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Erasmus

They suffer in silence!
The everyday struggles of teen mothers, Thies, Senegal.

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Seydina Aboubakry Cisse
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Members of the Examining Committee:
Dr. Roy Huijsmans (Supervisor)
Pr. Irene Van Staveren (Reader)

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Inquiries:

International Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

t:	+31 70 426 0460
e:	info@iss.nl
w:	www.iss.nl
fb:	http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl
twitter:	@issnl

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ANSD	Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie (National Agency of Statistics and Demography)
BFEM	Brevet de Fin d'Études Moyennes, in the Senegalese education, (Certificate of completion for lower secondary education)
DPRE	Direction de la Planification et de la Réforme de l'Education (Directorate of Education Planning and Reform)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRW	Human Rights Watch
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEN	Ministère de l'Education Nationale (Ministry of National Education)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

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ABSTRACT

This research paper addresses the issue of teen mothers and their decision towards education after giving birth. The paper examines the decisions of the teen mothers and how they decide whether to resume or drop out of the schools. I interviewed eight (8) teen mothers, both those who resumed and those who dropped out. Though the sample is small, I had the privilege to engage with them in a conversation to receive their lived experiences and emotions about being a teen and mother. The study closely examines the teen mothers in the city of Thies, Senegal. This study investigates different issues regarding teen motherhood in Thies and how these issues (re)shape the lived experiences of the teen mothers. The study uses qualitative methods to investigate the phenomenon. The result of the study shows different levels and degrees of support, exclusion, and stigmatization that teen mothers experience in the city of Thies in Senegal.

RELEVANCE TO DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Considering the importance of education for development and empowerment of young women, this research has its relevance for development studies because it explores and explains societal issues pertaining to teen mothers and their educational experiences.

Addressing teenage pregnancy and motherhood is crucial in promoting girls' education as it aligns with fundamental human right that every individual should have access. In addition, educating a girl contributes to breaking the cycle of poverty and social inequalities. Teen pregnancy often leads to school drop-out, thus hindering any future opportunities.

Keywords

Teen mothers, Re-engagement, Stigma, Exclusion, Agency, Labeling theory, Senegal

CHAPTER ONE (1)
INTRODUCTION

"I felt embarrassed and ashamed because of all the gossips, teasing, and insults. Eventually, I stopped going to school even though the school year wasn't over yet" Bintou (D2)

Bintou is a young girl. Like all my participants, she lives in one of the most underprivileged areas in the city of Thies. She decided to drop out when she was four months pregnant. She was embarrassed by the way she was looked at. Based on Bintou's (D2) arguments about her daily experience as a teen, mother, and student, I would like to use the lines below as a brief introduction, before giving more details in the background of my work. It is also an invitation to the readers of this paper to reflect on teen mothers' everyday struggles as they proceed in their life because being a teen and mother is a harrowing and painful experience for all my study participants.

In the research context of Thies, Senegal, the research has found that teen mothers are isolated, excluded, stigmatized, and mocked, because they have violated societal norms and mores within their own families. Their mothers and siblings consider their pregnancies and motherhood as a disgrace to the whole family. Within the families, even some teenagers believed that being married when they were pregnant would help them earn a good reputation in their families and communities (Gyan, 2018). At the school level, even though they have some support from their friends, they do not have available infrastructures or enough support systems from the school as an institution to help them combine their education and new parenting roles.

Reflecting more on the issues of teens and motherhood, I can elaborate that becoming a mother is a significant milestone in a woman's life (Mangeli *et al.*, 2017). The transition of the girl from childhood to adult life through parenting roles requires preparation such as physical, psychological, social, and cognitive. Unfortunately, teen mothers seem to lack the readiness required for the role of a young mother (ibid).

Teen motherhood is a complex and hard process. Teen mothers must balance the responsibilities of parenting with the ongoing developmental requirements of adolescence. This includes adapting to adult roles and expectations, physical changes of puberty, brain growth, and newborn care. In addition to these problems, many young mothers face financial difficulties, making their transition into motherhood more challenging (Mangeli *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, young women who become mothers before marriage faced harsh consequences; some of them are even expelled from the households and community (Gyan, 2018).

1.1 Background

Teenage pregnancy is a concerning global phenomenon that refers to young women who have become pregnant between ages 13 to 19. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), teenage pregnancy has far-reaching impacts on whole nations and societies at large, while at the same time, it also poses major challenges for the teen mothers themselves (Subhanie and Azlina, 2020). That is the reason why teenage pregnancy has captured both international and national attention for many decades. Official estimates indicate that every year there are around 21 million pregnancies among young women aged 15-19 years in developing countries, and a further 2 million pregnancies among girls under the age of 15 (Darroch J et al., 2016 and UNFPA, 2015, as cited in Subhanie and Azlina, 2020, p.2). About one fifth of them come from Africa (Jochim *et al.*, 2022).

Scholarly literature indicates that teenage pregnancies or childbearing also negatively impact and discourage young women from pursuing their educational ambitions (Mohr, Carbajal and Sharma,

2019). As a result, their pregnancies affect their well-being and personal development. It is also claimed that teenage pregnancy is a key driver of higher mortality rates (**Jochim _et al._, 2022**).

Furthermore, Meekers and Ahmed (1999) show the relationship between pregnancies among schoolgirls and school drop-out can be ascertained from the fact that they are often expelled from the schools. A major concern associated with teen motherhood is low educational performance and the fact their children well-being could also be affected (**Jochim _et al._, 2022**).

Expulsion of teenage mothers from institutional settings and the school environments can infringe on teen mothers' fundamental right to education despite the fact that globally, nation-states have laws and policies to protect girls' access and rights to education (Naidoo, Muthukrishna and Nkabinde, 2021)

In Africa, many teen mothers are likely denied school attendance because of lack of effective institutionalized mechanisms to guarantee their re-entry, or cultural and social norms associated with pregnancy (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

In 2022, data show that in Senegal, in a total of 841,180 enrolled students at junior schools, 456,525 were females, which represents 54.3% of the number of student population in this level. Among these students 722 got pregnant with the percentage of 0.2% and 997 married before turning 18, representing 0.2% (DPRE/MEN, 2022).

In Senegal, a law was passed in 2004 to make education compulsory for children of both genders up to the age of 16 (MEN, 2004). In reality pregnancy for young women often means giving up their education, (Ruzibiza, 2021) mainly for unmarried girls who are stigmatized (Human Rights Watch, 2017) because they are considered to be problematic to the society (Duncan et al, 2010).

In Senegal, the legal framework for re-entry policies is there as the country has ratified all the conventions related to children's rights, yet when a student is pregnant her schooling is suspended until she delivers. Senegalese authorities argue this is based on security reasons. In addition, Senegalese authorities have made re-entry based on a medical certificate proving the young mother's abilities to resume her education (MEN, 2012). These practices are in contradiction to the claim that every educator and community member has a responsibility to address and advance education issues and understanding of teen mothers' educational concerns (Mohr, Carbajal and Sharma, 2019) and advocate at all levels, national and international, to facilitate their re-entry in the educational system (Naidoo, Muthukrishna and Nkabinde, 2021)

1.2 Problem Statement

In Sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 45% of pregnancies in young girls between the age of 15 and 19 are not planned which can result in unwanted childbirths, abortion, and miscarriages (Wado, Sully and Mumah, 2019). Teen pregnancies can have negative consequences on teenagers' health, education, social, and economic prospects (ibid). Teenagers may not have acquired the physical and biological maturity required for pregnancy and childbirth and an early pregnancy can affect the lives of the young mothers (**Noori _et al._, 2022**)

As a result, a demographic household survey (DHS) conducted in 23 Sub-Shaharan African countries showed that 18% of teen mothers discontinued their education at secondary school (Eloundou-Enyegue, 2004, as cited in Unterhalter, 2013, p.75)

It is important to underline that over the last twenty years, the international development community has focused on addressing the issue of young women's premature drop out from school (Newman, 2021). Researchers have different understandings about the factors that lead to teen

mothers' dropouts. Hunt (2008) emphasizes the likelihood for girls from low-income families to drop-out in contrast with children from better off families who stay in school.

It is acknowledged that teen mothers are less likely to complete their schooling and get a suitable employment (Duncan et al, 2010). Newman (2021) argues that when it comes to examining this issue in Africa, the dominant techniques are focused on economic factors. That is the reason why some scholars focus more on social and psychological dimensions like discrimination and stigma which can be "highly structural, institutional, and cultural"(USAID, 2014, p.2) because teenage pregnancy and parenting are frequently portrayed as a devastating experience for young girls and as a major societal issue (Duncan, 2007). Another point that is reflected in some literatures is the correlation between marriage and education, notably the tendency of young females in the Global South to drop out early (Newman, 2021).

If they are unmarried students as it is the case with my participants in this study, in Senegal and many Sub-Saharan countries, even though the re-entry policy offers a chance for teen mothers to resume their education, some of them do not take advantage of this opportunity and return to school after giving birth (Onyango, Ngunzo Kioli and Nyambedha, 2015).

Another problem about the re-engagement of teen mothers into the educational system is related to society's negative opinion of pregnant young girls and teenage mothers (Barmao, Nyaga and Lelan, 2015). Structural constraints do not encourage girls to persist in school. However, I recognize that four of my participants in this research resumed their education after becoming mothers. They continued their schooling because of their personal ambitions (Salvi, 2019). Three of my participants that resumed said that they decided to continue their education because they believe that it is a pathway to success. This point can be nuanced as one of them uttered that her decision to resume was a combination of her own will and the encouragements of her parents who wanted her to resume her studies.

Although numerous efforts to cope with the challenges of pregnancy related to unfavorable behaviors, barriers to gender disparities, school performance, emotional well-being, and long-term social stability around teen parenthood, it is important to underline that premarital pregnancy is complex, rejected, and condemned (Onyango, Ngunzo Kioli and Nyambedha, 2015). Teenagers who succeed in returning to school are stigmatized, mocked, and poorly treated by both teachers and other students (Barmao, Nyaga and Lelan, 2015). In addition, the negative impact of such treatment is not limited to social effects like stigmatization and exclusion, but also impacts their educational attainment (Worku et al., 2021).

Therefore, the school as an institution that must serve as social frame for individuals to engage in interactions (Hodgson, 2006) with the expectations for each to act accordingly to the rules established because in Senegal, every school has an internal regulation with a set of rules. The regulation that sets out the rights and responsibilities of every member of the educational community can be favorable or negative for some students with penalties and sanctions (Waylen, 2014). Moreover, the young mothers as constrained social agents are often not put in a position to express their minds, views, and their own wills, which will make some to challenge the rules to have a full control of their life (Gurdal and Sorbring, 2018) and use their free will in opposition to social structural restrictions (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013).

1.3 Situating the research.

As part of my research journey, I chose the region of Thies, Senegal, because it is the second most important area in terms of education after Dakar with a student population of 140,071, with 62,723 boys and 77,340 girls (55.2%) (DPRE/MEN, 2022). Thies represents the second largest population with 12.86 % of the national population(ANSD, 2023). It is also a significant region in terms of economic activities. My research is basically focused on the city of Thies. The choice of the place is related to my connection to the city as it is my residential area and workplace in the field of education. Another valid reason is that Thies is at the crossroads of the country leading to major Senegalese regions. It has many cultural influences in line with the social, ethnic, religious landscapes of the country. This aspect is interesting to look at how social norms influence people's perceptions and attitudes and lead to the stigmatization of teen mothers.

The complexity of the topic added to the vulnerability of my participants; this pushed me not to single out one specific site or school. I decided to engage, through recommendations of colleagues and resourceful community people, with girls whose lived experiences can be a momentum to document the situation of teen mothers. Education is a fundamental human right and nobody should deprive them of achieving that goal because lacking access to education, individuals worldwide might find themselves with limited prospects for enhancing their social status or life outcomes (Savani, Rattan and Dweck, 2017).

I refer to the first two research participants with the term "young women" as they are no more teens and are university students. I confessed that these first two young women I approached for this research through my own social ties denied my request for an interview. The first one who is a relative to the wife of one my cousins said that the reason she could not help me with my research was that she belongs to a big family, and she does not want people to use her stories against her, despite the assurance I gave her about the ethical dimensions that put confidentiality and anonymity on top of my concern.

The second one was my former student at junior school. When I called and explained to her about my research interest, her first question was "who told you that I have a baby?" For confidentiality, I could not display the name of my colleague; I told her I was there when it happened. This epitomizes the lack of information schools have about cases of pregnancies as most of my interviewees hid their pregnancies by stopping going to school or interacting with the outside world because they were ashamed and feared negative remarks from people.

This research paper seeks to examine the different aspects of stigma and its effects on the educational attainment of the young mothers. Based on my decision to choose a semi-structured approach, this paper delves into the lives and experiences of teen mothers from different backgrounds in the city of Thies. This approach enabled me to engage in deep conversations with the girls' new statuses as mothers and teens. I acknowledged that my interactions with some were so much filled with intense emotions that they ended up crying when they had to relate some of the instances of challenges they were confronted with.

Through their narratives and stories, I could grasp how labeling someone with negative comments or hints can impact their lives and education. That is why in my pre-interview sessions, I told them my interest about the topic is to elevate their voices so as they can be heard everywhere, and push decision-makers address their issues.

1.4 School break and re-engagement policy strategies

Somani (2017) contends that education for girls is essential for the advancement of society. Despite numerous international declarations and development targets, as well as significant endeavors, disparities in educational opportunities between genders persist. The typical challenge is when pregnancy occurs at an early age which likely leads to drop out of school and impeding educational advancement. In addition to this significant obstacle and barrier, girls can encounter discrimination and violence within their own families (Lardies, Dryding and Logan, 2019).

I will elaborate by examining some major international milestones in the field of education and also some national education frameworks.

In 1948, the right to education became a fundamental human right which every individual worldwide has the right to access (UN, 1948). It was acknowledged during the international "conference for education for all" held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 that despite enormous efforts made by countries around the world to guarantee universal access to education, the following fact remained: many children, including girls, did not have access to education (UNESCO, 1990). For the leaders their top priority was to secure girls and women's access to and quality of education, as well as to remove all barriers to their active participation.

Furthermore, any gender-based stereotypes in the educational system must be eradicated: for example, girls are blamed or sanctioned when they become pregnant whereas the same blames or sanctions are not applied to boys. There is a double standard in sanctions for two individuals with the same responsibilities. It has become clear that the policy may not adequately address the issues that young mothers face when trying to balance their responsibilities as mothers with their pursuit of an education (Onyango, Ngunzo Kioli and Nyambedha, 2015).

The emergence of the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals, 2000-2015) and the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals, 2015-2030) encourages countries worldwide to review their existing educational policies; that is why many Southern African nation-states have formulated policies in response to the global issue of teen pregnancies. These policies have largely evolved from punitive approaches that used to result in the exclusion of young women from education when they became pregnant to more inclusive measures aimed at facilitating pregnant schoolgirls to finish their education (Salvi, 2019)

In the context of Senegal, legislation was passed at the parliament "la loi d'orientation Loi N° 91-22 du 16 Février 1991" (Act No. 91-22); article 5 guarantees every citizen the right to education and training without any distinction. It provides equal opportunities for success to everyone. It is inspired by the recognized right of every human being to receive education and training corresponding to their abilities without discrimination based on gender, social origin, race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality.

However, there was a regulation regarding student pregnancies which allowed for the immediate or deferred exclusion from school for any pregnant girl, and this posed a significant obstacle for many girls (Gomis, 1999). The law "la loi d'orientation Loi N° 91-22 du 16 Février 1991" (Act No. 91-22) was amended in 2004 by law "Loi n° 2004-37 du 15 décembre 2004" (Act No.2004-37) amending and supplementing the National Educational Policy Law No.91-22 of February 16, 1991. Articles 3 and 4 were the subject of modification (MEN, 2004).

In article 3, additional provision, education is compulsory for all children of both genders aged from 6 to 16 years and the State has the obligation to keep children from that age range within the

education system. Compulsory education is provided free of charge in public educational institutions. Parents are obligated to enroll their children in a public or private school once they reach the age of six. Parents are responsible for their children's attendance until they reach the age of 16. Any child under the age of 16 who is unable to continue in general education is referred to a vocational training program (MEN, 2004).

In 2007, an administrative circular was signed to facilitate teen mothers' re-engagement in schools; though their education is suspended when they are pregnant, they are allowed to resume after giving birth with the official medical recommendation (MEN, 2012). However, I noted in my research that many teen mothers are not aware that this text exists about their re-engagement in school. It is also ignored by some staff who expel pregnant students without considering the texts. It came out during my work on the ground with my research participants that there is still stigma on early pregnancies even though they get support from their peers and the principal. Some of my interviewees complained about the fact that they had to suspend their education and they advocate for the option to continue their education and get facilities that can help them in this transition.

1.5 Justification of this research

First, there is a growing importance of gender in educational and developmental goals that has prompted substantial research into the factors influencing girls' enrolment and retention in educational institutions (Salvi, 2019). Second, this research was carried out to understand and address teen mothers' re-engagement in schools as it is critical to overcoming major challenges they face in terms of poverty, social exclusion and marginalization, and health issues.

Another important dimension of this research is the groundbreaking contribution it will provide to view the issue of teenage motherhood in a different perspective as it can initiate debates and communications within families, communities, and schools to build up support around young women in their everyday challenges as teens and mothers and at the same time provide some data in Senegal. Even though it will be at the grassroots level, it can trigger future research interests in the field. There is limited extent of existing research on this topic in Sub-Saharan Africa and particularly in Senegal. While I was writing my research paper, I experienced limited source of data and information regarding this topic.

This lack of data is fundamentally related to the sensitivity of the topic which makes it challenging to address. Furthermore, this research provides different lenses about our understanding of stigma because many critics have demonstrated that stigma research has excessively emphasized individual and interpersonal dimensions, ignoring the more substantial and comprehensive structural components of stigma (Link and Phelan, 2001, as cited in Hatzenbuehler, 2016)

1.6 Research objective and questions

The primary objective of this paper is to explore the factors that drive some young mothers to resume and pursue their studies after becoming mothers, as well as identify the barriers that lead other young mothers to completely abandon their education. In this sense, social, structural, and institutional factors will be looked at as the basis of my work. To achieve this objective, the research is guided by the following questions:

-What are the social, structural, and institutional barriers that prevent young mothers from returning to school?

-How can these barriers be addressed at the community and institutional levels to facilitate young mothers' re-engagement?

1.7 Organization of the paper

This research paper is composed of six chapters. Following the introductory chapter, chapter two engages with the reviewed concepts and theories in relation with the situation of teen mothers' education. Chapter three focuses on the methodology. In this part, I have addressed the data collection and sampling/sample size techniques. Chapters four and five portray the challenges that young women daily face at the school, community, and family levels. These two chapters mark my analysis of the topic. Chapter six consists of concluding notes and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO (2)
CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

In this chapter, I have reviewed and examined the manifestations of stigma at social, cultural, structural, and institutional levels on the lived experiences of teen mothers. This chapter is also built on the theories of agency and labeling to better address and understand how stigma operates in general, specifically in the Senegalese society.

2.1 Stigma

In his seminal work Goffman (1963) classified stigma into three categories. In the first part of his analysis, stigma refers to physical manifestations intended to reveal something uncommon and negative about the signifier's moral position. It can be any type of physical malformations. The second point is what are referred to be individual flaws as rigid beliefs, being treacherous, and dishonesty. The last point is related to people's identities, religious beliefs, and geographical background (ibid). Looking at the work of Goffman on stigma, I would like to elaborate on the manifestations of stigma on young unmarried school women in my paper.

I have observed that the focus of stigma has shifted from the persons with specific disorders like mental illness or HIV/AIDS (Pescosolido and Martin, 2015) to cultural, structural, and institutional stigma (USAID and Health Policy Project, 2014). That is what makes teen mothers' plight critical, and it is an issue that needs a space for more exploration, since when a teen becomes pregnant her educational institution and community jeopardize the completion of her education (Chinkondenji, 2022).

2.1.1 Social and Cultural factors

Onyango, Ngunzo Kioli and Nyambedha (2015) on their exploration of re-entry among teen mothers in western Kenya, argue that teen motherhood is regarded as a big societal issue with considerable effects on education. Children are constantly viewed in the context of the family and community in which they reside, and their early parental responsibilities may encounter some resistance as in many countries parenting is a socially defined phenomenon (Ambert, 1994). Kassa (2017, as cited in Abebe, 2019, p.2) acknowledges that, despite the fact that the newborn is often wanted and regarded as a 'gift of God', teen mothers are stigmatized, classified as criminals, and condemned for tainting the family and community reputation by bringing in a bad progeny (Phoenix and Woollett, 1991 as cited in Neiterman, 2013, p.337).

Therefore, due to their pregnancies, teen mothers may experience social isolation and rejection from their families and communities (Mccarthy, O'brien and Kenny, 2014). As a result, teen mothers may be more vulnerable to mental health effects and be less likely to complete their schooling (ibid).

2.1.2 Structural and institutional Stigma

Hatzenbuehler (2016) defines structural stigma as the combination of societal circumstances, cultural standards, and institutional practices that restrict the chances, access to resources, and overall welfare of individuals who experience stigmatization. Bos et al. (2013, as cited in Olivier et al., 2020, p.121) describes structural stigma as the process through which stigma against certain groups is ingrained in society, organizations, and ideologies.

For unmarried students and mothers at the early age, this means that they have challenged some of the foundations of the society as every human being is expected to act accordingly to the rules and expectations (Bermer, 1998) . As for teen motherhood, it is as if they have broken a well-established rule which results in the social exclusion of the teen mothers (Hodgson, 2006). Consequently, they are given a different consideration in society and might not benefit equally from the services or assistance (Olivier et al., 2020).

The examination of the embeddedness of institutions in a social structure with two societal boundaries of 'what to do' and 'what not to do' with its enforcing rules and disciplining behavior (Bermer, 1998) is critical in my exploration of the barriers of teen mothers' re-engagement in schools. Institutions have the capacity to fundamentally alter the capacities and behavior of people (Hodgson, 2006) which involves a power relation between the institutions that seek to influence and control behavior and people (Bermer, 1998)

Family

The family, as an important social institution, is an underlying and major unit in social organization composed of many individuals who have a shared commitment to their relationship and are related by various ways such as blood, marriage, adoption, and so on (Etieyibo, 2019) . In her epistemological exploration of in-school pregnancy, Salvi (2019) observes that Mozambican families, like in many parts in Africa, follow an age-based hierarchy in which older generations exert influence over younger people which reflects power differences and at the same limiting decision-making between individuals living within the same space.

Etieyibo, (2019) argues that in Africa, it is within the family that fundamental societal values are communicated and embraced, giving most people a platform to acquire behavioral norms, nurture their character and personality, and create an awareness of moral ideals of good. Therefore, it is important to notice that the occurrence of pregnancy outside of marriage might be viewed as a social issue (Odimegwu *et al.*, 2019) and it is frequently subject to criticism and stigma (Mjwara and Maharaj, 2018). Most of family making is within marriage, so pregnancy outside of marriage is likely to trigger tensions as this situation might be viewed as a disgrace to the family lineage (ibid). Mothers expressed devastating emotions when they discovered the pregnancies of their teen daughters (Mgbokwere, Esienumoh and Uyana, 2015). Similar to mothers, fathers expressed disappointment and may struggle to accept the pregnancy and birth of a new baby. Such a pregnancy may result in the expulsion of the girl from continuing her education while some parents see it as a child mistake (ibid)

The experience of motherhood offers a challenge, regardless of a mother's age or financial situation, necessitating support and active participation from the community (Breheny and Stephens ,2007, as cited in Barmao, Nyaga and Lelan, 2015, p.64). It is worth pointing out the critical role families, caregivers, and parents have in assisting young mothers in both minimizing the challenges by unexpected and unplanned pregnancies in adolescents as well as in nurturing their personal growth (Amod, Halana and Smith, 2019)

Community

Amod, Halana and Smith (2019) posit that childbearing is viewed in many traditional African countries as a significant milestone into womanhood and it triggers the social standing of women as they may be judged or given consideration based on people's perceptions. Within the community, early unmarried motherhood is most of time regarded as problematic (Bhana, 2013). Teens

that engage in premarital sex and give birth outside of wedlock are seen as manifesting a personal trait that contradicts societal norms and this contradiction may have an impact on them and other members of the immediate family (Gyan, 2018)

Certain parents experienced feelings of shame about their teenagers' pregnancies and voiced worry about how their family, neighbors, and friends would respond (Mgbokwere, Esienumoh and Uyana, 2015) because the parents of such teens were the focus of gossips and the teens themselves are described as bad influences on the rest of the girls in the community (ibid).

Unmarried girls who fell pregnant were subjected to harsh punishments, including expulsion from their community (Gyan, 2018). Girls who deviate from societal norms are highly stigmatized (ibid)

School

Bhana (2013) argues that managing the responsibilities of being a young mother while attending school continues to be a challenge for schools, pregnant teens, and teenage mothers. However, it is necessary to understand that education serves as a focus point for exploring the relationships between community institutions, notably schools, and their response to teen mothers as they navigate their social position within the community and their educational obligations (Hunter, 2007). The education policy serves as a catalyst for laying the groundwork to counter any attempts to hinder girls' education, but in reality the policy is unable to compel females to exercise their freedom (Bhana, 2013).In addition, learners who return to school after giving birth encounter various obstacles, and their chances of success may be hampered by a lack of assistance from schools and teachers (ibid). That is the reason why some argue that schools do not provide appropriate assistance to schoolgirls who become mothers as they actively reject and stigmatize them (ibid)

2.2 Agency

DeJaeghere, McCleary and Josić (2016) assert that the concept of agency enables us to understand how young people perceive, engage with, and navigate through their everyday existence, whether social, cultural, political, or economic, in the face of both continuity and change. This understanding extends to their transition from childhood to adulthood.

Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2013) define agency as the decision-making abilities of people. In the same line of idea Newman (2021) defines agency as the freedom of individuals to pursue and realize their unique interests. However, this idea opposes the effect of culture and social interactions on human intentions and behaviors (ibid). In this sense, children must be active participants in their society rather than being treated as passive individuals in the environment they live in (ibid). Young individuals possess the ability to make their own choices and indeed exercise this capacity (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013) contrary to prevailing development narratives that portray people under the age of 18 as lacking decision-making ability (Newman, 2021)

However, their agency is shaped by a prevailing culture of sexual shame and marginalization (Bhana, 2013) which will have a tremendous impact on their abilities and responsibilities in relation to the future actions that they will take (Bermer, 1998). The capacity of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers to utilize their agency within educational institutions continues to be a matter of concern (Bhana, 2013); when teen pregnancy is considered undesirable by the dominant ideological narrative, it constrains young women's capacity to make choices and take action.

Therefore, young people must negotiate their own personal agency within the specific narratives, societal norms and mores, expectations, and structural elements that influence their life

(Newman, 2021). For pregnant learners, this dominating discourse presents a difficult scenario since it limits their ability to exert influence and control (Bhana, 2013).

Furthermore, this life process engages teenage mothers in discovering in themselves some of the values like a sense of purpose, self-esteem, and more responsibility (Amod, Halana and Smith, 2019).Teenage mothers do not live in isolation as they belong to a social and cultural context which shapes their lives and instills them with ideals and values specific to that setting (Abebe, 2019). Pursuing the same idea, DeJaeghere, McCleary and Josić (2016) argue that the individual is constantly entangled with different societal systems and norms. Therefore, it will be challenging for young mothers to actively shape and determine their social lives and the ones of people living with them (Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi, 2013). I acknowledge that a considerable number of women lack autonomy in making decisions about their own conditions, owing primarily to family and cultural influences (Bhatti and Jeffery, 2012, as cited in Newman, 2021, p.3)

Therefore, they must manage and balance their roles as mothers and children, which include fulfilling their educational obligations as students and as mothers' roles to bring up a child (Erikson, 1968, Musick, 1993, as cited in Kalil, 2002, p.556)

I am interested to situate people's activities within a larger social, cultural, economic, and political framework in order to understand the structural factors that either facilitate or limit their ability to act (Newman, 2021)

2.3 Labeling theory

Bernburg (2009) posits that labeling theory offers a distinct sociological perspective as it investigates how societal labels influence the growth and manifestation of crime and deviance. This theory elaborates that while individuals may initially engage in wrongful behavior for various reasons, the moment they are tagged or designated as bad by others, they start facing new challenges. These challenges come from their own reactions and the reactions of others to the negative judgments associated with the deviant label (ibid). While social labels are typically embedded within the cultural framework that individuals use to describe and categorize their social environment, deviant labels possess a distinctive feature as stigmatized markers (ibid).

Tannenbaum (1922, as cited in Krohn and Lopes ,2015, p.313) shared his perspective on the negative effects of labeling individuals, asserting that once someone is labeled a criminal and incarcerated, they start to lose everything they hold dear – dreams, friendships, and more. This process could lead them to internalize the criminal identity (Krohn and Lopes, 2015). Individuals labeled as criminals or delinquents tend to face ostracization due to their perceived divergence from societal norms, often being linked to stereotypes portraying negative traits (Bernburg, 2009). The act of labeling profoundly impacts individuals, often leading them to be viewed as incapable or unwilling to conform to moral standards, thus potentially violating significant rules. Subsequently, the violation of this normative expectation from family or society will influence any past or future misconduct which will be regarded as a sign of their fundamental deviant or criminal disposition, further perpetuating stereotypes (ibid). They are depicted not to be part of normal people, they belong to another world now (Krohn and Lopes, 2015).

These inaccurate assumptions allow others to make quick judgments about a person without truly knowing them (Eshbaugh, 2011). This can be related to the plight of young mothers. Even though they are now more visible in society, there is still a negative perception associated with their pregnancy and motherhood (ibid) because the mainstream culture reinforces negative

stereotypes of individuals who commit crimes through various mediums, such as movies, literature, mass media, and even everyday language (Bernburg, 2009).

Stigmas and stereotypes can influence the treatment of teen mothers. A negative perception of a teen mother can lead to unfavorable interactions (Eshbaugh, 2011). Stigma possesses the potential to have a negative impact on specific groups, making things harder for people who are already struggling. As a result, teen mothers may suffer of the stigma associated with adolescent parenthood (ibid). However, Vinson, J (2017, as cited in De Hertogh, 2019, p.112) contends that becoming a teenage mother doesn't indicate being unsuccessful socially or as a parent.

This research paper attempts to explore various aspects about teenage pregnancy and motherhood through the voices and narratives of young mothers: to comprehend their daily struggles in a context where being a teen and mother is challenging as they are permanently stigmatized and excluded based on societal and cultural norms.

For a comprehensive and holistic exploration of the issue of teen mothers, I have used agency and labeling theoretical frameworks in relation with the concepts of social, cultural, structural, and institutional stigma to understand the labels and decision-making associated when pregnancy occurs at the early age in a society where the expectation is girl's chastity until her wedding day. If a girl breaks this normative expectation, she is tagged and excluded.

CHAPTER THREE (3)
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data collection

To get the data for this research, fieldwork has been conducted. The fieldwork was conducted from June 26th, 2023, a few days before the end of school year for students, to Wednesday, July 26th, 2023, in Thies, Senegal. It started with an initial meeting with the inspector of the academy, head of regional branch of the ministry of education. I had to clear some ethical considerations about my research on teens who are considered to be vulnerable population, as I presumed that any interaction with them might affect their lives (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), and get permission to interview my participants. My real contact with my participants started on July 1st, 2023, with two refusals to participate as explained in Chapter one (1).

I conducted this research using semi-structured interviews to collect data because of its flexibility and two-way communication on how the questions are addressed and how the participants can respond (Sharma, 2017) as it was a face-to-face interview. I had two online interviews with my participants, and both are among those who dropped out. The first one lives in Dakar, the capital city, where she works as a maid to support her daughter and family; the second one has to escape from the host family and join her mother in another region.

It is important to mention that apart from this participant who left the host family, I have another participant whose parents decided to take her to another region to escape the mockery of the neighbors. Basically, distance was the major factor; I could not meet in person the participants I interviewed online. I did one physical interview at my office because the girl said she did not want people to know about the nature of our discussion and she wanted to keep it private from people.

I interviewed two participants at their schools as they found it more convenient for them to engage with me in a discussion about their situation. The other three were also physical interviews as I personally met them at the places they lived. These interactions allowed me to collect additional information that was not mentioned in the questionnaire. My questionnaire included both open and closed ended questions to allow me to delve into in-depth stories and perceptions.

I also used secondary data from different sources on teenage pregnancy and motherhood. These data are drawn from the National Statistical Agency reports, policy documents and literatures conducted locally and globally. All these varieties of sources provided me with baseline information about the situation of teen mothers in the Senegalese education system and at the same time their living conditions in their families and communities. It was also an enabling factor to look at different international and national frameworks pertaining to education locally and globally with institutional regulations.

3.2 Sampling technique and sample size

I used purposive and snowball samplings as both techniques facilitated me to easily access the research participants and the desired information. Initially, I intended to interview ten (10) participants preferably aged between 13-18, five teen mothers who resumed their education after giving birth and five teen mothers who dropped out. I have to acknowledge that because of the complexity of the topic, the period I had to collect data (end of school year), and the challenge of locating young mothers due to the stigma surrounding early pregnancy, the sample was relatively

small (Mjwara and Maharaj, 2018). I ended up with eight research participants, four who resumed their schooling and other four who decided to drop out.

Most of my participants, specifically six out of eight, identify as Muslims, the remaining two are Christians. Despite the use of pseudonyms to protect their identities, the names I used in this paper reflect their religious affiliations. My participants hail from low-income households, and they depend on financial support from their parents and relatives for their livelihood. They all attend (attended) public schools where education is free, except a yearly tuition fee that does not exceed 10,000 FCFA (15.24 Euro). The participants who resumed were aged between 15 and 16 years and those who dropped out were 17 and 18 years old when they became pregnant.

I assigned each pseudonym a letter and a number to denote both their category and the order of their interview session. For example, (R1) stands for the first participant in the "resumed" category, (R2) stands for the second, (R3) stands for the third, and (R4) stands for the fourth. Likewise, (D1) stands for the first participant in the "dropped out" category, (D2) stands for the second, (D3) stands for the third, and (D4) stands for the fourth.

In addition, I interviewed three key informants because I thought their perspectives and insights would be instrumental to have a broader knowledge about the issues of young students who have become mothers. My first key informant is in charge of the gender issues at one of five sub-inspections of the academy of Thies. The second key informant is a "Badiene Gokh". I can literally translate it as an "aunt of the district". She is a respected leader within her community, selected by the people to be their representative, but she works under the supervision of the Ministry of Health. She is highly trusted to handle various social issues, including sensitive and confidential matters. Confidentiality plays a crucial role in her work. When someone in the community is unwell, she discreetly assists them in seeking medical attention. Moreover, if individuals encounter problems within their households or with their spouses, the Badiene Gokh mediates and resolves the issues. My last key informant is a school principal. A principal, in the Senegalese education system, is the head of a junior school.

3.3 Research site: Context of the city of Thies

Thies is one of the smallest regions in Senegal as it covers 6602 km2, representing 3.4 % of the national territory. It is divided into three departments, namely Mbour, Thies, and Tivaouane. The city of Thies is the capital of both the region and the department of the same name. The region of Thies holds the position of having the most significant economic potential in Senegal. It maintains this favorable economic position due to the dynamic sectors of agriculture, livestock, fishing, tourism, craftsmanship, trade, and mining (ANSD, 2021).

Education, being the foundation of a nation's economic and social development, places Thies as a major region, ranking second after the region of Dakar. In this study, the focus will be on junior level students, of which my participants are a part (DPRE/MEN, 2022).

Regarding girls who are pregnant at an early age, out of a total of 722 recorded cases in 2022, Thies accounted for 64 cases of pregnancies, ranking among the four most affected regions in Senegal, after Sedhiou (122), Ziguinchor (105), and Kolda (79) (ibid).

3.4 Reflexivity

As a male conducting research on a complex gendered topic on vulnerable young women, I was challenged in many aspects. First, I acknowledge my own bias in choosing the city of Thies as my research site because it is my residential area and also the place I work, and I can easily relate to

many people in the field of education which facilitated my access to information and data. Second, my status or professional background--I started my career as a teacher before joining the regional branch of the Ministry of Education--was instrumental to build a rapport of trust but I felt that it disadvantaged me at times as two participants did not allow me to record our conversations. I was compelled to take down notes while they were narrating their stories. I sensed that they were afraid the information they shared with might become known.

In addition, I had two rejections from two individuals whom I requested participation for my work. I also felt a power difference between me and my research participants as I am a male adult researcher. I am a government officer which means that I have income whereas my participants are teens who are not involved in waged employment. Third, during my conversations with my interviewees to share their lived experiences about early pregnancies and motherhood, we some- times reached to the point that our exchange turned out to be so emotional that they cried, and I had to stop for a while and ask if they still want to continue and remind them that they were free to discontinue the interview. Personally, I was affected listening to them and seeing them crying when they recalled about some hard times of their lives. I questioned myself if I made the right decision to engage with such a topic and I would drop it if I did not promise my participants, who devoted their time and energy, to elevate their voices and promised them to put their own words and stories without any judgment.

3.5 Limitations

I acknowledge some limitations I have had from the initial phase of my engagement with this topic. Because of the complexity of the topic, I struggled hard to find individuals who can open up and discuss their experiences as teen mothers. Most of my research participants asked me the reasons I was doing these interviews and work as it was the first time they had been asked about their lives. I had to build trust with them in order to start my conversations with them. Another difficulty I had to get access to my participants was related to the fact that in Senegal, though officially the school year ends in July, in June after the end of their last class exams, students stop going to schools. Then, I had to deal with students who were preparing their BFEM (Brevet de Fin d'Études Moyennes). In the Senegalese education system, it is a certificate of completion for lower second- ary education or junior schools.

However, my major challenge was finding data in Senegal about the situation of teen mothers in schools as they are not documented enough. Another point that I would like to underline is my position as a male and my first time researching on gendered issues did not allow me to delve into critical questions about their initial sexual experience and critically investigate parental responsibil- ities about the education of their children.

3.6 Ethical Issues

Conducting research with teen mothers has implications and requires ethical considerations. I have to acknowledge teens' agency and autonomy not just as a product of academic theory but also as a way to accept them as legitimate human beings (Beazley *et al.*, 2009). I am aware that in interview- based research, there are many ethical concerns due to the difficulties of looking into human lives and making information public (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). I acknowledge some challenges in this regard as the first individuals I contacted declined to be part of my work and when I started my work two of my participants did not allow me to record our conversations.

In addition, I had to obtain informed written consents from the head of the local branch of the Ministry of Education (Inspection d'Adcademie), the school principal, the "Badiene Gokh", and above all teen mothers and their parents as my participants must be informed about the different aspects and motivations of the research, including at least the purpose, expectations, methods, the research entity involved, and the utilization of the gathered information by authorized parties. It is crucial to provide participants with the assurance of confidentiality, ensuring that their identities cannot be disclosed by individuals unrelated to the research. Participants should also be aware of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the research at any point, for any reason, without facing adverse consequences (Beazley *et al.*, 2009).

For security and safety reasons pseudonyms are used because it is critical to guarantee that my participants are not harmed or exploited when engaging in research activities (ibid). I insisted and guaranteed that the audio data will be deleted after the transcription (audio data deleted). Both parents and participants could address any concern about the fieldwork and ask for adaptation about some of the details. One of my participants was interviewed in my office because she did not want to draw people's attention to our conversation. I did so as I adhered to the guidance and approach of child researchers who view ethics as 'contextual and adaptable,' meaning they are contingent upon the socio-cultural environment and the circumstances at hand (Ahsan, 2009). I was helped by some resourceful persons like teachers, principals, staff at the inspections, and two "Badiene Gokh" who have built up that personal and confidential rapport with my research participants to enable me to interact with them in line with ethical issues guiding my research.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data collected from in-depth interviews with my key study participants and informants were analyzed through themes. Apart from two participants who wish not to be recorded during our conversations, I had to transcribe my recorded audio interviews. I did nine interviews in Wolof, the most spoken language in Senegal and two interviews in French, the official language. The reason I did navigate in these languages is that the two participants that used French are government officials. Though it is not compulsory, it is highly recommended for them to communicate in French at their workplaces.

The transcriptions helped me to structure, organize my data and get my codes based on their frequent occurrence. This process enables me to engage with the initial part of my thematic analysis. As for my interview questions, I structured them with both open and closed ended questions to allow my participants to reflect and comfortably articulate their responses.

CHAPTER FOUR (4)
CHALLENGES OF BEING A TEEN MOTHER

4.1 Isolated within the family

"My siblings distanced themselves from me. It was a lonely and isolating experience."
Pauline (R1).

Pauline is 17 years old. She is a young mother of a 28 month-baby. She is my study participant whose parents decided to send her to the Northern part of the country to escape gossips and mockeries in order to properly pursue her education. Fortunately, she passed her final junior exam (BFEM) few weeks after my interview with her. This section of the research paper, that builds on the remarks of Pauline (R1), investigates the challenges teen mothers come across in their everyday life about their situation as young persons but also their new responsibilities as mothers. I have focused on different sources which include family level, school level with regards their interaction with their friends, and also at the larger community level to see how these people react towards teenage pregnancies and parenthood.

My research reveals that even though there are instances of societal judgment and negative views about unmarried girls, teen mothers get most of the support from their friends and neighborhood. As for their families, they really face many types of challenges. They are insulted, humiliated, distrusted; they lacked support from their mothers and siblings. Most of the girls said that they are tagged as "thiaga", "takhawalukat" which mean that they are called frivolous and suggesting that they are "prostitutes". Some of the girls are blamed for losing their dignity "niakk jomm" "niakk fayda" because they are no more chaste.

Because of this, in Senegalese society they are seen as having lost their values as women because they cannot get important dowries, gifts on the wedding day. They are no more considered in the family. They are isolated by their mothers, and brothers and sisters. They are no more given consideration. One of my participants explained me the hard journey she went through when within the family compound, she is looked at in a malicious and disdained manner "khelu". She pointed out the fact that sometimes people will walk on her feet pretending not to see her. These were traumatizing and stressful episodes for her. Had it not been the support of her own mother, who gave her moral and financial support, she would have left the family compound to find refuge somewhere else.

This is characteristic of the situation of many young mothers in their daily relations with their social settings which restrict their ability to make choices and engage in actions that benefit their own life and general well-being (DeJaeghere, McCleary and Josić, 2016). Though I acknowledge that talking to their mothers would provide me with different perspectives about their reactions to their daughters, my interaction with the "Badiene Gokh" indicates that one of the biggest issues these girls face is related to the pride and prestige of their families. The mothers fear the judgment of their neighbors and if it is a polygamous family, it becomes a dishonor for the mother the day of the wedding ceremony.

It is part of the social norms in many families to expect the girls to be chaste until marriage. Not only does it reinforce the pride and prestige of the mother, but the girl will be praised for not ruining her life with sexual activity, and she is going to be given as a role model to other girls in the household and also in the community. Consequently, the girl finds herself within a social mold that specifically limits her choices and decision-making. She must align each of her actions with

the family's expectations regarding behavioral norms (DeJaeghere, McCleary and Josić, 2016). If she does not behave as expected by the norms, she is likely to be ignored by the rest of the family. This is what happened to Aicha (R4) when she told her story about her pregnancy: *"I received no attention at home, and I felt ignored and neglected" Aicha (R4).*

4.2 Silent suffering

> *"I had to deal with double stresses: the stress of being pregnant and the trauma of negative comments from people. It made me feel sad" (Khady, D1).*

Khady's quote reveals the traumatic experiences that the teen mothers go through. Khady is a young mother of a two (2) weeks baby (the moment of the interview). She was compelled to leave her host family to join her divorced parents in Diourbel because she feared the reactions of her grandfather, her grandmother's brother. Teenage mothers continue to face a lack of widespread social acceptance, leading to specific psychosocial implications for them (Subhanie and Azlina, 2020). Because of the labeling words and signs their mothers and siblings associate with their status as young mothers, they suffer a lot. Sokhna (D4) explained how her experience as a teen and mother impacted her personal life and health. She went through betrayal, distress, and remorse. Her blood pressure dropped, and she became thinner and thinner. Her boyfriend denied his responsibility as the father and her daughter cannot get the birth certificate and therefore at the age to get to school, she will not be educated.

Rose (R2) mentioned how she was not supported by her own mother in a period when she really needed help. She needed someone who would listen to her and support her in her trial. She added: *"I had many difficulties and worries about my pregnancy, which made it hard to sleep at night."* The most traumatic period for her was when her mother said, *"If I knew you would turn out like this and bring shame, I wish I could have killed you when you were born at the hospital".* It came out during my conversation with Rose (R2) that this episode happened when her mother knew about her pregnancy.

This illustrates one of the clashes or conflicts within the families when pregnancy occurs out of a marriage relationship. Rose (R2) even articulated that the staff and teachers were judgmental as they considered her as a frivolous girl: *"I felt like they were warning rather than giving me good advice. They kept telling me that to be careful with boys as I was hanging out with them". "I wanted to terminate my pregnancy because I could no longer support the pressure coming from my mother and family members".* Fortunately, her friends convinced her not to do so if she does not want to go through some legal issues and prison because abortion is prohibited unless it is a recommendation of a doctor to save the life of the pregnant woman.

Nafi (R3) articulated how she ended up building mistrust against boys: *"I don't trust men as much as I used to".* Khady (D1) shared the same views: *"I can't trust men anymore because they lie and never take responsibility".* Sokhna (D4) also went into the same direction: *"I know many girls who are unfairly labeled as careless. They suffer from the cruelty of men who mistreat and abandon them".* Bintou (D2) drew the attention on her emotional distress as she was embarrassed and ashamed because of all the gossips and insults she daily received about her pregnancy and motherhood. Because of the psychological problems she was facing, she stops going to school even though the school year was not over yet. She felt ashamed.

My research also reveals that emotional trauma through stigma can affect the relationship between the girl and the newborn. "The Badiene Gokh" told me about a case of a girl who after giving birth refused to breastfeed the baby and she had to intervene and convince her to feed the baby.

I realize during my conversations with the girls that almost all of them hid and kept secret their pregnancies for fear of gossips and negative remarks from people. Subhanie and Azlina (2020) posit that part of the coping mechanisms the teen mothers employ is to hide or opt to terminate their pregnancies as they face stresses. One of my participants told me the way she even changed her dress styles in order not to reveal her protruding belly because she could not stand people's remarks and gossips.

Another tragic episode was my conversation with Khady (D1). She voiced that she went through instances where she was self-hurting because of the psychological struggles she was facing at that time. She said this: *"I was worried, and it started to take a toll on my health. I was angry at myself, and I ended up crying a lot and mutilating myself"*.

The principal described another hard experience within the school when one of her Physical Education teachers informed her of a case where a pregnant girl continued with physical activities, and one day she fell and fainted, as if she wanted to induce an abortion. Perhaps even her parents and the Physical Education teacher were not aware of the pregnancy. This shows the unawareness, immaturity, and loneliness of the teen mothers. They suffer in silence.

4.3 Parenting

It is true that some of the teen mothers, mainly those who resumed their education, have adapted, and built resilience to their new status as teens and mothers. Either they have had care support from their own mothers or their boyfriends' mothers which is instrumental to their ability to restart school and activities.

However, four (4) of my study participants, those who completely dropped out, uttered that they could not combine education and parenting. They do not benefit from any form of help from their mothers or siblings when they want to go back to school. In addition, they have to find jobs as maids or do small income-generating activities like selling perfume in order to have some money to meet their basic needs.

At the beginning of our interviews four (4) girls explained that their partners have denied paternity and in the middle of the conversation two (2) said their partners finally accepted their parental responsibilities. These acceptances are based, for the first participant on the intervention of her family which is an acquaintance to her partner's family, and for the second participant, the Badiene Gokh played a crucial role to convince the man to recognize the baby. This episode testifies that some of the girls and their babies cannot benefit from any support both financially and emotionally from the men.

Sokhna (D4) informed me that she was compelled to find a job during holidays to help her family because her father underwent a work accident, and he is not capable to work anymore, and her mother is just a housewife. After giving birth, she stopped her studies and is now working as a maid in the capital city, Dakar. It is the only way she can earn money to help the family and take care of her daughter.

4.4 Shame

During my fieldwork and conversations with my participants, I could constantly hear in their stories how shameful they feel and how their families treat them as having tainted the image and reputation of everybody. Though many unmarried girls are pregnant in Senegal, it is not socially accepted. That is why oftentimes when a pregnancy occurs, the parents manage to send their daughters to other places where people do not know them and hide the issue to the neighborhood

and community; two participants faced this problem. When Pauline (R1) became pregnant in the southern part of Senegal, her mother decided to send her to Thies to her aunt's house. Khady (D1) was also obliged to escape from her host family, her grandmother's brother, to Diourbel where her divorced parents live. Though she left the place, they kept harassing her with hurtful words accusing her of being a prostitute "thiaga".

I have identified two types of fear of shame from these girls: one is how their families and other people look at them but also they are shameful of themselves and regret having babies at such early ages. They stop any contact outside of the household for fear to be gossiped and insulted. Rose (R2) explained how her mother qualified her as frivolous in front of her friends which was very shameful for her. Bintou (D2) explained how she made the decision to drop out: *"I felt really ashamed, and I didn't want other students to find out about my pregnancy because I knew the news would spread quickly if they did"*.

4.5 Types of Support

This section critically examines the support systems for teen mothers at the household, school, and community levels and its implications to facilitate the re-engagement of teen mothers in schools. My interactions with the adolescents show that they come across real challenges when they want to go back to school because they lack care support to effectively pursue their education. Aaltonen (2013, as cited in DeJaeghere, McCleary and Josić, 2016, p.17) posits that we can investigate how young people make decisions and take actions in three different locations: at school, with their peers, and home. These places involve making choices and decisions. Thus, the help and support young people get from their families at home has a huge impact on how they can make decisions in other problems of their lives.

4.5.1 Family level

The family is an important social institution. It consists of individuals bound by common shared commitment and diverse bonds (Etieyibo, 2019). These individuals are supposed to help one another in times of joy and hardship. On the ground, interviewing and sharing the experiences of these young people, I realized that it is within their own families that they are isolated, excluded and are not much supported with their babies. They have to practice and exercise their parenting roles alone without the help of their mothers.

Aicha (R4) traced for me the journey of her pregnancy and was forced to do the household chores as a means of punishment. She said, *"I was forced to wake up very early in the morning to do household chores. I had to do all of this before going to school, which made me arrive an hour late every day. This affected my life and education because I couldn't concentrate in school. I kept thinking about the hurtful words my family members used, like calling me names da ngay takhawalou meaning you are a prostitute. Sometimes, I didn't even have enough money to buy breakfast"*.

I confess that the hardest part for me as a researcher to listen to her is when she explained me that: *"Even when I was 7 or 8 months pregnant, I had to do household work, and sometimes it involved lifting heavy things, which wasn't safe for me. One day, while I was at school, they noticed some liquid was coming out, and they took me to the hospital. The doctor said it was because of the heavy work I was doing at home"* (she starts crying).

As for the girls who were not able to go back to school, they relate it to the fact that nobody helped them when they had to resume school. Seynabou (D3) told me that *"I had to take care of my baby, and I didn't have anyone to help me manage both being a student and a mother"*. Sokhna (D4) shared

the same standpoint as she said that *"My daughter's father abandoned us, so I had to find a job to support our basic needs"*.

4.5.2 Community level

My objective is to look at the community-led support systems and available facilities for teen mothers. Most of my participants told me that they did not know any available facilities and also they did not benefit from the support of any organizations at the community levels with regards to the situation of teen mothers. Only two of them mentioned the crucial role played by the "Badiene Gokh" when they really needed support.

Unmarried girls who fell pregnant were subjected to harsh punishments, including expulsion from their community (Gyan, 2018)

4.5.3 School level

Bhana (2013) argues when analyzing the situation of teen mothers that managing the responsibilities of being a young mother while attending school continues to be a challenge for schools, pregnant teens, and teenage mothers. I found out that the main challenge that the school principals have, is that they are not informed when a girl becomes pregnant. The school principal I interviewed said that girls prefer to stay at home rather than come to schools.

However, apart from the administrative circular of 2007 that allows their re-integration to schools, they have put in place a number of initiatives and projects to help young mothers. A project called PARAJE (Project for Improving Adolescent Reproductive Health) works to address the specific needs of students and raise awareness among young people about their reproductive system. Within the PARAJE, it is set up UCOJ (Youth Counseling and Guidance Unit) where students, especially young girls, can receive advice from trained teachers and peers.

They also have OVDS (Observatory for the Fight against Vulnerability and School Dropout), which brings together teachers and staff. If a pregnancy is confirmed, the student, if she remains in school, which is rare, can be supported and supervised by the school. It is important to underline that, at schools, young mothers, like Pauline (R1), feel safer than with their own families as she said, *"my school is more welcoming than my family"*.

It is true that some might experience gossips and negative remarks at school, but the majority told me their peers were very supportive both emotionally and financially. Some of their friends gave them gifts and bought diapers for the babies. Pauline (R1) told me she considers school as her second family, and it must be a place where everyone should be comfortable and secure. It came out during my conversations with the school principal and the representative of the inspection that teen mothers get more support from students.

The principal added *"I think it depends on the girl's behavior. If the girl is considered serious, diligent, her pregnancy elicits empathy from students and teachers because she is seen as a victim. On the other hand, if the girl is judged frivolous, she faces negative judgments from her peers"*. The representative of the inspection narrated to me a story of rape followed by pregnancy involving a fourth-grade student. *"Even the teachers themselves did not want the girl to remain in school because they claimed it would be difficult to reintegrate her, but the principal disagreed with the teachers' decision. When the principal reported the case to us, we found another school for the well-being of the girl"* she articulated. This story describes the various obstacles, and opportunities of success to teen mothers' educational attainment due to lack of support from school staff (Bhana, 2013).

4.5.4 From stigmatization to normalization among peers

If in general my interviewees said that they encountered many challenges within their families where they are excluded and isolated, when it comes to dealing with their relationships and interactions with their peers, they revealed how supportive their friends were when they became mothers. Sokhna (D4) shared the support she got: *"my friends were there for me and supported me"*. For some pregnancies, the presence of their friends was instrumental to the fact that they did not terminate the pregnancies.

This situation intrigued me, and I wanted to know about this differentiation in attitudes. The school principal believes that the tolerance shown by peers towards teen mothers depends on their own appreciations; either they consider the girl serious and have empathy for her or she is considered frivolous, and she will not benefit from their support. This point can be connected to Eshbaugh (2011) who believed that stigma and stereotypes can influence the treatment of teen mothers. A negative perception of a teen mother can lead to unfavorable interactions. However, this contradicts the arguments of the representative of the inspection who asserted that this generation of students is more tolerant than their elders. She acknowledged that in the Senegalese society, culturally, pregnancies outside of marriage are not accepted. This poses a generational problem and conflict as reflected in mother-daughter/teacher-student relationship when pregnancy occurs.

To conclude this section related to the types of support, while the personal ambitions of the girl are important, however, I believe that the primary determinant that is instrumental in a girl's decision to either continue or discontinue her education depends on the support she gets. In fact, all my participants who dropped out said that they found it quite difficult to combine their education with their parental responsibilities. Although I acknowledge in my discussion that family can be constraining for these teen mothers due to their stigmatization and exclusion, but, contrary to teens who drop out, those who get support from their own families or partners' families are likely to continue their schooling.

In summary, this chapter sheds light on the various factors that can significantly influence both the life and educational attainment of teen mothers. It examines, using the lenses of stigma, the everyday challenges of young unmarried persons in their social structures. Fundamentally, being a teen and mother is challenging for many young people in Senegal mainly when they come from families where the normative expectation is sex starts in the wedlock. Beyond these recurring tensions between the teens and their families, there are the underlying societal expectations of the girl's chastity until her marriage. An absence of chastity and virginity would bring shame and lack of consideration.

Therefore, girls that go against these norms are humiliated and excluded and are most given the attributes of being prostitutes. It is also acknowledged that the young mothers lack support from their relatives and the alternatives they have for support come from their friends within the community and school settings and some school officials.

CHAPTER FIVE (5)
GENDER DYNAMICS AND STEREOTYPES

5.1 Family dynamics

This section focuses on how the occurrence of teen pregnancy affects the family structure and relationships among different members. I have observed a shift of roles and responsibilities as the male figure, father, is absent at home. Among my eight interviewees, only two live with their fathers and mothers, the rest live either with their mothers or a family relative. Three of them directly communicated about the divorce of their parents and for the rest I inferred that the parents might divorce because it is not common in Senegal to see a whole family living together without a father, unless he passed away.

Rose (R2) explained that *"My mom is always away because she goes to work early in the morning and will get back home in the evening".* Truly, there is no one at home to care for the education of these girls and the other family members. This reflects the sentiment in today's society about the shortage of time for family issues. Many families find it difficult to be together, mostly because of the busy schedules of both parents and children (Offer, 2013).

Consequently, it is worth noting the lack of communication within the family about certain social issues like the sexuality of teens when they start with their first menstruations. Almost all my interviewees consider their pregnancies as "mistakes" and they regret of being pregnant at this stage of their life today. There is also that fear to announce to their mothers that they are pregnant.

All of them told me that they were afraid of their mothers' reactions when they knew about their pregnancies. Salvi (2019) acknowledges that for young women and their partners, telling family members they are expecting a child can be particularly difficult. There might not have existed a space for discussion for girls' sexuality and bodies when they are in their teenage years and the active participation of parents is seen as critical in the area of teen pregnancy prevention and preventing other risky behaviors in teens (Silk and Romero, 2014).

Khady (D1) said, *"In Diourbel, I went to my father's house and talked to him about my pregnancy. He called my mother to tell her the news. I was really afraid of how my mother would react to it".* Rose (R2) made the same point *"The biggest challenge was figuring out how to tell my mother about my pregnancy and how she would react".* This attitude reflects the relationship in patriarchal settings where the older generation has a certain amount of authority or influence over the younger generation (Salvi, 2019).

5.2 Absence of male partners: single parenting

This part highlights the challenges about single parenting with the absence of the male partners. Different reasons can explain about single parenting such as divorce and relationship breakdown. In Africa in general parenting roles are mostly feminine because men and elderly women tend to support traditional gender roles, in which women are primarily responsible for early-life feeding and caregiving (Okelo *et al.*, 2022).

However, in this research, it is mainly related to abandonment, denial of fatherhood. One of the abandonments is connected to extramarital relationship. Sokhna (D4) *"The father of my daughter left me and his daughter and denied being her father. Because I was very young when I got pregnant of him, he ran away to another country. He was afraid of how it would affect his reputation as a religious person since he was*

involved in an extramarital relationship with me". The man fears about his own image and the legal issues related to his relations with the girl which made him escape prison as the girl was below legal age of sexual consent.

He could not afford to be associated with a baby from non-marital bonds. This abandonment and denial of fatherhood has a huge emotional and financial impact on the girl and her daughter. Not only is the man not there to support them, but the daughter cannot have a birth certificate because it requires the name of the father with identification documents to validate the family attachments.

5.3 Inequalities in treatment

It takes two to create a child. Oftentimes, when pregnancy occurs the burden falls so heavily on the female. It is evident that if boys are not blamed and are able to pursue their education, girls cannot handle both education and pregnancy simultaneously. This section offers societal biases that contribute to the stigmatization and inequalities of teen motherhood. Girls face blaming and judgment, while boys may not take any responsibility for their roles as fathers and partners.

This gender-based inequality is rooted in social norms with expectations of girls' chastity until marriage where the same expectations are not demanded from men. This inequality is even reflected in the administrative text for return after becoming a mother; a girl's education is suspended and is allowed to resume after giving birth with an approval of a medical certificate; however, there is no mention about what is expected from the male partner if he is a student as well. Nafi (R3) explained *"In school, if a girl gets pregnant, she is usually the one who gets blames, while the boy doesn't face any blame. Girls have to deal with many challenges in such situations, and they really need support".* Pauline (R1) pointed out that *"the most challenging aspect was having to put my studies on hold, which resulted in numerous problems in my life. It made me feel restricted and not free to pursue my goals".*

This inequality does not affect the teen mother alone as the baby is also affected. Sokhna (D4) advocated that *"authorities should help teen mothers whose boyfriends denied fatherhood to get birth certificate for their children. If the father refuses his role as a father, mothers should be allowed to show the birth document provided by the hospital in order to get the birth certificate because only this way we can send our children to schools and prepare their future".* This reflects patriarchal attitudes in Senegalese society. That is why Pauline (R1) recommends a non-judgmental attitude and an inclusive environment towards teen mothers in order to break down gender stereotypes.

5.4 The baby: a constraint for teen mothers

I find it relevant to discuss the place and status of the baby in the society in this discussion as we tend to forget or grant them minimal consideration even though the focus of this research paper is rather on the mother. It is a fact that the baby plays an important role in the social structures and the birth of a new-born is celebrated as a major event in the family and community as the arrival of a baby is seen as a gift from God which benefits not only the immediate family but also the larger community (Ohaja and Anyim, 2021).

Chukwu and Ume (2020, as cited in Ohaja and Anyim, 2021,p.1) argue that in the majority of African countries, as well as in many other cultures, women are expected to conceive and deliver babies in order to contribute to the expansion and perpetuation of the family's lineage from one generation to the next. Therefore, for this research paper, it is crucial to consider the presence of a baby in the realm of teen mothers' issues. In Senegal, even though birth is connected to joy, in

these situations the birth of a baby is viewed as a disgrace and more importantly as a constraint to the young mothers who see their mobility and decision-making very limited.

All my participants, both those who dropped out and those who resumed their education, confessed that the fact of having a baby as young persons has tremendously affected their lives as their everyday actions are connected to the babies. Khady (D1) said, *"when I want to go somewhere, my mother tells me it is not possible because I cannot leave my baby alone"*. The same point of view is shared by Rose (R2): *"having a baby has limited my ability to go to certain places and events. I cannot move around as freely as before because I have to take care of my baby, which takes a lot of my time and energy"*. Seynabou (D3) argued, *"I learned that having a baby at a young age limits my ability to move around freely. I cannot work because I have to stay home to take care of my baby and other kids"*. Pauline (R1) mentioned the impact of the baby in her educational attainment that she had to make a pause, *"Being a teen mother is a difficult experience, and the most challenging aspect was having to put my studies on hold, which resulted in numerous problems in my life. It made me feel restricted and not free to pursue my goals"*.

As I mentioned earlier in my discussion about the issue of the birth certificate, many of these children, when they reach the age to go to school, will have problems in pursuing their education because they do not have a birth certificate which recognizes them to be part of a given family. This situation has been part of the daily struggle of Sokhna (D4) who is fighting to get a birth certificate and is ready to give her family name to her daughter. Sokhna (D4) shared with me the invaluable life lessons she got from her experience as a teen and mother and is determined to provide the best education ever to her daughter and ensure that she will not go through the same mistakes.

At the family and larger community levels the babies born from unmarried parents are stigmatized and tagged as "doom njalo" which literally means "infant of unmarried persons", or another expression used is: "doom bu dul doom u yoon" which is a euphemism to qualify someone who was not born in a wedlock. These labels follow these babies up to their adult lives and they can likely affect peoples' perceptions when they want to achieve certain positions within their communities.

To conclude, this chapter focuses and articulates a number of gender dynamics and stereotypes and their operation in the patriarchal Senegalese social setting regarding teenage pregnancy and motherhood. From the absence of the father and the mother who has become the breadwinner for the whole family, young people are left alone without proper support on how to transition from childhood to teenage life. The moment they enter their teenage life which overlaps with the discovery of their "bodies" with all their manifestations like their first menstruations, they do not have proper guidance. In the family, it is almost a taboo to talk about sexuality. In addition, the place of the baby is often forgotten or omitted in this narrative as the focus is always put on the girls. However, this paper highlights that the life of the baby is also affected mostly if the infant is denied paternity.

CHAPTER SIX (6)
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This research paper explores the everyday life of teen mothers and examines the barriers to their re-engagement in schools after becoming young mothers through their own voices, narratives, and most importantly vision about how their everyday journey in this tense dichotomy of being teen and mother impacts their lives. My initial intention was to examine the role of stigmatization in relation to early pregnancy and motherhood from the perspective of social, structural, and institutional barriers, specifically through schools, family, and community.

This study found that, contrary to a number of works that located the source of stigma at the school and community level, my participants said that they got most of their support from their friends at schools. It is at the family level that they suffer the most as they are daily humiliated, isolated, and lack support from their mothers and siblings. The negative judgments and views that their families have of them are related to the fact that they broke customary norms and mores which expect a girl to remain chaste until her wedding day. Shefer et al. (2013, as cited in Salvi, 2019, p.21) clarify this by characterizing teen pregnancy as a disruption to conventional ideas of authority and structure. They further assert that this can be connected to the prevailing division between childhood and adulthood, where the pregnant schoolgirl is portrayed as breaching established boundaries.

Chastity of a girl reinforces the status of the mother but also to the whole family as it is a good marker that the girl comes from a "good family". There is a silent moral contract between the mother and her daughter regarding certain moral/ethical expectations until marriage. I gained clearer perspectives during my interaction with the "Badiene Gokh" who pointed out that one of the biggest issues unmarried teens face is related to the pride and prestige of their families. This behavioral, moralist norm is ingrained in the tradition of many Senegalese families. In addition, religion plays a key role in people's lives and any behavior by unmarried girls seen as deviant is blamed. That is why most of my research participants told me at a certain point of time they were labeled as frivolous and immoral. The shame brought on the family made some parents to decide to send their daughters to places where people do not know them.

It is true that parents always think about the impact of these adolescent pregnancies on the family reputation and prestige, but they failed to build support systems for the girls. I noticed that a number of my participants have regrets about becoming a young mother as they have double challenges of being tagged as "prostitute" and also losing their decision-making power. They navigate through these two extreme worlds of teenage life. They still want to do activities related to their age-group like hanging around with friends, but their new roles and responsibilities involve taking care of the babies and educating them, which is tricky as they are themselves still going through their education process under their parents.

This situation brought about trauma in their existence because they went through a lot of hard times. Some confessed that they were about to terminate their pregnancies if their friends were not around to support them. The family influence was so high that it took a toll on the health of many girls. One of them told me that she was getting thinner and thinner and her blood pressure went down; another one had to self-mutilate.

Therefore, support from the families is a cornerstone in the young mothers' decision to pursue their education or discontinue. Though all my participants, those who dropped out, understood the importance of education in their lives; they terminated their schooling. They said that it was impossible to combine their studies and new roles as parents. They did not have enough support from their relatives who would take care of their babies when they went to school. This is a waste of potential for both the young girls and the communities they live in. An educated girl is a transformative agent who can drive social change and contribute to the development of her community. It is evident that Pauline (R1) is the embodiment of this dedication and success after going through lots of challenges as a young mother; she successfully passed her BFEM exam. She is now a high school student for the academic year (2023/2024). When I asked her what influenced your decision to return to school after giving birth? She said, *"I convinced myself that going back to school is essential if I want to build a successful future. I strongly believe that education is the pathway to a promising future for myself and my baby."* Pauline had the support of her parents who made the decision to send her to a place where people did not know her to escape stigma. Her parents listened and supported her decision to resume her education at junior schools.

6.2 Recommendations

In the light of my findings, I propose a number of recommendations to effectively address the challenges faced by teen mothers in the city of Thies. First, there is a need to promote gender equality in schools to treat girls and boys equally when it comes to their responsibilities when pregnancy occurs because the tendency is that only the girl is blamed and sanctioned. Her education is also suspended. Second, the engagement of all the stakeholders in the field of education—including parents, community people, and other partners—is critical to address teen pregnancy and its impact on the girl's educational attainment. Third, it is important to build synergies with schools, families, and local communities to co-create a non-judgmental, supportive environment for teen mothers. At the school level, the government should implement childcare support programs to facilitate the pursuit of teen mothers' education during and after pregnancy because most of my participants said it was within the schools; they felt supported by their friends. I believe that this is one of the mechanisms to end the perpetuation of teen mothers' stigmatization.

Furthermore, there should be a strong collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. This collaboration is crucial to data collection and sharing on the lived experiences of teen mothers. It could contribute to documenting and monitoring the prevalence of teen mothers at both local and national levels.

As I have mentioned it, there is a lack of awareness among my study participants about the legal frameworks for re-entry after giving birth. Therefore, it is recommended that the policy makers/implementers communicate and inform all girls about laws and programs that support them as mothers and students. In addition, access to birth certificates for babies whose fathers denied parental attachments must be facilitated to align with every child fundamental right to be registered with a name after birth (as stated in article 7 of UNCRC, 1989). Lastly, to better address current educational issues and avoid any gender biases, the government should update and refine the National Education Policy

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Appendix 1: Resumed

Interview guide for teenage mothers who resumed their education.

Good morning/Good afternoon, madam,

I am Seydina Aboubakry CISSE. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Policy for Development at the International Institute of social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I am conducting research on the teen mothers' issues, meaning young women who became mothers while they were students. I am interested to explore the barriers to their re-engagement in schools. I am going to ask you some questions pertaining to your pregnancy and your role as a mother.

Therefore, your answers would be a momentum to broaden my knowledge on the problem at the same time make recommendations to policymakers.

Please note that all the responses and any personal information will be kept in secret and will not be used for other purposes.

Before we begin, I would like to request your permission to record this interview. The purpose of recording is to ensure accuracy in capturing our conversation and to assist me in accurately reporting your insights. The recording will be used purely for the purpose of this research, and your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. Is it okay if I record the interview? If yes, please feel comfortable to stop me at any point if you wish to discontinue this interview.

I appreciate your availability and voluntary participation, and I believe that your opinions will be instrumental in this work.

Demographic data

Age:

Marital status:

Religion: Christian

Educational attainment:

Occupation: (your source of income):

How old is your child? (age in months):

How many siblings are there in your family:

Are you the oldest or youngest in your family:

What is your level of education compared to brothers and sisters?

Do you live with your family (father and mother and siblings?

Education

1-Can you share your story when you knew about your pregnancy while still enrolled in school? What effects did it have on your life and your studies?

2-Did you pause your schooling? If yes, When, and why did you have to take a break from school? How did you feel about it?

3-When you were no longer attending school, did you continue to study on your own , or did you seek any other educational alternatives? If so, could you please explain how you continued your studies during that time?

4-What factors influenced your decision to return to school after giving birth?

5-Did you have any difficulties or obstacles when you returned to school after your pregnancy? If so, what were they, and how did you deal with them?

Childcare and support

1-When you go to school, who looks after your child? Could you please tell the facilities and the people who help you?

2-What difficulties, if any, have you encountered in finding appropriate childcare facilities while pursuing your education?

3-Are there any particular services or supports offered at your school or in your neighborhood to help adolescent mothers obtain child care while going to class?

4-What kind of financial and emotional support do you get from your baby's father, your family, and community?

Attitudes

1-How did your principal and staff react when they found out you were pregnant? Were they supportive or judgmental? could you give more details?.

2-Did the school administration or staff provide you any specific advice or recommendations about your education? Did they encourage you to continue your studies or recommend you examine other options? Please give more details.

3-What were your fellow students' overall attitudes when they found out you were pregnant?

4-Did you notice any differences in attitudes between male and female students? Please give specific examples.

5-Were you bullied, excluded, or subjected to negative attitudes from Students, family, or community? If yes, how did they express them through words or signs?

6-How being a teen mother affected your sense of freedom and independence?

7-Were you able to make your own decisions about your situations?

Lessons learned

1-What did you learn from your experience as a teen mother at the personal level?

2-What advice would you give to address the issues of teen mothers' re-engagement?

Closing the interview:

Have you anything else to add?

I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your time and valuable answers.

Appendix 2: Dropped out.

Interview guide for teenage mothers who dropped out.

Good morning/Good afternoon, madam,

I am Seydina Aboubakry CISSE. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Policy for Development at the International Institute of social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I am conducting research on the teen mothers' issues, meaning young women who became mother while they were students. I am interested to explore the barriers to their re-engagement in schools. I am going to ask you some questions pertaining to your pregnancy and your role as a mother.

Therefore, your answers would be a momentum to broaden my knowledge on the problem at the same time make recommendations to policymakers.

Please note that all the responses and any personal information will <u>be kept in secret</u> and will not be used for other purposes.

Before we begin, I would like to request your permission to record this interview. The purpose of recording is to ensure accuracy in capturing our conversation and to assist me in accurately reporting your insights. The recording will be used purely for the purpose of this research, and your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. Is it okay if I record the interview? If yes, please feel comfortable to stop me at any point if you wish to discontinue this interview.

I appreciate your availability and voluntary participation, and I believe that your opinions will be instrumental in this work.

Demographic data

Age:

Marital status:

Religion: Muslim

Educational attainment:

Occupation: (your source of income):

How old is your child? (age in months):

How many siblings are there in your family:

Are you the oldest and youngest in your family:

What is your level of education compared to brothers and sisters?

Do you live with your family (father and mother and siblings?

Education

1-Can you share your story when you knew about your pregnancy while still enrolled in school? What effects did it have on your life and your studies?

2-Did you pause your schooling? If yes, When, and why did you have to take a break from school? How did you feel about it?

3-What factors influenced your decision to drop out after giving birth? How did you feel about not returning to school?

4-Did you confront any difficulties or obstacles when you decided to stop your education after your pregnancy? If so, what were they, and how did you deal with them?

5-When you were no longer attending school, did you continue to study on your own , or did you seek any other educational alternatives? If yes, could you please explain?

Childcare and support

1-Did you get support during your pregnancy and motherhood? Can you elaborate on it?

2-Did you try to find any appropriate childcare facilities to enable you to pursue your education? Give more details.

3-Were there any services or supports offered at your school or in your neighborhood to help adolescent mothers while going to class?

4-What kind of financial and emotional support did you get from your baby's father, your family, and community?

Attitudes

1-How did your principal and staff react when they found out you were pregnant? Were they supportive or judgmental? could you give more details?

2-Did the school administration or staff provide you any specific advice or recommendations about your education? Did they encourage you to continue your studies or recommend you examine other options? Please give more details.

3-What were your fellow students' overall attitudes when they found out you were pregnant?

4-Did you notice any differences in attitudes between male and female students? Please give specific examples

5-Were you bullied, excluded, or subjected to negative attitudes from Students, family, or community? If yes, how did they express them, through words or signs?

6-How being a teen mother affected your sense of freedom and independence?

7-Were you able to make your own decisions about your situations?

Lessons learned.

1-What did you learn from your experience as a teen mother at the personal level?

2-What advice would you give to address the issues of teen mothers' re-engagement? Closing the interview:

Have you anything else to add?

I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your time and valuable answers.

Appendix 3: Principal

Interview guide for Key informants: Principal

Good morning/Good afternoon, madam,

I am Seydina Aboubakry CISSE. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Policy for Development at the International Institute of social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I am conducting research on the teen mothers' issues, meaning young women who became mother while they were students. I am interested to explore the barriers to their re-engagement in schools. I am going to ask you some questions pertaining to your pregnancy and your role as a mother.

Therefore, your expert answers would be a momentum to broaden my knowledge on the problem at the same time make recommendations to policymakers.

Please note that all the responses and any personal information will be kept in secret and will not be used for other purposes.

Before we begin, I would like to request your permission to record this interview. The purpose of recording is to ensure accuracy in capturing our conversation and to assist me in accurately reporting your insights. The recording will be used purely for the purpose of this research, and your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. Is it okay if I record the interview? If yes, please feel comfortable to stop me at any point if you wish to discontinue this interview.

I appreciate your availability and voluntary participation, and I believe that your opinions will be instrumental in this work.

General Information

Name of institution:

Location:

Date of Interview:

How long have you worked in this School?

What is the current school enrolment:

Pregnancy rates

1-How many cases of teen pregnancy does the school (or inspection) generally see each year?

2-Do you have any information about the marital status? Are they married or single?

3-What are the main channels of information that the school (or inspection) uses to learn about teen pregnancies? Do students confess themselves or do other students, teachers, or other staff members report it?

Childcare and support

1-When a teen's pregnancy is discovered, how does the school assist the teens? Do you have any services or programs that can help them?

2-Do you have any success stories that have resulted from the school's (or inspection) endeavors in addressing teen pregnancies? If yes, can you give some details.

Attitudes

1-How do the principal and staff react when they find out that a student is pregnant?

2-Does the school administration or staff provide any specific advice or recommendations about their education? How do they encourage them to continue?

3-What are other students' general attitudes when they find out that a student is pregnant?

4-Are they bullied, excluded, or subjected to negative attitudes from Students, family, or community? If yes, how did they express them through words or signs?

School policy on pregnancy

1-Can you describe the school's policies on teen pregnancy and re-engagement after giving birth?

2-How does the policy help teen mothers who want to continue their education?

3-Many students might not know about these policies. How do you communicate the re-engagement policy to pregnant students and their families to encourage their education?

Closing the interview:

Have you anything else to add?

I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your time and valuable answers.

Appendix 4: IEF

Interview guide for Key informants: IEF

Good morning/Good afternoon, madam,

I am Seydina Aboubakry CISSE. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Policy for Development at the International Institute of social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I am conducting research on the teen mothers' issues, meaning young women who became mother while they were students. I am interested to explore the barriers to their re-engagement in schools. I am going to ask you some questions pertaining to your pregnancy and your role as a mother.

Therefore, your expert answers would be a momentum to broaden my knowledge on the problem at the same time make recommendations to policymakers.

Please note that all the responses and any personal information will be kept in secret and will not be used for other purposes.

Before we begin, I would like to request your permission to record this interview. The purpose of recording is to ensure accuracy in capturing our conversation and to assist me in accurately reporting your insights. The recording will be used purely for the purpose of this research, and your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. Is it okay if I record the interview? If yes, please feel comfortable to stop me at any point if you wish to discontinue this interview.

I appreciate your availability and voluntary participation, and I believe that your opinions will be instrumental in this work.

General Information

Name of institution:

Location:

Date of Interview:

How long have you worked in this School?

What is the current school enrolment: Boys…………Girls…………..

Pregnancy rates

1-How many cases of teen pregnancy does the school (or inspection) generally see each year?

2-Do you have any information about the marital status? Are they married or single?

3-What are the main channels of information that the school (or inspection) uses to learn about teen pregnancies? Do students confess themselves or do other students, teachers, or other staff members report it?

Childcare and support

1-When a teen's pregnancy is discovered, how does the school assist the teens? Do you have any services or programs that can help them?

2-Do you have any success stories that have resulted from the school's (or inspection) endeavors in addressing teen pregnancies? If yes, can you give some details.

Attitudes

1-How do the principal and staff react when they find out that a student is pregnant?

2-Does the school administration or staff provide any specific advice or recommendations about their education? How do they encourage them to continue?

3-What are other students' general attitudes when they find out that a student is pregnant?

4-Are they bullied, excluded, or subjected to negative attitudes from Students, family, or community? If yes, how did they express them through words or signs?

School policy on pregnancy

1-Can you describe the school's policies on teen pregnancy and re-engagement after giving birth?

2-How does the policy help teen mothers who want to continue their education?

3-Many students might not know about these policies. How do you communicate the re-engagement policy to pregnant students and their families to encourage their education?

Closing the interview:

Have you anything else to add?

I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your time and valuable answers.

Appendix 5: Badiene Gokh

Interview guide for Key informants: Badiene Gokh

Good morning/Good afternoon, madam,

I am Seydina Aboubakry CISSE. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Policy for Development at the International Institute of social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. I am conducting research on the teen mothers' issues, meaning young women who became mother while they were students. I am interested to explore the barriers to their re-engagement in schools. I am going to ask you some questions pertaining to your pregnancy and your role as a mother.

Therefore, your expert answers would be a momentum to broaden my knowledge on the problem at the same time make recommendations to policymakers.

Please note that all the responses and any personal information will <u>be kept in secret</u> and will not be used for other purposes.

Before we begin, I would like to request your permission to record this interview. The purpose of recording is to ensure accuracy in capturing our conversation and to assist me in accurately reporting your insights. The recording will be used purely for the purpose of this research, and your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. Is it okay if I record the interview? If yes, please feel comfortable to stop me at any point if you wish to discontinue this interview.

I appreciate your availability and voluntary participation, and I believe that your opinions will be instrumental in this work.

General Information

Name of Area:

Location:

Date of Interview:

How long have you worked as Badiene Gokh?

What is the current school enrolment: Boys…………Girls…………..

Roles

1-How did you become Badiene Gokh?
2-Who is the Badiene Gokh?
3-How do you work with teen mothers?

Pregnancy rates

1-How many cases of teen pregnancies do you see in your district yearly?
2-Do you have any information about their marital status? Are they married or single?
3-What are the main channels of information that you use to learn about teen pregnancies? Do they confess themselves or other people report it?

Childcare and support

1-When a teen's pregnancy is discovered, how does the district assist teens?
2-Do you have any success stories that have resulted from the efforts in addressing teen pregnancies?

Attitudes

1-How do families and communities react when they find out that a girl is pregnant?
2-Do you provide any specific advice or recommendations about their education and or well-being?
3-Are they bullied, excluded, or subjected to negative attitudes from families or communities?
4- How being a teen mother affected their sense of freedom and independence?

Collaboration

1-Do you collaborate with the ministry of education (schools) to facilitate the re-engagement of girls? If yes, how do you collaborate?
2-How do you collaborate with girls and their families to help them?

Closing the interview:

Have you anything else to add?

I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your time and valuable answers.

Appendix 6: ISS Research Ethics Quiz

Name and ERNA: Seydina Cisse, 519655

ISS Research Ethics Quiz

This Ethics Quiz aims to help you identify research ethics issues which may come up in the design and delivery of your Research Paper (RP). The quiz consist of answering questions divided into two checklists available below: **B1-Low-sensitivity** and **B2-High-sensitivity** questions.

A): Research description: Provide a short description of your possible proposed research and the context country it is carried out:

Click or tap here to enter text.

B): Research checklist

The following checklist acts as a guide to help you think through what areas of ethics you may need address. For explanations and guidance please refer to the ISS Research Ethics Guidelines for MA students. Please complete both sections (B1 and B2)

Please tick the appropriate box.	YES	NO
B1: LOW-SENSITIVITY		
1. Does the research involve the collection and or processing of (primary or secondary) personal data?	☒	☐
2. Does the research involve participants from whom voluntary informed consent needs to be sought?	☒	☐
3. Will financial or material incentives (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	☒	☐
4. Will the research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for access to the groups, communities or individuals to be recruited (students at school, residents of children's home or prison)?	☒	☐

If you have ticked any of the above boxes (1-4), please discuss with your supervisor and include more information in your RP design describing the issue raised and how you propose to deal with it during your research.

B2: HIGH SENSITIVITY		
5. Does the research involve the collection or processing of sensitive (primary or secondary) personal data? (i.e. regarding racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, biometric data, data related to health or a person's sex life or sexual orientation)	☐	☒
6. Does the research involve participants for whom voluntary and informed consent may require special attention (e.g. children (under 18s), people with learning disabilities, undocumented migrants, patients, prisoners)?	☒	☐
7. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the research without their knowledge and consent at the time (covert observation of people in non-public places)?	☐	☒
8. Will the research involve recruitment of patients or healthcare staff?	☐	☒
9. Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences for research participants or researchers?	☐	☒
10. Could the situation in one or several of the countries where research is carried out put the individuals taking part in the research, or connected to the researcher, at risk? Presence of COVID-19 is considered a risk – please provide information as outlined in Guidelines.	☐	☒
11. Does the research require ethical approval or research permission from a local institution or body?	☒	☐

Appendix 7: Authorization

República du Sénégal
Un Peuple – Un But – Une Foi

1882 N° _____ IA/TH/ia-emd

Ministère de
l'Education nationale

INSPECTION D'ACADEMIE DE THIES

Thiès, le

.0 3 JUL 2023

L'Inspecteur

Objet : autorisation d'accès dans les établissements scolaires
Référence : V/lettre du 27/06/2022 portant
demande d'enquête dans le cadre d'un mémoire d'étude.

Monsieur,

Par lettre rappelée en référence, vous demandez une autorisation d'accès dans les établissements scolaires de l'Académie de Thiès pour mener une enquête sur la problématique des adolescentes-mères dans le cadre de la préparation de votre mémoire d'étude en Politique sociale pour le développement.

Je marque mon accord et vous invite à prendre contact les Inspecteurs de l'Éducation et de la Formation et les Chefs d'Établissement concernés pour discuter des modalités de déroulement de vos enquêtes tout en veillant à la confidentialité des données.

En vous souhaitant plein succès pour votre mémoire, je vous prie d'agréer, **Monsieur,** l'expression de ma considération distinguée.

A
Monsieur Seydina Aboubakry CISSE
Tél. 77 913 50 50
Email : dinacisse@gmail.com
Etudiant à International Institute of Social Studies,
Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands
519655sc@eur.nl

Ampliations :
- MEN/SG
- Gouverneur Thiès
- IEF
- lycées concernés
- IA/BPCG
- IA/Chrono

El Hadji Mouhamadou DIOUF

Inspection d'Académie Thiès, 422, Avenue de Caen – BP : 187-
Tél : (221) 33 951 10 88   email: iathies@education.sn   Site: http://iathies.com   www.education.gouv.sn   www.education.sn

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Appendix 8: Participants' Information

Participants' information

	Resumed 1	Resumed 2	Resumed 3	Resumed 4	Dropped 1	Dropped 2	Dropped 3	Dropped 4
Covered names	Pauline (R1)	Rose (R 2)	Nafi (R3)	Aicha (R4)	Khady (D1)	Bintou (D2)	Seynabou (D3)	Sokhna (D4)
Age	17	18	18	17	17	19	19	22
Age at pregnancy	15	16	15	16	17	18	18	18
Age of baby	28 months	24 months	36 months	12 months	Two weeks	Six months	Nine months	48 months
Marital status	single	single	single	single	single	single	single	single
Religion	Christian	Christian	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim
Educational attaintment	Junior (after the interview, she passed her exam)	Junior	Junior	Junior	Junior	Junior	Junior	Junior
Income	mother	Small business	Grandmother, maid	mother	mother	father	maid	maid
Partner's support	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Siblings	10	7	3	1	1	5	3	6
Residence	Aunt	mother	grandmother	Mother (family's house)	mother	parents	mother	parents