PERCEPTIONS OF TEENAGE MOTHERS ON THE DIFFICULTIES OF REMAINING IN
PUBLIC SCHOOL IN RURAL TENNESSEE

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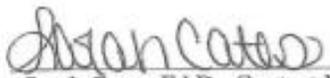
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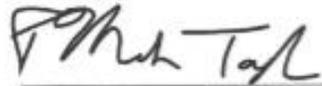
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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the characteristics of teenage mothers and the experiences they encountered as they worked towards high school graduation. Through this research, the study involved collecting data by means of interviews, a questionnaire, and a focus group meeting. The focus group and interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to provide specific information about their experiences as pregnant high school students and new teenage mothers. Fidelity was established through triangulation of data, member checking, and peer debriefing. The theoretical framework used for this study was based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, that shared how people can experience various situations throughout their lives that has the potential to impact their behavior in many ways. This research indicated that young teenage mothers need support at school, as well as at home, while working to acquire their high school education.

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Dedication

First, my thanks go to God, my father. He placed me on this journey almost three years ago. Praise Him from whom all blessings flow.

Second, I would like to thank my father, Pastor Anthony Williams, my mother Andrine Williams, and my stepmother, Madalene Williams for the continuous support they provided me throughout this study and for every challenge I have pursued. They have always believed in me, even when I did not believe in myself. I love you all forever.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Background Information

The developmental stages that individuals experience within their juvenile years and their more mature years can produce numerous changes. During this time of adolescence, learning how to balance social and personal situations are usually established. Several influences can either help or prevent a teenager's ability to succeed. Unfortunately, for girls who have become pregnant in high school, balancing certain influences tend to produce more of an undesirable outcome as opposed to a desirable outcome. Certain areas that are damaged in the lives of teenage parents can be both encouraging influences and unfavorable influences. The encouraging influences for teenagers may include positive reasons that add to the chances of receiving a secondary school diploma. For adolescents who do not receive suitable care, the unfavorable influences, such as dropping out of high school, may increase significantly. Teenage parents who benefit from positive social, personal, and family influences are more likely to succeed in high school, although they have the significant responsibility of being a parent.

This research scrutinized how being able to recover quickly from the difficulties of being a teenage parent and not graduating from high school are linked toward individual, household, and communal involvement. Due to the many risk factors teenage mothers face, they are less likely to have in-house and outside support necessary to remain in school, which subsequently could cause them to drop out of school. Many of the teenage pregnant girls may continue to stay enrolled in school during their pregnancy and some may return to school after they have delivered their babies. Nevertheless, their difficulties and problems are often overwhelming, which makes it much more difficult to earn a high school diploma. Some of the difficulties may include belittlement from the public, financial problems, and transportation problems.

According to Sweirzewski (2015), teenagers who have babies at an early age will more than likely be a parent who does not earn as much income as their peers who do not become pregnant. At some point in their lives, over 75% of teenage mothers must depend on government assistance. These mothers also have greater chance of dropping out of high school. Approximately 33% of teenage mothers acquire a high school diploma. Teenage pregnancies are linked to heightened amounts of alcohol intake and substance abuse. The pregnancies are also linked mothers' lower educational levels and fathers' lower income levels.

Some high schools provide services and different programs for teenage parents who are pregnant or who have recently delivered. Some of the programs include on-site daycare, clinics, and in school or after school specialized programs. Although these programs may increase high school graduation rates, some schools may not offer them. According to Ng and Kaye (2013), just one third of teenage girls who gave birth before they have turned 21 will acquire a high school diploma by age 22, and over 22% of adolescent females who drop out are under the assumption that pregnancy or parenthood is the reason for dropping out.

Students who have multiple risk factors are at a greater risk of becoming a high school dropout. According to Hauser and Koenig (2011), early research proposed that specific communal and personal background factors were connected to an amplified risk of dropping out, such as living in poverty, being from a certain sector, living in a one-parent home, or being from a household with low educational success or low encouragement for instruction, pregnancy, and unsafe neighborhoods (Hauser & Koenig, 2011). The information about risk factors is important for teenage mothers because prenatal problems and infant care are also detailed. Before delivering a baby, many young mothers seem to struggle with success in school. The quick shift

to parenthood may produce medical problems that decrease the teenage mother's attendance at school, causing delays in any academic requirements.

Other factors that teenage mothers provided for dropping out of high school included earning their GED, finding employment, or the inability to pass state required tests. The change between a child's primary, adolescent, and teenage schooling has major effects on young individuals who struggle individually or with being in the school atmosphere. A more significant proportion of young individuals who did not graduate from high school also did not meet the requirements of being promoted in some middle school and high school grades. Knowing that they have been held back, students have a hard time achieving academically and socially. When students are held back, they have to repeat a grade. As students are not promoted from grade to grade, their social and peer settings change. They become a part of an unfamiliar setting and possibly different culture.

The individual's everyday surroundings take on a significant position for young mothers who struggle with their uniqueness and the difficulties of being a mother. Teenagers often face numerous dangers. Examples include, the convenience of purchasing drugs and weapons, and violent behavior. Individuals who are susceptible to living in a community that is filled with drugs, violence, and/or poverty are more susceptible to becoming pregnant. These communities can lessen a student's ability to think wisely regarding promiscuous behavior. These communities may be incapable of offering sex education programs and reasons for abstinence to youth.

According to Lavrentsova and Valkov (2017), the reasons children drop out of school are usually multiple and complex. Poverty is one of the most important factors affecting school attendance and dropout rates. Poverty is the result of systematic financial and material

deficiencies in the family, which often force children to work from a very young age to provide for the family budget in some small capacity. Household size is also a risk factor. A large number of family members significantly increases the risk of school dropout, not only as a result of the accompanying issues, such as the difficult material and financial situation in family, but also because of the commonly occurring involvement of children in family in the upbringing of their younger brothers and sisters, as well as in other household activities.

According to Furger (2008), school factors that add to teenage pregnancy are continuous, rebellious behavior, which is not/iced early on, disappointment in academics that are noticed as early as primary school, and lack of any accountability toward school. Students who demonstrate rebellious behavior in elementary school are more likely to carry on these same traits through their adolescent years in high school. Thus, teenage pregnancy and dropout rates will increase. Drops in test scores and scores that are low on state tests can cause academic failure.

Furger (2008) says personal factors are capable of decreasing a student's natural and learned motivation to succeed. Friends who participate in unacceptable behavior and who share similar attitudes toward unacceptable behavior are linked to school dropouts and teenage pregnancy. Teenagers who enjoy the company of peers who take part in unacceptable actions have higher chances of developing those same actions.

To decrease the high school dropout rate, Furger (2008) recommended cultivating relationships. A teacher who is involved in his/her students' lives or an adult who is highly respected by his/her students can make a difference between an individual's decision to continue his/her education or to drop out of school and not return. For this reason, secondary schools worldwide are establishing advisories, which are small gatherings of individuals in school that congregate with an employee of that school to establish an in-house clan of people full of

variety. These advisories meet throughout the school day to offer a more organized way of allowing those supportive relationships to develop and succeed. The advisories that are regarded as the most successful will meet frequently; they will remain in close proximity for a number of years; and they will include growth within their staff that will assist teachers in supporting the educational, communal, and emotional needs of their students.

Statement of the Problem

Teen Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy has a significant influence on the possibility of the high school graduation rate for girls. Rates between Latino (35%) and African American (37%) girls are substantially increased than those of other races. Academic accomplishments change the financial status of teen mothers: 67% of families started by teenage parents are classified as poor, and one of four parents will rely on government assistance within two and a half years of a child's birth. Many of the teen parents and young babies continue to remain in some form of hardship. Approximately 66% of children who are born to mothers who are younger than the age of 18 actually graduate from when compared to the 78% of their peers with parents who are over the age of 20 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013).

According to Shuger (2012), almost 30% of teenage girls who have dropped out of high school cite early pregnancy or early parenthood as a main cause. Only four of ten teenage mothers graduate from high school, and no more than two of the ten mothers graduate from college by age 30. The high school dropout rate in the United States remains a crisis; approximately 25% of the American population and 40% of subgroups do not complete high school with their classmates. Moreover, the national graduation rate improved by 3.5 percentage points between 2001 and 2009 (from 72% in 2001 to seventy five percent in 2009).

The importance earning a high school diploma cannot be understated. The normal dropout can hope to procure a yearly pay of $21,320, as indicated by the U.S. Statistics Bureau. That is almost half of the amount of the usual high school graduate, and $35,313 less than an individual who has graduated from a university. Obviously, simply getting a job is more difficult for dropouts. While the nationwide unemployment rate remained at 7.9% in July of 2011, individuals without employment versus those who graduated high school was evaluated at 11.9% (U.S. Statistics Bureau, 2002). The rates of the country's employed young secondary school dropouts differed according to gender, race-ethnic, and family salary. According to Sun, Chatinada, McClendon, and Palman (2009), Black American dropouts were, to the minimum degree, at risk to be (30%) followed by Asians (42%), Whites (45%), and Hispanics (52%). This proposes that Black Americans have an unemployment rate of (68 %) followed by Asians at (56 %), Whites at (53 %) and Hispanics at (46%) (Sun, McClendon, Palma., & Chatinada, 2009).

The birth rate for teenagers in the United States is almost seven times higher than Japan and Denmark, more than triple that of Germany, double that of Canada, and one and one-half times that of the United Kingdom. Ideally, a way to decrease the teenage pregnancy rate would be to remove teenage pregnancy altogether. However, with millions of dollars spent to minimize teenage pregnancy, the number of pregnant teenagers has not drastically decreased. The pregnancy does show a recent slight decline.

According to Lander (2017), the Trump Administration cutback over $199 million in government assistances toward more than 80 proof-based associations that intended to diminish adolescent pregnancy rates in July 2017. The results of this drastic financial change are striking in various ways, including instruction. Adolescent pregnancy is a primary factor of dropping out

of secondary school. For more than 25 years, the United States has seen a decrease of teenage pregnancy and childbirth on an annual basis by approximately 6.25%.

Lanier (2017) stated that despite the drop in adolescent pregnancy and childbirth, these remain a community health concern. Risk factors concerning health have been amplified for teenage mothers and their offspring, as well as the more serious danger of early birth, grief among the teenaged mothers, and the unfortunate demise of either the parent or child. Young women often refer to parenthood as a main reason for dropping out of school. Approximately one-half of teenage mothers in North America live in destitution. For mothers who are under the age of 21, they often fail to earn their high school diploma. Almost half of all teenaged mothers in the United States that are under age 21 will be less persuaded to obtain a job and earn enough money to help their new family. Families naturally introduced to destitution have a more serious hazard impediments and interruptions in their scholastic career. In certain groups of people, for the individuals that pay taxes on a yearly basis, they would save almost $9.5 billion on average if teenagers would wait to become pregnant after they turn 21.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to review and compare the many characteristics between teenage parents to understand their perceptions of being a teenage parent in high school and what they believed provided the most encouragement leading up to their high school graduation. This research scrutinized how a student's characteristics and their activities or lack of activities impacted the high school dropout rate. While quitting high school is closely related to the support of the parents and community involvement, many do not understand the correlation teenage parenting and failure to complete high school. Presently, the connection including the individual qualities, community contributions, and scholastic abilities have not been thoroughly

detailed for teenage mothers. Ascertaining the negative influence that teenage pregnancy has on high school graduation magnifies the importance that all parts of the high school experience support pregnant and parenting teenagers. There is a significant need to understand the struggles of being a teenage parent in regard to dropping out of high school. Increasing the knowledge of a teenager's perception of his/her high school experiences, providing teenagers with support that meets their needs would help increase the chances for high school graduation.

The Resiliency Theory by Perry (2002) was used in the study of "The Perceptions of Teenage Mothers on the Difficulties of Remaining in Public School in Rural Tennessee" to improve the education for teachers, the individual's surroundings, and the family. Data collected assisted in explaining the dissimilarities between teenage mothers who finished their coursework and received their diploma from high school versus those who did not finish their coursework and dropped out of high school. Understanding the factors that bring protection and the factors that bring harm for teenage parents will increase the assessment of the plans and beneficial agendas toward this particular group of individuals.

The image displayed in Figure 1.1 shows the many influences that are believed to affect pregnant and parenting teens. They include poverty, race, academic achievement, childhood upbringing, community, religious beliefs, health, and family stability. The influences that do not affect the teen as much personal attributes are support programs provided by the school and time frame. The support programs provided by the school, such as pregnancy prevention seminars and daycare, are beneficial to the teen only if she believes that by attending, it will greatly affect her life. Every layer of the image in Figure 1.1 is completely influenced by the layers inside it. For instance, the time frame influences the effectiveness of the support programs provided by the school and personal attributes and the support programs provided by the school affects the teen's

personal attributes. All of these attributes influence a teenager's attempt of receiving a high school diploma.

The Theory of Reasoned Action, The Problem-Behavior Theory, and The Resilience Theory are all related with the teenager and their relationships in the environment. None of those theories, however, affects the teenager as much as the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The Theory of Reasoned Action argues that an individual's intentions influence behavior. The Theory of Reasoned Action suggested that a person's behavior is decided by his/her purpose to complete the behavior and that this purpose is, in turn, a function of his/her way of behaving toward the behavior and his/her subjective norm. The best predictor of behavior is intention (The University of Twente, n.d.). Purpose is the thinking-related representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behavior, and it is carefully thought to be the immediate earlier event of behavior. This purpose is decided by three factors: their way of behaving toward the specific behavior, their subjective norms, and their apparent behavioral control. If an individual believes that others in his/her environment, school, home, or church, sees a certain type of behavior as being appropriate, and he/she has a positive attitude about that behavior, then that individual is more than likely going to choose to participate in that behavior.

Figure 1.1: Image of the High School Experiences of Pregnant Teenagers
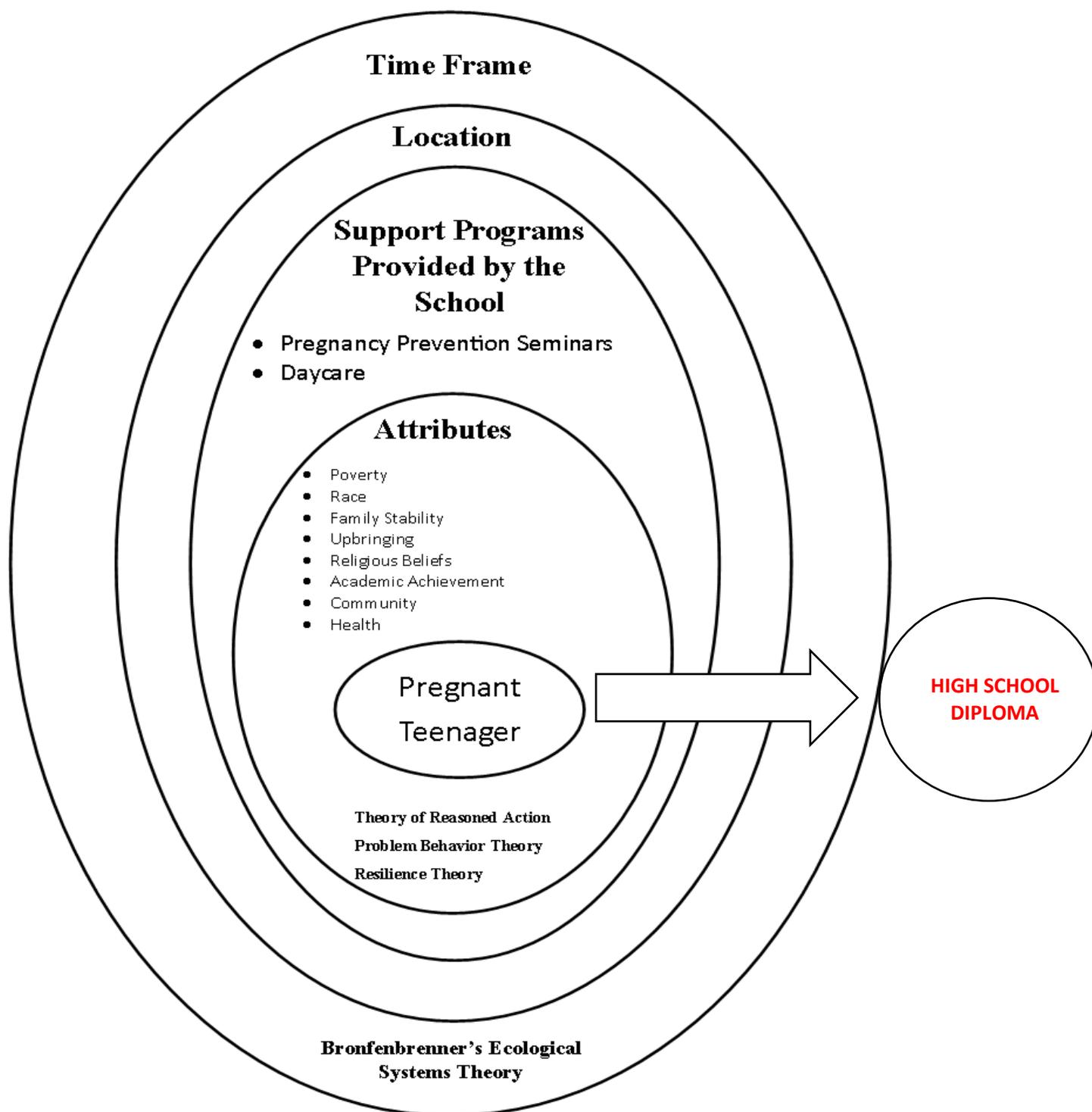
The Problem Behavior Theory argues that an individual's behavior is influenced by his/her social environment. The theory focuses on three ways an individual chooses to select his/her behavior: personality, perceived environment, and behavior. The Problem Behavior Theory is any behavior that deviates from both social and legal norms or behavior that is socially disapproved from those of authority and tends to "elicit some form of social control response whether mild reproof, social rejection or "incarceration" (Jessor, 1987). The personality system includes all personal values, expectations, and beliefs. There is an orientation toward self and society. In this system, problem behavior is more likely if there is low parental disapproval of problem behavior, a lower value on academic achievement, a high value of independence, a high tolerance of abnormality, and/or a low level on religious beliefs. In the perceived environment system, values included are social controls, models, and supports. This system is determined by an individual's problem behavior. In this system, problem behavior is more likely if there is high peer approval of problem behaviors, low parental controls and support, low compatibility between parents and peer expectations, and low parent influence. The behavior system includes the actions of the individual and their two types of behaviors: problem behaviors and conventional behaviors. The problem behaviors include risky behaviors such as promiscuity, drinking, and smoking. The conventional behaviors include behaviors that are socially approved, such as attending church and academic achievement. Any involvement in problem behaviors will increase the chances in any other problem behaviors due to the linkages in the social ecology of youth (Sankey, 2013).

The Resiliency Theory has two parts: the trait-oriented viewpoint and the process-oriented viewpoint. The trait-oriented viewpoint describes resilience as something that is created in an individual and does not consider the environment to be a factor. The process-oriented

viewpoint stipulates that the interaction between the environment and the individual creates resilience. Environmental factors that could be included in the process-oriented viewpoint of the Resilience Theory are parents' education, education aspirations, and academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

Ideally, this research will benefit persons, relatives, and societies by discovering the necessary tools for teenage parents to successfully graduate from high school and to possibly apply for admission to a local college, university, or trade school. Stakeholders and school administrators benefit from the decisions that affect dropouts because these administrators are constantly developing the curriculum, increasing pregnancy prevention strategies, and providing useful intervention programs. The National Conference of State Legislatures (2018) stipulates that teen pregnancy is strongly linked to poverty, with low-income level associated with higher teen birth rates. In addition, 63% of teen mothers receive public assistance within the first year of a child's birth. 52% of mothers on welfare had their first child in their teens. More evidence is necessary to study the cost to determine whether the prevention and intervention plans will be beneficial for the teenage mothers. In addition, national programs and organizations should be examined because men birthed by teenage mothers are significantly more prone to be incarcerated than young men who are born to mothers who are established and who are over 25 years old. Scrutinizing national programs may be of some benefit relative to precautionary measures.

Finally, children who are born to teenage mothers are more susceptible to reside in poverty and are more likely to endure increased amounts of abuse and abandonment than children who are born to more established adults. The Schroder Facility for Analysis and Advocacy (2008) stated that children whose mothers range from 17-19 years old are almost half

as more likely to have a stated case of abuse or abandonment than children whose mothers are

20-22 years of age. The daughters of teen parents are 22% more likely to become teen mothers

themselves.

Research Questions and Rationale

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. **What were the educational experiences in high school for young teenaged mothers in rural Tennessee who earned their diploma?**

This question explores the experiences faced by young mothers in high school. Based on

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, individuals' experiences may be restricted to only

them when they interact in the different groups of their exclusive environment. The process-

oriented viewpoint in the Resiliency Theory stipulates that support from one's environment aids

teenage parents in handling adversity, which may have an impact on their high school

experiences. The Theory of Reasoned Action dictates that an individual's reason for performing

a behavior is persuaded by her own ideas about the behavior and the ideas of others in his/her

environment that he/she respects. The individual always has the control of whether or not to

perform the behavior. Her opinion of her experiences may explain how these struggles affected

his/her ability to earn a high school diploma. The Problem Behavior Theory focuses on the social

community and the mental attributes of the individual when he/she studies his/her own

behaviors. For this reason, examining experiences may assist in understanding behavior choices.

Her actions will ultimately influence his/her experiences. When the theories that are mentioned

in this study are applicable to a pregnant teenager's high school experiences, graduation rates

could possibly be increased.

2. What were the personal barriers and the positive influences that the young teenaged mothers faced while receiving their high school diploma?

This question investigates the relationships between the teenagers' personalities and attributes and their high school experiences. When an individual's personal attributes are clarified in the different parts of her environment and when they interact with her environment, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is proven to be true. Those same interactions are able to persuade the individual's development actions. The trait-oriented viewpoint of the Resilience Theory stipulates that individuals are born with particular behaviors that allow them to be resilient. Therefore, the examination of the supposed of personal attributes on the teenage parents may explain which traits have the most influence on resilience. Understanding how one's own personal characteristics persuade pregnant teenagers' behaviors regarding receiving their high school diploma will provide schools the opportunities they need to firmly support each student based on their abilities.

3. What could the school system do to assist the young pregnant teenaged mothers?

This question surveys the sources of alleged support the pregnant teenagers may encounter. In the process-oriented viewpoint of the Resilience Theory, the environment provides assistance to individuals who are dealing with adversity. The information collected from this question should provide the educational community understanding of the significance of the support by pregnant teenagers. With this information, the teenage parents should be able to receive the help necessary to ensure they earn their high school diplomas.

Assumptions

It is believed that all the teenagers have or will graduate with their diploma from a rural Tennessee high school. It is also believed that the teenagers of this study volunteered their time and were honest in their recollections of their experiences.

Limitations

This research was limited to only a minimal number of pregnant teenagers. Although confidentiality was ensured, several research participants were reluctant to participate in group discussions or having interviews audio-recorded because they were afraid their voices may be recognized. Numerous participants believed they would be judged based on their responses to the questions, thus it was conceivable they would not answer the questions in a truthful manner. It was also feasible that some girls were uncomfortable with some of the interview questions. One final limitation considered in this study was the age range of the participants.

Definition of Terms

Dropout – any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another elementary or secondary school (Bonneau, 2006).

Teenage Pregnancy – a pregnancy that occurs for a woman under the age of 20. Although technically not a teenager, a young woman 12 or under who is pregnant falls into this definition of teenage pregnancy as well (American Pregnancy Association, 2017).

High School – a school especially in the U.S. usually including grades 9–12 or 10–12 (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Risk Factor – a characteristic at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precedes and is associated with a higher likelihood of problem outcomes (O'Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009).

Protective Factor – a characteristic at the biological, psychological, family, or community (including peers and culture) level that is associated with a lower likelihood of problem outcomes or that reduces the negative impact of a risk factor on problem outcomes (O'Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009).

Behavior – the way in which someone conducts oneself or behaves (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Poverty – the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions (Merriam-Webster, 2016)

Summary

This chapter identified problems associated with teenage pregnancy and detailed the motivating factors that prompted this study. Pregnant teenagers are less likely to earn a high school diploma compared to teenagers who are pregnant or are mothers. Failure to earn a high school diploma can limit a teenage mother's future and possibly her overall well-being. Although the United States spends millions of dollars each year to help prevent teenage pregnancy, it still ranks first in the world in instances of teenage pregnancy. According to Viebeck (2015), the United States has the highest rate of teen pregnancy among countries that collect complete data, despite a marked decline since the 1990s.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Statistics and Background

In recent years, the worth of being educated at least through the high school level has significantly increased. In the years referred to as the "Golden Age," a high school diploma was esteemed, especially in the workforce. Throughout the 1970s, a high school diploma was likely to provide many career opportunities. Conversely, recent improvements in the technological world have filled the interest for an exceptionally gifted work drive, changing secondary school training into a base prerequisite for becoming a part of the workforce. (National Center for Educational Indicators, 2002).

Because secondary school fulfillment has become necessary for receiving extra instruction, preparation, or entering the workforce, the monetary results of leaving secondary school without a qualification are significant. Most likely, dropouts will not hold a fulltime job as compared to those who regularly attends high school. The high school teens who drops out of school will not make a comfortable amount of money compared to their counterparts. Secondary high school dropouts are more prone to openly ask for academic help and support compared to completers who are admitted to college. Females who drop out of school are more likely to have children at younger ages and are also more likely to raise their children in single-parent homes, compared to those who graduate from high school, making these young mothers more dependent on government assistance. Additionally, a disproportionate number of dropouts comprise the population of those in jail and/or on death row (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2004).

The 20th century was a noteworthy period for the American laborer. As wages increased, incidental advantages developed, and working conditions moved forward. Although numerous measurements were inconsistent at the beginning of the century, the image is clear: The

American labor force was greatly improved near the end of the century compared to the beginning of the century. The measure of the America's workforce expanded significantly in the 20th century. Nevertheless, organization, pay, working environment, and environment of work also changed within the century (United States Department of Labor, 2004).

Innovation entered the working environment in a meaningful way in the 20th Century. The inventory of innovative upgrades in the working environment in the most recent century is relatively perpetual: specialized gadgets, estimating gadgets, PC controlled gear, the x-beam, wind burrow, bend welder, electrical switch, transistor, Geiger counter, laser, neon light, print, fiber optics, hardened steel, and the nuclear clock. Innovation is perpetual. When the new 21st Century began, just 5% of America's manufacturing plants utilized power to control their machines. Mechanical enhancements that entered the home in the 20th Century prompted real changes in the work environment (Fisk, 2003).

Technology significantly impacted the workplace in the 20th Century, and the demographics of the workforce also affected the working environment. The population matured, differed in numerous ways, and developed significantly. In the 19th Century, the natural life of an infant was 47 years. In the 20th Century, the natural life of an infant was 78 years. In the 19th Century, 80% of American youngsters had a working father and a homemaker. However, by the 20th Century, this dropped to 24%. At the beginning of the 20th Century, the population in the United States was 75 million, which increased to 280 million by the end of the century (Fisk, 2003).

Although there were changes to the workplace, education had the most meaningful impact. Instruction assumed a vital job in the progression of the individual specialist, the workforce, and the economy; and during the 20th Century, there was an enduring increment in

instructive accomplishment. In 1900, under 14% of all Americans completed secondary school. By 1999, that figure had expanded to 83%. In 1910, under 3 percent of the populace had moved on from a school of higher learning. By 1999, this increased to 25%. Additionally, expanded training fostered significant money-related results for the individual specialist. Men with higher educations earned 62% more and women with higher educations 65% more in hourly remuneration compared to those with a secondary school degree in 1997. A considerable component of the development of the economy is owing to expanded training (National Center for Educational Indicators, 2002).

As the secondary school population increased, so did the secondary school dropout rate. The effectiveness of a high school education began to decline, and the term "dropout" was given to those students who no longer had an interest in school. Consistently, state-funded schools lose almost 33% of its understudies. The Union for Magnificence Training announced that every year, roughly 1.3 million understudies neglect to complete secondary school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010).

Vast research related to teenage pregnancy involves attributes that may serve as future indicators of teenagers' risk for pregnancy. Significant research details how these attributes affect the chances of high school graduation and how those same attributes impact teenagers' lives. This research has changed over the decades. Early research focuses on alternate school settings to teach pregnant teenagers, and include educational factors such as house cleanliness, manners, and staff anxieties due to working with pregnant teenagers. Current research addresses the educational and economic impact of teenage pregnancy on teenagers' lives. Factors such as poverty, race, academic achievement, upbringing, living environment, religious beliefs, health, and parent stability can either increase or decrease the chances of a teenage girl's risk of

becoming pregnant. Studies also show that many of these factors also can influence whether pregnant teenagers or teenage mothers will receive their high school diploma (Arai, 2009).

The services that schools provide can impact pregnant teenagers' chances of graduating high school. Programs intended to prevent adolescent mothers from dropping out of school share characteristics with those designed to promote the contribution of social laborers.

- some academic establishment committed to aiding teenage mothers;

- network associations with outside partnership;

- medicinal services and daycare administrations onsite;

- singular advising and tutoring on-site;

- bunch treatment sessions in various locations;

- bolster administrations and vocation readiness;

- case organization programs

Profitable school-based projects for young mothers with social work association are exemplified by projects in many territories throughout the American education system (Van Pelt, 2012).

Theories

Numerous theories have been used as establishments for researchers of adolescent sexuality and pregnancy, and each of these theories has a different focal point. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory stipulates that individuals encounter unmistakable conditions that may affect actions in certain instances (Sincero, 2012). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory also explains why minors grow distinctively and which components of advancement are within the minor's control. The background provided by the Resilience Theory identifies protective factors that allow adolescents to successfully overcome adversity. The Theory of

Reasoned Action is a philosophy which concentrates on someone's expectation to perform a particular way. The hope is an organization or a chance that somebody will carry on particularly in precise situations, not considering whether they really do as such (Lawson, 2007). The premise of the Problem Behavior Theory is a clarification of variety in young people's contribution in practices that are socially characterized as an issue and as annoying by the standards of customary society. These practices inspire some type of social approval (David, 1997).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Better known as the Human Ecology Theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory articulates that human improvement is obstructed by the varied classes of ecological contexts. This theory prompts individuals to analyze their conflicting behavior. The Ecological Systems Theory stipulates that people experience diverse situations throughout life that may impact conduct in various ways. These frameworks incorporate the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the large-scale framework, and the chronosystem (Timay, 2014). Every framework incorporates jobs, standards, and principles that can capably influence advancement. Bronfenbrenner indicated that it is important to ascertain how the family or school impacts human improvement. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory infers that people are the focal point of an arrangement of settled spaces that impact their conduct.

The microsystem is the condition that encompasses human lives. The idea expresses that individuals are not unimportant legatees of various encounters when associating with these individuals in the small-scale framework condition, yet individuals add to the development of such condition (Timay, 2014). The microsystem is the layer closest to the pubescent and it encompasses configurations with which the pubescent has with its direct environments. The

microsystem incorporates the connections and collaborations a youngster retains through his/her prompt environment (Boyd, 2008). Within this platform, contacts have two effects. Distance and proximity to the pubescent are both necessary. The communication of the layers of organizations within a level is significant to this assumption. In this stage, controls are best established and provide the most efficient influence on the pubescent (Paul & Riles, 2002).

The mesosytem includes the bonds among the microsystems in an individual's natural life. This indicates that one's household familiarity possibly will be acknowledged with his/her academic sense. Altogether, for a relationship to be viewed as a component of the mesosystem, there must be immediate teamwork between two parts of the microsystem that impacts the advancement of the person. For instance, if a child's guardians take part in a functioning job in a child's academic surrounding, this will help ensure the child's overall progress. Conversely, if the child's guardians' conflict on how to best raise and develop the child, this will negatively impact the child's growth and maturity level (Osborne, 1996). The exosystem is the locale where there is no association among the areas in which the person does not occupy a serious task. Resources that are provided by household members provide the child with more opportunities.

The macrosystem site shows the actual beliefs of a being. The communal settings comprise of the fiscal prominence of the being or potentially his/her everyday group of people, his/her society, and dwelling in a country that is either still improving or is not. This particular level may be seen as the level that is nowhere near the youngster's state (Osborne, 1996).

The chronosystem incorporates the advances and moves in an individual's life expectancy. This may include the socio-authentic settings that may impact an individual. For example, the separation of one's parents, as a noteworthy life change, may influence the couple's relationship and the conduct of their children. Research shows that most children are affected, in

a negative way, during the first year of their parent's separation. The following year, after everyone has had some time to heal, it may be determined if the communication between the family becomes back friendly and steady (Paul & Riles, 2002). This framework includes the measurement of time as it identifies with a child's surroundings. Components inside this framework can represent the planning of a parent's passing or may also include the physiological changes that happen with the maturing of a child. As children become more experienced, they may respond distinctively to natural changes and may be more ready to embrace change (Timay, 2014).

Recently, experimental research has described teenage pregnancy as a complex and multidimensional process where individual, sociodemographic, family, and relational dimensions connect. Accordingly, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is most valuable when approaching teenage pregnancy. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory views human growth because of an active and shared collaboration of frameworks. The Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory has been previously connected to sexuality to clarify teenagers' sexual practices that are deemed risky. The Ecological Systems Theory has been considered to clarify the kinds of impacts experienced by people and how these affect sexualities, the start of sexual practices and those following, and support and goals of sexual brokenness (Jones, Meneses da Silva, & Soloski, 2011).

Figure 2:1 The Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory
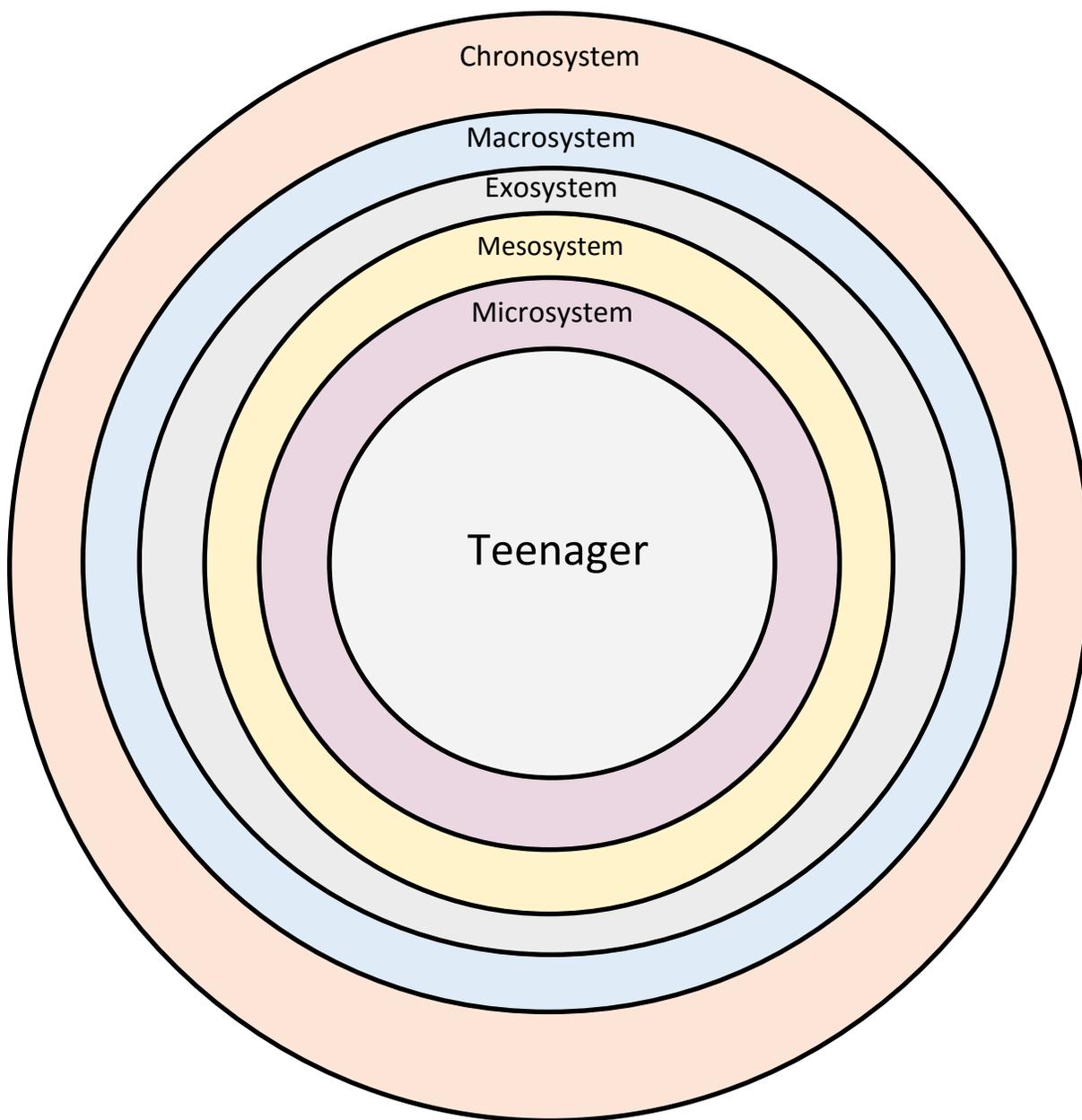
The Resilience Theory

Numerous dynamics have been considered when trying to explain the factors that contribute to high school dropouts. Susceptibility to distressful difficulties, such as family division, destitution, experience of injury, psychosocial and natural dangers, generally leads numerous young people to poor consequences. Delaying results can incorporate weakness to poor scholarly accomplishment, leaving school early, high school pregnancy, emotional grief, and conduct, physical emotional well-being difficulties (Zayers & Block, 2012). Contrasting outcomes can sometimes manifest, as there are youngsters who have the suitable qualities and advantages that help them to beat troublesome and ominous conditions as they are found to flourish regardless of their challenges. These qualities and advantages incorporate talents that help individuals to be versatile, and thus lead them to a rewarding life.

When a person is confronted with an unfortunate encounter, catastrophe, disastrous event, health issue, employment, or school issue, versatility is a critical component that allows an individual to adjust to various occasions throughout life. An individual with great versatility can recover more rapidly and with less worry than somebody whose flexibility is not as established (Cooper, 2017). It is important to understand that resilience is not cheerfully disregarding one's difficult hardships, but instead, it is being able to contain oneself during a trying time. The Resilience Theory focuses primarily on qualities as opposed to shortages or deficits. Moreover, The Resilience Theory is involved with showing how positive results can be accomplished, paying little heed to testing and undermining occurrences. It is credited to being able to adapt effectively to difficult encounters and discourage negative actions related to dangers (Zayers & Block, 2012).

There are two different viewpoints of The Resilience Theory: the trait-oriented viewpoint and the process-oriented viewpoint. The trait-oriented viewpoint describes resilience as something that is created in an individual and does not consider the environment to be a factor. The trait-oriented viewpoint stipulates that some individuals are born with resilience, which is not in harmony with the approach of the ecological system. This viewpoint suggests that all individuals have some protective traits or factors, but not to the same degree (Baruth & Carroll, 2002). Some of these protective traits include an encouraging environment, less stressors, compensating experiences, and a flexible personality. Individuals who have some of these traits handle adversity with resilience.

The process-oriented viewpoint posits that the interaction between the environment and the individual creates resilience. Receiving support from the individual's environment allows the individual to be victorious over any risk and cope effectively with adversity. Environmental factors that could be included in the process-oriented viewpoint of The Resilience Theory are parents' education, educational aspirations, religious beliefs, and academic achievement. An individual's environment can help protect him/her from negativity (Zayers & Block, 2012).

A positive attribute of The Resilience Theory is that it focuses more on the strengths rather than the shortcomings. The Resilience Theory finds factors that can protect individuals and help them overcome adversity, instead of looking for weaknesses.

The Theory of Reasoned Action

The Theory of Reasoned Action was first created in the late 1960s by Martin Fishbein and was later developed by Fishbein and Icek Azjen in the decades that followed. This theory that focuses on an individual's intent to act a specific way (Lawson, 2007). The Theory of Reasoned Action uses four basic concepts to describe an individual's reasoning for engaging in a

specific behavior: intentions, attitudes, behaviors, and subjective norms. Intention is a determination to act in a certain way (Merriam-Webster, 2018). For example, a teenage girl who wants to stop having sex *intends* or purposes to stop, but may or may not actually follow through on that intent. To know the behavioral plan of an individual, The Theory of Reasoned Action scrutinizes an individual's demeanor toward that conduct and the individual customs of significant individuals and assemblies that could impact those demeanors (Lawson, 2007). For example, a teenage girl intends to attend a pregnancy prevention program to learn more about safe sex and contraceptive use. To predict whether the teenage girl would actually attend the program would depend on her opinion about attending the program, whether her opinion is positive or negative, and the models that she sees from individuals around her, such as her peers, about whether attending the program would be beneficial. As stated by The Theory of Reasoned Action, outlooks and models are the primary manipulators on purpose, which is the fundamental support of behavior. Demeanors concerning a particular manner are impacted as a result of a blend of two related elements: persuasions regarding the end result of the manner and the valuation of the prospective end result. Based on The Theory of Reasoned Action's perspective, the essential amount of personality depends on what it is sure, undesirable, or unbiased. For instance, if a teenager strongly believes that attending a pregnancy prevention program will prompt an alluring result, she could state that she has an uplifting outlook toward that conduct. Similarly, if she firmly trusts that the conduct will prompt an unwanted result, she is probably going to have a negative state of mind regarding the conduct. Emotional standards are affected by impressions of the convictions of others: guardians, companions, associates, accomplices, etc. As indicated by The Theory of Reasoned Action, individuals contain a discernment whether these societies would support or oppose the problem behavior. Nevertheless, individuals should

consider that they are persuaded to conform to perspectives. This can shift, beginning with one circumstance and progressing to the next circumstance. By concentrating on mentalities and standards, The Theory of Reasoned Action offers a system for recognizing and assessing the hidden justifications after someone's expectation to behave in a certain manner. It is known as The Theory of Reasoned Action since it prompts individuals to focus on understanding these reasons, not on the premise that the convictions and state of mind themselves are essentially sensible.

Problem-Behavior Theory

The problem-behavior theory asserts that three systems influence people psychosocially: personality system, behavior system, and perceived environment system. Inside each of these frameworks, the aptness for behavioral problems might be characterized (Ensminger, 1987). The critical behavior concepts are positive states of mind, qualities, convictions and desires to behavioral problems. High incentive on freedom and low desire for scholastic objectives are both conceptualized as positive in regards to behavioral problems. Numerous factors, such as church and school participation, are used to predict behavioral problems. Research shows that sexual conduct will most likely provide a desirable role in the adult life more so than behavioral problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, cigarette smoking, and delinquency.

In each of these systems, there are factors that will either stop the progress of problem behaviors or limit these behaviors. Problem behavior *proneness* indicates that people that do not follow social norms are apt to use drugs, take part in pre-marital sex, and/or commit crimes. Because proneness is found in all three systems, each must be investigated independently and collectively to understand the individual's risk (Jessor, 2014). The Problem Behavior Theory has been widely used in the research of the wellbeing of young individuals, such as, alcohol and

substance use and promiscuous behaviors. The concept theorizes that it is the harmony between the shielding and defensive factors that happen inside a young individual's nature and the young individual's uniqueness that decides his/her chance of taking part in a behavioral problem. Additionally, some researchers believe that problem behaviors are a part of a syndrome, meaning if one problem behavior exists, there is a good chance that other problem behaviors will become known. However, not all researchers agree. Some researchers have found that only certain problem behaviors are found in groups while some problem behaviors appear separate. Regardless of personal beliefs, the theory is widely used by researchers to pinpoint the problem behaviors of teenagers.

<div align="center">**Historical Viewpoint on Teaching Pregnant Teenagers**</div>

Teenage girls who gave birth in early America were often seen as being a part of a larger concern pertaining to premarital sex and births with only one parent present. In the latter half of the 20th Century, teenage pregnancies and high school births without any father present were viewed as extraordinary difficulties to the American culture. There is rising nervousness about the absence of high-class academic training acquired by teenage moms. Occasionally, the government has taken on a serious commitment to help reduce unplanned teenage pregnancies and to give openings that are more instructive for all stakeholders (Vinovskis, 2003).

Background History of Teenage Sex

Sixty years ago, it was still considered extremely indelicate to even speak of a pregnancy in public or to refer to a pregnancy in books any other kind. Pregnancy was a private matter - something to be disguised by clothing and only hinted at in conversation with one's closest friends. Additionally, women could not rely on learning much from physicians about what was happening to their bodies. There were no ultrasounds, there was no decision to be made about

learning the baby's gender (Hill, 2006). Women of the middle or upper classes were expected to limit their activities in public during the latter part of their pregnancies and to give birth in the hospital - under sedation. Mother and baby were expected to spend a period of time receiving a limited number of visitors. Presumably, they would both be fresh and perky when it was appropriate to resume life in the public world.

The United Nations World Health Organization (2011) defined teenage pregnancy as the pregnancy of young girls who are under age 18. These adolescent females have not yet reached the acceptable age of becoming pregnant and delivering a baby. Adolescent pregnancy is more accepted in some parts of the world where poverty is high because a lack of financial resources is common for many people. These places include Europe and the United States. Presently, when adolescent sex is prevalent, high school pregnancy is not uncommon.

Although teenage pregnancy has long been an issue, it was freely acknowledged because adolescents often got married at young ages. The "young person" idea and youth culture started in the late 1940s and in the "Golden Age" when adolescent pregnancy took on dynamic roles in literature and film in America. Young pregnancies and deliveries became problematic and demonstrated an absence of control among the teenage mothers.

In the 1950s, teenage pregnancies and adult pregnancies were equivalent, primarily because teenage marriages were common in the 1950s. This was because teenage marriages were common in the 1950s. Ladies frequently ended up pregnant with the expectation that their accomplice would wed them. In this manner, "Shotgun Weddings" were an indispensable component of the romance arrangement in America (Tufenkjian, 2013). During this time frame, teenage pregnancies increased significantly after World War II. Almost half of all teenagers in

the Golden Age who were both wedded and pregnant at the time represent both the enormous flood in marriage rates and the high rate of adolescent parenthood.

In the 1960s, due to the postwar "baby boom," many young people were engaging in sex before marriage, which increases the request for free help and amenities to single parents. According to Campbell (1968), the young lady who gives birth to a child at age 16 without being married suddenly has had 90% of her life story written. She would have most likely drop out of high school, regardless of whether another person in the family provides care for the infant. Additionally, she would have most likely be unable to locate stable employment that provides the necessary financial resources to provide for herself and her child; she may be forced to marry someone she otherwise would not have married. She has few life decisions and the majority of these decisions are negative.

In the 1970s, a study committed to regenerative wellbeing campaigned for more services that offered assistance for unmarried adolescents, financed with government funds. The Goodes Foundation that proposed that the United States would be confronted with a wave of adolescent childbearing (Tufenkjian, 2013). Additionally, in 1970, Title X was ordered for the Public Health Service Act. The Title X Family Planning Program was designed to help low-income or uninsured families gain admittance to family planning sources and preventive insurance (Teen Pregnancy Statistics, 2009). For instance, people and families were offered access to preventative amenities, supplies, and other materials they may have need. The Title X Family Planning Program is presently the only federal grant program that is intended for furnishing families with preventive restorative help.

In the 1980s, teenage pregnancy decreased moderately due to abortion and contraceptive use. The amount of premature births to live births climbed from 279 for every 999 to 461 out of

1984. During this time period, pregnant teenagers often terminated their pregnancies. In 1989, President Bill Clinton said that high school childbearing was the most irrefutable community issue. President Clinton was not the only president to observe the expenses of early childbearing. (Tufenkjian, 2013). Teenage pregnancies drastically decreased because of the presentation of contraceptive use for teenagers. In addition, the trend was supported by teenage fathers. The young fathers were expected to be active in their child's life. By 1995, high school pregnancies had declined compared to previous years, primarily due to the widespread use of contraceptive methods. Teenage pregnancy rates declined from 1989-2005, then increased from 2005-2007. Subsequently, teenage pregnancy decreased again, primarily due to increased use of contraceptives, less teenage sex, and more information provided to teenagers about pregnancy prevention. Currently, the issue of teenage pregnancy is problematic. These issues include the ethics of abortion, acceptability of premarital sex, availability of anti-conception medication and the preparation of families to the young and unmarried, costs for giving help to unmarried moms, and making adoption appear "unattractive". Recently, the adolescent pregnancy has considerably dropped. A key reason for the decline is because of the information that has been provided to teenagers about contraceptive use and family planning services.

Teenage pregnancy has been long been established. It became a major issue in the mid-19th century when child bearing was linked to the middle-aged group of individuals. Teenage pregnancy reached its highest point in the 1950s, then later decreased. This decline can be attributed to teenagers who are not as actively involved with sexual activity, education programs regarding contraceptive use, and sex education classes for fathers with young babies.

Rural Tennessee and Teenage Pregnancy

Fewer teenagers are delivering babies in the United States, however, teenage pregnancies and births are considerably higher in rural areas compared to metropolitan areas. It remains a significant issue with a national average of 24.2 per 1,000 females. In metropolitan regions with expansive inhabitants, teenage pregnancies and births are considerably higher in rural areas compared to metropolitan areas. Still, it is considerably lower than in provinces with populaces of less than 49,000 individuals that stated an extensively higher 30% adolescent birth rate (Santhanam, 2016). Health experts indicated that this discrepancy is likely due to limited access to contraceptives for teens that live in rural areas. Tennessee has a teenage birth rate of 33%, 36% higher than the national average. Teenagers in rural Tennessee likely have less access to the most effective methods of birth control, such as IUDs and implants (Schulson, 2016).

In Tennessee, 37 of 95 counties have teenage pregnancy rates over 19.5. Tennessee requires all school regions in the counties with a pregnancy rate surpassing 18.9 to develop and apply a family life tutoring curriculum (Santhanam, 2016). In 2015, there were 81,685 live births in Tennessee. The population of women of childbearing age (ages 15-44) in Tennessee in 2015 was estimated to be 1,299,690. The birth rate in Tennessee in 2015 was 62.8 per 1,000 women ages 15-44 (Schulson, 2016). When compared to other states, Tennessee ranked 10th in the nation in teenage pregnancies. Also, Tennessee ranked 14th in the nation regarding percent of births to mothers who had never been married. Those mothers are more prone to be young and in poverty.

Tennessee state law mandates that schools educate and teach sex education in only those areas where the pregnancy rate between students ages 14-18 has reached a specific level (18.9 pregnancies per thousand young girls). Abstaining from sex must be emphasized as preventative measure against unintended pregnancy, STDs, and HIV/AIDS when spread through sexual

activities. Education on contraceptives, such as, condoms or the "Pill", is not mandatory

(Planned Parenthood, 2017). Tennessee law stipulates that being educated on sexually

transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS is mandatory. Students who reside in Tennessee do not have

to have their parent or legal guardian's permission to enroll in sexual education classes.

However, parents or legal guardians have the right to take their child out of those classes. In

most states, including Tennessee, individuals are not considered to be an adult until they are

above 18 years of age. Until that age has been reached, the law says that individuals cannot agree

to have sexual interaction with someone who has not reached the age of 18. These types of laws

are called agreement laws and are intended to protect anyone under the age of 18 from being

influenced or made to engage in sexual acts with those older than them. (Planned Parenthood,

2017). Laws regarding sanctions can vary between the different types of sex and the genders of

the individuals who are engaging in the sexual acts. The different types of sex are oral, vaginal,

and anal. According to Tennessee state laws, an individual must be over age 18 to have legal sex.

Any two people who are over age 18 can have sex without it being illegal. According to

Tennessee state law, teenagers do not need permission from their parent or legal guardians to be

tested for any sexual transmitted diseases or HIV/AIDS. They also can agree to treatment

without permission. Individuals who are under age 18 should be sure to ask if there are rules or

policies regarding client privacy from their treatment center of choice. Certain questions should

be asked to ensure confidentiality. Individuals of all ages, including adolescents, can purchase

condoms from a drugstore, market, or online. In Tennessee, if a age 16 or older and/or wedded,

individual could receive treatment for birth control without the approval of a parent or legal

guardian. In like manner, this is valid if an individual's insurance carrier believes the individual

is mature, which implies that an individual is dependable or developed enough to obtain birth control medicine without the authorization of a parent or legal guardian.

Title X clinics are health centers that offer private health care services for both teenagers and adults. Title X health centers provide many options for individuals, such as refills and prescriptions for birth control pills, pregnancy therapy, and tests to check for STDs and pregnancy (Teen Pregnancy Statistics, 2009). The health centers collect their money by allowing people to pay what they are able and in cash if necessary (Planned Parenthood, 2017). In Tennessee, an individual who is under age 18 must have consent from a parent or legal guardian to have an abortion. This process is called parental agreement. If their parent or legal guardian is not available to consent, the child is allowed ask a judge. This process is called judicial bypass.

Although there are numerous programs that help support teenage mothers, many of those mothers are bullied on a regular basis for being pregnant. When teenagers become guardians, they immediately turn out to be targets of unfairness, favoritism, and racist labelling. Young mothers remain likely leave high school early, disregard their children, and achieve little (Vianna, 2008). For many teenage parents, expecting a baby causes others to look intently, make unnecessary remarks, and exposed them to abuse, and tormenting. Adolescent parents who are still enrolled in school are weighed down by their companions, teachers, and other school staff (Vianna, 2008).

Traits of Pregnant Teenagers

Research proposes that negative results of teenage guardianship such as low instructive accomplishment and destitution, are monotonous and will continue to be both the circumstances and end results of adolescent parenthood (Cooley, 1998). Financial connects, such as instruction, family size, and family structure, are not inferable from any outside or ecological factor to high

school pregnancy. The mother's age has less of an impact than financial status on instructive accomplishment. Pregnancy, not financial variables, is the chief reason for high school dropouts among teenage girls. When these traits are structured in different arrangements, their impact can be changed by either increasing the risk or decreasing the risk. When there is an understanding of how these personal traits could affect the risk of teenage pregnancy and subsequently dropping out of high school, schools can make decisions that are up-to-date concerning policies and practices.

Poverty

Dating back two decades, the impact of poverty on adolescent pregnancy has been reported consistently. Researchers on adolescent pregnancy reasoned that teenage pregnancy is high among family units who are led by adolescents. The adolescents in those families regularly work jobs in return for cash to help them to survive. Researchers also determined that there are high rates of adolescent pregnancy among African Americans who live in poverty and who participate in unprotected sexual practices as a way to survive their conditions. Nations that lack financial resources produce more adolescent mothers than nations who have financial resources.

Poverty is both a reason and an outcome of high school pregnancy. More than 59% of adolescent single mothers live in families that qualify as destitute. One of four adolescent mothers will be placed on a welfare program within three years of giving birth. High school mothers also have less access to help with academic programs, which negatively impacts them financially later in life (Vittana, 2017). Adolescent mothers are more reluctant to finish secondary school. They are significantly less likely to pursue an education beyond high school, which in turn negatively impacts their earning potential. In the previous two decades, the average

pay for students who finished college has increased by 18.5%, while the average pay for the individuals who dropped out of secondary school has diminished by 27.5%.

Adolescent mothers are more likely to be living in poverty compared to the rest of the adolescent populace (Kemper, 2012). Adolescents who wind up pregnant often originate from more unstable families than the individuals who do not wind up pregnant. Additionally, among pregnant adolescents, the individuals who decide to terminate their unborn baby are often more advantaged than the individuals who decide to deliver their child. Therefore, adolescent mothers are more likely to be African-American, Native American, and/or financially disadvantaged. Prior to becoming pregnant, these adolescent mothers, are already more than likely behind in school and do not have the best test scores. Numerous specialists have tried to clarify why young ladies living in need will probably have children prior to the age of 18. Many specialists have concluded that growing up with limited financial prospects can lead young ladies to choose motherhood as their job. Some have alluded to this as a "social standard" or indicated the "cycle of destitution" (Vittana, 2017). Education attempt to remediate the sequence of juvenile pregnancy. The United States Coalition of Teen Pregnancy Prevention has provided information that details what adolescent mothers are lacking. Almost 90% of young ladies who have not given birth and are under age 18 will graduate from high school. However, only 37.5% of adolescent young mothers who have given birth before age 18 will receive their diploma from high school by the time they turn 21. Additionally, 29.5% of adolescent mothers who no longer want to attend high school choose to drop out of school because becoming a mother at their age is overwhelming.

Race

Although teenage birth rates among African-Americans and Native American adolescents have significantly decreased throughout the years, these teenagers are nevertheless three times as likely as their white associates to have babies. These pregnancy rates differ throughout the U.S. and in various counties. The teenage birthrates for African-American and Native American adolescents are elevated due to the following factors: high redundancy rates, guardians who lack educational knowledge, and high destitution levels (Campbell, 1968). From 1990–2013, the birth rate among adolescents ages 15-19 in the United States dropped to 60%, from 62.8 to 25.3 births per one thousand, the most reduced rate at any point recorded. From 2007-2015, the adolescent birth rate declined to 41%.

African-American adolescents and Hispanic adolescents and their societies are regularly assumed to have weaker standards regarding adolescent pregnancy compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Although they are significant, youths' standards regarding high pregnancy have not been estimated (Hogan, 2000). High school graduation rates differ for pregnant teenagers of different ethnic groups. More of these pregnant teenagers are more apt to earn a secondary degree than pregnant teenagers in of other races. African Americans also exceed Caucasians in terms of graduation rates. Actually, African American pregnant teenagers are less likely to earn a high school degree than those who do not become pregnant (Ceaser, Lee, Elsik, & Halpern-Flesher, 2010). The parents of African-American teenagers provide more help than similar adolescent females of different races/ethnicities, furnishing their teenagers with housing, childcare, and emotional and financial support (Ceaser, Lee, Elsik, & Halpern-Flesher, 2010).

Academic Achievement

When high school students do not receive the necessary help and supplies, numerous negative outcomes may occur. In 2001, just ten percent of moms between ages 15-17 graduated from high school and 66% of mothers who were in high school never graduated (Brooks, Wiser, & Elder, 2006).

Researchers discovered proof that social help and school-based projects that offer advising, insurance, and training to adolescent guardians regarding child growth can ease a considerable quantity of issues related with teenage pregnancy (Ceaser, Lee, Elsik, & Halpern-Flesher, 2010).

Although exploration demonstrates that pregnancy is the main factor constraining a high school mother's instructive accomplishment, it has been reported that various studies have recommended that these students' purposes behind leaving school have more to do with school arrangements and past school encounters than with being pregnant (Brooks, Wiser, & Elder, 2006). Young mothers have communicated negative discernments about training, including an absence of pertinence and a negative school atmosphere (Vinovskis, 2003). High school guardians regularly referred to school related issues behind dropping out of school. The unbending nature of some school principals regarding school attendance rules was a primary factor in increasing the high school dropout rate (Brooks, Wiser, & Elder, 2006). Not granting the necessary leave to adolescent guardians for childcare contributed to the dropout rate (Ceaser, Lee, Elsik, & Halpern-Flesher, 2010). Other factors that increased the dropout rate included limited credit often received from home study and lack of transportation to and from school and to and from daycare (Brooks, Wiser, & Elder, 2006). Teachers sometimes fail to provide the

necessary support and encouragement for adolescent mothers, which discourages future advancement and achievement of academic goals (Vinovskis, 2003).

According to Brooks, Wiser, & Elder (2006), teenagers reassessed their attention and academic achievement objectives when they wound up pregnant, paying little heed to their prior states of mind. Signs of extended school focus included enhanced evaluations, a determination to graduate, and a fresh mindset to further academics. High school mothers noted how having a child increased their enthusiasm for academics and fostered knowledge that academics would help them create better futures for their children, increase their potential income, and help them abstain from receiving government assistance (Vinovskis, 2003). The choice to acknowledge accessible help is portrayed as the individual change phase of high school child rearing (Brooks, Wiser, & Elder, 2006). The individual change starts when a high school mother understands that achievement and opportunity for her and her baby does not come without individual drive, unselfish devotion, and a pledge to succeed (Ceaser, Lee, Elsik, & Halpern-Flesher, 2010). Some studies show how young adolescent mothers have discovered that having a baby genuinely changes their points of view on both their academics and their future. Because of the disrespect associated with high school pregnancy and parenthood, adolescent mothers frequently hide the fact that they are pregnant. Principals and school staff might be uninformed that some students are also parents. This lack of clarity frequently creates negative outcomes, such as improper mediations to address their exclusive necessities, absence of support for adolescent parents, and lack of care with respect to the academic framework to help young mothers balance their academics and their duties as parents (Ceaser, Lee, Elsik, & Halpern-Flesher, 2010).

Childhood Upbringing

There is a developing body of writing on the impacts of pathological family functioning, including sexual and physical abuse and neglect on teenagers' sexual and reproductive behavior (Arai, 2009). In a British analysis of the link between child sexual abuse, occurring before the age of 13, and factors such as later mental health and parenting behaviors, sexual abuse was related with negative results in adulthood as well as teenage pregnancy, even after adjustment for other adverse childhood experiences. Research has confirmed the relationship between teenage pregnancy and abuse in childhood. In a New Zealand-based study, four factors anticipated high school pregnancy: living in a dysfunctional family, having caretakers who never agreed on anything, being physically discouraged, and not having had a friend while growing up. Serious sexual assault, such as rape, predicted early pregnancy independently for those four variables. Although the ways in which young women respond to sexual abuse vary, not all will experience a teenage pregnancy. There does appear to be a "pathway" from sexual abuse to reproductive outcomes that can clearly be seen in the lives of abused young women who experience early pregnancy. This was succinctly described by American researchers as a pathway that has a tendency to pursue a well-trod course: rape as an adolescent, advanced sexual conduct as a child, removal from school, maltreatment of liquor and drugs, and pregnancy and teenage parenthood.

Living Environment

The communal groups in which teenagers live can have meaningful impacts on their advancement (Organization of Medicinal Studies, 2011). How a neighborhood is organized, including its monetary status, lodging quality, and being able to access materials, are vital (Vittana, 2017).

Living in a wealthy neighborhood where the people have graduated from college is related with favorable circumstances for the scholarly accomplishments of young people, particularly young men (Campbell, 1968). Living in an area with low financial status fosters dangers regarding conduct, social, and various other issues. In like manner, living in a poor neighborhood increases the risk for early childbirth among young people (Organization of Medicinal Studies, 2011). Researchers warn that since neighborhood living arrangements are not accidental, similar attributes may lead families to specific neighborhoods and persuade their children to engage in certain behaviors. Furthermore, scholars emphasized communal influences are moderate related to the influence of parental salary, parent academics, and other family impacts.

School is typically the biggest and most critical foundation with which adolescents are included, and it is an essential setting for their growth. Schools have expansive basic attributes that differ, such as, the financial status of the populace they serve, their size and the proportion of instructors to students, school and classroom size, and student and educator versatility (Organization of Medicinal Studies, 2011).

Religious Beliefs

Pregnancy statistics demonstrate a connection between high school pregnancy and religion. Although numerous religions advance forbearance and discourage pre-marital sex, pregnancy rate for adolescents is significantly higher in states where solid religious convictions are available. In states where there are more traditionalist religious convictions, an expansion in births is evident. Some clarifications demonstrate the association between high school pregnancy and religion. Some specialists believe that there is disapproval of pregnancy prevention and the utilization of contraceptives in neighborhoods with solid religious convictions among most of the

occupants. Teenagers in these neighborhoods may be more hesitant to converse with members of their household about acquiring pregnancy prevention items. They may likewise be reluctant to attempt and buy condoms at the nearby store due to worry about being seen and their parents being informed (Admin, 2012).

Numerous studies suggested that the connection between high school pregnancy and religion show that religious adolescents are engaging in sexual relations more regularly than non-religious adolescents (Admin, 2012). However, it is feasible that some religious teenagers are not utilizing contraceptives compared to non-religious teenagers. The number of teenagers engaging in sexual relations may early the equivalent in each state; however, the number of adolescents that have abortions may be higher in non-religious states. Numerous religions disapprove of abortion. Numerous religious states may emphasize sexual education that focuses on abstinence compared to sex instruction that encompasses high school sex, adolescent pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. Thus, these religious societies could be prompting more teenagers to engage in hazardous sexual activities which connects adolescent pregnancy and religion. Teenage pregnancy numbers demonstrate higher quantities of pregnancy termination rates in states that are not as religious. Different variables to consider with the connection between high school pregnancy and religion incorporate different parts of the adolescents' experience, race, culture and financial foundation – all meaningful factors regardless of whether a teenager is engaging in sexual relations, having safe sex, or abstaining from sex altogether (Arai, 2009). These practices are the connection to the rates of adolescent pregnancy. With around 30% of adolescents getting pregnant every year, the quantities of adolescent pregnancies are still elevated in the U.S., although they have stabled lately. Some adolescents will guarantee themselves to remain virgins until marriage. However, some will choose to have intercourse.

Because they are ill-equipped to engage in sexual relations, intercourse could cause them to become teenage parents (Admin, 2012). Practicing safe sex is a viable option compared to other approaches to pregnancy prevention. Young people need to consider the benefits of learning about assets that aid in safe sex practices with contraceptives, regardless of whether they are concerned about religious ramifications. Practicing safe sex or discovering approaches to remain abstinent can promote a decline in the adolescent pregnancy rate.

Health

Pregnant adolescents can encounter various sorts of risks associated with health, some of which present dangers to the mother alone, some to her unborn baby, and some to them both. Some risks associated with health for pregnant adolescents related to the mother's age, which cannot be changed. Nevertheless, other risks associated with health to pregnant adolescents are predicated upon decision-making, and these can possibly be remediated when it is obvious to the pregnant adolescent that specific conduct represents a threat to herself, her child, or both (Akella & Jordan, 2015). The primary threat for pregnant adolescents, which can influence both the mother and her child, is not realizing that she is pregnant. A woman, who is pregnant and unaware of her pregnancy is less likely to receive the nourishment she needs to maintain her health and the health of her unborn child. She may not seek primary care for her unborn child, which would supply her with the necessary vitamins to help her pregnancy, and is less likely to receive guidance. The absence of primary care for an unborn child may result in untreated pregnancies which may lead to complications for mother or child.

Adolescents who are not aware that they are pregnant or are not aware that these measures are necessary are less likely to take these precautions. Adolescents are more likely to

smoke when they are pregnant compared to females over age 25, which intensifies difficulties with the placenta.

Hypertension or pregnancy-induced hypertension are also dangerous for pregnant adolescents. Preeclampsia is a related danger, and is distinguished by hypertension in females when pregnant who have not previously experienced hypertension (Johnson, 2018). Preeclamptic pregnant women who have an abnormal state of protein in their urine, can frequently have swelling in their feet, legs, and hands. This condition typically seems to happen in the latter stage of pregnancy, although it can happen at an earlier time. Both conditions are crucial for both the mother and her child and require therapeutic care. Preeclampsia is frequently found in first-time pregnancies, in pregnant teenagers, and in females over age 40 (Johnson, 2018).

Adolescents, who are pregnant, are more apt than more experienced ladies to become discouraged, to have doubtful assumptions regarding existence with an infant that are destroyed when the infant is conceived, and may feel uneasiness, blame, or dread about the pregnancy and what is to come (Akella & Jordan, 2015). Adolescents who are influenced psychologically should receive help from a psychologist who spends meaningful time working with adolescents. Adolescents are more likely to go into labor early and deliver babies with low birthweights of less than five pounds compared to older women. Adolescents and adult women who have babies without planning to do so are more apt to develop postnatal depression. This can be problematic regarding parental care of the child. While postnatal depression can impact up to 20% of mothers, the commonness of postnatal depression for adolescent moms is almost twofold, a hidden reality (Makijani, 2013). Factors such as an unhealthy home life, money-related uncertainty, or managing unintended pregnancies increase the danger of postnatal illness. Teenage mothers are more likely to develop postnatal illness compared to adult mothers. A

woman who has previously dealt with depression is at greater risk of developing postnatal depression.

Family Structure

The family is the main condition in which youth encounter adult-like bonds. Family, such as having both parents and/or legal guardians present in the home, have enduring effects for adolescents. Research indicates that children whose guardians have separated will likely separate from their spouses as later in life (Amato, 2006). Also, females whose parents were not married will probably repeat the same cycle (Blake, Simkin, Ledsky, Perkins, & Calabrese, 2001). Numerous elements identified with family organization, such as, salary and stress, could improve the probability that adolescents will have a portion of their parents' success.

Compared to females with no family history of high school births, females with sisters who also gave birth as adolescents and whose sisters and mothers were also pregnant as teenagers are more likely to become pregnant as adolescents (East, Reyes, & Horn, 2007). Females with sisters who gave birth in high school were more likely to become pregnant compared to females whose mothers gave birth as teenagers. Females with both mothers and sisters who gave birth as teenagers were connected to an increased likelihood of pregnancy.

Some parents are reluctant to converse with their teen about sexual relations. Some caretakers believe that discussing sex implies consent or promotes sexual relations among their teenagers. Neither of these convictions is valid. Talking with teenagers about sex does not prompt them to participate in sexual activities. Caretakers should also work on being good examples for teenagers. A parent's conduct should match his/her words. The "do as I say, not as I do" approach will greatly affect youngsters who are watchful and consistent spectators of the

adults in their lives. Numerous suggestions were offered for adults regarding teen pregnancy

(The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2008):

- Be clear about personal qualities and states of mind.

- Talk with young people early and regularly and be precise.

- Establish guidelines, curfews, and desires for conduct.

- Know the adolescent's companions and their families.

- Encourage communal exercises and keep a tight rein on one-on-one dating at an early
  age.

- Set points of confinement of a 2 to 3 year age distinction while a child is a high
  schooler.

- Talk with young people about the objectives for what's to come.

- Encourage extraordinary and achievable opportunities for school.

- Know what the high schooler is focused on, what they are listening to, and what they
  are reading.

- Make it a priority to have a great relationship with teenagers.

Supports Provided to Teenage Mothers

School-Provided Support

In an effort to improve the graduation rates of pregnant teenagers relative to federal

guidelines, school districts in the United States have applied support in the form of daycare,

clinics, and in-school or after school specialized programs. These support services have caused

graduation rates to increase in many schools across the country (Cornell University, 2015).

Daycare

For children who also have children, daycare centers provide those teen parents with an opportunity to continue with school and graduate with their high school diploma while receiving assistance with the everyday tasks of being a parent. Although teenage pregnancies in the United States have decreased significantly, advocates of the daycare programs believe they are aiding in preventing teenagers from dropping out of school to care for their newborns, along with the additional advantage of providing their babies the growth they need. However, some opponents believe the daycare centers encourage unprotected sex by teenagers. Many believe the daycare centers are enabling teenage pregnancy. Advocates are adamant that their daycare centers' task is to aid teen parents to receive their high school diploma. Almost 33% of adolescent young ladies who have dropped out of secondary school refer to pregnancy or parenthood as a reason for dropping out, and just 40% of adolescent moms move on from secondary school (The United States Coalition of Teen Pregnancy Prevention, 2008). It is necessary to aid youthful moms to remain in school, earn their secondary school endorsements, and accomplish future goals. One approach to ensure that is by providing the necessary assistance. Most teenage parents enjoy the idea of having an onsite daycare so that they do not have to worry about who is caring for the baby while they are in school.

Clinics

There are many pregnant teenagers or young mothers who do not have a primary care physician. Once the pregnant mothers receive some kind of health care, possibly at a school-based health center, their absenteeism rates and dropout rates may decrease. Having appointments at a school-based clinic may provide encouragement to the teenage mothers not to miss school, especially if they were not receiving medical care anywhere else. Irrespective of the

reasons, students who use the school-based clinics attend school more frequently than those who did not.

School Specialized Programs

Research indicates that secondary school dropouts are paid less cash, are in poorer physical condition, and will probably have issues with the law. Adolescents who are pregnant or who are caretakers are particularly more inclined to drop out of school. There are several projects intended to help teenagers stay in school. Young people who are a part of both school and community-based projects were more averse to dropping out and more inclined to move on from secondary school (Cornell University, 2015). Programs that were fully funded and staffed are believed to be more successful in achieving positive outcomes. There is solid proof that dropout deterrence programs for high school moms, particularly multi-benefit projects and participation examination programs, raise graduation rates (Steinka-Fry & Tanner-Smith, 2011). Multi-benefit programs significantly improve the probability that adolescent mothers will move on from high school, with or without money related motivations, to become successful. Generally, such projects raise graduation rates by 10 to 12 points.

Participation in examination programs that incorporate training additionally raise graduation rates among pregnant and parenting young adolescents by 12 points.

Summary

In the United States, the education of pregnant and parenting teenagers has changed in recent years from total isolation to total acceptance. There are laws that state that pregnant teenagers cannot be excluded from schools or school activities. However, these laws are not being enforced worldwide, and unfortunately, some teenagers are still being excluded. Some pregnant teenagers are still being denied the same education as their peers who are not pregnant.

Various factors, such as poverty, race, academic achievement, childhood upbringing, living environment, religious beliefs, health, and family structure may indicate a higher risk of pregnancy. The traits of poverty, academic achievement, and childhood upbringing may influence why pregnant teenagers do not complete high school. It is crucial to remember that when the traits are grouped together, the effect on the teenager may not be the same when these traits are not grouped together. The Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Approach stipulates that factors, such as some of the traits detailed in this study, fit into different systems and interact with one another. These traits should also be studied concurrently to foster better understanding.

Although there is significant research that publicizes the connections of traits and teenagers' risk for pregnancy and subsequent graduation, some of the research is inconsistent. Some studies imply that race has an important influence on the risk of teenage pregnancy while other research finds that socioeconomic status has a greater influence on the risk of teenage pregnancy. Some research upholds that religious beliefs have a positive connection with teenage pregnancy, and other researchers claim the opposite is true. These contradictions can make interpretation confusing.

Finally, research on specific supports provided by schools in the United States specifies these supports may help to increase pregnant teenagers' odds of graduation. Some school districts have designed and implemented programs to assist pregnant teenagers to earn a high school diploma. Other school districts have focused only on on-campus daycare centers or clinics designed to meet the needs of pregnant teenagers. Nevertheless, all of these support systems have shown some success. Numerous published researches on pregnant teenagers, both on possible indicators of pregnancy and on possible indicators of high school exists. This collection of research is sometimes contradictory and can be perplexing. There is also research on school-

provided support that has been proven successful. With the principles of Bronfenbrenner's

Ecological Systems Theory, all the factors should be considered simultaneously for true

understanding.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research sought to determine the perceptions of teenagers in rural Tennessee after becoming pregnant relative to high school experiences that include the effects of personal traits and support provided by the school. The purpose of this research was to develop a manual of suggested support for pregnant teenagers in high school in rural Tennessee based on students' personal traits. To ensure the objective is perfected, this thesis tried to see how an adolescent in rural Tennessee felt after she wound up pregnant while in high school while proceeding to gain a her diploma along with the following obstacles: high school encounters, the influences of the young mothers' individual qualities on high school encounters, provisions given by the school that were recognized as being useful, and what the young mothers felt was the driving force for them leading up to their high school graduation.

This chapter describes the dissertation's research plan, including sampling, interview rules, research, interview and participant qualitative questionnaire questions, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. This chapter also thoroughly explains the qualitative methodology used for this study.

Qualitative Phenomenological Research

Edmund Husserl developed the Qualitative Phenomenological Research. Researchers became more interested in qualitative methods when it was discovered that there were limitations with quantitative methodology while investigating questions concerning human lives. In qualitative research, whether it is a group of individuals that are in discussion of the topic at hand, detailed meetings, or surveys, researchers search for the conclusions, inspirations, and provocations behind an individuals' conduct. Rather than estimating an amount, subjective

research elucidates the more detailed, emotional, and less quantifiable occurrences that impact individuals (Inter Q, 2018).

Phenomenology is a subjective research strategy that is utilized to portray how individuals encounter a specific spectacle. A phenomenological analysis attempts to discard predispositions and biased suppositions about human encounters, sentiments, and reactions to a specific circumstance. It enables the analyst to investigate the observations, points of view, understandings, and sentiments of those individuals who have experienced the spectacle or circumstance of intrigue (Giorgi, 2012). There are many types of phenomenology, including Hermeneutic Phenomenology. In this type of phenomenology, a researcher will interpret text, which have now been expanded into other forms of multimedia such as blogs and webpages, to determine a person's lived experience with some kind of phenomenon. A sample research question in this type of phenomenology could be, "What is a patient's experience being treated for lupus as interpreted through blogs and tweets?" Transcendental Phenomenology focuses on individuals' importance of a lived understanding of an idea or spectacle. The motivation behind a supernatural phenomenology is to portray the quintessence and the idea of encountering spectacles. An examination question in this sort of phenomenology could be phrased as, "What is the experience of being treated for lupus?"

Husserl trained Martin Heidegger, who attended a German university with Husserl, with the expectation that Heidegger would continue his work with descriptive phenomenology. After Husserl secured Heidegger's professorship as his replacement, Heidegger distanced himself from Husserl and his phenomenological perspectives. Heidegger continued to concentrate on phenomenology, but in a philosophically-amended manner. Heidegger's view of phenomenology, an interpretive approach, does not separate the human experience from his

environment. Today, both descriptive and interpretive forms of phenomenology are used in qualitative research, depending upon the philosophy of the researcher (Giorgi, 2012).

Research Questions

1. What were the educational experiences in high school for young teenaged mothers in rural Tennessee who earned their diploma?

2. What were the personal barriers and the positive influences that the young teenaged mothers faced while receiving their high school diploma?

3. What could the school system do to assist the young pregnant teenaged mothers?

Sample

Qualitative and quantitative sampling are distinctive. Qualitative research is based on purposive sampling. This is a selective form of sampling whereby the researcher selects a sample population based on certain characteristics. Quantitative research, however, uses random sampling. Random sampling is a sampling method in which a group is selected to represent a larger population (EvaSys, 2015).

This research sought to examine the everyday functions of the participants who became pregnant in high school and ultimately received their high school diploma. For the student who was enrolled in high school, a parental consent form was signed and returned to allow her to participate in the study.

Description of Instruments

Questionnaires were dispersed to all teachers included in the study. Study participants included students, parents, and faculty and staff of rural schools in Tennessee. The questionnaire took approximately 45 minutes to complete and covered the topics of the student's background, home environment, academic plans, and experiences in school.

Interviews were used to gather data. Interviews were also audio-recorded. There are numerous advantages to utilizing interviews to gather data. Interviews allow the researcher to get a more detailed meaning that cannot be acquired by other instruments. The researcher can reword the questions that are asked so that the interviewee can better understand. Interviews allow the researcher to explain exactly what they mean, unlike questionnaires (Rangiah, 2012). Interviews were conducted with students.

Focus Group discussions allow the participants to provide responses that are more honest and to "piggyback" off each other. Focus groups have the ability to create more natural responses from the interviewees about the topic at hand. Focus groups also allow the researcher to get a better understanding of the insights of people and their feelings about the topic (Evidence Base, 2006).

Research Design

Interpretive phenomenology was used for this qualitative study. Interpretive phenomenology focuses on the research participants and their world as a unit. The frameworks that were used for this study include, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The Resilience Theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Problem-Behavior Theory. All support the principles of interpretive phenomenology. These interactions between the environment and the individual proved to be critical. The goal of an interpretative phenomenological study is to investigate in detail how members understand their own social world (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Interpretive phenomenology also highlights the association between a researcher and the study, which includes pre-understandings. (Laverty, 2003).

Study Participants

Five students served as research participants for this study. The five participants in the study consisted of four African-American and one Hispanic young lady. Each participant was experiencing a different stage of their pregnancy, different circumstances, and home life. All the participants completed the entire study. Student and parent consent forms were signed at the beginning of the study. The students were also informed throughout the process, student's names would be anonymous on any official documentation.

Trustworthiness

Fidelity was established through triangulation of data, peer debriefing, member checks, and a detailed description of the data collected. Peer debriefing was conducted before and after the survey and interviews. One school administrator and one English teacher was asked to conduct the peer debriefing for the researcher. Members checks were completed informally, to clarify misunderstandings or any questions that might occur. The triangulation of data was accomplished by using focus group interviews, a survey and student interviews.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the many characteristics of teenage mothers and to consider the experiences they encountered as they worked towards high school graduation. Through this research, the study involved collecting data via interviews, questionnaire and a focus group meeting. The interviews allowed the participants the opportunity to provide information about their experience as a pregnant high school student or new teenage mother. The participants for this study were selected using purposeful sampling. Each student selected to participate in the study, represented one rural public-school district in Northeast Tennessee. The name of the respective school and participants was removed and replaced with a letter to be used consistently throughout the research and findings.

In this qualitative data analysis, three different types of coding took place: open, axial, and selective. The coding process organized the data in to measurable themes. Codes are important because the researcher can demonstration that she collected the information and it is trustworthy for her readers. Codes allow data to be organized and structured (Yi, 2018). First, open coding was used to gather the set themes from surveys, focus group meeting, and interviews. Next, axial coding followed with the effort to categorize information into themes and then to essential concepts. Finally, selective coding was used to classify themes that supported assumptions and suggested recommendations.

Research Questions

1. What were the educational experiences in high school for young teenaged mothers in rural Tennessee who earned their diploma?

2. What were the personal barriers and the positive influences that the young teenaged mothers faced while receiving their high school diploma?

3. What could the school system do to assist the young pregnant teenaged mothers?

   Before the outcomes are portrayed, it is critical to share the accounts of the five teenage

   mothers who contributed to this study.

Study Participants

Qualitative research is based on purposive sampling. This is a selective form of sampling

where the researcher selects a sample population based on certain characteristics. The school

currently has 550 students and 43 full-time teachers. The school offers an assistance program

named the Student Support Program (SSS). The program helps retain and graduate students from

diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds at the highest possible rate. The program also promotes

an academically focused climate supportive of the success of students.

The five participants in the study consisted of four African-American and one Hispanic

young lady. Each participant was experiencing a different stage of their pregnancy, different

circumstances, and home life. All the participants completed the entire study. Figure 4.1

identifies the characteristics for the participants of the study,

Figure 4.1

Characteristics of Students

Participants	Race	Age	Age of Father	High School Diploma/GED	# of Children
Student A	African-American	18	19	Diploma with honors	1
Student B	African-American	21	21	Diploma	1
Student C	African-American	19	17	Diploma	1
Student D	African-American	16	15	Currently in High school	1
Student E	Hispanic	20	22	GED	2

Figure 4.1 represents demographic characteristic of each participating student within this study.

Student A

       Student A graduated high school in 2018 with honors. Because of her academic achievement, she graduated in the top 15% of her high school class. Currently, Student A lives with her mother, her two younger brothers, and her baby. She works as a cook and attends a local community college, part-time.

Student B

       Student B became pregnant with a baby girl during her first year. She mentioned that she fell prey to peer pressure. Student B continued in high school while being a full-time parent. She began working when her baby was three months old. She is now working towards finishing her bachelor's degree.

Student C

       Student C became pregnant four months before graduation and she was devastated. She was very active in school. However, being a mother required her time and freedom. She enrolled in a local college and began working full time. When this research study was over, Student C was still going to school and working. She and the father of her child are no longer together, but she still stays with members of his family from time to time.

Student D

       Student D is currently in high school. She became pregnant six months ago. She makes average grades. Student D is currently pregnant again and need mores assistance with her pregnancy.

Student E

       Student E was supposed to graduate with the class of 2016. She became pregnant during her junior year of high school. She dropped out her senior year and got her GED. Her grades were not good. She was not motivated by anything it seemed. She later enrolled to take the classes required to receive her GED She works third shift at a diner.

Data Collection Process

Survey

A ten-question survey was used to collect data from the research participants. The data was

collected through an online questionnaire that was emailed to each participating teen mother.

The questionnaire was a 5-point Likert scale survey where each participant was asked to answer

a variety of questions using the responses: Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly

disagree (Appendix G). All five participants were invited to participate in the survey on January

4th-11th, 2019. All five participants (100%) participated in the survey. Table 4.1 provides the data

collected. After translating the responses for each student participating, Question 1 revealed that

60% agreed that one burden about being a teenage parent is that they could not do the things they

liked to do before the baby was born. Question 2 shared that 40% could not count on their

families for help with everyday activities, such as child care, meals, laundry, or transportation.

Question 4 reported that 60% of the participants gave a neutral response when asked if the

fathers of the children currently or will continue to play an active part in the child's life.

Question 40% stated they could not count on their family members to help. Question 9 indicated

60% of the teen mothers gave neutral responses when asked if teenage pregnancy is a big

problem in their community. In question 10, all respondents agreed that if some of their friends

asked for advice about becoming a teenage parent, 100% would tell them to wait until they were

older to have a child.

Table 4.1

5-point Likert Scale

Question Number	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	60.00%	20.00%
2	40.00%	0.00%	20.00%	40.00%	0.00%
3	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	40.00%	0.00%
4	20.00%	0.00%	60.00%	0.00%	20.00%
5	40.00%	20.00%	0.00%	20.00%	20.00%
6	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
7	0.00%	40.00%	20.00%	40.00%	0.00%
8	20.00%	20.00%	20.00%	40.00%	0.00%
9	20.00%	0.00%	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%
10	0.00%	0.00%	40.00%	20.00%	40.00%

Table 4.1 represents the percentage of respondents to each question in the Likert scale questionnaire who: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree.

Interview

This study collected data from five teenage mothers from the above mentioned school who were either pregnant or have already delivered during high school. The ten-question interview guide was sent out January 16, 2019 and was collected back up on January 23, 2019. In order to participate in this study, a consent form was issued to the students (Appendix E) or from their legal guardians (Appendix D) for approval. The interviews were audio recorded so that they could be transcribed.

Figure 4.2: Interview Guide

1. Were you able to participate in homebound?

2. How did your school administrators, teachers, and classmates treat you?

3. How do you balance going to school and being pregnant?

4. How do you handle being pregnant or being a teenaged mother?

5. Who or what has had the greatest impact on you finishing high school?

6. What is your life like when you get home after school?

7. Have any of your teachers or your school counselors tried to help you with your pregnancy?

8. Do you think that by being pregnant or by being a teenage mother, you are taught differently?

9. Have your teachers or school counselors encouraged you in a way that you are determined to finish high school and possibly continue on to college?

10. Do you think sexual education should be a required course for students to take?

Figure 4.2 shows the interview questions that the young mothers answered. One of the interview questions asked if they were able to participate in homebound. Four of them stated that although they were able to participate in homebound, it did not make up for being absent from school. Student B stated that she when she returned to school, she felt that her academic skills were not on par with that of her peers that lead her feeling confused. The response to Question 3 revealed that three of the five participants responded that life was still relatively simple because they had someone at home to help them. However, two participants stated that life was hard because they did not have much help at home. Question 10 disclosed that every participant believed that sexual education should be required. Student B stated that she wished the course

was offered in high school. The response to question 5 showed that all participants reported that their child was their motivation to finish high school or the GED

Focus Group

After gathering data from both the surveys and interviews, a focus group was formed with the young mothers. The focus group met one time on February 17, 2019 for two hours and thirty minutes. It was important to meet at a neutral spot where the girls would feel comfortable and relaxed. The environment of the focus group allowed some of the participants to become more confident. Some of them believed they could not be as successful while having a young child. In this non-judgmental zone, the focus group deemed it a safe place open up and realize that many options were available.

Appendix H provided the focus group questions. Student D reported the best time to start having children is when a person is financially and mentally stable. The other four participants agreed that individuals, especially teenagers, should not have a child until they are able to provide financially, mentally, and emotionally. Student A stated that her future plans did not change much, but were somewhat altered, when she became pregnant. She realized that she would not be able to think only about herself. Figures 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 represent the coding process of this research study.

Figure 4.3: Coding Data for Research Question One: <u>What were the educational experiences in high school for young teenaged mothers in rural Tennessee who earned their diploma?</u>

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
My classmates were very understanding	Encouragement	Acceptance	Due to the lack of acceptance, support, and encouragement, most of the participants were ashamed and embarrassed because of their pregnancy.
My classmates always wanted to be around me	Felt reassured of becoming pregnant		
My classmates treated me equal to everyone else	Feelings of recognition		
Students connections with school personnel counselor	The need to culturally relate to adult figure	Lack of support	
None of the school personnel cared about the pregnant girls	The feeling of isolation		
Very honest and straightforward with me	Being honest and open develops trust		
Bad news travels faster than good news	Talk discreetly	Encouraging words	
I wanted my pregnancy to be private	Share news with select people		
All everyone does is talk negatively about you	Motivation is lacking		
I work by myself in class because everyone else talks	Establishing isolation		

Figure 4.4: Coding Data for Research Question Two: <u>What were the personal barriers and the positive influences that the young teenaged mothers faced while receiving their high school diploma?</u>

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Single mothers of teenage parent had to financially support the entire household on minimum wage	Make sacrifices financially	Resiliency	Because the participants developed resiliency, maintained perseverance, and had positive role models, they were able to receive either their high school diploma or their GED successfully.
Mother of teenage parent worked hard daily to provide for our household	Young grandmother shows determination		
I was determined to turn my pregnancy into a positive	Developing a will power attitude	Perseverance	
I was not forfeiting my education	Showing perseverance		
Bad childhood experiences filter over into bad school experiences	Cycle of bad behavior continues	Positive role models	
I was 6-month-old before I told my mother I was pregnant	Developing trust eliminates repeat problems		

Figure 4.5: Coding Data for Research Question Three: <u>What could the school system do to assist the young pregnant teenaged mothers?</u>

Raw Data	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
No programs were available to assist in graduation	Aide needed to assist young mothers	Efficacy of programs	Having effective school support programs and being able to provide resources for the participants was a deciding factor as to whether they would return to school after the birth of their child.
The programs that existed were quickly phased out	Programs need to be created		
More programs need to be added	Need to retain existing programs		
This is a voucher for my baby to pay for on-site daycare	Value of a good program	Needs met	
My textbooks are covered under this program	Young mothers benefit by having their child with at school them		
I have been assigned a tutor			

Three research questions were used for this research study, and those research questions along with the qualitative data analysis are examined in the section.

Emerging Themes from Research Question One

After gathering and analyzing data from the surveys, interview guide, and focus group, the following three themes were formulated and answered the first research question of this qualitative study: What were the educational experiences in high school for young teenaged mothers in rural Tennessee who earned their diploma? Figure 4.3 explains the themes found in the first research question.

Acceptance: The focus group contributed to the discovery of the first theme in category one. "Despite common acceptance of stereotypes associated with teen pregnancy and parenthood, recent evidence has suggested that the response of teens to their early role transition

is individualistic with many young parents adapting effectively to associated challenges" (Weed & Nicholson, 2016). Student A defined what acceptance meant to her during the focus group. "Being accepted to me means that people will like me for who I am, no matter what my circumstance is. I know I have a baby, but when people treat me as an equal, I feel more comfortable being around them." From the data collected during the focus group, Student B stated that her classmates treated her the same. "My classmates and friends were very understanding of my situation. I was a well-rounded student before my pregnancy, so everyone knew me and checked on me daily. As time passed, my classmates became more interested in my pregnancy and I felt almost honored to be pregnant."

Student B reported that she had a similar experience. When she was pregnant, her classmates treated her as an equal and offered her plenty of help, if needed. All of her friends said that her baby would be treated as their little sister. Of the five pregnant teenaged mothers, all found that the focus group discussion and interaction were important to them and felt accepted enough to talk about their experiences. During the focus group session, Student C reported that hearing others call others call her a "teenage parent" made her uncomfortable. "The name calling made me feel inadequate of being a mother. Although I had my baby at a young age, I believed he was my greatest accomplishment." However, Student C reported that when she noticed others' disapproval of her teenage pregnancy, the accomplishment she believed to be the greatest turned to into her greatest embarrassment. The focus group allowed these particular mothers to express their need to feel accepted and how it positively and negatively affected their educational experience.

Lack of Support: "An educator affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops" (Adams, 2013). "I wish people would say to me, 'Don't give up. You're doing fine." said

Student E. To know that these young mothers have someone in their corner and that they are supportive of them makes a world of difference. The survey and interview revealed that the participants did not have the support they would have liked to. One of the groups of people who had the most influence on support was the school personnel. The young mothers explained their experiences with school personnel, both positive and negative.

Student D reported that she thought she was going to instantly develop a relationship with school personnel. "My name was unfortunately left out of the graduation program. This really hurting my feelings. It felt like it was intentional because everyone else's name was printed, but they did not have a kid. I did." Student E shared her experience. "I was never really able to develop a relationship with school personnel. Some of my teachers were aware of my home life and my situation. I believe that if would have had their support during my pregnancy, my high school experience would have been better." Student E ultimately dropped out of school not knowing there were other options available to help her stay in school and improve her attendance.

Support can come in all forms. Being nonjudgmental and having empathy from teachers and classmates are just a couple of ways. Becoming a parent is a life changing experience for anyone, especially a teenager. With the right amount of support, the individuals have a better chance of figuring things out and flourishing. It is important to support teenage parents because they are more likely to experience abuse and abandonment than children of older parents. The abuse and abandonment can have a negative influence for the long-term on children and their communities. Almost half of teenage mothers graduate from high school before age 22, compared to 90% of their counterparts without children. Without a high school diploma, they could possibly earn less (Lewis, 2014).

Encouraging Words: Words of encouragement can help students identify themselves in a positive way. Positive words from parents, teachers, and school personnel are a rich source of internal motivation and guidance to children and teenagers. Often, students recall a person's words of encouragement for years to come (Price, 2017). Several of the young mothers stated that they did not receive many words of encouragement during their pregnancy. Based on the survey responses, all of the mothers agreed that having someone who consistently motivated them would have positively contributed to their overall educational experience. Student D reported that she yearned for inspirational words from school personnel and classmates because she did not receive encouragement at home. "When I get home from work, it is literally just my baby and me. I do not really talk to my mother. She doesn't ask me how my day went or how the baby is doing. She is occupied with other things most of the time."

Throughout the course of the interviews, the participants mentioned how their teachers positively influenced their education experiences. All of them expressed how certain school teachers would provide them with encouraging words. Student A shared her experience. "Some of my teachers were always easy to reach via email and some of them even gave me extra time to complete my assignments. Whenever we were in communication with each other, they would always encourage me to stay positive and stay strong."

A teacher from a rural high school in Tennessee shared her spiritual point view on how important encouraging words are to teenage mothers. "Providing encouraging words for a young lady who has become a mother can be an amazing thing. We must remember that they are still children. They don't need us to be judgmental. Instead, they need us to be loving, encouraging, and supportive."

During the focus group, three of the four mothers reported their teachers and peers were more supportive than unsuccessful

Emerging Themes from Research Question Two

Figure 4.4 explains the themes that were found in the second interview question, "What factors, positive or negative, contributed to the balance of going to school and being pregnant?" This interview question aligns with the second research question and the number of young mothers who felt each category had an influence on their experiences. The young mothers chose their themes based on the list of personal attributes that was provided to them when they received a copy of the interview questions. Their responses included both negative and positive influences of their own characteristics on their high school experience.

Resiliency: The participants in the study have experienced many difficulties throughout their brief lives. Some of those struggles include financial and educational struggles. Teenage mothers have the ability to become resilient when they are supported by family, friends, and school personnel. With help, young mothers will show resiliency by figuring out how to adapt to the difficulties of childbearing and position their lives back on track again to accomplish their educational goals (Adams, 2013).

Two of the young mothers identified their financial situation as having a negative influence on their high school experiences. Student B reported that she was raised in a single parent home and that her mother had to support the entire household with no help from her father. "Although it was a very hard time, financially, for my family, my mother supported me and persuaded me to get a job. My mother volunteered to watch the baby while I worked." Another young mother said her financial situation was the reason she dropped out of high school and pursued her GED. Student E knew her mother could not take care of her and her baby

financially, which is why she decided to leave school. Student D reported, "Becoming pregnant and having the responsibilities that come with parenting has inspired me to stay in school and graduate. I really want to do better in school so that I can be a role model for my baby."

The best results for teenage mothers after giving birth are to graduate from high school, obtain a college degree of some sort, find a well-paying job, and become independent.

Perseverance: Perseverance, also referred to as grit or tenacity, is the ability to overcome setbacks in order to accomplish a goal (Lewis, 2014)**.** Perseverance and resiliency go hand in hand, but because perseverance is a continued effort, the two are different.

All of the participants who shared academic ambitions stated that they related them to having a positive effect on their educational experiences and success. Student B was determined to turn her pregnancy into a positive, no matter what. "I did not want my dreams to end when I became pregnant." Student C stated that, "Although I had to forfeit some things, I was not going to forfeit my education." Student A stated that dropping out was out of the question. "I was not a student who struggled academically, so I was not going to let my pregnancy hold me back from getting my high school diploma."

The interview, survey, and focus group discovered that all of the participants encountered continuous hardships. Some of the mothers were unemployed when they gave birth. They had no real financial stability of their own. They constantly had to rely on someone else to take them places to get the things they needed for the baby and themselves. During the focus group, one of the participants shared that her mother did not have a car or a job, and that she relied on her live in boyfriend to take care of her. Student E stated, "It was horrible. It seemed like every time we got ahead, something bad happened. When we didn't have a car, so any time we needed something, we would either have to wait for my mother's boyfriend, or we would have to walk."

Although Student E did not graduate high school, she did go on to get her GED. The other participants were constantly faced with similar situations as well, but they never gave up. They persevered through their hard times.

Positive Role Models: According to the survey, all of the participants except one stated that they had at least one positive person they could look up to. These people were people they would want to be like. Some of the young mothers suffered from their parents' divorces and substance abuse issues. One young mother said she experienced both negative and positive childhood experiences that had an influence on her high school education. Student B reported, "My pregnancy was very upsetting for my family members with whom I lived with. I felt like I let them down tremendously." Student B then went on to report that her mother was the most important person in her life at the time. She stated that her mother was a great example of how to be a mother. Becoming pregnant was something she believed would break her mother's heart.

Student A shared, "I'm glad I have a brother. Although he is younger than I am, I look up to how he protects our family. When I asked him who taught him how to be a good protector for his family, he mentioned that his role model told him how." The experience that Student A shared about her brother exemplified the importance of having a positive role model. As Student B mentioned the impact of her mother, parents have the ability to powerful role models. What a parent says and how they act around their child can have a lasting impression on their child's attitude and morals, both now and in the future.

In order to be a role model for anyone, an individual has to model the behavior they want to see. Student B stated, "I have watched how my mother has behaved in intense moments that could have cause her to act out of character. Instead, she showed patience and maintained a good attitude. She has been a true role model for me to follow leading up to my graduation."

Emerging Themes from Research Question Three

The third research question explores the importance of the school system and school-based support programs that assist the pregnant and parenting teenage mothers. One of the interview questions that I asked the pregnant and parenting teenaged mothers was, "Are there systems or structures in place that help you stay in school?" This question allowed me to collect data. Figure 4.5 explains the themes found in the third research question.

Supports that are provided by the school, such as on-campus daycare and specialized programs, can be located in schools throughout the country. Researchers have said that when those programs are implemented, graduation rates increase. The process-oriented viewpoint posits that the interaction between the environment and the individual creates resilience. Receiving support from the individual's environment allows the individual to be victorious over any risk and cope effectively with adversity (Zayers & Block, 2012).

Efficacy of Programs: Support systems have a part in keeping pregnant and parenting mothers in high school. Even more so, if the programs were of some benefit to the participants, they would attend them. Out of the five young mothers, three of them reported that their high schools had no in school programs that helped assist them as they tried to graduate. Student C reported that her school had a program for students to attend. "An abstinence program had been started, but quickly disbanded due to lack of participation. The only reason most of us went was because they fed us pizza."

Student E stated that if schools offered beneficial programs, the girls that are currently pregnant could possibly become more educated and more prepared to be a parent. Student C had similar feelings about the lack of programs offered. "My school should add more programs to help young mothers when they are absent from school. Certain programs should be offered to

teenage parents, and even other students, to assist them in graduating from high school. Sex is an expected part of life. Regardless is a class is taught on it, it will still happen. Sex is a basic element of being a human being, but not all states require it as a course in school. Student D reported, "We need sex education in our schools because a lot of people don't really know what they're getting themselves into. Just because we take sex education doesn't mean that it's encouraging us to have it. I think it's doing the opposite."

Needs Met: Support systems have a part in keeping pregnant and parenting mothers in high school. The participants explained their importance to their educational success. In order for the participants to be successful academically and in life, they had to have the things that would allow them to be successful.

Out of the five young mothers, three of them reported that their high schools had no in school programs that helped assist them as they tried to graduate. Student E stated that she hoped some kind of system would be in place to help her graduate when she became pregnant. "I have seen other schools provide their teenage parents with things like onsite daycare. I have even seen some schools provide transportation for the mother and their child." Student C shared a positive experience for an offsite program. "Although there were no programs in high school for teenage parents, I was able to be a part of the Student Support System (SSS). It is offered in college and not in high school and it allowed me to stay on track academically. I have a voucher for my child to be in daycare, and without the voucher, I would not be able to afford daycare every week. I would also not be able to attend classes on campus."

Upon attending college, Student B was able to take part in government assistance programs, which helped her get valuable things for her and her child. "In high school, I was able to sign up for WIC, thanks to our school social worker. She also helped me sign up for a teenage

parenting class that gave me some insight on how to be a better mother." It was discovered during the focus group that the school social worker added to some of the participants' educational experience in positive way. She regularly visited the young mothers during the parenting classes and she spoke with them during the class if they had any questions.

Summary

The data collected from the participants in this study relating to pregnancy and the effect on graduation in a rural Tennessee town. The focus of the themes was based on responses available from young girls who encountered pregnancy as teenagers while they went on to earn their high school diploma. Their distinctive experiences, as well as their impression of their surroundings had on their outcomes were communicated, uncovering various themes. Although the pregnant and parenting teenaged mothers were all different in age, they each shared similarity that included themes such as support, resiliency, and efficacy of programs. In summary, this study revealed that young teenage mothers can work with and thorough life's barriers to achieve self-confidence, family and field support, and obtain goals that make for a productive and positive life. Chapter 5 provides conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to review and compare the many characteristics between teenage parents to understand their perceptions of being a teenage parent in high school and what they believed provided the most encouragement leading up to their high school graduation. This research examined how a student's characteristics and their activities or lack of activities impacted the high school dropout rate. While quitting high school is closely related to the support of the parents and community involvement, many do not understand teenage parenting and failure to complete high school. Presently, the link between the individual characteristics, community influence, and academic abilities has not been thoroughly described for teenage mothers. Determining the negative influence that teenage pregnancy has on high school graduation magnifies the importance that all parts of the high school experience support pregnant and parenting teenagers. There is a substantial need to understand the struggles of being a teenage parent involving dropping out of high school. By understanding a teenager's view of her high school experiences, support that meets their needs would help increase the chances for high school graduation (Viebeck, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Teenage pregnancy has a significant influence on the likelihood of high school graduation for girls. Rates between Latino (35%) and African American (37%) girls are substantially increased than those of other races. Academic accomplishments change the financial status of teen mothers. Approximately 66% of children who are born to mothers who are younger than the age of 18 actually graduate from when compared to the 78% of their peers with parents who are over the age of 20 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013).

According to Shuger (2012), almost 30% of teenage girls who have dropped out of high school blame early pregnancy or early parenthood as a main cause. Only four of ten teenage mothers graduate from high school, and no more than two of ten of those mothers graduate from college by age 30. The high school dropout rate in the United States remains a crisis; approximately 25% of the American population do not complete high school with their classmates. Moreover, the national graduation rate improved by 3.5 percentage points between 2001 and 2009 (from 72% in 2001 to 75% percent in 2009). Risk factors concerning health have been amplified for teenaged mothers and their offspring, as well as the more serious danger of early birth, grief among the teenaged mothers, and the unfortunate demise of either the parent or child (Shuger, 2012).

Research Questions

The participants' involvement was observed in relation to the accompanying research questions:

1. What were the educational experiences in high school for young teenaged mothers in rural Tennessee who earned their diploma?

2. What were the personal barriers and the positive influences that the young teenaged mothers faced while receiving their high school diploma?

3. What could the school system do to assist the young pregnant teenaged mothers?

Discussion

Because of this study, the research questions were answered through surveys, interviews, and focus group responses from five teenage mothers from a rural high school in Tennessee. In depth observations and logs were recorded throughout the focus group and interviews to assist in the collection of data. In addition, the focus group and interviews were audio recorded and

scripted. The data that was gathered from the focus group, survey, and interview were coded using open, axial, and selective coding.

Emerging Themes from Research Question One

The first research question revealed three themes: acceptance, lack of support, and encouraging words. Category one highlighted the importance of being acceptance and how it assists young mothers in receiving their high school diploma. The findings mentioned below will explain the themes found in category one.

Despite common acceptance of stereotypes associated with teen pregnancy and parenthood, recent evidence has suggested that the response of teens to their early role transition is individualistic with many young parents adapting effectively to associated challenges (Weed & Nicholson, 2016). From the data collected in this study, some of the participants reported their classmates as being individuals who showed equality towards them. The young mothers reported that as time passed, their classmates showed interest in their pregnancy and in their wellbeing. All of the participants stated that the interaction during the focus group discussion was important to them because they felt comfortable enough to talk about their experiences without feeling ashamed.

In regard to the second theme, lack of support, the participants reported that they experienced both positive and negative encounters. "An educator affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops" (Adams, 2013). The participants stated that the negativity they experienced from school personnel did not assist them in receiving their high school diploma. School personnel has a significant influence on the academic success of students. When schools are filled with positive and dynamic faculty and staff, students are the ultimate recipients. Regardless of the challenges students may face, school personnel has to set the bar high, for teen

mothers and for teens who do not have children, to provide the support each student needs. A teacher has the most direct influence on student's success in the classroom, and for the participants of the study, a high school diploma.

The last theme discovered in category one was encouraging words. Words of encouragement can help a student identify themselves in a positive way. Positive words from parents, teachers, and school personnel are a rich source of internal motivation and guidance to children and teenagers. Often, students recall a person's words of encouragement for years to come (Price, 2017). Several of the participants stated that they did not receive many words of encouragement during their pregnancy. All of the participants agreed that having someone who consistently motivated them would have positively contributed to their overall educational experience.

Emerging Themes from Research Question Two

The young mothers chose their themes based on the list of personal attributes that was provided to them when they received a copy of the interview questions. Their responses included both negative and positive influences of their own characteristics on their high school experience. The second research question revealed three themes: resiliency, perseverance, and positive role models. Four of the participants in this study successfully earned a high school diploma despite their personal struggles both in and out of school. Because of those personal struggles, they developed high levels of resilience. Although going to school and being a teenage parent was difficult, the participants did not consider leaving school. Four of the participants mentioned that they had already been determined to graduate high school before the got pregnant. As a pregnant or parenting teenager, the participants stated that they had no intentions

on changing their mind. All of the participants earned some kind of higher education degree after high school.

The participants mentioned their shame from becoming pregnant at such a young age. The participants experienced different levels of shame put on them from society. Although it is difficult to achieve a degree after having a child in high school, each participant displayed some level of perseverance and proved that they would continue in school to receive their high school diploma. During the interview, it was discovered that one of the participants, who did not finish high school, stated that she wanted to have a higher degree, although she was unable to receive her high school diploma. Instead, she enrolled into a GED program. The research study discovered that the participants did indeed have a hard time finishing high school, but they all developed perseverance to continue their high school experience.

The last theme that was discovered in category two was positive role models. Some of the participants suffered from their parents' divorces and their parent's substance abuse issues. The participants experienced both negative and positive childhood experiences that had an influence on their high school education. During the focus group discussion, it was discovered that the positive role models in the participants' lives showed them how to exhibit honesty, positiveness, confidence, grit, and kindness. All of those traits play a significant role in their positive development. According to the survey responses, the participants believed that the role models in their lives contributed either positively or negatively towards their educational experiences. All of the participants stated that in order for them to successfully complete high school, they needed a role model.

Emerging Themes from Research Question Three

The third research question explores the importance of the school system and school-based support programs that assist the pregnant and parenting teenage mothers, and it revealed three themes: acceptance, lack of support, and encouraging words. Category three highlighted the importance of efficacy of programs and having needs met and how those things assist young mothers in receiving their high school diploma. The findings mentioned below will explain the themes found in category three.

Students, especially pregnant or parenting mothers, who can participate in programs that are effective, experience higher academic success than students who do not participate. When a program is effective, students become more motivated to attend them and they can gain a better understanding of the program. Based on the contents of the program, the student may be able to apply the steps to their life. Effective programs can also help students score higher on assessments and can assist them in graduation, which is the ultimate goal.

Through the focus group, survey, and interview responses, the participants reported that some of the programs they are a part of, such as the Student Support Program (SSS), helps them stay in school, graduate, and obtain the skills needed for parenting. The types of programs have the ability to provide students with peer support and reassurance to help them avoid feeling isolated due to their pregnancy. Programs like the School Support Program can help decrease the dropout rate and improve the health of both teenage parent and her child.

Conclusion

This study revealed the perceptions of teenage mothers on the difficulties of remaining in public school in rural Tennessee. Participant surveys, interviews, and focus groups were the foundations of gathering data. The participants shared different responses in regards to the things

that contributed positively or negatively towards their educational experiences. Throughout the interview and focus group meeting, all of the participants referred to their child(ren) as being their motivation to either receive their high school diploma or their GED. The participants depended on the opinions and beliefs of their role models to create their own self beliefs. A few of the participants verbally spoke out about who the key people were in their lives that helped facilitate their high school experience in terms of graduating high school.

Other things that contributed to the participants' perceptions were overcoming the negatives associated with being a teenage mother, being a positive role model for their children, and being financially stable. The participants were determined to separate themselves from any negativity that did not assist them in becoming better parents and better women. Their ultimate goal was to graduate high school and begin a career. Overall, it appears that the participants in this study have both negative and positive perceptions about being a teenage mother. The participants all experienced isolation and being singled out to some degree. They experienced shame and gossip as well. Words of encouragement revealed to be one of the best motivational tools for the participants. Participants in this study had the common observation of communicating the importance of contraceptive use. Although the participants did not regret having a child, they all agreed that it is tremendously hard being a young parent.

Implications

This study showed that some pregnant teenagers are self-conscious about their pregnancy, causing graduating from high school to be a struggle. Unlike other issues that teenagers face in high school, teenage pregnancy is one that cannot be overlooked. Pregnancy is very visible, even for the slimmest person. This can be an embarrassment for some students. Some of the participants in this study believed that they were the targets of gossip and some

believe they were not treated fairly by school personnel. For those reasons, some teenagers may choose to ultimately drop out of high school.

There are serious consequences that come along with dropping out of high school. The literature review in Chapter Two stated that high school dropouts are more likely to be unemployed or have lower paying jobs, rely on government assistance, and are more likely to struggle financially opposed to those who graduate. Although teenage pregnancy is declining, it is still a national issue. Administrators should prepare their staff and equip their school with support programs and support systems for those at-risk of dropping out. Programs for teenage parents and other students who may be at-risk of dropping out should increase the chance for students to remain in school until graduation. It may seem unnecessary to require sex education as a course, but it is critically needed to eliminate and decrease teenage pregnancies. Many teenagers do not understand their bodies and the reproductive system.

Limitations

This research was relatively small with only five participants an only one focus group meeting. Although confidentiality was ensured, several research participants were reluctant to participating in group discussions or having interviews audio-recorded because they were afraid their voices may be recognized. The age group of participants was also a limitation of this study. Many participants believed they would be judged based on their responses to the questions. Therefore, it was possible they would not answer the questions in a truthful manner. It was also possible that some girls were uncomfortable with some of the interview questions.

Recommendations for Future Study

The study revealed that inability to investigate the unsafe practices that brought about the young mothers' high school pregnancies restricted the research study's discoveries with respect

to the concept of The Theory of Reasoned Action. Without data relating to the young mothers' goals for displaying the conduct, what their dispositions about the conduct were, or what they assumed their closest community members understood about the conduct, further examination was impossible. Further research is necessary when linking the Theory of Reasoned Action to the issue of pregnant and parenting teenage mothers and their risky behaviors that lead to teenage pregnancy (Yi, 2018).

This research study was also reserved for only the teenagers who received a high school diploma from a rural school in Tennessee. More research is necessary that focuses on both other states similar to rural Tennessee and national teenagers nationwide. This would enable experts to compare teenaged mothers who earned a high school diploma with the teenaged mothers who did not. More research is necessary in focusing on individual characteristics of young teenagers other than those in this research study. This will give teachers more information about the relationships between chances of graduation.

Summary

Research proves that teenage parents experience drops in their academic achievements compared to teenagers who do not have children. It was reported that teenage parents regularly encountered a lack of support, both at home and at school before their pregnancy and sometimes afterwards. By improving these resources, particularly in the school setting, the academic achievement of teenage parents increased.

The school environment and their influence on teenage parents graduating from high school were reviewed. The study revealed that the school's expectations of teenage parents did not always line up with the teenage parents' expectations. According to the participants of the study, the school often had lower expectations. When the school did not embrace and support the academic

goals of the participants, they struggled academically. This was detrimental to their education and resulted in one of the participants dropping out.

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Appendices

Appendix A

School Board Approval Letter

School Board Approval Letter

Phone: ████████

November 14, 2018

Ms. Katrich Williams

We are pleased to inform you that your application for research in ████████ ████████ Department of Education has been approved by the Research Approval Committee. This approval is contingent upon the final approval from building level principals that may be involved in this research project.

The division of Accountability and Research is here to support you as you complete your research. If you have any specific questions, please reach out to ████████ ████████ with any questions and she can direct you to the most appropriate contact within our office.

We look forward to receiving a final copy of your findings, sent by email to ████████ ████████ once your research is complete.

Sincerely,

Director of Accountability and Research

Appendix B

High School Approval Letter

High School Approval Letter

Principal

Asst. Principal

Dean of Students

Behavioral Specialist

School Secretary

Bookkeeper

Family Partnership
Specialist

Registrar

Attendance

...vision
& to develop students
who are compassionate
to diversity, connected
to the technological
advances of tomorrow's
world, and committed to
a focus on success.

November 8, 2018

SCHOOL PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Institutional Review Board:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I give Katrich Williams permission to conduct the research titled "Perceptions of Teenage Mothers on Difficulties of Remaining in Public School in Rural Tennessee" at ████████. With the ████████ Department of Education's ████ permission, she may use students and teachers from ████████ in her study.

This also serves as a guarantee that ████████ acts in accordance with requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and will guarantee that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

Principal, ████████

Appendix C

IRB Approval

Katrich Williams - IRB Request

IRB

Fri 1/11, 12:08 PM

This request has been approved

In His service,

Gregory A. Casalenuovo, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC, FNP-C
Professor, Nursing
Associate Director, Honors Program
Carson-Newman University
C-N Box 71883
Jefferson City, TN 37760

Office: Pedersen #1
Phones: (865) 471-3236, office; (865) 471-4574, fax

God put a million, million doors in the world for his love to walk through, one of those doors is you –
Jason Gray

Appendix D

Parental Consent Form

Parental Consent Form

Being that your child is under 18, it has been requested that you complete this consent form to confirm that you give permission for your child to be used in a study on the "Perceptions of Teenage Mothers on the Difficulties of Remaining in Public School in Rural Tennessee".

Please read this Parental Consent Form carefully before you complete it.

I declare that I am the parent or legal guardian of the child below. I hereby consent my child, who is under the age of 18, to be named below to participate in the study on the "Perceptions of Teenage Mothers on the Difficulties of Remaining in Public School in Rural Tennessee".
Full name of child: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Contact number or email address: _____

I agree that by completing this form, I have read, understood and agreed to the rules for the study.

I agree that the information given in this parental consent form is complete and accurate.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Title: Perceptions of Teenage Mothers on the Difficulties of Remaining in Public School in Rural Tennessee

Thank you for volunteering your time to participate in an interview and focus group. If you are happy to participate, then please complete and sign the form below. Please initial the boxes below to confirm that you agree with each statement:

Please Initial box:

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

I agree for this interview and focus group to be tape-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview and focus group will be used only for examination from the interview and I will not be personally.

I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one outside the research team will be allowed access to the original recording.

I agree to take part in this interview.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Principal Investigator   Date   Signature

Appendix F

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Were you able to participate in homebound?

2. How did your school administrators, teachers, and classmates treat you?

3. How do you balance going to school and being pregnant?

4. How do you handle being pregnant or being a teenaged mother?

5. Who or what has had the greatest impact on you finishing high school?

6. What is your life like when you get home after school?

7. Have any of your teachers or your school counselors tried to help you with your pregnancy?

8. Do you think that by being pregnant or by being a teenage mother, you are taught differently?

9. Have your teachers or school counselors encouraged you in a way that you are determined to finish high school and possibly continue on to college?

10. Do you think sexual education should be a required course for students to take?

Appendix G

Survey

Survey

Key	
1	Strongly Disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neither Disagree or Agree
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

1. _____ One burden about being a teenage parent is that I cannot do the things I liked to do before the baby was born.

2. _____ I can count on my family for help with everyday activities, such as childcare, meals, laundry, or transportation.

3. _____ Influences from social media and peer pressure causes many unplanned teenage pregnancies.

4. _____ The father of my child is currently and will continue to be an active part in our child's life.

5. _____ My parent should be held accountable for my pregnancy.

6. _____ If some of my friends, who are my age, asked me for advice about becoming a teenage parent, I would tell them to wait until they get older to have a child.

7. _____ I am financially, mentally, and physically ready to be a parent.

8. _____ The lack of education leads to teenage pregnancy.

9. _____ Teenage pregnancy is a big problem in my community.

10. _____ There is at least one person I can talk to about my teenage pregnancy when I feel overwhelmed.

Appendix H

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. In your opinion, when is the best time to start having children? Why?

2. Do you think people in your community treat teenagers who have children or are pregnant differently than teenagers who do not have children or are not pregnant? How and why?

3. How do the teenagers in your community spend their free time?

4. Have your future school plans changed since becoming a teenage parent?

5. Are there systems or structures in place that help you stay in school?