



Support mechanisms needed by re-admitted teenage mothers after rejoining secondary education in selected secondary schools in Nzega District, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify support mechanisms needed by re-admitted teenage mothers to cope with challenges after rejoining secondary education in Nzega District, Tanzania. This study is situated in the theoretical foundation of ecological systems theory. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and a hermeneutic phenomenological design to explore the experiences of the participants. The study employed 19 participants, including eight teenage mothers, five school academic masters and six peers of teenage mothers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and analysed thematically. The study found that to cope with challenges, teenage mothers needed psychosocial and emotional support in terms of guidance and counselling and ensuring an inclusive school climate within the school environment. The findings show that teenage mothers needed monetary assistance and material assistance. Furthermore, the findings revealed that school-based childcare facilities are essential for successfully supporting the reintegration of teenage mothers into secondary education. Thus, they needed childcare support centres within or near schools, as this could help reduce absenteeism and improve learners' concentration. The study concludes that effective support systems are required for the successful re-admission of teenage mothers into secondary education. The study recommends that there should be collaborative efforts among schools, families, communities, and policymakers to strengthen and implement comprehensive school re-entry support systems. This can be done through the provision of psychosocial and emotional support, financial and material support, and establishing childcare support services within or near schools. To capture diverse experiences and strengthen the applicability of the findings, future studies should extend to various districts to examine the support mechanisms required by teenage mothers in secondary schools.

Keywords: Ecological Systems Theory, Re-Admission, School Re-Entry, Teenage Pregnancy, Teenage Motherhood

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a key driver of individual success, yet millions of teenage mothers worldwide face barriers to completing their studies. In countries such as Tanzania and across both developed and developing regions, teenage mothers often experience interruption in their schooling. This disruption undermines academic performance and reduces long-term prospects, making educational access for teenage mothers an urgent international agenda. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 16 million adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 become pregnant annually, while 2 million births happen among girls below the age of 15 (WHO, 2017, as cited in Muzingili, 2024). Therefore, teenage pregnancy is still an important issue that affects the health and educational sectors, though variably. This variability is the result of geographical location, because developed regions including North America, Europe, and East Asia, are experiencing declining trends, while Sub-Saharan Africa in countries such as Niger, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea are still recording many cases of teenage pregnancy (Chuwa, 2023; Zemene et al., 2024). Tragically, approximately 95% of newborn babies whose mothers are teenagers are born in poor or developing nations in Sub-Saharan Africa (WHO, 2024; United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2022).

The education consequences of teenage motherhood have been highlighted by United Nations Children's Emergence Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2024), asserting that, over six million pregnant and parenting girls do not attend any form of schooling in the sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, it is believed that around four million girls leave school each year because of pregnancy in



SSA region (Marie Stopes International [MSI] Reproductive Choices, 2021). Together, these figures demonstrate the direct relationship between being a teenage mother and dropping out of school, which tend to perpetuate the vicious circle of poverty and restricted social-economic prospects for teenage mothers (World Bank, 2018). In response to this challenge, although some countries have made an attempt to facilitate girls' return to school after they give birth, reintegration processes have not been largely successful (Subban et al., 2022). Research shows that school reintegration rates among teenagers giving birth remain fairly low because of various barriers, including discrimination, economic problems, the lack of child care services, and institutional obstacles at school (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2024).

Tanzania's education system also encounters similar school disruption linked to teenage pregnancy and childbirth. Statistics show that there were roughly 42,954 schoolgirls who were forced to withdraw from learning institutions during the period between July 2021 and June 2022, owing to pregnancy related factors (Controller and Auditor General [CAG], 2023). The World Bank (2018) indicates that approximately 6,500 girls are forced to leave schools due to pregnancy or childbirth. Further, Tanzania holds one of the highest rates of teenage childbearing in East Africa, where the prevalence rate is estimated at roughly 27% in girls aged 15-19 years in the mainland, while the regional average is 23-24% (Isano et al., 2025). Due to this, Tanzania introduced the "Re-Entry Policy" in 2021 and revised its Education and Training Policy (ETP) in 2023 to allow girls who leave school due to pregnancy, to get re-admitted (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2021; 2023). However, the implementation of the policy is constrained by inconsistencies in the legal framework governing adolescents because, while the education policy supports re-entry, the Law of Marriage Act still permits marriage of girls as young as 14 with parental or court consent, despite a 2019 Court of Appeal ruling establishing 18 as the minimum marriage age (Tanzania Court of Appeal, 2019). This confusion within legal context affects the right of teenage mothers to smoothly integrate in the education system and also slows progress to achieving gender equality and the development mentioned in the agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [UN SDGs], especially Goals 5 and 10 (UN Women, 2024; United Nations, 2025).

Research studies have been conducted in different places regarding how teenage mothers can be supported and the strategies that can be used to successfully integrate them into education systems. For instance, to achieve this, the study by Marende (2022) emphasized the need to address the social and economic barriers that prevent teenage mothers from accessing education, while the study by Smiley et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of community and financial support for improving the well-being of teenage mothers. Consequently, in Rwanda, the emphasis has been put on providing free education from the primary up to the secondary level to ensure financial barriers to schooling is removed. This indirectly reduce girls' vulnerability to early pregnancy by keeping them in school. Rwanda also implements sexuality education and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programs, as well as youth empowerment initiatives to reduce teenage pregnancy (Nuwamanya, 2023). These initiatives help reduce dropout rates linked to distance and socio-economic barriers. In Cape Verde, the government has implemented legal and policy measures, such as Decree-Law No. 47/2017, to support pregnant learners and adolescent mothers to remain in school through flexible attendance, maternity leave, and academic adjustments (Republic of Cabo Verde, 2017). However, some countries have attempted to reduce teenage pregnancies by focusing on the source of the problem. For instance, in Sudan, teenage girls who get pregnant can be criminally charged according to morality laws (Vervoort, 2024). In South Africa, sexual activity involving children under the age of 16 is criminalized under sexual offenses law and can result in severe custodial sentences for offenders (UNICEF, 2023), while in India, any sexual activity involving a girl under the age of 18 is considered a serious criminal offense punishable by long-term imprisonment. These efforts are meant to protect teenage girls from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Despite the fact that some international studies have identified support mechanisms for the reintegration of teenage mothers into educational institutions, little is known about the specific support mechanisms needed by teenage mothers who are re-admitted to secondary education in Tanzania and in spite of the existence of the re-entry policy, several challenges persist, including the lack of specific facilities for teenage mothers, unfriendly school environments for students with children, stigmatization and gossip from peers and community members, and the absence of clear guidelines for implementing the policy (Ngaza & Mwila, 2022). Moreover, the implementation of the policy in Tanzania remains questionable (Mtoi, 2024). In this policy vacuum, existing research on teenage mothers who return to school in Tanzania has paid limited attention to the support they need to successfully continue their education. Most studies have focused primarily on the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as school administrators and parents, while giving little consideration to the views and lived experiences of teenage mothers themselves. As a result, the voices of teenage mothers particularly those who have continued schooling after re-entry and those who have dropped out again remain largely underexplored. This situation highlights the need for research that centers on their views and perspectives in order to better understand the support mechanism required for their educational success. This gap necessitated the current phenomenological study which sought to identify the support mechanisms needed by re-admitted teenage mothers in selected secondary schools in Nzega District, Tanzania.



1.1 Research Objective

To identify the support mechanisms needed by re-admitted teenage mothers in selected secondary schools in Nzega District, Tanzania.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Ecological Systems Theory

This study is situated in theoretical foundation of Ecological Systems Theory formulated by Bronfenbrenner (1979). It states that human development is influenced by various interconnected environmental systems including close interpersonal interactions, larger social and societal settings, and beyond. This study recognised Ecological System Theory as important because it provides knowledge and an understanding of how the lives of teenage mothers who have been readmitted to secondary education institutions are affected by multiple factors that make coping difficult (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

At the microsystem level, teenage mothers interact with parents, caregivers, teachers, peers, and their offspring. Support in areas like emotional encouragement, help with taking care of children, and educational advice from such people can greatly contribute to the mother's learning engagement and overall well-being. According to Bronfenbrenner, "the immediate surroundings have the most powerful effect on the individual. At the microsystem level, interaction between home and school becomes critical for guaranteeing that teen mothers get integrated services for maintaining their education. Collaboration between the home and the school helps to improve support systems and contribute to the creation of favorable learning environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Tudge et al., 2009).

The exosystem refers to the external institutions and organizations whose impact is felt on the life of re-admitted teenage mothers. These include community-based organizations, health care organizations, and government programmes within the area. Such institutions could offer services like counseling, reproductive education, child-care, and financial support, which aid the teenagers' continued learning. While the teenagers do not interact with these institutions, the services and actions from them have an impact on their education (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). At the macrosystem level, cultural beliefs, societal attitudes toward teenage motherhood, and national education policies influence how re-admitted teenage mothers are perceived and treated within schools and communities. Supportive policies and positive social norms can reduce stigma and promote educational continuity, whereas negative cultural perceptions may create barriers to successful school reintegration (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

Finally, the chronosystem recognizes that the challenges and support needs of teenage mothers may change over time as they transition from pregnancy and childbirth to re-entry into school. Life transitions and sociohistorical changes can influence the effectiveness and availability of support mechanisms throughout this process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Thus, Ecological Systems Theory was relevant theoretical framework for this research because of its recognition that the problems that face re-admitted teenage mothers and the strategies required for addressing them extend within several environmental systems. Using the Ecological Systems Theory enabled this research to recognize and analyze the support strategies at the family level, school level, community level, and even the policy level that can assist teenage mothers to cope with problems and attain secondary education success.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Support Mechanisms Needed by Re-Admitted Teenage Mothers to Cope with Challenges After Rejoining Secondary Education

There have been varying views from various researchers regarding what can be done to accommodate and support teenage mother students in educational institutions. According to the study carried out in Tanzania by Ngaza and Mwila (2022), there is a need to provide an enabling learning environment that catered for the needs of teenage mothers and their offspring. Mtoi (2024) in Tanzania, and Opondo and Aloka (2020) in Kenya suggested that teenager mothers require support in terms of comprehensive counseling programmes. Dorsah et al. (2024) in Ghana identified support systems needed by teenage mothers in public schools, such as financial support, learning materials, tuition lessons, and counselling among others. That study by Timothy and Juhudi (2023), in Tanzania, suggested that teenage mothers should be supported by access to boarding secondary schools and adequate financial support for success implementation of the re-entry policy. Moreover, UNICEF (2023) identified the need for educational material supplies; Opiyo and Elizabeth (2023) reported the need for materials related to menstrual hygiene; Mukabana et al. (2024) also identified the need for uniforms, textbooks, and childcare resources as important requirements for teenage mothers, and these could affect attendance and retention, suggesting that a combined material and institutional support were essential for teenage mothers to remain in school and complete their education. Collectively, most of these studies discussed were conducted outside Tanzania; neither used a hermeneutic phenomenological design nor included



teenage mothers, their peers, and academic masters as participants in a single inquiry. This has left a methodological gap, which the current study sought to address.

Mukuna (2021) in South Africa, conducted a study using an interpretative phenomenological design to understand the lived experiences of teenage mothers who return to school. Purposive sampling was used to select 5 teenage mothers and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Results indicated that teenage mothers experienced stigma, discrimination, emotional distress and lack of adequate school-based support that compromised their academic engagement. But the help of family members, friends and sympathetic teachers was instrumental in their continuing to pursue their education. The study revealed that teenage mothers need emotional and academic support systems to balance parenting responsibilities and schooling. The study recommended establishment of structured psychosocial support services, teacher sensitization and school-based support teams. The previous study employed an interpretative phenomenological design, whereas the current study adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological design, thereby addressing a methodological gap in the existing literature.

Accordingly, Groves et al. (2022) in South Africa carried out a study based on mixed-methods to explore the resilience and school re-entry experiences of adolescent mothers. The study had 109 survey respondents and 16 qualitative interview participants. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative data were analysed thematically. The results indicated that family emotional support, school flexibility and availability of institutional assistance had a strong influence on the ability of adolescent mothers to return and stay in school. But, lack of access to childcare services and financial constraints negatively affected school continuation. The study concluded that successful reintegration requires coordinated support systems at family, school and community levels, and recommended the strengthening of school-based support programmes, childcare provision and improved policy implementation. The previous study used mixed-methods research design and the current study is using phenomenological research design. The previous study employed a mixed-methods research design, whereas the current study utilizes a phenomenological research design.

Further, in Uganda, Eriku (2024) used a qualitative case study approach to explore how re-entry policies were implemented among secondary schools' teenage mothers. The study involved 17 purposively selected participants including teenage mothers, teachers, head teachers, counsellors and parents. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis and employed thematic analysis of data. The study reported that despite the existence of re-entry policies, teenage mothers experienced stigmatization, irregular attendance and inadequate counselling support. But schools that provided guidance and counselling services, remedial academic support and parental involvement had better reintegration outcomes. The study found that the successful re-entry of teenage mothers depended largely on strong institutional support systems and recommended that school counselling services, teacher training and community sensitization programmes be strengthened. The previous study adopted a case study design and excluded peers of teenage mothers, whereas the present study utilized a hermeneutic phenomenological research design and included peers of teenage mothers.

Furthermore, Subban et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative case study in Melbourne, Australia to investigate strategies used to support teenage parents who return to school. The study was interpretivist in nature and involved less than 20 participants, including teenage mothers and purposefully selected school personnel. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observation and analysed thematically. The findings revealed that teenage mothers required flexible learning arrangements, emotional and psychological support from teachers, access to childcare services and structured academic catch-up programmes. The study found that the success of reintegration is largely dependent on the degree to which schools are flexible in accommodating parenting learners by adapting traditional learning structures. The study suggested the implementation of flexible timetables, capacity building of teachers on inclusive education and integrated school-based support services of academic and psychosocial support (Subban et al., 2022). The current study was carried out outside Tanzania which created a geographical gap. This study therefore attempts to fill the gap by concentrating on Tanzania context.

Moreover, in South Africa, Malatji et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative case study in a township secondary school in Gauteng Province to explore coping strategies and institutional support provided to teenage mothers returning to education. The study involved approximately 10-15 teenage mothers selected purposively. Data gathering was achieved through the use of in-depth interviews and narrative accounts and were analysed through thematic content analysis. The findings showed that teenage mothers coped through personal resilience, peer support, teacher mentorship, and limited academic assistance provided by schools. However, the support systems were inconsistent and largely informal. The study concluded that the effectiveness of re-entry policies depends on the availability of structured school-based support systems. The study recommended the establishment of formal mentorship programmes, strengthened counselling services, and teacher training focused on supporting adolescent mothers in education (Malatji et al., 2023). The study adopted a case study design, was conducted in south Africa resulting in a



methodological and geographical gap that the present study seeks to address. Together, the discussed review of literature above provides an empirical foundation and justification for this study to be carried in the present context.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach and Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach to research using a hermeneutic phenomenological research design. Using qualitative research approach was important in order to provide participants with the opportunity to express their feelings and point of views in their own words, thereby allowing for detailed exploration of meanings, beliefs, and perceptions they have (Creswell & Poth, 2023). On the other side, hermeneutic phenomenological research design enabled the researcher to interpreted the meaning of the meaning provided by the participants through double hermeneutic strategy (Smith et al., 2021), regarding the support mechanisms needed by teenage mothers to cope with challenges they faced after rejoin secondary education.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in selected secondary schools in Nzega District, Tabora region, Tanzania. The study area was selected because it experiences cases of teenage pregnancy and school re-entry among adolescent mothers, making it suitable for exploring the experiences and support needs of re-admitted teenage mothers (United Nations Children's Emergence Fund [UNICEF], 2020). In particular, Nzega District was purposively selected for this study due to its high ranking among the top three districts in the region with the highest school dropout rates, that are largely attributed to teenage childbearing (URT, 2023).

3.3 Target Population

The study population for this study is teenage mothers, their peers and academic masters in the selected study area. Teenage mothers are included because they have direct experience of teenage motherhood and can offer rich insights into the challenges, experiences and coping strategies associated with their circumstances. Teachers are included as they interact with teenage mothers in educational settings and can provide insights into the academic, social, and behavioral implications of teenage motherhood. Also included are peers of teenage mothers as they are part of the social environment that influences and is influenced by teenage motherhood. Peers can provide valuable information about social support, perceptions and peer relationships.

3.4 Sampling and Sampling

The study was conducted among 19 purposively selected persons who have direct participation and experience with the phenomenon under study. The main participants were teenage mothers who were taken from a study population, while the additional participants were their female peers and academic masters. The study sample involved eight teenage mothers, four of whom continued with school after re-admission with four others who later dropped out, five academic masters and six peers of teenage mothers. The selection of teenage mothers was through criterion based homogenous purposive sampling on the basis of schooling status. The academic masters were selected through expert purposive sampling on the basis of their administrative roles in school. To get a diverse perspective, we used a heterogeneous purposive sampling to select the 6 female peers. The sample size was considered sufficient for a phenomenological study, as recommended by Creswell (2013) and Creswell and Poth (2016).

3.5 Data Collection

Data collection was achieved using semi-structured interviews and focus groups discussion. The use of these methods was important as they enabled participants to share their experiences, views and feeling freely due to flexibility rendered by these tools as the researcher were able to ask more detailed and follow-up questions (Zhang et al., 2025). Semi-structured interviews collected data from teenage mothers and academic masters while focus group discussion guides collected that from peers of teenage mothers. Every session was audio-recorded with the participants' permission to precisely collect and store data.

3.6 Data Analysis procedures

Data analysis was achieved through six steps of thematic data analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). These were such as getting familiar with data, generate initial codes, searching for the themes, reviewing the themes, defining and re-naming them, and finally producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This method helped the researcher to present data in a consistency and coherent way that answer the research objectives of the study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study followed all ethical clearance procedures to ensure that the study is contextualized within research ethical conducts. Researchers explained the purposes of study to participants and got informed consent from them before they joined voluntarily. Their identities and personal information were kept confidential to ensure privacy. The researcher also obtained study approval from The University of Zambia Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number HSSREC IRB 00006464). The researcher obtained permission from the District Executive Director in Tanzania for field data collection (Permit Number NDC/E1/57/193). These steps ensured that the study meets required research standards (Magalhães, 2024; Gabel, et al., 2024).

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the study’s trustworthiness, the researcher followed the procedures proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994), that include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. About credibility the researcher used triangulation approach by collecting data from multiple sources participants and precisely transcribing the data. To support transferability, we gave detailed descriptions of the study contexts in which the study happened. Dependability was ensured through consistent procedures, while we stayed neutral and true to what the participants said to support confirmability (Stahl & King, 2020).

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

The objective of the study was to identify the support mechanisms needed by re-admitted teenage mothers to cope with challenges they faced after rejoining secondary education secondary education. Since the study was carried out qualitatively, the analysis generated three major themes: Psychosocial and emotional support; financial and material support; and establishment of school-based childcare facilities. These themes and their subthemes are presented in the following thematic map and discussed in the subsections that follows after it.

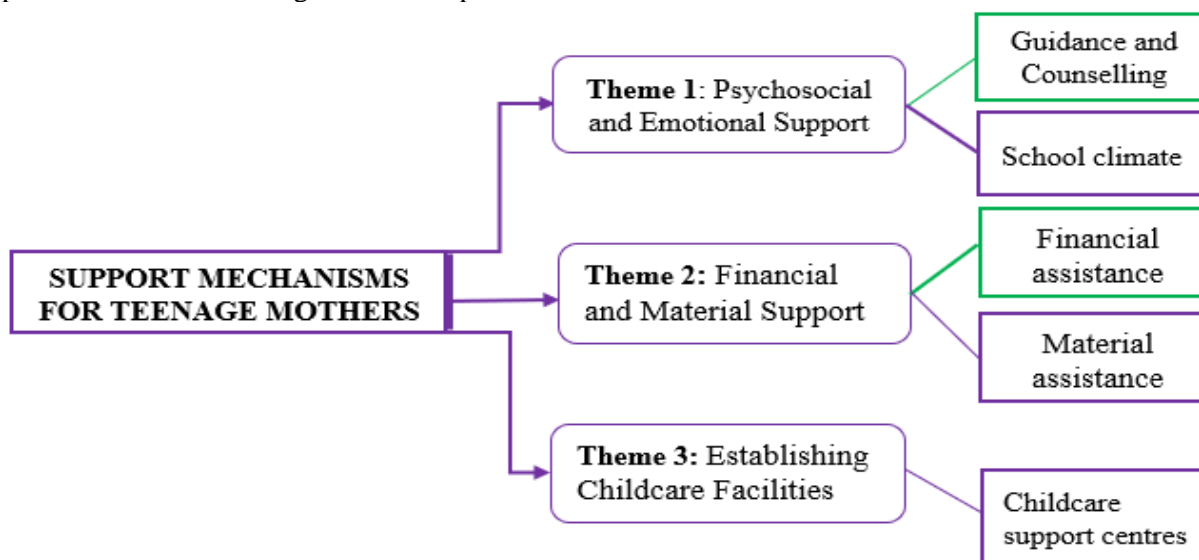


Figure 1
Thematic Map Showing the Relationships among Themes and Subthemes

Theme 1: Psychosocial and Emotional Support

Psychosocial and emotional support emerged as a key theme in understanding how well teenage mothers could be supported. Under this theme, guidance and counselling services, along with an inclusive school climate emerged as key subthemes.

The study found that guidance and counselling services were needed for teenage mothers to navigate through challenges. One of academic masters noted:

“In fact, teenage mothers need to be guided and directed, but here our school lacks counselling services and trained guidance and counselling teachers. At times, these students receive support, with teachers offering help based on personal experience rather than training.” (AM01, 23rd January 2026).

Similarly, another academic master noted:

“...counselling services would be helpful for teenage mothers to cope with issues they face but I do not see guidance and counselling teachers in our school or even a department. I think this is very bad and unfortunate” (AMO2, 26th January 2026).



In the same vein, an academic master suggested:

“There is a need to have guidance and counselling teachers, who are professionally trained to handle trauma and guilt so as to guide teenagers” (AM04, 11th February 2026).

Another academic opined:

“Counselling remains the backbone as it helps the girls process shame and focus forward” (AMO5, 12th Marh 2026).

A teenage mother who dropped out of school shared the following experience:

“I felt there was a need for teachers who could support us through talking to us, teachers who could guide us, stand with us, and encourage our peers to treat us fairly. In my experience, when I faced difficulties, I did not have a specific teacher I could turn to and share my problems with” (Linda, 22 years, 16th Marh 2026).

The findings imply that teenage mothers receive informal, uneven teacher support since schools lack qualified counselors, which may have an impact on their welfare. The above findings are corroborated with comparable results that were reported by Ediz and Budak (2023) in Turkey, whose randomized controlled trial demonstrated that a psychosocial support-based psychoeducation programmes reduced anxiety and depression while improving perceived social support among pregnant adolescents. The findings also match with what Opondo and Aloka (2020), Marende (2022) in Kenya, who found that providing guidance and counselling services significantly enhanced psychosocial adjustment among adolescent mothers in Kenyan secondary schools, particularly in emotional, academic, and social coping. In addition, Eriku (2024) in Uganda found that providing guidance and counselling services resulted into better integration outcome. Therefore, these studies emphasize counselling as a key intervention in reducing psychological distress and facilitating effective adaptation of teenage mothers in school settings.

Inclusive school climate: The findings further indicate that an inclusive school climate was needed to enable teenage mothers sustain and successfully pursue their education. Positive school climate fosters respect, inclusiveness, non-discrimination, a sense of safety, and supports academic success (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). Reflecting on the negative school climate in her former school, a teenage mother who had dropped out lamented:

“...Most female teachers did not encourage us; instead, they often nagged and discouraged us. Such negative attitude toward us makes us feel unworthy even though they were supposed to support us” (Rehema, 19 years, 6th March 2026).

Also, during a focus group discussion, when the researcher probed about the reactions teenage mothers receive from their peers, one peer of a teenage mother explained:

“...Some students gossip. They whisper or laugh when she walks in. You can tell she feels it. Then she stays quiet all the time” (P2, 18th February 2026).

One of the academic masters also stated:

supportive school environment helps teenage mothers feel better about themselves feel like they belong and really want to remain in school. Support from teachers and peers also strengthens confidence, inclusion, and commitment toward educational success, enabling teenage mothers to overcome stigma, remain focused in school, and actively participate in learning activities and academic progress (AMO5, 12th March 2026).

The findings imply that teenage mothers may find it more difficult to continue their education and achieve academic success in the absence of an inclusive educational environment. This study findings resonate with various studies that confirm an inclusive school climate is very important for teenage mothers to remain and continue with school. Mukabana et al. (2024) in Kenya found that a non-stigma and supportive school contexts make teenage mothers continue their education. Asumini and Mwila (2024) in Tanzania also found that a non-discriminatory and stigmatization with flexible academic arrangements are more likely to accommodate teenage mothers. Dorsah et al. (2024) in Ghana found that when schools help mothers and make them feel welcome, they are more likely to stay in school. Therefore, all these studies show that an inclusive school climate is very important. An inclusive school climate is what helps teenage mothers attract teenage mothers stay and finish their education.

Theme 2: Financial and Material Support

Teenage mothers reported that they had a need of money to help them with buying things for the basic needs. This discussion resulted into two subthemes:

Financial assistance: The study found that teenage mothers needed money to take care of themselves and their new born kids. Participants opined that without money they would experience hard time to afford basic needs. They said, this situation often results in stopping attending school. A school continuing teenage mother said:

“...I do not get any help from school or the government. I wish they could give us a money or food to eat. Mornings I go to class with an empty stomach” (Asha, 19 years, 30th January 2026).

Another teenage mother said:



“...I struggle a lot with money. If the government could give mothers some money to help with school many of us would stay in school” (Rehema, 19 years, 6th February 2026).

In a focus group discussion with friends of mothers one of them said:

“...many teenage mothers stop going to school because they do not have money not because they do not want to learn” (P6, 18th February 2026).

One of the academic masters said:

Teenage mothers often struggle with money problems. These problems include school fees, transport costs, childcare expenses and losing household support. These financial constraints make it hard for them to continue their education. Because of these challenges many studies show that financial help is crucial. This help can come in the form of scholarships, grants or social support programs. With this support teenage mothers can stay in. Go back, to school and finish their education. Teenage mothers need this kind of support to complete their education. (AMO5, 12th March 2026).

The findings mean that teenage mothers who lack financial support are more likely to be unable to meet their basic necessities, which could result in school dropout. Different studies that have been conducted in Africa confirm the above findings. For instance, Mizero et al. (2026) revealed that in Rwanda that financial factor was linked to the reason why teenage mothers drop out of school. Again, Milimo et al. (2021), when conducted a study in Zambia, found out that giving teenage mothers money helps them stay in school because teenage mothers need money to pay for things, school and taking care of their kids. This was also reflected in the study by Dorsah et al. (2024) in Ghana, who identified that financial support was one of support mechanism needed by teenage mothers in Ghana public schools. Therefore, without this money it is very hard for them to stay in school. In a systematic review covering broader level of sub-Saharan Africa, Kinya and Nzungya (2023) found that money was problem and a reason why teenage mothers, in Africa have a hard time staying in school and finishing their education.

Material assistance: The findings show that teenage mothers need things like school uniforms, textbooks and stationery. They also need sanitary products and other important things to make them stay in school and learn. Money is not enough always to help them. The academic master said:

Money alone is not enough. I think teenage mothers need help with things, like uniforms and learning materials. These things are very important for them to take part in education. Without these things teenage mothers may have a hard time going to school regularly and learning effectively. (AMO3, 4th February 2026).

A school continuing teenage mother said:

Many time I do miss school because I do not have the things I need for school like a uniform or sanitary pads. My parents are not able to provide for the family and me, so they have no money to buy all these things so I have a really tough time. Sometime friends help me with things like books or sanitary pads. This enables me to go to school so happily and concentrate in class. (Edda, 18 years, January 2026).

One of the teenage mother peers stated during the focus group discussion:

We noticed that many teenage mothers struggle to stay in school not because they eat at home, but because they lack basic learning materials like uniforms, books, and sanitary products. Some of us make an effort to assist by sharing notes or small items, but the need is larger than what we can offer, and without those, it becomes extremely difficult for them to fully participate in class activities (P5, 18th February 2026).

The findings imply that teenage mothers require more than just financial assistance; they may find it difficult to attend and engage in class if they do not have access to sanitary products and necessary school supplies, which highlights the necessity for extensive material support programmes. Many studies concur with the findings above showing that teenage mothers frequently experience economic difficulties, which affected their ability to attend and stay in school (Jochim et al., 2022). Referring to the study by Dorsah et al. (2024), poverty results into the inability to afford the cost to buy things like learning materials, uniforms, and baby care products are major causes of school dropout among teenage mothers in Ghana, emphasizing the importance of institutional and material support. In a similar vein, UNICEF (2023) reports that supply of educational materials and social protection were important to assist them in education as teenage mothers lacked an access to childcare and school-related resources. In the same vein, Opiyo and Elizabeth (2023), also Mukabana et al. (2024) in Kenya found that lack of materials such as those related to menstrual hygiene also uniforms, textbooks, and childcare resources negatively affect attendance and retention, suggesting that combined material and institutional support were essential for teenage mothers to remain in school and complete their education.



Theme 3: Establishing Childcare Facilities

Under this theme, teenage mothers opined that they needed structured arrangements in school to safely accommodate their children while they attend classes. Consequently, “a need for childcare support centre” emerged as an important subtheme and is explained below.

A need for childcare support centre: Teenage mothers reported that attending school while having a child at home resulted in divided attention. A dropped-out teenage mother narrated:

“...My concentration was poor, because my mind was always on my baby, if she had eaten, if she was crying” (Mary, 20 years, 9th February 2026).

Another teenage mother added:

“...And above all, building childcare nursery in schools would be helpful. Without those, mothers like me will always struggle to finish school.” (Asha, 18 years, 30th January 2026).

Further, another teenage mother student suggested:

“the policy should include practical things, make childcare part of the plan. Train teachers to handle teenage mothers’ sympathy...” (Edda, 18 years, 30th January 2026). She also noted: *“...If the school had some where to leave my child, I think I could study peacefully, check on my baby during breaks, and never miss class”* (Edda, 18 years, January 2026).

The academic master also observed that leaving a child at home is a significant challenge for teenage mothers:

Others never feel comfortable especially when it happens that they have left their babies in the care of people they do not trust. Most of the time they are unhappy. Feel emotionally upset. This makes it hard for them to focus in class and take part in school activities. It is clear that they need childcare support centres to help teenage mothers. These centres can provide a reliable place, for their babies while they are in class. (AMO2, 26th January 2026).

The findings imply that teenage mothers may not be able to attend classes on a regular basis due to a lack of childcare help in schools, which emphasizes the necessity of school-based childcare facilities to support their continued education. The findings are in line with evidence from across Africa that teenage mothers need support with child care to balance schooling and parenting responsibilities. In South Africa, Hunter-Adams et al., (2022) found that returning to school often makes breastfeeding impractical, echoing a disconnect between the educational system and childcare needs. Similarly, Yakubu and Salisu (2018) emphasized the importance of establishing childcare centres near schools to support continued educational participation among adolescent mothers. In Kenya, the Zizi Afrique Foundation (2025) identified the absence of childcare facilities as a major barrier to school retention, while Cluver et al. (2024) in South Africa found that access to formal childcare services positively influenced school participation and academic progression among teenage mothers.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that effective support systems are required for having successful re-admission teenage mothers into secondary education. The findings showed the need to have strengthened psychosocial and emotional support in form of guidance and counselling services in order to address the emotional, psychological and academic needs of teenage mothers and mentorship programmes for providing encouragement, guidance and positive role models to them. The study also emphasized the importance of having an inclusive and supportive school climate for teenage mothers that characterized by non-stigma and encourages acceptance from teachers and peers. Furthermore, access to financial and material resources was identified as an important factor in supporting teenage mothers for them to manage educational and childcare needs. Also, establishing childcare support systems within or near schools was found as important and would help reduce absenteeism and improve concentration in studies. Therefore, these findings underscore the need for having comprehensive and coordinated support systems to enable re-admitted teenage mothers to overcome reintegration challenges identified in the reviewed literature.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends collaborative efforts among schools, families, communities, and policymakers to strengthen and implement comprehensive school re-entry support systems. This can be done through the provision of psychosocial and emotional support in terms of guidance and counselling services, mentorship programmes and inclusive school policies, also financial and material Support and accessible childcare support services.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.



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