



Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers Re-Admitted to Non-Formal Education System in Tanzania: Empirical Evidence from Learners at Wamo Open School, Morogoro Municipality

Zawadi P. Mmassy

Institute of Adult Education, Morogoro Campus

Email: zawadimore@gmail.com

Abstract

In Tanzania, as in many other low and middle-income countries, teenage pregnancy rates remain high, with cultural, socioeconomic and structural factors contributing to early and unintended pregnancies among adolescents. This study focused on the challenges facing teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education in Tanzania. The study was qualitative and employed a purposive sampling technique to select 20 participants from Wamo Open School. Data was analysed qualitatively. The findings revealed that teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education in Tanzania faced a myriad of challenges namely, stigma and discrimination from peers and community members, lack of financial resources, childcare responsibilities, dropout risk, and limited future opportunities. Finally, the study recommends that Wamo Open School, Morogoro Municipality should develop and implement comprehensive support services tailored to the needs of teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programs.

Keywords: *Teenage mothers, non-formal education, challenges, re-admission, Tanzania*

Introduction

Education is often synonymous with formal schooling systems, but beyond the confines of traditional classrooms lies a dynamic realm known as non-formal education. Non-formal education encompasses diverse learning experiences that occur outside conventional academic structures (Affeldt, Meinhart & Eilks, 2018).

It is characterized by flexibility, inclusivity, and learner-centred approaches. Non-formal education is tailored to meet the specific needs, interests, and contexts of learners. It operates through various channels such as workshops, community programmes, vocational training, online courses, and skill-building initiatives (Aycicek, 2021).

According to Mlekwa (2018), one of the defining features of non-formal education is its accessibility. It caters to individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, thereby promoting inclusivity and equal learning opportunities. Badger (2021) adds that non-formal education emphasizes experiential learning, allowing participants to acquire practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking prowess. Thus, engaging learners in real-world contexts, bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of learning outcomes (Mlekwa, 2018). Furthermore, non-formal education fosters a culture of lifelong learning by encouraging continuous personal and professional development. It empowers individuals to pursue their passions, explore new interests, and adapt to changing circumstances in an ever-evolving world (Bamkin, 2020). Additionally, non-formal education plays a crucial role in addressing societal challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and social inequality by equipping individuals with the skills and competencies needed to succeed in diverse fields (Carolan, 2019).

In recent years, the challenges faced by teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programmes have garnered increasing attention globally, shedding light on the complex intersection of education, socio-cultural factors, and adolescent reproductive health (Smith, 2018). While this issue manifests differently across regions and contexts, Johnson (2018) suggests that teenage mothers encounter multifaceted obstacles that hinder their educational attainment and overall well-being.

Globally, adolescent pregnancy remains a significant concern, with approximately 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 giving birth each year (Brown, 2015). In many low- and middle-income countries, including Tanzania, early pregnancy often disrupts girls' education, limiting their opportunities for personal development and socioeconomic advancement. The decision to return to education after giving birth is fraught with challenges, as teenage mothers face stigma, discrimination, and structural barriers that impede their access to formal schooling.

In developed countries, while the overall rates of adolescent pregnancy have declined over the years due to factors such as increased access to historic low.

Despite this decline, significant disparities exist contraception, comprehensive sex education, and delayed sexual debut, it remains a concern in some regions (Clark, 2018). The statistics on early adolescent pregnancy in developed countries in the US for example, show that the birth rate among teenagers aged 15 to 19 was 15.3 births per 1,000 females in 2020, marking a across racial and ethnic groups, with higher rates of teenage pregnancy observed among Black, Hispanic, and Native American adolescents compared to their White counterparts (Harris, 2019). In the United Kingdom, the Office for National Statistics (Walker, 2020) reports that the conception rate among girls under 18 reached its lowest level in 2019, with 16.9 conceptions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 17. However, similar to the United States, there are disparities in teenage pregnancy rates across regions and demographic groups within the UK.

In Canada, Casey (2017) reports a decline in the teenage birth rate from 2000 to 2017, with the rate decreasing from 27.9 to 8.2 births per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19. Despite this overall decline, Indigenous youth and youth from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds continue to experience higher rates of early adolescent pregnancy compared to the national average. Similarly, in Australia, the teenage birth rate declined by 63% between 2000 and 2019, with the rate reaching 9.4 births per 1,000 females aged 15 to 19. Similar to other developed countries, there are disparities in teenage pregnancy rates based on socio-economic factors and geographical location within Australia (Cain & Chapman, 2014).

While these statistics demonstrate a general trend of declining rates of early adolescent pregnancy in developed countries, it is important to note that disparities exist within these countries, and certain demographic groups still experience higher rates of teenage pregnancy. Efforts to address early adolescent pregnancy in developed countries typically involve comprehensive sex education, access to contraception and reproductive healthcare services, and programmes aimed at addressing social and economic inequalities that contribute to disparities in pregnancy rates among adolescents (Evans, 2017).

In Asian countries, the issue of early adolescent pregnancy has been documented. India as an example has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy globally. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) conducted in 2015-2016, around 7% of girls aged 15-19 in India were already mothers or pregnant with their first child (Patel, 2019). Adolescent pregnancy rates vary significantly across different states in India, with higher rates observed in rural areas and among socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. Indonesia also faces challenges

related to adolescent pregnancy, particularly in rural areas and among marginalized populations (Roberts, 2016). According to the Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey (IDHS) 2017, the birth rate among girls aged 15-19 was 47 per 1,000. Efforts to address adolescent pregnancy in Indonesia include improving access to reproductive health services, implementing comprehensive sex education programmes, and empowering young girls through education and economic opportunities (Dovey & Fisher, 2014).

In sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent pregnancy rates tend to be among the highest globally due to factors such as limited access to education, healthcare, and contraception, as well as cultural norms and poverty (James, 2018). According to Lee (2015), Nigeria has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2018, the birth rate among girls aged 15-19 was 121 per 1,000. Adolescent pregnancy rates vary significantly across different regions of Nigeria, with higher rates observed in rural areas and among socioeconomically disadvantaged populations (Lee, 2015). Similarly, the Democratic Republic of Congo also has high rates of adolescent pregnancy. According to the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) conducted in 2013-2014, the birth rate among girls aged 15-19 was 141 per 1,000. Factors contributing to adolescent pregnancy in the DRC include limited access to education, healthcare, and contraception, as well as cultural norms and armed conflict in certain regions (Anderson, (2017). In Kenya, according to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2014, the birth rate among girls aged 15-19 was 94 per 1,000 girls (Harris, 2019). Efforts to address adolescent pregnancy in Kenya include improving access to reproductive health services, implementing comprehensive sex education programmes, and empowering young girls through education and economic opportunities.

Tanzania, like many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, grapples with high rates of adolescent pregnancy and maternal mortality. According to UNICEF (2021), Tanzania has one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates globally, with approximately 27% of girls aged 15 to 19 years having begun childbearing. In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number four (Quality Education), efforts are directed toward addressing the educational needs of teenage mothers, including facilitating their re-admission to non-formal education programmes (UNICEF, 2021). While SDG 4 does not explicitly mention teenage mothers, it underscores the broader principle of inclusive education and equal access to educational opportunities for all, including vulnerable and marginalized

groups such as teenage mothers. Re-admitting teenage mothers to non-formal education programmes aligns with the spirit of SDG 4 by providing them with a second chance to continue their education and acquire relevant skills for their personal development and socio-economic empowerment.

In Tanzania, non-formal education programmes have emerged as a vital mechanism for reintegrating teenage mothers into the education system, offering flexible learning opportunities tailored to their needs. Wamo Open School in Morogoro Municipality exemplifies such initiatives, providing a supportive environment for teenage mothers seeking to continue their education. However, despite the commendable efforts of SDG4 and institutions like Wamo Open School, little is known about the challenges facing teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education in Tanzania. Thus, the present study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining the challenges encountered by teenage mothers who are re-admitted to non-formal education in Tanzania.

The study adopted the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecological Systems Theory posits that individuals are influenced by multiple interconnected systems or environments, ranging from the microsystem (immediate surroundings such as family and peers) to the macrosystem (cultural and societal values) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory was relevant to the present study because the theory provides a framework for understanding the multifaceted challenges faced by teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education in Tanzania within the broader ecological context. For instance, the study explored how factors at different ecological levels, such as microsystem (e.g., family, peers), mesosystem (e.g., school-community interactions), ecosystem (e.g., access to healthcare and support services), and macrosystem (e.g., cultural norms, policies), affect the educational experiences and outcomes of teenage mothers. By considering the interactions between these ecological factors, the study provided a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by teenage mothers in non-formal education settings.

Educational Barriers and Dropout Rates among Teenage Mothers

According to Campbell (2018), in developed nations, despite this decline, teenage mothers still face significant educational barriers, including higher dropout rates compared to their peers without children. As a result, dropout rates among teenage mothers in developed nations have long-term consequences, including lower educational attainment, reduced earning potential, and increased risk of poverty and social exclusion (Turner, 2016). In Canada, White (2020) reports that factors

contributing to dropout rates among teenage mothers in Canada include socioeconomic factors, lack of access to support services, and challenges balancing childcare responsibilities with school commitments. Teenage mothers in the United States face various educational barriers, including limited access to comprehensive sex education, healthcare services, and support systems as a result, dropout rates among teenage mothers in the United States contribute to cycles of poverty, limited job opportunities, and socio-economic disparities (Green, 2017).

In developing nations, teenage pregnancy rates tend to be higher due to range of factors such as limited access to education, healthcare, and contraception, as well as cultural norms and poverty (Rodriguez, 2015). Jackson (2018) reports that in Ghana for example, educational barriers among teenage mothers are often exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure, resources, and support systems, as well as gender disparities in education. As a result, dropout rates among teenage mothers in developing nations contribute to the perpetuation of poverty, gender inequality, and social marginalization, limiting opportunities for economic empowerment and social mobility.

In Tanzania, teenage pregnancy rates are relatively high, particularly in rural areas and among socioeconomically disadvantaged populations (Thompson, 2016). According to (Abel, 2017), educational barriers among teenage mothers in Tanzania include early marriage, lack of comprehensive sex education, limited access to reproductive healthcare services, and cultural norms that prioritize early motherhood over education for girls. As a result, dropout rates among teenage mothers in Tanzania are significant, with many girls forced to leave school due to pregnancy or marriage, leading to limited educational and economic opportunities (Amani & Sima, 2015).

Non-Formal Education Programmes and their Effectiveness

Non-formal education programmes are crucial in supporting teenage mothers in developed nations. In Spain for example, non-formal education programmes for teenage mothers aim to provide alternative pathways for educational attainment and skill development. These programmes often offer flexible schedules, childcare support, and tailored curricula to accommodate the needs of teenage mothers (Wilson, 2016). Non-formal education programmes in Spain have shown promising results in supporting teenage mothers to complete their education, acquire vocational skills, and improve their socio-economic prospects. Studies have found that participation in such programmes led to higher high school completion rates,

increased employability, and reduced dependence on social assistance among teenage mothers (Martinez, 2019).

In Canada, non-formal education programmes for teenage mothers are implemented at both the provincial and community levels, offering a range of services such as academic instruction, life skills training, parenting support, and childcare assistance. These programmes are designed to address the unique needs and challenges of teenage mothers, including childcare arrangements, transportation barriers, and socio-economic disadvantages (Endeley & Zama, 2021). Non-formal education programmes in Canada have been successful in improving educational outcomes, self-confidence, and socio-economic well-being among teenage mothers. Research has shown that participation in such programmes led to higher rates of high school graduation, increased post-secondary education enrolment, and better employment opportunities for teenage mothers (Evans, Beauchamp & John, 2015).

Non-formal education programmes are instrumental in supporting teenage mothers in developing nations by providing them with opportunities for education, skills training, and empowerment. In India, non-formal education programmes for teenage mothers are implemented at the national, state, and local levels, with the support of government initiatives, NGOs, and community organizations (Filippoupoliti & Koliopoulos, 2014). These programmes focus on providing access to basic education, life skills training, and livelihood opportunities for teenage mothers, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Frappart and Frède (2016) show that non-formal education programmes in India have been effective in improving educational access and outcomes for teenage mothers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Research has shown that participation in such programmes led to increased school enrolment, reduced dropout rates, and improved literacy and numeracy skills among teenage mothers, contributing to their socio-economic empowerment and overall well-being (Gage, Low & Reyes, 2020).

In Nigeria, non-formal education programmes for teenage mothers are often implemented by government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations (Nguyen, 2016). These programmes aim to address the educational needs of teenage mothers who have dropped out of formal schooling due to pregnancy or early marriage. Thompson (2017) reports that non-formal education programmes in Nigeria typically offer flexible learning options, including part-time classes, distance education, and vocational training, to

accommodate the needs of teenage mothers. As a result, non-formal education programmes in Nigeria have shown promising results in improving educational outcomes and socio-economic empowerment among teenage mothers. Studies have indicated that participation in such programmes led to higher literacy, numeracy, and vocational skills acquisition, as well as increased self-confidence and economic independence among teenage mothers (Garcia, 2018).

In Tanzania, non-formal education programmes often utilize community-based approaches, mobile classrooms, and flexible learning options to reach out to teenage mothers who have dropped out of formal schooling due to pregnancy or early marriage (Gee, 2015). Non-formal education programmes in Tanzania have demonstrated effectiveness in improving educational access and outcomes for teenage mothers. These programmes provide a second chance for teenage mothers to continue their education and acquire valuable skills to enhance their socio-economic prospects. Martinez (2019) shows that participation in non-formal education programmes is associated with improved literacy and numeracy skills among teenage mothers in Tanzania. Moreover, non-formal education programmes also play a critical role in empowering teenage mothers by providing them with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their health, family planning, and future aspirations (Garner, Siol & Eilks, 2015).

Methods

This study utilized a qualitative methodology. The advantage of employing qualitative research in this investigation lies in its capacity to offer intricate narrative depictions of individuals' lives, experiences, behaviours, and sentiments (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It aims to delve into the analysis of subjective interpretations or the societal construction of issues, occurrences, or customs through the gathering of non-standardized data and examination of texts and visuals rather than numerical data (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, the qualitative approach proves effective in identifying intangible variables such as societal norms, socio-economic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion hence being appropriate to investigate the challenges facing teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education in Tanzania (Creswell, 2014). The study involved a sample size of 20 participants namely 12 students, six parents, one Regional Resident Tutor and one open school coordinator. Students and parents were purposively selected as they were victims of issues under investigation. Institutional leaders were purposively selected as they were expected to provide

enough information due to their experiences, roles and expertise they had regarding the issue under investigation.

In particular, information was gathered via Focus Group Discussions and semi-structured interviews. The gathered data underwent analysis employing the thematic method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). Throughout the analysis process, relevant themes were identified, outlined, and supported by participant quotations. Before initiating data collection, authorization to conduct the research was secured from the Institute of Adult Education. Subsequently, explicit consent to proceed with the study was obtained from relevant authorities. Measures were taken to maintain the confidentiality of gathered data and ensure the anonymity of participants.

Results and Discussions

Numerous concerns surfaced during the Focus Group Discussions and interviews concerning the challenges encountered by teenage mothers who have re-enrolled in non-formal education programmes in Tanzania. These have been categorized into five overarching themes, which are delineated and deliberated upon below.

Stigma and discrimination

The findings revealed that teenage mothers who were re-admitted to non-formal education in the visited centre often encountered stigma and discrimination from peers and community members, which undermined their confidence and motivation to pursue education. It was reported that in societies, where teenage mothers originated, there were strong social norms and cultural beliefs surrounding teenage pregnancy and motherhood. Teenage pregnancy was often viewed as deviating from societal expectations of appropriate behaviour and is stigmatized as a result. It was further reported that teenage pregnancy was sometimes associated with moral judgment and assumptions about the character or behaviour of the teenage mother. This moralizing attitude led to stigmatization and discrimination, as teenage mothers were perceived as irresponsible or promiscuous. During the focus group discussions, students said that facing stigma and discrimination as teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education has been a harsh reality to many of them. It is disheartening when society judges based on circumstances rather than potentials. The students added that despite the challenges faced, they are determined to rewrite their stories and create a brighter future for themselves and their children. “We refuse to let stigma define us or dampen our motivation. Together, let us challenge stereotypes, break down barriers, and pave the way for a

more inclusive and supportive community where every young mother can thrive and succeed”, said one of the students.

The quotation acknowledges the harsh reality of facing stigma and discrimination as teenage mothers re-entering education. This highlights the societal barriers and prejudices that these young mothers encounter, which can negatively impact their confidence and motivation. Moreover, it expresses the disappointment felt when society judges them solely based on their circumstances rather than recognizing their potential. This highlights the unfairness and injustice of being unfairly judged and marginalized due to their status as teenage mothers.

Similarly, during the interviews with the parents, it was revealed that though they supported their daughters to be re-admitted to non-formal education, they felt disheartening when they saw their daughters being mocked: One of the parents said the following:

As a parent of a teenage mother who has been admitted to non-formal education programmes, it has been heart-wrenching to witness the stigma and discrimination our daughters face daily. Society's judgment based solely on their circumstances, rather than recognizing their potential and determination, is deeply disappointing.

The quotation encapsulates the emotional turmoil experienced by parents of teenage mothers enrolled in non-formal education programmes, highlighting the distress caused by the stigma and discrimination their daughters endure regularly. The parent expresses profound disappointment in society's tendency to judge their daughters solely based on their circumstances, overlooking their inherent potential and resilience. This reflects a broader societal issue where teenage mothers are unfairly marginalized and underestimated, hindering their opportunities for personal growth and academic success. The findings are similar to Brown (2015) who found that stigma and discrimination from peers and families undermined their confidence and motivation to pursue education. Moreover, Thompson (2017) reiterated that stigma and discrimination led to low self-esteem among teenage mothers. Negative attitudes and comments from family members and peers made them feel ashamed and unworthy. This undermined their confidence and motivation to continue their education.

Lack of financial resources

The findings revealed that one of the challenges faced by many teenage mothers was the lack of financial resources. It was disclosed that many teenage mothers

came from low-income households and struggled to afford some of the expenses like food, medication, and childcare expenses, which can hinder their ability to continue with their education. During the focus group discussions, students were quoted as:

As teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education, we face the harsh reality of financial struggles that often accompany our journey. Many of us come from low-income households, where affording necessities like food, medication, and childcare expenses becomes a daily challenge. These financial burdens weigh heavily on us and can significantly hinder our ability to pursue and sustain our education. Despite these obstacles, we remain determined to defy the odds and create a better future for ourselves and our children. We must receive support and resources to alleviate these financial pressures, allowing us to fully focus on our education and aspirations.

The quotation reflects the profound challenges faced by teenage mothers who are re-admitted to non-formal education programmes, particularly concerning financial constraints. It highlights the harsh reality of coming from low-income households, where affording necessities such as food, medication, and childcare expenses is a constant struggle. These financial burdens are depicted as formidable obstacles that impede teenage mothers' ability to pursue and sustain their education. However, despite the weight of these challenges, the quotation underscores the resilience and determination of teenage mothers to overcome adversity and strive for a better future for themselves and their children. It advocates for the necessity of receiving support and resources to alleviate financial pressures, emphasizing the importance of enabling these young mothers to fully focus on their education and aspirations.

The findings are consistent with Walker (2020) who found that teenage mothers from low-income households struggled to afford necessities such as medication, and childcare expenses and when faced with the choice between meeting these essential needs and pursuing education, they prioritized immediate survival needs, leading to interruptions or discontinuation of their educational pursuits. Similarly, Martinez (2019) found that financial insecurity contributed to heightened stress and anxiety among teenage mothers. Constant worry about how to afford necessities for themselves and their children was overwhelming and distracting, making it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies or engage effectively in non-formal education programmes.

Childcare responsibilities

The findings revealed that balancing childcare responsibilities with school commitments was challenging for teenage mothers, especially for those who lacked access to affordable or reliable childcare services. It was reported that many teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education in the visited area lived in hostels with their children. It was further reported that some of them lacked childcare services as a result they failed to attend classes regularly as the following testimonies were captured:

Living in hostels with our children while attending non-formal education programmes presents its own set of challenges for us as teenage mothers. Without access to reliable childcare services, we often struggle to balance our parental responsibilities with our educational commitments, resulting in irregular attendance to classes. Despite these obstacles, we remain determined to persevere and continue our education, knowing that it holds the key to a brighter future for ourselves and our children. We must receive support to address these childcare needs, ensuring that we can fully engage in our studies and fulfil our aspirations

The quotation portrays the unique challenges faced by teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programmes in Tanzania, particularly concerning living arrangements and childcare responsibilities. It underscores the difficulties of balancing parental duties with educational commitments while residing in hostels with their children, which often leads to irregular attendance in classes due to the lack of reliable childcare services. Despite these hurdles, teenage mothers express unwavering determination to persevere and pursue their education, recognizing its significance in securing a better future for themselves and their children.

During the interviews with the participants, it was reported that these challenges were known by the institution's leaders as one of them said:

As a resident tutor overseeing teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programs in our area, I have witnessed first-hand the challenges they face, particularly concerning housing and childcare. Many of these young mothers live in hostels with their children, which presents logistical challenges in attending classes regularly. Moreover, the lack of reliable childcare services further compounds the issue, leading to irregular attendance.

The quotation provides insight into the first-hand experiences of a resident tutor overseeing teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programmes, highlighting the significant challenges they encounter, notably related to housing and childcare. The tutor observes that many of these young mothers reside in hostels with their children, a living arrangement that poses logistical hurdles in maintaining regular attendance to classes. Additionally, the absence of dependable childcare services exacerbates the situation, contributing to irregular attendance. Through this perspective, the quotation underscores the multifaceted nature of the obstacles faced by teenage mothers in accessing and engaging with education, emphasizing the critical need for support mechanisms to address these challenges and facilitate their educational pursuits. The findings are in line with Nguyen (2016) who purported that the lack of adequate childcare and parental support had implications for the well-being and development of the children of teenage mothers. Without consistent caregiving and supervision, children do not receive the attention, stimulation, and nurturing environment necessary for optimal growth and development. Similarly, the study by Evans (2017) found that teenage mothers living in hostels with their children experienced social isolation due to their unique living situation. They felt disconnected from their peers who do not share similar parenting responsibilities, further exacerbating feelings of loneliness and alienation.

Dropout risk

The findings revealed that teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education in a visited area were at a higher risk of dropping out of school due to the combined pressures of motherhood, financial constraints, and social stigma, which limited their future opportunities for employment and economic independence. It was further reported that the responsibilities of parenthood place significant strain on these young mothers, often requiring them to juggle childcare duties alongside their educational pursuits. Additionally, financial limitations make it challenging for them to afford necessities and support their families, forcing them to prioritize immediate needs over their schooling. Moreover, the pervasive social stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy and motherhood exacerbates feelings of shame and inadequacy, discouraging these mothers from continuing their education and pursuing future opportunities. During the interviews, one of the participants reported that:

The combined pressures of motherhood, financial constraints, and social stigma create formidable barriers that limit the educational and economic prospects of teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programmes, increase their likelihood of dropping out of school and perpetuate cycles of poverty and dependence.

The quotation highlights the complex challenges faced by teenage mothers who re-enter non-formal education programmes, emphasizing how motherhood, financial limitations, and social stigma collectively serve as significant obstacles to their educational and economic advancement. Firstly, the responsibilities of motherhood impose additional demands on these young women, making it difficult to balance childcare duties with academic commitments. Secondly, financial constraints exacerbate their struggles by limiting access to resources necessary for continuing their education, such as transportation, school supplies, and childcare services. Lastly, the social stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy and motherhood further compounds the issue, undermining the confidence and motivation of these mothers to pursue their education. As a result, these formidable barriers increased the likelihood of dropout among teenage mothers, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependence by limiting their ability to secure better employment opportunities and achieve economic independence. The findings are consistent with Walker (2020) who found that teenage mothers from low-income households struggled to afford necessities such as medication, and childcare expenses and when faced with the choice between meeting these essential needs and pursuing education, they prioritized immediate survival needs, leading to interruptions or discontinuation of their educational pursuits. Similarly, Martinez (2019) found that constant worry about how to afford necessities for teenage mothers and their children was overwhelming and distracting, making it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies or engage effectively in non-formal education programmes hence dropping out of school.

Limited future opportunities

The findings revealed that teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programmes often face limited future opportunities due to various interconnected factors. Participants reported that the responsibilities of motherhood demanded significant time and attention, making it challenging for these young mothers to prioritize their education and pursue further opportunities. Moreover, participants argued that financial constraints restrict their ability to access resources necessary for educational advancement, such as school supplies, and childcare services. These

cumulative challenges created formidable barriers that hindered teenage mothers from accessing and maximizing future opportunities for employment, economic independence, and personal development. As a result, they found themselves trapped in cycles of limited prospects, perpetuating patterns of poverty and dependence. During the interviews, one of the participants was had the following to say:

The intersection of responsibilities as mothers, financial constraints, and societal stigma present multifaceted obstacles that often limit their prospects beyond the classroom. We must recognize and address these barriers comprehensively, providing tailored support and resources to empower teenage mothers to overcome these challenges and unlock their full potential for success in both their academic pursuits and broader life aspirations.

The quotation effectively highlights the complex and interconnected challenges faced by teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programmes. Firstly, it identifies the intersection of responsibilities as mothers, financial constraints, and societal stigma as key factors contributing to the multifaceted obstacles these young women encounter. The responsibilities of motherhood demand significant time and effort, while financial limitations restrict access to resources necessary for educational and personal advancement. Moreover, societal stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy and motherhood undermines their confidence and motivation. However, the quotation also emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing these barriers comprehensively. It calls for tailored support and resources to empower teenage mothers to overcome these challenges, enabling them to unlock their full potential for success not only in their academic pursuits but also in broader life aspirations.

The findings are similar to Wilson (2016) who found that teenage pregnancy often disrupts traditional educational pathways, leading to gaps in academic attainment and lower levels of educational achievement. Re-entering non-formal education programmes may not fully compensate for the educational opportunities missed during pregnancy and early parenthood, limiting the skills and qualifications teenage mothers can acquire. Similarly, Smith (2018) added that teenage mothers frequently experienced financial challenges due to their caregiving responsibilities and limited earning potential. The costs associated with childcare, healthcare, and other basic needs strained their financial resources, making it difficult to invest in further education or training that could enhance their employability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, the study concludes that the presence of stigma and discrimination from peers and community members, coupled with financial constraints, childcare responsibilities, and the risk of dropout, underscores the systemic barriers hindering the educational attainment and social inclusion of teenage mothers. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive interventions that encompass not only financial assistance but also psychosocial support, access to childcare services, and targeted educational programmes. Furthermore, efforts to challenge societal norms and attitudes towards teenage pregnancy and motherhood are crucial for creating an inclusive and supportive environment that empowers teenage mothers to pursue their educational aspirations and access broader opportunities for their future socio-economic advancement.

This study provides the following recommendations. First, Wamo Open School, Morogoro Municipality should develop and implement comprehensive support services tailored to the needs of teenage mothers re-admitted to non-formal education programmes. This includes providing access to childcare assistance, counselling services, mentorship programmes, and academic support to help them successfully balance their educational pursuits with their parenting responsibilities. Second, launch awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to challenge social stigma and discrimination against teenage mothers in Tanzania. Foster inclusive and supportive learning environments within non-formal education programmes that promote empathy, understanding, and respect for diversity, regardless of age, gender, or parental status. Third, advocate for policy reforms at the national and local levels to address the systemic barriers and inequalities facing teenage mothers in Tanzania. This includes advocating for the integration of comprehensive sex education in school curricula, implementing policies to prevent teenage pregnancies, and ensuring access to quality education and economic opportunities for all young mothers, regardless of their circumstances.

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