

Empowering self-reliance: Assessing the impact of lifting ban for pregnant girls to return to school in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to examine how the Tanzanian government's program allowing girls who became pregnant while in school to return after giving birth relates to efforts in promoting self-reliance among these girls. Using a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional design, the study found that 87.5% of teenage mother students and 62.5% of teachers had positive perceptions of the program. Factors influencing teenage pregnancies included poverty (37.5%), peer pressure (10%), bad friends (10%), and rape (12.5%). Additionally, 32.5% of the pregnancies were attributed to businessmen, 27.5% to bodaboda (motorcycle taxi) drivers, 25% to street men, and 15% to fellow students. The study also revealed challenges for teenage mothers, such as difficulty balancing studying and childcare (62.5%) and stigmatization from students, teachers, family, and community members (57.5%). Teachers reported issues like low concentration in class (62.5%), late arrivals (75%), lack of respect (62.5%), and absenteeism (68.5%). Furthermore, 65% of teenage mother students reported no support from the fathers of their children, highlighting a lack of support from these individuals. It is recommended that all stakeholders provide both psychological and material support to help these teenage mothers become self-reliant. The government, in collaboration with the community, should also ensure that all perpetrators of pregnancies are held accountable for supporting these teenage mothers.

Keywords: *Adolescence, Lifting ban, Pregnancy, Self-Reliance, Teenage mothers.*

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Highlights of this paper

- The Tanzanian government's initiative to reintegrate pregnant schoolgirls into the education system is broadly supported by both students and teachers, enhancing inclusive education and fostering self-reliance among these girls.
- Key challenges, such as balancing academic and childcare responsibilities and overcoming stigmatization, highlight the need for comprehensive support services, including on-site childcare centers, psychological counseling, and mentorship programs.
- It is recommended to expand public education on stigma reduction, strengthen laws against sexual abuse, and provide professional development for teachers to support teenage mother students, with the aim of creating a more inclusive and empowering education system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every rational human being is expected to demonstrate self-reliance skills, whether derived from formal education in the classroom or knowledge acquired outside the formal school system, which can collectively be understood as self-reliance education. According to Lombardi (2014) self-reliance is grounded in a positive notion of responsibility: the belief that each person has certain duties they are morally obligated to fulfill. It involves the conviction that individuals have a duty to provide for their own support and that active, diligent work defines our humanity and fosters our growth. The economic and physical effort required by responsibility equips us to self-actualize and access the social and even spiritual qualities within us. Globally, schools are seen as critical environments for teaching self-reliance education. However, for many girls, pregnancy while still in school has become a significant barrier to acquiring self-reliance through the formal education system. Many of these girls are expelled from school upon becoming pregnant, which often results in lives that lack the prospects for self-reliance in the future.

According to Worku, Tessema, Teshale, Tesema, and Yeshaw (2021) adolescent pregnancy is a significant public health issue in both developed and developing countries, with severe consequences for maternal health and pregnancy outcomes. Adolescents face increased risks such as unsafe abortion, maternal death, violence, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS). Additionally, they encounter social repercussions like school expulsion, child marriage, and poverty (Vongxay et al., 2019). Unmarried pregnant adolescents may also experience stigma, school dropout, and rejection or violence from partners, parents, and peers. Girls who become pregnant before age 18 are more likely to suffer violence within a marriage or partnership (Raj & Boehmer, 2013). Annually, an estimated 21 million girls aged 15–19 in developing regions become pregnant, with about 12 million giving birth. Furthermore, at least 777,000 births occur to girls younger than 15, and there are approximately 10 million unintended pregnancies each year among girls aged 15–19 in these regions (Darroch, Woog, Bankole, & Ashford, 2016; UNFPA, 2015). Adolescent pregnancy significantly contributes to maternal and child mortality and perpetuates a cycle of ill-health and poverty (WHO, 2014).

In Tanzania, the situation is alarming due to a very high adolescent birth rate, with 22 percent of women aged 20 to 24 having given birth before the age of 18 (Human Rights Watch, 2021a). According to data from the Guttmacher Institute, a sexual and reproductive rights organization (Guttmacher Institute, 2021) approximately 360,000 girls and young women aged 15 to 19 give birth each year. Additionally, 390,000 girls in this age group, or 57 percent, have an unmet need for or are not using modern contraception. In addition, Al Jazeera Media Network (2021) reports that data from The World Bank indicates more than 120,000 girls drop out of school annually in Tanzania, with 6,500 of these girls dropping out due to pregnancy or having children.

Despite the alarming situation that hinders the aspirations of many affected girls, Tanzania enacted the Education Act and its expulsion regulations in 2002. These regulations allow for expulsion if a student has

committed an offence against morality or has entered into wedlock. Although the regulations do not explicitly mention pregnancy, both ministry officials and school authorities interpret pregnancy as an offence against morality. While the regulations have been in place since 2002, their enforcement was initially lax, with few expulsions based on pregnancy occurring in many schools across mainland Tanzania. However, the regulation was strongly reinforced in 2017 following a directive from the late President Dr. John Magufuli, which mandated that no pregnant students would be allowed to return to school. As a result, school administrators began implementing mandatory pregnancy testing for students, and those found to be pregnant were promptly dismissed ([Human Rights Watch, 2021b](#); [The Chanzo Initiative, 2021](#); [Wambura, 2021](#)).

This policy has led to significant suffering for Tanzania's girls, including humiliation, isolation, and the potential destruction of their futures. This situation could result in a shortage of female experts in the country, which would be detrimental to the nation's economic development. In fact, this outcome contradicts the mission of fostering a society with more self-reliant women. [Lombardi \(2014\)](#) defines self-reliance in two ways: as a person's possession of resources beyond what is needed for survival and as their ability to acquire and retain those resources. Possession is an external outcome that causally depends on an individual's internal abilities. The mechanism of self-reliance includes two key components: one that reflects how people think and another that reflects how they act. Additionally, individuals engage in self-reliant behaviors to the extent that they embrace three critical beliefs that shape their motivation and ability: responsibility, self-efficacy, and a long-term orientation. Responsibility provides strong motivation by clarifying the 'Why' behind actions. Self-efficacy and a long-term orientation contribute to abilities: self-efficacy provides the 'Can Do,' while a long-term view clarifies 'What to do' and 'How to do it'.

Fortunately, in response to the need for a society with a substantial number of self-reliant individuals, the government of Tanzania, under Her Excellency President Samia Suluhu Hassan, officially lifted the ban on pregnant students and mothers. The new policy allows them to continue their studies after giving birth. This official decree represents a government program and intervention that began operating shortly after the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology issued a statement (Education Circular Number 2 of 2021) on November 24, 2021, with Reference Number ED/OKE/NE/W/VOL.II/39. The statement outlines the procedures for students who dropped out of school due to pregnancy and other reasons to return to their studies ([United Republic of Tanzania, 2021](#)). The government's decision to lift the ban on pregnant students returning to school after giving birth aligns with several international declarations. This decision represents a significant step in implementing Africa's Blue Economy Strategy (Agenda 2063), which emphasizes building human capital through sustainable investment in education. Additionally, it supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to ensure that no one is left behind in development through quality education for all ([Hamad, 2021](#)). Furthermore, the decision has been widely praised by many educational stakeholders, including the affected individuals, both within and outside the country.

However, it is undeniable that adolescent pregnancy remains a significant problem in our society, with major consequences, the most prominent being the limitation on future self-reliance, particularly when pregnant girls are expelled from school. Although the government now allows pregnant girls to return to school and continue their studies, it is crucial to examine their learning experiences and the realities of their student life as mothers. Many of these students are still teenagers in a period of maturation, facing substantial challenges related to emotional and romantic relationships. Hence, this study specifically aims to explore the perceptions of teenage mothers and teachers regarding the program. Secondly, it seeks to examine the factors influencing school-based teenage pregnancies. Lastly, the study intends to assess the challenges facing the program in the teaching and learning process, with the goal of identifying significant barriers that hinder the successful reinstatement and education of

pregnant girls. Therefore, these objectives will provide valuable insights into improving educational programs for teenage mothers, enabling them to complete their education and acquire skills that will ultimately help them achieve self-reliance for their personal and economic development.

2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This study was guided by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), a widely recognized and accepted social psychology theory developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). According to Yzer (2013) Reasoned Action Theory comprises three structural components that together explain behavior formation: (a) predicting behavior based on behavioral intention; (b) explaining intention as a function of attitude, perceived norm, and perceived behavioral control, along with their underlying beliefs; and (c) describing beliefs as originating from various potential sources. Based on these three structural components of behavior formation, the theory defines the relationship between four key aspects: beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. According to this theory, individuals are more likely to engage in a behavior if they have a positive attitude toward it and believe that their peers expect them to perform that behavior. Behavioral intention is the most immediate determinant of behavior and is defined as a person's readiness to perform a behavior (Yzer, 2013). According to Ajzen (1985) intentions are generally assumed to capture the motivational factors influencing behavior, reflecting how hard people are willing to try and the effort they plan to exert. Yzer (2013) further suggests that intention can be indicated by the subjective probability of performing a behavior, which is the individual's estimate of how likely they are to engage in or refrain from the behavior.

Reflecting on its centrality, this theory can be effectively applied to understand the motivations behind the relationships that many schoolgirls engage in, which often lead to teenage pregnancies and expulsion from school. According to this theory, behavior is influenced by attitudes toward the behavior and perceived social norms. For instance, if a schoolgirl believes that a romantic relationship will bring her emotional satisfaction or social status, she is likely to engage in such a relationship. This intention can be further strengthened if she perceives that her peers and significant others expect her to be in a relationship. Consequently, these attitudes and social pressures increase her motivation to pursue the relationship, even if she is aware of the risks of pregnancy and school expulsion.

On the other hand, this theory has notable limitations, particularly in that it does not address actions or decisions made under coercion, without personal willingness. For example, in the case of schoolgirls becoming pregnant, some may become pregnant as a result of rape, which is entirely against their personal volition or peer influence. Despite these limitations, we still believe that this theory provides valuable guidance for this study, based on its central idea. Essentially, the theory demonstrates significant strength, particularly in explaining why people might engage in certain behaviors or make decisions based on personal volition or peer pressure. Moreover, the theory, through its central tenets, can be used as an intervention to develop a school and community environment that discourages early romantic involvement while emphasizing the importance of education by shifting beliefs, attitudes, and social expectations among schoolgirls. Therefore, the choice of this theory remains vital.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional survey design. According to Singh (2023) this design provides an overview of a specific population in terms of an outcome at a given point in time. A cross-sectional survey design is well-suited for this study, as it employs a quantitative approach using a questionnaire containing both open and closed-ended questions as a tool for data collection. Consequently, this

design facilitates the collection of necessary data by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, while providing a comprehensive overview of the research problem at a single point in time. In this study, 40 teenage mothers and 16 teachers were randomly selected from four active school centers; Nzondahaki, Sinde, Legco, and Iyunga, chosen from the 10 centers implementing the program in Mbeya town. The results were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented and discussed based on the three specific research objectives outlined in Section One above.

4.1. Perceptions of Teenage Mothers and Teachers Regarding the Program

Both teenage mother-students and teachers were asked to provide their perceptions regarding the program that allows pregnant girls to return to school after giving birth. Their responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Responses to the Government’s decision on allowing pregnant girls to return to school after giving birth.

Question	Respondents	Responses			
		Yes	%	No	%
Do you support the government decision of returning pregnant girls to school after giving birth?	Teenage mother students	35	87.5	05	12.5
	Teachers	10	62.5	06	37.5

Source: Field Data, 2023.

The findings presented in Table 1 reveal that approximately 35 (87.5%) of teenage mother-students support the government's decision to allow pregnant girls to return to school after giving birth, while only 5 (12.5%) do not support the decision. On the other hand, about 10 (62.5%) of teachers support the government's decision, while 6 (37.5%) do not. Based on this analysis, it is evident that the majority support the government’s decision to allow girls who become pregnant to return to school after giving birth.

Conversely, a few teenage mother-students and teachers expressed disagreement with the government’s decision, although their reasons were not explored in this study. For instance, Adangabe (2020) reports that some teachers have differing views on teen pregnancy and teenage mothers. Often, these teachers feel saddened and unwilling to assist pregnant adolescent girls and adolescent mothers at school. They believe that their role is to teach, not to engage in midwifery, and that school is meant for students, not pregnant teenagers. Additionally, Gyasi (2020) discloses that some teachers perceive allowing teenage mothers to return to school as potentially encouraging other students to view teenage pregnancy positively, which might lead to increased sexual activity among teenagers. They see schools as places of sexual innocence, and dealing with teenage mothers disrupts their understanding of the school environment. However, although this research did not aim to explore the perspectives of those who disagree with the government's plan to reintegrate pregnant girls into schools, we acknowledge that their viewpoints may contain important arguments. Moreover, based on the focus of this study, we believe that opposition to this plan undermines efforts to empower self-reliance among girls. Such opposition perpetuates the longstanding notion that women are incapable, resulting in a large segment of society unable to achieve self-reliance.

Based on the responses of the majority, which align with Hall (2022) thousands of adolescent mothers in Tanzania now have the opportunity to continue their education in public secondary schools. This change follows the government's reversal of its previous stance, allowing adolescent mothers to return to their studies. This

decision has significant implications for their self-reliance and empowerment. For instance, this decision ensures continued educational opportunities, which are fundamental for personal and professional development. It helps to reduce gender disparity by providing equal chances for both girls and boys. Additionally, this decision promotes economic empowerment by improving job prospects and earning potential, thereby enhancing their living standards. Additionally, it fosters better health outcomes through increased awareness, as educated girls are better equipped to make healthier choices for themselves and their children, and to build essential social support networks for their mental and emotional well-being. Moreover, this governmental commitment to girls' rights and education could inspire more supportive policies and drive societal change.

Reflecting on these implications, [Ajayi \(2022\)](#) emphasizes that education is crucial for girls' future earning potential and the promotion of their lifelong health and socioeconomic well-being. Implementing the Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children's decision would help break the persistent poverty cycle linked to early childbearing and missed educational opportunities. This decision would also facilitate greater contributions from development partners focused on girls' education and gender equality. Furthermore, civil society organizations now have a new benchmark to assess the government's adherence to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. According to [Human Rights Watch \(2021a\)](#) at least 30 African Union (AU) countries now have laws, policies, or strategies in place to protect the educational rights of pregnant students and adolescent mothers.

Hence, based on the findings obtained through this objective and the evidence presented in other literature, the perspectives on the program's reception, acceptance, and effectiveness from both the students who are the significant beneficiaries and the teachers who are the implementers, are illuminated. We believe that the positive perceptions indicate a supportive environment, which is essential for fostering self-reliance and empowerment among teenage mothers. In the long run, educated and empowered girls can serve as role models, inspiring future generations to value education and strive for self-reliance despite challenges. Therefore, it is beyond doubt that this program demonstrates the importance of education in breaking the cycle of poverty, reducing gender inequality, and promoting a more inclusive and equitable society.

4.2. Factors Influencing School Teenage Pregnancies

In this subsection, the researchers aimed to understand the circumstances leading to teenage pregnancies from the perspective of the teenage mother-students who are the direct victims. Notable factors influencing teenage pregnancies included poverty (37.5%), peer pressure (10%), bad friends (10%), and rape (12.5%). Additionally, teenage mothers reported that 32.5% of the pregnancies were the result of relationships with businessmen, 27.5% with bodaboda (motorcycle taxi) drivers, 25% with street men, and 15% with fellow students. In other words, these are the sources of teenage pregnancies among schoolgirls. The study highlights various reasons and environments that contribute to schoolgirls becoming pregnant. Research conducted in government day secondary schools in the Ruvuma region of Tanzania by [Nyangarika, Nombo, and Mtani \(2020\)](#) identified six factors contributing to early pregnancies among students in government schools. These factors include poverty, lack of parental guidance, drug use and abuse, peer pressure, lack of reproductive health education, and prevailing beliefs and attitudes. Similarly, [Kukundakwe \(2021\)](#) found that negative peer interactions, the timing of sexual intercourse, and unhealthy teen friendships increase the likelihood of teenage pregnancy, whereas positive peer interactions, delayed sexual intercourse, and healthy friendships decrease it. The study concludes that peer influence plays a significant role in impacting teenage pregnancy rates among adolescents.

On the other hand, regarding the sources of schoolgirls' pregnancies, it is evident that relationships with fellow students are not the primary cause. Instead, surprisingly, businessmen, bodaboda (motorcycle taxi) drivers, and other men on the streets, many of whom are adults, are primarily responsible for deceiving and convincing schoolgirls to engage in risky sexual activities. These activities often lead to early pregnancies while the girls are still in school, resulting in significant problems, with expulsion being the most notable consequence. [Obiria \(2022\)](#) reports that most adolescents in Kenya are impregnated by older men, including neighbors, religious leaders, bodaboda riders, and matatu touts. Similarly, [Joseph \(2020\)](#) notes that 66.7% of bodaboda operators befriended pupils, particularly girls, by offering them free rides to and from school. This practice often led to higher dropout rates among girls compared to boys, as the favors granted by the riders frequently came with demands for sexual favors in return. This situation increased the likelihood of teenage pregnancies, which often resulted in school dropout and early marriages.

Indeed, all the noted factors and sources of pregnancies among schoolgirls can force them to drop out of school, limit their opportunities for economic independence, and perpetuate a cycle of dependency. This significantly hinders efforts toward empowerment and self-reliance, which are crucial for the advancement of girls in society. Therefore, we believe that the results from this objective highlight the importance of addressing these factors as critical for developing targeted interventions. Such interventions can help prevent pregnancies and support the continuation of education, thereby promoting self-reliance among girls.

4.3. Challenges Facing the Program in the Teaching and Learning Process

The subsection's purpose is to identify the challenges faced by the program, with a particular focus on the teaching and learning environment. This inquiry involved teenage mother students as well as their teachers. It highlighted challenges that could potentially hinder efforts towards self-reliance and empowerment for pregnant girls who have been allowed to return to school to continue their education and pursue their dreams of becoming fully responsible and independent citizens. The findings indicate that the challenges faced by teenage mothers in their studies include difficulty in balancing time between studying and caring for their babies 25(62.5%), and stigmatization from fellow students, teachers, family, and community members 23(57.5%). Additionally, teachers reported challenges such as low concentration among teenage mothers in class 10(62.5%), late arrival to class 12(75%), lack of respect towards their teachers 10(62.5%), and absenteeism 11(68.5%).

When discussing these challenges, questions of why and how they occur arise. For example, difficulties in balancing time between studying and caring for their babies may stem from a teenage mother's need to attend to a crying child or when the child falls ill. In line with this challenge, [Mangeli, Rayyani, Cheraghi, and Tirkari \(2017\)](#) found that adolescent mothers experienced role conflict in various forms, often navigating between two worlds. One significant conflict arose between the responsibilities of motherhood and their roles as students. School rules frequently conflicted with the demands of childcare, creating a tension between fulfilling caregiving responsibilities and meeting school expectations. In the same vein, [Crugnola, Ierardi, Gazzotti, and Albizzati \(2014\)](#) argue that adolescent and early adult motherhood significantly impacts both the infant's development and the mother's subsequent developmental trajectory. Additionally, adolescent motherhood is often linked with other risk factors, such as low socio-economic status (SES) and limited educational attainment, which are well-known to correlate with poor parenting.

On the subject of stigmatization; peers, teachers, family, and the community may perceive the teenage mother as someone who has disgraced herself, her family, and the surrounding community. They may also see her as a burden to the parents or guardians who were supporting her education, possibly viewing her as having

compromised her future. According to [Adangabe, Emmanuella, and Tigtig \(2021\)](#) stigmatization and prejudice are significant problems that these young mothers confront as they strive to reconcile their roles as mothers and learners. With the challenging responsibilities of motherhood and societal humiliation, these young mothers are frequently traumatized by society, including within the school environment. Additionally, [SmithBattle \(2020\)](#) points out that teen mothers are often stigmatized for violating age norms for parenting and for belonging to devalued racial or socioeconomic groups. As a result, they may be labeled with derogatory names such as troublesome, helpless, immoral, or any other pejorative terms.

Regarding the challenge of low concentration in class among teenage mothers, it could stem from concerns about how their child is faring at home, coupled with the difficulties of balancing childcare and academic pursuits. In their study, [Adangabe et al. \(2021\)](#) found that many teenage mother students usually wake up very early to prepare food for their babies and bathe them before starting to prepare themselves to go to school. In contrast, their peers who are not mothers might wake up and revise their notes or even still be in bed. Because they wake up too early and perform various tasks before going to school, teenage mother students often become tired and may find themselves dozing off during lessons. Consequently, due to this state of fatigue, it is evident that their level of concentration in learning greatly diminishes, leading to a lower understanding of the subjects and, ultimately, lower grades in their exams.

The issue of late arrival to class may stem from disrupted sleep due to nighttime childcare duties or difficulty managing time to arrange for the child's care while the mother attends school. In their study, [Omolo, Simatwa, and Ndolo \(2024\)](#) noted that teenage mother students often sleep late, and when they wake up in the morning, they must wash their babies' nappies and bedding before going to school. This implies that teenage mothers face numerous challenges due to their new status, which affects their ability to arrive at school on time because they need to attend to their children's needs first. As a result, teenage mothers often come to school late, regularly missing morning classes and citing the need to care for their babies as the reason for their tardiness.

Regarding the lack of respect towards their teachers, it may stem from teenage mother students being accustomed to adult relationships, which might lead them to view their teachers, especially male ones, as ordinary individuals similar to their romantic partners. Additionally, having children may lead them to perceive their teachers as equals in parenting experience, potentially diminishing their respect for authority figures. However, regardless of circumstances that might suggest teenage mother students do not respect their teachers, it is important to recognize that a teacher remains a teacher and a student remains a student, even if they share similar parenting experiences or knowledge about relationships. These student-parents should maintain good communication and socialization with their teachers to receive guidance on academic and life issues. Despite being parents, most of them are still very young and need the guidance and care of their teachers as their guardians. [Miriti, Mberia, and WaNgula \(2021\)](#) emphasize that teenage mother students should maintain positive socialization with their teachers to create a platform for appropriate communication on various matters, including sexual health, which can aid in addressing teenage pregnancies. Conversely, teachers should be equipped with communication skills tailored for interacting with these students. Effective socialization between teachers and teenage mother students will foster an environment where students feel comfortable discussing issues related to sexuality, which can help prevent the recurrence of teenage pregnancy.

Moreover, absenteeism may be unavoidable due to various reasons such as seeking essentials for the child, lack of transport fare, taking the child to clinics or medical appointments, fatigue from childcare responsibilities, or discouragement from those around them. [Adangabe et al. \(2021\)](#) support that frequent school absences may occur when teenage mothers face difficulties related to their children, such as illness or medical appointments.

Additionally, Omolo et al. (2024) assert that challenges related to social environment at school, family support, community support, and general childcare issues are contributing factors to poor school attendance and high absenteeism among teenage mothers in secondary schools.

On the other hand, this subsection aimed to investigate the extent of support that teenage mother students receive for their children's upbringing from the men who impregnated them. The inquiry involved teenage mother students, and it was found that about 26 (65%) do not receive any support from these men. This means that only 14 (35%) receive support from the fathers of their children. These results highlight the challenge of inadequate support from the fathers of the children. The small number of men providing support underscores the need for measures to hold these men accountable, ensuring they provide the necessary essentials for both the mother and child. If deliberate actions are not taken against these individuals, the issue of impregnating schoolgirls might be perceived as a normalized behavior with no significant consequences for the girls or the community as a whole.

Human Rights Watch (2021b) suggests that male students responsible for a pregnancy should be given mandatory leave during the girl's pregnancy, as this could act as a deterrent and a lesson to other boys. However, unlike girls, boys are not required to take paternity leave and will be permitted to return to school after the girl has delivered. If a male student transfers schools, the original school is expected to share information about his parenthood status with the new school to aid in tracking him. We strongly agree with the recommendations made by Human Rights Watch, as they promote fairness by sharing the consequences of expulsion from school for both parties if the pregnancy was caused by a fellow student. Additionally, if the man responsible for the pregnancy is not a student but an adult from the community, such as a businessman or a motorcycle taxi driver, subjecting him to punishment and compelling him to bear the costs of supporting both the child and the mother would create a sense of shared responsibility in parenting. Therefore, the challenges identified through this objective will help improve the effectiveness of the program, ensuring that teenage mothers receive the education and skills needed for self-reliance and empowerment.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of this study was to determine how the Tanzanian government's program of allowing girls who became pregnant while in school to return to their studies after giving birth is related to efforts to promote self-reliance among these girls. Both students and teachers have largely expressed satisfaction with the government's decision to reintegrate these girls into the education system, indicating a clear commitment to inclusive education and sustainable development for girls, ultimately fostering a self-reliant society. Additionally, understanding the circumstances and causes of teenage pregnancies among schoolgirls, along with the challenges faced by teenage mother students in their teaching and learning process, provides valuable insights into what needs to be done to prevent pregnancies among schoolgirls and to support teenage mother students in overcoming these challenges. This support will enable them to achieve their dreams of having successful careers and lead independent lives. Therefore, we argue that allowing pregnant girls to return to school after giving birth is a highly successful initiative in fostering a society of self-reliant individuals. Additionally, this program promotes self-reliance while addressing gender discrimination that has persisted for decades in many communities. Ultimately, it lays the foundation for equal rights in accessing education, which is essential for self-reliance and economic development.

However, in order to achieve the mission of having self-reliant teenage mother students in their future, this paper recommends the following. First, A comprehensive support services should be introduced through establishing childcare centers within schools, which will enable teenage mother students to study while being close to their children under reliable supervision. This is in contrast to leaving their children at home, far from their

schools, which causes them to worry about their well-being since they cannot see them. These centers will help them balance their academic responsibilities and childcare more effectively. Additionally, psychological counseling services for teenage mother students should be established or strengthened in schools to help them cope with stigmatization and build resilience. Special mentorship programs should also be introduced to empower them with the skills needed for effective child-rearing.

Second. Public education should be provided involving parents, religious leaders, village and street leaders, and all other relevant stakeholders on the importance of not stigmatizing teenage mother students and supporting them as they continue their education while being parents. This support will help them achieve their dreams, which might have seemed unattainable after becoming pregnant and being expelled from school.

Third. The government should enact or strengthen existing laws against sexual abuse of schoolgirls and ensure that all those who impregnate schoolgirls are apprehended. Additionally, it should establish necessary procedures to hold these individuals accountable for providing childcare support while the mothers continue their education.

Fourth. Government and school authorities should introduce professional training for teachers with a focus on inclusive education. This training will help them acquire strategies for teaching students who require special attention, particularly teenage mother students, including how to manage them both disciplinarily and academically.

Hence, the implementation of these recommendations will make the country's education system more inclusive and empowering for teenage mothers. Additionally, a more inclusive education system will not only address the immediate challenges faced by these teenage mothers but also lay the foundation for their long-term self-reliance and socio-economic development. However, for this approach to succeed, a mutual commitment from all stakeholders including teachers, policymakers, planners, community leaders, and families to support and inspire teenage mothers as they strive to build better futures for themselves and their children is strongly needed.

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