



RESEARCH TITLE

EVALUATING THE LONG – TERM CONSEQUENCES OF TEENAGE PREGNANCIES IN RURAL SCHOOLS WITHIN UMKHANYAKUDE DISTRICT: A SOCIOECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Adolescent pregnancy is a worldwide issue that has specific socioeconomic and educational consequences, particularly in settings with minimal resources, such as South African rural schools. Although adolescent pregnancies have been addressed widely across the globe, little research has been done on the long-term effects of these pregnancies in the setting of rural schooling. The need for this kind of investigation is further reinforced by the particular socio-cultural and economic dynamics of South Africa.

The purpose of this literature review is manifold:

- **To Establish Grounding:** A thorough review is the foundation of every scholarly investigation. We can place our work into the larger academic debate and give it perspective and legitimacy by looking at previous research and results.
- **To Identify Trends and Patterns:** When data from several sources are combined, trends about the long-term effects of adolescent pregnancies in rural schools start to show themselves. This will make it easier to understand the phenomenon's overt as well as covert ramifications.
- **To Recognize Gaps:** Thorough literature reviews often reveal aspects of the topic that have not received enough attention or investigation. By identifying these gaps, we can make sure that the present study adds new ideas and understandings to the wider discussion.

There is no way to overstate the importance of this subject. Although they are individual experiences, teenage pregnancies are hardly isolated occurrences. These converge with more expansive socio-economic and educational frameworks, especially in rural places where resources are few. In a nation such as South Africa, where socio-economic differences are still shaped by the legacy of apartheid, structural inequities often affect rural schools. In light of this, comprehending the

effects of adolescent pregnancies becomes both an intellectual exercise and a call to action.

Furthermore, the effects of adolescent pregnancies extend much beyond the local setting due to the complex relationship between socioeconomic position and education. They have the ability to influence educational attainment levels and, hence, the socio-economic paths that young women, their children, and their communities take.

2.2 Background on Teenage Pregnancy

2.2.1 Global Context and Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy

Although teen pregnancy is a common occurrence, it varies greatly between nations, cultures, and economic strata. Teenage pregnancy is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a pregnancy occurring between the ages of 10 and 19 (World Health Organisation, 2014). Globally, it is projected that over 21 million girls aged 15 to 19 get pregnant in poor countries each year, resulting in roughly 12 million births (UNFPA, 2018). This predominance emphasises the seriousness of the problem and the urgent necessity to solve its accompanying issues.

Different nations have different patterns of adolescent pregnancy, which are mostly driven by societal, economic, and educational variables. Teenage pregnancies have been dropping in affluent countries during the last several decades. For example, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that the adolescent birth rate in the United States fell by 7% from 2018 to 2019, hitting an all-time low (Martin et al., 2020). Similarly, Western European nations such as the Netherlands and Denmark have achieved significant decreases in adolescent birth rates as a result of comprehensive sexual education and easily available contraception facilities (Arie & Aiken, 2016).

In contrast, many underdeveloped nations continue to struggle with high rates of adolescent pregnancy. Sub-Saharan Africa stands out, with countries such as Niger and Mali having some of the highest worldwide rates of adolescent pregnancy (UNICEF, 2016). Early marriage, limited access to education and healthcare, and prevalent cultural values all contribute to the region's high rates (Bankole et al., 2017).

Latin America, too, has high rates of adolescent pregnancy, but with significant regional differences. In countries such as Guatemala and Honduras, the problem is inextricably linked to socioeconomic issues and educational hurdles, as well as social ideals emphasising motherhood (Azevedo et al., 2012). Notably, economic inequities exacerbate the problem; lower-income groups within nations, whether developed or developing, often have higher rates of adolescent pregnancy (Kearney & Levine, 2012).

While there is a general cultural conservatism towards premarital sexual behaviour in the Asian culture, there are also large rates of adolescent pregnancies. Due to early marriages and a lack of sexual education, countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal are grappling with this problem (Godha et al., 2014). However, the larger Asian picture remains complicated, with nations such as Japan and South Korea seeing low adolescent pregnancy rates, which may be ascribed in part to a strong cultural focus on education and job goals (Kojima et al., 2017).

Several experts discuss the primary causes of worldwide frequency and inequalities in adolescent pregnancy rates. Some researchers, such as Bongaarts and Casterline (2013), emphasise the importance of contraceptive availability and usage as a main factor. Others, such as Chandra-Mouli et al. (2014), contend that a combination of cultural norms, education, and economic possibilities explains the various worldwide trends more holistically.

2.2.2 The Prevalence and Unique Challenges of Teenage Pregnancy in Rural South Africa

Teenage pregnancy offers a complicated difficulty in South Africa, especially in rural regions, with origins in traditional norms, economic limits, and educational impediments. Despite numerous advances in socioeconomic development, the nation still faces high rates of adolescent pregnancy in rural areas.

According to Statistics South Africa (2019), around 16% of South African women aged 15-19 have started having children. This frequency, although significant throughout the country, is more evident in rural areas, as shown by a study that found adolescent

pregnancy rates as high as 27% in the eastern Limpopo Province (Mchunu et al., 2012). Such data highlight the critical nature of the problem in these rural areas.

The effect of socio-cultural practises is central to the debate on adolescent pregnancy in rural South Africa. Early marriages have been highlighted as a key cause to early childbirth, motivated by cultural practises and, at times, economic need. Panday et al. (2009) discovered that cultural norms that prioritise fertility often promote early pregnancies, establishing a woman's social status via parenting. In contrast, Harrison (2008) contends that such practises are shifting, implying that, although traditions have a role, the socioeconomic context, especially poverty, has a greater impact on early pregnancies in these communities.

Economic restrictions, particularly in rural areas, exacerbate the difficulties connected with adolescent pregnancy. Access to healthcare services, particularly reproductive health education and contraception, becomes critical (Willan, 2013). Poverty and limited resources in rural regions sometimes restrict access to necessary services, resulting in a circular pattern in which poverty exacerbates the occurrence of adolescent births, which in turn reinforces socioeconomic limits (Jewkes et al., 2009).

The educational background is equally important. Dropout rates in rural regions are frighteningly high owing to adolescent pregnancies. According to Seutlwadi et al. (2012), young mothers in these locations are less likely to finish their education, which has repercussions for their economic chances and general quality of life. A pause in schooling exacerbates the economic obstacles encountered by young moms, creating a feedback cycle of socioeconomic misfortune.

The stigmas connected with adolescent pregnancy exacerbate the problem. Young mothers often endure ostracization and negative labelling in rural places where communal and cultural judgements have enormous power, impacting their self-esteem and socioeconomic goals (Macleod, 1999). This stigma, along with genuine economic and educational hurdles, produces a multifaceted environment of adversity for adolescent moms.

There is also a health consideration that should not be neglected. Teenage pregnancies pose a number of health hazards due to the physical immaturity of young moms. According to Garenne et al. (2008), there are greater maternal death rates

among teens in South Africa, with rural regions being more susceptible due to poor healthcare facilities.

2.2.3 Historical Context of Teenage Pregnancy in South Africa

The history of adolescent pregnancy in South Africa is deeply intertwined into the fabric of the country's social, cultural, and political development. To acquire a thorough understanding, it is necessary to trace this story against the background of apartheid, colonial impact, and indigenous practises.

Indigenous African communities often practised early marriages throughout the pre-colonial period, connecting them with social rank and economic rewards. Although these couplings occurred at an early age, they were not necessarily related with the current definition of "teenage pregnancy," but they were ritualised and institutionally encouraged (Posel, 2005). Births outside of such marital circumstances, on the other hand, were less common and sometimes met with societal condemnation.

These socio-cultural norms shifted throughout the colonial period. According to Swartz (2010), European settlers influenced African family structures and traditional rites of passage, thus leading to a rise in adolescent premarital pregnancies. Colonial educational and religious institutions promoted ideals that sometimes contrasted with indigenous practises, generating socio-cultural dissonance.

Apartheid, with its racial isolation and socioeconomic inequalities, increased the problem of adolescent pregnancy. Black South African communities endured geographical displacement, forced deportation, and family disintegration in this setting (Hunter, 2005). Such disruptions, along with economic challenges, contributed to an increase in adolescent pregnancies, particularly in townships and rural regions where educational and health facilities were severely lacking (Jewkes et al., 2005).

Macleod (1999) explored how the apartheid state dealt with adolescent pregnancy. Policies during this time period seldom addressed the socioeconomic determinants of early pregnancy, instead relying on moral regulation. As a result, many black South African teens who were already marginalised by structural socioeconomic difficulties were stigmatised further by these moralistic regulations.

While embracing democratic ideas, post-apartheid South Africa struggled with the historical legacy of adolescent pregnancy. Despite progressive legislation and initiatives in the new South Africa, adolescent pregnancies remained common, particularly in rural regions. According to Kaufman et al. (2001), this persistence may be due to persistent socioeconomic inequities and lasting cultural practises. Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa added a new layer to the story, as adolescent pregnancies were entangled with HIV transmission fears (Harrison, 2008).

While the aforementioned studies give essential historical background, it is critical to see adolescent pregnancy not just as a 'problem,' but also as part of a larger socio-cultural and economic environment. Rural communities confront distinct issues and historical continuities due to their specific histories of dispossession and neglect. When one examines this history through a postcolonial feminist perspective, the resilience and agency of young mothers appear as crucial characteristics (Bhana, 2012).

2.3 Socioeconomic Challenges and Repercussions of Teenage Pregnancy

2.3.1 Economic Impact on Teenage Mothers

Teenage pregnancy in South Africa has complex socioeconomic implications that have far-reaching effects, especially in rural areas. The economic burden on adolescent moms, which appears both soon after delivery and over time, lies at the heart of these complexities.

Teenage moms encounter a variety of acute financial concerns. First of all, young moms often struggle with the immediate medical costs associated with delivery and postpartum care; this financial burden is sometimes made worse in remote areas by the lack of access to public health facilities (Panday et al., 2009). This is made worse by the sometimes unstated expenses, which may be prohibitive for many people. Examples of these include transportation to medical facilities and the cost of necessary infant products (Makiwane et al., 2010).

In addition, adolescent moms often face a problem in terms of their schooling. Taking care of the infant sometimes requires pausing or stopping school entirely (Willan,

2013). There are substantial opportunity costs associated with this disruption; most notably, people lose out on potential wages they might have made had they pursued their education. According to Branson et al. (2015), adolescent moms who drop out of school early might have a 40% lifetime earnings gap when compared to their peers who finish higher education levels.

Emphasising the spiralling nature of these difficulties is critical as we get into the long-term economic repercussions. After giving birth, a sizable percentage of adolescent moms choose not to return to school, which will restrict their future work options and earning potential (Macleod & Tracey, 2010). As a result, people continue to be trapped in low-paying positions or experience unemployment, which feeds the cycle of poverty. Teenage moms often become disproportionately reliant on social grants in rural South Africa, where employment options are already limited. This contributes to the perception that teenage pregnancies are a "grant-driven" phenomena (Makiwane et al., 2010).

The already costly task of raising children is made considerably more difficult when adolescent moms' low financial resources are taken into account. These young moms have a heavy financial burden, covering everything from basic kid nourishment to healthcare and education. Sekotlong (2017) reports that a large number of adolescent moms in rural areas depend on their family for financial assistance. Although the support from family members might be advantageous, it also contributes to economic pressure between generations as grandparents and other relatives must use their already few resources to support the kid and the young mother.

Further investigation on the interaction between child-rearing duties and economic issues is necessary due to their interconnectedness. According to Bhorat et al. (2013), adolescent moms are under more pressure to obtain job due to the financial strain of raising children, which often pushes women into hazardous, low-paying, and sometimes exploitative working conditions. Feelings of shame, inadequacy, and stress are exacerbated for these young moms by their incapacity to meet the child's demands.

Analysing the aforementioned story, it is clear that adolescent pregnancies in rural South Africa have both immediate and long-lasting economic effects. These difficulties are made much more severe by the systemic flaws in the educational and economic

systems. In addition to addressing the critical issue of adolescent pregnancy, there is an urgent need to address the systemic socio-economic disparities that both cause and exacerbate these economic difficulties.

2.3.2 Employment and Career Prospects

In rural South Africa, teenage pregnancy has a significant impact on young mothers' professional paths and job opportunities. These effects are intricately linked to the socioeconomic realities of the area, making the difficulties this group faces even more acute.

There is no denying the direct impact of adolescent pregnancy on employment prospects. These young moms' education is generally limited because of the need to care for their infant, which often compels them to drop out of school (Macleod & Tracey, 2010). Their job opportunities are inevitably limited by this disturbance to their schooling. According to research by Branson et al. (2015), there are few job options for adolescent moms, and even those that do exist are often in low-wage fields. Their children are often the bystanders in this vicious cycle of poverty as a result of their diminished earning ability.

These women have ongoing work obstacles for the whole of their lives. They are not just acute issues. Sekotlong (2017) states that it becomes more difficult for a young mother to reenter and successfully compete in the workforce and school system the longer she stays out of both. Long-term economic vulnerability results from their lack of formal work, which impacts not only their present financial status but also their future pension and retirement benefits (Bhorat et al., 2013).

It is indisputable that education has a crucial role in determining the financial success of adolescent moms. There is a wealth of data in the South African context that indicates better economic results correspond with increased educational attainment (Willan, 2013). Education gives people the competences, knowledge, and skills that employers value in employees. After giving birth, continuing school may be a difficult undertaking for adolescent moms, made more difficult by social stigmas and financial limitations (Panday et al., 2009). However, those who are able to finish their school have greater career prospects and higher earning potential. According to Makiwane et al. (2010), completing secondary school almost doubles one's earning potential when compared to those with just a primary education.

Nonetheless, several academics contest the ostensibly direct correlation between schooling and improved financial consequences for adolescent moms. Education is clearly important, but these moms' success trajectories are also greatly influenced by other variables, like as social support, personal resilience, and availability to childcare resources (Macleod & Tracey, 2010). Education may not be the magic bullet that is often thought to be the solution if these overall demands are not addressed.

After combining the information above, it is clear that, while adolescent pregnancy definitely hurts one's chances of landing a job and advancing in their profession, the extent of this influence is varied by a number of variables, with education playing a significant role. It emphasises the need of programmes that support adolescent moms' reintegration into the educational system in addition to preventing teenage pregnancy. For real change to occur, a multifaceted strategy that sees education as a crucial part of a larger socioeconomic support system is required.

2.4 Educational Consequences of Teenage Pregnancy

2.4.1 School Dropout and Educational Continuity

The story of adolescent pregnancy in rural South Africa is defined by its negative effects on young mothers' educational ambitions. The frequency of school dropout rates and the varied problems encountered by these young women in re-entering the educational system are significant consequences of this predicament.

The high rates of school dropout among adolescent moms in rural South African settings cannot be overstated. According to Grant and Hallman (2008), over half of adolescent women drop out of school during pregnancy, with just a small percentage returning after delivery. This rate is substantially greater in rural regions than in metropolitan ones. According to Timaeus and Moultrie (2015), these dropouts not only limit these young moms' immediate schooling but also lower their chances of pursuing higher education in the future, thereby limiting their life possibilities.

The environment in which these dropouts occur is fraught with sociocultural and structural difficulties. As Panday et al. (2009) point out, social shame is a major factor driving adolescent moms out of school. School settings, which should be supportive, often devolve into arenas of judgement, with both teachers and classmates passing judgement on these young moms. This psychological weight makes it difficult for them

to finish their schooling. Mkhwanazi (2010) agrees, pointing out that cultural norms in rural regions, influenced by traditional beliefs, are less tolerant of adolescent pregnancies, aggravating dropout rates.

However, social judgement is just one aspect. Practical reasons, as emphasised by Jewkes et al. (2013), also discourage adolescent moms from continuing their studies. The absence of childcare services in remote locations, financial restraints, and the overwhelming duties of motherhood at such a young age are among the most significant of these. Many of these young women lack family support networks, making juggling study and parenthood a difficult task.

Scholars, in contrast to the dismal environment seen above, give a slightly different perspective. According to Marteleto et al. (2008), although dropout rates are certainly high, a significant proportion of young moms overcome the odds and re-enter schools, particularly in circumstances where educational institutions have support systems in place. They credit this resistance to increased awareness, government legislation, and community actions aimed at assisting adolescent moms. However, the researchers all agree that such occurrences are the exception rather than the rule.

Based on the evidence given, the link between adolescent pregnancy and poor educational prospects in rural South Africa is unmistakable. While cultural norms and logistical constraints are major deterrents, there is some promise in cases where institutional assistance is provided. These findings highlight the need of a multifaceted strategy to addressing this problem, one that not only tackles cultural standards but also strengthens support networks for these young moms. The battle is not just against dropout rates, but also for the future of these young women.

2.4.2 Academic Performance and Future Opportunities

Teenage pregnancy, particularly in rural South African settings, offers a slew of issues, not the least of which is the negative influence on academic performance. Motherhood's merging with critical schooling years is a significant obstacle to optimum academic achievement and future chances for higher education or professional endeavours.

Following delivery, adolescent moms' academic performance suffers noticeably. According to a fundamental research by Madhavan and Thomas (2005), adolescent

moms who are juggling caregiving and school likely to underperform their non-pregnant friends. Their study in rural KwaZulu-Natal shows that the additional tasks greatly diminish the attention and dedication to academics. Willan (2013) supports these findings by arguing that the cognitive and emotional demands of early parenting often appear in absenteeism, less class involvement, and, consequently, worse academic achievements.

Aside from the immediate scholastic effects, adolescent pregnancy throws a long shadow over future educational and occupational opportunities. According to Branson, Ardington, and Leibbrandt (2015), adolescent moms are much less likely to continue postsecondary education due to the financial and logistical constraints of childcare and studying. In the long term, this deprivation often translates into fewer professional possibilities and lower earning potential.

Despite this forbidding picture, there are measures in place to assist adolescent moms in their educational ambitions. Several provinces, including the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, have implemented 'Second Chance' programmes to assist young mothers in re-entering the school system (Chigona and Chetty, 2008). These projects give academic, financial, and psychological assistance, fostering a learning environment. Furthermore, Sekgobela (2017) emphasises the significance of community-based programmes and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that provide flexible study schedules, online courses, and vocational training particularly targeted for young moms.

The effectiveness of these support methods is currently being debated. While Chigona and Chetty (2008) advocate for systematic governmental and non-governmental initiatives, Gyesaw and Ankomah (2013) take a more cautious approach. They believe that, although support methods are important, their effectiveness is dependent on widespread community engagement and the de-stigmatization of adolescent motherhood.

2.5 Community Perceptions and Traditional Beliefs

2.5.1 Influence of Community Attitudes

2.5.1.1 The role of societal beliefs in shaping the experiences of teenage mothers

Teenage moms' experiences are greatly influenced by the social environment in which they function, especially in the setting of rural South Africa. Strong ingrained customs and the general public's perceptions of early parenthood may either exacerbate or lessen the difficulties these young ladies encounter.

Teenage pregnancy is often seen through a cultural lens in many rural South African communities, which associates early motherhood with improved femininity and fecundity (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). This kind of view has two drawbacks. On the one hand, it might act as a social acceptability cushion, supporting the psychological health of the adolescent mother. On the other hand, it might unintentionally promote adolescent pregnancies, leaving young girls unprepared for the rigours of parenthood.

Deeply ingrained patriarchal standards exacerbate these intricate cultural subtleties. Some societies' traditional views, according to Khunou (2017), are that young women who become mothers are more mature and more suited for duties in marriage. Teenage moms may be indirectly discouraged from re-entering the educational system by these attitudes, which may push them in the direction of domestic duties. Although it provides social capital, cultural capital may inadvertently hinder academic goals.

But set against these deeply ingrained stereotypes is a more contemporary perspective that berates adolescent moms. According to Mkhwanazi (2010), adolescent mothers often experience stigmatisation in the context of the changing social structure, which may result in feelings of shame and marginalisation. This stigma may seriously harm their academic career. A hostile school climate, characterised by overt and covert discrimination from teachers and classmates, might discourage adolescent mothers from pursuing further education.

However, in spite of these obstacles, some community organisations provide a lifeline for young moms who want to continue their education. In order to close the gap between adolescent moms and educational institutions, community-based NGOs and grassroots movements have proven essential (Panday et al., 2009). In addition to academic help, they provide these young moms forums where they may talk about their struggles, find strength in numbers, and look for mentoring.

It is noteworthy that opinions on the re-entry of adolescent moms into the educational system seem to differ. Some academics—like Makiwane and Udjo (2006)—claim that

views in the community have changed to support the academic goals of these young moms, while others—like Jewkes et al. (2009)—state that there are still many biases and prejudices in the way.

There is no denying that adolescent moms live in a complex atmosphere due to the constant balancing act between conventional beliefs and changing cultural expectations. They may find strength in cultural acceptances on the one hand, but they also have to deal with the maze of expectations and stigmas in society on the other. Therefore, it becomes essential to continuously evaluate the changing sands of community views and their concrete effects on these young women in order to have a comprehensive picture of the scholastic path of the teenage mother.

2.5.1.2 The Stigma Associated with Teenage Pregnancy in Rural Communities

Teenage pregnancy is fraught with social stigma, especially in rural areas where socio-cultural norms and values are intricately entwined. The degree and character of this stigma vary from community to community and are impacted by many socio-cultural, religious, and economic variables.

The reaction to adolescent pregnancy in rural South African communities, where customs and culture continue to play a major role, is complex. Teenage pregnancy, according to Gyesaw and Ankomah (2013), is often seen as a challenge to social standards, a sign of a failed upbringing and a breakdown of conventional values. There is sometimes a double load of guilt on the young lady since her family is held accountable for this alleged moral transgression. The girl is shunned for being pregnant and accused of bringing shame to her family, in addition to being stigmatised for being pregnant.

But the adolescent mother is not the only one who bears the burden of this stigma. Though he is often ignored in discussions about adolescent pregnancy, the young father also faces social stigma. According to Sekgobela et al. (2017), young dads are often stigmatised as reckless and are under pressure from their family and the society to take on financial obligations that they may not be ready for at their age.

Amidst these increasingly unfavourable opinions, some community members maintain a different perspective based on customs. According to Bhana and Morrell (2013), a young woman's fertility is a source of pride in certain rural cultures since it is seen as

a validation of her femininity. This is a complicated dynamic whereby there are pockets of approval founded in conventional conceptions of gender and reproduction on the one hand, and public condemnation on the other.

These stigmatising sentiments are mirrored in the educational institutions within these communities. Willan (2013) claims that pregnant youth often face prejudice in schools, which are supposed to be places of safety and support. The already-present social stigma is exacerbated by peer scorn and overt and covert discriminatory actions by instructors, which causes many students to drop out of school.

There are interactions between these stigmas and the economy. According to Mkhwanazi (2010), because of the widespread stigma, many community programmes are hesitant to be linked with young moms, who are already dealing with public censure, making it difficult for them to get resources and assistance. Their socioeconomic weaknesses are exacerbated by this.

Community-based programmes have started to question and alter these unfavourable attitudes, even though it is clear that stigma is widespread and has several detrimental effects. By providing thorough sex education and encouraging candid conversations about adolescent pregnancies, organisations like LoveLife in South Africa have played a critical role in transforming societal views (Panday et al., 2009).

Examining the research reveals that the stigma surrounding adolescent pregnancy in rural areas is complex and firmly ingrained in sociocultural norms. It is clear that culturally aware, nuanced interventions are needed to ensure that the adolescent moms have a supportive environment in addition to meeting their urgent needs.

2.5.2 Cultural Norms and Their Impact

2.5.2.1 Traditional beliefs surrounding teenage pregnancy and motherhood

Traditional attitudes about adolescent pregnancy and parenting have significant repercussions in rural areas, particularly in South Africa. Understanding the depth and breadth of these beliefs offers a more comprehensive picture of the obstacles and, at times, unexpected assistance that adolescent moms may face.

Fertility is very important in many African civilizations. According to Mkhwanazi (2010), in certain rural cultures, a woman's capacity to conceive is highly valued. As a result,

adolescent pregnancies may be seen as confirmation of a young woman's fecundity rather than a sign of carelessness. This viewpoint, although providing social acceptance, may mistakenly support adolescent pregnancies (Mkhwanazi, 2010).

In addition, there is a social mindset that considers adolescent pregnancy to be a rite of passage. Some traditions, according to Bhana et al. (2010), see a girl's transition to motherhood, regardless of age, as a journey from adolescence to femininity. Young moms may discover a sense of belonging and identity within this conventional framework. However, it is critical to contrast this with the economic and educational disadvantages that often accompany early pregnancies, emphasising the issue's complexities (Bhana et al., 2010).

Another strongly ingrained mindset is the notion of "cleansing" following an adolescent pregnancy. According to Richter and Mlambo (2005), certain cultural conventions imply that young women should participate in a second relationship with an older man after giving birth, which is sometimes referred to as a "cleansing" procedure. While based in ancient ideas about restoring purity, such practises provide major obstacles. They not only expose young women to possible exploitation, but also make them more vulnerable to health hazards and other socioeconomic issues (Richter and Mlambo, 2005).

Traditional beliefs, no matter how much affirmation or support they provide, are sometimes double-edged swords. On the one hand, they may give young moms with a communal safety net of understanding and acceptance. On the other side, they may prolong poverty cycles, impede educational development, and expose young moms to additional hazards. These traditional standards, when mixed with modern-day concerns, create a diverse and often conflicted environment for young moms, according to Swartz and Bhana (2009). It's a situation in which ancient beliefs collide with modern socioeconomic realities, frequently with opposing results (Swartz and Bhana, 2009).

When these conventional beliefs are evaluated, it is obvious that they have both protective and risk-enhancing aspects for adolescent moms. While they may provide a barrier against blatant social rejection, they often do so at the price of continuing harmful practises or restricting young women's financial mobility. This dichotomy highlights the need of culturally appropriate approaches. Understanding and

honouring these beliefs while encouraging health, education, and empowerment for young moms is a difficult but vital balance.

2.5.2.2 Cultural Practices that Might Contribute to or Deter from Teenage Pregnancies

Rural surroundings, particularly in African contexts, are characterised by a mosaic of cultural practises with major consequences for adolescent pregnancy. These historical practises impact not just the behaviours and views of teenagers, but also the community's approach to young moms.

For starters, some initiation rites may unintentionally promote to adolescent pregnancy. For example, in many Southern African societies, rites of passage into adulthood often include teaching young people about their societal obligations. According to Vincent (2006), some of these rites may include practises that represent or even promote early sexual behaviour, hence indirectly encouraging early pregnancies. According to Leclerc-Madlala (2001), the original aim of these rituals was to train young people for responsible adulthood, but the essence may be lost or misconstrued over time and without sufficient direction.

Furthermore, in certain communities, the cultural emphasis put on bride price or "lobola" might be a factor. Families that perceive lobola as a business opportunity may push their young daughters to marry young. In such cases, these young brides are more likely to get pregnant early. Lobola talks, according to Ngwenya (2003), may also put enormous pressure on young women to show their fertility, sometimes leading in pregnancies shortly after nuptial rituals.

On the negative side, certain cultural practises emphasise the significance of virginity and chastity. In Zulu villages, for example, young maidens bring reeds to the queen mother as a sign of their purity during the "umhlanga" or reed dance rite. According to Scorgie et al. (2013), such celebrations not only honour virginity but also serve as a social platform for avoiding early sexual engagement and, hence, adolescent pregnancies.

Another protective cultural norm focuses on the value of education. Cultural leaders and elders in many African countries are increasingly prioritising schooling for their children as awareness of the advantages of formal education grows. According to Hunter (2005), this movement has started to question and modify conventional

practises, with communities actively prohibiting actions that may interrupt a girl's educational path, such as early births.

2.6 Policies and Interventions Targeting Teenage Pregnancy

2.6.1 Existing Policies in South Africa

2.6.1.1 Overview of National and Regional Policies Addressing Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is still a major socioeconomic and health issue in South Africa, which is made worse by its effects on rural communities. The South African government, together with regional organisations, has introduced a number of policies and methods to address adolescent pregnancy head-on because of its complex ramifications.

A key player in this field is the National Youth Development Policy Framework (NYDPF), which was established in 2002. By addressing the many issues that young people encounter, such as adolescent pregnancy, the NYDPF seeks to integrate them into the economy and society at large (Department of Youth Affairs, 2002). The framework places a strong emphasis on offering youth-specific healthcare services and comprehensive sexual education.

In parallel, the Departments of Health and Basic Education worked together to create the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP), which was established in 2012. The explicit goal of this policy is to improve students' access to health services, particularly those related to sexual and reproductive health (Panday et al., 2009). It emphasises how crucial it is to provide a supportive learning environment, make sure pregnant students finish their education, and draw attention to the availability of health services including counselling and contraception.

Provinces with strategic plans, like KwaZulu-Natal's Adolescent and Youth Health Strategy 2017–2022, are located in the region. By expanding youth-friendly health services, supporting comprehensive sexual education, and improving access to sexual and reproductive health care, the policy seeks to reduce adolescent pregnancies (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, 2017).

But even with these admirable foundations for policy, problems still exist. According to Manzini (2001), problems include a lack of youth-friendly medical facilities, restricted access to contraception, and sociocultural norms often make it difficult to put these ideas into practise. Additionally, Kaufman et al. (2001) contend that while these policies provide a thorough framework, their efficacy is sometimes hampered by a lack of integration and coordination across various departments.

It is clear that South Africa recognises the need of tackling adolescent pregnancy and its consequences at both the national and regional levels. The nation's dedication to empowering its kids is reflected in the policies that are in place. But as this assessment points out, creating policies alone is insufficient. Ensuring its strict execution is crucial, with consideration for the distinct socio-cultural context of rural populations. Subsequent initiatives have to concentrate on enhancing cross-departmental cooperation, engaging the community, and guaranteeing that these policies materialise into concrete results at the local level.

2.6.1.2 Evaluation of the Alignment between Policy Objectives and On-Ground Realities

Over the years, South Africa has implemented many measures aimed at reducing the effects of adolescent pregnancies, particularly in rural schools. Although these measures demonstrate the country's commitment to addressing the problem, an important question arises: To what extent do these policy goals correspond with the reality on the ground?

The integration of young people into the economic and social sectors is given top priority under the National Youth Development Policy Framework (NYDPF). It places a strong emphasis on customised healthcare services and thorough sexual education (Department of Youth Affairs, 2002). Although these goals are admirable, Swartz and Bhana (2009) note that there is still variation in how these goals are implemented in rural schools. Uniform execution of these aims is sometimes hampered by sociocultural obstacles combined with a lack of infrastructure and human resources.

Similar to this, the goal of the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP), which focuses on sexual and reproductive health services, is to provide an atmosphere that is favourable for learning for students, particularly those who are pregnant (Panday et al., 2009). Chigona and Chetty (2008) draw attention to the fact that many rural schools

still lack the infrastructure and properly qualified personnel needed to provide these services, even in spite of the policy's obvious goals. The writers have seen a conspicuous lack of systems for overseeing and assessing the effectiveness of the policy.

Regional plans also seem promising, including the KwaZulu-Natal Adolescent and Youth Health Strategy 2017–2022. However, Harrison (2008) notes that these regional solutions often struggle with the localization issue. Because of their deeply ingrained cultural norms, local populations may see these tactics as top-down impositions and oppose their easy acceptance.

There are times when there is clear congruence notwithstanding the differences between policy intentions and reality. Gyesaw and Ankomah (2013), for example, praise the efforts in a few rural schools where community-driven programmes that follow national policy have reduced the number of adolescent pregnancies.

Despite the admirably broad nature of South Africa's policy aims, their execution sometimes lacks efficacy. This disparity emphasises how vital it is to comprehend the nuances of rural areas. Strong monitoring and evaluation systems should be given top priority, as well as the promotion of partnerships between educators, policymakers, community leaders, and young people. The only way to successfully bridge the gap between policy goals and on-the-ground reality is via such comprehensive interactions.

2.6.2 Effectiveness of Interventions

2.6.2.1 Analysis of Programs, Campaigns, and Initiatives Targeting Teenage Pregnancy

Addressing the complicated problem of adolescent pregnancy requires multiple methods that include a variety of programmes, campaigns, and initiatives. There has been an increase in programmes focused at addressing the fundamental causes and effects of teenage pregnancies throughout South Africa, particularly in rural regions.

The "LoveLife" programme, launched in 1999, has become one of South Africa's most well-known programmes, seeking to decrease HIV infection rates and unplanned births among young people. The programme, according to Pettifor et al. (2005), combines media advertising, youth centres, and peer education. However, its

usefulness is still being debated. According to Jewkes et al. (2006), although the programme boosted reproductive health awareness, there was no substantial decrease in adolescent pregnancy rates.

Another notable intervention is the "Keeping Girls in School" campaign, which aims to reduce school dropouts caused by pregnancy. The programme provides scholarships, mentoring, and life-skills training and is supported by data indicating educated females are less likely to get pregnant (Marteleto et al., 2008). In contrast to the findings of "LoveLife," Bhana et al. (2016) discovered a positive association between the initiative and lower adolescent pregnancy rates in certain locations, suggesting that tackling larger socioeconomic concerns has practical consequences.

In addition, the Department of Basic Education produced initiatives such as "Let Us Protect All Children to Move South Africa Forward." This campaign emphasises the need of comprehensive community involvement, including parents, teachers, and community leaders in reproductive health education. According to Grant and Hallman (2008), an inclusive strategy like this bridges the gap between formal education and cultural norms. Makiwane et al. (2009), on the other hand, emphasise that although community participation is important, it must be handled carefully to ensure that traditional beliefs do not eclipse scientific data in reproductive health discourse.

Furthermore, mobile clinics providing sexual and reproductive health care have been established in isolated rural locations. These clinics try to alleviate healthcare facility inaccessibility by offering contraception and counselling. According to Chersich et al. (2017), these mobile clinics have increased contraceptive adoption, while their frequency and consistency remain an issue.

Given the variety of programmes, campaigns, and initiatives in place, it is clear that although some have had great effects, others have produced equivocal results. The variable effectiveness emphasises the need of ongoing monitoring, assessment, and change. It also implies the significance of context-specific tactics, which recognise the inherent problems and complexities of various rural areas. Future interventions should ideally mix scientific information with cultural sensitivity to ensure that efforts connect with the populations they are supposed to serve.

2.6.2.2 Assessment of the Success Rate and Areas of Improvement in These Interventions

To grasp the scale and complexity of the problem posed by adolescent pregnancy in rural schools, one must critically assess the treatments that have been implemented. This kind of analysis not only gives insights into the success rates of various initiatives, but it also identifies areas that need to be improved to further optimise their efficacy.

As previously stated, the "LoveLife" programme has been one of South Africa's frontline measures in combating adolescent pregnancies and associated challenges. While its extensive reach, which includes media campaigns and youth centres, is impressive, its efficacy on decreasing adolescent pregnancy has been called into question. Pettifor et al. (2005) emphasise the program's effective growth in adolescent reproductive health awareness and understanding. However, as stated by Jewkes et al. (2006), the real decrease in adolescent pregnancy rates remains a difficulty, since simple awareness does not necessarily translate into behaviour change. This argues that such programmes should include a more concrete, skill-based approach.

In certain areas, the "Keeping Girls in School" campaign, which focuses on minimising school dropouts due to pregnancy, has shown to be a successful model. While the method of providing scholarships and mentoring has resulted in more girls remaining in school, Marteleto et al. (2008) argue that the project must address the socioeconomic causes that contribute to adolescent pregnancies holistically in order to be sustainable. Furthermore, for a more significant effect, Bhana et al. (2016) propose broadening the scope of life-skills training to incorporate real-life simulations, role-playing, and greater peer mentoring.

Holistic community involvement strategies such as "Let Us Protect All Children to Move South Africa Forward" have shown the possibility for incorporating community values and beliefs into reproductive health discourse. While Grant and Hallman (2008) highlight its effectiveness in ensuring community ownership, Makiwane et al. (2009) advise that the initiative strike a balance between traditional beliefs and modern reproductive health practises to avoid regressive approaches.

The effectiveness of mobile clinics in rural regions has been attributed mostly to greater access to contraception. Their presence, according to Chersich et al. (2017), has resulted in an increase in contraception usage among rural teenagers. However, there is room for improvement in terms of the frequency and durability of these clinics, which provide regular treatment to the most distant places.

Based on these evaluations, it is obvious that, although numerous programmes have made progress in reducing adolescent pregnancy, there are still gaps between policy, practise, and effect. The disparities in success rates among treatments highlight the necessity for tailored tactics that take geographical variances, socioeconomic considerations, and cultural subtleties into account. Future interventions should use a multi-pronged strategy to enhance results, including awareness, skill training, community participation, and resource accessibility. Continuous monitoring, feedback loops, and adaptive techniques will be critical in ensuring that these treatments not only aim high but also have the desired effects.

2.7 Synthesis and Gaps in the Literature

Many themes come to light in the extensive literature on the socio-economic and educational effects of adolescent pregnancies in rural schools. There is broad consensus among experts that adolescent pregnancies have a detrimental effect on the educational paths of the females involved. Panday et al. (2009) draw attention to the startling numbers of pregnant women dropping out of education. Sekine and Hodgkin (2017) concur, emphasising the additional socioeconomic ramifications, including a persistent cycle of poverty and few employment prospects.

Though there is broad agreement on the negative effects of adolescent pregnancies, there is ongoing discussion over the underlying causes and effective preventative measures. Jewkes et al. (2010), for example, highlight the crucial impact that society and cultural norms have in maintaining early pregnancies. Mkhwanazi (2010), in contrast, emphasises that the main drivers are socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and limited access to education. This contradiction highlights the necessity for a more all-encompassing strategy that takes a holistic approach to addressing the socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects.

2.7.1 Identification of Gaps, Inconsistencies, and Areas that Require Further Research

Regarding the long-term psychological impact on adolescent mothers in rural settings, there is a clear gap in the research. Although McHale and Callanan (2008) discuss the stress and anxiety these young moms encounter, there is no research that examines the long-term psychological and emotional effects in a comprehensive way. Furthermore, the existing research fails to provide a thorough examination of the

fathers' roles in these settings, viewpoints, problems, and contributions—or lack thereof—to the child-rearing process in rural environments (Kaufman et al., 2001).

A additional topic that needs further examination is the intervention programmes' success rate. Although Bhana et al. (2016) provide valuable perspectives on several effective strategies such as "Keeping Girls in School," there is a dearth of critical assessment on the immediate and long-term effects of these interventions. Further research is required to determine how flexible and scalable these models are in various rural environments.

One further largely untapped topic of research is the influence of technology in preventing adolescent pregnancies. In the digital age, technology-enabled interventions, particularly those that provide sexual education or serve as forums for counselling and support, have the potential to be revolutionary. However, there is a dearth of research in this area, particularly in the context of rural South Africa.

There are considerable disparities in the way various research assess the effectiveness or consequences of adolescent pregnancies. While some studies just concentrate on educational results, others explore the socioeconomic ramifications; these approaches typically provide different results and don't give a whole picture (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). This emphasises the need of developing a common framework or set of standards for assessing the effects of adolescent pregnancies in rural schools and the actions that address them.

2.8 Theoretical Framework Employed in the Study

The Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) has served as the main theoretical foundation for this investigation. The SEM provides a multifaceted approach that emphasises the interaction of social, relational, community, and individual issues.

2.8.1 Origins and Principles of the Socio-Ecological Model

Originating in the study of interactions between organisms and their surroundings, ecology is a topic within biology that provides the foundation for the Socio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The fundamental tenet of SEM is that behavior—in this case, adolescent pregnancies—cannot be comprehended in a vacuum, but rather requires the interplay of many levels of influence.

- **Individual Level:** This level includes a person's personal history and biology, which might raise the risk of becoming a teenage mother. Personal attitudes, knowledge, and education are a few examples of factors.
- **Relationship Level:** This study looks at the impact that connections with families, partners, and peers have on the prevalence of teenage pregnancies. Peer pressure and family histories of adolescent pregnancies, for example, may be factors (East & Reyes, 2019).
- **Community Level:** Here, the emphasis is on how social ties take place in areas like workplaces, schools, and neighbourhoods and how those relationships affect adolescent pregnancies.
- **Societal Level:** This wide level looks at the broader societal variables that foster an environment that either supports or discourages adolescent pregnancies. Policy, social norms, and economic issues are all included (Luke, 2005).

2.8.2 Justification of the Use of the Socio-Ecological Model

Given the socioeconomic and pedagogical complexities of adolescent pregnancy in rural schools, SEM appears as an appropriate paradigm. Its multi-level approach enables a thorough comprehension of the many variables at work.

Individually, the setting of rural schools often limits access to comprehensive sexual education. According to Wood and Jewkes (2006), myths and misunderstandings regarding pregnancy and contraception are more common in rural areas. This validates SEM's emphasis on individual knowledge and attitudes.

The importance of peers and family on relationships cannot be overstated. According to Posel and Rogan (2009), there is a normalisation of adolescent pregnancies in certain rural communities owing to family history, emphasising the need of evaluating the dynamics of these interactions.

The local level is very important. Rural populations may lack readily available healthcare services, limiting access to contraception and reproductive health treatments. Furthermore, the school environment, including curriculum, teacher

attitudes, and peer dynamics, may either reduce or increase the likelihood of adolescent pregnancy (Hallman et al., 2015).

Finally, the social level provides an opportunity to investigate larger policy ramifications. South Africa has seen a variety of measures aimed at lowering adolescent pregnancies, but their efficacy in rural areas is questionable given community norms and economic obstacles (Panday et al., 2009).

2.8 Conclusion

Adolescent pregnancies have been the focus of many scholarly conversations, research projects, and policy actions, especially when they occur within South Africa's rural school settings. The several factors connected to the long-term effects of these pregnancies have been thoroughly examined in this review of the literature. The relationship between socioeconomic and educational viewpoints is still a recurring issue in the large body of research on this topic.

Important conclusions from the literature show a complex interaction of the following factors:

- **Socio-economic Implications:** Teenage pregnancies in rural settings often result in exacerbated economic challenges for young mothers. Their early motherhood severely limits their capacity to seek further education or occupational training, which lowers their earning potential and prolongs their financial troubles. Reduced life quality for the mother and the kid is one of the cascade impacts of this.
- **Educational Outcomes:** A girl's academic career is sometimes cut short by an early pregnancy. Her educational achievement is decreased as a consequence of this limitation, which has an impact on her employment and socioeconomic mobility. Many young moms struggle with self-worth and social acceptability after leaving school early, as shown vividly in the literature.
- **Policy and Interventions:** Although South Africa has a number of policies targeted at lowering adolescent pregnancies, there is sometimes a mismatch between the goals of legislation and the reality on the ground. Despite the fact that certain interventions have shown results, the general consensus is that additional community-based, grassroots strategies are required.

- **Gaps and Future Research Avenues:** There is a glaring void in our knowledge of the complex experiences that adolescent moms have after giving birth, particularly with regard to their reintegration into the school system. Furthermore, not enough research has been done on how families and the community may either exacerbate or lessen the difficulties adolescent mothers experience.

It is clear how these important discoveries relate to the study's research topics. We can better explore the particular research topics we have presented by having a better awareness of the general outlines of the literature. These inquiries aim to close the gaps in knowledge and provide a deeper level of insight into the complexities surrounding teenage pregnancies in rural South Africa, all while being influenced by the larger discourse. In addition to reiterating well-known difficulties, this research attempts to illuminate the more profound, often unsaid experiences and systemic barriers that influence the course of adolescent mothers in these environments.

In conclusion, examining the long-term effects of adolescent pregnancies in rural schools from both the socioeconomic and educational angles is a challenging but important field of research. By being aware of these nuances, we may strive to develop interventions and laws that are in line with actual conditions and provide many young women and their kids with hope and workable answers.

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