



## **The Effects of Parents' Reactions towards Teenage Pregnancy on Pregnant Teenagers' Educational Aspirations in Secondary Schools in Buea Sub-division, South West Region of Cameroon**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author EEM designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author APT managed the analyses of the study. Both authors managed the literature searches, as well as read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Teenage pregnancy is regarded as a major socio-medical and socio-economic phenomenon in both developed and developing countries and has become more rampant in recent times. This also happens at the level of schooling. The study investigated the effects of parents' reactions on teenage pregnancy on their pregnant teenager's aspirations. A qualitative research paradigm (ethnographic approach) was used in conducting this study. Twenty one parents and twenty four pregnant teenagers participated in the study. A focus group discussion guide, interview guide and observation guide were the instruments used for the collection of data for the study. Data were analyzed with the use of thematic-content analysis and pre-coding. Pregnant teenagers are allowed to continue schooling and given three months maternity leave before the delivery date.

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The result is psychosocial problems with negative effects on their aspirations. The results show that parents' reactions have serious consequences on pregnant adolescents' aspirations. Therefore, most pregnant students leave school before they are given maternity leave and some who go on maternity leave do not return. This is probably because of the way they are treated in school and back at home. They are provoked by school administrators and rejected at home by parents. Counselling should also be done to the parents of the girls as stipulated in the re-entry policy. By so doing, they may be able to support their daughters during the challenging stages of parenthood and take care of their grandchildren.

*Keywords: Parents' reactions; teenage pregnancy; pregnant teenagers; educational aspiration; Buea; Cameroon.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Learning is an important concept in life, carried out because one sees the need for it in the desired goals to be achieved at the end of the exercise. According to Conley [1], everyone understands the importance of motivation to learn. While it is possible to get students to learn by having them be compliant or seek external rewards, the most powerful learning occurs when students take ownership of the learning process and can link what they are being taught to a larger set of goals that they have embraced and toward which they are directing their efforts. For Conley, these can be characterized as their aspirations. When students have a vision of what they want their future to be, and the education they are receiving moves them toward that vision, they are powerfully motivated to give their best effort and engage more fully in the learning process [1].

Educational aspirations could be influenced by family backgrounds, socioeconomic status, living areas and neighbourhoods [2,3]. They may be different for the children of educated parents [3], [4], those with a better economic status [5], those who live in urban areas, boys [3,6,7], and those holding relatively higher aspirations than their counterparts [1].

The period between childhood and adulthood is a time of profound biological, social and psychological changes accompanied by increased interest in sex [8]. Furthermore, adolescents today are growing up in a culture in which peers, television, movies, music, newspapers and magazines transmit subtle and obvious messages that influence premarital sexual relationships leading to adolescent pregnancy [8]. This constitutes a serious health and social problem worldwide as there were estimated 16 million births to mothers, aged 15-19 years, worldwide in 2008 of which 95% of the

births occurred in low and middle-income countries like Cameroon [9]. The adolescence age, (10-19 years) is a transitional phase of physical and mental development as it embodies a period of rapid growth, both physical and emotional [9].

About 16 million women, aged 15 to 19 years, give birth each year – about 11 percent of all births worldwide. Of these, about 95 per cent happen in low- and middle income countries. The average teenage birth rate in middle-income countries is two times higher than in high-income countries. In low-income countries, this rate is five times as high [10]. The proportion of births that takes place during adolescence is about two per cent in China, 18 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean and more than 50 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention [11], a total of 249,078 babies were born to women aged 15 to 19 years in 2014, for a birth rate of 24.2 per 1000 women in this age group. Still, the rate of teenage pregnancy and childbirth is considered high in the United States as well as in the United Kingdom [11,12].

The percentage of women who become pregnant before the age of 15 differs enormously within regions in Sub-Saharan Africa. The rate in Rwanda is 0.3 per cent versus 12.2 per cent in Mozambique [10]. Likewise, in Nigeria, an estimated 23 per cent of women between the ages of 15 to 19 are teenage mothers. Similarly, 32 per cent of teenagers in rural areas of Nigeria have begun childbearing, as opposed to 10 per cent in the urban areas [13]. It is argued that teenage pregnancy is not a challenge of only one government department but requires the active participation of all stakeholders [14,15].

Studies have shown that Cameroon has one of the highest adolescent fertility rates in West and Central Africa. According to data in 2004 as part

of the DHS, 22.7% of adolescents below 20 years of age were mothers of at least one child. Also, Cameroon's adolescent fertility rate of 138 births per 1000 women aged less than 19 is the highest in Central Africa. Furthermore, a study carried out in Cameroon to assess adolescents' contribution to deliveries in referral maternities (2003-2005) reported that adolescents all over Cameroon contributed to 14.23% of deliveries [16]. The psychosocial outcomes of adolescent pregnancy include, school dropout, depression, low school performance, poor attendance and in some cases violence, including suicide and homicide [9,16].

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem, Objective and Research Question**

According to administrators in some government secondary schools around Buea Sub-Division, the government's stance (Decree no 2001/041 of 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2001 article 25) is that students are no longer dismissed from school when they become pregnant. They are allowed to continue schooling and granted three months maternity leave at the end of the sixth month of pregnancy. They are expected to come back after delivery at the end of the three months and continue schooling. The same holds with boys who are future fathers as they are expected to assist their girlfriends through the stressful periods. However, they hardly wait until they are granted the maternity leave as they drop out of school before then and may never return to the same school again to continue studies. The government schools do not have any rules or regulations related to pregnancy while in school. They only implement the Government's text on this, as cited above.

Mission schools including lay private schools do not have specific policies and only implement government decree as day schools are concerned. With boarding facilities, the mission schools will not allow a pregnant girl to be in the same dormitory with others. Firstly, it does not portray good morale and secondly they are not equipped to take care of pregnant teenagers.

It has been observed by the researcher that in most of the mission and lay private secondary schools, teenagers who become pregnant are dismissed from school while in the government schools, these teenagers are allowed to stay in school while pregnant and are given maternity leave three months before the delivery date, after which they are allowed to return and continue

their education. Most of these pregnant teenagers leave school before they are given three months maternity leave and some who go for maternity leave do not return. This is probably because of the way they are treated in school. These pregnant teenagers are being isolated by their friends; provoked by some secondary school administrators and rejected back at home by their parents, thus making them to develop psychological problems like low self-esteem, stress and depression. This makes them not to concentrate on their academics. As a result, academic performance is low, coupled with poor school attendance as they are scared of being stigmatized by school authority and peers for being a disgrace or worthless. Such a situation may affect their aspirations and consequences of this may be women who cannot effectively contribute to societal development. Thus, the study aims at investigating the effects of parents' reaction on teenage pregnancy on their pregnant adolescent's aspirations among secondary school students in Buea Sub-division of the South West Region of Cameroon. The objective of this study was to capture parents' reaction towards educational aspirations of their pregnant teenagers. Therefore the study sought to answer the question; How do parents' reactions towards teenage pregnancy affect pregnant teenagers' educational aspirations in secondary schools in Buea Sub Division?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 The Concept of Adolescence**

The term adolescence was introduced in the early twentieth century by Hall [17] to describe the distinct period between childhood and adulthood. It is a complete period of growth and change in variety of domains and certainly the leading age group all over the world with most paid attention [18]. Physical maturation, cognitive growth and expanding social relationships provide adolescents with new opportunities and challenges which call for increasing autonomous decision making and self-regulated action in the context of social demands and relationships, thus triggering the development of individuality [19]. Adolescence is the developmental stage during which the individual is expected to adapt and adjust childhood behaviours to adult forms that are considered acceptable within a culture and society [20-24].

According to Frydenberg [24], adolescence or youth is marked by the "shock" of moving from

the culture of childhood to that of adulthood. Adolescence comes with a normative task such as the development of identity, achieving independence from the family while staying connected and fitting into a peer group. It is also a time when the individual is required to fulfil social roles with peers and members of the opposite sex, complete the requirements of schooling and make decisions regarding a career [24-26].

A number of psychosocial forces are at play which separate the individual from childhood and move him or her towards adulthood [26]. Due to these upheavals, adolescence is often conceived of (both by the scholarly literature and in popular opinion) as a period of tension and conflict [25]. Notwithstanding, the problems are not universal, as some individuals pass through it easily and happily [27]. This period would usually last for about a decade, extending from about 11 years to the early twenties [25].

The Meta tribe of the Mbengwi Sub-Division, North West Region of Cameroon, conceives adolescents as individuals who like to identify themselves within groups in order to participate together in income generating activities, leisure activities, uphold their own values and take and act on their own personal decisions. In addition, they also look at adolescents as individuals who easily learn bad habits and new patterns of social behaviours from the mass media (Interactive Entertainment Technologies) and suffer from negative peer influence, if proper care is not taken by parents and adult guardians of the community [28].

## 2.2 Teenage Pregnancy

According to World Health Organization [29] the term “adolescent” is often used synonymously with “teenager”. In this sense “adolescent pregnancy” means pregnancy in a woman, aged 10–19 years. In most statistics, the age of the woman is defined as her age at the time the baby is born. Since a considerable difference exists between a 12- or 13-year-old-girl, and a young woman of, say 19, authors sometimes distinguish between adolescents, aged 15–19 years, and younger adolescents, aged 10–14 years. Birth rates and pregnancy rates are counted per 1000 of a specific population. Statistics comparing the incidence between countries often give rates per 1000 adolescents, aged 15–19 years. Sometimes, statistical data on pregnancies and births among younger adolescents are also

available. The pregnancy rate includes pregnancies ending in births and also pregnancies ending in abortion; the abortion rate is the number of (induced) abortions per 1000 women of a specific age. The abortion ratio is the percentage of pregnancies ending in (induced) abortion.

## 2.3 Consequences of Teenage Pregnancy on the Adolescent in Sub-Saharan Africa

The long-lived belief in the African society where females were not prioritized for education is fading out. With this, it is expected that female education will increase in Sub-Saharan Africa [30]. Unfortunately, adolescent pregnancy contributes to denying brilliant students education and has potential to retard their growth and development including that of their children.

According to the World Health Organisation [31], about 17 million adolescent girls give birth every year and most of these births occur in low- and middle-income countries such as Cameroon. Adolescent health and development are of global concern. The need to prevent early pregnancy among adolescent girls in Sub-Saharan Africa has been recognized increasingly over recent years [32]. Adolescents develop psychological problems from social stigma, suffer physical and domestic violence in their attempt to meet the demands of pregnancy and childbearing [33]. Also, they most likely would drop out and may not get the chance to return to school [34].

## 2.4 Parents’ Reaction to Teenage Pregnancy

The news of teenage daughter’s pregnancy is unpleasant to parents. Some authors found that mothers described their feelings resulting from the discovery of the pregnancy of their adolescent daughters as devastating. The news was difficult to believe, welcome or accept. Many demonstrated that they had not liked receiving the news. Some added that it took them a long time to accept the reality. Some other mothers described the situation as a fearful and shocking one that caused discontentment [35]. Some fathers were also equally disappointed and expressed their difficulty in accepting the pregnancy and the arrival of a new baby while some acknowledged it as a mistake [35].

While some parents would grieve and worry about the future of such girls [36], others would feel a

sense of guilt at the thought that they had failed in their responsibility and could have done more to protect their child from this predicament. On the one hand, some parents felt embarrassed by their teen's pregnancy and worried about how family, friends and neighbours would react. This position was consistent with that of Nava [36] who found that such teen's parents were gossiped about and the affected teens seen as bad influence. On the other hand, others were happy about the news of a soon to-be grandmother especially if the teen is older and in a mature relationship. They may also expect a great deal of pleasure from their new grandchild.

It has been identified that pregnancy in adolescence brings significant changes in behaviour of families, with the mother figure being highlighted as a source of support and maintenance of the family structure. The importance of emotional support, affection and information throughout the gestational process has also been recognised. These factors are considered to be decisive for the adjustment to pregnancy and the maternal role by the affected adolescent [37].

Kate [38] carried out a study and its aim was to investigate the educators' perceptions of the effects of teenage pregnancy on the behaviour of secondary school learners in Mankweng area, Limpopo province. The study sought to establish whether teenage pregnancy has an effect on school attendance, and school performance.

Mgbokwere, Esienmoh and Uyana [39] investigated on the perception and attitudes of parents towards teenage pregnancy in a rural community in Akpabuyo Local Government Area. The objectives included: to determine parents' perception on teenage pregnancy and to determine parents' attitudes towards teenage pregnancy. A null hypothesis was stated to test the association between demographic characteristics of parents and their attitude towards teenage pregnancy. Descriptive survey was used and data were collected through self-administered questionnaire to a sample of 309 respondents selected through purposive sampling. SPSS version 21.0 was utilized for data analysis. The findings included that 93% of parents claimed that a pregnant teenager outside wedlock is a social deviant and 85.8% said teenage pregnancy is a sign of parental failure. Their attitudinal behaviour showed that the affected girl would be sent away from the family (32.7%), parents would stop her education

(49.8%) and that the girl would be abandoned to the man/boy responsible for the pregnancy. Socio demographic characteristics of parents depicted by gender, education and religion were significantly associated with the attitudes of parents towards teenage pregnancy. Conclusion was made that gaps exist in parental perception and attitudes towards teenage pregnant girls.

Nnodim and Albert [40] carried out an inquiry on the effect of teenage pregnancy on the socio psychological wellbeing of rural women in Etche Ethnic Nationality, Rivers State of Nigeria. The goal was to determine the effect of teenage pregnancy on the academic advancement and socio-psychological well-being of women in Etche ethnic tribe of Rivers State in Nigeria. The result indicated that teenage pregnancy affects the educational attainment and socio-psychological well-being of the affected teenage girl.

### 3. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Theoretically, two theories, Caplan's Crisis Theory and Bronfembrenner's Ecological System Theory were found relevant to the study.

#### 3.1 Gerald Caplan's Crisis Theory

In this study, the crisis theory as elucidated by Caplan [41] is advanced to conceptualize teenage pregnancy as a crisis whose positive resolution leads to fundamental integrity of the pregnant teenager. According to Caplan [41], a crisis arises out of some change in a person's life span that produces a modification of his/her relationship with others and/or perceptions of the self. Such a change may come about relatively slowly and as a result of rather normal and inevitable experiences of growing and developing physically and socially or quite rapidly as a result of some unforeseen and traumatic event. Based on this explanation of a crisis, teenage pregnancy could be perceived as an experience that leads to rapid physical, emotional and social changes that are usually unforeseen by the pregnant teenager. Caplan [41] outlined four phases of a crisis situation to illustrate how the process takes place:

##### 3.1.1 Phase 1

During this particular phase, there is a rise in tension as a result of the problem stimulus which generates anxiety and perceptions of threat to the self. This anxiety and perceived threat to the

self, triggers habitual problem-solving responses which the individual has learnt previously and which might be generalized to this particular situation. In the case of teenage pregnancy, it can therefore be postulated that the teenager will become anxious as soon as she realizes that she has become pregnant (the problem stimulus). This will then trigger some of the habitual problem-solving responses that the teenager is accustomed to.

### 3.1.2 Phase 2

Since the problem stimulus and the situation will be of such novelty and intensity, the individual experiencing the crisis will fail to reduce the anxiety in the period of time expected. This perceived failure to apply the usual coping mechanisms will lead to feelings of helplessness and ineffectualness. Similarly, a pregnant teenager may be overwhelmed by her pregnancy to the point of feeling helpless.

### 3.1.3 Phase 3

It is during this phase, known as the "hitching up the belt" stage that the individual will try to draw from her reserve of strength in order to maintain her ego integrity. The individual may even try to redefine the problem to bring it into the range of prior experience. Trial and error behaviour may be contemplated, both in thinking and in overt act, to change or remove the problem stimulus. In some cases, the individual may even try to redefine her role in order to accommodate the new situation. The individual may accept the situation and thus integrate it into the self-image. Caplan [41] points out that such acceptance may result in the individual becoming stronger and thus moving farther along the continuum toward mental health. It is this acceptance of the situation that helps the individual to develop new methods of effectively dealing with a new and threatening situation. It can therefore be postulated that a pregnant teenager may, during this stage, try to maintain her ego integrity by associating the experience with her other previous experiences. If the experience is perceived as acceptable, the teenager could become more positive about the pregnancy and thus develop new and positive ways of dealing with it.

### 3.1.4 Phase 4

If the problem fails to be resolved during the third phase, the tension produced by the anxiety is

likely to take the individual beyond the threshold of rational responding. The fourth phase is characterized by personality decompensation (where there are exaggerated distortions of one's identity or of the situation) and other maladaptive behaviour patterns like compulsive and ineffective behaviour, socially unacceptable behaviour and extreme withdrawal. Failure by a pregnant teenager to accept and cope with the new experience, could lead to various forms of psychological distress.

This theory is relevant in that it explains why pregnant teenagers encounter problems during or after child birth. The theory conceptualizes teenage pregnancy as a crisis whose positive resolution leads to fundamental integrity of the pregnant teenager. According to the theory, a crisis arises out of some change in a person's life span that produces a modification of his/her relationship with others and/or perceptions of the self.

## 3.2 Ecological Systems Theory

This theory looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex "layers" of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. This theory has recently been renamed "bioecological systems theory" to emphasize that a child's own biology is a primary environment fuelling her development. The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his/her development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. To study a child's development then, we must look not only at the child and his/her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well.

## 3.3 Bronfenbrenner's Structure of Environment

The microsystem – this is the layer closest to the child and contains the structures with which the child has direct contact. The microsystem encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with her immediate surroundings [42]. Structures in the microsystem include family, school, neighbourhood, or childcare environments. At this level, relationships have impact in two directions - both away from the child and toward the child. For example, a child's

parents may affect his beliefs and behaviour. However, the child also affects the behaviour and beliefs of the parent. Bronfenbrenner calls these bi-directional influences, and he shows how they occur among all levels of environment. The interaction of structures within a layer and interactions of structures between layers is key to this theory. At the microsystem level, bi-directional influences are strongest and have the greatest impact on the child. However, interactions at outer levels can still impact the inner structures.

The mesosystem – this layer provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem. Examples: the connection between the child's teacher and his parents, between his church and his neighbourhood. The exosystem – this layer defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly. The structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with some structure in her microsystem. Parent workplace schedules or community-based family resources are examples. The child may not be directly involved at this level, but he does feel the positive or negative force involved with the interaction with his own system.

The macro system – this layer may be considered the outermost layer in the child's environment. While not being a specific framework, this layer comprises cultural values, customs, and laws. The effects of larger principles defined by the macrosystem have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. For example, if it is the belief of the culture that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children, that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents. This, in turn, affects the structures in which the parents function. The parents' ability or inability to carry out that responsibility toward their child within the context of the child's microsystem is likewise affected.

The chronosystem – this system encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child's environments. Elements within this system can be either external, such as the timing of a parent's death, or internal, such as the physiological changes that occur with the ageing of a child. As children get older, they may react differently to environmental changes and may be more able to determine more how that change will influence them.

Also of concern to Bronfenbrenner is the "deficit" model used to determine the level of support granted by the public to struggling families. Parents must declare themselves deficient in some way in order to qualify for help in solving problems that may come about because of our cultural value of independence. A larger degree of failure means a larger amount of support. By working from this deficit model, we expect families to hold their hands up from deep inside a black hole of helplessness. Then, we expect them to have the psychological strength to climb up the thin rope (the throw down).

Bronfenbrenner sees the instability and unpredictability of family life we have let our economy create as the most destructive force to a child's development [43]. Children do not have the constant mutual interaction with important adults that is necessary for development. According to the ecological theory, if the relationships in the immediate microsystem break down, the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of his environment. Children looking for the affirmations that should be present in the child/parent (or child/other important adult) relationship, look for attention in inappropriate places. These deficiencies show themselves especially in adolescence as anti-social behaviour, lack of self-discipline (as becoming pregnant in your teens), and inability to provide self-direction [43].

Bronfenbrenner's theory is relevant to this study because it emphasizes the interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment, and the societal landscape fuels and steers his/her development. Changes or conflict in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. This in turn can affect the child all through his/her life, especially in adolescence. If care is not taken the girl adolescent can become pregnant and as a result develop psychosocial problems in school.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Research Design**

A qualitative research paradigm (ethnographic approach) was used to conduct this study. In order to collect rich and qualitative data, the ethnographic/phenomenological approach with the aid of a focus group discussion guide and an interview guide, made up of open ended questions were also used to conduct this study. In this light, information that was obtained from

the focus group discussion guide and the interview guide was used to buttress (complement) the information that was obtained from observation. The suitability of an ethnographic approach lies on the premise that issues of teenage pregnancy are more or less qualitatively measured and usually fall within a grey area thus, not easily crystallised-more subjective and explained base on the observer's previous knowledge and exposure on the concept.

#### **4.2 Study Site**

Buea is a small historic town located at the foot and eastern slopes of Mount Cameroon, the highest mountain in West and Central Africa. It was the capital of German Kamerun during German colonial rule, capital of Southern Cameroons under British colonial rule, the capital of the Federated State of West Cameroon, and now regional capital of the South West Region ([www.ubuea.cm](http://www.ubuea.cm)). The study site is related to this study in that Buea has many secondary schools and tertiary institutions and so we are likely to find pregnant teens in these areas of the Buea Sub-Division in Fako Division.

#### **4.3 Target Population**

The target population of this study is all pregnant teenagers (15-19 years of age) among students of the 16 secondary schools within Buea Sub-Division. A total of 24 pregnant teenagers, and 21 pregnant teenagers' parents (making a total of 45) participated in the study.

#### **4.4 Sampling Technique**

A purposive, incidental sampling technique was adopted in this study. Purposive sampling method is already preferred as biased by the nature of the study. It included firstly the selection of the 43 secondary schools in Buea Sub-Division from the 109 secondary schools in Fako Division based on data from the Regional Delegation of Secondary Education for the South West obtained in 2017. The unit of analysis pertains to pregnant adolescents and also consisted of their parents of the 16 secondary schools under study. In this regard pregnant teenagers and parents designated for this study were successfully selected to participate.

#### **4.5 Research Instrument**

Data collection instruments such as an in-depth interview guide, a focus group guide and

observation guide were employed to elicit relevant information. The researcher trained two research assistants on issues pertaining to the data collection procedures and techniques before carrying out the study. The researcher spent two weeks on the field briefing participants/respondents on what is required of them. Eighteen (18) weeks were used to collect data from participants/respondents, making a total of 20 weeks.

Focus group discussion and interview guides as well as observation guide included questions to collect data relating to the effect of parents' reactions towards teenage pregnancy on pregnant teenagers educational aspirations in secondary schools in Buea sub-division in accordance with the objective of the study. The guides included questions on educational aspirations of the pregnant adolescents.

#### **4.6 Administration of the Instruments**

Twenty weeks were envisaged and used for this exercise and it started at the moment the supervisor gave his approval. Movements were made from secondary school to secondary school, ANC to ANC and home to home to conduct individual interviews, focus group discussions and on the spot observation. Furthermore, for effective administration of the instruments to respondents, two devoted trained members of the community were used as research assistants to assist in the data collection process.

#### **4.7 Validity of Measuring Instruments**

The instruments were validated in two phases. That is face validity and content validity in order to ensure validity and reliability of the instruments.

#### **4.8 Face Validity**

After constructing the focus group discussion guide, interview guide and observation guide, they were presented to the supervisor of the thesis for scrutiny and cross checking. Adjustments were further made following the supervisor's remarks and corrections.

#### **4.9 Content Validity**

After constructing the focus group discussion guide, interview guide and the observation guide, they were presented to the supervisor of the thesis to check the content validity of the items

by evaluating them in terms of their relevance to the variables, research questions and the objectives of the study. Adjustments were further made following the supervisor’s remarks and observations.

#### 4.10 Reliability of Measuring Instruments

After subjecting the data collection instruments to scrutiny and corrections, a statistician was consulted for the organisation of a statistical package appropriate for this study. Thereafter, a pre-test was conducted on a small sample to ensure that the items on the instruments were within the reach of the respondents and the instruments were testing what they were intended for.

#### 4.11 Reliability Analysis

Copies of the set of instruments were administered to a small proportion of the population for analysis. They made up part of the target population but were not included in the sample. The reliability of the instrument was done through a test-retest procedure. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to compute the correlation coefficient in order to establish the extent to

which the contents of the research instruments were consistent in giving similar responses every time the instruments were administered.

#### 4.12 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical methods were used to analyse collected data.

#### 4.13 Conception of the Analytical Guide

The analytical guide followed the specific objective and the research question of the study.

#### 4.14 Data Validation

Two complementary techniques were used to validate the data for this study namely: the sample flow chart or flow table and reliability analysis.

#### 4.15 Data Processing and Analysis

A triangulation process was followed in analysing the data by using qualitative approach in the analysis and interpretation of results as well as three different statistical packages.

**Table 1. Target population**

School type	Schools	No. of pregnant teenagers	No. of parents of pregnant teenagers	Total
Public	GHS Buea town	3	3	6
	BGS Molyko	2	2	4
	GHS Bokova	1	1	2
	GHS Ekona	2	0	2
	GHS Bomaka	3	3	6
	GHS Bojongo	1	0	1
	GHS Bokwango	1	1	2
	GHS Bolifamba	1	1	2
	GTHS Molyko	2	2	4
Confessional	Baptist High School	1	1	2
Private	Inter Comprehensive College Great Soppo	2	2	4
Lay Private	• NABESK Boduma-Bakweri Town	1	1	2
	• CAM COL Great Soppo	1	1	2
	• Salvation Bilingual High School	1	1	2
	• Community Christian College Bomaka	1	1	2
	• Summerset Bilingual Comprehensive College Molyko	1	1	2
		16	24	21

Since qualitative instruments such as interview, focus group discussion and observation guides consist of only open ended questions, to be in line with the standardized approaches of data processing and analysis, the data management and analysis processes followed a number of systematic steps all complementary to each other [44].

#### 4.16 Thematic/Content Analysis and Pre-coding

The qualitative data that were obtained from the field with the aid of a focus group discussion guide, an interview guide and observation guide (all characterised by open-ended questions), were analysed with thematic-content analysis and pre-coding [44]. By the end of the pre-coding exercise, a code list was derived that summarised the major concepts that emerged from the qualitative data. This was done with the support of Atlas Ti 5.2 (Atlas Ti GMBH, 2006).

#### 4.17 Data Entry and Clean Up

Data were entered using Epic Data version 3.1 (Epic Data Association, Odense Denmark, 2008) and analysed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) standard version, release 17.0 (SPSS Inc. 2008). Data clean up (content clean-up and exploratory statistics): that is exploratory statistics is an integrated part of data clean up. Variables were explored to identify questionable entries, inconsistency in responses

and outliers, their validity discussed to make the necessary corrections [44]. Frequency analysis were used for categorical variables as to identify invalid entries. At the end of this exercise, the proportion of valid cases in relation to what was initially expected was appreciated and data were then validated for analysis.

#### 4.18 Presentation of Findings

##### 4.18.1 Demographic characteristics of pregnant teenagers

Twenty four pregnant teenagers ranged between 15 to 19 years were recruited from 16 secondary schools in Buea Sub Division as shown on Table 2.

##### 4.18.2 Demographic characteristics of parents

Twenty one parents, 2 males with an age range of 50-66 years and holders of First School Leaving Certificate and 19 females with an age range of 40-60 years and holders of First School Leaving Certificate right through Master's Degree as shown in Table 3.

The presentation of findings was organised with reference to this major research question; How do parents' reactions towards teenage pregnancy affect pregnant teenagers' educational aspirations in secondary schools in Buea Sub Division?

**Table 2. Demographic characteristics of pregnant teenagers**

No.	School	Number participated	Age	Forms
1	G.H.S Buea Town	3	18	5 & 7
2	NABESK Boduma –Bakweri Town	1	15	2
3	B.G.S Molyko	2	18	6 & 7
4	Inter Comprehensive College Great Soppo	2	19 & 18	6 & 5
5	CAM COL Great Soppo	1	18	5
6	G.H.S Bokova	1	18	5
7	G.H.S Ekona	2	18	5
8	Salvation Bilingual High School	1	19	6
9	G.H.S Bomaka	3	18 & 19	5
10	Community Christian College Bomaka	1	19	5
11	G.H.S Bonjongo	1	19	6
12	G.H.S Bokwango	1	17	4
13	Baptist High School	1	19	7
14	G.H.S Bokova	1	18	5
15	G.T.H.S Molyko	2	19	5 & 6
16	Summerset Bilingual Comprehensive College Molyko	1	18	5
Total		24		

**Table 3. Demographic characteristics of parents**

Type of participants	Sex	Age range	Level of education
Parents	2-males	50-66	First School Leaving Certificate
	19-females	40-60	Above First School to master's degree

Findings revealed that most pregnant students leave school before they are given maternity leave and some who go on maternity leave do not return. This is probably because of the way they are treated in school and back at home. They are provoked by school administrators and rejected at home by parents.

According to findings, parents were not happy with their children's pregnancy. This is because they had high hopes for their daughters. It was also discovered that parents reacted differently to their children's pregnancy. One participant said: "When I found out that my daughter was pregnant, I was speechless and surprised, I felt very humiliated and devastated. I felt that I had failed to carry out my responsibilities as a parent".

Ten participants expressed these words when they discovered that their daughters were pregnant. They said they felt disappointed, humiliated, ashamed, devastated, shocked, and furious and as a result they were very aggressive towards their pregnant daughters.

One participant said: *"I could not believe that my daughter was pregnant and as a result, I asked my daughter to leave the house and stop schooling. With the interventions of some family members, I took her back"*.

On the other hand, teenagers who were pregnant acknowledged the fact that their parents' reactions towards their pregnancy affected their educational aspirations. One participant said, "My parents were not happy when they found out that I was pregnant. As a result I was always being insulted and most of the time isolated. Consequently, this affected me psychologically as I was always in deep thought, looking depressed and worried. This affected my educational aspirations. I absented a lot from classes and I could not concentrate on my studies, the few times that I attended classes. This made me to fail exams".

Another participant said:

My parents always shouted at me, they asked my other siblings in the house to

isolate me. My father even asked me to drop out of school because he does not see the need of me going to school. Besides, when I had not dropped out of school, I felt sleepy and tired all the time. My parents' attitudes made me see myself as not worthy. I always blame myself for what happened.

Another pregnant teenager expressed that her parents asked her to go and learn a trade. With this, her educational aspirations were shattered. Another pregnant teenager said she has dropped out permanently from school. She further said, in tears, "I had always wanted to become a medical doctor; here I am pregnant and living in my child's father's house. I do not see myself fulfilling that dream again because my parents have abandoned me. Knowing that my friends are in school and I am here with a child, with no future, I feel like killing myself".

The original inhabitants of Buea are Bakweri people. To the Bakweri family the news of pregnancy of an adolescent who is schooling, always signals feelings of disappointment, disgrace, anger and frustration on the part of the parents and even the siblings. The parents feel disappointed and ashamed as they see other families mocking at them for failing in their duty as parents in bringing up a girl child with low morale. The father feels more frustrated and unfriendly towards her and might not want to see her especially if he had refused sending female children to school and was persuaded to do so and the outcome is pregnancy. The family would demand to know the person who is responsible for the pregnancy. If the person is known and accepts responsibility, dialogue is initiated and the both families take a decision as to who will take care of the pregnancy until the child is born and who will sponsor the mother's return back to school. Sometimes, the parents are obliged to take their teenage daughter for an abortion especially when she is below 15 years of age and the doctor does not object for health reasons. For another family there may be joy where there was a problem of infertility in the family because a child born out of wedlock belongs to the girl's family. Thus, the family is happy that at last they are blessed with a child although not at the right time.

As revealed by the focus group discussion, for the community or the society in which the family resides, they are usually unfriendly and they ignore her as the pregnant adolescent is perceived with a lot of stigmatization and even discourage their children from hanging out with her as she is considered a bad influence to others.

The findings of this study are therefore in line with Gerald Caplan's Crisis Theory in that teenage pregnancy is considered a crisis in home by the parents, peers and the larger society. It is seen as a reflection of the inability of the parents to bring up the teenager in a morally upright manner. The findings are also in line with this theory in the sense that if there is positive resolution, then there is fundamental integrity of the pregnant teenager. This positive resolution depends to a very large extent on the perceptions and attitudes of the parents.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are corroborated by the Ecological Systems Theory in that the interaction between factors in the biological maturation of teenagers, the immediate and community environment, and the society landscape are important determinants of their development. Changes in one layer lead to a corresponding ripple effect throughout other layers.

The findings of the study have practical application in Buea in particular and Cameroon in general which has witnessed an increase in the number of pregnant teenagers. As such, parents should be aware that pregnancy is not the end of life of a teenager, and many teenagers have gone on to lead fulfilling lives. As such, parents should react in a more positive manner when faced with the situation of teenage pregnancy.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Findings revealed that parents were not happy when they found out that their children were pregnant. This is in line with what Fernandes et al. [35] said that the news of teenage daughter's pregnancy is unpleasant to parents. Mgbokwere, Esienumoh and Uyana [39] in their study, confirmed that parents' negative attitudes toward teenage pregnancy affect the girl in such a way that parents stop her education, the girl is sent away from the family and the girl is abandoned to the man/boy responsible for the pregnancy. Findings also showed that parents' unpleasant reaction towards teenage pregnancy affect their

educational aspirations. Fernandes et al. [37] is of the opinion that pregnancy in adolescence brings significant changes in behaviour of families in general and of pregnant teenagers in particular.

To further support the above findings, Atuyambe et al. [33] admitted that the parents in his findings were reported to have become angry upon knowing that their daughters were indeed pregnant at their age. In some cases this anger resulted in the girls getting away from the family home and finding solace in rescue homes which they now refer to as their 'home'. The anger also resulted in communication breakdown as some of the participants confirmed never to have had any connections with their immediate family members upon leaving home. According to the ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner, if the relationships in the immediate microsystem break down, the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of her environment.

Participants in the study also acknowledged that the negative reactions from their family members especially their parents affect their educational aspirations. In line with this, Nnodim and Albert [40] and Gyan [45] carried out studies in Nigeria and Accra respectively and concluded that teenage pregnancy affect the educational attainment of teenage girls. In the same vein, Kate [38] carried out a study on the effects of teenage pregnancy on the behaviour of learners at secondary schools in the Mankweng area, Limpopo and concluded that teenage pregnancy has a negative or detrimental effect on the school attendance, academic performance of the pregnant teenager. Furthermore, Maemeko, Nkengbeza and Chokomosi [46] in their study, said the impact of teenage pregnancy on academic performance included poor academic performance after the pregnancy, increase dropout because of pregnancy related issues and negative feeling on schooling.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Teenage pregnancy as a social construct is seen as one of the indicators of adolescents' delinquency and as such the reactions towards it are mostly negative and unfriendly towards the pregnant teenagers. Although parents and school administrators do their utmost best to encourage girl education to the highest level, teenage pregnancy at secondary schools has always been a stumbling block. The consequences are bound as continuing her

education to the end by attending all classes, performing well in all exams and at the end earn a certificate.

The present study on effects of parents' reactions towards teenage pregnancy on their pregnant adolescents' aspirations among secondary school students in Buea has shown that parents' reactions have serious consequences on pregnant students' aspirations that have to do with their educational aspirations that have to do with attendance, performance, attainment and drop out.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The principals should consider setting up responsive guidance and counselling programs to support the young-mothers learners from the time they are discovered to be pregnant up to the time they re-enter school after child birth. This would make them feel accepted and build a high self-esteem which would enable them cope with learning.

Counselling should also be done to the parents of the girls as stipulated in the re-entry policy. By so doing, they may be able to support their daughters during the challenging stages of parenthood and take care of their grandchildren.

## CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Using the above methods and research designs, relevant data was collected from respondents without any problem as all the ethical issues were taken into consideration. This was achieved firstly by informed consent, that is, by explaining the purpose of the research and its benefits to the participants of the study and the community. Secondly by confidentiality and anonymity, that is, assuring all the informants and participants that, information gotten from them would be used solely for research purpose and would be treated confidentially. Finally, a friendly rapport was created with the respondents, that is, creating a conducive/friendly atmosphere for free and frank discussions which helped a lot in obtaining reliable and valuable data for this study.

The letter was presented to all participants including the secondary school administrators, peers, parents of pregnant students, religious authorities, pregnant teenagers and Antenatal clinics (ANC) where they attended. Approval was given in all cases except acceptance to appear in

pictures or videos. Their wishes were granted and a go-ahead given to collect relevant data.

On the part of the researcher, ethical considerations consisted of informing participants that participation was voluntary and they could opt out at any time if need be without any constraints from the researcher, avoiding bias, using appropriate research methods, reporting findings correctly without falsifying them, and appropriately using and managing collected data.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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