is how some of these participants shared their views:

> *Eh, some of these learners or teenagers, are influenced by media. They are exposed to too many things, including sex behaviour on TV and Facebook which they like so much* **(Participant 2).**

> *Media plays a critical part in influencing the behaviour of our learners. They see celebrities' pictures and video clips on these media and then they want to imitate them in whatever they do, even the way they dress. These girls expose their bodies too much, they wear mini-skirts, and this way men are being seduced* **(Participant 5).**

Other principals claimed that they had witnessed some teenagers using their mobile phones to download and watch pornography videos. These principals indicated that this is very risky because these teenagers are likely to want to copy what they see from those videos, the behaviours that may result in pregnancy. One of these principals explained this by saying:

> *Most teenagers spend most of their time watching porn videos which they sometimes download from their mobile phones. This is so unhealthy because they end up imitating what they see from those videos* **(Participant 3).**

Contraceptives non-usage

It was found from this study that most teenagers do not use contraceptives when they engage in sexual activities. The participants disclosed that while some of these young people deliberately decide to engage in unprotected sex, others do not use contraceptives because they are ignorant about them. For those who have limited knowledge, other participants (3) indicated that this might be the result of not having enough information about contraceptives. About

those who deliberately choose not to use the contraceptives, the participants' views were that some of the young people believe in the myths and misconceptions associated with contraceptives. This is what one of the principals said:

> *The use of contraceptives seems to be very low because we would not be having these learners who fall pregnant before completing their studies. These young people just risk their lives by engaging in sexual relationships without considering the use of contraceptives* **(Participant 1).**

From what the principals have observed, it can be noted that most teenagers do not use contraceptives because schools are still experiencing learners' pregnancies.

4.3.3 Challenges Caused by Teenage Pregnancy

It appeared from this study that teenage pregnancy is a problem which brings different challenges for learners. These challenges include school dropout, poor academic performance, irregular school attendance, and stigmatization and discrimination by other learners.

School dropout

Participants in this study indicated that most of the pregnant learners end up leaving school before they complete the school programme. When they leave school, they just disappear, they do not report to anybody. The principals explained that there were rare cases where the parents of a pregnant learner would report the situation to the school and discuss available options for this learner. They explained that, while these learners are expected to return to complete the school programme after delivery, in most cases they do not. If they do, they do not return to the same school. Rather they take a transfer to another school. This is how the participants said about this:

> *In my case, most of these pregnant learners leave school even before it could be known that they are pregnant. Once they become aware that they are pregnant, they decide to drop out. Some go for good while others may return after they have delivered* (**Participant 3**).

> *Pregnancy for learners is a great challenge because they don't stay at school even though they have been granted an opportunity to attend school. This then means that every year we have learners who drop out due to pregnancy* (**Participant 10**).

According to two participants, only a few learners do not mind attending school during their pregnancy. This is how they put their views:

> *Some learners do drop out, but of late, they do not leave school in large numbers because they are being encouraged to continue schooling by their teachers. Even now, we have two pregnant learners in grade 10* (**Participant 6**).

> *Some learners prefer to continue schooling even when they are pregnant. Even though, the challenge is that they miss school regularly and this angers some of the teachers* (**Participant 8**).

Generally, the views of these principals regarding pregnant learners' dropout from school reflect that teenage pregnancy is one of the causes for learners to drop out of school. This finding is consistent with Gyan's (2013) finding that most pregnant learners drop out of school to deliver, and after delivery feel shy and do not return to school thereby serving as a baseline for other girls with the same problem. Willan (2013) revealed that in South Africa the return of learners to school after pregnancy is dependent on socio-economic factors such as family support to assist with children's responsibilities or the teenager's ability to afford children services.

Poor school performance

There was also an observation among participants that in some instances the academic performance of learners who fall pregnant at school becomes poor or deteriorates badly. The reason is that this may be due to their shyness to participate in class, or missing school frequently. The participants further indicated that sometimes the poor performance of these learners is caused by poor health conditions experienced by the learners. One of the principals even quoted a situation where a very brilliant learner fell pregnant, and her academic performance dropped dramatically. This is how that principal put it:

> *There was a year when we had a very intelligent learner who was among the Top Achievers at the JC level, but her performance deteriorated so badly after she had fallen pregnant. You will not believe me when I say that her Form E results were very embarrassing* (**Participant 4**).

The other views from fellow principals were:

> *The performance of most learners who fall pregnant normally drops and becomes very low. This also affects their teachers and the school as a whole* (**Participant 6**).

The performance of pregnant learners is normally not satisfactory. Mostly, it is the external learners (learners staying off campus) who happen to fall pregnant. I don't why we have this kind of a trend here. There was a year when we had a very brilliant learner who fell pregnant. She stayed in school until she wrote her exams. When the results were released, we found out that her performance was not what we had expected. She had a very poor performance (**Participant 9**).

It is evident from the above responses that teenage pregnancy contributes negatively to the academic performance of pregnant learners. This poor performance appears to be resulting in learners who may have to repeat the class or drop out of school. These views from the participants in this study align with findings of Du Preez et al. (2019). Their study revealed that teachers' experiences of having pregnant learners in their classrooms are negative as these learners are frequently absent from school, perform poorly and drop out of school.

Irregular school attendance

The participants also cited irregular school attendance as a challenge for pregnant learners. The reasons behind the irregular school attendance were attributed to antenatal clinic attendance, pregnancy-related illnesses and unsafe feelings when at school. The following are some of the expressions from the participants:

Pregnant learners miss school on a regular basis as they have to attend prenatal consultations. Sometimes they just fall ill or just do not feel like going to school because of not feeling safe and free in school environment (**Participant 2**).

The attendance of pregnant learners is very poor because they have to visit the clinic frequently for check-ups, and in their absence, they miss lessons. I also have a feeling that they sometimes miss school just because of laziness (**Participant 7**).

This frequent absence of pregnant learners from school appears to be one of the reasons that cause learners to fall behind their lessons, which leads to failure and dropping out of school in some instances. This observation aligns with Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) 's view that irregular school attendance and poor school performance during and after pregnancy often lead to girls dropping out of school.

Discrimination and stigmatization

The principals further reported that pregnant girls are discriminated against by their peers at school. Their peers sometimes call them humiliating names and even exclude them from their

social groups. According to these principals, pregnant teenagers themselves have a tendency to yield to the humiliation by isolating themselves from others. They also do not feel free and are shy to participate in class. They try to hide their pregnancy by wearing big jackets and coats even when it is not cold. In support of this observation, this is how they put it:

> *It is so sad that children of that age have to experience teenage pregnancy at school because they are being discriminated against by their colleagues. I remember an incident where a boy in grade 9 humiliated a pregnant learner in his class by calling her unacceptable and abusive names. We tried to intervene but from that day, the girl started absenting herself frequently from school* (**Participant 5**).

> *It's true that we have allowed pregnant girls to continue schooling but we haven't considered the issue of the school uniform which they have to wear like the rest of the learners even in the latest stage of their pregnancy. This is one of the embarrassing things they experience at school, and it may be the reason why they miss school so much, also it isolates them from other learners* (**Participant 7**).

> *Pregnant learners are the ones who start isolating themselves from their peers and try to hide their pregnancy by wearing big jackets even when it is hot. They just cannot accept themselves. In addition, other learners at school do not accept them in their social groups, so they become lonely and end up leaving school* (**Participant 9**).

Generally, the participants' observation is that pregnant learners do not enjoy school since other learners discriminate against them. One of the participants even pointed out that discriminating against pregnant learners at school could be associated with Basotho's view that pregnancy that happens outside marriage is immoral.

4.3.4 Schools' Approach to Teenage Pregnancy

It emerged from the study that different schools deal with the issue of teenage pregnancy in different ways. The school principals explained that they have school policies that guide them on how to manage learners' pregnancies. They also indicated that some schools provide support to pregnant learners while others do not provide any support.

School policies

This study revealed that schools have different policies relating to teenage pregnancy. About 8 principals reported that their schools have policies that allow pregnant learners to continue schooling. These principals explained that despite these policies, pregnant girls still opt to leave

school once they discover about their pregnancies. These are the claims made by some of the participants:

> *Our school does not expel learners from school because of pregnancy because that would be hindering their progress in education. These kids are already vulnerable, so, what will happen to them if we expel them! It's killing them* (**Participant 3**).

> *We have our own school policy that states that pregnant learners have to continue with their schooling like the rest of the learners, though in most cases, some of them just disappear. Some show up after delivery while others go for good* (**Participant 5**).

> *We used to suspend pregnant girls for a year once we discovered that they were pregnant, but we had to change our policy and allow them to continue with their schooling because we realised that most of them did not return to school after delivery* (**Participant 6**).

On the contrary, two principals stated that their policies do not allow learners to continue with schooling once the school management discovers their pregnancies. They explained that their policies suspend pregnant learners for a year from the day of suspension. These learners are only allowed to return to school after they have delivered. One of these two principals further revealed that boys who have impregnated the girls are suspended too. These principals expressed the following views:

> *Girls know that once they fall pregnant, they have to leave school and return after a year when they are sorted out. It is not only girls who are suspended, the boys who have impregnated them too are. If these boys are in our school and they declare that they are responsible for the pregnancy, they too are suspended. We are a church school, so we do not want to promote immorality* (**Participant 1**).

> *When girls discover that they are pregnant, they go home and return after delivery. They do not even need to be told to go, but they know they have to because it is in the school policy. From the religious perspective, we do not accept that kind of behavior. If we accept pregnant learners, what kind of message are we sending to the other learners* (**Participant 10**).

It was further discovered from the principals' responses that the reason for schools to deal with the issue of teenage pregnancy differently is that there was no national policy on learners' pregnancies when this study was conducted. This is how one of the participants put it:

Managing teenage pregnancy in schools is a challenge because as a country we do not have a policy at the national level on how schools should deal with it **(Participant 6).**

Generally, this study established that all schools have their own policies that guide them on how they should manage learners' pregnancies. It also appeared that only a few schools still suspend pregnant learners from schools. This practice either interrupts the girls' education or unexpectedly terminate their education, shocking the girl and the family of this girl.

School support structures

In this study, policies that protect pregnant girls from being suspended or expelled from school appeared to be the common measure that many schools used to address teenage pregnancy. This study also revealed that some schools provide support to pregnant learners. The principals claimed that they usually provide support to pregnant learners by allowing them to access services they need for their pregnancy status. They do these by allowing the pregnant learners to miss classes and to attend health services such as going for antenatal services. Also, when they are not feeling well, they are allowed to stay home and only come to school when they feel better. There were also 2 principals who claimed that in their schools they have allocated some female teachers to be responsible for pregnant learners while they are at school. These teachers should ensure that the pregnant learners attend classes regularly. They should also attend to their social and emotional needs where possible. The following are some of the claims made by these teachers:

At my school, we provide support because we allow them to visit the clinic for check-ups and allow them to stay home if they do not feel ok. There are also some female teachers who are tasked to look after them and counsel them when necessary. To confirm that we really support them, there was a time when a pregnant learner could not write end of year exams. We agreed as teachers to promote her to the next class. We mainly did this because we wanted to secure her bursary and to ensure that her education was not interrupted (**Participant 2**).

I think we provide support to ensure that they attend the health services. Some teachers are tasked to take care of them by supporting them emotionally and academically. These teachers also collaborate with parents to discuss the health issues of these girls. They even arrange the dates on which these learners are released from school for delivery (**Participant 7**).

Participant three claimed that in their school they have programmes for both girls and boys in which they educate them about teenage pregnancy. This is what she said:

> *In our school, we hold sessions for boys and girls separately and in those sessions, we address learners on teenage pregnancy. This is one of the strategies that I think other schools could copy* (**Participant 3**).

Some schools do not provide any support to teenage learners. The principals explained that they were aware that pregnant learners are in need of support structures like social support, emotional support and support with regard to their academic work in general. They further asserted that they could not provide that kind of support because it would be promoting unacceptable behaviour among learners. As thus, they did not want other learners to copy that kind of behaviour. Some of these principals explained this by saying:

> *I do not think we provide enough support to pregnant learners. Yes, we are aware that they need support socially, emotionally, academically, and otherwise but it is not easy to provide this kind of support because we would be promoting immoral behaviour that can easily be copied by others* (**Participant 3**).

> *We support them to a certain extent because we still allow them to attend classes, and we cannot do more. Much as it is understandable that they need support because of their "status", we cannot provide it as we don't want to encourage other learners to do the same. We want to protect the image of our school* (**Participant 9**).

Generally, it appears that some schools provide support for pregnant learners where possible while others believe that allowing them to come to school is enough because supporting them would mean that they accept and allow learners' pregnancies in their schools. This finding corresponds with Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2012) who established that teachers could only support pregnant learners up to a certain level, as they can only provide classroom and a little support, within the confines of their own knowledge, skills and the resources available to them.

4.3.5 Strategies Proposed for Managing Teenage Pregnancies in Schools

The findings in this study revealed that teenage pregnancy is a serious issue experienced in many schools. These schools should be equipped with strategies that they could use to manage this phenomenon. Thus, the participants were asked to identify these strategies. The participants identified a number of strategies that include.

Improve the implementation of the sex and sexuality education school programme

These participants emphasized the need to strengthen the teaching of Life Skills Based Sexuality Education (LBSE) in schools since this subject covers concepts on sex education that can help learners make informed decisions about their sex lives. This is how they expressed their views:

> *Really, something must be done to reduce teenage pregnancy in schools. The government has already implemented LBSE in schools, so, ours is to support that initiative. We should strive towards improving and strengthening the teaching of this subject because that is where learners get an opportunity to learn about sex* **(Participant 7).**

> *We can as well strengthen the teaching of LBSE in our schools because its contents are educative when it comes to sex and self-esteem* **(Participant 10).**

Engage various stakeholders in learners' lives

It emerged from this study that schools should consider engaging other stakeholders such as health professionals, social workers, psychologists, professional counsellors and such departments as Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU) to address learners on the issue of teenage pregnancy. Some of the participants said the following:

> *Also, the involvement of other departments like CGPU and health can be of great help because they are more knowledgeable about this issue* **(Participant 6).**

> *I think steps towards reducing teenage pregnancy in schools must be taken. For instance, health professionals can be invited to educate learners on the use of contraceptives and other related stuff* **(Participant 10).**

> *Eh, it may not be easy but schools can still do something and not just let things as they are. We can network with other stakeholders like health professionals and social workers. They are more experienced in teenage pregnancy prevention issues, so, I believe they can provide more knowledge on how teenagers can avoid pregnancy. Also, teenagers should be encouraged to abstain from sex or use contraceptives if they feel like they can't wait until they are mature enough* **(Participant 8).**

Raise awareness of teenage pregnancy

The participants further indicated that schools could organise campaigns to raise awareness about teenage pregnancy. According to the participants, learners should be provided with information on reduction measures in the form of talks with boys and girls separately so that both groups discuss sex issues freely. These participants also stated that during these campaigns, learners should be made aware about the risks and consequences of irresponsible sexual activities and how to be responsible for their own lives. One of the participants clarified this by saying:

> *It is important that as schools we take action against learners' pregnancies so that at least they are reduced because we may not prevent them completely. So, schools can hold awareness campaigns where learners are made aware of the results of early and unprotected sex, also they should know that their education is often negatively affected by the poor decisions they make about sex. In our school, we hold sessions for boys and girls separately and in those sessions, we address learners on teenage pregnancy, this is one of the strategies that I think other schools could copy because it helps somehow* **(Participant 3).**

Encourage Abstinence

The participants were also of the view that learners who are not yet active in sexual relationships be encouraged to abstain from sex until they are responsible enough to make informed decisions.

Encourage condom use for those sexually active

It further emerged from the study that learners should be encouraged to use contraceptives. The participants suggested that health professionals be invited to schools to provide education on the use of contraceptives.

Generally, the participants in this study shared a common opinion that the implementation of certain strategies in schools could help reduce teenage pregnancy. They believed that sex education in schools could help provide learners with the knowledge necessary for them to make informed decisions regarding their sexual behaviour. The views of these participants concur with Mweembe (2016) who postulates that sex education helps learners to make informed `decisions about their sexuality and helps to eliminate myths associated with sexual reproduction. Mweembe (2016) further affirms that sex education helps learners understand

their physical reproduction make-up and assists them acquire knowledge and skills about their sexuality that helps to reduce teenage pregnancy.

The other issue that emerged from these findings is the importance of educating both boys and girls about sex and sexuality indicating the importance of separating boys and girls when addressing sex related social issues such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse and others. Presler-Marshal and Jones (2012) observed the importance of focusing on both boys and girls when preventing and managing teenage pregnancy. The views of Presler-Marshal and Jones (2012) are supported by the views of those that participated in this study that sex education should focus on both male and female learners to empower them to make informed decisions to reduce the large numbers of unwanted pregnancies and consequences associated with them. In addition, it is evident from the views of the participants in this study that the effective teaching of LBSE in schools could assist learners to acquire knowledge and skills relating to reproductive health. Further, this programme, if implemented appropriately, can develop the learners' self-esteem and confidence they need to resist peer pressure and other factors that contribute to the early and unintended teenage pregnancy.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of this study. The findings have been presented in five broad themes and these themes have been broken into sub-themes to give meaning to data. The findings revealed that teenage pregnancy is a serious problem in schools and it is influenced by a number of factors that include poverty, peer pressure, limited knowledge about sex education and lack of parental guidance among others. The findings in this study also indicated that schools deal with teenage pregnancy in different ways because of the absence of the national policy on teenage pregnancy. The challenges that are experienced by learners and schools resulting in pregnancies that occur at school have also been presented. The strategies that could be used to curb teenage pregnancy in schools as suggested by the principals have been presented. The next chapter, which is Chapter 5, discusses these findings, draws conclusions from the discussions, describes the limitations of this study, outlines the implications of the findings of this study, and makes recommendations for future research, practice and policy.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study investigated principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's Nek district. Specifically, the study intended to describe principals' understanding of teenage pregnancy; establish the views of these principals on the factors contributing to teenage pregnancy; explain how the principals manage teenage pregnancy in their schools and the challenges they encounter; and to describe their views on the role that the schools should play to mitigate teenage pregnancy. The study adopted a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews to collect data and thematic approach for data analysis. In line with the main questions of this study, the following themes are discussed in this chapter:

1. Principals' understanding of teenage pregnancy.
2. Principals' views on the factors contributing to teenage pregnancy.
3. How the principals manage learner pregnancy in their schools.
4. Principals' views on the challenges the schools encounter because of teenage pregnancy.
5. Principals' views on how schools should mitigate teenage pregnancy.

In the previous chapter, the findings of this study were presented. This chapter discusses the findings, draws the conclusions, highlights the limitations of the study and makes recommendations.

5.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings in this section are discussed in the following manner: first the school principals' understanding of teenage pregnancy and their views on factors contributing to teenage pregnancy, how they deal with teenage pregnancy, the challenges that the schools experience as a result of teenage pregnancy, and the role these schools should play to mitigate teenage pregnancy.

5.2.1 Principals' Understanding of Teenage Pregnancy

The principals who participated in this study had a common understanding and interpretation of teenage pregnancy. They defined teenage pregnancy as a status where young girls who are between the ages of 13 to 19 years fall pregnant. This understanding is similar to the existing literature. For example, Kanku and Mash (2010)'s definition states that teenage pregnancy

refs to a situation where young girls who are in a teenage stage or under-aged, usually between the ages of 13 and 19, become pregnant. Furthermore, the principals indicated that 13 years of age is not a cut-off point or the minimum age at which girls fall pregnant. They pointed out that they have experienced learners falling pregnant before the age of 13 years.

5.2.2 Factors Contributing to Teenage Pregnancy

The principals also mentioned some factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy, notably poverty, peer pressure, limited knowledge on sex, a lack of parental guidance, media exposure, non-usage of contraceptives as well as the phenomenon of child-headed families.

The principals identified poverty as the major contributing factor. Their view was that many learners in their schools were from poor families, which failed to meet some of their basic and teenage needs. As such, these learners engaged in sexual relationships with older men who in return provided them with money to address their needs. The principals' views were found to be aligning with Nyangaresi et al. (2021) who also established that high levels of poverty in most families expose teenage girls to premature sexual activities with older men for the exchange of money and gifts.

Moreover, these principals cited peer pressure as another contributing factor to teenage pregnancy. The principals were of the view that many teenagers fall pregnant because they lack knowledge about sex. They identified two factors that influence teenagers' lack of knowledge. First the Sesotho culture which considers it taboo for adults to discuss sex and sexuality with people younger than them. As a result, parents or community elders do not educate their children about sex. Secondly, LBSE teachers, who are responsible for sex and sexuality education, are also not properly trained. As a result, they use ineffective instructional approaches and methods to teach this subject. Consequently, teenagers are left to rely on their peers on issues relating to sex, sexuality and issues related to safe sex. Since their peers do not also know much about sex issues, they provide inaccurate information that is full of myths. Ultimately, these teenagers engage in sexual activities ignorant of the consequences, resulting in unplanned pregnancies. Mataboge et al. (2014) and WHO (2012) have also reported that limited access to information about sex and sexuality is associated with less knowledge about safe sex and pregnancy prevention.

The principals also pointed out that some teenagers do not live with their parents because of socio-economic reasons. Many parents, especially in rural areas, frequently migrate to the urban areas in Lesotho or to South Africa in search of jobs, leaving their children with the

elderly or alone. As such, these children lack parental guidance in their upbringing, knowledge and skills for dealing with life challenges that they encounter. When these children encounter problems such as lacking food or running short of household supplies, they sometimes resort to engaging in sexual activities with people who will provide for them, especially older men who have money. Since parents are away, there is nobody who monitors and guides these children to make appropriate decision. Simelane (2019) also established that some parents are not able to guide their children because of the limited time they spend with them.

The principals also blamed social media for increased rates of teenage pregnancy. Their view is that young people have too much access to media like television, internet, social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) and mobile phones. As a result, they are exposed to sexual behaviours, which in turn trigger their desire to have early sex. Gyan (2013) has the same view that social media contributes significantly to teenage pregnancy because it displays sex as easy fun and glamorous, and it gives the impression that everyone is doing it, as a result, teenagers become easily hooked.

5.2.3 Views on how Schools Deal with Teenage Pregnancy

The principals in this study appeared to be using different approaches to mitigate teenage pregnancy. As it seems, their differing approaches emanated from the absence of a policy on teenage pregnancy. Selibeng (2020) has also confirmed there is absence of national policies on teenage pregnancy in many education systems. Thus, in the absence of national policies, each school decides on their own policy on teenage pregnancy.

Unlike before, when most of the schools used to expel or suspend pregnant learners, they do not do that anymore. They now allow learners to continue with their education regardless of their situation. Further, these schools usually assign some teachers to look after the pregnant learners' welfare while at school. They advise learners and ensure that they access available services for pregnant women. These teachers also monitor the learners' academic work and provide support where necessary.

There were some principals who indicated that they still upheld the old practice of suspending or expelling pregnant learners. Their practice was based on the moral judgement. The view of these principals was that expelling pregnant learners from school sent a strong message to other female learners that, if they did the same, their education would also be interrupted. These principals appeared also to be concerned about the image of their schools, which could be

tarnished by the pregnant learners. They pointed out that they did not want their schools to be viewed as ineffective and dysfunctional by their communities.

5.2.4 Challenges Imposed by Teenage Pregnancy in Schools

The principals who participated in this study pointed out many challenges that are experienced by the schools because of teenage pregnancy. In line with Ramalepa, Ramukumba and Masala-Chokwe (2021), the principals pointed out that teachers complained that pregnant learners distracted teaching and learning and normally behaved in an unacceptable manner. First, these teachers believe that learners do not follow school regulations; they sleep in class, and are generally undisciplined. According to the principals who participated in this study, teachers claim that they do not have the knowledge and skills required to work with pregnant learners. These teachers also believed that having pregnant learners in a school portrayed a negative school image to the local communities and school community members. The principals believed that teachers' negative attitude towards pregnant learners makes it difficult to keep such learners in school.

Other challenges that were mentioned by the principals were directly related to the pregnant Learners. Even in the case where the pregnant learners had been allowed to continue with schooling, many of them opted to leave school once they realised their status and did not return even after they had delivered their babies. Gyan (2013) also, established that most pregnant learners drop out of school and feel shy to return after delivery. Additionally, as viewed by these participants, pregnant learners, who opt to continue schooling regardless of their situation, face the challenge of regular school attendance, and their school performance deteriorate. The principals believed that many of these problems could be associated with the health status of these learners, being discriminated against and stigmatized.

The principals further indicated that the health conditions of pregnant women were unpredictable. They could instantly feel sick and need special attention. Also, they could frequently absent themselves from school because of illness or visiting health centres which often increase their workload and require them to do a lot of catch-ups. This often results in pregnant learners becoming frustrated and opting to drop out of school. This view is supported by Soba (2020) whose observation of the main causes of school dropout among pregnant adolescent girls, particularly in the developing countries, has been pregnancy related illnesses, and frequent visits to the health centres for check-ups. Maemeko et al. (2018) also align

themselves with the view that in most cases, the academic performance of pregnant learners who opt to continue with school lowers significantly.

With regard to discrimination and stigmatization, Soba (2020) first stated feeling unsafe at school as one of the reasons pregnant learners drop out. In this study, it has also been established that the reasons behind the pregnant learners' poor school performance, were being shy to participate in class and frequently missing classes, and that dropping out of school, could also be associated with the treatment they receive from some teachers and school mates. According to the principals that participated in this study, some learners give pregnant learners humiliating names and exclude them from their social groups. For example, one of the participants in this study quoted an incident where a boy in Grade 9 humiliated a pregnant girl in his class by calling her abusive names which forced that pregnant girl to drop out of school. Discrimination and stigmatization affect pregnant learners negatively, to an extent where they choose to give up their studies because they do not feel safe at school.

5.2.5 Strategies for Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy

The principals viewed managing teenage pregnancy at school as one of the main challenges the schools face. However, they believed that a number of strategies could effectively reduce teenage pregnancy in schools. According to these principals, enhancing the knowledge and skills of Life Skills Based Sexuality Education (LBSE) teachers, is very important in this regard. Their view was that LBSE programme create opportunities for young people to learn about sex and sexuality issues, including the methods that could be used to avoid unplanned pregnancy. If this programme, is implemented competently, learners can gain knowledge that can assist them make informed decisions about sex. Engaging different stakeholders such as health professionals, social workers, psychologists and others to educate learners about sex and provide the necessary services can effectively manage teenage pregnancy. Also, organising campaigns that raise awareness about teenage pregnancy can effectively influence different members of the society to see pregnancy as a problem to the whole society, not to individuals who could be judged to have been immorally engaging in sexual activities.

5.3   CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teenage pregnancy is a growing concern in Lesotho schools which negatively affects the education and the plans of high school learners. How teenage pregnancy is handled in schools is worrying because there is no national policy that guides schools, as a result, individual schools handle the issue of pregnancies differently. Some schools suspend

learners when they are pregnant while others allow them to continue with schooling until they are due to give birth. Also, schools appear to be limited in knowledge and skills about how to deal with teenage pregnancy. This also increases teacher-related and learner- related problems. With teacher-related problems, some teachers have negative attitude towards pregnant learners. They view them being immoral and tarnishing their schools' image. Others, believe that they have to assist these learners and make sure that their education is not interrupted, and that teachers have skills and knowledge required to support pregnant learners.

It also emerged that some learners discriminate against and stigmatise pregnant learners by calling them names and isolating them. Consequently, pregnant learners end up attending school irregularly, performing poorly academically, and ultimately dropping out of school.

This study has revealed that a phenomenon of learners' pregnancies is a cause for a great concern and requires urgent attention. All the stakeholders of education in Lesotho should join hands to combat this problem. There is need for health professionals, social workers, psychologists and Child and Gender Protection Unit officials to build a strong team that fights teenage pregnancy. Schools should also organise campaigns for raising awareness on the negative impact unplanned pregnancies have on young people. There is also a need to empower LBSE teachers so that they teach sex and sexuality competently.

5.4   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study relate to the methodology. Firstly, the number of principals who participated in this study was very small. The principals were selected from very few schools in the district of Qacha's Nek only. As a result, the views of these principals cannot be taken to represent the views of all the principals in Lesotho. Further, the study was also qualitative in nature, and it used only interviews for data collection. Other data collection methods, which are used to generate qualitative data, such as, observations, documents and others, were not included. Meaning that the study was solely dependent on the views of the principals. Therefore, there may be need to conduct a study which will engage a different approach or various methods to collect data that will have a larger size of the participants from other districts of Lesotho.

5.5   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study various recommendations are made. These include policy on teenage pregnancy, sex education, teacher training, and further research.

5.5.1 Recommendations for Policy Development on Management of Learners' Pregnancies

The findings of this study revealed that there is no national policy on teenage pregnancy in Lesotho. As such, schools have different policies and deal differently with learners' pregnancies. It is therefore recommended, as a matter of priority, that the Ministry of Education and Training develop a national policy on this critical matter. The policy should guide schools on how to manage learners' pregnancies so that consistency in dealing with learners' pregnancies is maintained.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Comprehensive Sex Education

It was established in this study that teenage learners have limited knowledge on sex issues and sexuality. It is therefore essential that learners should be introduced to comprehensive sexual education that aims to develop their knowledge, attitudes and skills that would enable them to make appropriate and healthy choices relating to sex.

5.5.3 Recommendations for Teachers Training and Skills Development

This study also established that there is a need to improve the implementation of the LBSE programme in schools. LBSE is a relatively a new programme, which requires a considerable attention on how it should be implemented. Thus, teachers should be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement this programme competently and assist learners on sexual issues affecting them in a real-life situation.

5.5.4 Recommendations for further research

This study used only one method, semi-structured interviews. This method involved a small number of the principals, which could not be viewed as representing the principals in Lesotho schools. Further research that can use more methods that can cover a larger number of the principals' population in Lesotho might give a broader picture of how the schools are dealing with learner pregnancy.

5.6 SUMMARY

This study investigated school principals' perceptions on teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's Nek district. This chapter discussed the results that were presented in the previous chapter (Chapter 4). The conclusions that were made were drawn from the discussions made in this study. Also, the limitations of the study were presented, and recommendations for policy-makers, teacher training and further research have been made.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

Telephone: +266 22340601/3631
Fax: +266 22340000
http://www.nul.ls

P.O. Roma 180
Lesotho
Africa

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Postgraduates Studies
Department of Educational Foundations

31 May 2022

Dear Sir/ Madam,

My name is 'Mathabo Julia Chere-Masopha, a Postgraduate Research Programme Coordinator and the supervisor of Mrs. Pulane Regina Majoro-Teke who I would like to introduce to you. Mrs. Pulane Regina Majoro-Teke (199600097) is a postgraduate student in the Faculty of

Education. As part of her studies, Mrs Major-Teke is investigating issues of *School Principals' Perceptions about Teenage Pregnancies in Lesotho Secondary Schools: The case of eight Schools in Qacha's Neck District*. Her research proposal has been approved by the Faculty. She has identified your school for possible data collection.

On behalf of the Faculty of Education and Mrs Majoro-Teke, I am making a request that your good office gives her an opportunity to collect data for her study in your school.

Should you require additional information, please contact Dr Chere-Masopha through one of the following:

Mobile #: 5775 6658, or Email address: juliachere@gmail.com.

Yours Faithfully,

Chere – Masopha

Julia Chere-Masopha (Ph.D)

DEAN FACULTY OF EDUCATION
P.O. ROMA 180
2022 -05- 3 1
LESOTHO, AFRICA
National University of Lesotho

APPENDIXB: LETTER OF RECRUITMENT

The National University of Lesotho

P.O. Roma 180

Lesotho

Contact: 59030150

Dear participant

My name is Pulane Regina Majoro-Teke (Student number: 199600097). I am a postgraduate student in the Faculty of Education at the National University of Lesotho. I am inviting you to participate in a study that investigates the school principals' perceptions of teenage pregnancy in selected high schools in the Qacha's Nek District. This study is part of my studies that lead to Master of Education (M. ED) Degree in Educational Management. I have specifically decided to undertake this study because I believe information on how schools deal with teenage pregnancy can benefit all school education stakeholders in this country. They can use this information to inform their decisions when dealing with teenage pregnancy issues. Your participation in this study will assist to generate this information.

If you agree, you will be participating in an hour-interview. All information collected will be treated strictly confidential, and will be used specifically for the objective of the study. Please, also note that your participation in this study is voluntary. Even where you had agreed to participate, but you begin to feel uncomfortable during or after the interview with the interview questions, you have a right to withdraw your participation and ask for the information you have provided be destroyed. None of the information collected would be used against you or your will.

For more information, you are free to contact my supervisor, Head of Department or Dean of the Faculty of Education of the National University of Lesotho, at this number: 22340601

Yours sincerely

Pulane Regina Majoro-Teke

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A STUDY

I…………………………………………………………………………. (Participant name), confirm that the researcher requesting my consent to take part in this research project has provided me with the necessary information pertaining to the nature, procedures, and potential benefits of the study. I have not been pressurised to participate in this study, and therefore, understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I can withdraw from it at any time without penalty or provision of reasons

Signature…………………………………………. Contact number……………………………. Date ………………………

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR QACHA'S NEK HIGH SCHOOLS PRINCIPALS

My name is Pulane Regina Majoro-Teke. I would like to thank you very much for participating in this research study. The purpose of this interview is to find out your perceptions of teenage pregnancy in schools. As already indicated, your responses will be kept confidential. I am requesting you to help me fill in this form.

1. **School Name** ....
2. **Time of interview:** ....
3. **Date of interview:** ....
4. **Interviewer:** ....
5. **Interviewee Assumed Name:** ....
6. **Gender** (Tick the correct option)

   [   ] Male

   [   ] Female.

7. **Age:**

   [   ] 30-39 years

   [   ] 40-49 years

   [   ] 50+ years.

8. **Teaching Experience:**

   [   ] 5-10 years

   [   ] 11-15 years

   [   ] 16-20 years

   [   ] 21 + years

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. What is your understanding of teenage pregnancy in schools?
   - At what rate do learners in your school get pregnant?
   - What are your views about teenage pregnancy?

2. Which factors do you think contribute to teenage pregnancy?

   Prompt; lack of information on sexual behaviour, peer influence, poverty. Ask the interviewee to mention those that are often overlooked.

3. How do you deal with learner pregnancies in your school?
   - What does the school policy say about learner pregnancies?
   - If there is no policy, how does the school deal with learners who fall pregnant?
   - How does the school support a learner and the family of a learner who falls pregnant?
   - What kind of support does your school offer to learners who lost their time when they went to give birth or when they were ill?
   - What kind of support does your school offer to young mothers?

4. What challenges are imposed by learner pregnancy in your school?

5. What do you think schools should do to mitigate learner pregnancy?
   - In your view, how has the introduction of Life Skills Based Sexuality Education contributed to the rates of pregnancy in schools?

APPENDIX F: PROOF OF LANGUAGE EDITING

<div align="right">
National University of Lesotho
Faculty of Education
Department of Educational
Foundations
P O Roma 180
Lesotho

27 July 2023
</div>

Dr. J. Chere-Masopha
The Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Foundations
National University of Lesotho
P O Roma 180
LESOTHO

Dear Madam

Re: Copy-editing of Mrs 'Mamakhoathi Teke's M. Ed dissertation titled: *INVESTIGATING*

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN SELECTED

HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE QACHA'S NEK DISTRICT

I have copy-edited the above captioned dissertation by Mrs. Teke's to the best of my ability. If there are any errors, omissions and other mistakes are solely the responsibility of the author.

Yours sincerely

Tankie Khalanyane (Mr)
Senior Lecturer, EDF & B Ed Honours Coordinator

APPENDIX G: SIMILARITY INDEX

school Principals Perceptions of Teenage Pregnancy in Lesotho schools