

The findings suggest that there is a need for health and reproductive services available for teenage mothers to access anytime they need, without the constraints of time that is allocated to health care facilities. Condom use was non-existent among the participants and this gives rise to a concern relating to rising HIV/AIDS infection among young people in South Africa, as knowledge about onset of sexual intercourse and contraceptives was minimal among the participants. One participant argued that although she had been taking her contraceptive pills everyday she continued to experience repeat pregnancies. This is evident that rather than just the knowledge of contraceptives being the problem, knowledge about the use of contraceptives seemed to be an even bigger problem for the participants.

Trust and the need to keep the relationship and make the partner happy was also among some of the reasons for non-use of condoms. Some argued that it is because of the trust they had for their partner that they decided not to utilise condoms. Participants did not seem to do anything about protecting their health when it came to HIV/AIDS as some of them engaged in early sexual activity. An important finding on contraceptive and condom use revealed the importance of educating teenage mothers' on the importance of taking charge in their relationships and being able to negotiate the use of a condom without making their partner feel like it is about mistrust. One participant had multiple pregnancies and it is in her third pregnancy that she acknowledges that she has a problem and needs help. These findings suggest the importance of contraceptive education and knowledge of sex on taking control of one's life.

The consensus among many of the participants is that of pregnancy having taught them a lot of responsibility. Some participants viewed motherhood as a good thing that happened to them as it served to teach them a few lessons about themselves, related to caring and being able to take care of someone else other than themselves. They argued that having a baby has taught them to do things for themselves. One participant argued that it taught her to get up, get herself a job, and not beg her family for money to take care of her child. It was evident from the study however, that not all teenage mothers found teenage pregnancy to have worked in their favour. Some argued that teenage motherhood had exposed them to problems they would not have otherwise experienced had they not had a child. This is critical in debunking the myth that teenage mothers are a homogenous group that experiences the same things and are in the situations they are in because they are delinquent beings. Experiences cited included family members no longer taking care of the teenager and placing more emphasis on the child, and others argued that they felt their parents longer loved them and resented them secretly.

These findings suggest a great need for support for teenage mothers and allowing them a chance to express their experiences in intervention settings. Five participants also expressed concerns about being stigmatised because of their status as teenage mothers. Some specified that this was when they were publicly visibly pregnant, while others indicated that they experienced stigma when they were seen with the child or by people who knew they were teenage mothers.

Some participants argued that they did not think people cared if they were teenage mothers, as long as they were happy while others stressed how differently people were treated because they were teenage mothers, and how sad this made them feel. When it came to decisions on handling schoolwork and taking care of the child, the main reasons participants gave for choosing to stay in school were either to please parents or to ensure that they and their child have a better future.

The importance of education was greatly emphasised among the participants who were still in school and those who returned to school after the pregnancy. These participants present important factors relating to their reasons for staying in school, support being one of the additional ones. Support was seen as an important factor in teenage motherhood as teenage mothers were able to return to school if they had a supportive partner or friend who took care of their other needs: social, financial and taking care of the child.

These findings suggest the need for context specific interventions to help curb teenage pregnancy, which places considerable burdens on teenage mothers. Even though some of the girls who were interviewed emphasised positive aspects of becoming mothers and how this had made them more responsible, becoming a mother seriously disturbs the flow of events of a teenage girl's life. Understanding teenage motherhood and the context under which it occurs is important to ensure that teenage mothers are accepted in schools and receive the necessary support to advance their knowledge and education.

Education about early sexual intercourse is also an important factor as participants in this study, argued that they were not aware that they would fall pregnant. This proves that knowledge and education that we often take for granted has not actually reached many teenagers in rural areas. Designing interventions that would target educating teenage girls about the different side effects and effects of particular contraceptives and the difference between condom-use and contraceptive pills as these protect against different effects. For teenage mothers, interventions related to curbing repeat pregnancies and support for teenage mothers would be helpful advance their transition into motherhood and ensuring they are able to juggle school and studying.

Chapter 7

Summary of findings, Concluding remarks and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the experiences of teenage mothers in a peri-urban area in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The study focused on understanding the participants' experiences of pregnancy and motherhood, factors leading up to the pregnancy as well as the attitudes of others towards them as pregnant teenagers as well as family reactions to the pregnancy. The study further investigated the participants' experiences of motherhood, specifically understanding that teenage mothers experience some positivity in becoming mothers. Gendered narratives of teenage motherhood are also explored and discussed in the study. The study further explores the experiences of teenage mothers on the schooling system, why some choose to stay in school and the reasons for those that do not stay in school.

7.2 Summary of findings

The findings of this study revealed that teenage mothers experience pregnancy and motherhood in different ways. It was evident that teenage girls engage in risky sexual behavior that they do not see as a risk to falling pregnant. Half the participants reported not knowing that they were pregnant until the partner pointed it out to them, or until they missed their period or experienced symptoms later. This reflects that there is still a great need to ensure that sex education is integrated into the everyday syllabus and to strengthen the Life Orientation classes for teenage girls, to empower them to understand the implications to unprotected sex and the high risk of pregnancy and HIV infection. Given the statistics released. The attitudes of teenage motherhood as a responsibility only for teenage girls and not boys needs to acknowledge equally, the responsibility of teenage boys in teenage pregnancy.

While studies have shown that half of the children born to teenage mothers are fathered by older men (Jewkes et al., 2001; Landy and Forrest 1995), research needs to investigate ways to ensure that fathers are also equally responsible for consequences of teenage pregnancy. South Africa is riddled with policies that are good on the paper, but fickle on implementation.

Contrary to the attitudes that teenage mothers are a homogenous group of delinquent, unfit parents, the participants in this study revealed experiences of teenage motherhood as having

been positive for some of them. They relayed stories of the ways in which becoming mothers had made them more responsible and caring.

The policy on education in South Africa aims to allow teenage girls the advantage of completing school when they are pregnant, without the problem of expulsion. However, this is not always the case, as often, teenage girls, as evident in the study, are forced to leave school due to circumstances that are not conducive for them to learn, and attitudes of othering that they are subjected to in the school environment.

In terms of participants who decided to stay in school, findings suggested that schoolteachers' attitudes towards them, which were motivating, allowed an environment for them to stay in school and work harder. Participants who were already doing well academically, before they fell pregnant seemed to receive more support from teachers during and after the pregnancy.

The study also found that teenage mothers who decided to leave school did so because of financial and social constraints that did not allow them to complete their schooling. Such constraints ranged from not having anyone to take care of the child, having to handle schoolwork and taking care of the child which put more pressure on them. They also experienced attitudes from family members, which were not conducive to them completing school.

7.3 Concluding remarks

This study investigated the lived experiences of teenage mothers in a peri-urban area in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The study explored the risky sexual behavior that teenage girls engage in that they do not necessarily see as a prerequisite for teenage pregnancy. The study further investigated the experiences of teenage mothers in school and those who opted to leave school upon discovering the pregnancy. It is evident from the findings that education plays a key role in the way in which most of the participants see their future. They continue to reflect on the value of education in ensuring that they receive a bright future, not only for them but also for their children. This study further showed that while education policy allows teenage mothers to return to school during and after the birth of the child, attitudes of teachers and learners may not be conducive and hence lead to teenagers opting to drop out of school. The study further found that some of the participants received positive encouragement from their teachers allowing them to make the decision to stay and continue with their education.

The access to contraceptives and use of these by the participants was also explored, with findings reflecting that teenage girls are still unable to access contraceptives, due to barriers mainly due to attitudes of healthcare staff at clinics as well as times with clinics clashing with the teenage girls school times. Some of the teenage girls argued that negotiating condom use was also a barrier due to them not wanting to anger their partner who may think they are asking for condoms because they do not trust him.

There is a need to ensure sex education in school, not only through the Life orientation classes, but to find a way to integrate this into regular classes as well. There is also a need to strengthen the existing Life Orientation classes to ensure that teenage girls and boys equally get to understand the responsibility that pregnancy has n both of them

It is evident that teenage pregnancy consequences and those of raising the child often fall on the teenage girls and the boys are left out of the stigma and associated attitudes. This needs to change to ensure that fathers are also part of the consequences that are experienced by teenage mothers.

7.4 Recommendations

In the description of teenage mothers experiences of teenage motherhood in KwaZulu-Natal; their experiences of motherhood, stigmatisation and the reasons that encourage teenage mothers to stay in school, it is evident that there is a need to undertake a study on the teenage fathers and the fathers who impregnate teenage girls. It would be useful to investigate how they construct their everyday realities in the midst of the realities constructed by these teenage mothers. This would benefit in understanding whether teenage fathers who father children with teenage girls do think of the responsibilities that teenage girls have to deal with when they are pregnant. It would also be interesting to understand what the implications are for the teenage fathers in their own families.

The study would uncover the reasons for the “silence” assumed by teenage fathers. While Bhana and Swartz (2010) have argued for the value that teenage fathers place on fatherhood and their experiences of finding out they are fathers, it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study in Kwa-Zulu Natal, as this is the province with higher levels of HIV infections. Understanding how teenage fathers construct fatherhood and responsibility would assist with policy that can equally deal with not only pregnant schoolgirls, but also school boys who impregnate these girls, to come up with common ground that does not stigmatise the teenage girls in the process.

While government has introduced policy that allows teenage girls to stay in school during/ after the pregnancy, this is not always easy for the participants, as they have reflected. It would be beneficial for government to conduct road shows with schools, to ensure that their own moral beliefs of constructs of what is relevant behavior does not conflict with what this policy wants to achieve. That way, gender equality and fairness is achieved for teenage girls who find themselves pregnant and in schools.

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Appendices: Appendix A

LETTER TO CHIEF -MZINGAZI VILLAGE

Mzingazi Agri Village

Richards Bay

3900

Dear Chief

REQUET FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND MOTHERHOOD IN YOUR AREA-MZINGAZI AGRI VILLAGE.

My name is Nothile Dlamini. I am a Researcher undertaking studies as a Masters student at the University of Stellenbosch. I am interested in undertaking a study in your area, entitled: *Teenage motherhood “is it so bad?” A case study of teenage mothers in peri-urban KwaZulu-Natal*. The study will mainly be focused on conducting semi-structured interviews with teenage girls in your area as a follow-up from a study undertaken last year as part of the honours project. I understand that I need to gain permission from you to conduct this study as this is much more in-depth than the honours project and your permission will be greatly appreciated. I may also need to interview some people from the nearest clinic in the area.

I am happy to make the research report available to the community should this be needed. Looking forward to working with you on this great project.

Yours faithfully

Nothile Dlamini

University of Stellenbosch

Cape Town

8000

Cell: 0605834518

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Hello, my name is I am from the University of Stellenbosch and I am asking people from your community to answer some questions, which we hope will benefit your community and possibly other communities in the future.

I am a Masters student at the University of Stellenbosch and I am conducting research regarding teenage motherhood in your community. I am interested in finding out more about teenage mothers and how they cope with being teenage mothers. I am carrying out this research to help increase knowledge on the complexities involved in being a teenage mother.

I have chosen you because I have been told that you might be interested in taking part in the study. I am doing this in a number of different households in the area, and after combining all people's answers, I hope to learn more about teenage motherhood, which will help me make useful recommendations to the relevant authorities and organisations who work with improving access to services for teenage mothers.

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, I would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with me. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the questionnaire and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only I will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around 30 minutes .I will be asking you questions and ask that you are as open as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before,

and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. I know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but I ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers. When I ask questions about the future I am not interested in what you think the best thing would be to do, but what you think would actually happen.

If I ask you a question which makes you feel sad or upset, I can stop and talk about it a little.

If possible, I would like to come back to this area once I have completed the study to inform you and your community of what the results are and discuss our findings and proposals around the research and what this means for people in this area.

If you are harmed or have any concerns

If you feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please call the Department of Sociology And Social Anthropology on this no: Prof. R. Pattman. Tel: 021 808 2940.[This introduction and consent form as well as the questionnaire will be translated (and back translated) into the isiZulu which is the first language of all participants of participants].

CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to any questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

Appendix C

QUESTIONS FOR FIELDWORK

Introduce yourself. Describe study. Consent forms – please ask participant to sign one and allow them to keep one. Sign register

- Check that they signed the consent form
 - Check that they understood the consent form
1. Tell me about yourself. Age, where you live, schooling, education level, your child, current occupation. etc
 2. Tell me about the time you became a mother, what happened, who was there to help you, how are you coping with the baby, who is supporting you financially.
 3. Were you on any birth control (contraceptives) that time? Tell me more.
 4. How do you feel about being a teenage mother now?
 5. How do you think people in your community feel about you being a mother? Do they treat you different etc.
 6. Where is your child? Who does the child live with etc?
 7. Do you take the child to the clinic often? Tell me about that experience.
 8. How is having a child and going to school working for you?
 9. Do you experience any problems for being a teenage mother in school/ in the community? Tell me more
 10. If you were to describe for me the time before you became a teenage mother and now that you are a teenage mother, tell me what has changed and how has it all changed?

Tell me about the people in your life, your friends, your family and your school teachers.

11. Have you had any change in attitude or behaviour since you had a child and now? Please explain.
12. Why did you decide to stay in school? Or to leave school if not in school.
13. Tell me about your access to education? Are you happy at school? If not why not. If not at school, why not?
14. How do you juggle being in school and taking care of your child?
15. Tell me about your boyfriend. Where is he now? Does he help take care of the baby?
16. What is your greatest wish for your child's future etc?
17. Is there any other way that you make money and take care of your child besides work?
18. If you were to picture yourself five years back? What would you have done differently?
19. What do you want to do in five years' time?
20. What advice would you give a young girl who has not been a teenage mother?

ⁱ Sugar daddy is a term widely used in South Africa to refer to older men who date young girls. The term originates from the economic/ financial gains that a young girl would get from the so called sugar daddy.