



Principals-Initiated Programmes put in Place to Enhance Retention of Teenage Mothers in Public Secondary Schools in Nyali Sub-County, Mombasa, Kenya

By

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine strategies initiated by principals to enhance retention of teenage mothers in public secondary schools in Nyali Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya. The research question guiding this study was what programs have principals initiated to support the retention of teenage mothers? The study was grounded in Emile Durkheim's Social Integration Theory and employed a mixed-methods research approach using a convergent parallel design. Both descriptive cross-sectional and phenomenological research approaches were integrated. Sampling techniques included stratified random, simple random, systematic random, and purposive sampling. The target population comprised 1,750 Form Three and Four students, principals, SCDE and 265 teachers across seven public secondary schools. The sample included 165 students, 131 teachers, four principals, and one sub-county director of education. Data collection instruments included questionnaires, in-depth interview guides, and focus group discussion guides. Instrument reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for quantitative tools, and member checking, triangulation, and peer review for qualitative tools. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic methods. Findings revealed that principals have implemented initiatives such as healthcare assistance, counselling, reintegration policies, and flexible timetables to support teenage mothers. The study concluded that while principal-initiated programs are essential for retaining teenage mothers in school, sustained parental involvement and broader community collaboration are vital for achieving long-term success. Recommendations included standardizing retention programs across schools, enhancing parent engagement through workshops, improving teacher preparation, and forming partnerships with local stakeholders.

Key Words: Retention, Stakeholder, Engagement, Teenage Mother, Flexible Timetable

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Background to the Problem

Teenage motherhood is linked to significant adversities such as poverty, abuse, forced sex, and educational disadvantages, often occurring in marginalized areas. Research highlights the severe health risks faced by teenage mothers and their children, including high maternal mortality rates among girls aged 15 to 19, a leading cause of death in this age group (Janina, 2021). Teenage mothers often struggle with social stigma, balancing childcare and educational responsibilities, and limited access to healthcare, which can lead to school dropouts, particularly as many come from impoverished backgrounds (UNICEF, 2023; WHO, 2022; Panday et al., 2023). However, supportive measures like flexible learning and school-based reintegration programs have been shown to improve educational outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2023).

Retention programs aim to ensure teenage mothers remain enrolled and engaged in education by addressing needs such as mental health care, childcare support, and stigma mitigation (Kochhar-Bryant et al., 2023). Effective practices include flexible schedules and academic support, and collaboration among parents, schools, and communities plays a crucial role (Olufunke et al., 2023; Mwangi & Chege, 2022). Despite these efforts, implementation challenges persist, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where teenage pregnancy continues to disrupt educational access (UNESCO, 2019; Njoroge & Muhia, 2019). The global community, through SDGs and the MDGs, emphasizes inclusive education for all, highlighting the importance of empowering women and addressing inequalities (Mutua, 2019; Imbosa et al., 2022; UNICEF).

Teenage pregnancy has decreased by more than 50% in the US since 2007, which has been linked to a rise in teenage usage of reliable contraception. Nonetheless, notable variations in the rates of teenage pregnancies continue to exist within the nation's ethnically, economically, and geographically defined subpopulations (Martin et al., 2019). Children born to teenage mothers are at a significantly higher risk of becoming pregnant at a young age, roughly two to three times higher than those born to older mothers (Hendrick & Maslowsky, 2019). This growing gap



emphasizes how critical it is to find workable solutions to lower the likelihood that children of teenage mothers will become teenage parents.

According to Sepeng, Mulaudzi, and Mathivha (2023) compared to other African nations, South Africa is reporting greater rates of Teenage pregnancy. Various kind of interventions are implemented to tackle teenage pregnancy. Nevertheless, the fact that these interventions were created using a top-down approach without the input of other stakeholders or teenager mothers makes it difficult to put them into practice, especially in nations like South Africa. Therefore, it is necessary to ascertain if principals include interested parties in their efforts to keep teenage mothers in school.

Like other African nations, Kenya experiences difficulties with teenage pregnancy and teen mothers' access to education. The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2019) estimates that, with notable regional differences, around 18% of teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have started having children. Nyali Sub-County is located in Mombasa County, which has unusually high rates of teenage pregnancies and teenage mothers. This contributes to the already existent disparities in socioeconomic level and education (KNBS, 2020). Although the Kenyan government has taken action to address the problem by enacting laws like the retention policy for teenage mothers, there are still issues with implementation, such as stigma, insufficient support networks, and low knowledge among community members and school administrators.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, teenage motherhood presents significant challenges, with school dropout rates among teenage mothers being alarmingly high due to factors like inadequate support systems and stigma (UNESCO, 2021). Research across various regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, has shown that teenage mothers face unique educational and social barriers, including discrimination and lack of childcare, which hinder their academic progress (World Bank, 2020; Al-Mutairi, 2021). In Kenya, the issue is compounded by socio-cultural beliefs that stigmatize teenage mothers, contributing to lower retention rates in schools (Nyambegera & Kiplagat, 2019; Imbosa, Majanga, & Ouda, 2022).



In Kenya's Nyali Sub-County, despite school principals initiating programs to support teenage mothers, studies indicate that these initiatives are often inadequately implemented, leading to limited effectiveness in addressing dropout rates (Echessa, 2021). The social cry for educational equity and the right to education for all, including teenage mothers, underscores the urgency of this issue (UNICEF, 2022). This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of principals'-initiated programs in enhancing teenage mothers' retention in public secondary schools in Nyali Sub-County, Mombasa county, Kenya.

Research Question

What are the principals-initiated programmes put in place to enhance retention of teenage mothers in public secondary schools in Nyali Sub-County?

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Emile Durkheim's Social Integration Theory, which explores the importance of social cohesion within communities and how integrating individuals, such as teenage mothers, into the school system can foster unity and reduce disparities. According to Durkheim, social integration is essential for forming a collective consciousness that directs social interactions and norms (Sourabh, 2023). His theory suggests that shared beliefs and values contribute to stronger interpersonal connections and a sense of belonging, which is vital for enhancing retention strategies in schools. In the context of public secondary schools in Nyali sub-county, Mombasa County, effective school leadership practices that promote inclusive environments can help integrate teenage mothers and bridge social gaps without erasing their unique identities (Karima & Boutouchent, 2020).

Durkheim's ideas also emphasize the role of social control, where individuals' adherence to societal norms is driven by personal integrity and moral values rather than external enforcement (Follert, 2019). This internal control fosters compliance and reduces deviant behavior, supporting a stable social structure. In educational settings, creating a culture of inclusion and reminding



students of the value of community norms can contribute significantly to retention programs for teenage mothers. By cultivating a sense of belonging and unity, schools can enhance social integration and promote positive attitudes and behaviors among students, ultimately boosting their academic and personal well-being (Picciotto, 2021; IvyPanda, 2023).

Review of Related Empirical Literature

The UK continues to have one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in Western Europe, even after the Labour Government's successful ten-year effort to reduce teenage pregnancies between 1999 and 2010 according to the study conducted by Freedman (2020). About half of teenage pregnancies result in abortion, with the majority being unplanned. Both the early pregnancy and economic hardship associations as well as the lower educational attainment and conception before the age of eighteen remain important. Adolescent pregnancy is both a cause and an effect of low educational achievement. Studies have indicated that in the United Kingdom, even with laws and policies aimed at guaranteeing postpartum education for young mothers, many remain effectively shut out of schools and other educational establishments for a variety of reasons, such as inadequate facilities within schools, stigmatizing and discriminatory attitudes, and restricted access to childcare facilities. Compared to older mothers, teenage mothers are more likely to drop out of school, raise their kid alone and in poverty, and have mental health issues. In order to ensure better long-term outcomes for themselves and their children, this freedman highlights the need for continued efforts to both lower the rates of teenage pregnancy and better support young women who become pregnant at an early age to continue or return to their education.

Shiningayamwe's study (2023) was to explore Namibian school-going students' perspectives on the causes of learner pregnancy and school dropout, as well as to provide solutions to address these problems. Using interpretive phenomenological data analysis, the study made use of qualitative research methods. It comprised 10 focus groups and seventeen individual interviews with 63 students enrolled in school, including teenagers, expectant students, and learner parents. The study found a number of factors that contribute to learner pregnancy and school dropout in rural Namibian schools, such as the age restrictions that follow maternity leave, the extended school



holidays, the presence of alcohol outlets near school premises, and the exploitation of young girls by older men and cattle herders. Learners recommended a range of administrative solutions, including limiting entry to facilities that provide alcohol, improving stakeholder engagement, educating females and livestock herders, and maintaining advocacy activities. The high rates of learner pregnancy and school dropout in rural Namibian schools must be effectively addressed by including learners' viewpoints into retention of teenage mothers' initiatives.

In the light of the Kenyan government's current directives to promote teenage mothers' retention and return to school, Opiyo and Nanyama's (2023) study responds to the demand. It records the opinions of many stakeholders about the principals' leadership practices that encourage teenage mothers to pursue further education. In a rural Kenyan location where, teenage pregnancy is quite prevalent, semi-structured interviews with 32 respondents yielded rich qualitative data. The majority of school principals, albeit not all of them, backed the government's 100% transition and retention and return to school policy, according to a thematic analysis. While some principals aggressively opposed the programme, others were proactive in educating parents and guardians about it. Teenage mothers appreciated that schools tried to assist them in becoming good mothers, to offer facilities for menstruation and childcare, and to help them be accepted by their peers. The parents of teenage mothers held a variety of opinions, from liberal viewpoints that encouraged open discussion about sexuality to conservative viewpoints that supported early forced marriage to maintain the family's social position. The creation and implementation of a number of school retention and re-entry policies in Kenya have not resulted in a shift in the attitudes of all relevant parties or in the provision of the financial and psychological assistance required for all girls to fully benefit from these programmes.

Research Design and Methodology

The study on principal-initiated programs aimed at enhancing the retention of teenage mothers in public secondary schools in Nyali Sub-County employed a convergent parallel mixed-method design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design facilitated the



simultaneous collection and analysis of data from both methods, providing an understanding of the research topic (Malau-Aduli & Alele, 2023).

The quantitative component utilized a cross-sectional survey to examine specific principal-initiated programs designed to support the retention of teenage mothers. This approach enabled the collection of detailed and structured data on these programs. Meanwhile, the qualitative aspect employed a phenomenological approach to explore experiences of students and educators. By focusing on lived experiences within the educational setting, the study provided insights into the effectiveness of these programs. Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio (2019) highlight that phenomenological approaches are valuable for understanding complex human experiences, such as retention of teenage mothers. The mixed-method design offered a holistic perspective on the effectiveness of principal-initiated programs in retaining teenage mothers in Nyali Sub-County.

Locale of the Study

Nyali Sub-County has seven public secondary schools and twelve private ones. Nyali is a residential area and sub-county within Mombasa City, located on the mainland north of Mombasa County. It is connected to Mombasa Island by the New Nyali Bridge. All seven public secondary schools in the sub-county are day schools (Mombasa County Government, 2022). Nyali Sub-County is well known for its coastal location, characterized by a mix of commercial and residential areas. The socioeconomic conditions in the sub-county are notably uneven, with both affluent and underprivileged areas. Students' academic performance in Nyali Sub-County is significantly affected by high rates of teenage pregnancy, which stem from disparities in communities' access to educational institutions.

Target Population

The target population, as defined by Creswell (2023), refers to the entire group of individuals or units from whom data is collected to make inferences. In this study, the target population comprised 2,023 respondents, including 7 principals, 165 teachers, one sub-county director of education, and 1,750 students.

Description of the Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

In line with Kothari's (2019) recommendations, the researcher employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to ensure a representative sample for data collection in the study on principal-initiated programs aimed at enhancing the retention of teenage mothers. Given the mixed-method approach, a combination of stratified, purposive, simple random, and systematic sampling methods was used. Stephanie (2022) suggests that a sample size of 10% of the population is typically sufficient, provided it does not exceed 1,000 participants. Following this guideline, the researcher selected 4 out of 7 public day secondary schools in Nyali Sub-County using stratified sampling to ensure representation across various school categories. From these schools, 7 principals were included through purposive sampling due to their leadership roles and valuable insights into retention programs for teenage mothers. Additionally, 131 out of 165 teachers were chosen using simple random sampling to provide equal participation opportunities. Finally, systematic sampling was applied to select 175 out of 1,175 students, ensuring balanced representation within the student population.

Description of Research Instruments

A research instrument is a tool designed to systematically collect data to quantify observable social and natural phenomena (Sugiyono, as cited in Sugiharto, 2018). These instruments are primarily employed to gather data that addresses specific research questions. In the study on principal-initiated programs aimed at enhancing the retention of teenage mothers, both quantitative and qualitative research tools were used to ensure a comprehensive approach to data collection. Structured questionnaires were utilized to gather quantitative data, enabling standardized responses suitable for statistical analysis. For qualitative insights, focus group discussion guides and in-depth interview guides were employed to explore participants' perspectives and experiences more deeply. To further enrich the data and enhance understanding of the research topic, supplementary methods such as document analysis and observation checklists were also incorporated (Sugiyono, as cited in Sugiharto, 2018).



Validity of Research Instruments

The validity of a research instrument is crucial, as it ensures that the tool accurately and reliably measures the intended variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the study investigating the effectiveness of principal-initiated programs on enhancing the retention of teenage mothers, maintaining consistency in research instruments was essential to address potential uncertainties and deficiencies, thereby improving the tool's effectiveness (DeVellis, 2019). To ensure content validity, experts reviewed the instruments to confirm their relevance to the research topic. Based on their feedback, the instruments were refined and adjusted to enhance their accuracy and alignment with the study's objectives.

Reliability of Research Instruments

The reliability of a research instrument refers to its ability to consistently produce stable results across repeated applications (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2018). In the study examining the effectiveness of principal-initiated programs in enhancing the retention of teenage mothers, reliability was ensured by pre-testing the instruments on a subset of students from the intended participant pool. The internal consistency of the instruments was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical measure where higher values indicate greater reliability. Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with a higher coefficient reflecting a strong correlation among items, thereby confirming the consistency of the instrument in measuring the research topic (Middleton, 2023). In this study, a Cronbach's Alpha value between 0.6 and 0.7 was considered acceptable, while a value of 0.8 or higher indicated excellent reliability.

Pilot Testing of the Research Instruments

A small, representative sample of the study population is typically used for pilot testing, an initial trial of the research instruments. This process helps identify any issues with the instruments and allows for necessary adjustments. In this study, the researcher administered the instrument to a small group of participants representative of the target population. Participants were asked to rate the items based on difficulty, relevance, and clarity. The researcher used their feedback to refine the tool, including rewording unclear items, removing unnecessary questions, and adding relevant



ones, as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2018). For the current study, a pilot test was conducted with respondents from two schools, including both students and teachers. The pilot study assessed the accuracy, clarity, and suitability of the instruments to ensure their validity and reliability.

Description of Data Collection Procedures

The Department of Postgraduate Studies in Education at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa provided the researcher with a letter of introduction. Subsequently, the researcher applied for and obtained a permit to collect data from the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Additionally, authorization was secured from the Nyali Education Office to conduct research within the sub-county. The researcher scheduled appointments with school principals to conduct research at prearranged dates and times, ensuring minimal disruption to the schools and reducing unannounced visits without prior notice or explanation. The researcher personally distributed questionnaires to each teacher at the sampled schools, allowing them sufficient time to complete them. Once completed, the questionnaires were collected. In preparation for interviews, the researcher arranged in-person meetings with the sub-county director of education and the principals. During these interviews, the researcher took detailed notes and recorded the data as necessary. Focus group discussions with students were conducted by the researcher, supported by two assistants, to gather additional qualitative insights.

Description of Data Analysis Procedures

Following the data collection process, the completed questionnaires were indexed and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) application for easy access and analysis. Backup copies of both the input and output data were created and securely stored to prevent data loss. The analysis employed both qualitative and quantitative methods, enabling the researcher to overcome the limitations of using a single approach and obtain a more comprehensive dataset (Creswell, 2017). For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency tables, and pie charts were used. Frequency distribution tables and visual figures were employed to present the data, making it easier for readers to interpret trends by examining the tables and charts. The



qualitative data from focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved organizing the data, conducting preliminary coding, minimizing redundancy, merging related codes into themes, and reporting the findings in a narrative format in the final report.

Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the research, the researcher obtained the necessary field research approvals from the National Council for Science and Technology (NACOSTI) through the Department of Postgraduate Studies at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. Following this, the researcher secured a formal authorization letter from the Sub-County Director of Education for Nyali Sub-County to visit the four selected schools. To facilitate access to Form Three students and related documents for analysis, the researcher visited the schools and requested permission to meet with the principals, Form Three and Form Four students, and teachers. The researcher then scheduled the distribution of questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions at times convenient for both the institutions and participants. Adult respondents voluntarily signed consent forms, while student participants provided consent after being informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. To maintain anonymity, respondents were instructed not to include their names on the questionnaires. Integrity was maintained throughout the entire research process. With the main objective of enhancing students' academic performance, the final report was written with honesty and authenticity. Proper citations to other academic works were included to avoid plagiarism.

Findings and Discussions

The data displayed in Table 1 pertains to the degree of agreement that respondents have with different assertions concerning the measures taken by principals in Nyali Sub-County to keep young mothers enrolled in public secondary schools. On a 5-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree), respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement. These programs are essential to ensuring that, in spite of any obstacles, adolescent moms are encouraged to pursue further education.

Table 1

Programmes Principals use to Retain Teenage Mothers Enrolled in their schools

No.	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
i	Teenage mothers attend classes with flexible timetables thanks to the effective principals' practices.	24 25%	20 20%	23 24%	18 18%	13 13%	3.26	1.37
ii	For teenage mothers, the school provides emotional support and therapy services.	25 25%	37 37%	18 18%	10 10%	8 8%	3.63	1.20
iii	Policies that prohibit discrimination against teenage mothers are put in place.	30 31%	35 26%	15 15%	11 11%	7 7%	3.72	1.22
iv	Teenage mothers receive help or access to childcare services through the school.	16 16%	25 26%	25 26%	15 15%	17 17%	3.10	1.35
v	The school works with neighborhood groups to give teenage mothers support.	22 23%	26 27%	18 18%	19 19%	13 13%	3.27	1.35
vi	The school provides programmes for teenage mothers in terms of academic support.	20 20%	25 26%	24 25%	15 15%	14 14%	3.24	1.31
vii	Teenage mothers participate in extracurricular activities and leadership responsibilities.	30 31%	30 31%	13 13%	17 17%	8 8%	3.95	1.35
viii	Teenage mothers can flourish academically because of its welcoming atmosphere.	42 43%	28 29%	16 16%	6 6%	6 6%	3.96	1.14

Source: *Field Data (2024)*

Table 1 lists the initiatives Nyali Sub-County principals have taken to improve teenage mothers' retention in public secondary schools. The information draws attention to a number of crucial tactics, such as adaptable schedules, emotional support, anti-discrimination rules, and academic assistance initiatives. One important endeavor to help teenage mothers manage their personal issues with their academic commitments is the use of flexible schedules. There is unmistakable support for this strategy, with 20% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing (Mean = 3.26, Std Dev = 1.37). The 24% of respondents who expressed uncertainty, however, point to a lack of knowledge



or dissatisfaction with the efficiency with which these schedules are carried out. This ambiguity implies that although flexible schedules are appreciated, there can be irregularities in their implementation or a dearth of explicit explanation regarding their operation. Enhancing these schedules' organization and clarity may make it possible for more teenage mothers to benefit fully from them, which would increase their retention and academic achievement.

With 25% strongly agreeing and 37% agreeing (Mean = 3.63, Std Dev = 1.20), emotional support and therapy services received considerable endorsement, highlighting the significance of attending to the emotional health of teenage mothers. Given that teenage mothers frequently struggle emotionally to strike a balance between parenting and school, this program is seen to be essential to their retention. Merely 10% of respondents expressed disapproval, suggesting that emotional support services are usually well-received. However, there may be room for improvement in terms of guaranteeing universal access to these programs. The decreasing disagreement indicates that, despite some students' continued perceptions to the contrary, schools are effectively identifying the need for therapy and emotional support.

Strong support was shown for anti-discrimination rules; 26% agreed and 31% strongly agreed that schools have put these rules in place (Mean = 3.72, Std Dev = 1.22). These rules are crucial in lowering the obstacles teenage mothers must overcome in order to ensure that they can pursue further education without discrimination or shame. This high degree of agreement demonstrates the significant progress schools are making in the area of inclusion. Further, 11% disagreed, though, which might point to problems with the regulations' inconsistent application or issues with school culture that still need to be resolved. All things considered, the overwhelming consensus points to a move in the right direction toward establishing a more encouraging learning environment for teenage mothers.

However, when it came to access to childcare services, the results were more mixed. Of the respondents, 26% agreed and 16% strongly agreed, while the remaining 26% remained uncertain and the remaining 17% strongly disagreed (Mean = 3.10, Std Dev = 1.35). This suggests that



although some schools provide adequate childcare support, its availability or quality may vary across institutions, and that some teenage mothers may not be fully aware of or satisfied with the childcare services offered. This inconsistency suggests that more comprehensive childcare programs and clearer communication are needed in order to fully support the educational needs of teenage mothers.

Community support programs reflect school attempts to work with local groups to provide additional aid to teenage mothers, as seen by the 27% who strongly agree and the 27% who agree (Mean = 3.27, Std Dev = 1.35). Nonetheless, there is some disagreement in the replies, with 19% disagreeing and 18% unsure, suggesting that these collaborations might not be well known or consistently successful. Although there is space for improvement in the way these collaborations are carried out and perceived, schools that forge good relationships with local groups may be able to provide a wider range of support services.

Additionally, 20% strongly agreed and 26% agreed with regards to academic support (Mean = 3.24, Std Dev = 1.31), indicating the awareness of academic help as a crucial area of concern. Nonetheless, 25% expressed uncertainty, indicating some doubt on the efficacy or accessibility of these initiatives. While it is clear that schools are working to support teenage mothers in maintaining their academic progress, the considerable ambiguity suggests that not all students have equal access to or knowledge of the resources that are available. This shows that there is a need for more robust and well explained academic programs designed with teenage mothers' interests in mind.

According to the research, teenage mothers actively participate in extracurricular activities and leadership possibilities inside schools, with 31% of respondents strongly agreeing and another 31% agreeing. With a standard deviation of 1.35 and a mean score of 3.95, these programs appear to have moderate to high support. Similarly, with a somewhat higher mean score of 3.96 and a smaller standard deviation of 1.14, 43% strongly agreed that schools offer a friendly environment favorable to adolescent moms' academic achievement. This suggests that respondents had a



favorable opinion of the school's support services, which makes this effort one of the most well-liked ones.

Even if these programs are well-liked, the data also points up areas that may want better. While Nyali Sub-County principals have made great progress in assisting teenage mothers, certain services, like child care, need to be improved further to guarantee uniformity in accessibility and effectiveness among all schools. For teenage mothers, strengthening these areas might result in more all-encompassing assistance, which would enhance retention and academic performance even more.

Principals in Nyali Sub-County expressed throughout the interviews their dedication to fostering an inclusive learning environment for teenage mothers. One of the principals asserted that:

Implementing flexible academic timetables, which are intended to suit the simultaneous duties that these students confront, is a key component of this program. We want to provide teenage mothers the resources they need to thrive academically without sacrificing their parental responsibilities. To that end, we offer modified class schedules and online learning opportunities. This strategy helps these teenage mothers reconcile parenthood and education by empowering them to manage their time well and easing the burden of strict academic schedules. Because it allows teenage mothers to complete their education while carrying out their parenting responsibilities, the flexibility plays a crucial role in lowering dropout rates (NSCPSSP 2 Personal Communications September 8, 2024).

The principals also emphasized the value of counselling programs specifically designed to meet the needs of teenage mothers. One of the principals said that:

These treatments are essential for treating the psychological and emotional difficulties, such as loneliness, stigma, and anxiety, that frequently come with becoming a first-time mother. Schools provide a secure environment for these children to talk about their experiences and ask for advice by providing specialized support. In addition to aiding in academic retention, the counseling sessions enable adolescent moms to create supportive networks by fostering



a feeling of community and belonging. Students are encouraged to participate more actively in their education in this supportive setting, which strengthens their dedication to both academic achievement and personal development. All things considered, these programs show a holistic approach to assisting young moms, hoping to provide them emotional and intellectual strength NSCPSSP 3 Personal Communication 10 September, 2024).

Students' opinions of the supportive initiatives in existence were similar to those of the principals during focus group discussions. Numerous participants expressed their gratitude for the extracurricular programs and organizations that foster peer interaction and leadership development and are aimed at including teenage mothers. Students emphasized the value of a friendly school climate where staff members are cognizant of and sympathetic of their circumstances. They said that these programs really encourage them to stay in school and work toward their academic objectives. The conversations showed that students feel more engaged and empowered as a result of these initiatives, which is crucial for their retention and general academic achievement.

Indeed, the deployment of tailored counselling services for teenage mothers is consistent with the findings of Schmidt et al.'s (2023) research, which highlighted the significance of welcoming and encouraging surroundings in augmenting retention initiatives. The goal of these counselling services is to help teenage mothers deal with emotional and psychological issues like anxiety and stigma in order to help them feel more accepted in the school community. The study's discussion on the need of proactive communication and cooperation with external stakeholders increases the efficacy of these retention programs. School administrators can offer complete assistance that goes beyond academics by forming networks with social services and healthcare professionals.

Social integration theory highlights the value of social ties and community support in promoting academic achievement, which may be applied to the findings on the initiatives principals started to improve the retention of teenage mothers in public secondary schools in Nyali Sub-County. According to this theory, people who experience a feeling of connection and belonging to their classmates and the school environment are more likely to stay interested and succeed in learning



environments. Principals' use of specialized counselling services and flexible academic schedules helps to integrate adolescent moms into the school community, enabling them to form networks and connections that support them.

Summary of Findings

While these initiatives played a significant role in supporting teenage mothers, issues like stigma, a lack of resources, and inadequate funding impacted their effectiveness. The study examined the various programs that principals in public secondary schools in Nyali Sub-County started to improve the retention of teenage mothers. These programs included counseling services, mentorship programs, flexible school schedules, and educational support. The study also highlighted the need for more organized and creative programs to maximize retention outcomes.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, principals' initiatives to create programs for teenage mothers have demonstrated encouraging outcomes in terms of retention. However, outside variables including community views, a lack of resources in schools, and governmental restrictions can make these programs less effective. Retention rates were higher in schools with extensive, well-funded, and cooperative programs than in those with little assistance.

Recommendations

It is recommended that schools obtain sufficient funds and resources from the government and local stakeholders to successfully support these initiatives in order to improve the retention of teenage mothers. Schools and community organizations should work together to foster an inclusive atmosphere that lessens stigma. To further enhance program results and student retention, principals and instructors should receive training on how to manage the special needs of adolescent moms and incorporate mentoring and counseling services.



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