

Abstract

Maternal and child health outcomes are greatly influenced by education, especially in South Africa where many young women encounter obstacles to finishing high school, such as teenage pregnancy. The majority of adolescents do not reenroll in school after giving birth, despite policies encouraging this. This study investigates how adolescent mothers' education is hampered by the stigma and discrimination they face. To better understand the obstacles and enablers of postpartum school return, education and grant officials, young mothers, and caregivers provided qualitative data.

This qualitative study explores the complex experiences of teenage moms in South Africa, ages fourteen to nineteen, who choose not to go back to school after giving birth. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used in the recruitment process, with the assistance of qualified research assistants and community liaison officers. Using the intervention program Mentoring Adolescent Mothers at School (MAMAS), interviews were carried out in the Umlazi township. An evolved grounded theory approach was used for data analysis, with an emphasis on the stigma that adolescent mothers face. An existing codebook was integrated into the study's analytical framework and used iteratively through the coding and memoing processes to investigate emerging themes.

Three main research issues that directed the investigation are addressed in this study: the investigation of stigmatization experiences of adolescent mothers to which these experiences relate to bullying and harassment at school, social stigma when it manifests as bullying and harassment affecting adolescent moms' postpartum educational paths, and tactics to counteract and lessen the stigma that society places on them to create a more encouraging atmosphere that supports adolescent moms' academic and educational endeavors.