


## Chapter 7

# Emotional Burden Among Student Mothers: Emotional Burden, Coping Strategies, Ways of Helping Student Mothers Combine Multiple Roles

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to find out the emotional burden among student mothers, coping strategies, and measures that can be taken to reduce the emotional burden. This is qualitative study adopted a feminist and interpretive paradigm approach. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select 13 student mothers of ages between 14-26 years. A structured interview was used to collect data for the study. The findings showed that student mothers suffered emotional burden due to the overwhelming responsibilities and lack of understanding. The data also revealed that the student mothers coped with the emotional burden through acceptance, avoidance, sharing with friends and spiritual leaders, and planning. The implications and recommendations are discussed.*

### INTRODUCTION

The current trend of economy requires that every individual be independent as the times that women depended on men are long gone. It is therefore not plausible for any female, married or not to end their education due to motherhood. Research has it that domestic violence is prevalent in households where a wife has to depend on a man for livelihood. Findings of a study by Dahal, Joshi & Swahnberg (2022) suggest that the subjugation of women occurs due to practices based on gender differences and can lead to interpersonal and socio-cultural violence. Similarly, World Health Organization (WHO), (2009) established that sex trafficking, as an example of the outcome of inequality and violence, occurs due to the disadvantageous

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position of women compounded by poverty and illiteracy. The differences between sexes were exhibited in the attainment of education and professional jobs, ownership of assets and feminization of poverty.

It therefore becomes necessary for the woman to obtain a higher education to attain the necessary qualification and certificate that will help them achieve their aspirations, fit into the job market and equally support the family, (Anane, Adangabe & Inkoom, 2021). In order to achieve this, it means that a woman does not drop out of school as a result of motherhood. This obviously comes with a lot of emotional burden as the student mother has to take on their responsibility as a parent in addition to their role as a student which is not limited to academic demands. The situation becomes even worse in African societies where most of the parenting roles are borne by the mother. Anane et al. (2021) found that in the African society, reproduction is perceived as a 'mother's work. This involves becoming pregnant and giving birth, yet it seems little or no support is given to student-mothers at school. They further indicate that being a mother naturally consumes almost all of a woman's time and combining it with studying is yet another challenge.

## **BACKGROUND SECTION**

Cases of student mothers are very common in educational institutions so turning a deaf ear to them would only disadvantage the affected students and make the society lose on the gains on gender parity. According to Tennant & Dickson (2019), majority of women in higher education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are first generation college students and about over half of them are student mothers. According to the WHO (2014) Fact sheet, about half of the 14 million pregnancies occurring across Sub-Saharan Africa are among women aged 15 to 19 years. In a study conducted by Eyeberu (2022) among 43,758 teenagers aged 13–19, the overall prevalence of teenage pregnancy was 30% and Western Africa had the highest prevalence of teenage pregnancy at 33%. This clearly is too high to be ignored.

Parenting poses psychosocial implications on student mothers because they become overwhelmed with difficulties in meeting educational, physical, emotional and financial needs (Thompson, 2010). Gyan (2013) found out that teenage mothers experience more deprivation, mental health difficulties, low educational attainment, emotional tantrum and behavioural problems. Further, a study by Moreau et al. (2013) also shows that student mothers have difficulties in terms of time, financial, health and emotional problems. With the data from the aforementioned literature, the researcher was inspired to determine emotional burden that students who are also mothers face.

## **EMOTIONAL BURDEN**

Emotional burden are psychological problems that one may experience. The double role of being a mother and learner is a major concern that impacts on the psychological development of the learner (Yussuf, & Afolayan, 2009). Literature indicates that student mothers are not able to balance child care and education favourably (Tezza & Gulanhem, 2010; Banko, Navraga, & Obansa, 2012). They also have mix feelings about the behaviours of the people in their communities who as much as cherish children also frown on teenage mothers (Faku, & Kablavoh, 2006). This causes psychological challenges that would no doubt affect their educational lives, both socially and academically (Buku, Namale & Oppong, 2018). The next section discusses ways in which emotional burden is expressed.

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