

# Chapter 10

## The Emotional Wellbeing and Future Aspirations for the School-Going Young Mothers: A Case in the Lubombo Region of Eswatini

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In Eswatini school-going young mothers who attend school in secondary schools in the Lubombo region face a number of challenges which result in emotional stresses. A qualitative study was utilised to examine the emotional wellbeing and future aspirations of school-going young mothers. 15 school-going young mothers from five (5) high schools were selected using purposive sampling. Focus group discussions and questionnaires were used to collect data from the school-going young mothers, and data were analysed using content and thematic analysis. The study findings revealed that the school-going mothers were subjected to emotionally distress from their parents, teachers and community members. Despite the challenges they still*

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-4501-7.ch010

*have a positive outlook towards school and life. The main recommendations for the study was that young mothers should be provided with parenting skills, psychosocial support and counselling to deal with the stress and challenges of being a young and school-going mother.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The experience of being a young mother is the most challenging responsibility which young girls go through and it can be overwhelming (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013). This bad experience is aggravated by the bad treatment they get from the society. According to Molapo, (2011) young motherhood refers to a young girl between the ages of thirteen (13) to nineteen (19) who conceives, gives birth, or nurtures a child. This age is a critical development stage of young women's lives and it is identified as having adverse social and health consequences (Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong & Michael, 2015). Most young mothers who return to school after the birth of their babies' experience stress, increased responsibilities, shame, guilt, rejection from peers isolation and stigmatisation from society and school (Govender, Naidoo & Taylor, 2020; Moonga, 2014, Bantwana, 2018 & Dlamini, 2019). Hence these challenges result in some of them dropping out of school, affecting their education.

The thought of young motherhood has an immense impact on the emotional wellbeing of young mothers (Govender, et. al., 2020). Emotional wellbeing refers to how well people are able to accept and manage their emotions and cope with challenges throughout life (Melkonian, 2021). It leads to positive emotions, moods, thoughts, feelings and permits a person to adapt when confronted with adversity and stressful situations. To be a mother at a young age affects the emotional wellbeing in a negative manner making one to worry about her aspirations and future life choices (Watson, Vogel & Wubbena, 2017). Hence, emotional wellbeing can impact negatively on the young mothers' outlook on life in terms of aspirations for the future and relationships with others. During these difficult times the young mothers need family support, encouragement, nurture, forgiveness and acceptance (Gatsinzi, 2021). This support could come from support groups from school or society. Providing such support to the young mothers can make them to continue with schooling and have a positive perception about life instead of giving up. Support also helps them to realise that that being a young mother does not mark the end of life. This means that through support, the school-going young mothers could still have dreams and aspirations for the future and achieve those dreams. These are positive thoughts which help them maintain confidence and self-esteem, thus have a good career and be persons who contribute to society (Govender, et. al., 2020).

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