

**Transition to parenthood in adolescence:
Lived experiences in the Hohoe Municipality of
Ghana**

Inauguraldissertation

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SUMMARY

Background to the study: Studies have revealed that adolescents transitioning into early parenthood experience different challenges due to financial uncertainty, inadequate social support structures, stigmatization within their communities, and other uncertainties because of their age. Additionally, the persistent silence of adolescent parents' voices may possibly be the most negative of all experiences for adolescents transitioning into early parenthood. The necessity to recognize the opinions of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents as they experience the transition to parenthood is utmost to my thesis. There is plenty of literature that examined and reported findings concerning adolescent pregnancy and parenting. Nevertheless, not many studies have precisely researched the lived experiences of both female and male adolescents transitioning into parenthood. My study will stipulate a podium for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana to narrate the situations in which they find themselves, their source of social support, and how they cope during their transition into early parenthood.

Objective: The main objective of my study was to provide a detailed phenomenological description of the lived experiences of pregnant adolescent and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana. The study inquired into how adolescents in the Hohoe Municipality made sense of their transitioning phase into early parenthood, how being pregnant adolescents or adolescent parents affected their lives, which social support systems were available for them and which coping strategies they adopted in order to transition well into adolescent parenthood.

Theoretical Framework: My study was guided by the Schlossberg's transition theory and stipulated the perspective to interpret the phenomena of self, situation, strategy, and support that facilitated a further understanding of the adolescents' transition phase to early parenthood. Through this transition theory, I endeavored to explain a detailed understanding of pregnant adolescents' and adolescent parents' lived experiences and demonstrated how their transition to early parenthood can be better appreciated through their uniquely shared narratives.

Methodology: My study adopted a qualitative research methodology. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to guide my data collection, coding and analysis. Ethical approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Ghana Health Service Ethics Review Committee before I started the empirical data

collection. Data was collected through 18 semi-structured in-depth interviews (10 female adolescents and 8 male adolescents). Data was recorded digitally, transcribed, coded and analyzed with the assistance of the MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software.

Results: The findings are presented in two parts, in chapters 5 and 6. The transcriptions of 18 participants (10 females and 8 males) including interviews and field notes were used to develop superordinate themes. These superordinate themes were: news of pregnancy, adolescent motherhood, social support and coping strategies for female adolescents, and for male adolescents the superordinate themes generated were: the journey of becoming a father, adolescent fatherhood, social support, and coping strategies. The stories of the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents are interpreted using the Schlossberg's transition theory to demonstrate how their transition into early parenthood offered them a different understanding of life and this triggered other anxieties such as poverty, level of education, and intergenerational outcome. Transitioning into early parenthood was considered as a major turning point in the lives of the participants as it shaped their lives, identity, and sense of self.

The participants reported that the kind of support they received enabled them to cope well with stressful situations, to obtain the exact personality of being a parent, the participants admitted that there was the need to improve their relationship with their parents and other family members because of the support given them. It was revealed that the support they received went a long way to reduce parental anxieties and thus increasing their self-esteem, self-confidence, and life satisfaction as pregnant adolescents or adolescent parents. Participants focused on reducing the pressure of their transition to early parenthood by engaging in certain practices as a form of coping strategies.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Findings show that the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents endeavored to utilize their assets of situation, self, and strategies to control the liabilities of support to enable them to modify their behavior to accept their responsibility as parents throughout their transition phase. Though most adolescents encounter a lot of challenges with adapting to becoming parents, the majority narrated that though they faced difficulties they did not allow their struggles to overcome them. It is therefore recommended that policymakers concentrate on building shared accountability which will provide a shift in having a better understanding of the needs of adolescents who experience challenges during their transition phase to adolescent parenthood.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The topic of transition to parenthood and its outcome on adolescents has been of profound relevance to researchers who investigate the lived experiences of adolescent parenting. Research has constantly shown that adolescent parenthood is often a traumatic event and it is mostly associated with additional overwhelming transformations than any other transition in life (Campbell & Hart, 2019; Deave, Johnson, & Ingram, 2008). Adolescence in itself is regarded as a transitional life phase with significant life changes and adding parenting to this transition phase can disrupt this crucial stage in the life of the adolescent. Intermediate difficulties characterize an important feature of adolescent parenthood, connecting an intersection between the growth of the adolescent and transition to parenthood (Kelly & Millar, 2017). Studies have demonstrated that adolescents transitioning into early parenthood experience diverse challenges due to financial insecurity, insufficient social support systems, stigmatization within their communities, and other realities because of their age (Leese, 2016). Additionally, the recurrent silence of adolescent parents' voices may perhaps be the most detrimental of all experiences for adolescents transitioning into early parenthood (Lau Clayton, 2016; Nkwemu, Jacobs, Mweemba, Sharma, & Zulu, 2019).

Ghana is one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa with 14% of its adolescent population between 15-19 experiencing pregnancy and early parenting (Ghana Statistical Service & Ghana Health Service, 2018). This high rate of adolescent pregnancy and early parenting means the country also has the probability of experiencing challenges with regards to adolescent development. Thus, this will result in a high level of adolescents' dropout, hence reducing the literacy rate which may eventually affect the economic stability of the country. Since parenthood is an important part of the social and cultural system of Ghana, it is essential to understand and appreciate the challenges pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents encounter to implement interventions that will eventually reduce the rate of adolescent pregnancy and also establish policies that will provide adequate support for those adolescents who are already parents. The need to acknowledge the views of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents as they experience the transition to parenthood is paramount to my thesis. There is an abundance of literature that discussed and reported findings regarding adolescent pregnancy and parenting. However, there are

a few studies that have specifically researched the lived experiences of both female and male adolescents transitioning into parenthood. My study will provide a platform for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents to narrate the situations in which they find themselves, their source of social support, and how they cope during their transition phase.

1.2 Purpose Statement

The main purpose of my study is to gain insight, explore and analyze a phenomenological narrative of the lived experiences and coping strategies of adolescents during pregnancy and early parenthood in the Hohoe Municipality, Ghana. To achieve this key objective, two specific objectives were developed as summarized below.

1. To explore and analyze female adolescents' experiences and coping strategies during pregnancy and early motherhood.
2. To explore and analyze male adolescents' experiences and coping strategies during early fatherhood.

1.3 Research Question

The main research question that was answered in this study is: What are the perceptions of pregnant adolescents, adolescent mothers, and adolescent fathers in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana during their transition into early parenthood? And what do they do alone or with the support of others, to cope during this transition period? To implement the objectives of this study, detailed research questions and sub-research questions were developed as below:

- 1. What are the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early motherhood?**
 - I. How did the female adolescents feel when they realized they were pregnant?
 - II. How do they feel when they are confronted with challenging situations?
 - III. Who do they rely on for support during their transition to early motherhood?
 - IV. How do they manage their difficult circumstances as pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers?

2. What are the experiences of adolescent fathers, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early fatherhood?

- I. How did the male adolescents feel when they realized they were going to be fathers?
- II. How do they feel when they are confronted with difficult situations?
- III. Who do they rely on for support during their transition to early fatherhood?
- IV. How do they manage their difficult circumstances as adolescent fathers?

1.4 Outline of my thesis

My thesis is presented in seven chapters. After the introduction recapitulated in the previous section where I have introduced the statement of the problem, the purpose, and its research questions. Chapter two provides background information on my study and also provides an analytical review of relevant literature applicable to my study. The review provides an outline of the global burden of adolescent pregnancy and its consequences on adolescents, their families, the community, the nation, and even the world.

Chapter three presents a summary of the applicable theoretical framework which serves as an informing theory fundamental in the analysis of the participants' narratives. Initially, in this chapter, I provide a brief introduction of the Schlossberg transition theory, which is a transition theory that is classified as a theory for adult development. Explaining the four main sets of elements that influence an individual's ability to effectively cope during a transition phase. These elements are the situation, self, support, and strategies. I used this theory to expound on the situation pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents find themselves and how their situations determine how they manage circumstances in the midst of difficulties. Next in this chapter, I concentrate on exploring how factors such as personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources significantly influence the self during the transition phase. Furthermore, I present in this chapter the importance of support in a transition phase grounded on the Schlossberg transition theory. Finally, in this chapter, I examine how they cope during their transition phase to early parenthood.

Subsequently, in chapter four, I explain the methodology I used to guide my study. Providing a synopsis of the epistemological justification, sampling, recruitment strategy, and empirical approach, comprising a detail of the methods I used in the collection and analysis of the data.

Chapter five and six, I present the empirical findings that were developed from the data of my study. These findings are connected with six superordinate themes of my study: news of pregnancy, adolescent motherhood, the journey of becoming a father, adolescent fatherhood, social support, and coping strategies. Several emergent themes evolved within the six superordinate themes and these are presented to illuminate texts that were developed from the analysis of the narratives from the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents.

Chapter seven discusses the main empirical findings emerging from the analysis of the data I collected from the perspective of my study's theoretical framework. The aim of incorporating the findings of my study into the theoretical framework was to help me to identify the main themes that were developed during the process of analysis, additionally to define the importance of the theoretical framework to the general research field. Furthermore, I present the limitations of my study and some future study recommendations¹.

¹ I have published some aspect of my thesis as a doctoral student, for details see underlisted publication:

Sitsofe Gbogbo (2020) Early motherhood: voices from female adolescents in the Hohoe Municipality, Ghana—a qualitative study utilizing Schlossberg's Transition Theory, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 15:1, 1716620, DOI: 10.1080/17482631.2020.1716620

Link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2020.1716620>

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the lived experiences of some male and female adolescents in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana during their transition phase to parenthood. For the purpose of this study and accuracy, I have categorized the literature that is pertinent to adolescent pregnancy and parenthood into four comprehensive themes. I would like to elucidate that phenomenally these themes are all interconnected. The first superordinate theme is the news of pregnancy/the journey of becoming a father, this is to highlight the diverse studies on the situation of becoming an adolescent parent that are available in the literature. Although most of these studies reported adverse findings and therefore constrains adolescent parents' outcomes, other studies have on the other hand shown an alternative and constructive outcome for adolescent parents. The second theme emphasizes the individuals around whom my thesis is tied, precisely female and male adolescents, and illustrates their experiences of transition to early motherhood/fatherhood. The third theme focuses on the social support system available to these pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents and how these support systems helped them to cope with their challenges as pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. Finally, the fourth theme aims to explore the coping strategies adolescent parents utilize during their transition phase.

2.2 Global burden of adolescent pregnancy and its effects

Although I will be reviewing relevant literature that explores research on how adolescents react to realizing that they are pregnant or they are going to be parents, I commence with a review on the global burden of adolescent pregnancy and its effects on adolescents, their families, and the community as a whole. In recent years, the rate of adolescent pregnancy has risen significantly, approximately 16 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years get pregnant globally (Blum & Gates, 2015). Furthermore, adolescent pregnancies that occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are over 90% and this is seen as a major public health issue (Nove, Matthews, Neal, & Camacho, 2014). Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has the greatest adolescent fertility rate, yet records the lowest prevalence rates of contraceptive utilization (Ghana Health Service, 2016; Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). Adolescents who reside in rural communities have a greater fertility rate and this presents both health, economic and social consequences (Ghana Health Service, 2017). A survey

conducted in Ghana in 2017 suggested that 14% of 15 to 19-year-old adolescents had experienced pregnancy and parenthood (Ghana Statistical Service & Ministry of Health, 2018).

Adolescence is the stage of life between the ages of 10 and 19 years and it marks a transition of life from childhood to adulthood (Sawyer, Azzopardi, Wickremarathne, & Patton, 2018), it is also regarded as a demanding phase in the life of an individual (Kar, Choudhury, & Singh, 2015). Adolescents may feel they are adequately matured to engage in sexual activities due to hormonal changes during their transition phase into adulthood (Atuyambe, Mirembe, Johansson, Kirumira, & Faxelid, 2005). Getting pregnant as an adolescent has gained extensive consideration in the past years, due to the general scope of health-related and psychological complications connected with it (DeVito, 2010; Islam, Islam, Hasan, & Hossain, 2017). A major contributing factor of maternal and child mortality in many countries in the world is due to adolescent pregnancy (Sedgh, Finer, Bankole, Eilers, & Singh, 2015) and also a major cause of the cycle of intergenerational poverty (Erfina, Widyawati, McKenna, Reisenhofer, & Ismail, 2019).

Studies have revealed that there is a connection between socio-economic struggle, adolescent pregnancy, and early parenthood which comprises interruption of education reduced employment possibilities, and single parenthood (Mangeli, Rayyani, Cheraghi, & Tirgari, 2017; McMichael, 2013). According to Aparicio, Birmingham, Rodrigues, & Houser (2019), the majority of adolescent pregnancies and births are unplanned and unwanted and frequently resulting in affected adolescents feeling disappointed, regret, stigmatized and unprepared for parenthood (Maly et al., 2017). This can have many adverse social and economic outcomes on the adolescents, their families, and communities as a whole. Additionally, the majority of adolescents who get pregnant or become parents before the age of 20 years struggle to adjust to their new responsibilities as parents (Ngum Chi Watts, Liamputtong, & McMichael, 2015). Adolescents are emotionally and psychologically unprepared for parenthood and, thus, experience an excessive proportion of loneliness, anxiety, and depression (Hodgkinson, Beers, Southammakosane, & Lewin, 2014).

2.3 News of Pregnancy

In presenting the first theme, I have aimed to illustrate the consequences of adolescent pregnancy on both adolescents and society. It is also important to understand how male and female adolescents feel about their transition phase into parenthood. Some female adolescents report experiencing stigma, disappointment, regret, and fear upon hearing that they are pregnant (Ellis-Sloan, 2014; Lenters et al., 2015; Ntinda, Thwala, & Dlamini, 2016). Likewise, some male adolescents have reported in some studies of their unpreparedness for fatherhood hence the disappointment, regret, and anxiety associated with the news of becoming a father (Bordignon et al., 2014; De Jesus Sampaio, Villela, & De Oliveira, 2014; Reeves, 2006). These perceptions are attitudes that are particularly embarrassing if adolescents do not receive the appropriate social support during their transition into early parenthood (Gbogbo, 2020).

Adolescent pregnancy and parenting as suggested by an emergent body of research have some social consequences connected to stigma and discrimination (Jones, Whitfield, Seymour, & Hayter, 2019; SmithBattle, 2013; Yardley, 2008), susceptibility to denial (Wiemann, Rickert, Berenson, & Volk, 2005) rejection and loneliness (Wenham, 2016). Researchers have highlighted that stigma and discrimination among adolescents transitioning into early parenthood appears to be an imperative social problem. Furthermore, in the past years, studies have also revealed that society mostly 'labels' adolescents transitioning into early parenthood as being 'bad' and therefore do not set good examples for the other adolescents in the community (Bordignon et al., 2014; Mjwara & Maharaj, 2017; Yardley, 2008). This 'bad label' significantly has an emotional effect on the adolescent which results in being stereotyped by some of their community members, some health professionals, and even sometimes their family members. According to Ellis-Sloan (2014), adolescents transitioning into early parenthood are conscious of their stigmatizing identity, and this influences how they present themselves.

As empirical findings reveal that pregnancy during adolescence can be unpleasant and undesirable, elements that influence the responses of adolescents to unplanned and unwanted pregnancy can be diverse (Mjwara & Maharaj, 2017; Ojo Melvin, Ayotunde, & Mustapha, 2009). The particular attribute and the life situation of the pregnant adolescent would influence the girl in the extent of the reaction. For instance, an adolescent on realizing that she is pregnant will be disappointed and unhappy if she is in

school, not working, and not married (Aziato et al., 2016). Research also denotes that, on confirmation of the adolescent girl's pregnancy they also become disappointed due to reactions from their significant others such as their parents who may feel their daughters have brought shame and humiliation to the family, this view is supported by other studies (Copeland, 2017; Faudzi, Nor, & Sumari, 2019; McMichael, 2013; Sriyasak, Almqvist, Sridawruang, & Häggström-Nordin, 2018). This contributes significantly to the experiences they encounter during their transition phase into parenthood as it leads to other negative emotional feelings such as regret, worry, and despair.

In a study conducted by East, Chien, & Barber (2012), comparable concerns about female adolescent's feelings with regards to becoming pregnant were articulated. They evaluated pregnant adolescents' feelings of regret about having a baby. Their study revealed that adolescents regretting getting pregnant may be reciprocally connected to their parenting anxiety. Similarly, Mjwara & Maharaj (2018) used data from a qualitative study to explore the relationship between unprotected sex, unplanned pregnancy, and the feeling of regret. They showed in their findings that for many of the pregnant adolescents, their pregnancies were not planned and were also unwanted, they, therefore, regretted having unprotected sex. Hence, they felt ashamed of their behavior and also felt disappointed in themselves, none of their study participants felt particularly excited about the news of their pregnancy.

The above presents the additional concern that pregnant adolescents out of disappointment, regret, and fear of been stigmatized resort to abortion. However, the literature on abortion shows that most pregnant adolescents who seek abortions in Sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to resort to self-induced abortions or untrained abortionists and this puts them at a high risk of complications (Awusabo-Asare, Abane, & Kumi-Kyereme, 2004). Furthermore, (Krug, Mevissen, Munkel, & Ruitter (2016) in their research stated that in most communities in Africa where sex before marriage is not encouraged, especially for female adolescents unplanned pregnancies usually occur outside of marriage, when this happens out of despair they often engage in secret and unsafe abortions. In their study on pregnant adolescents option for an abortion, (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013) found that parents in most cases discouraged their daughters from resorting to abortion though they might be disappointed in them, their findings also revealed that although the partners of some of the pregnant adolescents were against

abortion for fear of complications, a few still attempted to abort their pregnancy due to anxiety and distress.

2.4 Journey of becoming an adolescent father

Though most studies on adolescent pregnancy have been directed and concentrated on female adolescents, there is also an emergent collection of literature on male adolescents' transition to becoming fathers. Adolescent fathers are usually labeled as socially disadvantaged, immature, and vulnerable (Johansson & Hammarén, 2014). For a man to transition successfully into fatherhood, he has to be prepared physically, emotionally, and financially, however, studies have revealed that adolescents who experience fatherhood usually encounter difficulties because of their unpreparedness for fatherhood. During their transitioning phase of becoming fathers they are frequently full of anxieties, uncertainties, struggles, and the inconsistency of being fathers and at the same time adolescents (Corrêa et al., 2016; De Jesus Sampaio et al., 2014; Tuffin, Rouch, & Frewin, 2018). The reaction of male adolescents to the news of becoming a father is generally devastating news for them, anxiety occurs as a result of the burdens confronting life in general in combination with the stresses of the phase of transition into fatherhood (Mazza, 2002).

In a qualitative study with seven adolescent fathers whose purpose was to explore the challenges of adolescent fathers towards fatherhood in Vaalbank, Mpumalanga province, Matlakala, Makhubele, & Mashilo (2018) found that almost all their study participants felt apprehensive upon learning they were going to become fathers, this was due to their sense of unpreparedness for the responsibilities that are attached to fatherhood. The participants reported reactions such as being scared, nervous, and worried and thus this finding illustrates that male adolescents in most instances are not emotionally ready to take up the responsibilities of fatherhood. In another study, conducted in a rural district in South Africa, most of the participants narrated that the news of the pregnancy prompted extreme emotions such as distress, denial, doubt, and perplexity due to their unpreparedness for fatherhood (Madiba & Nsiki, 2017).

Research seems to suggest that although some male adolescents feel unprepared for fatherhood hence the doubt, disappointment, and anxiety, however reflecting on the joy that comes with being a father generates confidence and delight with regards to their

prospects as good fathers (Eskandari, Simbar, Vadadhir, & Baghestani, 2016; Reeves, 2006; Wilkes, Mannix, & Jackson, 2012). According to Corrêa et al. (2016), participants in their study elucidated that they had diverse feelings when they realized they were going to be fathers as adolescents and this was an essential strategy in managing their pessimistic experiences. Similarly, male adolescents in another study developed a sense of self-encouragement during their transition phase into fatherhood because they coped well with their negative and positive feelings about becoming a father and this inspired them not to give up on their fatherly roles (Uengwongsapat, Kantaruksa, Klunklin, & Sansiriphun, 2018).

Certainly, an emergent number of studies have established that most male adolescents transform positively during the transition into early fatherhood as their unborn child becomes an instrument of positive change (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Chideya & Williams, 2013a; Dornig et al., 2007). Such studies demonstrate that male adolescents' perception about fatherhood may intensify positively as their newly attained role compels them to show love and care, thus providing them with immerse awareness of self-worth and reflective acceptance of attachment with their child. Tuffin et al., (2018), suggest that the news of becoming a father can be a positive transformational turning point for male adolescents as their child offers the motivation to become better individuals consequently leading to self-improvement. While the literature above highlights the situation in which adolescents find themselves when they realize they are pregnant or becoming a parent and how they react to their transition phase. In the next subsection, I will be deliberating on literature regarding adolescent parenthood.

2.5 Adolescent motherhood

Adolescent motherhood considerably affects not only the adolescent girls but also their families, schools, and the society at large (Herrman & Nandakumar, 2012). To transition effectively into motherhood, one needs to be prepared physically, psychologically, socially, and emotionally; studies however have shown that adolescent mothers are mostly not well prepared for the transition into motherhood (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013; Mangeli et al., 2017). In defining transition; Kralik, Visentin, & Van Loon (2006) described it as a passage from one life stage, situation, or position to the other and the characteristics may include process, detachment, awareness, patterns, and reactions. This means adolescence and motherhood are both transition phases and this can be a time of

anxiety, interruption, and social transformation. Combining the requirements of adolescence with motherhood is a twofold task because two transitions are happening at the same period. This twofold task is a subject discussed by (Islam et al., 2017) and (Seamark & Lings, 2004), they indicated that adolescent mothers still struggle to combine these two roles as they find themselves in the midpoint of their growth paths. Lawler, Begley, & Lalor (2015) also revealed in their study that transition can extremely influence how adolescent mothers perceive themselves and the way other people perceive them.

A phenomenological study conducted in the USA by Ford (2016) provides more description and understanding of the transitional lived experiences of twelve adolescent mothers as they reconstructed their identities of becoming mothers while advancing their motherly responsibility. She further explored the adolescent mothers' views, beliefs, feelings, and experiences concerning their emotions, the mental judgment of self, maternal pressures, and environmental influences as they are interconnected with motherhood. Reconstructing their identities can be explained as meaningful and transformative, being categorized by intensified experiences of emotions and struggles caused by natural and psychological development and social modifications (Salazar-Pousada, Arroyo, Hidalgo, Pérez-L´ Opez, & Chedraui, 2010). It is therefore not surprising that transitioning into adolescent motherhood can have a psychosocial influence on the general identity maturity of the female adolescent. The consequences of adolescent motherhood can be challenging and may trigger a host of emotional, societal, and environmental outcomes for the adolescent mother. Studies have revealed that the new role of being a mother may generate tremendous emotional impediments for adolescent mothers (Fallis et al., 2016; Ntinda et al., 2016; Wiggins et al., 2005).

Research distinctly illustrates that when adolescent mothers mostly feel angry, anxious, and sometimes not assured to provide the care needed for their child, this leads to a sense of confusion and lack of preparedness for new responsibility as a mother (Fatmawati, Nur Rachmawati, & Budiati, 2018). These findings resonate with those of Roberts, Graham, & Barter-Godfrey (2011) who stated that adolescent mothers are more disposed to experiencing negative experiences such as feeling isolated, dissatisfied, and lonely which sometimes affects their self-esteem. Atuyambe et al. (2005) in their study of pregnant adolescents in the Wakiso district, Uganda, reported that these expectant mothers sometimes received negative reactions from their families and abuse from the males who

impregnated them, this frequently resulted in feeling desperate and abandoned. While some studies highlight certain negative experiences connected with female adolescents' transition to early motherhood, other studies emphasize the transformative outcome of early motherhood on female adolescents, where adolescent mothers derive their source of motivation through the desire of achieving their potentials.

Nkwemu, Jacobs, Mweemba, Sharma, & Zulu (2019) asserted that adolescent mothers sometimes generate their source of motivation by placing importance on their desire to achieve their potentials such as the continuation of their education. Nkwemu et al. (2019) extend what we have learned about adolescent motherhood by assessing adolescents' evaluation of their pregnancies, how these affect their self-perception, and their motivation to achieve their goals. Their findings support a previous study by Ntinda et al. (2016) who explored the lived experiences of adolescent motherhood and the potential life prospects of school-going adolescent mothers in the Lubombo region of Swaziland. Ntinda and colleagues revealed in their study that adolescent motherhood may generate a high sense of well-being for the adolescent mother thus increasing their self-perception and perceived capabilities. The reason this may happen is due to their determined attitude to pursue their goals as mothers even amid their struggles.

2.6 Adolescent fatherhood

Until lately, the subject of adolescent fatherhood was greatly disregarded, discussion about adolescent fathers are frequently described as being reckless, inexperienced, and as a risk to the social order (Duncan, 2007). Research on adolescent fatherhood have mostly perceived adverse assertiveness to them and although they have not been well delineated in research, studies on fatherhood can be traced far back to the 1970s, and interesting studies have been conducted from the 1990s till date (Johansson & Hammarén, 2014; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2004). According to Frewin, Tuffi, & Rouch (2007) becoming a father as an adolescent is about developing very speedily, it is about hastening maturity and setting oneself second even while despondently disorient prospects. This resonates with other studies which demonstrate that adolescent fatherhood is connected to the genetic probability and cultural expectancy and for that reason is infused with struggles (Cherrington & Breheny, 2005; Lawlor & Shaw, 2002).

Adolescent fatherhood contributes to adolescents desiring to interrelate more often with significant others and decreasing their disengagement. This deliberation on the significance of the important social relationship with significant others has the potential to positively influencing their fatherly responsibilities and this is obvious in current literature (Tuffin et al., 2018). In a synthesis of exploring how the relationship with significant others influences adolescent fathers' mindsets, beliefs, and behaviors, Jaime, Robbins, & De Los Santos (2015) in their study examined how for the adolescent father the birth of their child becomes a transformative phase for them, through which they improve the relationship they have with their parents, especially their fathers. Jamie and colleagues claimed that male adolescents whose fathers were mostly not involved in their upbringing decided to use the opportunity of being a father themselves to amend their experiences. They did their best to take up their fatherly obligations as much as they are capable of doing. When reflecting on the influence of their parents, adolescent fathers in Recto & Lesser's (2020) study faced various family transitions which caused disintegrated family relationships and restricted connections with their fathers. They mostly lived with their mothers and spent the majority of their childhood without the support of their fathers. For many of the adolescent fathers, they relied on their mothers for sustenance while their fathers were either absent or uninvolved.

To be fully involved in the upbringing of their child, adolescent fathers also needed to be in a good relationship with the mother of their child, this plays an important role with regards to fatherhood obligation (Lau Clayton, 2016). A father's involvement in taking care of their child tends to intensify, and the fathers devote additional time with their children when there is a good relationship between him and the mother of their child (Jessee & Adamsons, 2018). Furthermore, Bhana & Nkani (2014) also revealed in their study that adolescent fathers tend to have a good fatherly relationship with their children and get involved better in their paternal responsibilities if they have a good relationship with the mother of their child however their involvement tends to reduce if they do not have an established relationship with the mother of their child. When adolescent parents are in disagreement with each other, the father may find it problematic to take up his role and be in stable communication with the mother. This consistently persuades the adolescent father to disassociate himself from the mother and child and become unpredictably connected (Uengwongsapat et al., 2018).

A unique interpretation that has been prevalent in recent literature is the progression towards adolescent fathers' self-improvement. In their study of adolescent fathers, Wilkes et al. (2012) discovered considerable evidence that becoming a father as an adolescent can present emerging prospects for positive transformation. Early fatherhood can empower such male adolescents to reflect on their behavior and also an occasion to completely change their behavior even during their challenges. They used the description of positive transformation as a prompt presenting an opportunity for subjective maturity, encouraging change and emotional development (Tuffin et al., 2018), and in doing so emphasized the capable characteristic of adolescent fathers' accounts, such as acceptance of the new and evolving distinctiveness of being a father. They established that formulating consciousness of one's occurrences is a critical fragment of building a positive change. Likewise, Enderstein & Boonzaier (2015), explored how the identity of fatherhood was constructed through reference to the role of a father in a child's life. Their findings showed that early fatherhood can become a meaningful transitional phase for otherwise purposeless adolescents.

Finch & Bacon (2016) studied how fatherhood emotionally and psychologically impacted on the lives of adolescent fathers. Participants in their study narrated their emotional link and unreserved affection for their children, fatherhood meant the capability to sufficiently provide for their children without restrictions. Their findings were in tandem with other studies that found that fatherhood offered an augmented consciousness of power over one's life and stipulated a robust determination around which adolescent fathers could converge their dynamisms (Kowlessar, Fox, & Wittkowski, 2015). When deliberating on the evidence of the meaning of fatherhood among male adolescents, Sriyasak, Almqvist, Sridawruang, & Häggström-Nordin (2015) agree that adolescent males sometimes feel ecstatic and fulfilled when they comprehend they have the competence to create life and the remarkable love that is both given and acknowledged from the child. This opinion is examined by Kiselica & Kiselica (2014) who stated in their study that even though adolescent fatherhood offers many opportunities for happiness, development, and self-actualization, there is also widespread research that shows that experience of early fatherhood tends to bring on many adversities, especially for male adolescents from a disadvantaged background.

Closely connected with the meaning of adolescent fatherhood is the discourse of identity development and this is well emphasized by Tuffin et al. (2018) who stated in their study that adolescent identity is essential together with a growing environment of extensive struggle to traverse through the intense physical, emotional and social transformation. Fatherhood is an important developmental stage for all men and rotates around a transformation that enforces stressful psychosomatic disruption notwithstanding the age of the father. This transformational phase is more demanding for adolescent fathers, who encounter a fast-tracked progressive trajectory and are confronted with the intimidating conflict of an instantaneous and frequently unanticipated modification (Frewin et al., 2007). Such an opinion stimulates a concentration on exploring identity development that highlights the discussion on double identities. In their research to examine identity development, Tuffin, Rouch, & Frewin (2010) recruited 12 fathers who had become fathers before their nineteenth birthday, their findings revealed that adolescent fathers are stuck between the enticement of unrestraint and liberty and the obligation and burdens of fatherhood. These adolescent fathers decided to pursue resolving the contradictory identities of an adolescent and a father due to the contrasting identities involved in the two personalities.

Notwithstanding the disposition of adolescent fathers to be involved in parenting activities and the positive change that this necessitates, studies indicate firmly that adolescent fathers encounter practically tremendous anxiety and struggle during their transition phase of fatherhood. While they do their best to sought intergenerational repair, their transitional phase is negotiated by the persistent requirement to obtain employment to sufficiently cater for their child (Lau Clayton, 2016; Madiba & Nsiki, 2017). There is also the struggle according to Johansson & Hammarén (2014) to attain equilibrium between occupying themselves with caring for their child and devoting their time pursuing their objectives such as achieving educational training. Adolescent fathers experience other challenges with regards to, finances, overcoming humiliation, and other negative cultural stereotypes (Tuffin et al., 2018). Although negativity has been distinct in research, there are also the bases of affirmative support with Bordignon et al. (2014) mentioning in their study that religious organizations and some neighbors were helpful and Johansson & Hammarén's (2014) research reveals that adolescent fathers were acknowledged for persistently getting involved in their children's wellbeing.

To recapitulate, earlier research on the unconstructive perception of adolescent childrearing is empirically embedded in African society. These unconstructive perceptions generate fewer prospects for adolescent parents to attain higher education that will enable them to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. As I have illustrated earlier in the review, there has been a change in how adolescent parents are perceived; however, there are still some parts of the African society that do not agree with this optimistic perception. Hence, the restraint of literature regarding adolescent parenthood due to the assiduous attention on the unconstructive perception and stigmatizing adolescent parents. With regards to the context of my research, my thesis tends to encourage an optimistic interpretation of adolescent parenthood. Based on this optimistic interpretation, the next subsection of my review centered on my third theme which highlights the possibility of investigating the necessity for social support to positively impact adolescents' transition to parenthood.

2.7 The demand for social support for adolescent parents

An essential characteristic that functions to defend adolescent parents and their children from adverse consequences often connected with early parenthood is the necessity for support. Adolescent parents can draw support from some sources, including family, partners, peers, and the community in which they live (Angle, Divney, Magriples, & Kershaw, 2015; Edwards et al., 2012; Gadsden, Ford, & Breiner, 2016). The social context is a fundamental variable in outlines of managing demanding life occurrences such as adolescent parenthood. Specifically, informal social support is widely accepted as a vital safeguard against anxiety. Adequate social support has the possibility of lessening worry and other unenthusiastic feelings associated with adolescent parenthood (Hodgkinson et al., 2014). As indicated in the previous review, notwithstanding adolescent parents' intention to be good and always there for their children, they still encounter considerable difficulties during their transition to early parenthood. These struggles are even more evident among underprivileged adolescent parents, signifying the necessity for further social support. When these adolescent parents experience suitable social support during their transition phase, adverse outcomes that affect them are reduced (Hadley & Ingham, 2018; Lau Clayton, 2016).

Biaggi, Conroy, Pawlby, & Pariante (2016) revealed in their systematic review that social support tends to reduce stress and depression. A supportive system is essential for

adolescent parents who fundamentally go through adolescent demands connected to psychological, physical, and identity development in addition to planning for their responsibility as parents (Thompson, 2016). Adequate social support during the transition phase of early parenthood increases the self-esteem and life fulfillment of adolescent parents and this has a long-term positive effect on their well-being (Masselink, Van Roekel, & Oldehinkel, 2018). Evidence suggests that many adolescent parents have unambiguously described experiences of feeling rejected and marginalized during their transition phase to parenthood and also may be constructed as not prepared for parenthood, feeling disappointed, stigmatized, and regret becoming parents at an early age (Corrêa et al., 2016; Erfina et al., 2019; Mangeli et al., 2017). This is the interpretation that has become embedded within legitimate conventions and accepted philosophy on adolescent parenthood (Mollborn, 2017).

Social support comprises of a well-meant act that is provided freely to an individual with whom there is a subjective affiliation, and that creates an instantaneous or deferred progressive reaction in the life of the individual who benefited (Rausa, 2008). According to Camara, Bacigalupe, & Padilla (2017), while reviewing discourses regarding social support from a practical viewpoint, the consideration concentrates on the diverse categories of support that adolescents explore and obtain. Camera and colleagues noted in their research that, four main forms of support are considered fundamental and specifically appropriate when relating it to adolescent parents. These four forms comprise emotional support, material support, formative support, and cognitive support. Milgrom, Hirshler, Reece, Charlene, & Gemmill Alan (2019) extended the above interpretation and maintained that outlining the instinctive potencies of family and community in combination with solving the problem is the paramount successful way to support adolescent parents.

This interpretation is shared by Angley, Divney, Magriples, & Kershaw (2014) who described in the results of their longitudinal study the reviewed relationship transformations in adolescent couples transitioning from pregnancy to parenthood. Their research found the significance of a resilient support framework during pregnancy on perceived parenting capability in the initial post-delivery period for both adolescent parents. Both social support and family functioning during pregnancy were connected with a better consciousness of parenting proficiency, and these associations were

negotiated by parental despair. According to Ahlborg, Berg, & Lindvig (2013) when adolescents experience a high level of social support during their early phase of parenthood their self-efficacy and contentment also increase, hence it can be argued that adolescent parents who feel more supported during their early transition phase into parenthood have a more optimistic sense of their parenting possibilities, which in return expands their sense of parenting contentment (Leahy-Warren, McCarthy, & Corcoran, 2012).

Informal support networks seem to be most collective among adolescent parents and the structure of setups differs based on various features such as age, gender, level of education, and living with parents or partner (Letourneau, Stewart, & Barnfather, 2004). A background evaluation of analysis on social support emphasizes the social and environmental circumstances in which the activity happens, for instance where is the source of the support. Social support is derived from a setup of people drawn from family, partners, peers, and community who provide help coping with challenges during a transition (Alsubaie, Stain, Webster, & Wadman, 2019). Studies have shown that family plays an important role in supporting adolescent parents during their transition phase and it has been useful in enabling adolescent parents to present themselves as good parents (Campbell & Hart, 2019; Dallas, 2004). On the other hand, support from partners has also been acknowledged to have a positive health outcome on a child (Devito, 2010). Research evidence suggests a significant negative relationship between social support and emotional disorders such as despair and (Poudel, Gurung, & Khanal, 2020; Tomás, Gutiérrez, Pastor, & Sancho, 2020; Väänänen, Marttunen, Helminen, & Kaltiala-Heino, 2014). Coherent outcomes from these studies showed the significant role of social support on an individual's wellbeing.

An earlier study by Nunes Bueno et al. (2012) found out that family members most emphasized as providing the utmost social support were parents, siblings, grandmothers, and godmothers. They also noted in their findings that the quality of relationships and events that happens within the family is crucial for adolescents in acquiring knowledge to become efficient parents. Similarly, Yurdakul (2018) reported that family has a convincing influence on adolescent parents, thus reassuring them to fully experience the transition into parenthood. Certainly, her study also found that while the adolescents had an opinion of the low level of social support, their families provided the maximum level

of social support. Perceived social support from their peers was found to be significantly low in her study, this she claimed could be attributed to the fact that the majority of her participants lived with their extended families and had a little link with other community members. Brand, Morrison, & Down (2014) also noted in their review that there is robust research suggestion of the interdependency between adolescent parents' support networks and experiencing an encouraging transition to parenthood. These findings resonate with those of Clemmens (2003) who reported in her meta-synthesis of qualitative studies that when adolescents receive support from their parents it improves their self-perception of parenting and this leads to enhanced developmental intentions among adolescent parents. Further research conducted in Costa Rica by Copeland (2017) revealed that adolescent parents who do not have substantial parental support mostly show signs of a feeling of shame, the extreme experience of anxiety and dissatisfaction on the other hand adolescent parents who receive support experience more of positive emotional state and less feeling of anxiety.

According to Bunting & McAuley (2004), while research into the role of family support and adolescent parenthood is comparatively usual, an exploration into the role of partner support is frequently distinct by its absence. Partner support has the potential of increasing self-esteem and reduces symptoms of anxiety thus improving the psychological well-being of adolescent parents. Maputle (2006) while adding to the understanding of how partners of adolescent mothers support them found in her study that the majority of adolescent mothers who participated in her qualitative research stated they had received support from their partners, only a few stated they did not receive any support from their partners. Furthermore, Angley et al. (2014) also showed that partner support has an encouraging influence on the parenting capability of adolescent mothers and this influence may increase partner family performance. Adolescent parents may be better equipped to support their partner's childcare capability if they experienced extreme levels of family performance in their own families.

Although family members play a significant role in supporting adolescent parents during their transition phase and may not automatically decline in prominence and encouragement, peers of the adolescent parents are also another important component of the social context of adolescent parents, relationship with age peers may become more relevant, especially with regards to some emotional necessities (McLeish & Redshaw,

2015; Sherman & Greenfield, 2013). Research conducted by Rawiri (2007) in Gisborne, New Zealand targeting nine adolescent mothers, four of the adolescent mothers were attending a local high Teen Parent Unit while the other five were not attending high school. In her study, Rawiri found that her participants were comfortable discussing the difficulties they were facing as adolescent mothers to their friends; thus, friends' responses were generally supportive, friendships with their peers meant a lot for her participants and the support of their friends was essential through all of the stages of their early transition to motherhood. On the other hand, Davis (2002) revealed in her study that even though peer support can provide an opportunity for an improvement in self-affirmation hence reducing the effects of stigma, for younger adolescent parents, however, turning to peers for support may make matters worse as these peers may be unable to adequately meet the special needs of younger adolescent parents. These findings also resonate with those of Mollborn & Jacobs (2012) who reported that the adolescent mothers in their study narrated that though they received some support from their peers in the initial stages of their pregnancy, their peers, however, did not provide them with any other help again after they had their child.

2.8 Coping strategies adopted by adolescent parents

Coping can be described as the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals make to endure or moderate external and internal difficult experiences they encounter (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2016). There are two major types of coping strategies and these are the problem-solving and emotion-focused. The objective of these efforts is to modify the source of anxiety. It normally comprises making efforts to generate opportunities to resolve the difficulty, assessing the pros and cons of diverse choices, and employing steps to resolve the difficulty (problem-solving) or control the traumatic emotions surrounding the situation (emotion-focused) (Stanisławski, 2019). As pointed out by Baker & Berenbaum (2007) the main interpretation in the literature regarding coping is that emotion-focused coping practices are maladaptive. Emotion-focused coping has often been intellectualized as a weak substitute to problem-focused coping. Though data seem to indicate that emotion-focused coping cannot be efficient, there are numerous explanations to be uncertain of the prevailing study. The scope of emotion-focused approaches is rather extensive, comprising approaches such as denial, concentrating on and expressing emotions, the reassuring reinterpretation of occurrences, and seeking out social support. When these distinctive pieces of evidence of emotion-focused coping are

combined, the connection between emotion-focused coping and maladaptive outcome becomes debatable. The practical pieces of evidence of emotions have led to a fundamental precept in research that reveals that emotions can function in an adaptive role in the coping activity (Baker & Berenbaum, 2008; Kelly, Tyrka, Price, & Carpenter, 2008).

High levels of community acceptance and low levels of stigma are some of the conditions that accelerate adaptive coping (Berjot & Gillet, 2011; Stangl et al., 2019). Furthermore, individual experiences and diverse social backgrounds appear to demand the implementation of distinctive approaches and activities to cope with the transition to early parenthood. Consequently, adolescent parents try to develop a great sense of creativity and engage in various innovative activities within their community surroundings that will enable them to learn how to successfully manage their challenges (Moriarty Daley, Sadler, & Dawn Reynolds, 2013). Adolescent parents accustom themselves with approaches that they regard as practical to their circumstances. Some of the prevalent coping strategies adolescent parents implement appear to overshadow societal frameworks although they are not consistently applied. These strategies comprise attitudes such as self-reliance, self-compassion, self-control, self-encouragement, positive self-talk, and acceptance (Bahlmann & Dinta, 2001; Boals, vanDellen, & Banks, 2011; Kohl, Rief, & Glombiewski, 2012; Neff, 2003).

According to literature (Forsberg, 2019; Keizer, Tiemeijer, & Bovens, 2019; McNamara, Cutler, Lundsberg, Kennedy, & Garipey, 2018) self-reliance refers to the total capability of individuals to achieve their purposes and to get along in life. The fundamental concepts regarding self-reliance are thinking independently, embracing one's individuality, and striving towards one's purpose courageously. It is important to develop a self-reliant attitude as it helps one to solve his or her difficulties without always having to rely on others, it also involves developing an attitude of self-acceptance, self-knowledge, and self-compassion (Forsberg, 2019). In their study of adolescent mothers, Seamark & Lings (2004) found substantial evidence that becoming a mother as an adolescent can present innovative opportunities for developing a self-reliance attitude as a coping strategy. Their results showed that adolescent mothers learned to appreciate their character strength by demonstrating a positive attitude that enabled them to reflect on their achievements as young mothers that made them feel proud. For some, motherhood had been the

momentum to transformation for the better. They acknowledged that they were still young enough to further their education or other aspects of employment. For the participants in this study, having been an adolescent mother did not mean that their life and future were all over, they felt confident that they will be able to add value to themselves. The participants were realistic about their potentials, often reflecting on developing their careers. They did not believe that they were not capable or unable to become economically self-reliant. This meant setting up goals and achieving them while developing an attitude of self-accepting (Seamark & Lings, 2004; Wamelda, Santa Daclan, & Gempes, 2016).

During the transition to early parenthood, most adolescents will experience one challenge or the other, as explained earlier some may develop the attitude of self-reliance and adjust quickly to difficulties associated with adolescent parenthood, while others may be more affected by their transition phase and may be prone to develop emotional struggles. Self-compassion may be specifically appropriate, to better understand individual differences of how adolescent parents cope with their transition phase. According to Neff (2003), self-compassion involves “being open to and moved by one's suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding, nonjudgmental attitude toward one's inadequacies and failures, and recognizing that one's experience is part of the common human” (p. 224). Neff theorized self-compassion in terms of three main descriptions— (1) being kind and supportive to oneself rather than harsh and judgmental (self-kindness as opposed to self-judgment); (2) recognizing that such difficulties are a normal part of all humans' life rather than feeling isolated from other people as a result of one's imperfection (common humanity as opposed to isolation); and (3) keeping the personal suffering in rational awareness rather than becoming fully absorbed by one's problems (mindfulness as opposed to over-identification) (Muris, Otgaar, Meesters, Heutz, & van den Hombergh, 2019, p. 1433; Neff, 2003).

The fundamental characteristic of self-compassion involves treating oneself compassionately when things go erroneous. For instance, when one makes a critical mistake, self-compassionate people tend to delight themselves with more gentleness, attention, and empathy and with less self-directed reproach and resentment than people who are low in self-compassion (Batts Allen & Leary, 2010). Self-compassion also involves being encouraging rather than analytical toward oneself when things do not go

well. Treating oneself kindly can be evident in explicit activities such as taking time off to give oneself pause psychologically or in emotional acts of thoughtfulness such as forgiving engaging in self-talk that is affirmative and reassuring (Neff, 2019). Klingle, Jessica, & Vliet (2017) studied the understanding of self-compassion from the adolescent perspective. Six adolescents, who had experienced a range of life struggles, were interviewed about their experiences of self-compassion in the viewpoint of their daily lives. Their findings supported other research work that found that self-compassionate individuals are less judgmental and more likely to forgive their mistakes and shortcomings, they have less of a demand to reject their disappointments and inadequacies. When looking for evidence of self-compassion in adolescents, Bluth & Blanton (2015) agree that self-compassion is paramount as it has been connected with emotional well-being. Adolescents who are high in self-compassion take better accountability for their disappointments and make necessary transformations while preserving an affectionate, tender, and tolerant attitude toward themselves.

Self-control refers to a person's capability to abrogate and obstruct socially undesirable and adverse desires and to amend and control one's behavior, feelings, and reactions (Fujita, 2011; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Because it comprises mindful efforts undertaken to adjust its form before it happens or to avoid certain behavior from happening, self-control, as has been defined, is connected to numerous theories in the developmental and social psychosomatic literature that replicate an internalized competence to control views, behavior, and feelings. Self-control empowers an individual to achieve long-term objectives notwithstanding the existence of temporary desires and interruptions (Chapman, Hampson, & Clarkin, 2014; Duckworth, 2011; Gillebaart, 2018). Therefore, low self-control is probably the cause of some people frequently not able to achieve the objectives. Consequently, self-control is connected to several positive outcomes. For example, empirical evidence suggests that high self-control is linked to improved academic achievement and employment performance, better well-being, and amendment, enhanced interactive performance, health outcomes, improved health performance and endurance (Hill & Roberts, 2011; Turiano, Chapman, Gruenewald, & Mroczek, 2015). In contrast, low self-control is connected to diverse challenging behaviors like substance abuse, delinquency, reckless buying, and overindulging (Franken et al., 2016). According to Roberts, Lejuez, Krueger, & Richards (2014), these diverse challenging behaviors can have devastating effects on an individual and cause

extreme expenditures for the society. It is known that interindividual disparities in self-control develop early in life predicting emotional concerns in later life.

There may be distinct differences among individuals in how good or bad they are with self-control, and these differences may demonstrate analytical connections with significant life outcomes. Certainly, current research indicates that individual differences in self-reported or parent-reported self-control in infancy and adolescence predict a range of essential affirmative life outcomes in adulthood such as improved education and employment but also undesirable outcomes such as unemployment or misconduct and abnormality (Daly, Delaney, Egan, & Baumeister, 2015; Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2013). For instance, a study conducted by Moffitt et al. (2011) revealed that children with low self-control have a higher possibility of less education, deprived health, and other reduced financial stability as they grow into adulthood. These outcomes are negotiated partly by challenging behaviors and consequences evident in adolescence (e.g., adolescent parenthood). Therefore, low self-control during childhood and adolescence affects later-life outcomes by self-control struggles that may have dominant adverse permanent consequences (Allemand, Job, & Mroczek, 2019).

Furthermore, family relationships have been shown to have a great influence on the lives of adolescents especially regarding their self-control (Farahati, 2011; Stillman, Stillman, Tice, Fincham, & Lambert, 2009). Adolescents who demonstrate low self-control is generally as an outcome of their initial life where they were confronted with negative socialization experience. On the other hand, adolescents who were raised in a positive and happy family environment have high self-control (Tangney et al., 2004). Research conducted by Arshat & Ismail (2017) supports the findings that a positive relationship with family has the potential of increasing the self-control attitude of adolescents. They argued that adolescents who have high interconnection in their family are more likely to have high self-control. They also concluded in their studies that adolescents who have low family relationships are more likely to exhibit low personal competencies which may be a result of low self-control and low self-efficacy. However, this may not always be the case, in an earlier study Finkenauer, Engels, & Baumeister (2005) indicated that low levels of self-reported self-control were strongly connected to both developmental and emotional difficulties for early adolescent boys and girls. Seeing one's parents as restricting and emotionally domineering was related to additional behavioral difficulties

such as recklessness and violence and more expressive difficulties such as anxiety, low self-control, and unhappiness. Also, when parents are viewed as reassuring and tolerant, fewer emotional difficulties are associated with the adolescent's attitude.

Self-encouragement is described as a coping strategy that increases self-confidence, assists individuals to release their capabilities, and provides them the assurance to try again without despondency. Besides, it can enhance self-esteem, increase hope, instill perseverance and self-reliance in people (Saljughi & Sadeghi, 2017). Self-encouragement is about building oneself up, believing in oneself, concentrating on one's potency, positive mindsets, and abilities. Also, self-encouragement which is also an emotion-focused strategy can be used to reduce distress and promote a positive effect that allows young people to reconnect emotionally with their educational prospects (Skinner, Pitzer, & Steele, 2013). According to Harvey et al., (2016) and Jenaabadi, Mirlotfi, & Sanadgol (2020) self-encouragement can also play the role of providing positive feedback that places importance on efforts, enhancements, and evolvments rather than consequences. It also supports individuals to ascertain, acknowledge, and have assurance in the fact that there is no need to be the greatest to be a perfect individual, assisting them to preserve their self-worth irrespective of outcomes they achieve.

It is worth noting that, studies have also shown that families also play an important role in enhancing an attitude of self-encouragement in adolescents (Bahlmann & Dinta, 2001; Huh & Kim, 2017). In alignment with other studies, the results of another study showed that adolescents can cope with disappointments in ways that support them to re-engage in education, such as providing themselves with self-encouragement (Amemiya & Wang, 2018). In the same line, a hermeneutic phenomenological study conducted by Nourian, Mohammadi Shahbolaghi, Nourozi Tabrizi, Rassouli, & Biglarrian (2016) demonstrated that self-encouragement helps adolescents to be more tolerant and courageous and cope with their difficulties more efficiently. Participants in their study considered self-encouragement as an element helping them move forward, attempt to resolve the problems and embrace affirmative innermost dialogues.

Positive self-talk can be interpreted as messages that strive to modify an attitude. Therefore, if positive self-talk conveys messages that fall outside an individuals' scope of approval, the individual may decide to reject those messages. For example, if an individual who thinks that he or she is not attractive repeat, "I'm an attractive person,"

that individual may decide to reject this assertion and possibly even emphasize his or her opinion that he or she is not attractive (Wood, Perunovic, & Lee, 2009). It is important for individuals especially adolescents to use positive self-talk as a cognitive coping strategy as it may enable them to concentrate on accomplishing their goals while assisting to facilitate their ability to manage well with adverse thoughts. An assessment by Ellis (2004) found that high levels of positive self-talk can predict modification in cognitive therapy; while improved emotional well-being in times of anxiety has been connected with deeper opinions of significance in life (Boyraz & Lightsey, 2012), and has demonstrated to have motivational usages through improving achievement (Burton, Gillham, & Glenn, 2013; Hidayat & Budiman, 2014). The connections of positive self-talk purpose and well-being have been demonstrated by Oliver, Markland, & Hardy (2010), who assessed post-lecture self-talk use in undergraduate students. Findings showed that the use of enlightening positive self-talk was precisely linked to positive outcomes in the students, even if they did not have much understanding of what they were taught during lecture times. While the connections that exist between adjusting to positive self-talk established that if lack of understanding of lecture content had occurred, monitoring self-talk was greater, which may predict a complex state of nervousness. The investigators were enthusiastic about the propositions of their findings, signifying that positive self-talk may affect students' experience of higher education, recommending that it should be properly encouraged as an approach that is targeted at developing a strategic coping approach. These findings echo the possibility for positive self-talk to be implemented in a way that improves the well-being of individuals (Ford, 2015).

The concept of acceptance can be defined as a self-control approach centered on an open and friendly assertiveness toward one's feelings, opinions, or external occurrences (Williams & Lynn, 2010). It implies acknowledging the reality even if it is not suitable for one's anticipations or aspirations, and the preparedness to compromise with this reality (Nakamura & Orth, 2005). The rationale purpose of acceptance as an emotion control approach is not to modify the experienced feelings, but to accept them without any attempt to regulate (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006; Kohl et al., 2012). Consequently, acceptance is relatively distinctive from other regularly reviewed methods of controlling feelings such as reflection and suppression, which are most frequently grounded on some form of an active amendment of psychological state with regards to courage, duration, excellence, or regularity of feelings (Gross, 2015). Notwithstanding

these distinctions, acceptance exists in a psychological study on emotion control and is regularly associated with other self-control approaches (Naragon-Gainey, McMahon, & Chacko, 2017; Southward, Heiy, & Cheavens, 2019). As Ispa, Sable, Porter, & Csizmadia (2007) illustrated that persons who utilize the acceptance approach to cope with situations, do all that they can to maintain their focus and engage with the principal objectives that contribute to the organization to their lives.

According to a review by Webb, Miles, & Sheeran (2012), acceptance coping strategies are typically proficient. Their efficacy is on average more effective than suppression which is a method of controlling emotions, comparable to distraction which is also lower than certain practices of reassessment such as holding onto a perception. Nevertheless, as stated above, there is extremely high adaptability between the findings of specific studies (Kohl et al., 2012). Some findings revealed that acceptance is more efficient, and some suggest that it is not as effective as it should be when equated to other approaches, like reassessment (Smoski et al., 2014; Webb et al., 2012). Recent research indicated for example that acceptance can be inefficient on the level of psychological understanding, while still efficaciously not controlling mental functional reactions (Boehme, Biehl, & Mühlberger, 2019). In my opinion, these disparities can be partly attributed to the fact that, in several studies, qualitatively diverse self-control approaches are triggered beneath one combined description named acceptance. The concept of acceptance was also reported by Moridi, Amin Shokravi, & Ahmadi (2019) who studied the real-life narratives of pregnant female adolescents. To have control over their transition phase as pregnant adolescents, some of the participants expressed that accepting their pregnancies brought them feelings of optimism and fulfillment. The participants who experienced fulfillment and optimism expressed contentment at the hope for motherhood and felt as if they were generating a persistent and determined life for themselves.

In all of this research, the transition to parenthood is formed by societal construction. Parenthood is an important part of the social and cultural system in Ghana, parents dominate positions in a society based on the relationship they have with a child (Waterhouse, Hill, & Hinde, 2017). As revealed by Kim & White (2018), adolescents' voices need to be heard by decision and policymakers. Listening to the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents and how they cope with their difficulties during their transition into early parenthood will accelerate the development of

adolescent-friendly health services and also encourage customarily delicate, excellent health care (Gbogbo, 2020). Research has indicated that studies done on transition have predominantly concentrated on the support provided to persons struggling with incidents such as loss of relatives, loss of employment, and other serious afflictions (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). Interventions such as counseling using the 4 S's framework of Schlossberg's Transition Theory were proposed to support persons who are struggling to adjust to key transformations in their lives (Browne, Webb, & Bullock, 2018). As there is little literature in Ghana on the constructed selves of adolescent parents, this thesis focuses on experiences and perceptions of adolescent parenthood of a group of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality. In this study, Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Anderson et al., 2012; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010) is used as a guide to provide more insight into the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana. Through this theoretical framework, the female and male adolescents' perceptions of their transitions into, through, and out of early parenthood are analyzed.

2.9 Concluding remarks

In this review of relevant literature, I commenced by exploring research that explained the global burden of adolescent pregnancy and the implications these have had on adolescents, their families, and the community as a whole. I also explored research that offered reflections on the situation adolescents who found themselves on the realization of being pregnant and the journey of becoming a parent. It is also paramount to review the literature on adolescent parenthood, the experiences they encountered during their transition into early parenthood. I have emphasized in this section some of the transformative effects that early parenthood seemed to have on adolescents concerning their self-identity, their source of motivation, determination to pursue their goals, their new roles, and involvement with their child. More significant, though, is the literature that summarizes how adolescent parents construct innovative self-identities of themselves as parents. I have also described some of the sources of social support adolescent parents rely on during their transition phase. Additionally, I also expounded on the coping strategies adolescent parents use during their transition phase.

To conclude, this literature review has revealed that, though the lives of earlier generations of adolescent parents were restricted by adverse discussions and constricting

strategies, contemporary adolescent parents are additionally empowered by more positive discussions and research. In recent years, it has emerged that several adolescent parents develop self-confidence and get inspired from their identity as parents which in return traverses to a direction of change with encouraging outcomes. I feel optimistic that adolescent parenthood if well explored can be comprehended in constructive expressions, hence I share this zeal of optimism into the design of my research study investigating the lived experiences of some male and female adolescents in the Hohoe Municipality who through their narratives make meaning into their transition to early parenthood. Similar to earlier scholars in the field of adolescent research, I pursue to expand my understandings of the lived experiences of a sample of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents who reside in the Hohoe Municipality.

My research traces the experiences and opinions of these male and female adolescents to ascertain what has facilitated and obstructed their transitions to early parenthood in their pursuits of becoming good parents. I agree with Pinzon et al. (2012) who propose that to improve outcomes for adolescent parents, support and its effectiveness should be tailored on an individual basis and balance the outcomes and the experiences that adolescent parents encounter. I am in support of the report of Pinzon and colleagues and also the opinion of Ngum Chi Watts et al. (2015) who suggest that listening and understanding the lived experiences of adolescent parents is important for making interventions accessible that meet the authentic obligations of adolescent parents. Finally, I trust that the modification on concentration from adolescent parenthood being a liability on the society to an interpretation that focuses on the positive characteristics of adolescent parents needs to be further researched. Consequently, this thesis elaborates this modification and expands our understanding of adolescent parents by exploring their experiences.

Chapter 3 will describe Schlossberg's Theory of Transition; the theoretical framework I used in this study.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The social phenomenon that constitutes experiences, events, and procedures is precisely complicated and it is not feasible for any distinct theoretical framework to postulate a comprehensive and satisfactory elucidation for all the scope involved. To better appreciate the transition to parenthood, I reviewed Schlossberg's Theory of Transition that I considered relevant in making sense of the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents and provide a feasible interpretation of how pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents make meaning of their transition to early parenthood and how they cope with and adjust to their new role as parents.

3.2 Schlossberg's Theory of Transition

To explore and understand adolescents' transition to early parenthood, the study drew on Schlossberg's Transition Theory, which is generally categorized as a theory of adult development (Evans et al., 2010). This transition theory played a significant role in the development of this qualitative research study and also served as the lens to elucidate the phenomena of self, situation, strategy, and support that influenced the adolescents during their transition phase to parenthood. Schlossberg developed the Theory of Transition framework (Schlossberg, 1981) to facilitate further understanding of individuals coping during a transition phase (Anderson et al., 2012; Byrd, 2017). This theory was developed to endeavor to answer the question of why people react to the same situation using a different approach or even the same situation with a different approach at different times of their lives. The theory was founded to support adults experiencing some form of transition to attach themselves to facilities and other resources to cope with the expected and unexpected events of life (Thompson-Webb, 2015) and can be used to show how the transition to parenthood can be shaped to provide better potential for adolescent parents to achieve their objectives of becoming good parents.

3.2.1 Transition Defined

According to Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson (2006), the transition is defined as any event or non-event in which the consequences change relationships, habits, assumptions, and obligations. Transitions have been positioned theoretically inside a developmental framework, labeled as turning points or as a phase between two stages of firmness. For

some individuals, the transition may be perceived as a difficult situation. However, others may be contending with a nonevent, the frequently unexpressed event that was anticipated but did not happen. Whether regarded as a period of a predicament or as a growth-related modification, transitions present exceptional difficulties, alongside prospects for progression and conversion (Anderson et al., 2012). Goodman and colleagues emphasized the role of perception in transition, stating that changes may occur in a life situation but if the individual involved does not ascribe considerable prominence to the situation, such transformations cannot be considered as a transition (Goodman et al., 2006). For the male and female adolescents who participated in this research, the above feature was a fundamental segment of their experiences. The participants, while narrating their lived experiences, attached ample importance to the situation in which they found themselves.

According to Leybourne (2016), transitions require coping, irrespective of the particular type of transformations involved. To go through a transition, it is important to let go of characteristics of the self; thus, forgoing previous responsibilities and being ready to adjust to new responsibilities. Individuals moving through transitions must certainly take stock as they mediate the transformations in their lives, and these transformations may encompass achievements as well as failures. Bussolari & Goodell (2009) examined transitions of life and focused on the consciousness of failure and distress that transitions can influence, even when they are affirmative and premeditated. Regardless of the consciousness of failure and distress, transitions can be viewed as life-transforming experiences, which reactivate improvement in an individual's life. It can therefore be stated that transformation is made possible by reconnecting to nature, which may happen after some part of the individual has been separated from the former. According to Miller & Harvey (2001), the experience of a failure can become a reflective means that may generate the reappraisal of an individual's existence and exploring personal stability. This characteristic of a transition can change the purpose of therapy beyond ordinary adjustment to insightful transformation. The objective of an adjustment during therapy is inadequate and that a re-management of life must take place. It is perceived that these types of objectives may be very applicable, still, it is essential to be careful of an individual's opinions of a transformation and their understanding and occurrences. It is fundamental to understand an individual's view of the transition and the impact of the transformations on their lives (Ryan, Lynch, Vansteenkiste, & Deci, 2011).

3.2.2 Type, Context, and Impact

To better understand the impact a transition has on an individual, Anderson and colleagues elucidate that it is essential to consider the type, context, and impact of the transition (Anderson et al., 2012). The three types of transitions described are anticipated transitions (expected events, which are predictable), unanticipated transitions (unexpected events, these are not predictable or scheduled), and nonevents (events that are expected to occur but do not occur). Nonevents can be categorized as personal and these are connected to individual ambitions; ripple can be experienced due to a non-event of someone intimate; while resultant can be initiated by an event; and delayed can be expecting an event that may still occur. Nonevents are connected further with probability than a possibility. Only when an event is expected to happen but fails to happen does it qualify as a nonevent (Evans et al., 2010). The meaning connected to transitions by diverse individuals is comparative, as is how the transition is considered by type. Again, the function of perception is essential (Evans et al., 2010; Goodman et al., 2006). The context of the transition refers to the individual's relationship to the transition and the settings in which the transition takes place. The impact is determined by how the transition influences the day-to-day life of the individual. Both positive and negative transitions, as perceived by the individual, generate anxiety. The presence of several transitions can compound the anxiety. The effect of such anxiety is subject to the proportion of the individual's assets and liabilities at the time (Anderson et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2010; Goodman et al., 2006). In this study, the unanticipated transition will be considered, as the adolescents in this study did not plan their pregnancy nor parenthood but got pregnant and became parents unexpectedly.

3.2.3 The Transition Process

Although a transition may be triggered by an event or non-event, dealing with a transition is a process that increases over time. Fundamentally the individual moves from a preoccupation with the transition to an assimilation of the transition. The period required to accomplish effective assimilation differs with the individual and the transition. Transitions may lead to development, but degeneration is also a potential consequence, and several transitions may be considered with ambivalence by the individuals experiencing them (Evans et al., 2010). Building on the research done by Schlossberg and colleagues in 1995, Goodman et al. (2006) endorsed the concept of transitions consisting of a series of phases, which they termed involving a series of stages, namely "moving in,

moving through, and moving out” (Evans et al., 2010, p.216). There are four main sets of elements that influence an individual’s capability to cope during a transition period. These are situation, self, support, and strategies, which are also known as the 4 S’s. It is imperative to note that the 4 S’s represent four quadrants of liabilities or assets. This model assesses the proportion of resources (assets) to deficits (liabilities) (Goodman et al., 2006).

Coping effectively during a transition depends on the individual’s assets in the four sets of elements. The individual’s assessment of the transition period is a significant factor in the coping process. It is worth noting that the 4 S’s provide an outline for an individual’s assessment process (Evans et al., 2010). Consequently, the 4 S’s described by Schlossberg’s Transition Theory can be utilized to answer the questions of the situation in which the male and female adolescents in this study found themselves, the social support available to them, how their personal and demographic characteristics affected how they view life, and how they cope with early parenthood. While the literature has revealed the effectiveness of Schlossberg’s theory in practice, research studies backing its rationality are insufficient (Evans et al., 2010). However, this study proposes that as a theoretical framework, it captures participants’ perceptions of their experiences in early parenthood and how they cope with their transition. If an adolescent parent has more assets than liabilities in relation to the 4S’s then there is a greater possibility for him or her to make an effective transition to his or her new responsibility in life as a parent.

3.2.4 The 4 S System: A detailed interpretation regarding my study

Situation

Each of the male and female adolescents in this study found themselves in specific situations and this determined how effectively they coped during their transition phase of early parenthood. Their situation varied according to the following factors:

Trigger—What caused the transition? *Timing*—Is the transition considered “on time” or “off-time” in terms of their social clock, and is the transition perceived as occurring at a “good” or “bad” time? *Control*—What characteristics of the transition can they control (for example, the transition itself, their reaction to it)? *Role change*—Does the transition involve a change of responsibility and if so, is it considered as a gain or a loss? *Duration*—Is the transition seen as permanent, temporary, or uncertain? *Previous experience with a similar transition*—How effectively did they cope if there was any

previous experience, and what are the implications for the current transition? *Concurrent stress*—Are multiple sources of stress present?

Assessment— Who or what is seen as responsible for the transition, and how are their behavior affected by this perception? (Evans et al., 2010)

Trigger: Most adolescent pregnancies are unexpected and are mostly triggered by the socioeconomic background of their parents, the lack of guidance due to guardians and parents feeling reluctant or do not understand the need to educate their adolescent children about the vice and sexual reproductive behavior (Manzi et al., 2018). Another significant cause of adolescent parenthood is the reluctance on the part of most adolescents to use contraceptives (Blum & Gates, 2015). According to Goodman et al. (2006), triggers can be external, and also can stimulate individuals to look at themselves and their lives in a new way. A transition can also be triggered by something that happens to someone close to the individual. For example, a female adolescent whose parents' socioeconomic status changes for the worse due to loss of a job can cause her to seek financial support from outside and can result in an unplanned and unwanted pregnancy leading to early parenthood. The timing of adolescent parenting is mostly not considered an ideal time as early parenthood likely have far-reaching consequences not only for the child but also the parent. Physiologically, a female adolescent who becomes pregnant has a greater risk of anemia, premature labor, and pre-eclampsia than older women. Besides, they are more likely to experience pregnancy complications, poor dietary habits, and inadequate nutrition (Mjwara & Maharaj, 2017). Early parenthood often occurs in adolescents who may still be in school and this can alter the entire future of an adolescent, hence the transition may be viewed as happening at a bad time for the adolescent, therefore making it difficult for them to go through the transition process (Shefer, Bhana, & Morrell, 2013).

The source of some transitions is internal, a thoughtful decision on the part of the individual, whereas the source of others is entirely external and the transition is compelled upon the individual by other people or by situations (Anderson et al., 2012). As stated earlier majority of adolescents in Sub-Sahara Africa and precisely in Ghana become parents due to adolescent pregnancy or early marriage (Ministry of Health, 2016). Due to the circumstances surrounding their transition into early parenthood and the fact that the source of their transition is not a deliberate decision on their part, they find the transition phase more challenging and troubling. Islam, Islam, Hasan, & Hossain (2017) conducted

a study to examine the trends and determinates of adolescent parenthood in Bangladesh. The methodology of this study consisted of data from the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Surveys starting from 1993–94 to 2014. For trend analysis, all seven waves of data were used. However, for multivariate analysis, four waves of data from the BDHS were examined: 2004, 2007, 2011, and 2014. Their results revealed that most adolescent girls become mothers at an early age due to child marriages and poverty that they did not have control over and also the use of contraceptives was lower among these female adolescents because their husbands were in control of whether they should use contraceptive or not. It is worth noting that even if the transition is beyond the individual's control, the response to it can be within the individual's control as the two sources of control are internal and external interactions with each other (Goodman et al., 2006). Adolescent health therapists can support adolescents to explore the level to which their trigger or transition is in or out of their control and the level to which they can control their reactions to it.

Role Change: Many, but not all, transitions involve role change. As already noted, role changes are an essential feature in determining the effect of a transition. Irrespective of whether a transition comprises a role gain or loss, some level of stress follows it (Anderson et al., 2012). Adolescents require an enormous amount of time for their education and social life, which are important parts of their development and maturity. Becoming a parent is a key growth-related transition and conveys an intense concern of both positive and negative experiences which may necessitate a careful shift (Meleis et al., 2000). As parents, adolescents must devote time and effort to taking care of their child which may involve role change (Dornig et al., 2007). A grounded theory study among Thai adolescent parents conducted by Sriyasak, Almqvist, Sridawruang, Neamsakul, & Häggström-Nordin (2016), revealed that adolescent parents accordingly experience conflicting role change. After becoming parents, the main concerns of most adolescent parents were being a caring mother and a breadwinning father. This period of role change can be very stressful if they do not get support from their significant others. According to Anderson et al. (2012), when there are no role models available for the new role, the individual remains marginal for a longer period (p. 70). Parents can become role models available for the adolescent parents in their new role and this can significantly improve their transition phase positively even amid other challenges. Therefore, a given role change can be more or less challenging and have bigger or smaller effect conditional on whether the new role is a loss or a gain, is positive or negative, or has unambiguous rules

and expectancies for the new incumbent. It is not the splitting away from old roles that count to well-being, but what is revealed in the context of the new roles (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 71).

Duration: The anticipated duration of the transition influences the comfort or struggle of adjusting to the transition. A change that is considered as permanent will be perceived differently from one that is considered as temporary, a transition that is uncomfortable and unpleasant may be more undoubtedly tolerated if the individual is certain that it is of regulated duration (Anderson et al., 2012). For example, an adolescent who gets pregnant while in school will regard the change as permanent since her role as an adolescent has changed to motherhood, however, such an adolescent based on the social support she receives and the kind of coping strategies she adopts will perceive her transition as uncomfortable and unpleasant allowing her to be reassured that the transition phase is not permanent. On the contrary, if the change is anticipated, then the conviction that it denotes an additional or less enduring state may be comforting. Uncertainty about duration, however, is associated with possibly the highest level of anxiety and adverse outcome (Goodman et al., 2006). In examining uncertainty of duration during a transition, Dalton (2014) in her qualitative study utilizing a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experience of uncertainty among pregnant adolescents revealed in her findings that pregnant adolescents struggle to apportion meaning to their pregnancies when they come into confrontation with circumstances, and occurrences they do not have control over. Hence, the reality of uncertainty in adolescent parenthood is a lack of control. Given the very precise and comparatively short duration of pregnancy, time is predominantly a relevant aspect in determining how participants hold on to uncertainty that is whether they make an effort to circumvent, cope, or acknowledge the anxiety associated with it.

Previous experience with a similar transition: Also, Raneri & Wiemann (2007) in their study of adolescent mothers experiencing a repeat pregnancy within 24 months revealed in their findings that some of the adolescent mothers who had repeated pregnancies were mostly planned and the reasons most of them gave were to have children close in age and to ensure that the older child had someone to play with. Others also stated that their subsequent pregnancies were not planned, it happened because they failed to initiate long-acting contraceptive methods within few months of their delivery. Studies have shown that though some female adolescents experience repeat pregnancies they are still not able

to cope effectively and this may have a negative implication for their current transition (Blum & Gates, 2015; Kumar et al., 2018; Van Zyl, Van Der Merwe, & Chigeza, 2015). It is usually presumed that individuals who have positively gone through a specific kind of transition in the past will possibly be positive at integrating another transition of a related type. Conversely, individuals who have been overwhelmed by a situation may become extra susceptible and less able to cope in the future. Past experiences to some level regulate an individual's psychological set, and if that experience was negative, then the psychological set may be something of a self-approved prediction. Certainly, given potential changes in the stability of assets and liabilities, the connection between effective integration in previous experience and at a subsequent point in time is by no means complete (Anderson et al., 2012 p. 72).

Concurrent stress: Normally transitions in one sphere trigger other stresses and transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). Poverty for instance is a concurrent situation and is closely connected with adolescent pregnancy and parenting (Chideya & Williams, 2013; Lau Clayton, 2016) as well as low levels of educational accomplishment and intergenerational effect (Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). Adolescents who come from affluent families with high educational ambitions and are enthusiastically involved in schooling tend to be discouraged from premature sexual pursuit and childbearing behaviors (Sedgh et al., 2015). Wall-Wieler, Lee, Nickel, & Roos (2019) argued that the high rate of adolescent pregnancy is predominantly high among those with a family history of adolescent parenting. This intergenerational conveyance of adolescent parenting has been ascribed both to the transmission of assets and to the transmission of social and cultural patterns. Adolescent mothers tend to raise their children in more socioeconomically underprivileged settings, which in turn contributes to higher rates of adolescent pregnancy among their daughters (Penman-Aguilar, Carter, Snead, & Kourtis, 2013). Additionally, assessing adolescents' opinions of who or what is responsible for their early parenting, may affect how they evaluate their transition phase (Manzi et al., 2018).

Self

According to Evans et al. (2010), some factors are considered significant concerning the self and these are classified into two categories: personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources. Personal and demographic characteristics are described as affecting how an individual perceives and assesses life. This category includes

socioeconomic status, gender, age (emphasizing psychological, social, and functional age over chronological), and stage of life, state of health, and ethnicity/culture. Psychological resources are the personality characteristics that individuals rely on to help them endure threats, these include ego development; outlook, in particular optimism and self-efficacy; commitment and values; and spirituality and resiliency (p. 217). Research that merges shared and individual evaluations demonstrate the significance and usefulness of an incorporated approach to the study of transitions. Such research elucidates the distinctions that are mentioned when it is assumed that research findings contrast as a function of age, gender, and social class. Individuals who occupy diverse parts of the social system live, in various ways, in extremely distinctive settings, have diverse assets and are affected differently by diverse circumstances (Anderson et al., 2012).

Personal and Demographic Characteristics: Socioeconomic status is an important factor in the personal and demographic characteristics of the self-element because of the social restrictions and perception of others as being a member of a marginalized social class. The courage and deficiencies an individual has before the trigger of life struggle are also essential because an adolescent previously experiencing difficulties in his or her education due to his or her socioeconomic status may have a predisposition to dropping out of school before being pregnant and being an adolescent parent (Thompson-Webb, 2015). Social patterns, religious norms, and morals slightly dictate to pregnant adolescents or adolescent parents what is expected of them due to their transition. The socioeconomic status of the family may hinder or support them in taking decisions regarding the prospects for their children. Another important factor in the personal and demographic characteristics of the self-element is the adolescent parents' age, the younger the adolescent parent the greater the possibility of dropping out from school (Manstead, 2018). Recent studies indicate that the relationship between low income and poor health has its origins in early childhood (Gary, 2016; Kruk, 2013). In a recent cross-sectional study, investigating the trends of inequalities underlying key socioeconomic factors that account for the inequalities in adolescent pregnancy and parenthood, (Chirwa et al., 2019) found that inequality in adolescent pregnancy and parenthood is worse among adolescents from poor families, their findings also suggested that the main drivers to inequality in adolescent pregnancy and parenthood are socioeconomic status and early sexual debut.

The connection between low income, reduced access to health care and poorer health characterizes just one demonstration of the outcome of socioeconomic status on the life possibilities of adolescents (De, 2017). The main backgrounds that impact the way children and adolescents grow up include families, communities, and schools. The quality of these backgrounds, and whether they are caring and encouraging or hazardous and devastating, has an intense effect on adolescents' possibilities for leading efficacious mature lives. Family revenue is possibly the most distinctive fundamental element in determining the quality of these backgrounds (Escarce, 2003). Growth-related features of adolescence, such as inadequate emotional control, insufficient coping abilities, and the difficulties of developing uniqueness, frequently compromise the adolescent male's capability to successfully deal with the pressures of parenthood (Lee, Fagan, & Chen, 2012). In a qualitative study exploring the perception of men on the experiences of parenting during adolescence, Corrêa et al. (2016) found that adolescent couples had struggles sustaining co-parenting relationships that are encouraging, and this was due to not having sufficient relational proficiencies. Studies on fatherhood at distinctive life phases have stipulated convincing indication that as compared to matured fathers, adolescent fathers are mostly predisposed to parenting pressures which may be due to reduced educational accomplishment, fewer experiences in the parenting responsibility, greater rates of unemployment, and relationship unpredictability with the mother of their child (Hunt, Caldwell, & Assari, 2015; Wilkes, Mannix, & Jackson, 2012).

It is important to note that an individual's state of health does not only affects his or her capability to adjust to a transition but may also on its own be a source of anxiety. Experiencing ill-health intrinsically is a transitional phase, depending on the mental state of an individual, an illness can have a long-term emotional effect which then can affect other transitions. An illness may be chronic, which may cause a slow degeneration in physical assets and the level of strength, hence intensely distressing the individual's coping capability (Anderson et al., 2012). In addition to maneuvering the developmental obligations of adolescence, studies have revealed that adolescent parenting is also connected with a higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes (Beers & Hollo, 2009; Lewin, Mitchell, & Ronzio, 2013). In a study conducted by Gurung et al. (2020) to evaluate the prevalence, risk factors, maternal and neonatal health effects among adolescent mothers. The methodology of this research consisted of an observational study conducted for a period of 12 months in 12 public hospitals of Nepal between July 2017–

June 2018 encapsulated within an extensive neonatal revitalization program (Ashish et al., 2019). Results from this study suggested that female adolescents from underprivileged ethnic societies have a greater probability of being an adolescent mother compared to the privileged ethnic society. Pregnant adolescents are at a greater risk of adverse birth consequences compared to adult females being more prone to experience protracted childbirth, preterm birth, and having a baby that is small for gestational age. Implications for the results of this study could be used to assist in the prevention of morbidity and mortality among pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers. It could also be used to help in increasing the frequency of adolescent mother's commitment to pursuing their educational objectives (Gurung et al., 2020).

Psychological Resources: Adolescents approach the transition into early parenthood from unique frameworks of situation, each adolescent reacts according to their framework of the situation and their level of development (Deave et al., 2008). For instance, if there were 50 adolescent mothers and 50 adolescent fathers who are experiencing the transition to early parenthood, each of these adolescent parents would cope with their transition phase according to their unique situation and their level of maturity. This example can be used to describe the term ego development, and this term refers to the transformation of an identity construct that integrates experience into a logical impression of how individuals perceive themselves. In this way, ego development is the focus of the exploration of human experience (Gfellner & Armstrong, 2012). Ego development is operationalized by different levels that reflect the increases in diversity and complexity, conformist individuals who are at a lower level will think in stereotypes and comply with instructions without difficulty, while self-reliant individuals who are at a higher level are more analytical and better able to endure uncertainty (Anderson et al., 2012). Knowing the level of ego development of adolescent parents can be beneficial to psychotherapists in various situations. Consider such distinct transitions as negotiating adolescent parenthood. If for instance psychotherapists can identify the level at which adolescent parents operate, they may better modify their interventions to suit adolescent parents' situations. Indeed, an increasing number of studies have found that adolescent parents often display both conformist and self-reliant levels of maturity (De Jesus Sampaio et al., 2014; Deave et al., 2008; Kelly & Millar, 2017). Such studies show that some adolescent parents during their transition phase get encouraged when they feel anxious, to influence the lives of their children, and also to be acknowledged in their society. While others

through their struggles as adolescent parents seek to deepen understanding of themselves and show accountability for their commitment in life. Hence, an individual's outlook itself is a consequence of the composite relationship of several influences and this intensifies the way transformation is perceived. Optimism and self-efficacy are two essential aspects of one's outlook (Goodman et al., 2006).

According to Piper (2019), optimism is the emotional attribute categorized as the common anticipation that good things will occur or the certainty that the future will be favorable because an individual has control over significant outcomes. In a study to understand how individuals can change their mind and their lives optimistically, Seligman (2006), examined the elements that empower individuals to overcome difficulties in their lives, prevent sickness, endure hardship, and lead happier and more fruitful lives. His work has concentrated on various ways individuals respond, especially to adverse, overwhelming circumstances. According to Seligman, life extorts comparable impediments and misfortunes on both optimists and pessimists, however, optimists tend to cope better. In the context of young individuals, it could be demonstrated that adolescent parents who perceive that they can cope with their difficulties or who feel optimistic about the challenges they face during their transition phase tend to experience less anxiety and accomplish more in their endeavors and also achieve better health outcomes. Even though Seligman in his study was cautious to indicate that optimism is not a panacea, his results supported its positive influence on physical well-being, success, and overall emotional outlook. He reinforced the opinion that optimists age healthier and experience less of the prevailing emotional disorders among young individuals (Seligman, 2006). In their study of pregnant and parenting adolescents, O'Brien Cherry, Chumbler, Bute, & Huff (2015) found convincing evidence that becoming a parent as an adolescent can present new opportunities for developing optimism which has a positive influence on the physical well-being and overall emotional attitude. Their study revealed that being optimistic about the future and aspiring for a better life was very prominent among their participants. Desiring for a better life meant recognizing the negativity in their own lives and striving for something different. Thus, a positive transformation in conscientious goal-seeking behaviors, optimism, accountability, and objectivity with parenthood (O'Brien Cherry et al., 2015)

Another essential aspect of an individual's outlook that predicts how an individual will negotiate transitions is self-efficacy. According to Doménech-Betoret, Abellán-Roselló, & Gómez-Artiga (2017), self-efficacy can be defined as “an individual's belief in his or her own ability to organize and implement action to produce the desired achievements and results” (Doménech-Betoret et al., 2017, p.2). Self-efficacy plays a significant role in the adolescent transition to early parenthood because adolescent parents who perceive that they have no control over their situations tend to have the propensity of making default decisions. Consequently, they end up taking on a defeated attitude, making the accomplishment of an objective less possible to occur; nevertheless, adolescent parents who perceive their transition phase as a pivotal point (Duncan, 2007) in their lives will do their best to appreciate the optimistic side of their transition and this may positively influence their new life event. A study conducted by Kelly & Millar (2017) illustrated that the development of self-efficacy including a distinctive sense of proficiency connected with efficient parenting would emerge to be a fundamental aspect of formulating a positive transition to early parenthood. They also suggested that self-efficacy comprises for the adolescent parent the necessity to feel capable in their parental responsibility. Similarly, Puspasari, Nur Rachmawati, & Budiati (2018) revealed in their study that for adolescent parents who develop a sense of capable parenting abilities, their sense of personal happiness, satisfaction and desire is improved as part of this transitional phase. Nevertheless, for a sense of self-efficacy to happen adolescent parents rely on the experience, encouragement, and reassurance from significant others to boost their sense of ability connected with their parenting obligation (Kelly & Millar, 2017).

Support

Support has been illustrated to play a defensive function against depression among the general population (Gariépy, Honkaniemi, & Quesnel-Vallée, 2016). Support constitutes three components: types, functions, and measurement. “Support” in this context refers to social support, and four types are mentioned: intimate relationships, family components, networks of friends, and communities. Affirmation, encouragement, and sincere opinion act as the functions of support (Evans et al., 2010). According to Goodman et al. (2006), social support can be measured by ascertaining the constant supports of an individual, supports that are to some extent responsibility dependent and supports that are most probable to change. The function of social support in a transition phase has been of precise significance as a potential defensive element for coping struggles which may result from

the many challenges that accompany parenthood (Milgrom et al., 2019). Pregnant and parenting adolescents can benefit from support services to enable them to achieve their objectives and prospects during their transition phase into early parenthood.

Several studies have endorsed the opinion that social support is one of the most significant necessities for pregnant and parenting adolescents. Hayward (2011), for instance, in her publication *Teenage Pregnancy and Its Health Implications*, (Hayward, 2011), outlined several ways that pregnant and parenting adolescents can be supported through social support networks. Furthermore, Huang, Costeines, Kaufman, & Ayala (2014) revealed in their study that a high level of parenting stress and low perceived social support were associated with higher levels of maternal depression hence the need for a social support network. A study conducted by Recto & Lesser (2020) among Hispanic adolescent fathers to explore their views on fatherhood showed that though some of the adolescent fathers did not have much fatherly love and support they were appreciative of the time they spent with other fathers and explained that parenting programs offered an affirmative setting for support. The participants were able to honestly deliberate on their anxieties through the support they received from the program, thereby allowing them to connect to each other's experiences. These encounters provided diverse prospects for reassurance and exchange of information associated with fatherhood (Recto & Lesser, 2020).

A previous study by Mills et al. (2013) revealed that their participants who participated in a young parents support program considered it to be very beneficial. The program provided adolescent mothers with social support which offered them an opportunity to interact and make new friends, support each other emotionally, and also learned from other people's experiences through listening to presentations on exclusive issues regarding adolescent parenthood. Similarly, the Ministry of Social Development (2010) reported that effective parenting social support services were necessary for adolescent fathers as it increases adolescent fathers' involvement with their children. Indeed, their report found that mentoring relationships can be beneficial to adolescent parents who may particularly lack role models during their transition phase to early parenthood. McLeish & Redshaw (2015) noted that participants in their study narrated how the relationship was built and managed between them and their peer volunteers. In the course of the participants' reflections on the relationship constructed they made mention of building relationships of trust and preventing dependency. One of the adolescent mothers

reflecting on the significance of having this sort of support provided the following narrations saying: “[The peer volunteer] is like my mum. Seriously, she [has] been like a mum to me. She is my friend, I can talk to her [about] whatever I want, I can meet her whenever I want... She is friendly, she is patient, she will listen to you and I like everything about her” (p. 9).

Strategies

In assessing the fourth S, strategies, Goodman et al. (2006) recommended that coping responses can fundamentally be described under three categories: modification of the situation, controlling the meaning of the problem, and supporting to manage the stress after going through the struggle. Connecting to the diverse objectives reflected by these categories, individuals may also utilize four coping approaches: seeking information, direct action, obstruction of action, and intra psychological behavior (Evans et al., 2010). According to Goodman et al. (2006), individuals who cope efficiently during their transition phase successfully exhibit resilience and use different approaches.

Wenham (2016) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study following a sample group of adolescent women from the final phase of their pregnancy to the early transition phase of motherhood and then subsequent advancement as a mother. The purpose of the study was to explore adolescent mothers’ experiences of pregnancy and parenthood and specifically the experience of stigmatization and how they coped. The sample population which consisted of 18 adolescent mothers over five years were individually interviewed. Her findings revealed that participants' response to the stigma they experienced helped them to transform their situation positively thus aimed at modifying the source of their anxiety, they did this by negotiating through their transition, taking optimistic actions, and being self-reliant (Wenham, 2016). A shared and emergent theme from studies by Lombe, Phiri, Mampi, & Liato (2018) and Uengwongsapat, Kantaruksa, Klunklin, & Sansiriphun (2018) was that parenting gave adolescents resilience in life. This resilience empowered them to seek parenting information, accepted their responsibility as parents, modified their behavior, and developed the attitude of planning for their future and that of their children. Furthermore, a systematic review conducted by Benito (2018) illustrated that adolescent parents become resilient during their transition phase despite difficulties to attain progressive consequences through informative and competent objectives and the rejection of the typical negative stereotypes connected with pregnancy and adolescent

parenting provide tremendous endurance to understanding their pregnancies and early parenthood as misfortune. This review reflected those of Lombe et al. (2018) and Uengwongsapat et al. (2018) study results. Implications for the study suggested that pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents require a resilient social support network to encourage them achieve their purpose and fulfill their aspirations in life.

Uengwongsapat et al. (2018) highlighted in their research the process of growing into adolescent fatherhood. In their study all their participants were able to resolve the identity conflict of their future roles, ultimately growing into dependable adolescent fathers. Uengwongsapat et al. (2018) postulated that growing into adolescent parenthood is an extremely demanding developmental process, yet, some adolescents gradually can transition to early fatherhood with the support of various coping strategies. A study by Anwar & Stanistreet (2015) found that those adolescent mothers though they experience some form hardship during their transition phase into motherhood due to low income, still viewed motherhood as a positive experience through the diverse coping approaches they used. These findings are similar to that of Mills et al. (2013) who suggested that having a trusting relationship to whom adolescent parents can turn for advice and support can be an essential form of coping strategy which eventually would have a positive impact on them during their transition phase of early parenthood. Furthermore, Clarke (2015) concluded from a biographical qualitative study that adolescent pregnancies and parenting offers to some extent the motivation for development and improvement as participants in her study developed and applied a pattern of life skills which increased the development of other adjustment approaches and defensive elements.

An essential fact emerging from the above theoretical frame is that selection of a coping strategy depends on whether or not the situation can be transformed. If it can be, then problem-focused approaches may be considered and utilized; if not, then an emotion-focused approach may be employed. It is important to note that individuals who cope well during challenging times of the transition are mostly flexible and utilize diverse approaches. The ability to effectively cope is not an attribute but is a self-motivated activity persistently modifying throughout the continuing process of the transition phase (Anderson et al., 2012).

3.3 Conclusion

The earlier chapter aimed to recapitulate the main theoretical framework pertinent to the analysis of my study results. Building on the evaluation of Schlossberg's Theory of Transition, the purpose of my empirical analysis is to further elaborate on the lived experiences of adolescents during their early parenting transition phase. Reflecting on the viewpoints of Schlossberg's Theory of Transition discussed in this chapter, I anticipate demonstrating this viewpoint exploring pregnant and parenting adolescents' ability to cope during their transition phase of early parenthood utilizing the Situation, Self, Support and the Strategies variables to describe the factors that make a difference in how these adolescents cope with change. Further theoretical reflections related to the methodological approach I adopted in my study will be discussed in my next chapter.

4 MATERIALS AND METHODS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain the epistemological justifications which include the research methodology and research design. I will then expound on the methods of data collection, study location, and study participants. Also, the preparation for the field research will be explained and the approach used. Furthermore, similarly, the procedure used to record, transcribe and code the data collected will be described. Additionally, the process of data analysis, interpretation, and presentation will be explained. Finally, the chapter will be concluded by presenting the outline research process.

4.2 Epistemological Reflections

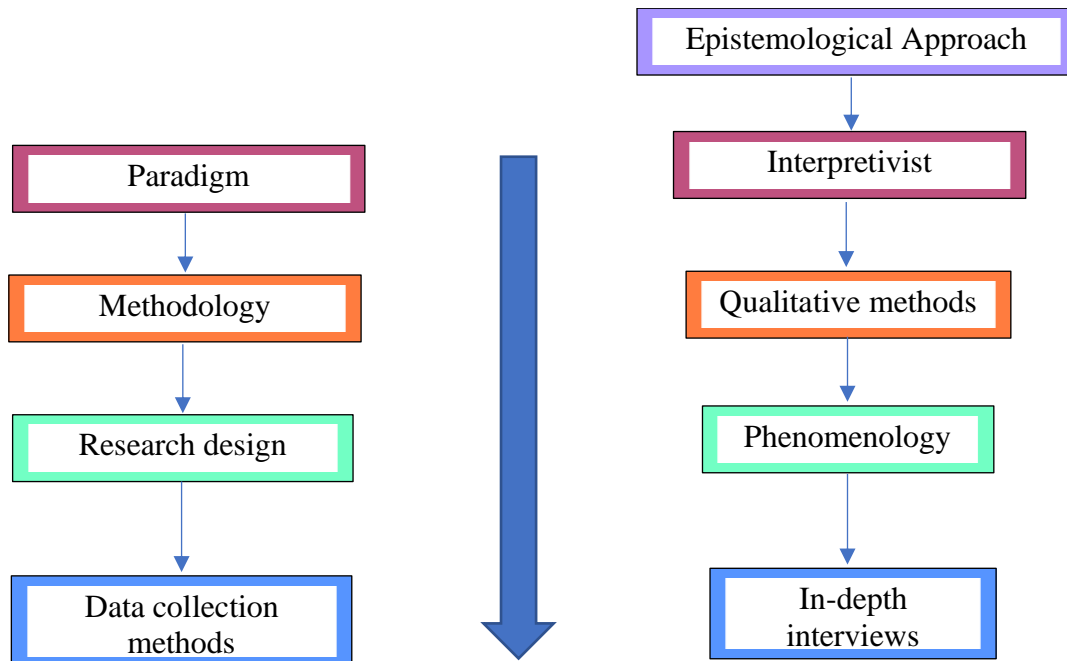
In this section, I will discuss the research methodology of the study, how applicable and justifiable it is for the research question of the study. I will start this section by elaborating on the epistemological approach and further explain the research methodology. Lastly, a detailed presentation on the research design-phenomenology will be given.

4.2.1 Epistemological Approach of the Study

To conduct and evaluate any study successfully, it is important the researcher distinctly explains the epistemological approach, research methodology, and the research design implemented. Research methodology refers to the techniques used to categorize, select, processes and analysis data for any study (Silverman, 2013), whereas a research design is a set of methods and procedures that offers an outline for the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012). Selecting the research methodology and research design of any study depends on the paradigm directing the study interest. How suitable and applicable they are to the objectives and research questions. More precisely, selecting the research methodology and research design is guided by views about the nature of reality and humanity (ontology), the theory of knowledge that informs the research (epistemology), and how that knowledge may be increased (methodology) (Tuli, 2010). The essential feature of any debate about the description of social science research must put into consideration the ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives as these components contribute to the structure and description of how a study is conducted (Tuli, 2010). The general theoretical and epistemological approaches in most social science studies and other multidisciplinary research areas such as public health, sociology, and

psychology, are either positivistic or interpretative approaches (Mohajan, 2018). The epistemological approach summary to this study is outlined in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Epistemological approach to the study (source: modified from literature)



Epistemology constitutes the following questions: What is the connection between the knower and what is known? In what way do we know what we know? What is considered knowledge? (Tuli, 2010). The positivist paradigm of discovering social existence is grounded on the philosophical concepts of Auguste Comte a French Philosopher. According to him, surveillance and reason are the best ways to understand the behavior of humans; real knowledge is grounded on experience of sense and can be obtained by surveillance and testing (Bryman, 2012). Positivists assume that knowledge is objective and quantifiable, they implement the scientific method and categorize the knowledge initiation procedure with the help of quantification to improve accuracy in the explanation of parameters and their existing relationship. Positivism deals with the discovery of reality and demonstrating it through empirical means (Thomas, 2013). According to this viewpoint, it is significant to formulate applicable methods to measure the objective existence of a phenomenon be it natural or social.

Consequently, the positivist paradigm mainly emphasizes the advancement of detailed and exact ways of empirically quantifying such phenomenon. The positivists predominantly use the techniques of science that effectively achieve an understanding of the natural world (Mohajan, 2018). On the other hand, the interpretivist paradigm argues that the world is constructed, interpreted, and experienced by people in their connections

with each other and with broader social structures (Tuli, 2010). According to this paradigm, research is intended to be interpretive, it does not aim to generalize to the whole population but rather to comprehend a particular phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2010). Therefore, from an interpretivist perspective to achieve an understanding of what is considered as knowledge, the subjective narrations of the study population must be better understood (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

The interpretivist paradigm opposes the unity of methods based on the methods of natural sciences as argued by the positivist paradigm. Rather the interpretivist paradigm emphasizes that the methods relevant to the study of natural sciences may not necessarily be suitable for the study of human subjects (Saunders et al., 2009). Additionally, the interpretivist paradigm claims that the subjective and objective characteristics of social existence are intricately connected. They, however, admit that objective reality exists. Since social actors make meaning of things around them, the reality is therefore comprehended as being perceived and given significance. Social actors are naturalistic beings, making meaning to their actions while they try to understand their experiences and the real world around them (Green & Thorogood, 2004).

Human behavior may be patterned and consistent as alleged by both the positivist and interpretivist paradigm. Nevertheless, positivists perceive that these patterned behaviors are controlled by the laws of cause and effect, while interpretivists argue that such patterned behaviors are in existence due to developing meaning systems that individuals create as they interact socially (Neuman, 2014; Sandberg, 2005). This, therefore, suggest that interpretivists are more concerned with emphasis on a better understanding of the world through firsthand experience, honest commentary, and quotes of actual narrations from insiders' viewpoints than using laws of cause and effect on human behavior (Tuli, 2010). Interpretivist researchers use data collection techniques that are subtle to context and this allows for a deeper narration of social phenomenon (Neuman, 2014).

In conclusion, there are major concerns in the interpretivist paradigm with issues of trustworthiness and credibility divergent to the positivist paradigm principles of validity, reliability, and objectivity (Tuli, 2010). Positivists researchers aiming to explain, predict, and authenticate experimental connections in comparatively controlled environments use validity, reliability, objectivity, precision, and generalizability to judge the accuracy of

quantitative studies (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2005). On the other hand, for research to be considered trustworthy and accurate, interpretivist researchers seek to base their research on a rigorous rationale that validates the use of selected methodology and the processes involved in data collection and analysis (Tuli, 2010). This study is guided by the interpretivist paradigm.

4.2.2 Research Methodology

Methodology is a research approach that interprets ontological and epistemological ideologies into guidelines that show how research is to be done (Tubey, Rotich, & Bengat, 2015). It also explains the principles, techniques, and practices that direct research (Tuli, 2010). Based on the epistemological reflections discussed earlier, it is worth stating that researchers strive to collect empirical data systematically and to examine data patterns so that social life can be understood and explained better. However, differences between research methodologies can generate miscommunication and misinterpretation, quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are equally logical and they also correspond to a large extent with the positivist and the interpretivist paradigm (Neuman, 2014).

A quantitative research methodology is linked to the positivist paradigm while a qualitative research methodology is linked to the interpretivist paradigm (Tubey et al., 2015). Nevertheless, according to Kalof, Dan, & Dietz (2008), quantitative and qualitative research methodologies both contribute greatly to the understanding of the social world. These two research methodologies achieve the same purpose using somewhat different techniques. These different techniques are revealed throughout the whole research process including how the research problem is defined, how samples are reached, how data is gathered, and even how the data is analyzed, translated, and disseminated (Green & Thorogood, 2004; Kalof et al., 2008).

In contrast to quantitative research methodologies, qualitative research methodologies' key concern is to assume that meaning is embedded in the participant's experiences and that this meaning is negotiated through the researcher's own opinions (Tubey et al., 2015). Researchers using qualitative methodology submerge themselves in a particular setting by observing its people and their dealings, regularly participating in activities, interviewing important individuals, taking life histories, forming case studies, and

analyzing existing documents or other social objects. The qualitative researcher's goal is to achieve an insider's opinion of the people under study (Tuli, 2010).

Qualitative researchers mostly adopt an inductive approach in their research study, thus coding and analyzing are done predominantly from the data without applying any preceding theoretical concept. On the other hand, quantitative researchers adopt a deductive approach, thus analytic categories are derived from the conceptual framework, research question, or literature review (Kalof et al., 2008). Using the deductive approach, the researcher has preceding anticipation of information needed and will collect and analyze data utilizing a systematized approach informed by any of the above-mentioned sources. In a purely deductive method, the researcher does not commence the research with an open mind as it is in the inductive approach (Kalof et al., 2008; Kuckartz, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the meaning and interpretations pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents give to their experience of transitioning into parenthood. This study explored how pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents make sense of what it means to be an expectant adolescent mother or an adolescent parent. As discussed earlier, gaining knowledge of how these adolescents make meaning of their transitioning experience into parenthood cannot be rationally achieved by a quantitatively informed method to social study. Hence, this research implemented a qualitative method to collect data and analysis. In a qualitative research method, the researcher maintains a focus on gaining knowledge of the meaning that participants make of their experiences, not the meaning that the researcher creates to the inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.2.3 Study Design- An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The predominant question this study sought to answer was 'what is it like to be an expectant mother or a parent in the context of being an adolescent?' The focus of the study was on the participants' subjective lived experiences of their transition into parenthood, and the meaning they attributed to their experiences. This study chose Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) as the methodological framework because its phenomenological approach is suitable in answering the research question of the study, and its interpretative emphasis allowed the sense-making of the participants to be connected to a concept and situated within cultural viewpoints of what it means to be an adolescent parent.

This section aims to give a summary of the theoretical bases of IPA and give a synopsis of how the study was conducted to allow readers to predict what they might discover and evaluate the consistency of the knowledge produced (Yardley, 2007).

The main objective of this study is to develop an absolute understanding of how adolescents make sense of their transition into parenthood and also to explore their experiences in their expressions (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). According to King & Horrocks (2010), an IPA approach argues that people attribute meaning to their behavior and that of others and that they act based on these meanings. It also acknowledges that the phenomenon and the meaning ascribed to it are exclusive to the perspective in which they are experienced. From an analytical humanist viewpoint, it is presumed that there is a lived experience of adolescent parenthood that is contextually situated, formed by its cultural structure of orientation and social interface. The purpose of the IPA methodological framework is to gain an understanding of the subjective meaning of this social experience, rather than to make projections, and to trace this within a particular context (Smith, 2011).

This investigation of the lived experiences of adolescent parents and how they make sense of their experience follows the fundamental principles of IPA (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Firstly, that to engage in phenomenological research, the experience should as far as possible be expressed in its terms, rather than according to predefined classification structures. Secondly, that phenomenological inquiry applies interpretative meaning to experience; thus, people are not inactive perceivers of an objective existence but rather their perception actively creates the objects of experience. Thirdly, that the use of phenomenological research, follows an idiographic approach, positioning participants in their specific settings, exploring their perspectives, and starting with a detailed exploration of every single case, before making any general statements (Smith et al., 2009).

The first of the fundamental principle IPA draws upon is derived from the work of Husserl who proposed that when examining a phenomenon, it should not be approached with any specific hypothesis but the focus should be on the phenomenon as it is without changing its meaning (Smith, 2011). Phenomenological studies, therefore, focus on how individuals understand and talk about objects and events, rather than narrating

phenomenon according to scheduled concepts and scientific principles (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). In maintaining the principle of phenomenology, the emphasis of the study is not on the cultural and established practices that generate and restrict potentials for human experience, but on the subjective lived experience of individuals within their specific community and social setting.

To successfully undertake a phenomenological study, an adjustment of perspective is required by the researcher to avoid hypothetical presumptions from altering the interpretation of the phenomenon (Gallagher, 2012). This involves bracketing all scientific, cultural, and norms about the phenomenon. Thus, the main research question of this study, what are the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early parenthood? was set in an empirical term in advance of the analysis to prevent the imposition of presumptive hypothetical concepts.

The second fundamental principle IPA draws upon is Heidegger's proposition that understanding and interpretation always starts from the viewpoint given by one's life situation, including one's predispositions and beliefs (Porter & Robinson, 2011). Heidegger's main concern was with the philosophical question of reality itself. According to the principle of hermeneutics which means interpret from the Greek word, it is essential to understand the attitude of an individual and language which arbitrates the individual's understanding of the world, to interpret his or her message (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Therefore, when conducting an IPA study, researchers must seek to understand what it means to be part of the subject's experience (even though this can be difficult) and through interpretative activity make meaning distinct by explaining it (Smith et al., 2009).

Consequently, researchers play a significant role that affects how far they gain access to the participant's understanding and how through interpretative action, they will appreciate the subject's world (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The interpretative aspect of this study was informed by the double hermeneutic idea, firstly because the participants made meaning of their world, and secondly, the researcher tried to understand what an experience is like from the participant's viewpoint. Also, in this study, it was therefore vital to reflect both on what participants do and how they think. Efforts were made, thus, to describe the phenomenon as they appear and acknowledge occurrences that were the

participants' taken for granted behaviors of understanding the world, which directed their activities and their acceptance, and thus formed their experience of adolescent parenthood.

The third of these fundamental principles as it applies to IPA is idiographic. This refers to the analysis of a single case in detail and probing into the individual viewpoint of study participants, in their distinctive setting (Smith, 2011). Studying every single case, before making any overall statements is the essential principle behind the ideographic approach. IPA researchers using the ideographic approach concentrates on the specific rather than the general, thus making specific statements about study participants because analysis of data is based on the exploration of single cases. This approach is unique to IPA and uncommon even among other qualitative methodologies (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). From the above-mentioned, this study implemented the three essential principles that influence the use of IPA in research to describe and interpret the perceptions, meanings, and interpretations that pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality had concerning their experiences and to explain the coping strategies they used during their transition period into parenthood.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were the main methods used to collect data in this study. Using an interview guide, IDIs were conducted through face-face interactions with pregnant adolescents, adolescent mothers, and adolescent fathers. Constructing an interview schedule for the interview enabled me to facilitate a comfortable interaction with participants, (Flick, 2014) which in turn, enabled the participants to provide a detailed account of the experience of transitioning to parenthood.

4.3.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews (IDIs) are semi-structured narratives that can be highly meaningful, as they turn questions concerning a specified subject into storytelling invitations and it is perceived as 'conversation' and conversation is natural (Mahat-Shamir, Neimeyer, & Pitcho-Prelorentzos, 2019). IDIs do not aim to test a hypothesis or evaluate but rather its goal is to understand the lived experiences of individuals and the meaning they construct of that experience (Seidman, 2006). Interviewing provides a calming environment for researchers to gain admittance to the context of people's behavior and thus gives way for

researchers to better comprehend the meaning of that behavior (Green & Thorogood, 2004). A fundamental presumption when conducting an in-depth interview is that the meaning individuals construct of their experience affects the way they implement that experience and this allows researchers to put the behavior of individuals in a context which then provides access to understanding their actions (Seidman, 2006).

A semi-structured IDI guide was designed to assist the IDI process, the guide was developed to collect the similar type of information from all study participants, therefore creating a sense of order which provided me with scheduled questions (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). The interview guides were developed from a combination of current research and theoretical works that were modified to suit the objectives of this study. Four main scopes shaped the guide: these were the situations that triggered adolescents' transition into early parenthood, how did the transition period relate to their social life. The personal and demographic characteristics of the adolescents such as their age, gender, and culture also influenced how they perceive and assess life during the transition period. The third scope was the type of support these adolescents received during their transition period and finally the strategies they used to cope with their situations during the transition period (Anderson et al., 2012).

4.4 Study Location and Study Participants

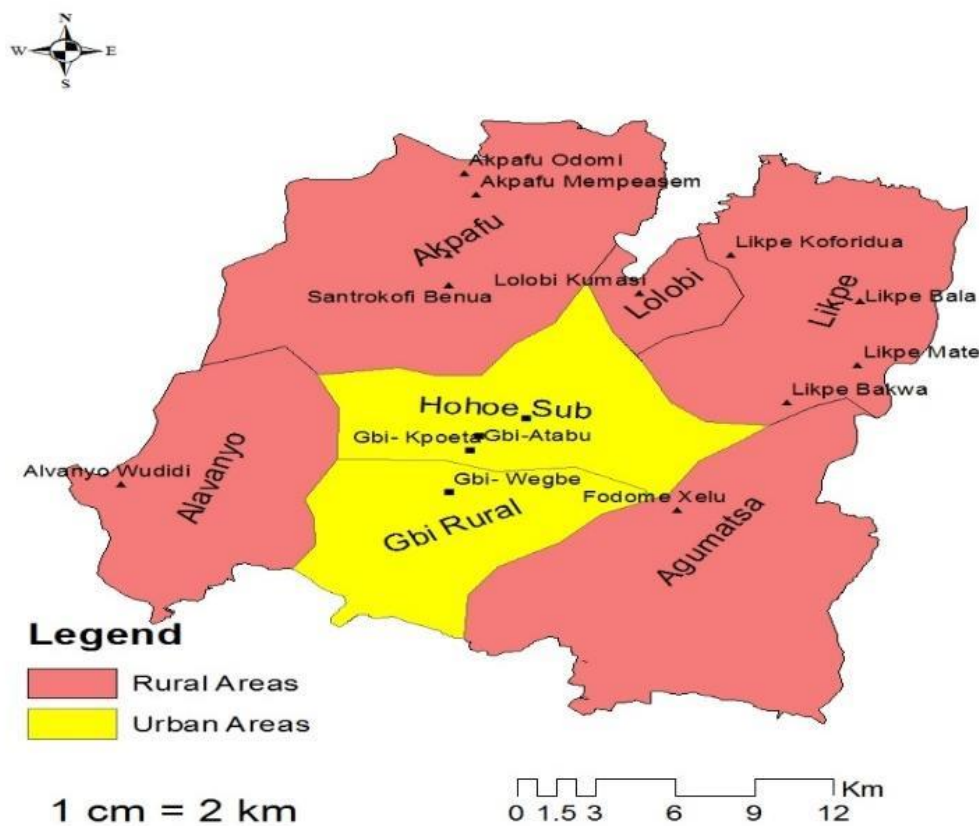
This section provides an overview of the essential information about the study location, the study participants, and the sampling technique used to identify study participants. It will also describe the sample size.

4.4.1 Study Location

The study was conducted in the Hohoe Municipality which is located in the Volta Region of Ghana. The Hohoe Municipality is one of the twenty-five administrative municipalities in the Volta Region. It shares a border with Togo on the East, with Afadzato District on the Southeast and the Southwest with Kpando Municipal, on the northwest with Jasikan District, and the North West with Biakoye District (Solomon et al., 2017). It is located at longitude 0 degrees 15 East and 0 degrees 45 East and latitude 6 degrees 45 North and 7 degrees 15 North. The Municipality has a population of 167,743 people of which 48.1% are males and 51.9% are females. Hohoe is the Municipal capital with a population of 63,000 people. The municipality covers an area of 1,403 km. sq (Nyavor et al., 2017).

The Municipality has been divided into seven sub-Municipalities namely, Akpafu/Santokofi, Alavanyo, Agumatsa, Lolobi, Gbi-Rural, Likpe, and Hohoe. Also, it has a total of 21 health facilities including one hospital, 14 health centers and 6 Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compounds providing clinical care, reproductive health, and child health services. The Municipal hospital at Hohoe serves as a referral hospital for complex cases from the health facilities within and outside the Municipality. The main economic activities engaged by the people of the Municipality include agriculture, petty trading, construction, and formal sector employment (Tarkang et al., 2017). Figure 4.2 shows the map of Hohoe Municipality.

Figure 4.2 Map of Hohoe Municipality (source: Ghana Statistical Service, GSS)



Hohoe Municipality was chosen for this study because firstly, trends in adolescent pregnancy in 2014-2016 by region have indicated that in the Volta Region there is a record of 10,296 adolescent pregnancy showing the second-highest percentage of adolescent pregnancy in Ghana representing 15.3 percent. This suggests that adolescent pregnancy is still high in the region and requires urgent attention (Ministry of Health, 2016). Secondly, I am a native speaker of the local mother-tongue (Ewe) and also

conversant with the culture of the area. Hence, I understand the study context and the experiences of adolescents during their transition into early parenthood. Finally, I have also worked as an adolescent health facilitator in the Hohoe Municipality with Nneka Youth Foundation an NGO with a mission to give the necessary guidance and support to adolescents in the rural community and have been involved in some workshops, teaching adolescents' issues on adolescent health such as adolescent pregnancy and prevention.

4.4.2 Study Participants (Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria)

Empirical findings I: Early Motherhood: Lived Experiences of Female Adolescents.

This study targeted female adolescents between the ages of 15-19 years, who were either pregnant or had babies below the age of 2 years, who could speak the Ewe language and residing in the Hohoe Municipality. This population included both in-school and out-of-school adolescents, met all the eligibility criteria and agreed to participate in the study. Pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers who did not meet the above criteria were excluded from the study. The study was conducted among selected pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers in the seven sub-Municipalities namely: Akpafu/Santokofi, Alavanyo, Agumatsa, Lolobi, Gbi-Rural, Likpe, and Hohoe. These sub-Municipalities were purposely selected to denote both an urban (Gbi Rural and Hohoe) and a rural (Akpafu/Santokofi, Alavanyo, Agumatsa, Lolobi, and Likpe) accessible area. These sub-Municipalities were selected because of the easy access to well-organized gatekeepers such as (Chiefs, Queen-mothers, Assemblymen, Traditional Birth Attendants, and Midwives).

Empirical Findings II: Early Fatherhood: Lived Experiences of Male Adolescents.

The target population for this study were adolescent fathers between 15-19 years of age. Participants must have become a father before their 20th birthday with their child aged 2 years or younger at the time of interview. Participants must also speak the Ewe language and be residing in the Hohoe Municipality. Participants included both in-school and out of school adolescents, who met all the eligibility criteria and were willing to partake in the study. Adolescent fathers who did not meet the above criteria were excluded from the study. Participants were identified and recruited by contacting gatekeepers (Chiefs, Queen-mothers, Assemblymen, Headteachers, and Adolescent mothers) in the seven sub-Municipalities.

4.4.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The key concern guiding sampling in qualitative research is successfully recruiting participants who are willing to provide equally significant and quality evidence that will assist in answering the research questions of the study. Therefore the sample size depends on the objectives of the study-how is the information collected going to answer the research question (Bryman, 2012). Thus, in qualitative research priority is placed on the information to be gained than the number of participants included in the study. For this reason, samples in qualitative research tend to be rather smaller compared to those in quantitative research and are usually purposively attained (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Consequently, sampling in this study was theoretically consistent with a general qualitative paradigm, meaning samples were selected purposively guided by the IPA's orientation.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling where the researcher does not seek to sample participants on a random basis, it does not allow researchers to generalize to a population (Bryman, 2012). According to Green & Thorogood (2004), the overall aim of purposive sampling, as opposed to probability sampling in quantitative research, is to include 'information-rich cases for in-depth study' (Green & Thorogood, 2004, p. 102). To attain this, there is a possible number of different sampling strategies. Some of these include typical case sampling, deviant case sampling, critical case sampling, maximum variation sampling, criterion sampling, theoretical sampling, snowball sampling, opportunistic sampling, and stratified purposive sampling (Given, 2008). According to Merriam & Tisdell (2016), snowball sampling is possibly the utmost common form of purposeful sampling strategy. It involves the locating of few participants who easily meet the study eligibility criteria for participation. In the process of interviewing these participants, the researcher asks each participant to refer other eligible participants "By asking some people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases" (Patton, 2015, p. 451). The purposive sampling strategy used in this study was snowball sampling because it helped to build the sample during the fieldwork as the phenomenon unfolded.

During the data collection process, the sample size is similarly an essential decision to sampling strategy. In qualitative research, the main recommendation when concerning sample size is to study a few locations or participants, while collecting extensive detail

about the location or participants studies. Therefore the key objective in any qualitative research is to interpret the specific and not generalize (except in some forms of case study research) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Beyond these general recommendations, the IPA approach to research raises specific sample size considerations. When using the IPA approach, potential participants are most often contacted; the snowball sampling strategy. Participants are chosen on the basis that they represent a specific perspective on the phenomenon rather than a population (Smith et al., 2009).

As discussed earlier, IPA uses an idiographic approach that studies the understanding of a specific phenomenon in a specific context and thus is conducted on small sample sizes. Analyzing individual transcripts in details on a case by case basis takes a while, in which the researcher's goal is to describe into details the perceptions and understanding of each participant (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Again, IPA studies aim for an equally homogeneous sample, where similarities and differences are analyzed within a group that has a comparable connecting variable (Smith et al., 2009). Informed by the philosophical consideration of sampling in IPA, five pregnant adolescents, and five adolescent mothers were recruited for empirical findings I, and eight adolescent fathers were recruited for empirical findings II. The sample size of these studies was in line with recommendations (Smith et al., 2009) and also commensurate with examples from some previous IPA studies (Clare, 2002; Eatough & Smith, 2006; Jones, Hassett, & Sclare, 2017; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Information on study characteristics presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1 Study Characteristic by participants, study no. methods, sample size, age, and location.

Participants	Empirical Findings Number	Method of data collection	Sample Size	Age Range	Number of participants recruited in each Sub-Municipality
Pregnant Adolescents / Adolescent Mothers	I	IDIs	10	15-19	Gbi-Rural-2; Hohoe-2; Akpafu/Santrokofi-1 Alavanyo-1 Agumatsa-1; Lolobi-2; Likpe-1

Adolescent Fathers	II	IDIs	8	15-19	Gbi-Rural-1; Hohoe-2; Alavanyo-1 Akpafu/Santrokofi-1 Agumatsa-1; Lolobi-1; Likpe-1
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4.5 Empirical Research Preparation and Procedure

There were main concerns that were deliberated upon in preparation for collecting of data, these comprised: approval of the study and ethical clearance and outlining the approach of accomplishing the requirements of informed consent. These concerns are described below.

4.5.1 Approval of Study and Ethical Clearance

I followed all the regulations for conducting empirical research following the Helsinki Declaration. Anonymity, voluntary participation, and written informed consent were significant requirements (Carlson, Boyd, & Webb, 2004) to partake in the research. I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the Ghana Health Service Ethics Review Committee (Ethical approval ID No. GHS-ERC: 006/07/17), before starting the empirical research project. Approval from the Health Directorate of the Hohoe Municipality, the Paramount Chief of the Hohoe Traditional Area, and the Medical Superintendent of the Hohoe Municipal Hospital was also obtained before contact was made with any potential participant.

4.5.2 Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Informed written consent was obtained from all participants (see Appendix 1). Before interviews began and consent was obtained, All the participants were informed about the purpose, aims, the methods to be used as well as the possible benefits of the study. It was also explained to them that, participating in the study was voluntary and that they had the right to refuse to participate in the research and this would not be held against them (Seidman, 2006). This was done by reading into details to all the participants what the informed consent form entailed. After reading the content of the informed consent form to all participants, I requested that they all signed, or thumbprint the consent form after they had all agreed to participate in the research. Parents or guardians of participants who were below the age of 18 years consented on behalf of their children.

Furthermore, to follow the guidelines for conducting empirical research, I informed all participants that their privacy and confidentiality was paramount during and after the study, and therefore confidentiality of their records would be preserved, no name or anything that can be used to identify them will be attached to the data. Rather pseudonyms and other identifiers such as their socio-demographic characteristics would be used during the final report writing. Participants were additionally informed of how the results of the study will be disseminated; they were assured that the research was primarily for academic purposes.

4.5.3 Recruitment and Training of Research Assistants

Recruitment of study participants and data collection was done by me and four research assistants. These research assistants were employed due to their research experience, academic excellence, and their ability to speak the local language (Ewe). The prerequisites that were needed to be a research assistant on the research was to have prior knowledge in qualitative research methods. All the research assistants had their bachelor's degree in Public Health, also they all had experience in qualitative data collection methods and adolescent sexual and reproductive health due to workshops and seminars they have previously attended. However, due to the sensitive nature of this study, research assistants were still trained after recruitment. They were taken through the research proposal, starting from the purpose of the study, the research questions, the methodology, research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and sample size, and finally the ethical consideration of the study.

I took them through a practical session on how to conduct interviews including a role-play and a thorough description of the data collection tools. The research assistants were also trained on the use of audio-recording devices. It was important to train the research assistants on the research methodology to ensure that all the major procedures in the proposal are properly followed and the guidelines are adequately adhered to by all members of the research team. All the interview guides were translated from English into the local language (Ewe) by a professional translator who made sure he did not diverge from the ethically approved English version in the proposal. This was to ensure a better understanding of the research questions by all the participants as some were not fluent in English. The interview guides were then pilot tested by the research team, this helped me

to improve upon the interview questions and also to acquaint myself better with the research methodologies (Gbogbo, 2020). The pilot interview was not transcribed or used during the analysis.

4.5.4 Recruitment of Study Participants

Potential participants were recruited by requesting authorization from the health directorate and the municipal hospital to circulate information about the study. Also, I requested permission from gatekeepers such as Chiefs, Queen mothers, Assemblymen, Midwives, and Traditional Birth Attendants. These gatekeepers were used as a means of gaining access to the adolescents. This activity was a multistage process which involved getting through a sequence of administrative procedure of identifying different gatekeepers from the municipal level to the community level (Green & Thorogood, 2004). During identifying and meeting the gatekeepers, a letter of introduction explaining the rationale of the study and procedure were given to each gatekeeper, this was to help them have a better understanding of the study. I then booked an appointment to meet with all the gatekeepers to discuss the procedures and details of the study. The meeting began by introducing myself and the purpose of the meeting. I then continued by describing in detail the aim of the study and the kind of help I needed from them to successfully identify and recruit eligible participants. Other topics that I discussed with the gatekeepers were: the characteristics of the potential participants, the eligibility criteria, the principle of informed consent, how the privacy of potential participants will be ensured, the data collection process, and how information collected will be disseminated after analysis. Other topics that were discussed were timing and site where interviews will be conducted and the proposed sample size of the study.

After going through all the administrative procedures, I then advertised the study by posting leaflets about the study on notice boards in the municipality. Potential participants who were interested in participating in the study were asked through the flyers posted on the notice boards to contact me. However, this method was not successful, so I decided to contact the gatekeepers to help recruit potential adolescents to the study. This method successfully identified and recruited potential participants who also referred other potential participants to participate in the IDIs. Hence, a snowball sampling strategy was used to recruit eligible participants in this research (Berg, 2001; Gbogbo, 2020).

4.5.5 Location for Data Collection and Interview Process

The location for data collection is important as it provides a significant opportunity for the researcher to construct a reflection that will produce more comprehensive evidence than can be gathered from the interview guide alone. These reflections can produce innovative evidence that may give the researcher a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Elwood & Martin, 2000). It is therefore important to give participants the choice to decide on where they would prefer to be interviewed. Participants who are given the choice to select the location of the interview may feel more empowered in their interaction with the researcher, hence providing an important opportunity for the researcher to gain a stronger understanding of the phenomenon through his or her reflections (Råheim et al., 2016). Thus, in this study, participants were allowed to choose the location where interviews were conducted, and a mutually agreed time and location was organized for the interviews to take place.

All IDIs were conducted in the participant's homes at their own appropriate time. It is worth stating that myself and my research assistants had to struggle with a noisy and disturbing environment in most of the homes of the participants which meant pausing the interview during short intervals. Six of the participants (adolescent mothers) had their babies with them and this distracted the interview on several occasions as participants had to stop the interview to either breastfeed or attend to their crying babies. There were also disruptions such as sounds from vehicles, animals, and neighbors playing music or other activities. All these disturbances interrupted with some of the interview sessions hence requiring more concentration during the transcription process to guarantee the accuracy of transcribed data.

Semi-structured opened-ended interviews were conducted with each participant in Ewe, the main language spoken in the study location, and then translated into English for easy transcription. Interviews lasted approximately one hour which allowed participants to fully describe their experiences and the meaning they attach to their experiences. The open-ended interview format also allowed for the explanation and further exploration of questions that emerged during the interview process. Interview topics included: effects of realization of pregnancy, experiences, and challenges of early parenthood, support availability, and coping with early parenthood.

4.5.6 Rapport and Organization of the Instruments

Researchers must establish a good rapport with participants, to have a good relationship with them. Rapport is the aptitude to relate with others in a way that builds an atmosphere of trust and understanding. It is also the ability to appreciate other's views, to understand and accept other people's opinions (Knight, 2009). The purpose of establishing rapport between the researcher and the participant is to both produce rich data while at the same time ensuring respect is well-maintained between the researcher and the participant. In other words, rapport is essential for methodological and ethical rigor (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009). With regards to building a good rapport with participants in this study, I initially ensured that I created and maintained an atmosphere of trust with the gatekeepers during my initial meeting with them.

Myself and my research assistants first briefly introduced ourselves before the start of every interview and then gave a brief description of the purpose of the study, the anticipated benefits as summarized in the informed consent form. Hence, all participants consented and were willing to participate in the study without coercion. Once consent was established, we started the interview by firstly asking the participant to introduce himself or herself, this helped to reduce tension and allow participants to relax. The research team assumed an unprejudiced approach during the interview process since the phenomenon under study (adolescent parenthood) was a sensitive topic. We were cautious not to be insensitive but rather were more open-minded, flexible, reassuring, friendly, empowering, and empathetic towards participants. Throughout the interview sessions, the team kept an active listening attitude through verbal prompts such as hmmm...yah...right and also maintained good eye contact. According to Hull (2007), being attentive to the participant shows that the researcher has an interest in what the participant is trying to say while at the same time gives the participant the confidence to freely narrate his or her story. We also made sure we were subtle with the use of time in order not to cause the participants boredom.

Another important thing that the research team paid much attention to, was to try and speak less than the participants. Using the interview guide, we found a way of interrogating the participants during the interview that lead to a comprehensive narration on the part of the participants. However, it was evident that some of the participants needed more clarification to the questions been asked, we then found an alternative way

of phrasing the question for a better understanding while ensuring that we did not deviate from the purpose of the research question. Hence interpreting the questions to make sense to the participants. During the interviews, the research team noticed that most of the participants made insightful comments, however, these comments were not exhaustive as required. Consequently, the research team as much as possible kept the interviewing flowing by using more probes such as uh-huh, say more, why? how come? and follow-up prompts, this strategy stimulated the participants to expand their original comments. As suggested by Yin (2016), it is vital not to overuse probes because to the participant, the interviewer still must be a lively and intelligent conversant. With this suggestion in mind, we kept probes to a minimum in order not to sound like the team has been automated like a robot (Yin, 2016).

4.6 Data Recording, Storage, and Transcription

This section will describe the recording, storage, and transcribing of the raw data collected. The main topics that will be presented, will include how the recording of interviews was done, how they were stored to maintain privacy and distinctiveness, and how the data collected were converted into transcripts. This section will also present how transcripts were managed to expedite the analysis phase.

4.6.1 Data Recording and Storage

Interviews were recorded using digital audio recording devices while taking field notes focusing on words verbatim to support the recorded data. According to Yin (2016), a continuing focus on capturing words verbatim during field note-taking helps to give the interviewer an insight into the meaning of interviewees' thoughts rather than the interviewers' inferred meaning. The demographic characteristics of study participants were also taken using a biographical information sheet. Four digital audio recording devices were used during the interview sessions. Permission was obtained from participants to record the interview every session; all participants approved for interview sessions to be audio recorded. Debriefing meetings were held at the end of each day to review field notes, discuss any noticeable topics that came up during interview sessions, and also deliberate on the general progress of the research. All research assistants shared their experiences and opinions regarding the entire research process for each day. These experiences and opinions were then reviewed and used to update the next day's activities.

Following the principles about data storage and handling, I always developed backup copy computer files, used good quality digital audio recording device, developed a master list of all the information collected, also protected the privacy of all study participants by disguising their names in the data and also developed a data collection matrix as a graphical means of locating and identifying information for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In recognition of the exposure of sensitive information, careful efforts were made to safeguard the privacy of all study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A password-protected computer was used to electronically store all data materials comprising of biographical data, audio recordings of interviews, field notes, and interview transcripts. The audio recording of the interviews would be stored for two years and the hard copies of the transcriptions and signed informed consent form and any additional information collected during the interview would be stored for five years after the study.

4.6.2 Data Transcription

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim into written text so that the information collected can be studied in detail, connected with analytical summaries and codes. Each interview needed at least 3 to 6 hours of transcription time conditional to the length of the recording. Audio records of data were transcribed and concurrently translated into English by two professional translators. Using two professional translators was to check the consistency and accuracy of the translation process, I also double-checked the consistency and accuracy of the translation and transcription process by listening vividly to each audio recordings severally and comparing it to what has been translated and transcribed.

It is worth stating that I employed professionals to transcribe and translate the audio records because even though I have excellent spoken and listening skills in the Ewe language I did not have the professional skills to translate the audio recordings from the Ewe language into the English language. According to Bailey (2008), transcriptions must be precise and comprehensive to capture descriptions such as emphasis, speed, tone of voice, timing, and pause as they can be vital in data interpretation, it also includes a close reflection of data through repeated careful listening. It is based on the above that I employed professionals, to capture important information that would improve the data analysis and empirical results.

Double-checking the translation and transcription process by severally listening to each audio recording of interviews, allowed me to acquire an intimate relationship and understanding with the data while reflecting on my interpretations of the data. This understanding offered insights into categories and themes that functioned as codes and recommended preliminary interpretations during the process of analysis. Completed transcripts were then imported into MAXQDA Plus 2018 Student License Version, a qualitative data analysis software. This software makes the data storage process and retrieval effective and easy, doing it in a short period as compared to doing it manually (Kuckartz, 2014).

4.7 Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation

This section will describe the method of data analysis, how the main themes of the study were identified will also be expounded into details, and lastly an explanation into the presentation of empirical findings.

4.7.1 Data Analysis-The IPA Approach

Data analysis is the process of describing the categorization and interpretation of verbal or photographic material to build descriptions about inherent and explicit scopes and arrangements of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016 p.195). The main aim of data analysis in interpretive research is to elucidate the experiences of those who lived them by sharing the richness of lived experiences and cultures. It is the responsibility of the researcher to describe and analyze what is present in the raw data to bring to life a particular phenomenon (Sutton & Austin, 2015). This implies that the principal goal for analyzing the narrative accounts provided by study participants, was for the researcher to investigate the experiences of these study participants giving evidence of the participants' making sense of the phenomenon that is being explored.

The role of the phenomenological researcher is to investigate and interpret the impact of the research subject-matter on the lived experiences of the study participants. To effectively investigate the phenomenon of the lived experiences of study participants, I analyzed the data using an iterative and inductive cycle and followed the six steps summarized in Smith et al.'s (2009) IPA protocol: (1) reading and re-reading, (2) initial noting, (3) developing emergent themes, (4) searching for connections across emergent

themes, (5) moving to the next cases, (6) looking for patterns across cases. Each step is presented in detail below.

4.7.1.1 Step 1: Reading and re-reading

In this first step of the analysis, I immersed myself into the original data by reading and re-reading the first written transcript while listening to the audio-recordings. During this process, I imagined the voice of the participant during the subsequent readings of the transcript, while ensuring that the participant becomes the focus of the analysis. Throughout, this initial step I also documented in a notebook some of my dominant memories of my interview experience, most outstanding reflections about the transcript. As noted by Pietkiewicz & Smith (2012), this process helps researchers to recollect the atmosphere of the interview, the location in which the interview was conducted, and also may provide some innovative understandings. I also paid particular attention to the content of the transcript, the use of language (descriptions such as metaphors, symbols, pauses, repetitions), perspectives, and preliminary interpretative remarks. This permitted a model of the overall interview structure to develop and allowed me to gain an understanding of how narratives bonded certain sections of the interview.

4.7.1.2 Step 2: Initial noting

This second step of analysis according to Smith et al., (2009), is the most comprehensive and time-consuming. This phase assesses semantic content and the use of language on an extremely empirical level. At this stage, I examined the transcript line by line while making notes, preserved an open mind, and commented on anything of interest within the transcript. This made me intensely become very conversant with the transcript, it enabled me to identify specific ways by which participants in each interview talked about, understood, and thought about their experiences of transitioning into early parenthood. Three essential elements of exploratory notes were developed in step 2; descriptive comments focused on recounting the content of the subject of the narration within the text (presented as a normal sentence in Table 4.2), linguistic comments focused upon investigating the precise use of language by the participant (presented as an italic sentence in Table 4.2) and conceptual comments focused on employing at an additional questioning and abstract level (presented as an underlined sentence in Table 4.2) (Smith

et al., 2009); consequently, I involved myself in a systematic dialogue with each line of the transcript.

4.7.1.3 Step 3: Developing emergent themes

At this stage, I worked primarily with the initial notes, rather than with the transcript to develop the emergent themes. I concurrently endeavored to decrease the size of the transcript and the initial note, whilst preserving complexity, in terms of charting the interrelationships, associations, and patterns between initial notes (Smith et al., 2009). While analyzing initial comments to identify emergent themes, I focused on the local level, on detached portions of the transcript while at the same time focusing on what I learned in step 2 through the entire activity of initial noting. This step denotes one indicator of the hermeneutic circle where the segment is translated in connection to the entire; the entire is translated in connection to the segment (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Steps 2 and 3 are explained below in Table 4.2, containing quotations from an interview with one of the study participants who narrates his experiences transitioning into early parenthood.

Table 4.2 Initial noting and developing emergent themes from one participant

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Initial Notes
<p>Negative behavior</p> <p>Reactions from family</p>	<p>I: Give me a brief background about yourself. How would you describe your life before becoming a father?</p> <p>P: I used to make a lot of friends, especially girls. I knew I was still young and wanted to have a lot of fun. I had two girlfriends; ermhhh I mean having sex with them. The girl I impregnated, hmmm she was in JHS two and I had just completed JHS and we started dating. She used to come to my house every day and then we started having sex. But her brother came to warn me oooooo, and my</p>	<p><i>It seems he was a carefree young man who wanted to have pleasure and enjoy himself by having two girlfriends because he felt he had a lot of years ahead of him</i></p> <p><i>Emphasizing the fact that he was warned but he did not listen by adding 'ooooooo' to his sentence</i></p>

	<p>mother also told me to stop seeing her since I was still young, but I didn't listen to my mother. After my results came, I stopped dating her as I was going to SSS.</p>	<p><u>Major issues of surprise, fear, and wanting to hide his shame</u></p>
<p>Disappointed and embarrassed</p>	<p>And then I had the shock of my life, she came to me and told me she was pregnant; I was very scared and wanted to run away from the house because we were no longer dating. But she said I was responsible so my mother said I should accept the pregnancy because she warned me to stop dating her and I disobeyed her, which shows that I am not the one responsible.</p>	<p>An adolescent boy who disobeyed his mother and now faces the consequences</p> <p><u>Was he thinking of denying the pregnancy that is why his mother told him to accept the pregnancy?</u></p>
<p>Acceptance</p> <p>Unprepared for fatherhood</p>	<p>And so, I accepted the pregnancy and adapted to the situation of been a father even though I wasn't ready to be a father.</p>	<p>By repeating the word 'and' it sounds like he was very reluctant in accepting the pregnancy, he was not prepared to be a father. However, he still had the support of his mother</p>
<p>Family support</p> <p>School as a tool of change</p>	<p>My mother was very supportive, she told me she will take care of the girl and the baby so I can continue my education. Knowing that I was going to be a father changed the way I think about life, I was more determined to go to school, get a better job and take care of my child</p>	<p><i>His attitude changed when he realized he was going to be a father. He became more focused in life. Going to be a father was an agent of change</i></p>

4.7.1.4 Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

In this fourth step, I developed a chart of how I thought the themes fit together. I developed the chart by probing for relations throughout the emergent themes. While integrating components of phenomenological knowledge that aimed to keep the meaning of that piece of narration at an advanced level of abstraction (Gbogbo, 2020), I organized the emergent themes into larger categories of super-ordinate themes that characterized the participant’s experiences and their interpretation of parenthood. According to Smith et al., (2009), an Abstraction is a basic form of classifying patterns between emergent themes and developing a sense of what can be called a ‘super-ordinate’ theme. It involves putting like with like and developing a new name for the cluster. Step 4 is demonstrated below in Table 4.3 for the same interview extract with one of the study participants who narrates his experiences transitioning into early parenthood.

Table 4.3 Super-ordinate themes, emerging theme from one participant

Super-ordinate themes	Emergent themes	Keywords
News of Becoming a Father	Disappointed and embarrassed	Very scared, wanted to run away
	Negative behavior	Having sex She warned me
Adolescent Fatherhood	Reactions from family	
Social Support		I wasn’t ready to be a father
Coping Strategies	Unprepared for fatherhood	My mother was very supportive
	Family support	I accepted the pregnancy

	Acceptance School as a tool of change	I was more determined to go to school
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4.7.1.5 Step 5: Moving to the next case

In this fifth step, I moved to the next participant’s transcript and reiterated the procedure for all other study participants. Virtually, every participant’s text was read and re-read exclusively, thereafter I moved to the following step of logging exploratory descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual notes, treating each text on its own. Furthermore, I assessed these exploratory notes while categorizing them into emergent themes and I bracketed the ideas emerging from the analysis of the first transcript while working on the subsequent ones. This was, possibly, in keeping with IPA’s idiographic commitment (Smith et al., 2009). Lastly, I sought connections across the emergent themes while sorting them underneath superordinate themes.

4.7.1.6 Step 6: Looking for patterns across cases

This final stage of analysis involved looking for patterns across cases, I did this by assembling all the themes from the transcripts, while searching for links and clusters to examine the super-ordinate themes. This helped the analysis to move to a more theoretical balance as I organized the themes and superordinate themes that were particular to a study participant. To enhance the validity of the findings I measured recurrence across each text (Smith et al., 2009). For instance, I decided that for an emergent or superordinate theme to be classified as recurrent it must be present in at least most rigidly, in all of the participant interviews. Table 4.4 below presents a diagram of establishing recurrence in empirical findings two.

Table 4.4 Measuring recurrence across each transcript

Super-ordinate themes	Ata	Kofi	Yaw	Kosi	Elornam	Atsu	Dotsi	Klenam	Present in over half of the sample?

News of becoming a father	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adolescent fatherhood	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social Support	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coping Strategies	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

5 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS 1: EARLY MOTHERHOOD: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the first part of the empirical results determined by the guiding research question and coherent with the explanation of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

This chapter aims to explore how female adolescents make sense of their experiences and coping strategies during pregnancy and early motherhood. Consequently, the empirical results reveal feedback to the guided research question:

- What are the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early motherhood?

Firstly, this chapter outlines the socio-demographic data of the study participants and also gives a synopsis of the profile of study participants. The names used for the participants are not their real names, they are rather replaced with pseudonyms to protect their privacy and identity. Through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs), synthesized analysis of the participants' narrations was achieved. Also, in this chapter four subordinate themes that were developed during the analysis are described with supporting quotations from the participants and presented with the first research question of "what are the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early motherhood".

5.2 Participants' Socio-demographic Characteristics

For participant protection and anonymity, the participants will be consequently referred to under the pseudonyms of Abla, Esinam, Alimatu, Mawuena, Kekeli, Yayara, Dzigbordi, Sedudzi, Selikem, and Sesinam. In this study, 10 (5 pregnant adolescents and 5 adolescent mothers) participated in the IDI's over two months between August and October 2017 in the seven sub-municipalities of the Hohoe Municipality, Ghana. Participants were between the age range of 15-19 years, the information collected for their educational background revealed that 6 of the study participants were Junior High

School (JHS) dropouts and 4 participants had completed their JHS education. Additionally, 3 of the participants had gone back to school after initially dropping out of school. It is worth stating that most of the participants (9) were not married while only 1 participant was married. All the study participants were unemployed with 9 been Christians and 1 been a Muslim. Table 5.1 presents the detailed socio-demographic characteristics of study participants.

Table 5.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of study participants

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n=10)
Female Adolescents	Pregnant	5
	Mothers	5
Age range	15-17	5
	18-19	5
Educational status	JHS dropouts	6
	Completed JHS	4
Marital status	Married	1
	Unmarried	10
Employment status	Employed	0
	Unemployed	10
Religion	Christians	9
	Muslims	1

5.3 Participants' Profile

Abla is an 18-year-old adolescent mother, she was 16 years and in JHS 3 when she got pregnant. She lived with her mother and stepfather before getting pregnant. She started going out with her (boyfriend) the father of her baby when she was in JHS 1. According to her before she got pregnant, her stepfather was always maltreating her, so she had no choice but to spend most of her free time with her boyfriend, a 19-year-old Senior High School (SHS) student who lives with both parents. Visiting her boyfriend frequently, exposed them to regular unprotected sex and this resulted in an unplanned pregnancy. She initially dropped out of school due to the pregnancy, but she went back to write her

final JHS 3 exams, she is determined to continue with her SHS education, and her baby was 15 months old at the time of the interview.

Esinam is a 19-year-old adolescent mother, her highest level of education is JHS 2. She is an orphan and was living with her older brother when she got pregnant. She moved out of her brother's house to live with her boyfriend in his parents' home when she realized she was pregnant. She was learning a trade (tailoring) when she got pregnant, her boyfriend the father of her baby who is also 19 years old a shop attendant in a neighboring town. During her narration she complained of not been happy with her boyfriend's parents, they do not consider her as part of their family since their son has not married her. According to her they always tell her they accepted her to stay with them because of her 10 months old son.

Alimatu is an 18-year-old pregnant adolescent. She was given into marriage by her father when she was 17 years old and had just completed her JHS education. During her interview, she narrated that her Muslim father lost his job as a driver and therefore did not have enough money to take her (Alimatu) his first daughter to SHS to continue her education while taking care of her five younger siblings. Her husband is 25 years old and also a Muslim who works as a mason. She claims she is not happy in her marriage because she does not love her husband and also, she had always wanted to be a nurse and she feels her dreams have been shattered by her father.

Mawuena is 18 years old, an adolescent mother with a 20 month old daughter who recently completed her JHS education after initially dropping out of school due to her unplanned pregnancy. She currently lives with her mother who helped her take care of her daughter for her to go and finish her JHS education. She is determined to continue her education; she wants to become a teacher and a role model to other young girls. In her narration, she had unprotected sex only once with one of her classmates who was always fond of her during one of their vacation extra classes. She did not know she was pregnant; all she knew was she was always getting sick and tired then one day her mother confronted her and forcefully took her to the community clinic where her pregnancy test showed positive. The boy who impregnated her is also 18 years and now in his second year at one of the boys Senior High Schools in the Volta Region.

Kekeli is 16 years old, she is 6 months old pregnant. She used to live with her parents but now lives with her grandmother since she got pregnant. She had to run from her parents' house because the 18-year-old boy who impregnated her denied the pregnancy saying she had other boyfriends. The boy is in his final year in SHS, but she could not finish her JHS education because of the pregnancy, however, during her interview, she narrated that she would go back to school after delivering her baby. According to her, she was still having her period until about five months ago when she felt very sick and was admitted to hospital. It was at the hospital that her mother requested for a pregnancy test to be done on her because her mother suspected earlier that she was pregnant; the pregnancy test came back positive.

Yayara is a 17-year-old 6 months pregnant adolescent. She was in JHS 2 when she got pregnant, and she currently lives with her parents who are devoted Christians. She stopped going to school when she realized she was pregnant because she did not want her teachers and friends to know she was pregnant. But her parents are determined for her to go back to school to finish her studies. Her boyfriend is 20 years and works as a pupil-teacher in one of the primary schools in her community. In her accounts, she indicated that she got pregnant the first time she had sex with her boyfriend and that brought a lot of arguments between them because both of them were not ready to be parents.

Dzibordi is a 17-year-old pregnant adolescent who is 7 months old pregnant and lives with her boyfriend and his parents, before she got pregnant, she was living with her father. She had completed her JHS waiting for her results to go to SHS when she got pregnant. Her 18-year-old boyfriend had also finished his JHS and waiting for his results, however when their exam results came her boyfriend continued his education, but she could not continue because of her pregnancy and this makes her very angry. She is not happy living with her boyfriend's parents, so she intends to go and live with her paternal grandmother when she delivers her baby.

Sedudzi is 18 years old and lives with the mother of the young man who impregnated her, before she got pregnant, she was living with her older brother. She was in JHS when she stopped schooling because her brother could not afford her school fees any longer, so she got a job in a school as an assistant cook. It was while she was working in the school when she got impregnated by a 21-year-old man who is also a gardener in the school. The

young man however stopped showing interest in her when she told him she was pregnant, he asked her to abort the pregnancy since he was not ready to be a father nor marry her. She also lost her job as an assistant cook because she was always getting tired and weak due to the pregnancy. She was 8 months pregnant when she was interviewed.

Selikem is an 18-year-old adolescent mother, she was in JHS 3 and 16 years old when she got pregnant. Her parents sacked her from the house and asked her to go and stay with the man who impregnated her. She now lives with the father of her 15 months old daughter, he is a 22-year-old young man who does not do any permanent work, he works on people's farms to survive and she is also unemployed. Selikem went back to write her final JHS exams after initially dropping out of school due to the pregnancy. She desires to go back to school to continue her SHS education if her parents would forgive her, accept her back and support her to go back to school.

Sesinam is a 17-year-old pregnant adolescent who lives with her boyfriend, a 19-year-old mobile phone repairer the father of her unborn baby. Before she got pregnant, she was living with her older sister who is a seamstress. She had just finished her JHS education waiting to continue with her SHS education when she got pregnant. In her narrations she stated that she wished she was still living with her sister since her sister's home was more comfortable however, her sister could not accommodate her and her unborn baby because she was angry with her and that is why she moved in, to live with her boyfriend in his single room.

5.4 Themes

Analysis of the data and the subsequent development of themes generated four superordinate themes that are connected to the research questions: (1) News of Pregnancy; (2) Adolescent Motherhood; (3) Social Support; and (4) Coping Strategies. Each superordinate theme has several related emergent themes and is presented in the table below.

Table 5.2 Superordinate Themes and Related Emergent Themes

Superordinate Theme	Emergent Theme
News of Pregnancy	Feeling of stigma Disappointment Regrets Attempt to abort Moving on
Adolescent Motherhood	Being a mother/Expectant mother Source of motivation Pursuing goals
Social Support	Family support Father of child support Peer support Community support
Coping strategies	Self-reliance Self-compassion Self-control

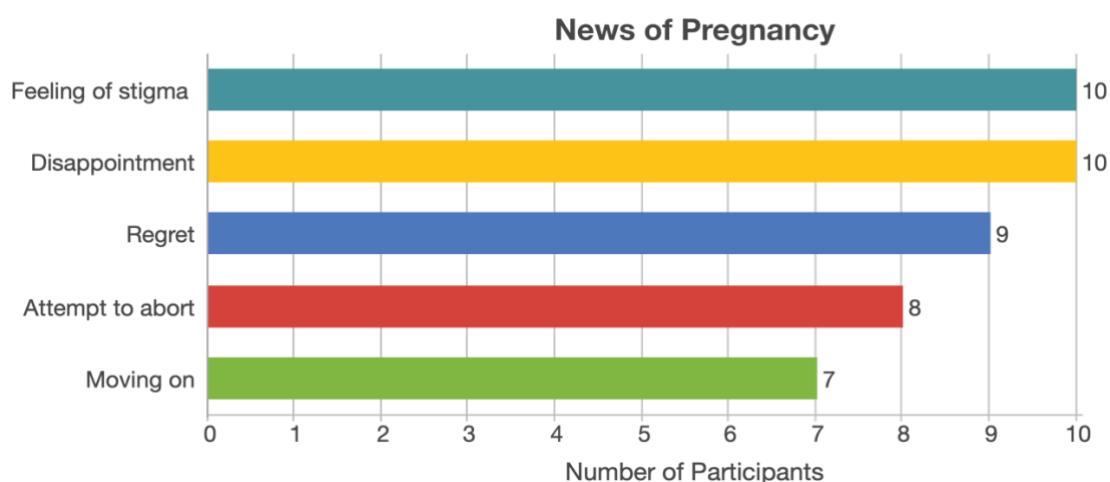
Detailed personal accounts were derived from the ten participants using in-depth semi-structured interviews (IDIs), these interviews with each participant offered a substantial opportunity to chart and assess an extensive scope of experiences and elucidations of the phenomenon of interest, nevertheless, an additional interpretation regarding participants' experiences with potential sites of the intensity of conversation were included. Also, the IDIs allowed me to engage with a particular part of participants' experiences to establish appropriate interpretations from their lived experiences, given the elements of the situation, self, support, and strategies. In line with the arrangement of IPA, the analysis and the interpretation of data presented give descriptions that are associated with phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). In applying the theoretical foundation of IPA, it is crucial to provide a comprehensive analysis of divergence and convergence across the interpretation and experiences from participants, capturing the consistency and richness of each particular case assessed (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

According to Smith (2011), an IPA study combines sections from each participant to illustrate the relationship and sequence throughout several participants' accounts (i.e., convergence) while establishing the unique distinctions that are inside each participant's experience (i.e., divergence). With regards to the ten participants in this study, a detailed analysis was done while threading connections across all the ten participants and included data to emphasize each superordinate theme. Consequently, during the analysis, I aimed to search for both deep and thick narrative, while also emphasizing both collective and distinctive experiences, therefore obtaining convergence and divergence amongst participants' experiences. The superordinate and emergent themes will be presented and explained in detail accordingly. Graphical presentations have been included to show a pictorial demonstration of the occurrence of superordinate and emergent themes among study participants. Even though themes are discussed in subsections and separated during analysis, most of them are linked to each other and this is evident throughout the account narration. For every experience to be well interpreted, I have intended to consistently sample citations across participants. Quotations from at least half of the participants connected to each superordinate theme will be incorporated in the empirical findings to support the statements made so that each participant is given a voice in the narrations (Smith, 2011).

5.4.1 Superordinate Theme One: News of Pregnancy

This superordinate theme explored how participants felt when they realized they were pregnant. All the female adolescents when they realized they had become pregnant felt very upset. The experience was a challenging transition for the majority of the adolescents, all the adolescents who narrated their experiences felt stigmatized due to their pregnancy. Furthermore, they all stated that they were either disappointed in themselves or their parents were disappointed in them. Out of the 10 female adolescents interviewed, 9 regretted their actions while 8 of them contemplated aborting the pregnancy. Even though the majority of the participants were saddened and felt criticized, 6 of them narrated that they wanted to move on with their lives no matter the situations in which they found themselves. Figure 5.1 below presents a graphical description of the first superordinate theme.

Figure 5.1 Graphical presentation of superordinate theme one



5.4.1.1 Feeling of stigma

Stigma is an attribute that is severely discrediting (Ellis-Sloan, 2014), when an individual is stigmatized, that person might experience some emotional responses such as anger, hatred, sadness, and abandonment. Analyzing the response to the research question, all the participants incorporated distinct statements and interpretations of feeling stigmatized on the news of their pregnancy. To make sense of how they felt unwanted because they got pregnant as adolescents, the participants often portrayed themselves as been labeled as bad girls in their families and in the communities in which they lived. In terms of the psychological impact of feeling stigmatized, there was a shared experience of been judged and stereotyped amongst all the participants. Abla narrated that at school, her friends refused to come close to her, they started calling her names and making her feel unwanted and not loved. Although Abla attended a school in a nearby rural community that was noted to have a high teenage pregnancy rate, it seemed to me that Abla portrayed herself as been identified as a bad girl among her friends and in her community.

‘I had to drop out from school because my classmates used to call me baby maame’ anytime they are chatting and I go to join them then they all scatter, and this made me feel like running away to hide myself from everybody’(Abla).

She also talked about how she lived with her mother and stepfather who made life very difficult for her, he always maltreated her and abused her verbally even before she became pregnant, the verbal abuse, however, became worse when she got pregnant. According to her, she was constantly stigmatized by her stepfather and this made her feel unhappy each day. Abla had this to say:

'He made me feel very unwelcomed at home, he always says you are a disgrace to your mother, a little girl like you all you know is to be having sex around now you see the outcome, shame on you. He was always quarreling with my mum because of me. I left to stay with my grandmother because of the way my stepfather was behaving. I was with my grandmother until I delivered my baby in the Hospital'(Abla).

Being a pregnant adolescent affected the female adolescents' willingness to attend hospital checkup because of the fear of being stigmatized, even if they gathered the courage to still access health care service, they still perceived themselves as been labeled. For Alimatu, even as a young married woman, the pregnancy phase was unpleasant and undesirable. She found it difficult to go for her antenatal checkups, she was afraid of being labeled a bad girl, from her opinion some of the nurses considered her to be too young to be pregnant, making her uncomfortable.

'I always feel like I am not welcomed when I attend ANC, these nurses hmm anytime I go for a checkup and it's my turn to see the midwife then they say hey small girl it's your turn, I get embarrassed everyone turns to look at me' (Alimatu).

To further explain their episodes of feeling stigmatized, Mawuena and Keleli both reported meaningful and upsetting experiences of unfriendliness relating to their identity, they shared occurrences where they felt judged and stereotyped as bad girls. They recollected instances where their age led to bad perceptions of them which were sometimes communicated through looks and sometimes obvious confrontations from the people in the community and occasionally insults provocatively. As such causing them to be placed into their distinct category thus creating a perceived separation between them and the people around them.

'The other day I sat on the bus and there was this woman with her friend immediately she saw me she was like these teenage mothers are a disgrace to our community, they are a bad influence on other teenage girls.....' (Mawuena).

'The people in my area are always teasing me that I like sex that is why I got pregnant and I find that very insulting' (Kekeli).

The stigmatized image of adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood was mentioned by Sedudzi with a focus on ‘status of loss and discrimination’. Based on the social stigmatization image of adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood’, Sedudzi was marginalized and separated from other youth members in her church due to her pregnancy. She was not allowed to participate in the various youth programs in her church. As a result of this, she felt ashamed, guilty, isolated, and lost her status as a singer from her church. In her narration she experienced discrimination and this contributed to her inability to successfully exhibit her talent in church, she however believed that God had forgiven her so why should her church members judge her.

‘I used to sing in the youth choir, but guess what the pastor’s wife called me one day and said I have to stop singing in the choir and that I am a bad influence on other girls. I just stopped going to church’ (Sedudzi).

The analogy ‘labeled as a bad girl’ encapsulated in all the narratives signified divergent perceptions about how participants distinctively interpreted their experiences. Various pattern codes also extracted larger refined pieces of raw data demonstrating the theme of feeling stigmatized. Participants in all their narrations identified disappointment as part of their experiences, but repeatedly explained the experience in distinctive dimensions, occurrences, and situations. Again, participants were capable of classifying the interpretations of their experiences that linked disappointment to regrets in further second cycle codes. Some also perceived the news of the pregnancy concentrating on an attempt to abort the pregnancy while others decided to move on.

5.4.1.2 Disappointment

Disappointment is defined as an emotional response to an outcome that does not match up to expectations, feeling disappointed may happen when one person does not live up to the expectations of another, the other can feel let down by that person. The disappointment a person feels depends on previous expectations (Bunkers, 2012). On confirmation of their pregnancy, all the participants reported feeling disappointed, unhappy, and upset. They particularly acknowledged disappointment throughout their narratives, but with considerable variation of experiences affecting their interpretations of disappointment. The divergence of interpretations throughout the experiences of the participants demonstrated the multiplicity integrated into the second-cycle coding. All the participants described disappointment as a fundamental element of their experiences,

however, they all gave diverse interpretations based on their occurrences. Abla for instance recounted that the news of her pregnancy caused disappointment and frustration in her life and those close to her. While other two participants (Dzigbordi and Selikem) narrated they were embarrassed by their conduct and felt disappointed in themselves. On the contrary, according to Alimatu, she was highly disappointed in her father for giving her into early marriage. Besides being traumatized by the news of pregnancy, Esinam and Mawuena also explained that they were unhappy at the news of their pregnancy due to fear of physical challenges and discomfort during childbirth.

At the age of sixteen, Abla did not know she was pregnant even when she had missed her period and was feeling sick every morning. Instead, her mother suspected of her pregnancy and bought her a pregnancy test kit to test her urine and when the results came out positive her mother felt very disappointed in her. Even though her mother was very disappointed in her, because of the good mother-daughter relationship she had with her mother, there was still a significant positive relationship, after few months of her mother not talking with her. I noticed during her narration that although her mother was angry with her for a while, she was able to build her self-perception of motherhood due to the high level of maternal emotional affection she received from her mother.

'my mother was so mad at me, she refused to talk with me for months but then after a while things became normal' (Abla).

Abla was not happy with the news of the pregnancy, she felt all her dreams have been shattered. This is what she had to say about her disappointment when she realized she was pregnant.

'It disturbed me because I was not ready for it. Sometimes I feel very sad because I didn't want to be like this. This makes me cry a lot, now that I got pregnant and have a child..... I feel I have disappointed myself' (Abla).

Although Dzigbordi and Selikem pointed out similar related viewpoints of disappointment, they stipulated distinctive experiences informing their perspectives of disappointment. Thus, they reported that they were traumatized by the news of the pregnancy and considered the pregnancy as a setback and that it was going to destruct their studies. In addition to the female adolescents responding with astonishment to the news of their pregnancy, they also felt excessively worried, being especially apprehensive about what the future had for them. They felt been pregnant had interfered with their

aspiration, regarding the fact that they wanted to end the generational poverty in their families, however, they were not sure if they would be able to break the poverty in their families with their current situations.

'I felt very sad because I wanted to go to SHS after completing JHS. I became very worried and disorganized. I didn't know what to do..... I felt so disappointed and worried because I come from a poor home without money and I aimed to go to school and work, dress well and become rich so that my family too will be rich' (Dzigbordi).

'I was ashamed of myself, there was so much I wanted to do for myself; getting pregnant and having a baby was not one of my immediate ambitions. I always ask myself why I got pregnant and had a child at this early age' (Selikem).

Alimatu, also further interpreted her disappointment recounting that she was upset when she realized she was pregnant, she felt she was not prepared for pregnancy, and also did not have adequate knowledge of the use of contraceptives. If she did, she would have protected herself from getting pregnant or even encouraged her husband to use a condom since she was not ready to become a mother. In her narration, she noted that she had no life of her own. Apart from been disappointed in herself for getting pregnant due to her ignorance of the use of appropriate family planning methods, she was also highly disappointed in her father and also gets worried because she feels her younger siblings may also end up like her without any better education. There was also the concern of not knowing how to properly care for her baby when he/she is born. I perceived in her accounts that it was out of poverty that her father gave her out for early marriage presuming that it will increase their economic opportunities, however, I noted throughout the interview that her early marriage would rather perpetuate a cycle of poverty, curtail her education and minimize her economic opportunities.

'I get worried and also disappointed in my father, I feel not prepared inside me because I don't know anything about bathing a child or taking care of the child, my mother-in-law is not very nice to me..... I feel I am in prison sometimes; I have no life of my own. I wished I had protected myself from getting pregnant but I did not know anything about contraceptives. It's now that the nurses are teaching me' (Alimatu).

Additionally, Esinam and Mawuena specifically reflected their disappointment narrating that their pregnancies were unplanned and unwanted and that they had been told that as an adolescent going through childbirth it will be painful because their uterus had not developed well. And the cost that comes with surgery created more disappointment at the news of pregnancy. As young girls, they were worried that they may not be able to deliver their babies the natural way based on the experiences of other young girls in their communities. Even if they had to go through a cesarean section to deliver their babies, it also came with the financial cost and they felt they did not have the funds for the surgical procedure. Participants also linked their disappointment to some of the major health consequences of giving birth as an adolescent, they were scared they may experience complications such as obstetric fistula which is one of the major severe childbirth-related complications.

'When I got pregnant, I was disheartened and also scared that I will die during childbirth because I have a friend who gave birth when she was 16 years old and she told me it was very painful and that she nearly died because she wouldn't push during labor, she was rushed to the theater for an operation and she needed blood afterward' (Esinam).

'I used to watch on TV how some adolescent girls suffer during childbirth and sometimes after childbirth they are not able to keep their urine, they urinate on themselves and smell a lot. So, when I also became pregnant, I felt very disappointed and angry with myself because I didn't want to go through what I used to watch on TV' (Mawuena).

There is no doubt that the above accounts concerning the experiences of disappointment involved feeling powerless, feeling a tendency to do nothing and to get away from the situation, thus turning away from realizing that they are pregnant and wanting to do nothing. Disappointment, therefore, appears to be one of the most frequent emotions experienced during the female adolescents' transition to early motherhood. Hence experiencing disappointment resulted in the female adolescents increasing their attention in pursuing their goals with the inclination of avoiding future mistakes.

5.4.1.3 Regrets

Regret is a negative emotion that includes some level of self-blame, where an individual reprimands him or herself for not doing something differently to accomplish a better

consequence. Overall mindsets of regret have been linked with despair and worry (East et al., 2012a). One of the most immediate consequences of unprotected sex is the risk of an unplanned pregnancy which leads to regret. Nine of the participants narrated that they regretted it when they realized they were pregnant. Out of the nine, three of them stated that they regretted not protecting themselves while having sex. According to them, if they had used contraceptives, they would not have gotten pregnant. Three out of the nine regretted due to denial and rejection on the part of the men who impregnated them.

Abla, Dzigbordi, and Esinam's accounts of their experiences is a representative example of the important characteristics in the participants' expressions of regret, they lamented for having unprotected sex that led to an unplanned pregnancy. According to them, they had a lot of plans for themselves with regards to education and future aspirations. There is no doubt that these participants regretted when they realized they had gotten pregnant, they all had aspirations they wanted to achieve but the pregnancy came as a barrier to their career objectives. They did not seem to be ready for motherhood hence the regret. Getting pregnant was a major transition in their lives that prompted some of them to run away from their homes to abort the pregnancy. It was evident in their accounts that the experience of regret was driven by being angry with themselves for not using contraception as a form of protection against unwanted pregnancy. It seems to me that, they also faced financial challenges as pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers and this aggravated their response to their experiences. This is how they articulated their feelings and understanding, which stress regret as being connected to their circumstances.

'I have always wanted to work hard in school and become a nurse, but I couldn't achieve my aim. I am not happy at all; I do regret having sex without a condom. If we had protected ourselves, I wouldn't have become pregnant' (Abla).

'I felt very disappointed and angry with myself, I regretted having unprotected sex and not ready to accept to be a mother, so I decided to run away from the house to abort as suggested by my boyfriend' (Dzigbordi).

'I get worried about my situation; things are hard for me. Maybe if we had used condoms, I wouldn't have gotten into this situation. I am not happy at all and sometimes regret having this baby' (Esinam).

Some of the other participants narrated that the men who impregnated them did not take up the responsibility of their pregnancies and that made them regret getting pregnant. This

was even more upsetting for some of the participants, as some were promised marriage, but just as they got pregnant the young men responsible for the pregnancy denied it while others refused to accept responsibility. These participants were confronted with the issue of denial when they most needed love, this left them all alone and blamed themselves for the pregnancy and as some mentioned in their narratives the first thought that comes is to terminate the pregnancy because they felt rejected and stressed. It was revealed in their accounts that some of the young men who impregnated them felt they were not the only men dating them that is the female adolescents so what was the evidence of being responsible for the pregnancy while others also felt they had sex with the participants only ones and how can that lead to a pregnancy. All these are disturbing statements that the participants had to endure during their transition phase.

'I feel ashamed and regret, I blame myself, I should have waited till I get married now he refused to accept the pregnancy because he said I have other boyfriends and that he is not responsible for it' (Kekeli).

'We had a lot of arguments when I got pregnant, he said we did it only once, and what shows that he is the one who impregnated me. I cried a lot because I felt rejected when I needed him most. I regretted meeting him and putting me in a family way' (Yayara).

Furthermore, Alimatu felt she was too young to get pregnant and wished she had waited a little bit longer to grow into a mature woman. She was worried and regretted not delaying her pregnancy for a few more years, this affected her self-confidence.

'I didn't feel comfortable at all, I said haaa is that how pregnancy is. I wasn't happy that I was pregnant. I told myself I should have waited a little bit before getting pregnant I regret marrying early and with this pregnancy' (Alimatu).

This account seems to represent other narrations that were captured during the interview process where participants felt ashamed of themselves due to the pregnancy. They indicated that they were too young to get pregnant, there was so much they could accomplish as adolescents but the pregnancy either delayed their ambition or they may not be able to accomplish their ambitions altogether. Therefore, the regret of getting pregnant led some of the participants to consider terminating the pregnancy so they could accomplish their aspirations.

5.4.1.4 Attempt to abort

Decision-making about if and how to abort a pregnancy is a setback for adolescent women who experience unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. Adolescents contemplating on abortion are influenced by where they live, their relationship with their parents, their religious beliefs, access to family planning services, their educational and socioeconomic status, the behavior of the male who impregnated them, and their peer group (Frederico, Michielsen, Arnaldo, & Decat, 2018). Findings showed that eight of the participants were advised by the father of their babies to abort the pregnancy or they attempted to terminate their pregnancy when they realized they were pregnant. The main reasons they gave for an attempt to induce abortion included stigma associated with pregnancy, fear of rejection, and denial of responsibility for the pregnancy on the part of the father of the baby.

One of the ways in which the participants decided to react to the news of their pregnancy was to attempt to abort the pregnancy. In some of the accounts, terminating the pregnancy came as an option because of how the participants felt and the worry that was associated with the news. According to Yayara and Kekeli, they intended to abort the pregnancy when they realized they were pregnant, due to the humiliation associated with it and the fear of been despised by people in their community, they also felt the pregnancy had interrupted their plans. However, their narrations revealed that their parents discouraged them from terminating the pregnancy.

'I felt all my dreams were not going to come through, so I wanted to abort the pregnancy. But my mother told me I will die if I abort the baby so I shouldn't worry everything will be fine. My father was always scolding me, telling me I have brought shame to the family' (Yayara).

'I am not happy at all; I told my grandmother I wanted to abort the pregnancy but my grandmother told me that if I abort it, I will die it's a taboo and God will not be happy with me so I should keep it' (Kekeli).

Sesinam on the other hand actually attempted aborting the pregnancy due to the advice of her friends but unfortunately for her, the drug did not terminate the pregnancy but rather made her sick. This is what she had to say:

I decided to abort the pregnancy so that I can go back to school, but the medicine I took didn't work so I got very sick' (Sesinam).

As adolescents who felt stigmatized, regretted, and disappointed in themselves for getting pregnant, Abla and Dzigbordi were also confronted with the challenge of assenting to their boyfriends' suggestion to abort the pregnancy. However, because their parents already knew of their pregnancy and out of fear of something happening to them, they did not agree to their boyfriends' suggestion. Below is what they had to say:

'My boyfriend is a student so he brought medicine and asked me to abort the pregnancy and I told him my mother knows I am pregnant so if I take the medicine and something happens to me what will he tell my mother. He said nothing will happen to me, but I refused to take the medicine and he decided not to mind me again' (Abla)

'From the beginning, my boyfriend was always on my back to terminate the pregnancy according to him I can't continue my education with the presence of a child. My father suspected it so he informed my grandmother to advise me not to listen to the boy' (Dzigbordi).

All the above narrations represent accounts from all the participants' quotations, excluding an account from one of the participants who took some medication to terminate the pregnancy. All the others considered the procedure either by themselves or were influenced by their boyfriends. Their parents played an important role by advising them not to terminate the pregnancy which according to them would have led to losing their lives in the process, others also stated that they were told that it was a taboo to commit abortion in their family. Committing an abortion according to some of the participants would lead to them not finding good husbands in the future and this scared them not to terminate the pregnancy even though they thought of it due to the humiliation that was linked with getting pregnant as an adolescent.

5.4.1.5 Moving on

Moving on means being accountable for one's well-being and happiness, it does not erase the previous experience but rather empowers an individual to surpass the difficulty while holding onto an informed prospect. It is about understanding the shame, disappointments, regrets and, unexpected events of life. So that these experiences do not act as obstructions, but rather as a basis to better develop (Schwartz, 2011). While reflecting on early motherhood, seven of the participants narrated how getting pregnant as an adolescent had affected them and their plans for the future, however, they did not allow their experiences

to affect their aspirations for the future. They were determined not to give up in life due to their pregnancy. They were ready to pursue their dreams and not allow early pregnancy and motherhood to interrupt their potentials. The participants knew that deciding to move on will not delete their past experiences, but it would rather help them to embrace their potentials amid all the challenges that come with adolescent pregnancy. They were ready to embrace and work towards overcoming all their challenges so that it will not serve as a barrier to their success. One of the ways in which the participants conveyed their attitude of moving on during their narrations was to determine to go back to school and become what they had always desired to be. Below are quotations from some of the participants.

'I will not allow my early marriage and pregnancy to affect my ambitions in life. I told my husband that I will go back to school after giving birth. I will pursue my dreams of becoming a nurse' (Alimatu).

'I didn't want to get pregnant, but since it happened there was nothing, I could do about it. when I see my child, I get consolation from my child. I want to be a role model to other girls; I will continue my studies when my child grows a little bit and then become a teacher' (Mawuena).

As mentioned above, Kekeli and Sesinam also had a positive attitude towards their plans, they did not allow their experience to determine their future but rather as a foundation for progress. Kekeli used to feel shy about her pregnancy, because of this she could not help her grandmother in the market. But in her narration, she has overcome her shyness and has now built her self-confidence.

'I have changed now I go to the market with my grandmother, I know all is not lost, I will go back and finish my school' (Kekeli).

Sesinam also has moved on after the disappointment and resentment she felt when she got pregnant. Even though she was upset with herself she feels there is more to life than always feeling pity for herself and not doing something beneficial for herself,

'I was very angry with myself, but hey life must go on, it is not the end of life. I pray my sister takes me back and helps me to go back to school' (Sesinam).

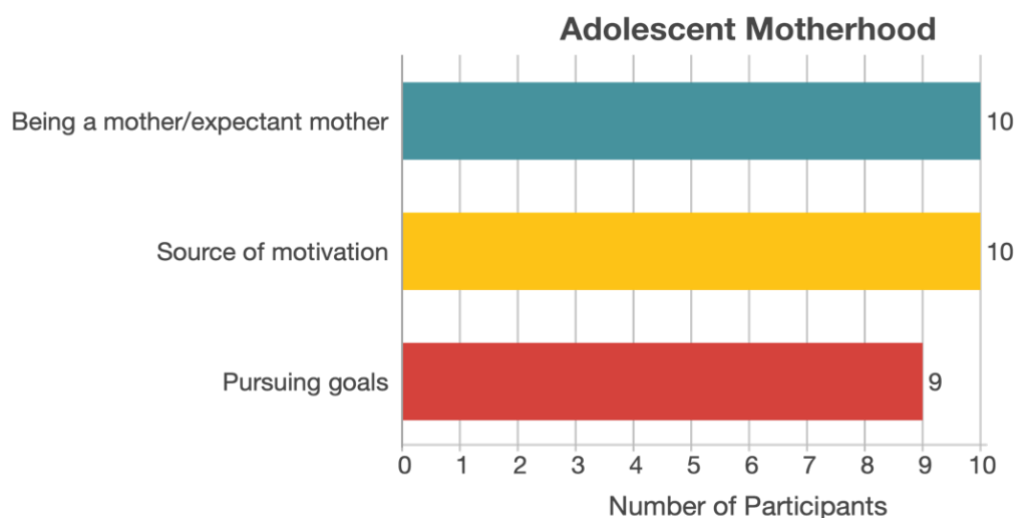
It is worth noting that these female adolescents at some time felt ashamed of themselves and blamed themselves for all that they were going through, but having a purpose to pursue their goals alleviated their pain and built their self-confidence and self-esteem to move on despite the difficulties. While some of the narrations described the female

adolescents', negative feelings connected to the transition into early motherhood, I also found that some of the participants revealed positive feelings linked with their transition, they felt the transition allowed them to change and provided a consciousness of maturity, hence giving them a positive self-perception trying to transform into becoming a good mother. Again, a few of the female adolescents noted that they sometimes felt happy anytime they see their babies and felt their lives have improved since becoming mothers, they saw this as an agent of change. Furthermore, some of the participants also explained that the transition provided an opportunity for them to develop into adulthood, they became less self-centered while learning to become role models to their babies, despite the challenges they faced as female adolescents.

5.4.2 Superordinate Theme Two: Adolescent Motherhood

This superordinate theme revealed how early motherhood shaped the adolescents' life and identity and also how it disrupted their sense of self. The participants narrated the physical and emotional experiences that resulted in a sense of responsibility for themselves and their babies. Even though becoming a mother is a distinct life occurrence that includes an assumption of new obligations and unending change of responsibility, for the adolescents, it was a challenge to balance the changes that take place during adolescence with the requirement of motherhood, while at the same time trying to either go back to school, learn a trade or find a job. Three emergent themes that were developed included: being a mother/expectant mother (all 10 female adolescents interviewed), source of happiness/motivation (all 10 female adolescents interviewed), and pursuing goals (9 of female adolescents interviewed). These are discussed in the section below. Figure 5.2 below shows a graphical narrative of the second superordinate theme.

Figure 5.2 Graphical presentation of superordinate theme two



5.4.2.1 *Being a mother/expectant mother*

Becoming a mother comprises moving from an existing reality to a new reality and entails rearrangement of objectives, behaviors, and tasks to accomplish a new formation of identity (Mercer, 2004). The female adolescents' ability to adapt to their responsibilities of being a mother or expectant mother was frequently prejudiced by characteristics linked with their specific phase of adolescence. This emergent theme expresses the participants' struggle concerning having individual societal and childcare prerequisites coupled with their phase of adolescent growth and at the same time being an expectant or new mother who is obliged to meet the demands of caring for their child.

In the role of being a mother, Abla and Mawuena recounted avoiding the responsibility of their new role as mothers. They however depended on their mothers to take up the responsibility of caring for their baby. While at the same time still seeking to be supported and cared for by their mothers as they cope with early motherhood. These adolescent mothers also narrated how they did not have any knowledge on how to care for their babies, they felt emotionally and physically overwhelmed by the unexpected demands of the new role of being a mother and were thankful for having their mothers around to help them take care of their babies. In their narrations, they also stated that they did not have the opportunity to attend parenting classes to help them prepare for motherhood and this was one of the reasons why they did not have in-depth knowledge on how to care properly for their babies.

'I get worried when my baby is crying, I am lucky I still stay with my mother. I don't know what I would have done alone. I even cry sometimes when my baby is crying, I wished I could turn things around and become that little mummy's girl' (Abla).

I am so grateful to my mother; I couldn't have coped with my daughter without her. She bathes my daughter, feeds her, and clothes her. I get so much help from her and this helped me to be able to go back and finish my JHS' (Mawuena).

Furthermore, Selikem described in her narratives the feeling of anger, anxiety, and not being confident enough to be a mother. Her comments also revealed a sense of confusion and lack of knowledge on how to take good care of her baby. Basically, she was not prepared for motherhood, she narrated how she got scared sometimes with the feeling of not prepared to be a mother. Throughout her accounts, Selikem talked about how unprepared she is to be a mother, she felt she could not meet the financial obligations of being a responsible mother. She could not afford basic necessities for herself and her baby, she however sometimes found joy anytime she sees her baby.

'I don't feel confident to take care of my baby there are a lot of times when I didn't even know how to bathe and dress my baby but I find happiness watching my baby. I feel I am not prepared to be a mother. Things that I used to do, I cannot do them any longer. For example, I used to go out with my friends for programs and go to youth camps. When she is sick I struggle to take care of her' (Selikem).

When elaborating the experiences of being an expectant mother, Keleli and Sedudzi made sense of their experiences as pregnant adolescents who received negative reactions from their families and also the males who impregnated them which frequently resulted in a feeling of being alone and desperate. The participants were faced with the difficulty of being all alone during their transition into early motherhood as the men responsible for the pregnancies deny being responsible. There was also on the other hand where these young women having to endure insults from their family members leaving them to feel lonely and not wanted. Their accounts indicate that denial was a major contributing factor to their unhappiness.

'It is very difficult; the boy has refused to accept the pregnancy and he has even left the town so I don't know how I am going to take care of the child since my

mother is also always insulting me. I am not ready to become a mother, but there is nothing I can do now it has already happened' (Kekeli).

'When I told my boyfriend I was pregnant, he stopped showing his love towards me, he even told me to abort the pregnancy, I felt so alone in this world' (Sedudzi).

It was evident through their narrations that, even though they were confronted with difficulties, some of them did not allow their challenges to affect their goals in life they were motivated to work hard to pursue their goals. they were determined not to give up, as a result, some of them depended on other people to help them achieve their goals.

5.4.2.2 Source of motivation

Motivation is the practice of initiating and sustaining a goal-directed activity (Cook & Artino, 2016) yet, people do not always generate their motivation from within, rather they sometimes become inactive and depend on other people for a source of motivation (Reeve, 2009). The female adolescents in this study were motivated not only because of the outcome their transition might produce or how fulfilling the process of motherhood might be but also because of what their actions might tell them about themselves, that is their maintained desired self-concept. The main factors that increased their source of motivation were; their desire to achieve their potentials, their perceived abilities, self-efficacy, their expected impact of their goal-related actions, the connection between these goal-related actions, and the inner acknowledgments of their goal-related actions.

Alimatu and Mawuena's self-perception of their ability to do well as career women shortly were completely connected with their possibility to go back to school. In their narrations, the female adolescents believed that their actions will have a positive impact on achieving their goals and it was based on this that they are more motivated to work hard towards going back to school to become a nurse, teacher, banker, and midwife respectively. Some of them motivated and encouraged themselves most of the time, they felt that was the only thing they can do to accomplish their aspiration of becoming what they intended to become. They noted that the main purpose for their motivation was to go back to school however they perceived that financial constrain may be a setback for them, nevertheless to climb the economic ladder they had to work hard towards achieving their purpose to give a better future to their children. The following quotations from Alimatu and Mawuena illustrate this:

'My motivation to become a nurse pushes me each day to go back to school, I know that the reward of going back to school to become a nurse will make me get more money to take good care of myself and also to help my husband' (Alimatu).

'It is more desirable to become a teacher and earn some money than to be a burden on other people and I never want to be a burden on anyone no matter what has happened to be, it is just for a while. I can only become a teacher as I have always wanted if I go back to school and am determined to enroll in my SHS education soon' (Mawuena).

In the above quotations, Alimatu and Mawuena appeared to attach their source of motivation to the outcome of earning extra income. They perceived that becoming a nurse or a teacher will also improve their socio-economic status in their community. Hence the motivation to go back to school.

On the other hand, other study participants interestingly found other sources of motivation. They engaged in behaviors that were from within them because it was naturally fulfilling to them. They were involved in activities without any apparent outward remuneration, they engaged in their various activities solely because they enjoyed it and wanted to get personal satisfaction from these various activities. They just wanted an opportunity to discover, acquire and realize their capabilities. In Abla and Sesinam's accounts, they narrated that they spent most of their time with their best friend and sister respectively because they enjoyed their company and not necessarily because their friend or sister can change the situation, they are in. I noticed throughout the interview that the participants felt very lonely and sometimes needed some company to alleviate their discomfort. In order not to stay at home all alone and feel self-pity for themselves they found strength and happiness in visiting either friends or family members. Visiting friends and family members did not necessarily motivate them to pursue their goals contrary to what other participants narrated, but rather it brought them satisfaction and fulfillment. This is what they had to say:

'I enjoy visiting my best friend who is also a teenage mother, we chat a lot. I derive a lot of satisfaction when we are together and not because of anything I will gain from her' (Abla).

'I derive a lot of motivation when I visit my sister in her shop, I find her place very relaxing, I just feel comfortable and satisfied and not because I want to please her' (Sesinam).

It is worth stating that other participants also found their source of motivation in helping other people, such as volunteering in their communities and churches, these participants felt relaxed and pleased anytime they found themselves rendering their services in their local communities. Some of them used this opportunity to reflect on their lives with regards to their experiences and their aspirations.

Furthermore, Dzigbordi and Kekeli narrated that they were constantly motivated to retain a positive self-concept. Thus, they strategically behaved in ways that allowed them to present themselves optimistically. The female adolescents desired to believe that even though they were going through difficulties during their transition, they motivated themselves that they are competent. They motivated themselves to do the right such as exercising self-control when people around did not behave well towards them. In their narrations, they also stated that they also depended on other people for their source of motivation.

'My grandmother gives me a lot of joy; without her, I don't think I would have made it through this pregnancy. She motivates me so much, she doesn't use harsh words on me, When I got pregnant she took me through a lot of counseling on how to take care of myself and the unborn baby, through all this I got myself confidence and I was encouraged' (Dzigbordi)

'I motivate myself a lot, I believe that things will change one day and my grandmother encourages me a lot, she tells me not to give up in life and that everything will be fine. Some people are just annoying, they say things that make you feel unwanted, but I control myself a lot and I am hopeful and motivate myself that I am not a bad girl' (Kekeli).

In all the narrations these young women had various sources of motivation and each of them had a unique account. I observed that the majority of the participants had set goals and these goals improved their self-motivation and performance to a greater extent, they were determined to avoid negative judgments of their capabilities. Again, some of the participants, believed that they can pursue their goals and that certain activities such as going back to school will produce a particular set of outcomes.

5.4.2.3 Pursuing goals

Pursuing a goal refers to the little and big activities one has to do daily for a goal to be accomplished. It is also when an individual turns an idea into a plan and a plan into action. Setting a goal to pursue it can be inspiring, it gets ones' spirit high while raising one's motivation and at the same time gives the person something to look forward to (Tsaousides, 2015). The female adolescents in this study focused on their strength which included acknowledging that they valued their education and the possibility of going to learn a trade, they expressed their renewed commitment to their education or learning a trade and recognized how important it was to their future; they were motivated to succeed. To accomplish their goals some of the participants also narrated how they regarded their transition period as an opportunity for change, they took steps to transform some negative attitudes. While others were determined to be good and responsible mothers.

Many of the participants narrated how they went back to school to finish their JHS education after initially dropping from school due to their pregnancy. This was as a result of their renewed commitment to their education; they were resilient not only to finish their education but also to attain economic stability. They were determined to rise to the difficulties of early motherhood and were prepared to navigate their transition effectively with a sense of tolerance and accomplishment. Going back to school after giving birth was a big challenge for them, combining the role of being a young mother and learning to rewrite exams was tough, they had to deal with the issue of self-doubt and build their confidence. The participants had a constant self-assessment of their values, potentials, and a cautious resolution to concentrate on their goals. Below are quotations from what some of them had to say:

'I was determined to go back to school and this is the reason I went back to write my final exams. It was a very tough time for me, very difficult to revise my notes and to learn as a young mother, but thank God I wrote the exams. The results are not what I expected but at least it can take me to SHS, I want to accomplish my goal and give a good future to my child' (Abla).

'After I had my baby, I built more confidence and was ready to eliminate self-doubt. After giving birth to my baby, my mother took care of her and I went to sit for my JHS exams, the first two days were hell for me. I told myself I will write and pass my exams and truly I made it' (Mawena).

For other participants, amidst the challenges that were accompanied by their early pregnancy, they still viewed their experience as an opportunity for change, individual advancement, and self-improvement. In their narration, they noted that getting pregnant as adolescents compelled and motivated them to stop participating in unhealthy, unsafe, and irresponsible conduct and to recommit to their future aspirations. They justified the importance of changing so they could get a better life and take good care of themselves and their children when they are born. These were depicted by quotes from some of the pregnant adolescents:

'Before I got pregnant, I sometimes eat very unhealthy food like taking a lot of toffees, ice cream and buying food from the roadside instead of cooking. But when I got pregnant and went for ANC, I was told to stop eating all that so I will stay healthy and my baby will also be healthy. This has changed my life a lot, now I do a lot of cooking myself and I have also stopped eating too many sweets, I believe that my experience has given me the chance to be a better person and this will help me be what I want to be' (Alimatu).

'Previously, I used to drink a lot with my friends when we go for outing and I used to sneak out and go to night clubs when I was leaving with my sister. But now I have stopped all these lifestyles and I think it's good for me because I can concentrate and add value to my life' (Sesinam).

It was also apparent that participants had the desire to become responsible mothers and to offer an affirmative and secure future for themselves and their children. Their narrations also clarified the fact that to become responsible mothers they needed to gather their strength to succeed notwithstanding the challenges around them. Below is a quotation from one of the participants:

'I want to be a loving mother to my child when he or she is born. I didn't experience that motherly love since my mother died when I was a little girl. Sometimes I get scared to be a mother but I still encourage myself that if I go back to school and pursue my goal, I will try to be that loving mother who will provide the love and needs of my child' (Dzigbordi).

Throughout the participants' narratives, I observed that they were determined and influenced to pursue their goals because of exposure to other young women's goals and achievements whom they have used as role models. They adopted goals as a result of

what they observed other young women in their communities pursued, they realized that to be economically stable like other young women in their communities who have worked hard to be for instance nurses, teachers, and bankers, they would have to set goals and work towards pursuing it. Again, the opportunity to change gave some of the participants the breakthrough to be good while concentrating on achieving their objectives even though they noted it a difficult time for them. The participants acknowledged that there are obstacles that they may encounter along their journey towards pursuing their goals personally, they related it to their behavior and state-of-mind such as unhealthy habits and self-doubt. Socially, they related their obstacles to people around them who made them feel unwanted and incompetent, however, they were keen not to allow other people to discourage or belittle them. Environmentally, they again linked their obstacles to the unexpected occurrence which they found difficult to easily deal with during their transition phase.

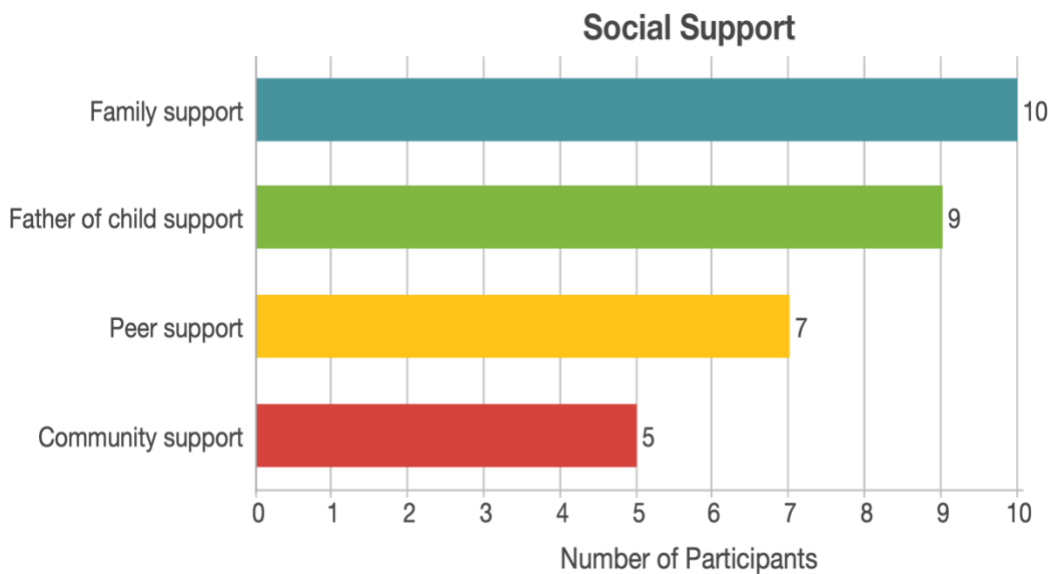
5.4.3 Superordinate Theme Three: Social Support

Social support is a vital component and convincing influence in the positive modification of adolescent motherhood (DeVito, 2007). In this sub-section, the superordinate theme is presented to answer the question of how participants in this study received informal social support from family, friends/community, and the father of their babies. These supports were provided in different forms, expressed as materials, informational and emotional. The participants narrated how they benefited from the social support they received, according to them it improved their health outcomes and that of their babies and unborn babies. Some of the female adolescents who faced challenges relating to their physical, emotional, identity development, and preparation towards their role as mothers noted that they found supportive relationships very beneficial during their transition phase. According to the participants, the social support they received affected their parental behaviors both directly and indirectly. Some narrated that they were less distressed and paid more attention to their child's growth and educational accomplishments. The social support they received during their pregnancy was also linked to their lower risk of maternal depression and also increased their self-esteem, self-confidence, and life satisfaction as expectant and young mothers. This theme also revealed that participants perceived having a lower risk of complications such as gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, preterm birth, low birth-weight of their babies, and also general well-being due to the social support they got from some of their family members. Furthermore, a supportive

relationship with the father of the babies and friends reduced the feeling of stigma and isolation.

The in-depth interview transcripts revealed that participants received social support from different sources and this helped in their transition into early motherhood which eventually impacted positively in their lives. As specified in Table 5.2, the main views detailed by the female adolescents that supported them in their transition phase were categorized into four emergent themes. These four themes are family support (all 10 female adolescents interviewed), father of child support (9 of female adolescents interviewed), peer support (7 of female adolescents interviewed), and community support (5 of female adolescents interviewed). These emergent themes are not essentially mutually exclusive but are connected. Furthermore, the majority of the participants asserted being influenced by these themes and these are discussed in the section below. Figure 5.3 below shows a graphical narrative of superordinate three.

Figure 5.3 Graphical presentation of superordinate theme three



5.4.3.1 Family support

Family support plays a significant role in reducing stress during adolescent pregnancy and it is recommended as the main source of emotional and financial resources during the transition phase of early motherhood (Campbell & Hart, 2019). Pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers who reside with their family members receive more support in the

form of advice, material aid, and childcare. Also, supportive family members may function as models and instructors of how to mediate and obtain assistance from other sources (DeVito, 2010). In the context of my study, the two key components of family support that will be considered in this emergent theme are kinship support and parental support. Kinship support refers to the emotional, social and financial support extended families such as grandparents, aunts and uncles provide. This kind of support is linked with a range of adolescent outcomes, comprising reduced behavioral and emotional difficulties (Hardaway, Sterrett-Hong, Larkby, & Cornelius, 2016). While parental support referring to the emotional, social, and financial support parents show towards their children which signifies to the child that he or she is accepted and loved. It is worth noting that greater parental support predicts an enhanced adolescent performance and fewer adolescent behavior difficulties (Essau, 2008). In this study, the female adolescents narrated situations where their parents, grandmothers, and other relatives supported them emotionally, socially, and financially during their pregnancy and early motherhood.

The study also showed that participants who lived with their parents or other relatives went back to school to finish their basic education after childbirth. During the interviews, there was a clear link between residential approaches and economic outcomes. Thus, the female adolescents who lived with their parents when they realized they were pregnant were somewhat more likely to return to school and write their JSS exams and again were determined to further their education when their babies grow. Mawuena specifically stated in one of her narrations that she thinks her mother supports her because she lives with her. This reflects in her statement below:

'As I stated earlier my mother helps me a lot, she sometimes gives me money to buy food for myself and my baby, and I think I get all this help from her because I live with her, it makes it easier for her to help me, she is not happy when she sees me sad' (Mawuena).

Yayara also described the emotional support she received from her mother. She said her mother dedicated so much time to her, encouraging her even when her father was always reprimanding her because of the disappointment she brought to her family. According to Yayara, her mothers' warmth and responsiveness made her feel secured and reassured that she will go back to school.

'My mother was a source of encouragement for me, she always told me all is not lost I can go back to school after delivery, she will take care of my child for me. That helped me a lot, and gradually my mother spoke to my father to stopped scolding me' (Yayara).

Parental support was expressed by Mawuena and Yayara as one of the main elements that motivated them to decide to go back to school. On the contrary, participants who moved out or did not live with their parents at the time of their pregnancy and during early motherhood were more likely to have dropped out from school, failed to return to school, and were unemployed. Kinship support was also stated as another essential component of support that some of the participants received, this support mainly came from their grandmothers. Narrations indicate that this support was useful in enhancing their ability to provide for themselves financially. I perceived during the interview process that the emotional support they received from their grandmothers increased the general well-being, decreased the rate of isolation of the participants and this led to a better pregnancy and birth outcome.

'Emotionally, my grandmother is always there for me, even though I don't live with her she sends me money anytime I complain to her of not having money. She is such an amazing woman; she makes me forget my worries' (Dzibordi).

'I depend totally on my grandmother for everything, I do not feel too lonely because of my grandmother. She teaches me how to take good care of myself during pregnancy, she shows me some exercise and herbal medicine I have to take so that I don't go through an operation during childbirth. It has helped me a lot, I used to feel tired but now I feel strong and healthy' (Kekeli).

One of the participants who is married and was not living with her parents at the time of the interview had quite different findings. There was no difference between her socioeconomic status and those who live with their parents. However, I perceived throughout her narrations that because she was married and lived with her husband, obviously she attained somehow a higher socioeconomic status than other participants who lived with the men who impregnated them but were not married to them or lived with the parents of the adolescent men who impregnated them. In her narration, she stated that she got a lot of inspirational, emotional, and sometimes financial support from her brother's wife. Below is a quotation from her narrations:

'My brother's wife talks to me a lot, she gives me a lot of emotional support, she even sometimes gives me money when I visit, she encourages me not to give up' (Alimatu).

The difference in the findings between the participants who live with their families and those who did not live with their families contributes to the validity of the interpretation that the support from families may directly affect the economic future of female adolescents. The fact that the participants who lived with their families had better economic outcomes suggests that the continuing provision of family support may have a part in advancing the prospect of these female adolescents. Hence an early marriage as in the case of Alimatu, accordingly, may decrease the possibility of receiving parental support.

5.4.3.2 *Father of child support*

Support from a child's father has the potential of improving the health outcome of that child. Growing children develop better mental and linguistic proficiency with fewer behavior challenges when fathers support the upbringing of that child, whether financially, emotionally, or psychologically (Gavin et al., 2002). The support fathers provide for their children vary from one setting to the other, the definition of a father's support in the context of this study included five fatherly roles: acceptance (taking responsibility of the pregnancy and recognizing the child as one's own), security (protecting the child from any form of danger and contributing to the assessments that affect the child's wellbeing), providing (providing the child's physical necessities), development (coaching and giving guidance the child) and caregiving (participating in caring for the child such as feeding, bathing and so on). The female adolescents in this study narrated that the men who were responsible for their pregnancies were also young men of their age or a few years older than them and because of this, the young men were either in school or not doing a full-time job to give them enough income. The situation of the father of their babies did not allow them to be fully responsible and execute their roles as fathers. Some of the participants were either living with their parents or the parents of the father of their babies and therefore the responsibility of taking care of the pregnant adolescent or the child and the mother was mostly on their families or the paternal grandparents of the child.

The issue of taking responsibility for the pregnancy and recognizing the child as one's own revealed some intriguing statements. Participants described how some of the young men initially denied responsibility for their pregnancies because they felt they were not ready to be fathers, the fear of becoming responsible and accepting the child as their own scared them. Participants stated that some of the young men had to be threatened by the girl's parents before they accepted being responsible while others had to run away from their home and compellingly stay with the paternal grandparents of their child for the young men to accept responsibility. In one of the narrations the police had to arrest the young man who impregnated the girl when he denied the pregnancy, however, he later confessed to being responsible for the pregnancy. According to the narrations, the young man felt fatherhood will change his social life and would not be able to continue his education.

'When my father approached him about my pregnancy, he denied being responsible for the pregnancy so my father reported him to the police and he was arrested. It was at the police station that he told the policemen he impregnated me and that he was afraid of his parents that is why he denied it, he didn't want to lose the opportunity of going to school. Now I live with his parents and they sometimes support my upkeep. The guy also gives me money sometimes but it's not much because he is a student'(Dzigbordi).

I was compelled to stay with the boy's parents because I am an orphan and my boyfriend was not ready to accept the pregnancy, he wanted me to abort it and I didn't want to do it. He said he wasn't ready to be a dad. When I reported it to his parents, they asked me to move into their house, I am not very happy staying with them but I have no choice when I ask him for money to take care of myself, he doesn't give me since I got pregnant and moved into his parent's house'(Esinam).

On the other hand, evidence from the study also revealed how some of the fathers sometimes did their best to protect their child from danger and some also tried to contribute towards the decision that affected the well-being of their child. One of the participants narrated that the father of her daughter calls her regularly to check up on their daughter even though he is a student and mostly at school. I perceived in her narration that this brings her some form of satisfaction, it demonstrates that the father of her

daughter shows concern for the child's well-being even though he does not support her financially because he is a student and also depends on his parents.

'I believe the father of my daughter genuinely wants to help, he always calls to check upon us, I remember one time I called him while he was at school to complain to him about our daughter been admitted to hospital, he was so worried he left school to visit us and I do appreciate it a lot. I know if he had money he would provide; his parents sometimes give me money'(Mawuena).

This is a very interesting finding as it reveals that despite the desire of some adolescent fathers to do good and be there for their children to provide all the support needed, their circumstances may not allow them to perform their roles effectively as fathers as seen in the narrations above. Again, Alimatu the only married participant in the study, described how her husband shows concern about their unborn child, does this by asking her regularly if their unborn baby is progressing well in her stomach, according to her even though she is not happy in her marriage because her father married her off as an adolescent and also the fact that she feels her mother-in-law does not like her, the emotional support sometimes her husband gives her strengthens her and gives her a little joy.

My husband cares for our unborn child, anytime I come back from a hospital checkup, he will ask me how did it go, how is our baby doing and I like him for this. It makes me feel am not alone in this pregnancy journey. I am not happy though because of the way my father just forced me into this marriage and my mother-in-law she is not nice to me at all. But my husband tries his best to make me happy and to be a good father always there for our unborn baby'(Alimatu).

Nevertheless, some of the participants narrated how they were not in a good relationship with the father of their child because of how they were intentionally neglected and left alone without the support of the child's father. According to the participants the fathers are just not responsible and available, they struggle financially and emotionally to care for their child. One participant narrated during the interview how the young man who impregnated her refused to support her financially, emotionally, and physically to care for their child, she stated that he claims he did not have anything to do with her nor the child as their relationship had come to an end before she delivered their child. This was

very devastating for her as she did not have a source of income except the support she receives from her family and peers. This is what she had to say:

'I am very saddened as I have to bear the responsibility of bringing up my child alone without the father's involvement and support. I feel so disguised about him and I hate him for this. He doesn't want to support me in any way because am no more his girlfriend. He doesn't want to be a responsible father; he neglects all his responsibilities as a father because I decided not to abort the pregnancy when he asked me to' (Abla).

It is worth noting that most of the young men who impregnated the female adolescents, were not financially stable to be a responsible father, they also did not have the skills needed to coach and give guidance to their child not alone to participate in feeding and bathing the child.

5.4.3.3 Peer support

Peer support is an adaptable idea that may be used during the transition to early parenthood, it refers to the activities of individuals who act in a non-qualified competence to provide support to other individuals with whom they have similar lived experiences. It is worth noting that individuals with similar experiences relate to and understand each other better and therefore can provide genuine emotional, childcare, and sometimes material support (McLeish & Redshaw, 2015). In the context of this study, peer support was provided to study participants by other female adolescents who were also pregnant or already mothers and had similar experiences. Participants in this study stated in their narrations that interactions with their peers assisted the progress of their social skills during their transition phase because there was a mutual understanding of their experiences. I noticed during the interview process based on the narrations, that participants identified members of their peer groups as friends, these were for instance peers in their community or friends from school with similar experiences.

Out of the ten participants who were interviewed, 9 of them indicated that they received a lot of support from their peers. According to the participants, of all the support offered by their peers, emotional support was most significant to them. Thus, the participants narrated that they received more emotional than childcare and material support from their peers. For Selikem and Alimatu, building a relationship of trust was the most important

thing to them, where they can confidently share their challenges with someone who will not judge them but understand them and they found that in their friends. Also, they found this kind of support very useful as it reduced their level of stress because with their peers around any time, they felt lonely they had someone they could talk to who understands them better sometimes even more than their parents. This is what they had to say:

'I have a friend just around the corner who mostly visits me and I also visit her sometimes, she is my good pal, a sister from another mother. We understand each other so well, she has an older son and so she encourages me a lot and we share our problems, I trust her a lot even more than some of my family members, I derive a lot of motivation from my friend, we tell each we can still make it in life'(Selikem).

'I visit my friend, she is my childhood friend and she also got married at age 18, she has a son. She tells me a lot about marriage and what I have to do as a young wife and mother to be happy. I learn so much from her and I can tell her all my problems even then my mother. I think she understands how I feel and how unhappy I am in my marriage because of my mother-in-law' (Alimatu).

Furthermore, some of the participants narrated that when they compared the experiences of going for maternity services and the support they receive from their peers, they are not encouraged to attend such services because they feel their feelings are not well understood by some of the health professionals especially how they feel emotionally. However, with their friends who have also been pregnant, there is that relationship that makes them feel confident in communicating their worries with them.

I feel the nurses do not understand us, they are mostly not friendly to we the young mothers, I prefer to talk to my friend who is also a mother than to ask the nurses. I know it is not right, because the nurses have more knowledge about pregnancy but the way they will speak to you when you ask them a question during ANC, is embarrassing. You will rather prefer to ask your friend who is experienced and understands you than to ask the nurse'(Sedudzi).

'I always like to talk to my friend about the use of family planning, she got pregnant a few years ago and she told me she is using family planning now, so she will teach me about it when I am ready. And I think, I am more confident to ask her about it than the nurses at the hospital. Some of the nurses always see us

as bad girls so I don't feel comfortable asking them questions when I go to the hospital' (Sesinam).

In the narratives above, participants' descriptions reflected a view that despite knowing the benefits of seeking support from health professionals that has a potential impact during their transition into motherhood, they feel reluctant in accessing such support due to the unfriendliness of some of the health professionals. This demonstrated that they seemed to acknowledge that the health professionals do not understand their emotional needs and therefore would rely on friends they can depend on.

5.4.3.4 Community Support

Support provided by some members of the community was very beneficial for some of the female adolescents in this study. In most communities in Ghana, adolescent pregnancy is not encouraged and therefore frowned upon, and this makes pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers feel humiliated and uncomfortable in the community. It is mostly perceived that these female adolescents are a bad influence on other younger adolescents, due to this perception they were not given much support in their community. Out of the 10 participants, 5 of them stated they received some form of support from some women in their community. Through their stories, they expressed ways in which they received support from these women. Each participant while sharing her story of been supported by some women in her community, communicated an instance where she felt belonged and loved even though some members of her community criticized her. It was a moment of the shift from being labeled as the 'bad girl' to being seen as a 'young woman' who made a mistake. Certainly, for some of these female adolescents, it was a profound realization of acceptance and readiness to correct their mistakes if possible.

In listening to the experiences of the female adolescents, I realized that these female adolescents appreciate all the support they receive from some members of their community and according to them this has prompted a positive change in their perception of self. They feel more confident knowing that it is not everyone in their community who condemns them. As the female adolescents narrated their stories, they also perceived that the community support they received led to a firsthand understanding of what it means to get support from other persons other than your family members, friends, or father of their child. Undoubtedly, it was an opportunity to show appreciation for such support as it motivated them to positively change for them not to be criticized and stigmatized by other

community members. For the female adolescents, it was also a chance to reflect on their situation and find a way of making good use of the support offered by these women in their community. One adolescent mother recounted:

'It is difficult as an adolescent mother to receive support from anyone in my community, when a woman approached me to advise me, I was so touched, she told me mistakes do happen so I should not blame myself for getting pregnant as a young girl but rather I should learn from my mistakes I really needed this emotional love and this woman was just there for me, she even sometimes gives me food and clothing for my baby'(Esinam).

Esinam described how challenging it can be to become pregnant as an adolescent in her community and still get help from members of the community, this support could be seen as very vital for her during her transition phase as it gives her a sense of belonging. By expressing her gratitude for the kind gesture shown her, she recognized how fortunate she is to receive such support from someone who is not a member of her family. Similarly, another pregnant adolescent shared her experience of receiving help from another woman in her community.

'In my community, there were some women who were good to me, they were always advising me on how to keep myself and that has been very useful to me. Also, there is an old woman in my area, she makes me feel so accepted in my community when all the other people call me names saying am a bad girl. She always advises me to concentrate on myself and work towards adding value to myself. These are such encouraging words and I reflect on her advice a lot'(Sesinam).

In the above narrative, this female adolescent described the support she got from a few women in her community which were in the form of advice that changed the way she perceived herself. She found these counsels very beneficial, she stopped concentrating on the negative things people said about her and started focusing on herself. Another pregnant adolescent referred to the support she received from some community members as a 'stress reliever' knowing that you are accepted amid all the disappointment and embarrassment. She has an unpleasant experience of family support where her step-mother treated her with contempt because of her pregnancy, the only family member who supported her emotionally was her grandmother. So, receiving help from another woman

in the community was such a relief for her. She describes her experience in the narrative below:

'My stepmother hates me so much and it got worse when I got pregnant, home was always hell for me, I just had to go and live with my boyfriend and his parents. I am grateful to this retired midwife in my community, she advises me on how to keep myself well and healthy. I visit her sometimes, help her with her house chores and she gives me money and gifts, it eases my stress' (Dzibordi).

In the above quotation, Dzibgordi explained how her step-mother ill-treated and disliked her even before she got pregnant. She however found motherly love from a woman in her community who provided her with emotional, physical, and financial support. This experience did not only emphasize the fact that pregnant adolescents receive support from members of their community, but it also demonstrates the friendliness of some women in the community.

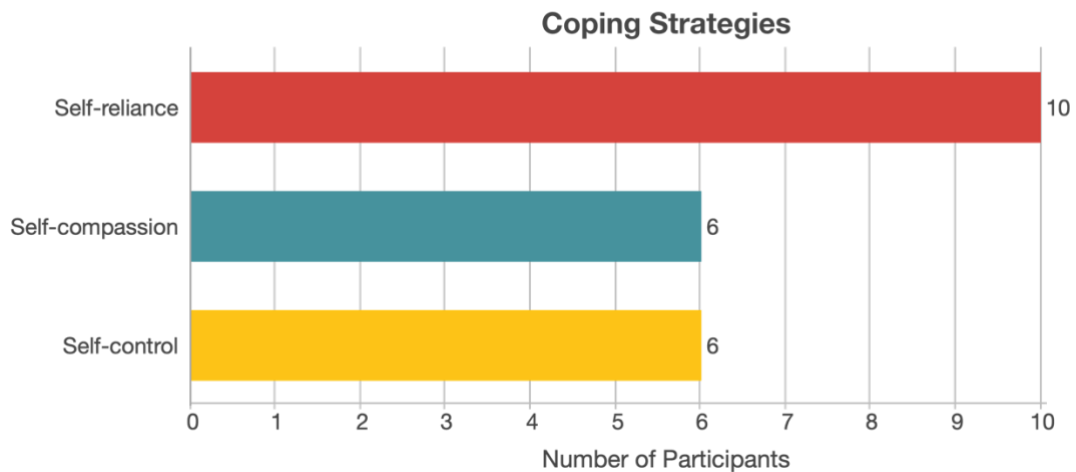
In each of the narratives above, I have emphasized how pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers receive support from community members even though adolescent pregnancy is frowned upon in the Ghanaian community. The female adolescents did not take for granted the support they obtained from the community. Their reports also revealed that although some community members labeled them as immoral adolescents there are still some who do not label them as such. I will now proceed to discuss the fourth superordinate theme that was developed from my analysis, this theme describes how the female adolescents in this study coped and managed their challenges during their transition to early motherhood.

5.4.4 Superordinate Theme Four: Coping Strategies

Coping strategies refer to both observable and cognitive efforts individuals utilize to control, endure, or lower traumatic events (Schoenmakers, Van Tilburg, & Fokkema, 2015). The female adolescents adopted some emotional and problem-solving strategies as a way of coping with their transition to motherhood. They were determined to control the emotional effects of the traumatic situation they were going through and also to participate in activities that will ease all the traumatic situations around them due to their early pregnancy and motherhood. Three emergent themes that were developed included Self-reliance (all 10 female adolescents interviewed); Self-compassion (6 of the female adolescents interviewed); Self-control (6 of the female adolescents interviewed). These

are discussed in the section below. Figure 5.4 below shows a graphical narrative of superordinate theme four.

Figure 5.4 Graphical presentation of superordinate theme four



5.4.4.1 Self-reliance

Self-reliant attitudes are emotional coping strategies that female adolescents acknowledged, managed, and communicated, thus offering evidence about the significance of their goal. This approach expedited potential decision making by providing different problem-solving viewpoints. I noticed throughout the interview process that; the participants frequently considered this approach as fundamental in their transition phase. All the participants who participated in this study narrated how they wanted to be independent by taking responsibility for their lives, get informed about issues around them, know where they were going in life, and then make their own decisions. They also indicated that they were keen on showing interest in all the things that concern them, they had a good attitude towards pursuing their goals. Furthermore, they did not allow the feeling of uncertainty to overtake their emotions but rather tried to build their self-confidence during their transition phase while recognizing that there are still challenges, they were facing.

When describing the coping strategies, they used during their transition phase, Abba and Esinam narrated how they wanted to reach the point where they will not rely so much on other people for sustenance, they were ready to accept their mistakes, own up to it and try to make things right for themselves instead of seeking for help always. They also felt the

only way to move on and do something meaningful for themselves is not to blame other people if things are not going the way they wanted it. It is worth noting that taking up responsibility was time-consuming for some of the female adolescents due to inexperience in pregnancy and motherhood. However, according to them, it was important to take firm decisions and accept the consequences because it helped them to build their confidence and take control of their own life. Using the approach of a self-sufficient attitude to cope with their challenges during their transition phase was quite impressive to me. Their responses when I asked them the question ‘how do you cope with all these challenges of being pregnant or as an adolescent mother?’ was remarkable. They wanted to be well informed to take up the responsibility of a mother and to be well equipped to carry out their responsibilities. They were always looking out for an opportunity to learn and expand their knowledge and skills as good mothers. Abia described her coping strategy as below:

‘Since my boyfriend refused to take up responsibility, I have decided to take up the responsibility of a good mum to my child. I manage my difficulties by getting conversant with issues concerning motherhood so I can do things for myself, I have decided who I want to be and how I want to get there’ (Abia).

Abia again acknowledges that learning to appreciate her strength is vital to be able to support herself throughout her transition period, she did not want to feel happy only when people around her compliment or reassure her. In her narratives, she described how she used to feel self-doubting, vulnerable, and even sometimes abandoned but developing the attitude of self-sufficiency as a coping strategy has made her aware of when to turn to others for support hence building her self-knowledge and setting up practicable goals. Nevertheless, she admitted how challenging it has been as an adolescent mother to manage her time appropriately but with resilience, she believes she will overcome it and become the good mother she wants to be.

‘I must admit it is tough for me to appreciate who I want to be, I cry sometimes because keeping to my plans is not easy but hey when there is life there is hope’ (Abia).

According to Esinam, she moved into her boyfriend’s parents’ house when he refused to take up responsibility not because she wanted to solely depend on him but rather, she wanted to be self-organized knowing that her child will not grow up as a bastard. She was

ready to accept her mistakes and try to make things work right for her and her child. Comparing herself to her peers would develop a sense of low self-esteem and this she narrated would make her feel inadequate of what she wants to become, that is a good mother to her child. The only person she wanted to compete and compare herself to, is herself and by doing this she will accomplish her level of good self-esteem. However, she noticed that utilizing the attitude of self-sufficiency as a coping strategy helped her to stand firm as an adolescent mother and not to give up on her dreams.

'I was naïve when I moved into my boyfriend's parents' home, I wanted to build a good future for my child. This decision toughened me up, I don't feel happy sometimes though but it made me organize myself well and I think it's a good way of managing my situation' (Esinam).

These quotations, precisely demonstrate the female adolescents' efforts at elucidating the attitudes they developed to cope with the difficulties that come with being an adolescent mother. In doing so, they illustrated a sense of direction, asserting themselves and making a decision for themselves based on what is appropriate for them. While acknowledging their challenges, they gradually learned how to become the controller of their feelings and emotions. The experience of being an adolescent mother was frequently a frightful transition which brought disappointment and regrets initially to the female adolescents however they gradually developed coping strategies such as self-sufficiency to help them during the transition phase of early motherhood. In the first quotation, Abia used the word 'hope' to describe her source of strength, and this is one of the qualities of a self-sufficient person. Throughout this study, I noticed that most of the female adolescents had hope for the future and that motivated them to persevere while using an emotion-focused approach such as self-sufficiency as a coping strategy.

As in the case of the other female adolescents, Alimatu and Sesinam narrate their style of coping with challenges during their pregnancy. Their enthusiastic attitude propelled them to stay focused to keep their priorities straight. Significant people in the lives of these female adolescents made choices that directly affected them which provided an opportunity for discouragement but they kept pushing through during their difficulties. The coping strategy they adopted inspired them to positively take action during their transition phase, accomplishing their goals of going back to school to become career women required hard work and zeal. It appeared to me during the interview process that, these female adolescents despite their challenges, had faith in themselves, appreciated

their proficiencies and capabilities, and were aware of their limitations as pregnant adolescents who did not have financial stability. Consequently, they trusted in their capabilities, knew how to improve upon their skills, repeatedly encouraging themselves that everything would work out well for them and so kept a sense of humor notwithstanding their difficulties.

‘My father pushed me into marriage I was not ready for, but I have approached my situation with different tactics I learned from a woman in my community. I have always told myself I will make it, I will work hard, I am positive that all shall be well with me, I will not end up as a school dropout’ (Alimatu).

For Alimatu even though the choice her father made for her affected her negatively she knew that to be successful she had to work hard and go back to school after giving birth to her child, she was however opened to views and affirmative influences that would assist her in achieving her goal of going back to school. This finding is one of the exceptions in my research where a father gave her daughter in for marriage leading to early pregnancy. It emphasizes the range of experiences of female adolescents, particularly when it is divergent from all the other narratives being discussed. I observed during the interview process that, Alimatu would not have gotten pregnant as an adolescent if her father had not given her into early marriage.

Creating an enthusiastic concept of life permitted Seginam to have a complete interactive opportunity despite her circumstances, this attitude of coping reduced her feeling of dejection and anxiety. According to her, her coping strategy promoted a stronger relationship with people around her, she stopped blaming herself for getting pregnant as an adolescent while implementing an attitude to better handle worrying situations. In her narrations, I noted that she developed a good emotion-focused coping strategy by trying to let go of pessimistic feelings and working on her emotional capabilities. This reflected in her quotation below:

‘I try to see the good side of my situation; this has reduced my fear. I used to get angry with my boyfriend but now I have stopped and I think this is because I have hope that my life will get better in the future. Nowadays I think about how am going to be a good mother to my baby when she is born’ (Seginam).

It can be understood from the abovementioned accounts that, self-reliance approaches made it unperturbed for these female adolescents to cope with the transition into early motherhood. This approach can therefore be conceived as a coping strategy that may stimulate well-being and affirmative emotional performance among these female adolescents. Hence encouraging these female adolescents to think independently and holding onto their uniqueness striving towards achieving their goals as adolescent mothers.

5.4.4.2 Self-compassion

Another attitude that the female adolescents demonstrated as a way of coping with their challenges was self-compassion. This attitude meant the participants instead of disapproving and judging themselves, they rather showed kindness and empathy to themselves they were not harsh on their weaknesses and inadequacies. Some of the participants stated that they managed their difficulties by being nice and caring towards themselves anytime they had financial or emotional distress, instead of punishing themselves with self-reproach. They felt the problems of being a pregnant adolescent or an adolescent mother are unavoidable, they would rather be calm with themselves when they encounter uncomfortable situations rather than becoming irritated when their expectations are not met. Mawuena for instance in her narrations articulated that she copes with her difficulties as an adolescent mother acknowledging that distress and peculiar incompetence is part of the experiences, she must encounter during her transition phase of motherhood and that everyone goes through one challenge or the other. She believes she is not the only person facing challenges, it is a matter of time and she will overcome her challenges. She sounded mindful of her emotions and took a steady approach to her situation to manage her negative feelings. this is reflected in the accounts below:

'I refuse myself to be distressed, I know I am not the only one in this problem so I will not kill myself, I have learned to cope with my problems by not condemning myself and not being hard to myself, this too shall be over soon' (Mawuena).

No matter how worrying the transition phase of early motherhood may be, Yayara also recognized that her challenges are part of the everyday human experiences. She coped with her disappointments and regrets by realizing that she is not alone experiencing such difficulties as such reducing her sense of isolation and consequently promoted a flexible

coping style. According to Yayara, she found it very difficult as an adolescent in the early part of her pregnancy to accept the fact that she is not perfect and can make mistakes, yet she did not have to constantly feel ashamed and isolate herself from others. She admitted that she used to feel self-pity, however after the encouragement she received from her mother, she decided to adopt the strategy of self-compassion and this gave her an adequate charisma of concentration to fasten herself and take a break to rejuvenate her inner self. During her narration, I noted that Yayara coped with her challenges by taking some distance from her adverse judgments and sentiments which sometimes made her feel isolated, coping in such a manner turned her feeling into a deep connection with other people around her though tough sometimes. This attitude helped her to avoid the usual effects of self-judgment, fear, and anxiety while empowering her to fully appreciate the support she received from her mother.

'I remember feeling so dejected and embarrassed about my pregnancy but am grateful to my mother who restored my inner self through her support. It was at this time that I told myself that I am not perfect, I am not alone in this. This helped me to overcome all the bad feelings I used to have'(Yayara).

Furthermore, some of the participants also noted that they coped with their difficult moments trying to alleviate the perspective of their situation in order not to be overwhelmed with emotion. They did not want to uphold a negative opinion of their transition phase but rather maintain a good sense of humor and confronting their challenges with mindfulness which is a key element of self-compassion. This approach not only had an impact on their self-concept but also helped them to become mindful of their distressing thought and feelings thus accepting their experiences for what it is. Esinam recounted how she applied self-effacing alertness to her thought and feelings, according to her she learned this coping strategy from a woman in her community who made her understand how her inner voice can analytically assist her to change any negative emotional feeling.

'I used to worry about what people think of me, I could not concentrate on the good part in me, wanting to always be separated from other people. But hey I realized that will not help me so with the help of this kindhearted woman in my area I was encouraged to accept my situation and concentrate on the good part of motherhood. This I must say has helped me so much in difficult times'(Sedudzi).

These narratives show that the female adolescents in this study utilized the approach of extending kind-heartedness and understanding to themselves instead of criticizing and judging themselves. Also, they did not separate their experiences from what other people go through, they managed their challenges acknowledging that other people also have such experiences and therefore there was no need to isolate themselves from people around them. Ultimately, I perceived from their accounts that they coped by asserting the uncomfortable contemplations and feeling in well-adjusted mindfulness instead of over-identifying with them.

5.4.4.3 *Self-control*

Another fundamental emotional coping strategy is learning to control one's anxious feelings and worry. The female adolescents in this study utilized self-control attitudes which are a major driver of behavior change, to deal with their emotions in the face of their difficult situations. They acknowledged the certainty that the only thing in life they can control and change successfully is themselves and that useful desires alone are not enough hence they applied endurance approaches to successfully curb some negative emotional perceptions. At the news of the pregnancy, most of the participants felt disappointed, blaming themselves for getting pregnant but during this critical moment of their lives some of them decided to exercise self-control as a coping strategy, this helped them to manage the stressful transition of early motherhood. I observed during the interview process that, the participants sometimes found it challenging to control their thoughts and worries due to the lack of discipline and continuous struggles. However due to determination and the endurance approach they demonstrate a self-control attitude as a coping strategy.

Because eliminating stress is not achievable, the female adolescents mentioned that to be in control of their transition phase they decided to set up an objective that will guide their choices. Alimatu for instance decided to stay healthy, so she set up a goal to start cooking herself at home instead of buying food and because the goal was specific, she managed to reach it, during her challenges. In her narrations, she stated that she tried to get a kind of feedback by developing an attitude of self-monitoring to track her progress toward accomplishing her goal which helped her to focus on some goal-relevant behaviors such as not eating too many sweets and ice cream. The more she wanted to achieve her objective, the more likely she was willing to make an effort without giving up, she

motivated herself to pursue her goal, she did not doubt her self-confidence of living a healthy life. Consequently, as Alimatu noted her utilization of a self-control approach in coping with her transition as a pregnant adolescent:

'I decided to control my bad eating habits as a way of managing my problems, as I told you earlier, I started cooking instead of buying cooked food. It's tough because sometimes you don't have the money to cook, but that made me happy, it helped me to feel like a good woman. I also wanted to have a healthy baby, okay I know it's like I can't buy my toffees always as I used to, but I was like this must stop. It's a gradual process but I don't doubt myself not to stop. I love myself and my baby I don't want to get typhoid or worms'(Alimatu).

Additionally, Mawuena used a self-determination approach which signified the emotional dynamism she used to work towards achieving her goal, this helped her to direct her attention notwithstanding her problems. She indicated that instead of blaming herself for all her predicaments as an adolescent mother, she tried to regulate her emotions by strengthening her self-control mechanism.

'I will not allow other people to seat on my happiness and what I want to become. I have tried to control a lot of this in my life to achieve my aim of becoming a teacher and a role model to other young girls. When you hear all these bad things people say about you, you just feel like giving up. I cope with all these by controlling my anger when I hear these things so I can stay focused to become what I want to be'(Mawuena).

Certainly, these narratives have given me an in-depth understanding of how these female adolescents made sense of their coping strategies. Self-reliance was very significant in helping the participants to think self-sufficiently, embrace their uniqueness, and endeavored to work towards achieving their goals as pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers. Also, they coped with their transition phase by showing kindness to themselves, doing their best not to isolate themselves from other people, and were always mindful of their negative emotions and not allowing their feelings to control their goals.

6 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS 2:

EARLY FATHERHOOD: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MALE ADOLESCENTS

6.1 Introduction

This current chapter elucidates the second part of the empirical findings propelled by the guiding research question and using the theoretical philosophy of the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This chapter aims to give a detailed examination of adolescent fathers' lived experiences, how they make sense of their experiences, and their coping strategies during early fatherhood. Therefore, the empirical findings explain answers to the guiding research question:

- What are the experiences of adolescent fathers and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early fatherhood?

The chapter initially summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of the adolescent fathers and also provides a brief profile of the adolescent fathers. The original names of the study participants have been substituted with pseudonyms to protect their personality and privacy. An integrated analysis of the participants' accounts was accomplished through the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs). The chapter then explores the four sub-ordinate themes that evolved during the analysis; findings on how the participants reacted to the situation of becoming a father, their perceptions of being an adolescent father, the social supports they received, and how they coped with their transition phase of early fatherhood.

6.2 Participants' Socio-demographic Characteristics

As explained early, to protect the participants, identity, and privacy, the participants will accordingly be assigned under the pseudonyms of Ata, Kofi, Yaw, Kosi, Elornam, Atsu, Dotsi, and Klenam. Eight adolescent fathers participated in the IDI's in this study for two months from August to October 2017 in the seven sub-municipalities of the Hohoe Municipality, Ghana. Participants were between the age range of 15-19 years, the evidence gathered from their educational background showed that 1 of the adolescent fathers was in Junior High School (JHS) 1 when he dropped out of school, 4 had completed JHS, and 1 had completed senior high school (SHS). Moreover, none of them are married to the mothers of their children, 4 of the participants work, while 3 are SHS

students and 1 an apprentice. It is also worth noting that all the study participants are Christians. Table 6.1 presents the detailed socio-demographic characteristics of study participants.

Table 6.1 Sociodemographic characteristics of study participants

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n=8)
Male Adolescents	Adolescent fathers	8
Age range	15-17	1
	18-19	7
Educational status	JHS dropouts	1
	Completed JHS	6
	Completed SHS	1
Marital status	Unmarried	8
Employment status	Employed	4
	Student	3
	Apprentice	1
Religion	Christians	8

6.3 Participants' Profile

Ata is a 19-year-old adolescent father who lives with his mother. He had just completed senior high school (SHS) when his girlfriend told him she was pregnant. After SHS he could not continue his education because his mother who is a single parent could not afford for him to go to the university or any other tertiary institution. He does not have a good relationship with his father because his father neglected him as a child, he depends on his mother for everything. He found it difficult to accept that he was going to be a father but he has now accepted the responsibility since he does not want to be like his father who abandoned him when he needed him most. He is determined to go back to

school so he works hard to save money towards that. According to him, he does part-time jobs to take care of his son with the help of his mother.

Kofi is a 19-year-old adolescent father who lives with both parents and in his second year in SHS. He started dating his girlfriend when he was 17 years old and the girl was 16 years old. The girl was in Junior High School (JHS) two and he had just completed his JHS education waiting to continue his SHS education. According to him, he stopped dating her when he was about to start his SHS education, it was then that the girlfriend came and informed him of the pregnancy. Initially, he did not want to accept the pregnancy since he had stopped dating her a few months earlier. His mother asked him to accept the pregnancy because she warned him to stop the relationship but he did not listen to her and how can he prove he was not responsible for the pregnancy. He then accepted the pregnancy and the girl moved in to live with him in his parents' house. However, he continued his education, he works on a part-time basis during holidays to help take care of his 1-year-old son.

Yaw is 19 years old and lives on his own with this girlfriend who is 18 years old and their 5 months old son. Before he became a father, he was living with his mother and younger siblings, his father died when he was 12 years old. He had completed his JHS education when his girlfriend got pregnant but could not continue to SHS because his mother would not afford his school fees. He was worried when his girlfriend told him she was pregnant and her mother had sacked her from the house. In his narration, he was compelled to start working in people's farms to raise money to take care of his child. He had to move out of his mother's home to rent a place of his own because his mother could not accommodate him, his girlfriend, and their son. He intends to save some money and go back to school to get a better job to take good care of his son and also help his girlfriend to finish her JHS education since she did not finish because he impregnated her.

Kosi is a 19-year-old adolescent father, he finished JHS but could not continue to SHS due to financial challenges, he works in a cornmeal factory as a corn miller. He met his girlfriend in his friend's house and started dating her when he was 17 years and a few months later, she became pregnant at the age of 16. She was then in JHS, she had to drop out from school due to the pregnancy, they live together in a single room with their 9 months old daughter. According to him, he does not know his father, he has been living

with his maternal uncle until he impregnated his girlfriend. He is determined to go back to school or learn a trade so he can take good care of his daughter and also marry his girlfriend. He was very disappointed when his girlfriend told him about the pregnancy, but his uncle encouraged him to accept the situation and become responsible. He could not stay with his uncle due to the pregnancy, hence his uncle rented a room for him to accommodate him and his girlfriend.

Elornam is 18 years old and in his first year in SHS, he lives with his parents and the mother of his 3 months old son who is 17 years also lives with them. He met the girl during a football game, he liked her and a few months later invited her to his parents' house, they had sex. Two months later her mother brought her to his parents that he had impregnated her daughter. He was so disappointed and embarrassed, he wanted to run away from the house. His parents accepted the girl to live with them while he goes to school. According to him, he does not work he depends totally on his parents for his upkeep and that of his son and the mother of his son. He feels it was a mistake and not ready to be a father, he is working hard in school to become what he had aspired to be, that is a medical doctor. It is a tough situation for him to combine been an adolescent father and student.

Atsu is a 19-year-old adolescent father who dropped out of JHS 1 due to financial challenges. He lives with his mother, as for his father he is always drunk and was never around for him. He works as a loading boy in a lorry station, he sometimes also works on people's farms or wash people's cars to earn extra income to provide for his 1-year-old son. According to him he feels imprisoned because he broke up with his girlfriend and then a few months later, she told him she was 3 months pregnant for him. He was saddened by the news and did not want to accept the pregnancy but the girl's parents threatened to report him to the police so he was compelled to accept the situation. The girl is 18 years old and lives with her parents, he does not get the opportunity to see his son often because the girl's parents do not like him so he does not find it comfortable visiting his son as he should. He is determined to go back to school so he saves money from his little income towards his school fees.

Dotsi is a 19-year-old adolescent father and learning welding as an apprentice. He finished JHS but because of financial challenges he could not continue with his SHS

education, he lives with his aunt who is a trader. The mother of his 7 months old daughter is a hairdresser and also 19 years old, she lives with her parents. He stopped dating her when she was 5 months pregnant, in his narrations he did not want to accept the pregnancy because someone informed him that the girl had other boyfriends so he was not sure if he was the one responsible for the pregnancy. According to him, he ignored the girl until after she had given birth and people in the community said the baby looked like him and then he took up responsibility as a father. He does not have a regular income; this makes it difficult for him to regularly support the upkeep of his daughter but he does his best to support her in his little way.

Klenam is a 17-year-old adolescent father and a first-year SHS student. He met his girlfriend when they were all 15 years and in JHS, she lives in his neighborhood. They had sex once and she became pregnant, he was so disappointed in himself as they did not plan to even have sex, it just happened unexpectedly. He is the only child of his parents, who are also well to do, they accepted to take care of the girl and their 1-year-old baby even though they were embarrassed and disappointed in their son for impregnating the girl. He does not work so he is not able to provide for his daughter however he is determined to finish SHS continue to the university and become a lawyer in the future so he can be fully responsible for his daughter. His parents have agreed to look after the girl so she can finish her studies or learn a trade whichever she would like to do, they have taken her as their daughter and his mother is so fond of her. According to him his friends and some of his teachers know he is an adolescent father and that does not make him happy because they sometimes tease him with it. However, he has this friend who is just like a brother to him, he understands him and accepts him as he is without judging him. According to Klenam, he feels very secured telling his friend about his worries.

6.4 Themes

Four superordinate themes were developed from the interpretative analysis that related to the research question and these were described by all eight adolescent fathers during the interview process: (1) The journey of becoming a Father; (2) Adolescent Fatherhood; (3) Social Support; and (4) Coping Strategies. Each superordinate theme has many related emergent themes and is described in the table below.

Table 6.2 Superordinate Themes and Related Emergent Themes

Superordinate Theme	Emergent Theme
The journey of becoming a Father	How the journey began Not prepared for fatherhood Mixed feelings about becoming a father Child as an agent of positive change
Adolescent Fatherhood	Relationship with mother of child Fatherly obligations Identity development Involvement with child
Social Support	Family support Mother of child support Peer support Community support
Coping strategies	Self-encouragement Positive self-talk Acceptance

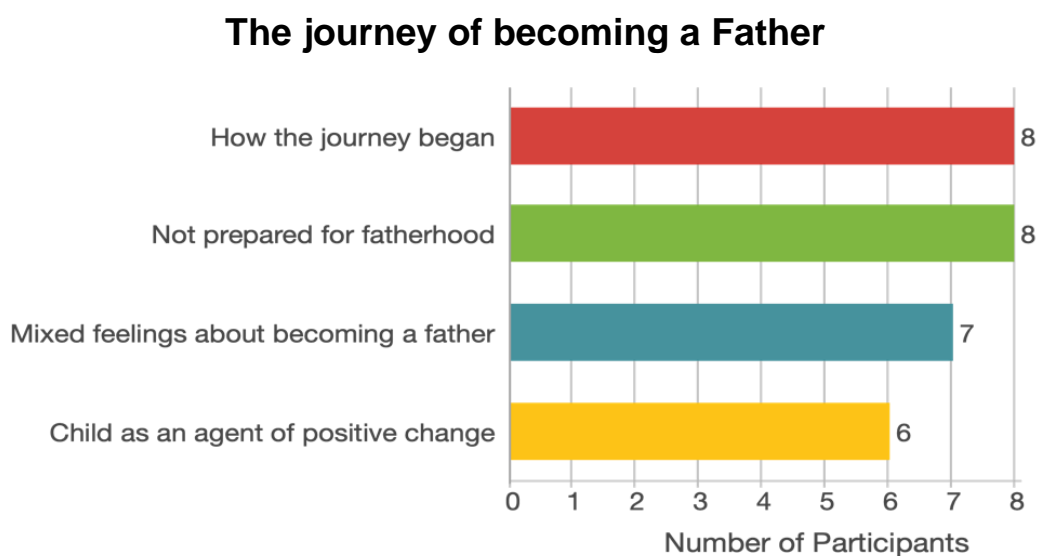
The superordinate and emerging themes will each be sequentially presented and interpreted in detail. Diagrams will be incorporated in the interpretations to give pictorial evidence of the occurrences of emerging themes throughout the narratives of the adolescent fathers. The majority of the themes are connected, even though they have been analyzed individually and this is evident throughout the account narrations. Consequently, it is fundamental to report the hermeneutic scope and the whole experience when narrating each theme. To expound the phenomenological basics from which I developed my interpretations, extracts from the transcript in the form of quotations will be incorporated in my findings. For each participant's expression to be heard and their personal experiences to be clarified, I have aimed to consistently sample the quotations across the study participants. To support my interpretations, I have incorporated extracts from at least half of the study participants connected to each emerging theme (Smith et al., 2009). Again, I have objectively probed both deeply and broadly, at the same time

emphasizing mutual and definite occurrences, hence identifying convergence and divergence between occurrences.

6.4.1 *Superordinate Theme One: The journey of becoming a Father*

In this section, I examined the aspects of the wider personal and shared perspective that interrelated with the adolescent fathers' lives. The subsequent narrations identified the adolescent father's accounts of their reactions to the news of becoming a father. The male adolescents in this study precisely gave distinctive and subjective descriptions of their experiences as fathers. The journey of becoming a father was established as every study participant individually reflected on diverse characteristics of their transition into fatherhood. During the data analysis, the emerging themes that were developed have been categorized and also interpreted throughout this section. Throughout the interview process, all the study participants narrated how their families and community members reacted towards them. Additionally, they all indicated how unprepared they were to become fathers, out of the 8 adolescent fathers, 7 of them stated that they had mixed feelings about becoming a father. Even though the majority of the participants were saddened and felt disappointed, 6 of the adolescent fathers stated how becoming a father changed their way of life. Figure 6.1 below shows a graphical description of the first superordinate theme.

Figure 6.1 Graphical presentation of superordinate theme one



6.4.1.1 How the journey began

When I started interviewing the adolescent fathers, I anticipated that they will be willing to narrate the difficulties they faced on receiving news of impending fatherhood. Hence, I started by asking them to tell me how they felt on hearing the news of the pregnancy. Nonetheless, I realized they did not answer this question as did the female adolescents I interviewed earlier. I noticed that the narratives of the adolescent fathers may have been involuntarily influenced by my interview guide. Consequently, I later requested that the adolescent fathers ‘describe to me their lives before becoming fathers’ each adolescent father initially were uncertain in telling their stories, some were contemplating a choice of how to start and then it was so obvious the adolescent fathers were reserved at the commencement of the interviews despite meeting them with a male research assistant. Though I primarily thought I had built a good rapport with them before the interview started, it seemed to me they felt shy of telling me their experiences.

Reacting to their shyness of not knowing where to commence their narratives, I proposed a timeline infographic (see Appendix 2) as a framework. In my description, I explained. ‘some individuals recollect important events when they think of their life experiences. Is it okay for you to give me a brief background about yourself, how would you describe your life before becoming a father’? this framework offered a point of beginning to the adolescent fathers to narrate their experiences of transition into early fatherhood. This strategy also showed how each of the adolescent fathers perceived and made sense of their lived experiences. It is worth noting that by suggesting a timeline infographic framework of a ‘main occurrences in life phase’, the adolescent fathers deliberated not only what they perceived as main occurrences in their lives but also how these occurrences affected their relationships with significant others and their situations during their transition phase. As they opened up and started sharing their experiences, I understood that the narratives of each of these study participant’s journey of becoming a father had a reflective influence on how they made sense of their lived experiences.

Ata’s journey account accentuates this:

‘Before I became a father, I didn’t have a good relationship with my father. He was never there for me, I always depended on my mother for everything I didn’t have a purpose in life even though I had just finished SHS, I was just roaming around, but the birth of my son brought a lot of changes into my life, I became more focused on life wanting the best for my son. It was not easy from the beginning; I was afraid of being a father. I met the mother of my son when I was

in SHS one, she lives in our neighboring community, I met her through her brother who was my friend at SHS. We started dating after I told her I loved her and then one thing led to the other we started having sex and about a year later she told me she was pregnant; it was a big blow to me'(Ata).

The remarkable part of this narrative is that the experience of Ata had a significant effect on how he received the news of becoming a father. He did not have a fatherly affection, he always depended on his mother for sustenance right from childhood. His past did not give him the confidence to initially accept the responsibility of being a father, together with the mother of his son they decided to abort the pregnancy but they changed their minds due to advice. As he shared his story of the challenging time of how the journey of fatherhood began, he was able to make sense of his difficult moment and the effect that his difficult times as a growing adolescent had on his purpose in life. It was during the narration of how the journey to early fatherhood began that he was able to self-reflect on his focus in life and realized how that can help him be a good father to his son. His expressions facilitated my interpretations of how he perceived himself as becoming a good father, in his accounts, his choice was intensely influenced by his past experiences while growing.

Similarly, all the other adolescent fathers in their narrations chose their past experiences as the main occurrences in their lives to start the story of how their journey into early fatherhood began. They recollected instances when all they wanted to do was to have pleasurable moments as adolescents and not worried about the consequences of their actions. There were instances when their actions as adolescents before becoming fathers caused disagreements and disapproval between them and their significant others such as their mothers. They recounted their journeys as an opportunity that contributed to their experiences of becoming adolescent fathers, times they regretted but at the same time using the transition phase to put things right for their children. Their stories communicate the process of transition, in which they journeyed from being an adolescent boy to one becoming an adolescent father. This transition phase began when these male adolescents realized they were going to be fathers. Beginning with this understanding, the adolescent fathers recounted the situation in which they found themselves, the significant others who were affected, the evaluation they made, and their own opinions of how their journey to early fatherhood began.

Extract of Yaw's narration of how his journey began:

'Before I became a father, I was staying with my mother and my four younger siblings, my father died when I was 12 years. I had finished JHS when my girlfriend became pregnant, I used to live a very carefree life not worrying about anything in life. I used to play football a lot with my friends after school. Anytime I don't go and play football with my friends my girlfriend visits me at home after school or I go to her house when her parents are not at home, because her mother doesn't like me, so I always avoid seeing her. I remember she used to come to our house and warn my mother that if I impregnate her daughter she will go and lock me up at the police station' (Yaw).

In the subsequent section, the adolescent fathers through their views constructed the meaning of a time of psychological burden in their lives. What they perceived as 'not prepared' in becoming an adolescent father was constituted through occurrences and interactions during their transition journey. These occurrences, therefore, functioned to negotiate their composition of becoming an adolescent father.

6.4.1.2 Not prepared for fatherhood

Fatherhood is a transitional period of new experiences in which males learn how to communicate and cope with divergent feelings and it has become a key issue in social phenomenon especially when dealing with adolescent fathers due to the further demands and difficulties directly associated with their age and the inference that they are mostly not prepared for fatherhood (Corrêa et al., 2016). Through the journey of becoming an adolescent father, all the participants in this study did not feel prepared for fatherhood. The reaction of the male adolescents on hearing that they were going to become a father was mostly an overwhelming news to them. Their answers when I asked the participants the question 'How did you feel when you heard you were going to be a father?' relatively confirmed they were unprepared for fatherhood. They mostly responded feeling disappointed, not feeling confident, afraid, not ready, embarrassed, and scared.

Elornam described his unpreparedness to his parents' disappointment in the extract below:

I feel I am not prepared to be a father..... I was scared and also embarrassed when the girl's mother brought her to our house that I have impregnated her daughter. I was always worried that my father will sack me from

the house, or he will not take care of me again. But when after some time he cooled down and accepted the girl into our house I had a mixed feeling of fatherhood. I was not sure if the pregnancy was mine since we had sex only once.....my parents were very disappointed in me, they felt I had become a bad boy, at the age of 17 I was going to be a father (Elornam)

Another participant shared his emotional narrative and how the news caused fear:

When she told me, she was pregnant I became afraid because I was not ready to be a father. I feel not prepared to be a father (Kosi).

Kofi stated how his father reacted to the news:

I don't feel confident at all to be a good father to him, I think I am not prepared to be a father..... people around me felt very disappointed, especially my parents. My father for instance said I should go and look for a job to take care of my child and that he will not take care of me again' (Kofi).

These quotes precisely demonstrate how the adolescent fathers endeavored to describe their responses to discovering that they were going to become fathers. They did this by presenting the emotional struggle surrounding reactions. The quotations given above to demonstrate the reactions of the adolescent fathers on their unpreparedness into fatherhood were representative of the responses from all the other adolescent fathers I interviewed and these are also evidenced in other research. Major discourses were surrounding the participants' narrations at the time they were initially confronted with the reality of becoming a father, this reality of becoming a father as an adolescent was frequently associated with immersed reflection. Reactions of the male adolescents on hearing that they were going to become a father demonstrate some relative descriptions that are significant to reflect upon when seeking to interpret the journey into adolescent fatherhood. Elornam recounted in the first narrative how he was 'scared and embarrassed' when he was informed that he was going to become a father. He was troubled and felt his father would sack him from the house and this may also have been correlated to the adverse discourses surrounding adolescent fatherhood. Throughout this study, most of the adolescent fathers described their responses as not prepared for fatherhood with incomparable patterns. The adolescent fathers' fear of an uncertain future triggered panic, anxiety, and unstable relationship with their family members.

The majority of the adolescent fathers were either living with their parents or other family members when they became fathers, some were compelled to move out and live on their own with the mother of their child while others had the opportunity to still live with their parents. However, the journey to fatherhood changed everything in their lives, some privileges they were enjoying stopped and they had to go through the situation either by looking for a job or seeking support from other people for sustenance. At this stage of the journey, it appeared that some of the participants were doubtful of the journey to becoming a father hence had mixed feeling about admitting to being responsible for the pregnancy. I was somewhat concerned when I initially noticed that the next emergent theme run across almost all the cases. I was mindful not to treat their mixed feeling as psychologically deviant and therefore did not ask specific questions concerning their opinions about how they felt about being responsible for the pregnancy. Nevertheless, it was quickly becoming evident that narrating the mixed feelings they had about the pregnancy was fundamental for the adolescent fathers and was therefore needed to better make meaning of their journey through adolescent fatherhood.

6.4.1.3 Mixed feelings about becoming a father

Mixed feelings are affective experiences characterized by the co-activation of two emotions typically reverse in attitude such as the feeling of sadness and happiness (Berrios, Totterdell, & Kellett, 2015). In mixed feelings, individuals tend to feel sad and happy at the same time, it also provides an opportunity for a person to reflect how ready and smart they are in dealing with challenging situations. In this study, the mixed feelings the adolescent fathers had about becoming a father was a fundamental approach in coping with their negative experiences. The adolescent fathers' capability to experience adverse feelings together with optimistic feelings empowered them to develop self-encouragement during traumatic situations. Some of the adolescent fathers upon hearing the news of becoming a father demonstrated an attitude of disappointment, distress, anxiety, and enthusiasm, they narrated that thinking of having a child also brought them joy and hope for the future. I perceived that the adolescent fathers due to the mixed feelings they had experienced, struggled between what they wanted to be in the future and doing their best not to be disrupted due to the situation they found themselves in. This was because having mixed feelings about their transition phase motivated them to reflect on how different goals such as going to school, learning a trade, or looking for a job fit together and how best they could pursue their goals. These adolescent fathers needed to

experience these mixed feelings as these emotions helped them to equalize the different choices available to them and also stimulated their self-control. The male adolescents in approaching fatherhood were faced with several challenges, all the pregnancies were all not planned even though they were somehow anxious about becoming a father they showed a willingness to accept responsibility of fatherhood.

'I was so afraid when she told me of the pregnancy, I just wanted to hide from everyone especially my parents who were so disappointed in me for bringing such shame to them. After few months when my parents cooled down and then I also had this feeling like oh okay it's already happened and after all am going to be a father soon, am kind of excited. It was a big struggle for me though, during this time of deciding whether to go to school or look for a job but am happy I made the right decision with the help of my father to go back to school, I can now study hard to pursue my career. It's a blessing in disguise though' (Elornam).

Stimulating their self-control was not the only positive benefit they had in their interaction between their conflicting goals and their mixed feelings. There was, however, a connection between their mixed feelings and their eudaimonic well-being that is their personal experiences linked with living a life of integrity in search of an impressive societal development. The phenomenological experiences they derived from such living included self-actualization and endurance (Niemic, 2014). The kind of mixed feelings Etornam had allowed him to reflect and evaluate the two goals he had and the significance they represented, he then tried to fit them together in a comprehensible whole and then decided to choose to go to school. Furthermore, in the narratives, I also noted that having a specific objective and working hard to pursue it does not usually lead to purposeful living. Rather, it is when there is a struggle between objectives and feelings which in turn precedes seeking for a sense of meaning which may lead to an increase in the adoption of positive behaviors.

'It was a big problem for me when she told me she was pregnant (chuckling) I wished I had not dated the girl; I regretted the day I met her; I was saying to myself she just brought me bad luck for my future but again sometimes too the thought of becoming a papa brought me some kind of pleasure I couldn't explain it just made me more focused in life' (Dotsi).

The narratives of the male adolescents about the mixed feelings they experienced on the news of becoming a father were not an indication of uncertainty but rather of emotional complication and intensity. These feelings of disappointment, distress, anxiety, and enthusiasm were connected with their capability to understand and describe them in a gritty and exceedingly distinguished manner; thus, they were more attached to their emotions and understood these feelings better than any other person. For these male adolescents, the mixed feelings they experienced during their transition into early fatherhood encouraged them to reflect on their goals, it is worth stating that reflecting on these goals improved their self-control and provided them with a better sense of purpose in life.

'The thought of becoming a father at this early age scared me a lot but on the other hand, I used to think a lot about what will happen to me as a father, sometimes I will be worried and not happy other times I will stay quiet and smile telling myself all is not lost after all I can still be a good father to my child. These times were trying times for me but I overcame my troubles'(Atsu).

It was obvious through their accounts that, although these male adolescents had a lot of mixed feelings regarding fatherhood, some of them did not allow the negative feelings to overcome them but rather managed both the negative and positive emotions in a self-controlled manner they were determined to work hard and become good fathers in their little ways. At this stage of the adolescent fathers' journey, it appeared that some of the participants decided to amend their behaviors and allow the news of becoming a father to serve as an agent of positive change.

6.4.1.4 Child as agent of positive change

One other important impact that the journey to becoming a father had on the male adolescents was evidenced by how the news of the pregnancy acted as an agent of change. This theme emanated from discussions about the journey to becoming a father, with the intense change it prompted providing the male adolescents an opportunity for individual growth, positive transformation, and psychological advancement. These adolescent fathers' perspectives were increased as their newly acquired obligations were required and provided an immense sense of self-value and profound acknowledgment of attachment with significant others. These accounts construct news of pregnancy as an

agent of individual development and how this change brought differences between them and their friends.

I was always with my friends playing cards any time I close from work. I wasn't saving much of my income, I always spend it with my friends buying alcohol, or going to chop bar to eat with my friends. I led a carefree life because I didn't have anybody to take care of except my girlfriend whom I give money when she visits me. I became more conscious of my life when my girlfriend told me she was pregnant, I stopped spending money on my friends and started saving more money, (murmuring) I modified my ways to improve my life and I can say it's rewarding.' (Kosi).

When Kosi was informed by his girlfriend that she was pregnant, he created the news of becoming a father as a desirable climax in his life. He acknowledged that he was spending too much time with his friends and not saving much of his income, this is indirectly thought-provoking as it situates him as self-critical, which was a healthy way of increasing his self-awareness and achieving his personal development. It was also a way of expediting the means of learning from his mistakes and helping him to overcome his weakness, suggesting that he was also sharing an open and candid report of transition into adolescent fatherhood. His attitude changed when he realized he was becoming a father soon; he reports *'I became more conscious of myself'* indicating renewed mindfulness. The news of becoming a father motivated Kosi to become more aware of himself and cultivated an understanding of the fundamental connectivity of the situation he encountered. Subsequently overcoming his negative feelings about becoming a father, he accepted the fatherly obligation and closely connected the significance of developing himself with the prospects of his child. *I was worried from the beginning but now I just want to work hard, I want to give my child the best I can.* Kosi's narration can be viewed as he doing his best to overcome his difficulties to enable him to provide for his child, it can also be interpreted differently as the transition of becoming a father as an agent of transformation.

'Giving his child the best' possibly denotes the kind of fatherly love he did not receive from his father as a growing child. The perception of intergenerational restoration is unambiguously described in the extract below.

'I didn't have any fatherly love so I don't want that to happen to my child'

Kosi's accounts indicate his desire to give his child all the fatherly affection since he did not enjoy that affection '*as for my father, he was never there for me, I don't even know him*', he did not want his child to experience the adverse effect of a disintegrated family. This demonstrates the mutual fatherly enthusiasm to restore the negative experiences and to protect his child. The study participants directed adverse attributions towards some of their former friends which provided divergence, suggesting that they may not be subject to these reproaches. Yaw for instance gives an account connecting unsteadiness to '*roam about doing nothing*', some of his friends though they have brilliant potentials are not inspired nor ambitious to pursue their goals but rather indulge in obnoxious activities. This adverse description accomplishes a dominant divergence suggesting that if Yaw had not become a father, he would have also indulged in activities that could have led him to prison.

'My son brings me a lot of joy, when am sad and I see him something inside me tells me all is well. Some of my friends even though they are not young fathers like me, I don't want to be like them nor do I want to associate with them. They just roam about doing nothing, some have a bright future but they are not making good use of it. One of my friends I used to play football with is now in prison for raping a small girl in our area I am happy I am busy now working to take care of my child, I feel like a grown-up man, my main priority now is my child and my girlfriend. I can say that becoming a father, has pushed me so hard to the wall but I will survive it through the difficult phases' (Yaw).

In the above extract, the interesting consequence of becoming a father is emphasized by invoking the predicament of his friend whose prospect has been destroyed because he raped a girl which then caused him his life in prison. These analogies indicate that becoming a father has stopped Yaw from a comparable situation his friend went through. The fundamental element in this narrative is the connection with his child, without his child been an agent of transformation he would have been more disorganized. The significance of the connection between him and his child improves, especially in understanding the composition of himself as uncertainly situated before becoming a father. The transition phase of fatherhood has relocated him from a point of compromise to a point of obligation. Remarkably in this account is 'child as main priority', this thoroughly links with the notion of a growing surge whereby Yaw is propelled into fatherhood '*I feel like a grown-up man*'. Tossed into the responsibility of fatherhood as

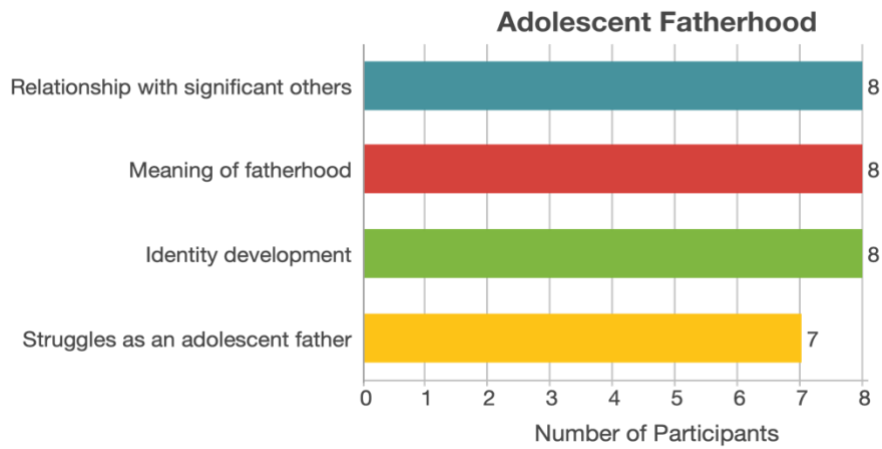
an adolescent, Yaw acted somehow positively to his obligations which put him on an existence he described as ‘pushing him so hard to the wall but he survived’. This might have been beneficial to Yaw but may not be recommended due to the ‘difficult phase’ he encountered, becoming a father as an adolescent and at the same time expected to provide for his child. The impact of the child as an agent of positive change on the adolescent fathers demonstrated above may be categorized concerning issues of enthusiasm, focus, and growth-related responsibility.

As comprehended in this sub-section, through the journey of becoming a father, these male adolescents experienced changes that motivated them to pursue a fresh personality to define their new responsibility. The change which was prompted by the delivery of a child saw the male adolescents’ hedonism and idleness substituted with focus, diligence, and accountability. This desirable revolving phase is impressive, comparatively rapid, and motivates the adolescent father to reflect on himself and the future of his child. Not only does the father pursue to provide a better opportunity for his child, but the child also contributes to an outstanding essence of his life.

6.4.2 Superordinate Theme Two: Adolescent Fatherhood

I explored in this section, the meaning of fatherhood from the perspective of the adolescent father. Accordingly, I pursued to increase the underlining work which studied insiders’ viewpoints (Tuffin et al., 2018) by evaluating the accounts of adolescent fathers with the opinion to deliberating on the rationality of the predominant pessimistic stereotypes. This section concerns itself predominantly with the study participants’ capabilities to familiarize themselves with their responsibilities of being fathers. The narrations revealed that different factors interacted in the male adolescents’ experiences in familiarizing themselves with the transition into fatherhood and to eventually resolve to accept their situation. As denoted in Figure 6.2, the key points mentioned by the study participants in their transition to fatherhood were categorized under four emergent thematic areas. These themes are relationship with significant others, the meaning of fatherhood, identity development, and struggles as an adolescent father. These themes are not essentially commonly exclusive but interrelated with each other. Moreover, the adolescent fathers communicated being stimulated by several of these elements, and these are discussed below. Figure 6.2 below illustrates a graphical description of the second superordinate theme.

Figure 6.2 Graphical presentation of superordinate theme two



6.4.2.1 Relationship with significant others

Relationship with significant others was a key influence in the study participants' transition to adolescent fatherhood, the adolescent fathers' relationships with significant others, included parents, the mothers of their children, and their friends. In this emergent theme, I explored how the adolescent fathers' relationships with these significant others impacted their attitudes, feelings, and conducts as fathers. The study participants experienced a diversity of mixed feelings about becoming a father and these were predominantly influenced by the responses from significant others on their new responsibility of being a father. The previously discussed emergent theme of a child as an agent of positive change emphasized some important areas of the transition phase where positive characteristics were visible, with one of these focusing on the subject of relationship with significant others. For these study participants, fatherhood added to the reduction of adolescent disengagement and gave them the desire to have a better family relationship. It was evident during the adolescent fathers' narrations that the reflection on the significance of social relationships carried with it the anticipation of becoming more affectionate individuals.

The adolescent fathers narrated how the birth of their children became a motivation for a comprehensive scheme for a better relationship with their parents. Those whose fathers were mostly not available regarded the neglect they had from their fathers as something they wanted to correct in their relationship with their children and they did this by way of intergenerational repair; that is the reflections on their upbringing and the resilient need to make sure their children benefited from better fathering, pursuing to embrace the

obligation of fatherhood and give the best to their children (Tuffin et al., 2018). This accentuates the extent to which the different emergent themes; the meaning of fatherhood, struggles as an adolescent father and self-development link each other with the distinctions being essential but distant from the entire. Some of the participants in this study, contemplating on the relationship with their fathers narrated how they were deprived of affection. While they mostly depended on their mothers for sustenance, for some their fathers were not involved in their upbringing, they did not enjoy fatherly love and felt they had been neglected, missing out on instructions regarding manhood. In the extract below, Kosi shared his story of the deprivation of affection from his father.

'I am determined to take good care of my daughter, I never had that fatherly love and I don't want my daughter to go through the same thing, it is not a good experience at all. I feel if my father was around me, I would have learned so many things from him and then now I could have understood better what it means to be a true father'(Kosi)

The quality of the adolescent father's relationship with the mother of the child plays an important role in terms of fatherhood commitment. It has an explicit performance on his paternal personality. The adolescent father's involvement in caring for his child tends to deepen and also spends more time with his child when the adolescent father has a good relationship with the mother of his child (Lau Clayton, 2016). Some of the adolescent fathers in this study wanted to be involved in decision making on how to bring up their children. However, some of the participants stated that their child's mothers and their family were sometimes unwilling to allow them to contribute towards making decisions that concerned their child and this made them feel separated and retracted. According to Atsu, once his child was born role confusion emanated and this put more constrain on the already tense relationship between him and the mother of his child. He was denied the opportunity to make decisions concerning his child and this served as a liberation journey for him, hence he did not visit his child as often as he should. Because Atsu was living separately from the mother of his child, the attempt and obligation to visit each other became an additional difficulty for him.

'I feel trapped because I sometimes think the child is not mine. I broke up with her a few months before she came and told me she is 3 months pregnant for me. I didn't want to accept it but her parents threatened to report me to the police..... The girl is staying with her parents and because I have broken up with her, I don't get

the opportunity to see my son often..... Anytime I visit them, she sometimes makes faces at me as if I am not wanted and because of this I am not able to visit frequently as I should, she thinks I don't have money to take care of my son, so since my son was born, she always does things concerning our son and she does not tell me, well that makes me not to involve myself too much it gives me some kind of freedom'(Atsu).

Upon further analysis, the findings revealed that some of the adolescent fathers were still dependent on their parents even after becoming a father. The news of the pregnancy initially generated tension in the family, some of the adolescent fathers narrated how their parents especially their fathers got angry and withdrew some benefits they were giving to their sons (adolescent fathers) due to disappointment and the fact that they had brought shame onto the family. However, as time went by their relationship with their parents got better, in the accounts of some of the adolescent fathers their parents accepted the mothers of their children to live with them and this helped them to successfully pursue their education while still engaging with their children. They stated that living in the same house with the mother of their child also created a better relationship between them hence deeper paternal involvement with their children. These adolescent fathers embraced fatherhood with less anxiety, took pleasure in co-parenting, and involved in parental obligations. This is highlighted in the quotation below:

'I am a first-year SHS student at HEPSS, I should have been in my second year now, but my education was delayed because of the girl I impregnated..... Now that I am a father, things have changed, I don't get all the attention I used to get from my parents. They have shifted all the attention to my 1yr old daughter who is leaving with my parents with her mother..... I don't give up; I am very determined to learn hard and go to university. I want to be a lawyer in the future. I am lucky my parents are ready to take care of me and also my daughter and the mother of my baby. As for the financial challenge I just have to manage the little I have and always pray that my parents should help me take care of my daughter'(Klenam).

Klenam takes up his fatherly obligations through the relationship he had with his parents, though his parents were disappointed in him for becoming a father as an adolescent. They provided him with the parental affection he needed to go through his transition period

while enabling him to also pursue his studies. However, he narrates that his parents have transferred most of the affections he used to enjoy from them to his daughter. During the interview, I perceived that for Klenam to live and depend on his parents as an adolescent father caused him to have less control over the decision made with regards to caring for his daughter. His parents had more control over how to bring up his child than he and the mother of his daughter. This arrangement could be detrimental to the effort Klenam was making to get involved in his daughter's upbringing and this could obstruct his level of self-reliance. Therefore, conserving an equilibrium between sustenance, intrusion, and abandonment can be a challenge and complicated issue as parental involvement can be seen as both a legacy and an obscenity (Lau Clayton, 2016).

6.4.2.2 Meaning of fatherhood

Fatherhood can be a significant event that any man can experience because it induces essential transformations in his personality and way of life. Though fatherhood is a usual experience for men, in the understanding of giving birth to a child, nevertheless it is not usual when it is interpreted as being involved in caring for a child (Eskandari et al., 2016). For the male adolescents in this study, fatherhood was a transitional phase that enabled them to reflect on their personality and an opportunity for positive transformation though associated with diverse struggles. In the earlier sub-sections, participants narrated how they embraced the new and emerging identity of being a father. Fatherhood allowed some of the participants to reshape their lives and also offered a resilient commitment to redirect their strength. Recognizing that they had begun a new transition in their lives and the affection they gave and received from the child created exceptional contentment and delight.

The meaning of fatherhood was unambiguously the emphasis of some of the adolescent fathers in this study. Their accounts stipulated a first-hand shared experience outlining the constructive and empowering composition of adolescent fathers. Throughout the narrations of the adolescent fathers, they described the meaning of fatherhood and their personality as being criticized for not accepting responsibility. Some of their accounts conveyed some evidence of self-confession, creating a new and more empowered uniqueness that developed into a constructive awareness of accountability and growth. Ata is 19 years old, he has been taking care of his 1-year-old son with the help of his mother, since his girlfriend the mother of his son left to live with a relative in another

town. According to Ata, the parents of the mother of his son sent her away to live with their relative in another town. He could not continue his education and a very challenging period for him he narrates. His mother has been very supportive in caring for his son, he works so hard to provide the little he can for his son.

'I am 19 years and I live with my mother and my son also lives with us. Before I became a father..... I was just roaming around, but the birth of my son who is now 1 year brought a lot of changes into my life, I became more focused on life wanting the best for my son. I do encourage myself a lot about life and that I will not give up no matter the challenge I face as an adolescent father. Also, because I didn't grow up with my father, I am not able to show a good fatherly love but I still try the little my mother taught me. The parents of my girlfriend started calling me all sorts of names, saying I was irresponsible, they were putting pressure on me to marry her, and because I was not ready to marry, they decided to bring my son to me when he was a few months old, it was my mother who helped me to take good care of my son. I am proud now that I provide the little I can to support my mother take care of my son. As for the mother of my son, her parents have sent her away to live with a relative so I don't see her again'(Ata).

Listening to the accounts of these adolescent fathers, illustrated a constructive image of adolescent fatherhood. For these male adolescents, fatherhood has created an opportunity for empowerment and self-development even during all the struggles. They narrated their experiences of feeling disoriented before becoming fathers. The birth of their children caused them to be more focused and determined. Kofi for instance before he became a father, was truant and adamant, he did not listen to his mother's advice, he thought he was still young and had all the time to have fun. However, when he realized he was going to be a father, he was frightened because it was unplanned. But he took up the courage and through his personality as a father he has learned to enhance himself, spending more time reflecting on his perspective of fatherhood. Below is what Kofi had to say:

'I used to make a lot of friends, especially girls. I knew I was still young and wanted to have a lot of fun, the girl I impregnated, hmmm she was in JHS two and I had just completed JHS and we started dating, I was 17 years and she was 16. She used to come to my house and then we started having sex. Her brother came to warn me, and my mother also told me to stop seeing her since I was still young but I was so stubborn and truant that I didn't listen to my

mother..... she came to me and told me she was pregnant; I was very scared and wanted to run away from the house..... Knowing that I was going to be a father changed the way I think about life, I was more determined to go to school, get a better job and take care of my child..... I have learned to be a better person since I became a father, I don't go out to play games with my friends any longer. I spend the most time thinking about how to bring my son up well, so he doesn't also become an adolescent father like me'(Kofi).

Furthermore, some of the adolescent fathers in this study described themselves as doing their best to be good fathers that is, being present and affectionate fathers, thus their children are their priority and an agent of positive transformation. Although some of the adolescent fathers stated how the transition into fatherhood had empowered them and given them the opportunity for self-improvement, there were also narratives with elements of regrets and disappointments due to the struggles linked with adolescent fatherhood. For some of the male adolescents, fatherhood meant to be a provider, a source of security and nurturance that is, keenly involved with the child, providing emotional support, spending time together, and being present physically (Tuffin et al., 2018). They linked fatherhood to the financial obligation to be able to provide for their children and they considered this obligation as a measure of being a good father. Throughout the interviews, I noticed that the participants who narrated that they had good relationships with the mothers of their child were more likely to provide for their child than those who were not in a good relationship. In the case where adolescent fathers were not working, they depended mostly on their families for support. Dotsi shared his view on the meaning of fatherhood in the extract below:

'As a father, it is my responsibility to provide for my child, I have to make sure I have enough money so that my child doesn't suffer. I must be there for her always, teaching her all the good things about life. But is very difficult for me, I can't provide for myself how much more for another person. I am so disappointed in myself that I am not responsible as I should, I regret all this and sometimes feel she trapped me into all these because someone told me she has other boyfriends. I feel ashamed sometimes that I can't be the real father I want to be, this is what fatherhood is all about, provider, always supporting'(Dotsi).

For Dotsi, fatherhood meant the ability to provide for his child, making sure his child does not lack anything and because he does not always have enough money to sufficiently take care of his child, he felt he cannot be a good father to his child even though he does his best to provide. He believed that as a good father he must be actively involved in his child's life and spend time teaching her to be a better person. Additionally, he narrates how distressed he feels sometimes, describing his situation as being trapped into fatherhood. The male adolescents in this study explicitly acknowledged some characteristics of being a father, that is what fatherhood meant to them. As they narrated their experiences with me, they used different expressions to describe the meaning of fatherhood. Nearly all the participants stated that as a father his main responsibility is to provide physically and emotionally for his child. Being involved in the upbringing of their child was distinct and enhanced to the meaning-making of becoming what they called a 'good father'.

6.4.2.3 Identity development

Identity development is defined as the process by which individuals modify their personalized set of morals, principles, and future objectives, mediated through connections with their settings. Identity development centers on two distinct but linked fundamental processes: identity exploration and identity commitment (Dhayanandhan & Bohr, 2016). Identity exploration comprises of the testing and finding of one's sense of self, whereas identity commitment involves deliberately searching for morals, principles, and future objectives that pursues comprehensive analysis of identity alternatives. Persons with a high level of both identity commitment and identity exploration are more likely to put more meaning into their relationships and illustrate immense levels of self-esteem and emotional well-being as compared to persons who find themselves in other identity conditions (Crocetti, Klimstra, Keijsers, Hale, & Meeus, 2009). Four quadrants identity status model are formed when the feature of identity exploration and identity commitment are compared. These four quadrants are diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achieved identity status model (Arnold, 2017).

Adolescent fathers in this study, in their narrations, exhibited the two processes that are involved in identity development. I perceived also throughout the interview process that, some of the adolescent fathers demonstrated the foreclosed identity status model which is exhibiting low identity exploration and high identity commitment. They were

committed to their beliefs, values, and goals based on the views and expectations of their significant others. While other adolescent fathers demonstrated the moratorium identity status model which is exhibiting high identity exploration and low identity commitment. These adolescent fathers actively sought out possibilities to develop their self-identity but did not make a clear identity choice. A few of the adolescent fathers also illustrated the achieved identity status model which is exhibiting high identity exploration and high identity commitment. These adolescent fathers established a self-determined identity that was based on their attitudes, principles, and goals without an influence from their significant others.

They situated themselves between the enchantment of self-reliance and capabilities and the obligations and commitments of fatherhood. Entangled between discordant personalities, these adolescent fathers tried to merge the diverging identities of being an adolescent and a father. The adolescent fathers in this study encountered many struggles during their transition phase which they narrated with resilient focus, this suggested to me that they were determined to overcome the emotional uncertainty involved in their transition phase and illustrated meaningful input in their changing identities, although some of them struggled to resolve their identities. Below is an excerpt from Ata, who was confused and struggled initially with his new identity but in the process of the struggle, he was committed to his acceptance as an adolescent father and his goal to be a good father based on the support he received from his mother, thus demonstrating the foreclosed identity status model:

'Me myself I didn't have that fatherly love so it was very difficult for me when I heard I was going to be a father; I didn't know where to start from. It was my mother who advised me on what to do as a father. It was the expectation from my mother that pushed me to accept my responsibilities and not just that but to also be a good papa to my child something I did not enjoy myself'(Ata).

Some of the adolescent fathers demonstrated a high level of identity exploration with a lower level of identity commitment. These adolescent fathers found themselves during an identity crisis, they were not sure of their new role as fathers, they became very uncertain and anxious during their transition phase. This prompted them to explore and experiment with different principles, opinions, and goals. While they were struggling with their new identity as fathers, they were torn between working to raise some funds to take care of

their children or going back to school to pursue their career goals. However, I noticed during the interview process that they had not made any final decision about what they wanted to do as adolescent fathers. Thus, they were not yet committed to a particular identity, they still kept their opinion regarding fatherhood and the adolescent phase open. Yaw for instance became ambivalent about achieving identity and was alternating between conforming to being a good father or going back to school. Though he was working to save some money the job was not a full-time one hence the inability to save enough. He struggled to find an answer to what he wanted to do and how to explore his role as an adolescent father. I observed during his narration that he tried combining the role of a father and at the same time-saving money to go back to school but he had difficulty firmly deciding on his aspiration and this caused him more anxiety in his transition phase. Below is an extract from Yaw's narrations demonstrating the moratorium identity status model:

'I was worried because I wasn't ready to be a father since I wanted to continue my education or learn a trade that will give me more money. Knowing that I was going to be a father initially was driving me crazy, I didn't know if I should concentrate on taking care of my girlfriend and my child or go back to school. Just confused, in all these, I need money to survive and at the moment I don't have a good job to even help me make the right choice'(Yaw).

An element of the feeling of being an adolescent father was an abrupt disposition of parenting, encountering these life-changing obligations caused some of the male adolescents in this study to become confused about their responsibilities as fathers when they realized they were going to be fathers. Hence, they found it problematic to resolve struggles connected with their identities as an adolescent and as a father. Consequently, some of them begun to develop an attitude of uncertainty about their ability to value their new identity as a father, which led to some form of identity confusion in the initial phase of their transition. Through reflections and trying to understand their new identity, they were committed to deciding with regards to their values, expectations, and goals. They made these decisions based on their self-definition and motivated by an emergent self-understanding. Thus, some of the male adolescents explored alternative perspectives and chose attitudes that were appropriate for their new identities as fathers.

'It was a big battle for me, not knowing where to start from brought more confusion in my mind each day because before she told me she was pregnant I

took life cool, then the news was like a bomb and not prepared for it you know how it feels like. I was so unsure about what I have to do as a father and at the same time combine it with my studies. Thinking and thinking and thinking one day I decided to accept my situation and encouraged myself that I can do it; I will work hard to study at school and do my best as well for my child'(Elornam).

The quotation above from Elornam demonstrated the achieved identity status model. The narration revealed that he was uncertain and confused about his new identity as a father, he struggled within him to accept the situation. Upon several reflections which are denoted with the phrase '*thinking and thinking and thinking*' illustrate the anxiety that was linked to accepting his new identity. Exploring alternative perspectives and selecting the best that fitted his situation helped him to form significant connections between his identity as a father and as an adolescent who needed to work hard to pursue his career. Nevertheless, his commitment to his goals helped him to develop a sense of confidence and strength to traverse through the doubts that were connected to his identity confusion and progressed towards achieving his identity.

6.4.2.4 *Struggles as an adolescent father*

Participants in this study narrated that they encountered overwhelming burden, struggled with many situations and conditions that inhibited their performance of paternal behaviors. While some of them were doing their best to ensure that their children benefited from better parenting, this was negotiated by a demanding need to seek employment to sufficiently provide for the needs of their child. There was also the struggle of trying to gain a balance between achieving their goal such as learning a trade, getting a better well-paid job, or accomplishing educational qualification and spending time with their child. Some of the adolescent fathers also stated they were confronted with difficulties overcoming negative communal judgment, stigma, and giving up on their freedom.

During the interview process, some of the adolescent fathers described how they encountered financial and emotional struggles. Their earning capabilities in the labor market had a low ceiling due to the limited educational qualifications and knowledge they had. Even with the kind of jobs available to them, they narrated that it often required prolonged hours of strenuous labor-intensive effort which mostly took all their time and

energy that they had less time to spend with their child. Not only were they not having enough time with their child, but also attempting to pursue their educational goal had a negative impact on them due to the complicated burdens of denial of sufficient sleep, handling child-care and adjusting to work, and commitment to financial responsibilities. Elornam for instance in his narrations described how this combination of circumstances was regarded as the key distress as he endeavored to manipulate these multifaceted challenging burdens. While he valued education as a means of offering a firm foundation for his career prospect, it was difficult for him to cope with his fatherhood transition phase without the support of his parents.

'It is a difficult task to be a young father though, I wanted to go to a boarding school but my father said I should go to day school and also have time for my son, so sometimes when I come back from school I play with my son or carry him if his mother is busy and that takes a lot of my time, sometimes instead of doing my assignment I rather take care of him. It is a big problem for me to combine all these responsibilities as a student and a father. I get overwhelmed sometimes and very exhausted.... Sadly, I am not able to provide for him financially, anytime he needs something, or he has to be taken to the hospital for a checkup, I have to rely on my parents for money'(Elornam).

The adolescent fathers in this study viewed early fatherhood as a period that either obstructed or improved their preparation for the future. For many of the participants in this study, the birth of their child initially interfered with their prospects. But for others, the birth of their child motivated them to reflect on their future in an approach that went beyond the restrained contemplations of the 'self-centered adolescent'. In their planning, they mostly contemplated on the future they would give their child and how their relationship with the mother of their child would positively affect the upbringing of their child. Hence to meaningfully plan for the prospect of their child, they committed to pursuing their education or seeking a better job opportunity.

In narrating their accounts, the participants elucidated the struggles that were involved in their sudden transition through which the normal freedom they enjoyed before becoming fathers were substituted with paternal obligations. They noted that the identity obligation of fatherhood in combination with the loss of the seemingly carefree years of adolescence was great distress for them. Some of the adolescent fathers noted that they initially

struggled within them, accepting the conflict between having fun as an adolescent, leading a relaxed lifestyle, and then instantly the demand of taking up a role of caring for another person. I perceived throughout the interview process that; these adolescent fathers experienced extreme anxiety in the early stage of their transition phase. Kofi for instance acknowledged that he encountered challenges between desiring the perceived liberty of adolescence and the obligations of fatherhood through which his independence was negotiated.

'I had to stop seeing my friends and this was too unexpected, very stressful for me in the beginning, before then as I told you earlier, I had all the independence, going to have fun with my friends and now all is directed to my son. It has been a very tough time for me, I won't lie, too much worry moment for me, I lost most of my friends but that is okay I have my son' (Kofi).

The challenge of experiencing stigma connected with adolescent fathers was reported by the male adolescents in this study. Some of the adolescent fathers' accounts revealed that adverse attitude and stigmatization were some of the struggles they encountered, they confessed how sometimes they felt they had been criticized for being an adolescent father. While narrating their stories, some of them expressed opinions of resentment and displeasure at those persons in their community whom they conceived criticized them. The birth of a child for most fathers brought happiness and was usually portrayed as a blissful event. Nevertheless, for some of the adolescent fathers in this study, it was a period of disappointment and regret due to circumstances surrounding the pregnancy. They were mostly stigmatized by the family of the mother of their child and also exposed to negative attitudes in the community they lived in.

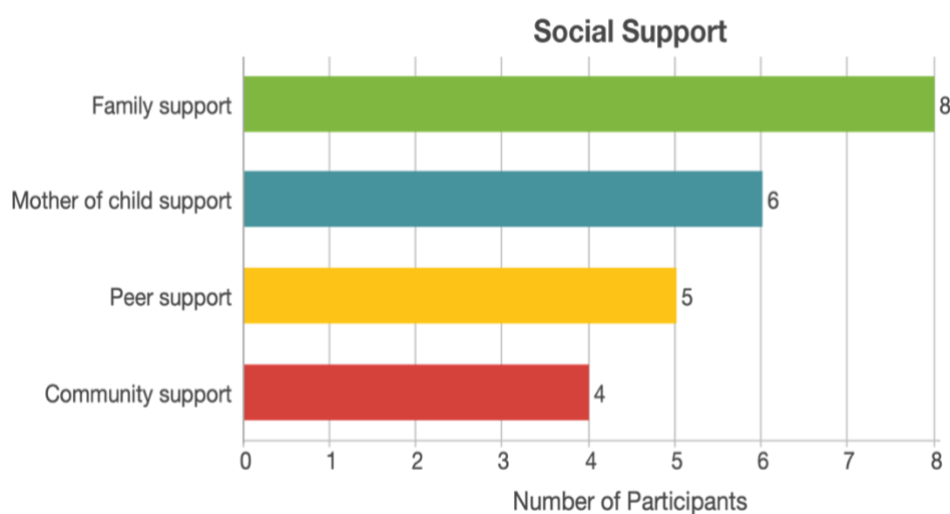
'.....the mother of my girlfriend hates me so much; we don't see eye to eye. When my girlfriend got pregnant, she was always insulting me and calling me names, I remember she once told me I was useless and irresponsible because she asked me to marry her daughter and refused because I am not financially stable. I feel so humiliated by her negative attitude towards me. And now that my girlfriend and our son live with me, sometimes these old gossips who are friends with the mother of my girlfriend who live in my area look at us with dirty looks as if we have committed a big crime. If I get some money, I intend to leave my area because of the mother of my girlfriend and those old gossips in my area. I feel so uncomfortable when I see them' (Yaw).

In the excerpt above, Yaw narrates the trauma he encounters with the mother of his girlfriend and this put a lot of strain on him making him feel stigmatized. Not only does he struggle with the negative attitude of his girlfriend's mother but also other women in his community. This excerpt highlighted how he believed that financial constrain can be a contributing factor to being stigmatized as an adolescent father. for some of the adolescent fathers, providing the fundamental necessities such as food, clothing, medical bills for their child were a big struggle. Irrespective of the struggles they encountered as adolescent fathers, they described ways of managing their situations and illustrated disagreements to the negative stereotype of 'being absent and not involved' and do their best to be a good father through support from their families and additional significant others.

6.4.3 Superordinate Theme Three: Social Support

Social support system functions to promote one's wellbeing, contributing to reduce the challenges adolescent fathers encounter when working towards achieving their responsibilities as fathers. To contribute towards a healthy family, adolescent fathers need to receive the needed support as it assists them to transcend in their obligations to their child, family peers, and community (Nunes Bueno et al., 2012). The study findings revealed four main emergent themes regarding the different forms of social support the adolescent fathers received. Having families and other people such as the mother of their child, peers, and community to turn to in times of challenges to provide better motivation and encouraging self-image were some of the forms of social support that the adolescent fathers described. These emergent themes are described in a graphical presentation in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3 Graphical presentation of superordinate theme three



As Figure 6.3 indicate, all the participants reported receiving support from their families, while 6 indicated getting support from the mother of their child. Additionally, 5 of the adolescent fathers acknowledged that some of their peers provided them with emotional, instrumental, and informational social support. Out of the 8 participants, half of them narrated how some members of their community supported them during their phase to early fatherhood. Throughout the interview process, it appeared that the positive social support the adolescent fathers received enhanced their resilience to stress, thus some of them were able to cope with their struggles during their transition to fatherhood. These emergent themes are described in the subsequent sub-sections.

6.4.3.1 Family Support

In this study, the family was perceived as a social support system contributing to the participants' fatherhood transition phase. All the male adolescents in this study acknowledged the necessity for family support. As noted by most adolescent fathers, the motivation to seek support from family members was due to their need to cope with the demands of fathering. The participants described situations where their parents, aunts, uncles, grandmothers, and siblings supported them psychologically and financially during their transition into early fatherhood. During the interview process, I noticed that the adolescent fathers placed much importance on the quality of the interactions and activities that occurred within their families as these were crucial for them in attaining the right personality of competent fathers. Some of the adolescent fathers narrated that for them to

progress well during their transition period of fatherhood, it became evident that they needed to improve their relationship with their parents.

Kofi before he becomes a father had some relationship problems with his parents due to his truant attitude and disrespect towards his parents. Upon hearing the news of becoming a father, he even tried to move out of his parents' home due to fear and embarrassment. However, soon he realized that he could not handle his situation alone and needed the support of his parents, his parents became a strong influence on his decisions, supporting him to positively understand the responsibility of fatherhood. He spoke especially about the significance of his mother as a source of psychological support during the time after the birth of his son describing her as *'my pillar'* and *'my shoulder where I lay all my struggles'*. Below is a quote from Kofi's narrations:

'Hmmm, I can't stop thanking my parents they were there for me especially my mother, I call her my pillar. When I heard the news, I wanted to run away from the house, I didn't even know where I will be going. People around me felt very disappointed, especially my parents, they were not happy with me at all. My father for instance said I should go and look for a job to take care of my child and that he will not take care of me again because I had become a bad boy. My mother and grandmother had to talk to my father and beg him on my behalf. After few months he calmed down and said he will pay my school fees, but I have to work during holidays to take care of my child and the mother of my child. Sometimes when I am confused as a young father I go to my mother, she is always there to listen to me and encourage me, she is my shoulder where I lay all my struggles' (Kofi).

Reflecting on his experiences as an adolescent father, Kofi appreciated the support he received from his parents, acknowledging the disappointment he caused his parents and how his mother and grandmother intervened to still get the financial support he used to receive from his father. His father still supported him financially, but I would like to comment that his father wanted to train him to become a responsible father as such he was advised to work on a part-time basis during holidays to cater for his son. This I assume will allow Kofi to get more involved in the care of his son. To express the affection his mother showed him, he used the metaphor 'shoulder' to describe how convenient he finds it going to his mother for comfort anytime he is worried.

I observed throughout the interview process that, the adolescent fathers in their accounts stated that their family members endeavored to transfer onto them some socially constructed attitudes and principled behaviors which aimed to institute a resilient connection between them, this was done through dialogues and counsel they received from their family members. For these male adolescents, the ability to embrace the obligations of fatherhood was time-consuming and burdensome for them, hence required support from their families based on conversation and knowledge. Their families were perceived as playing the role of advocates during their transition period to fatherhood. This was made distinct in Kosi's narration, that after having a dialogue with his uncle he was able to manage his circumstance effectively.

'When I heard I was going to be a father; I became afraid as the girl was only 16 years and also a student. I had sleepless nights, I just wanted to hide from my girlfriend and her parents. However, when my uncle told me that children are a blessing and that I should be courageous everything will be fine then I became relaxed a little bit. His words of encouragement improved my attitude positivelyHe told me that if I become a good father to my child, I will reap good returns in future, all I needed to do is to stay focused and work hard' (Kosi).

In the above account, not only was Kosi worried about becoming a father as an adolescent but also because of the age of his girlfriend and the fact that she was still in school. He described his experience as having sleepless nights and wanting to hide. Nevertheless, during his struggle, he found reassurance from the conversation with his uncle. His uncle established a strong affection between himself and Kosi through the advice he gave him, this contributed towards his confident assertiveness and acceptance concerning fatherhood.

The responsibilities of fatherhood required providing financially for the child, majority of the participants in this study mentioned receiving financial support from some members of their families such as their parents, uncles, and aunties, this they elucidated facilitated their fatherhood obligations and their prospects as well. Parental financial support was articulated as one of the significant factors that encouraged the participants to accept the responsibility of being a father. The majority of the adolescent fathers were not in full-time employment and therefore could not afford to single-handedly be

financially involved in bringing up their child. Throughout their narrations they acknowledged been supported financially, thus offering the foundation for them to exercise fatherhood. Dotsi an apprentice, basically depended on his auntie for everything even when he became a father. In his accounts, he stated that he still lives with his auntie even as a father and receives financial support from her, thus enhancing his fatherly obligations as she extends the support to his daughter as well.

My auntie has also been very helpful to me. I still live with her and she doesn't complain about me. She rather tells me to work hard and take care of my daughter..... Sometimes she gives me money, she also buys food and clothing for my daughter, am so grateful to her. I would have been messed up without my auntie'(Dotsi).

What is remarkable in the above narration is that, by thinking of the psychological and financial support received, Dotsi was able to reflect on the significance and influence it had on his fatherhood. As he narrated his experiences in his adolescent life, he was able to make sense of his transition phase and appreciate the support received from his auntie. He had someone he could turn to in times of crisis, helping him to increase his positive self-image and quality of life. It was his demeanor, his expression, and the emphasis in his statement that allowed me to have this understanding and a preview of how he perceived the supportive role his auntie played in his fatherhood transition phase.

Two essential tasks that some of the adolescent fathers in this study acquired were involvement in taking care of their child and getting to know their child better. These tasks some of them stated that they learned from their parents. According to some of the adolescent fathers who were living with their parents, they had the opportunity to learn from their parents how to feed, interact, comfort, and sometimes clean up their children. These skills they described were difficult to learn as they had to struggle to adjust, however, both they and the mother of their children gradually accepted these roles and took up the challenge of parenthood. Kofi narrated an example of the skills he learned from his father, which he thought had helped his transition to fatherhood.

'I depend mostly on my parents to support my child, even though I work part-time during holidays that is not enough. I learn a lot from my father, he carries and plays with my son often. He even bathes him sometimes because my son is so much

used to him. This skill I have learned from my father, now I also play with my son always, I call him my playmate thanks to my father' (Kofi).

Kofi shared his experience of the cherished and constructive relationship he established with his son due to the caring skills he learned from his father. Watching his father carry his son gave him the confidence to also get attached to his son, this support he would have missed if his father was not a role model for him to learn from. For Kofi it seemed that having his father get involved in taking care of his son nurtured him the competence to adapt to his transition phase, thus allowing him to become more resilient and take up the role of being a caring father.

6.4.3.2 Mother of child support

The participation and support of the mother of the child are important elements in the exercise of fatherhood. To assume full paternity, some of the adolescent fathers in this study stressed the significance of the involvement of the mother of their child during their transition phase. They stated that those of them who were in a good relationship with the mother of their child experienced some form of satisfaction in their fatherly responsibilities. During the interview process, some of the adolescent fathers acknowledged receiving emotional and financial support from the mother of their child. Thus, the mother of their child promoted connections that played a vital role in providing emotional and financial support which reduced the uncertainties, doubts, and worries of early fatherhood. Elornam for instance described in his narrations how the mother of his child encouraged him when he felt disappointed about the pregnancy. Even though he had mixed feelings about the pregnancy because he had sex only once with her, he claimed the mother of his child was still patient with him and tolerated his negative attitude towards her.

'I must admit, I wasn't sure if I was responsible for the pregnancy. I was nasty to her and did not want to link up with her again. But you know what, she was so patient and calm towards me, I later felt bad for my attitude towards her. Now that she lives with me in my parents' home, she always encourages me anytime she realizes that I am down and worried. She tells me it is well and that we will go through it together and this boosts my spirit a lot and psychologically stabilizes me' (Elornam).

Emotionally Yaw also narrated been supported by his girlfriend, knowing that he was been encouraged was very nurturing for him. As an adolescent father living on his own with his girlfriend and their son was a big challenge for him, however, the love and care his girlfriend shows him greatly makes a difference to his psychological nourishment.

'My girlfriend that is the mother of my child also encourages me all the time, she always says she will be there for me and always speaks in a loving tone even when I am angry, she shows so much care and love to me' (Yaw).

The demands of becoming a father were exhausting for Elornam and Yaw, the emotional support that was provided by the mother of their child gave them some relief and reassurance. Elornam for instance expressed the importance of the mother of their child as a source of emotional support describing this support as boosting his spirit and stabilizing him psychologically. In this narration, not only did Elornam admit the emotional support he received, but his consciousness of appreciating the presence of the mother of his child was also visible. His identity as a father was strengthened by his ability to recognize the emotional support provided by the mother of his son. He communicated what some of the adolescent fathers claimed they desired, not just support from significant others but also to be certain of encouragement that their effort in fathering their child was effectively acknowledged.

Additionally, Dotsi also narrated getting financial support from the mother of his child in taking care of his child. I perceived that because the mother of his child works as a hair dress it was not so much of a challenge for her to provide for their child if Dotsi was not able to provide for the upkeep of his child. He seems to have some affection for his ex-girlfriend and this was indicated in his narration 'I like her for this'. The accounts revealed that he apart from the mother of his daughter supporting financially in taking care of their daughter, also sometimes feeds him, and this can be seen as a form of support from his ex-girlfriend to him.

'The mother of my daughter is also a hairdresser, so she supports a lot in taking care of our daughter who is 7 months old, anytime I tell her I don't have the money she understands, I like her for this, it reduces my worry. Even though we are no more in a relationship she gives me food to eat sometimes when I visit my daughter' (Dotsi).

As the narrations above indicate financial and emotional support received from the mother of the child was very crucial in the well-being of some of the adolescent fathers in this study. It helped these male adolescents to actively get involved in the nurturing of their child even though some of them were not in a romantic relationship with the child's mother.

6.4.3.3 Peer Support

Although some of the participants stated that early fatherhood greatly affected their relationship with their peers, yet others expressed receiving emotional support from their peers during their transition into fatherhood. Peer support can provide an opportunity for interconnection and mutuality, contributing to decreasing the consequences of stigma and prejudice (Jivanjee, Brennan, & Carolina Gonzalez-Prats, 2016). Five out of the 8 participants I interviewed indicated that some of their peers were always ready to listen to them, anytime they were around some of their peers they felt their peers were more concerned about their well-being. According to some of them, they were able to comfortably express their worries and anxiety to their peers without been condemned as compared to expressing such feelings to their parents. For some of the adolescent fathers been supported emotionally by some of their peers was an important element that affected their relationship. During the interview process, I noticed that the adolescent fathers placed much importance on the rapport they had with some of their peers identifying them as friends and not just ordinary peers, they demonstrated this by describing some of the relationships they had with their peers as been real friendship, deeper and more meaningful than just casual companions. Klenam is his narration recounted how he lost the friendship of some of his peers because of his fatherhood transition, however, he was still able to keep one good friend who made him feel loved and accepted without been stigmatized because he is an adolescent father.

'Some of my friends didn't want to be close to me again but that did not worry me that much as I knew it was a mistake and I have learned a lot from this. But my best friend, he is like a big brother to me, he is 19 years, anytime I feel like talking when am worried I call on him. He is such a good listener; he makes me feel very important and he gives me all the attention I need when I am down. I remember when I told him about the pregnancy, he said I should not worry too much since it was a mistake and mistakes do happen. I should make sure I don't give up on

my dreams. His encouraging words brought me some kind of comfort, my relationship with him is very deep and is important to me' (Klenam).

Similarly, Atsu in narrating his story of the emotional support he received from his friend, stated that throughout the difficulties he faced as an adolescent father he found happiness with his friend. He emphasized this by the statement he made 'with the help of some of my friends who I call true friends'. Using such a statement meant that he appreciated the emotional help his friend gave him. He also spoke about the mutual trust and friendship they had for each other. Because his friend also has a child, he found it more comfortable to share his struggles with him perceiving that he understands him better as a friend.

'These times were trying times for me but I overcame my troubles, with the help of some of my friends, who I call true friends. One of my friends, I always like to be around him, he also had a daughter a year before me so he advises me a lot. It is not all my challenges I can tell my mother but with my friend he is like a brother to me, he understands all that I am going through, I always like to visit him in his house and also he visits me most often' (Atsu).

Again, Ata described the friendship he had with the brother of his ex-girlfriend even though he had a lot of relationship problems with the parents of his ex-girlfriend. He finds inspiration in the guidance his friend offers him, this allowed for a higher level of trust between the two friends, this trust appeared to offer Ata the opportunity to make a meaningful experience. Thus, he can discuss with his friend his worries without any reason of doubt.

'As for the mother of my son, her parents have sent her away to live with a relative in Accra so I don't see her again. But her brother who is still my friend is very good to me. We talk a lot and share our problems; he always advises and inspires me a lot and I trust him to discuss my feelings and anxieties with him even though his parents are not nice to me and his sister that is the mother of my son left for another town' (Ata).

The extracts above revealed that it was through the kind of relationships that the adolescent fathers formed with their peers that made them feel supported and were able to develop the confidence and ability to express their feelings. The adolescent fathers

indicated in their accounts that they placed much significance in the emotional support they received from their friends and also the value of trust played a significant role in developing the relationship between the adolescent fathers and their peers. It seemed to me that it was the care and affection the adolescent fathers received that contributed to increasing their sense of acceptance and wellbeing.

6.4.3.4 Community Support

At the community level, some of the adolescent fathers indicated that they benefited from a relationship of informal mentorship from some elderly people in their community. These were elderly people they were familiar with, built a friendship with, trusted, and did not condemn them but accepted them for who they were. Out of the 10 adolescent fathers who participated in this study, 4 narrated they had received some form of financial and emotional support from some of these mentors in their communities. These adolescent fathers in their accounts stated that in most cases when they were worried and needed encouragement, they gained guidance and inspiration from some elderly men in their communities whom they were familiar with and trusted. Each of the 4 adolescent fathers described a distinctive situation in which they received financial and emotional support from elderly community members. Notwithstanding the obvious differences in these situations, it appeared to me that each of these adolescent fathers acknowledged that they had been financially and emotionally supported when they were in distress during their transition into fatherhood. Below is an extract from one of the participant's narration:

'Other people in my community only gossip about me but gradually they stopped and some of the community members even encourage me to work harder to take care of my son. There is this particular old man in my neighborhood who is so good to me, he advises me and always tells me to ignore all those who gossip about me. I should try and concentrate on being a good father to my son he always tells me. He is my mentor I have learned a lot from this old man' (Yaw).

Yaw in his narration described how he had experienced discrimination in his community to the extent that some community members gossiped about him, however, he found consolation and reassurance from an old man in his community who acted as an advisor to him thus the old man provided emotional support to the adolescent father when he needed it most. Yaw constructs the emotional support he received as a motivational

turning point stating that he gained a lot from his mentor. Likewise, another adolescent father narrated his experience about the psychological and financial support he received from some members of his community.

'I don't have much problem with other people around me, I get a lot of encouragement from some elderly people in my community, some tell me children are a blessing so I should take good care of my child, I get so motivated when I hear all these encouraging words. I live in the same house with a nurse, she is like a mother to me. I do run a few errands for her and she rewards me well. She gives me money and even sometimes she buys dresses for my daughter, she is very supportive to me and my girlfriend'(Kosi).

In the above extract, Kosi described how he gets emotional support from the elderly in his community and this according to him gives him inspiration as an adolescent father. He further recounts additional financial support a nurse in his vicinity provides him. During all his struggles, receiving support from some members of his community seemed to nurture his sense of wellbeing and acceptance. I perceived in his narration that this emotional and financial support also enhanced his relationship with his girlfriend and other members of the community.

Furthermore, as it has been highlighted in the above quotations the supportive attitude of some of the community members placed the adolescent fathers in a position to develop their confidence in their role as fathers. Through these supportive relationships formed in their community, the adolescent fathers perceived themselves as self-reliant and capable. Their affirmative consciousness of self-enhancement confirmed their identity as fathers ready to take up their obligations no matter the difficulties they encounter during their transition phase. In the next subsection, I will deliberate on the coping strategies the study participants adopted to minimize their struggles during their transition into early fatherhood.

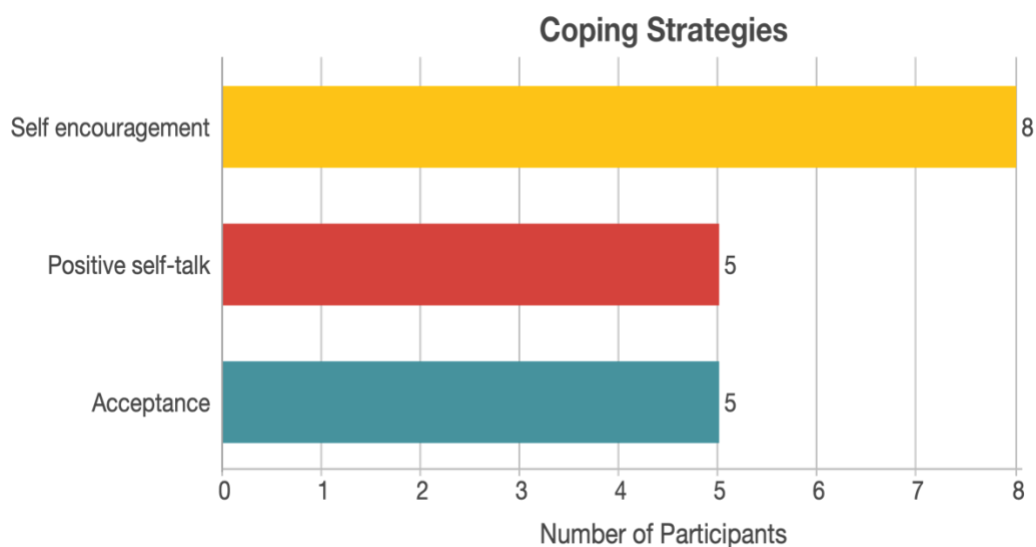
6.4.4 Superordinate Theme Four: Coping Strategies

Coping is the process of regulating difficulties that are considered as surpassing the capabilities of an individual. Thus, it can be implied as circumstantial in that it is determined by the person's assessment of the worrying situation, he/she is confronted with and resources accessible to the individual. There are two general types of coping strategies and these are problem-solving coping (doing something to modify the cause of

the trauma) and emotional-focused coping (managing the emotional grief connected to the situation) (Lohman & Jarvis, 2000). To effectively manage the challenges linked with the male adolescents' transition phase to fatherhood, they applied a combination of both problem-solving and emotional-focused coping strategies. While been faced with uncertainty and could not initially make sense of their transition phase due to disappointment and fear that made some of them anxious. They were still determined to overcome their uncertainties and focus their mind on the future with expectations.

Due to the in-depth nature of the interview process, the emergent themes relevant to this section are also found in other parts of the transcripts. Therefore, the coping strategies were derived both inductively, by reviewing other sections and by constructing interpretations from the feedbacks and deductively by adhering to the answers given from the interview questions asked. Three emergent themes that were developed comprised: Self-encouragement (all 8 adolescent fathers interviewed); Positive self-talk (5 of the adolescent fathers interviewed) and Acceptance (5 of the adolescent fathers interviewed). These coping strategies were what the adolescent fathers described either doing on their own or through the support of other people, particularly cases where they were not well-organized to accomplish their fatherly obligations. These emergent themes are presented consecutively in the following sections. Figure 6.4 below shows a graphical narrative of superordinate theme four.

Figure 6.4 Graphical presentation of superordinate theme four



6.4.4.1 Self-encouragement

Encouragement from other people is paramount when an individual is going through a struggle, but it can be challenging for an individual to continually be encouraged by other people and therefore they need the capability to reassure themselves thus self-encouragement. Individuals who receive encouragement from people around them also have an inner power variable called self-pursuit that motivate that individual to encourage him/herself to efficiently resolve their emotional and social difficulties (Huh & Kim, 2017). Self-encouragement was an important strategy adopted by the adolescent fathers in their coping difficulties associated with their transition into early fatherhood. In reviewing the responses from the adolescent fathers, self-encouragement was considered beneficial in improving their self-confidence, it helped them to release their abilities and gave them the courage not to give up in pursuing their goal. They took responsibility for their missed opportunity, they learned from the fact that even though they wanted to be adults before becoming a father and the situation they found themselves was different, they were not going to allow the challenges they were going through during their early fatherhood transition phase to determine their future.

The male adolescents in this study reported that self-encouragement helped them to believe in themselves and their capability to overcome their difficulties and hindrances. They were able to modify their objectives to reflect better on what they were capable of doing. The main priority of most of the adolescent fathers in this study was to work hard and be good fathers while adding more value to themselves either by education or apprenticeship. As a growing adolescent, Kofi's main objective was to become a teacher in the future and to take good care of his son. He also desired to always be there for his son, teach him and also give him all the opportunity he needed to be the best person he wanted him to be. However, to achieve all these, he needed to revise his objectives to reflect on what he was capable of doing as an adolescent father. He decided not to allow his challenges to overcome his aspiration to be a teacher and a good father, he strengthened himself by setting up a priority to continue with his education and also work part-time during his early fatherhood transition phase. Below is a quotation from Kofi's interview:

'My main objective is to take good care of my son; I want to become a teacher in the future and give my son all the opportunities he needs to excel in life. I desire to always be there for my son and teach him when he comes back from school. I

do encourage myself every day, I do believe in my ability that with determination and tolerance I will make it well in my studies even with all my worries when I have to work as a part-time store assistant. When I am sad, I remind myself that I am not a failure and will not allow being an adolescent father to push me down' (Kofi).

Because self-encouragement strengthened the adolescent fathers' confidence and their sense of self, it was therefore crucial for their personal growth and development. Elornam for instance was also determined to work on his relationship with the mother of his son. Although they lived together in his parents' home, they had some differences that he needed to work on to enable him to concentrate on pursuing his goals. He was also committed to identifying his strength, qualities, and abilities that would help him to balance his role as a father and also a student. In his accounts, he stated that he encouraged himself frequently that he can build a good relationship with the mother of his son and also ascertain his capabilities as a father and a student. During the interview process, I also perceived that Elornam had a better assessment of his ambitions and potentials while acknowledging his struggles as an adolescent father. He reassured himself of who he wants to become in the future and goals he wanted to set for himself and this I noticed as he stated it clearly that he wanted to be a teacher during his narrations. Below is an extract from his statements:

'I encourage myself a lot and tell myself everything will be fine; I have a few quarrels with my girlfriend, she never seems to understand me sometimes but I try hard to make peace with her so I can focus on my studies. Studying and been a father are two difficult things in my life as a young person but I don't give up on my courage. As I want to become a teacher, I will not allow my troubles to let me down. I try to save some money from what my parents give me so I can be using it to buy something for my son when he needs something. I don't always have to depend on my parents to take care of my son. It is not their responsibility. I brought the problem to myself and I must show some responsibility' (Elornam).

It is not embarrassing to be imperfect because it is part of being human. Dotsi accepted that he was not perfect and therefore used it as a stimulant to develop a positive attitude regarding his situation. This according to him brought him more hope for the future rather than struggling to overcome his perceived insufficiency. I noticed in Dotsi's account that

one of the key steps he took to develop his self-confidence when he became a father was to replace his self-criticism attitude which is shame-focused with a self-correction attitude which is compassion-focused. In the early stages of his transition into fatherhood, he often engaged in an attitude of self-criticism which mostly made him feel irritated, unfulfilled, and disillusioned, however, he gradually started focusing on the desire to improve on himself and learn from his mistakes. According to him, he was determined to enhance his potentials through a compassionate self-correction attitude rather than trying to be a perfectionist.

'I know I am not without fault; I have made some mistakes while growing but I don't want to allow my mistakes in the past to affect what I want to do as a young father. I used to feel angry and regret all that happened, but I have come to realize that feeling embarrassed and blaming myself always will not change my situation as a young father. I have learned from my mistakes and I am determined to be a better person for my daughter' (Dotsi).

As can be presumed from the above-mentioned accounts, self-encouragement has a positive effect on emotional well-being and self-confidence and was used by the study participants to cope with their transition into early fatherhood. For these adolescent fathers to grow and play their role effectively as fathers they had to learn from their mistakes, as these mistakes are valuable learning occurrences and therefore necessary for additional progression and maturity.

6.4.4.2 Positive self-talk

Positive self-talk is a mental-emotional approach used to prevent adverse thoughts that can trigger worry, despair, and doubt, and it may also obstruct performance and achievement (Hamilton, Miedema, MacIntyre, & Easley, 2011). Some of the participants in this study used positive self-talk as a cognitive approach to enable them to concentrate on achieving their objectives, improve their enthusiasm and also facilitate their ability to cope well with undesirable feelings, sentiments, and occurrences during their transition into adolescent fatherhood. According to some of the adolescent fathers, throughout the initial stages of their fatherhood, they perceived themselves as not ready to deal with the challenges they faced as adolescent fathers. They were seeing more of the pessimistic side than the optimistic side of adolescent fatherhood when there was a much less stressful positive side they were not perceiving because their concentration was more on their

consistent negative self-talk. They gradually overcame the attitude of rumination, that is the pattern of negative thinking that obsessed their slothful moments and caused anxiety from their past adolescent life into their present fatherhood phase, this attitude was perceived by the adolescent fathers as preventable because it did not resolve their difficulties.

To cope well during their transition into early fatherhood, out of the 8 adolescent fathers interviewed, 5 of them narrated that they replaced negative statements with positive self-talk anytime they were worried. Klenam narrated that during his difficult moment as an adolescent father he decided to turn more of his powerful negative words into more neutral ones and this helped neutralize his experience. Instead of using pessimistic statements, he replaced these statements with optimistic ones. Below is an extract from Klenam's accounts of using positive self-talk to cope as an adolescent father anytime he became anxious.

'I realized that I didn't have to be too hard on my emotions, so I read in a book on how to use encouraging words to help change your situation and my best friend also encouraged me to use a lot of positive statements when am down. So, I started using words that are milder to me to motivate myself. I started telling myself, my situation is not permanent, it will surely be over soon, all is well. I just need to be focused, encouraging myself in such a way helped me a lot to see the good part of my situation and not always be sad because I am now a father' (Klenam).

Klenam's narration illustrated that using positive self-talk was very paramount in coping with the transition into adolescent fatherhood. Substituting negative statements with positive assertions enabled him to appreciate the positive side of his fatherhood transition rather than reflecting always on the negative side of fatherhood. He appreciated his role more like a father knowing that his circumstances were not permanent but rather temporary. Likewise, did Kofi who also narrated that he stopped complaining about his problems, he started reflecting on his assumptions and chose not to attach the negative response to his feelings but tried most of the time to attach more motivating responses to his feelings. This is what he had to say about his positive self-talk coping strategy.

'I try to encourage myself that as a man I need to work hard to take care of my child..... Not getting the opportunity to go to a boarding school did not stop me from encouraging myself to still learn hard each day. Sometimes I feel bad that my parents did not take me to a boarding school because I impregnate the girl but

I don't attach a negative reaction to my moods. I have learned to encourage myself in my difficult times, that is the only way I can achieve my objectives in life' (Kofi).

As has been indicated in the previous quotations, positive self-talk was an important coping strategy for some of the adolescent fathers. They used positive statements to encourage themselves and to help them cope through difficult times as adolescent fathers. Ata for instance, in his accounts, stated that he also learned to change some of his self-limiting declarations to requests instead. He would rather ask himself questions such as 'how can I take good care of my child' anytime he was feeling anxious about his fatherly responsibilities rather than making statements such as 'I can't handle this responsibility as a father'. This statement according to him was detrimental to him as it increased his worry and regrets.

'It has not been easy for me, but one thing I have come to learn is to do all I can not worry too much in life as it will not help me get a solution to my challenges. I stopped saying I can't make it in life and rather I talk about how I can take good care of my son; this gives me more hope' (Ata).

The above extract described Ata's coping strategy while overcoming his challenges as an adolescent father. He acknowledges his struggles but again, through experience realized that he will benefit if he cultivates an attitude of prioritizing his reflections and dialogues on positive questions that will enhance his role as a father. In each of the passages above, I have emphasized how, as part of the transition to fatherhood, some of the adolescent fathers displayed an attitude of positive self-talk that appeared to resist negative reflections of adolescents been too young to accept their responsibilities as fathers. Their narrations also illustrated that although they sometimes experienced the attitude of negative self-talk, they learned to choose to resist this negative attitude.

6.4.4.3 Acceptance

Acceptance is a regulating psychological approach used to modify inevitable adverse circumstances by helping to maintain a person's emotional well-being and capability to take action. Acceptance means to access the reality even if it is not suitable for an individual's potentials or needs and the preparedness to deal with this reality. Such individuals do their very best to be committed to the essential ambitions that give their

lives a framework (Nakamura & Orth, 2005). Changing and adjusting their role to a father was initially a challenge for majority of the study participants especially when becoming a father was unplanned. Even though the transition phase was not planned and therefore triggered their emotions which caused anxiety, fear, and disappointment, some of the adolescent fathers gradually learned to adapt to their new responsibilities as fathers.

To have control over their difficult situations as adolescent fathers, some of them committed to not allowing themselves to be entangled in scuffling against circumstances they did not have control over, but rather they responded to changing their attitude in a way that coordinated firmly to their principles in life. Considering change as an instinctive form of their self-advancement, recognizing and accepting their perception as an outgrowth of occurrences was emancipating for some of the adolescent fathers. According to them their perception of fatherhood became less depressing because they accepted being a father and embraced their transition phase during their difficulties. Yaw in his narration stated that he learned to label his emotions for what they were: disappointment, fear, and anxiety. However, he did not focus on these negative emotions, rather he was determined to achieving his goal of becoming a good father, he committed himself to it. He acknowledged that sometimes negative emotions are normal and therefore did not think of it as something he could avoid but he worked towards his objectives. The quotation below presents an account from Yaw.

'When I decided to accept the pregnancy with its struggles and proved my responsibility as a father, I found some inner relief. It was a difficult decision to make, as I was faced with distress and frustration. Am glad I overcame some of my unhelpful feelings and now slowly I am getting there each day trying hard to be a good father to my child'(Yaw)

The decision to live in sequence with their fundamental values was another key acceptance coping strategy some of the adolescent fathers used during their transition phase. They were determined to have a value-based goal and were willing to move towards them, I perceived this was fundamental to their wellbeing. They considered their difficulty as a temporal impediment rather than a permanent obstruction. In describing how he accepted his challenges as an adolescent father, Ata stated he focused on his values, what gave him meaning and purpose in life. Focusing on values such as self-reliance, courage, trustworthiness, kindness, and, humility which were imperative for his

role as a father, and thinking about how he could move towards these values making it easier for him to overcome his negative emotions. The extract below presents Ata's narration.

'I always tell myself no situation is everlasting; I just need to move on and all will fall well for me. For some time now I do motivate myself a lot and not think about all the bad things I go through, like not having enough money to take good care of my son and even go back to school, I have decided to stay determined, concentrate on been independence, brave, responsible, supportive and modest which are characteristics I need to be a good father to my son' (Ata).

According to some of the adolescent fathers, acceptance was, therefore, a key emotion-focused coping strategy that enabled them to increase their positive feeling, they reflected on their situation positively and then looked for options they comfortably worked on instead of trying to change their circumstances as adolescent fathers.

7 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Overview

I commence this chapter by recapitulating the objectives of this phenomenological study. The key objective of this study was to explore and analyze the lived experiences or the journey through parenthood of five pregnant adolescents, five adolescent mothers, and eight adolescent fathers who live in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana and the type of coping strategies they utilized during their transition phase. The pregnant and parenting adolescents were recruited and voluntarily narrated their lived experiences, which were recounted in the two preceding findings chapters. I had the opportunity to comprehend and appreciate what it means to be a pregnant or parenting adolescent through their honesty and eagerness to discuss their early transition phase with me. To fully interpret the experiences of the pregnant and parenting adolescents, facilitation and the interpretation process was done by sharing their feelings, opinions, and perspectives of life and their significant others who positively influenced their experiences during their early transition phase. Even though each pregnant and parenting adolescent had their own experiences and narratives, I have endeavored in my study to incorporate the expressions of the pregnant and parenting adolescents into a shared experience to augment the fundamental characteristics of their narratives utilizing Schlossberg's Transition Theory. Though each question was explored autonomously, the 4 S's framework was a significant lens through which to view the questions of my research study. Even though each participant shared a unique experience and understanding in their transition experience, clear themes emerged from my study.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory was the theoretical framework I used in my study specifically, the 4-S's framework (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). Schlossberg's Transition Theory addresses transitions in life and how individuals cope with these changes. The 4-S's of transition comprises Situation: What is happening? the Self: To whom is it happening? Support: What help is available? and Strategies: How does the person cope? (Moran, 2017, p. 101). During the adolescents' transition to early parenthood, they utilized these 4 S's of transition (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). In the context of this study, the shared lived experiences of the pregnant and parenting adolescents comprised of their situation, self, support, and strategies. All the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents found themselves in specific situations that

determined how they transitioned efficaciously during their journey to early parenthood. Each of the pregnant and parenting adolescents' situation varied according to what triggered their transition into early parenthood, how their transition phase connected to their social dock, what aspect of their transition phase they could control, and how their responsibilities changed due to their transition. Also, their situations varied according to how they viewed their transition phase as to whether they viewed it as a permanent or temporary situation, how they handled their transition phase based on their previous experiences, how they handled difficult situations during their transition phase, and finally did they understand early parenthood, did they understand it as a positive change or a negative change. For many of the adolescents in this study, they exhibited both personal and demographic characteristics that were particularly relevant to them as they coped with their transition to early parenthood. They also demonstrated personality characteristics they drew upon to assist them to endure stressful situations as pregnant and parenting adolescents. Furthermore, to transition effectively during their early parenthood, the adolescents in this study received some form of support from their significant others and other members of their communities. Also, for many, there was a turning point where they utilized various kinds of strategies to effectively cope during their transition phase of early parenthood.

7.2 Summary of Findings

During my data analysis, I used Pietkiewicz & Smiths' (2012) recommendation of an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodological principle. The transcriptions of 18 participants (10 females and 8 males) including interviews and field notes were used to develop superordinate themes. These superordinate themes were: news of pregnancy, adolescent motherhood, social support and coping strategies for female adolescents, and for male adolescents the superordinate themes generated were: the journey of becoming a father, adolescent fatherhood, social support, and coping strategies. Furthermore, because my themes were categorized using the 4 S's framework of Schlossberg's Transition Theory. I will discuss the themes based on the 4 S's framework: Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies.

The first superordinate themes were news of pregnancy and the journey of becoming a father and these comprised of the following emergent themes: a feeling of stigma, disappointment, regrets, attempt to abort, moving on, how the journey began, not

prepared for fatherhood, mixed feelings about becoming a father and child as an agent of positive change. The majority of the participants were surprised at the news of becoming a parent, it was an unexpected event that was triggered by their socioeconomic background consequently becoming disappointed, regretting, not prepared for parenthood, and feeling stigmatized. Some of the participants highlighted in their narratives that before journeying through their transition phase, as adolescents they wanted to experience delightful moments with their peers without reflecting on their socioeconomic backgrounds, their aspirations for the future, and the consequences of their actions. However, their transition phase gave them a different view of life and this triggered other concerns such as poverty, level of education, and intergenerational outcome.

The second superordinate themes were adolescent motherhood and adolescent fatherhood, with the following emergent themes: being a mother/expectant mother, source of motivation, pursuing goals, relationship with significant others, meaning of fatherhood, identity development, and struggles as an adolescent father. Transitioning into early parenthood was considered as a major turning point in the lives of the participants as it shaped their lives, identity, and sense of self. The participants' accounts also revealed that different dynamics interrelated with their experiences while familiarizing themselves with the transition into parenthood and ultimately deciding to accommodating their circumstances. As pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents, their age and also the stage of life determined how they perceived and evaluated their experience of early parenthood. The participants' capability to embrace their new responsibility as parents were often prejudiced by characteristics connected with their stage of life as adolescents. Furthermore, participants described how they depended upon some personality characteristics such as identity development, commitments, values, and resilience in the form of source of motivation and pursuing goals to enable them to endure challenges during their transition phase. They were able to reflect on their personality and developed the attitude that empowered them to gradually transform their behavior positively, however they acknowledged throughout their narratives the struggles they encountered.

The third superordinate theme was social support which comprised family support, father of child support, mother of child support, peer support, and community support as the

emergent themes. The participants reported that the kind of support they received enabled them to cope well with stressful situations, to obtain the exact personality of being a parent, the participants admitted that there was the need to improve their relationship with their parents and other family members because of the support given them. It was revealed that the support they received from their family members went a long way to reduce parental anxieties and thus increasing their self-esteem, self-confidence, and life satisfaction as pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. Reflecting on their experiences, the participants stressed the importance of being in a good relationship with the mother/father of their child and in doing so received emotional and sometimes financial support. Similarly, some of the participants noted that they gained some knowledge from their peers who had also experienced early parenthood and this according to them improved their social skills. According to some of the participants, they were also emotionally and financially supported by some members of their community and this gave them a sense of belonging, referred to the support they received as a source of liberation.

The fourth theme was coping strategies and this also comprised of the following emergent themes: self-reliance, self-compassion, self-control, self-encouragement, positive self-talk, and acceptance. Participants focused on reducing the pressure of their transition to early parenthood by engaging in certain practices as a form of coping strategies. Participants in this study demonstrated an attitude of objectivity by been keen on pursuing their goals, they did not allow ambiguity to overtake their ambition to succeed. They did their best to reassure themselves in difficult situations, their enthusiastic attitude boosted them to stay motivated while keeping their main concern above-board. Throughout their transition phase, the participants acknowledged their weaknesses as pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents, though they felt embarrassed and disappointed at the news of becoming an adolescent parent, they did not allow their difficult circumstances to overpower them, they rather accepted their imperfection and used it as a restorative agent to develop an optimistic attitude with regards to their transition phase. Some of the participants' narrations also illustrated the importance of positive self-talk, replacing unhelpful declarations with encouraging statements enabled them to appreciate the affirmative side of early parenthood.

7.3 News of pregnancy/journey of becoming an adolescent father

The first sub-research question addressed in my study inquires, how did the female adolescents feel when they realized they were pregnant/ how did the male adolescents feel when they realized they were going to be fathers? Being pregnant as a female adolescent or becoming a parent as an adolescent is a critical event in their lives and this reveals different struggles that place additional burden not only on the young parents' phase of adolescent growth and journey to parenthood but also on their capability to adapt to the commitments of being a new parent. Thus, it can be comprehended that the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in my study struggled at the initial stage of their transition phase to accept their situations. They became disappointed, regretted, felt stigmatized, unprepared, and even to the extent of contemplating aborting the pregnancy. This is following the work of (Ntinda, Thwala, & Dlamini (2016) and De Jesus Sampaio, Villela, & De Oliveira (2014) who revealed in their studies that most adolescents experience a sense of regret, disappointment, and fear once they realize they are pregnant or about to be a parent. Other studies have also claimed that adolescents in most cases are not prepared for parenthood, hence they find the transition phase to be an extremely stimulating experience balancing the responsibilities of parenthood and adolescence (Ellis-Sloan, 2014; SmithBattle, 2013; Wenham, 2016).

The journey of becoming an adolescent parent can be very unpleasant and unwanted due to the uncertainties, anxieties, and struggles connected with the transition phase. This journey has some social outcomes connected to isolation, negative views, and vulnerability to rejection and this seems to be a crucial social setback. Most of the participants in my study indicated they were conscious of some of these social outcomes associated with their transition phase, they were aware of how their communities label them as bad boys and girls and this in most cases had a negative effect on their self-esteem but gradually overcame these negative effects. My findings suggest that although the journey to becoming an adolescent parent is unfavorable therefore prompting psychological confusion, nevertheless reflecting on the delight that is connected to being a parent encourages them to move on with life while viewing the birth of the child as an agent of positive transformation. Reflecting on the positive side of adolescent parenthood is consistent with the findings from Wilkes, Mannix, & Jackson (2012) who demonstrated that journeying into early parenthood offers adolescents with mixed emotions and difficulties, however, they gradually accepted their responsibilities while reflecting on the

qualities of parenthood and these reflections have an impact on their identities as adolescent parents. In the analysis of the findings in my study nine emergent themes were developed from the first superordinate themes: feeling of stigma, disappointment, regrets, attempt to abort, moving on, how the journey began, not prepared for fatherhood, mixed feelings about becoming a father and child as an agent of positive change.

7.3.1 Feeling of Stigma

The findings of my study indicated that the pregnant and adolescent mothers felt stigmatized and criticized. It was clear that they were unhappy and experienced a lot of anger and neglect due to their situation which was triggered by an unplanned and badly timed pregnancy. According to Jones, Whitfield, Seymour, & Hayter (2019), pregnant and adolescent mothers who experience stigma are more likely to report isolation, lower self-esteem and this is connected with increased fear of manipulation and assault. The pregnant and adolescent mothers in my study narrated that due to stigmatization they experienced from other people, motherhood became a very challenging transition for them. Majority of the pregnant and adolescent mothers narrated how they were psychologically affected negatively due to the experience of been labeled as a bad girl when they shared the news of their pregnancies. All the participants in my study stated they felt very unwelcomed and unloved among their peers at school, some of their close friends did not even want to get close to them. Similar to previous work by Mjwara & Maharaj (2017), my findings suggest that pregnant and adolescent mothers are often identified as bad girls who may negatively influence other girls in their communities, however, they did not allow the experience of been stigmatized to affect their aspirations for the future. This is also consistent with Yardley (2008) who revealed in her study that adolescent mothers though feel stigmatized, see motherhood in a positive light that improves their lives and prospects.

Many of the pregnant and adolescent mothers stated they experienced a lot of stigmas even among some family members, they were mostly ill-treated verbally and assaulted for been pregnant at a young age, they were seen as a disgrace to the family. Other studies have reported similar experiences of pregnant and adolescent mothers being stigmatized within their families (Hall et al., 2018; Ruzibiza, 2020). In an earlier study, Whitley & Kirmayer (2008) noted that some families perceive adolescent motherhood as shameful and think of any female who gets pregnant as an adolescent to be a failure. This perception

consequently results in loneliness which makes life hard to the point of contemplating self-destruction. The stigmatized appearance of adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood also stresses the significance of loss and judgment. Due to the social stigmatization image labeled with adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood, participants in my study reported how they were criticized and alienated from social activities in their communities as a result, they felt embarrassed, uncomfortable, and secluded. My findings support the study that explored challenges and impediments experienced among pregnant adolescents, conducted by Kumar et al. (2018) who found that pregnant adolescents' experiences of discrimination, contribute enormously to their inability to effectively demonstrate their capacities as prospective young mothers. I suggest that my study builds upon the work of Roberts, Graham, & Barter-Godfrey (2011) by proposing that personal characteristics such as strong-mindedness and resilience among pregnant and adolescent mothers can positively influence how they address and respond to stigma and discrimination.

7.3.2 Disappointment

Upon hearing the news of their pregnancy, all the participants in my study reported being disappointed, depressed, and troubled. Their disappointment of the situation they found themselves was influenced by the social norms in their communities that is, the assumed values of how adolescents are supposed to conduct themselves to avoid adolescent pregnancy and other adverse behavior. The participants were disappointed for various reasons, their narrations revealed that, due to the complications that accompany adolescent pregnancies, some of them were disappointed on the news of their pregnancies owing to the distress of pain during childbirth as adolescents. Not only were they disappointed but a majority of the participants also stated that their parents felt very disappointed in them for getting pregnant at a young age. The findings of my study are consistent with other research findings, which demonstrate that most female adolescents when they realize they are pregnant feel very disappointed and become upset during their transition phase of early motherhood (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013; Mangino, 2008; Maputle, 2006). Evidence suggests that because most of these pregnancies are not planned it becomes a burden for both the female adolescent and some significant others who play important roles in the lives of these adolescents. As revealed in my findings, some of these female adolescents had dreams of advancing their education to a higher level, and being pregnant meant their dreams are going to be shattered, hence the

pregnancy became a hindrance to achieving their objectives. This is in line with the results of Ramakuela, Lebeso, Maputle, & Mulaudzi (2016) who indicated that pregnancy that occurs during adolescence can have a lifelong impact on the educational prospect of the adolescent which in turn negatively influences their career goals.

In my study, one of the most significant points that were raised among the participants was the subject of poverty which indirectly made them feel disappointed on the news of their pregnancy. All the pregnant and adolescent mothers recounted how they viewed their situation with regards to their financial constraints and this made them feel more frustrated realizing they were pregnant. They felt very uncertain about how they were going to take care of themselves and their babies as majority of them were coming from poor homes and the males who impregnated them were mostly adolescents like them, according to Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009) in the process of a transition may be linked with a high level of fear and worry. This is also demonstrated in research conducted by Dalton (2014), where she explored the lived experiences of uncertainty among pregnant adolescents. Her findings revealed that feeling disappointed owing to uncertainty about life may contribute to the cultural and socioeconomic differences in adolescent pregnancy.

7.3.3 *Regrets*

Throughout the scholarly literature, researchers have acknowledged that most female adolescents who get pregnant, regret their actions especially when financial challenges set in, and wished they had waited till the right time (East, Chien, & Barber, 2012; Greensberry, 2018; Van Zyl et al., 2015). This is illustrated in my research as the pregnant and adolescent mothers shared their experiences of regret at the news of their pregnancy. They lamented and were filled with so much regret for having unprotected sex that had led to an unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. Some of the participants stated that they had plans regarding their future but felt that it would be difficult to combine studies with being a young mother. This finding in my research is consistent with other research on how female adolescents blame themselves for getting pregnant, and this has been connected with depression and fear among pregnant and adolescent mothers. Consistent with these previous research, depression (Monteiro da Cunha Coelho et al., 2013; Osok, Kigamwa, Stoep, Huang, & Kumar, 2018) and fear (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2019; Plan & UNICEF, 2014) were found to be the main characteristics connected with female

adolescents regretting getting pregnant. On the other hand, East et al. (2012) demonstrated in their study that not all female adolescents regret getting pregnant. Contrary to the usual perception, their findings revealed that not all adolescent pregnancies are unintended or unplanned.

Some of the pregnant and adolescent mothers in my study also described how the child's fathers refused to accept responsibility and this made them regret getting pregnant at a young age. They reported that the situation distressed them deeply when they felt betrayed, denied love and care from the males responsible for their pregnancy. Consistent with the literature on adolescent pregnancy, such reactions from males denying being responsible for pregnancy are to be expected when these males are also adolescents and do not have any source of income but rather depend on their parents for sustenance (Weber, 2012). Furthermore, my findings also showed that some of the participants felt rejected and stressed hence the regret and this was because the males who impregnated them did not trust them of being faithful to them. This was evident in the example of one pregnant adolescent who described what she went through during her transition phase to early motherhood *"I feel ashamed and regret.....he refused to accept the pregnancy, he said I have other boyfriends"* Such a devastating statement from the male who impregnated her degrades her self-image as an honest young woman. These findings are similar to those described in a study by Atuyambe, Mirembe, Johansson, Kirumira, & Faxelid (2005) where they explored the challenges ascribed to adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood. They highlighted most pregnancies that were denied due to the punishment of defilement. In Uganda for instance female adolescents below the age of 18 years who get pregnant are convicted of defilement which might lead to severe punishment. Thus, a lot of adolescent pregnancies are settled out of the court by most families and this according to the researchers may be a significant reason why males responsible for pregnancies deny responsibility (Atuyambe et al., 2005). An implication that rises from the example above is the meaning of the effect of regretting getting pregnant as an adolescent and how denial can have a negative effect on the transition to early motherhood. The consequences of regretting getting pregnant as an adolescent may lead some pregnant adolescents to consider terminating the pregnancy to avoid stigma, disappointment, and rejection.

7.3.4 *Attempt to abort*

In connection to the reactions of the participants upon realizing they were pregnant, in my study it appeared that some of the pregnant and adolescent mothers considered an abortion. However, these contemplations were influenced by some factors such as their socioeconomic background, access to health services, and relationship with significant others. This finding reinforces the research conducted earlier (Adetoro, Babarinsa, & Sotiloye, 1991; Dreyfus, 1992; Mutungi, Karanja, Kimani, Rogo, & Wango, 1999) and more recently (Frederico et al., 2018; Nyalali et al., 2013; Olukoya, Kaya, Ferguson, & AbouZahr, 2001) where researchers assert those female adolescents who experience unplanned and unwanted pregnancy go through challenges when they are contemplating terminating a pregnancy. These female adolescents are mostly subject to sociocultural and economic obstructions that bound their independence and make them susceptible to difficulties that influence their attempt to abort. Atuyambe et al. (2005) in their findings also illustrated that pregnant adolescents emotionally suffer by being rejected by the males responsible for the pregnancies and this drives them to attempt terminating the pregnancy. Indeed, some of the female adolescents in my study felt rejected and intended to terminate the pregnancy when they realized they were pregnant. They took this decision because of the embarrassment connected with their situations and the distress of being stigmatized.

Another reason why some of the participants in my study attempted to commit an abortion was that they felt the pregnancy would interrupt their prospects. The findings in my study are similar to others (Engelbert Bain et al., 2019; Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013; Ramakuela et al., 2016) who also found that most female adolescents opt for induced abortion due to fear of losing their future aspirations. It is worth noting that throughout my conversation with the participants in my study, their narrations revealed that their parents did not encourage them to abort their pregnancies. Though their parents were disappointed in them for getting pregnant, they, however, played a vital role in advising them not to commit an abortion. Contrary to my findings, a study conducted by Domingos, Merighi, de Jesus, & de Oliveira (2013) among women who experienced abortion during adolescence revealed that though these women tried to hide their pregnancies from their mothers the participants tried to disguise their pregnancies from their mothers and when the mothers found out about the pregnancies, they chose to interrupt it, requesting that their daughters have an abortion, which was executed in an unsafe approach, irrespective

of the adolescents' appeal. And this according to the researchers had a prolonged negative effect, self-reproach, and disappointment for not having battled against their mothers' choices (Domingos et al., 2013).

7.3.5 Moving On

Adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood is a transitional phase that is mostly uncomfortable, unpleasant, sometimes filled with disappointments, regrets and it may be associated with stigma and tough decisions such as terminating the pregnancy (McMichael, 2013). Some female adolescents when determined can endure the challenges, tolerate the transitional phase, and become certain that the transition is of controlled duration (Anderson et al., 2012). For most of the participants, moving on and accepting the situation in which they found themselves was something they were determined to do, they wanted to be responsible for their interest, fulfillment, and that of their babies. Their stories illustrated that they were conscious of their challenges and they realized moving on will not erase their previous experiences but would rather empower them to achieve their objectives as young mothers. Findings in my study highlight how moving on during a transition can positively transform pregnant and adolescent mother's previous experiences. When going through a transition such as adolescence into parenthood, it is paramount adolescents especially females understand and appreciate their disappointment, regrets, and other unanticipated situations so that challenges during the transition phase do not impede their inspiration but rather as noted by Schwartz (2011) will form a foundation for improvement.

My research also found that the female adolescents who participated in my study initially were disheartened and blamed themselves for getting pregnant. However, they were determined to achieve their purpose in life and this motivated them to move on with life. Similarly, in their study of adolescent parents in a semi-rural Western Cape community, South Africa Van Zyl et al. (2015) argued that despite the challenges of being an adolescent parent, the participants were able to persist towards achieving their educational ambitions and future desires. Adolescents experiencing early parenthood sometimes use their transition phase to empower themselves and this transforms their perception about adolescent parenthood providing them with an awareness of parental responsibility. Other studies have shown that some adolescent parents through their determination and endurance develop a positive self-perception attitude to enable them

to achieve the aim of becoming good parents (Gyesaw & Ankomah, 2013; McMichael, 2013). Also, confirming studies elsewhere, a few of participants in my study mentioned that their babies gave them hope to move on with life and not concentrate on their struggles thus promoting their self-esteem (Braga, Oliveira, Spanó, Nunes, & Silva, 2014; Mjwara & Maharaj, 2018). Other researchers have suggested that adolescents who transition well into early motherhood become less self-seeking while learning to develop a good relationship with their children (Kelly & Millar, 2017).

7.3.6 How the journey began

Contrary to the general perception, the accounts of adolescent fathers in my study suggest they ascertain and make sense of their transition experiences when allowed to tell their story. The participants in my study also reflected not only on what they understand as the journey to fatherhood but also how the journey has transformed their relationship with people close to them. Johansson & Hammarén (2014) demonstrated that though many adolescent fathers are labeled as socially underprivileged, vulnerable, and immature, many of them care deeply about their children, and when given the opportunity they would get involved in the caring of their children. Nevertheless, the past occurrences in the lives of adolescent fathers have an important influence on their readiness to become fathers. Findings in my study illustrated that some of the adolescent fathers in my study did not have fatherly love while growing up, they were mostly cared for by their mothers, hence they did not have the certainty initially to take up their responsibilities as fathers. These findings resonate with those of Bhana & Nkani (2014) who demonstrated in their study that adolescent fathers who do not grow up with their fathers find it challenging in the initial stages of their fatherhood transition to negotiate effectively into their new role. However, they gradually make sense of their challenging moments, reflect on their past and this spurs them on to be involved and offer love, care, and sustenance for their children.

Journeying to fatherhood is a significant time that involves preparation and adjusting one's priorities. For most adolescent fathers this journey comes with unexpected responsibilities and disappointments, the reason is that they indulge in risky behaviors such as having unprotected sex without considering the consequences of their actions (Lesser, Koniak-Griffin, Huang, Takayanagi, & Cumberland, 2009). Narrations from the adolescent fathers in my study illustrate how their journey to early fatherhood caused

disparities and discontentment between them and their families due to some of their risky behaviors before becoming a father. My findings corroborate those found by Pena et al. (2019) and Anyanwu, Akinsola, Tugli, & Obisie-Nmehielle (2020). Furthermore, my study revealed that the journey of becoming a father as an adolescent allowed my participants to transform their risky behaviors and this corresponds with the process of transition described by (Anderson et al., 2012).

7.3.7 Not prepared for fatherhood

I found compelling evidence to suggest that male adolescents mostly become anxious and disappointed when they realize they are going to become fathers due to their unpreparedness; this is particularly so because of the responsibilities associated with the transition. Initial explanations about unpreparedness were described as the demands of fatherhood and, in some cases the preliminary feeling of embarrassment, distress, and panic. Given the prevalence of male adolescents not prepared for fatherhood, (Chideya & Williams, 2013; Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015; Weber, 2012), it is not unpredicted that adolescent fathers in my study said they were not prepared to become fathers, the findings disclosed that the adolescent fathers became astounded at the news hence the disappointment. Results from my study support the literature suggesting that male adolescents react negatively and become nervous due to their consciousness of the obligations connected to fatherhood (Wilkes et al., 2012). The findings in my study are essential not because it confirms previous research findings (Uengwongsapat et al., 2018) but because of the narratives of the adolescent fathers which revealed that even though they were disappointed and had a lot of doubt about their transition face, they reflected on the pleasure that accompanies fatherhood. For instance, it has been documented that adolescent fathers' reflection on the positive side of fatherhood creates self-assurance and satisfaction (Eskandari et al., 2016).

My study has also highlighted the evidence that male adolescents who encounter early fatherhood are sometimes constrained to take stringent decisions such as interrupting their education to find employment to take up the role of a father (Kiselica & Kiselica, 2014). The demographic data of my participants showed that the majority were living with their parents or other family members and becoming a father meant the females they impregnated had to come and live with them or they had to move out and live on their own with the mother of their child. As illustrated in previous studies, there is well-defined

evidence about the challenges adolescent parents encounter due to their unpreparedness for parenthood (Fagan, Bernd, & Whiteman, 2007; Lemay, Cashman, Elfenbein, & Felice, 2010). It was also revealed in my study that the male adolescents who continued to live with their parents after becoming fathers were denied some opportunities by their parents. As previously mentioned, research studies have constantly documented the adverse outcome of the economic burden on adolescent well-being. Within this context, it is possible that reducing opportunities such as interruption in education to find employment may emerge as key anxiety specifically among adolescents' unpreparedness for fatherhood. Such anxieties trigger doubtful thoughts regarding transitioning well into fatherhood, this creates mixed feelings about asserting to be responsible for the pregnancy.

7.3.8 Mixed feelings about becoming a father

Following my interpretation, I found that early fatherhood provides an opportunity to reflect on how prepared and keen male adolescents are in dealing with the challenges of their transition. My results insinuate that the adolescent fathers in my study were faced with mixed feelings about being a father, and this was a fundamental attitude they developed to help them cope with their pessimistic experiences during the delicate phase of transitioning to early fatherhood. Several studies (Dornig et al., 2007; Jaffee, Caspi, Moffitt, Taylor, & Dickson, 2001; Lau Clayton, 2016) have found male adolescents to report having mixed feelings about becoming a father irrespective of whether the pregnancy was unwanted. It is not surprising that adolescent fathers' ability to experience unenthusiastic feelings together with hopeful feelings inspire them to develop self-confidence during the challenging period of their transition. Indeed, my study findings support earlier research signifying a constructive connection between the exhibition of mixed feelings and self-confidence among adolescent fathers (Uengwongsapat et al., 2018). Furthermore, their findings suggest that developing a sense of self-confidence motivate adolescent fathers to stay focused on pursuing their fatherly obligations, hence the need to experience mixed feeling during a transition phase such as early fatherhood.

A significant optimistic benefit may occur during the transition to early fatherhood as male adolescents interrelate between their diverging objectives and their mixed feelings (Corrêa et al., 2016). While male adolescents are confronted with the difficulty of constructing their fatherly objectives, they may come to realize the link between their

mixed feelings and their life of consistency to explore a notable social advancement. In my study majority of the adolescent fathers' experience of mixed feelings provided them with the opportunity to reflect and evaluate their conflicting objectives and the connotations these purposes characterized. In the process of evaluation, they managed to capitulate all the conflicting objectives in a coherent entity and decided to achieve the objective they considered as a priority. According to Niemiec (2014), having an explicit purpose and striving to achieve it may not have a fulfilling outcome, but rather the struggle involved in achieving that objective and the feeling connected to it which may precede seeking for a sense of meaning to assist in adopting an optimistic behavior. Participants in my study interpreted the mixed feelings they experienced as an indication of emotional obstruction and influence, consequently they were more committed to their psychological well-being, thus improving their self-control and enhancing their awareness of perseverance as an adolescent father. This supports the findings in the study by Madiba & Nsiki (2017) who found that adolescent fathers though experience mixed feelings about being a father, do not allow their pessimistic feelings to overwhelm them but rather cope with both pessimistic and optimistic feelings in a self-controlled approach.

7.3.9 Child as an agent of positive change

Despite the unpreparedness and mixed feelings, male adolescents may exhibit on the news of becoming a father, the connected question regarding positive transformation merit consideration as well. In recent review research conducted by Tuffin and his colleagues (Tuffin et al., 2018) which was based on comprehensive interviews with adolescent fathers demonstrated that having a child as an adolescent can have an intense modification providing an opportunity for individual growth, emotional development and positive change, consequently the child then acts as an agent of positive transformation. The adolescent fathers in my study utilized the birth of their child as an instrument of positive change to augment their scope as their newly attained obligations necessitated consistency and presented an outstanding consciousness of self-assurance and profound gratitude of affiliations with significant others. The implication is that it generated an opportunity for a turning point in their lives, it was a way of accelerating the process of learning from their faults thus assisting them to overcome their vulnerabilities. This supports the findings in the study by Maiden (2013) , who found that while the adolescent fathers in his study articulated anxiety, impending fatherhood became a facilitator for transformation as they began shifting from adverse patterns and actions. For instance one

of his participants described his experience with his child as *my baby has turned my life around* (Maiden, 2013).

Triggered by the arrival of a child, the change comprehends adolescent fathers' permissiveness and sluggishness substituted with focus, diligence, and accountability. This exciting transitional phase is impressive, comparatively swift, and encourages deliberation concerning the prospect regarding the adolescent father and the child. These prospects are completely connected and the acknowledgment of paternal obligations demands uncomfortable discourse (Tuffin et al., 2018). It was interesting to note in my study that adolescent fathers accepted their fatherly responsibility and diligently associated the impact of developing themselves with the imminent prospect of their child. Accordingly, it was perceived that they were doing their best to overcome their struggles and give the best affection to their child because they did not enjoy a fatherly affection while growing up. Being determined to overcome their struggles to build a permanent relationship with their child was also documented in a previous study by Tuffin & Rouch (2007). Their findings highlighted the encouraging compositions that portray fatherhood as a meaningful life-transforming occurrence. Fatherhood influences to modify drifting adolescents into full-grown men who acknowledge their paternal obligations.

7.4 Adolescent motherhood/fatherhood

The second sub-research question addressed in my study probes; how do they feel when they are confronted with challenging situations? The female and male adolescents in my study spoke of how their physical and psychological experiences resulted in the consciousness of accountability for themselves and their children, thus how did they make meaning of their transition to parenthood. Parenthood is a connection that is constructed and reconstructed and is pervaded by a set of diverse practices that include the connection that is entrenched among individuals. Nevertheless, when parenthood happens during adolescence, it is frequently perceived as a risk factor for the restricted development and maturity of the human being (Nunes Bueno et al., 2012). In the analysis of the findings for the second sub-research question in my study, seven emergent themes were developed and they are as follows: being a mother/expectant mother, source of motivation, pursuing goals, relationship with significant others, the meaning of fatherhood, and struggles as an adolescent father.

7.4.1 Being a mother/expectant mother

While narrating their stories, the pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers repeatedly shared accounts of their experiences of adjusting to their obligations of being a mother which was often influenced by attributes connected with the particular stage of adolescence. Previous studies concerning adapting to a new role as an adolescent mother revealed challenges regarding individual communal and childcare requirements combined with the period of adolescent development while being compelled to reconcile with the demands of motherhood (Islam et al., 2017; Maputle, 2006; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015). In adjusting to the responsibilities of a mother, some of the participants in my study reported circumventing their new roles as mothers, they explained their mothers mostly performed all the motherly responsibilities of taking care of their child. It was moderately a challenging transition phase for these female adolescents because they still felt they also needed to be cared for by their mothers. These findings are consistent with other studies Islam et al. (2017) and (Seamark & Lings, 2004), their studies showed that adolescent mothers in most cases are not able to adequately perform their motherly roles due to a lack of knowledge on how to care for a child.

Transitioning into early motherhood tends to have a psychosocial effect on the overall personality of female adolescents, this is because according to Salazar-Pousada, Arroyo, Hidalgo, Pérez-López, & Chedraui (2010), reconstructing the personalities of adolescent mothers can be elucidated as consequential and life-changing. Study results from a township in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa revealed that adolescent mothers in most cases feel nervous, furious, and not self-assured enough to become a mother as the transition phase changes some aspect of their identity as adolescents (Mjwara & Maharaj, 2017). Furthermore, a study conducted in the Wakiso district, Uganda also showed that female adolescents do not feel prepared for motherhood, they are not able to independently meet their financial responsibilities hence the struggle in being an adolescent mother. These results are consistent with the findings in my study, the female adolescent in my study reported not being able to afford fundamental necessities for themselves and their children and this made them feel angry and anxious in their transition phase of being a mother or an expectant mother.

It was interesting to note that, while the female adolescents were feeling anxious and angry about their transition phase due to the challenges they encountered, they did not

allow their challenges to affect their purpose as adolescent mothers and expectant mothers. They were motivated to strive for a better future for themselves and their children. Some of these female adolescents narrated that they found hope and joy as mothers because of their babies. Though some of them experienced negative reactions from the men who impregnated them and some family members, they still endured these adverse behaviors as adolescent mothers or expectant mothers however they reported that this attitude sometimes made them feel unwanted and lonely. The findings in my study are also in line with Fatmawati and colleagues who elucidated that adolescent mothers often feel irritated and worried, this leads to desparations and lack of unpreparedness of being a mother (Fatmawati et al., 2018). This may contribute to emotional and behavioral development problems in both the mother and the child, leading to their deprived consciousness of self and adaptability (Benito, 2018).

7.4.2 Source of motivation

The findings of my research revealed that the main characteristics that augmented the pregnant and adolescent mothers' source of motivation were their aspiration to accomplish their capabilities, their perceived competence, self-efficacy, the expected impact of their objective-related actions, the connections between these objective-related actions and the personal responsibility of their objective-related actions. The female adolescents' self-perception of the capability to do well to achieve their purpose was related to how they can accomplish their immediate goal. For some of the adolescent women, going back to school was one of their key immediate objectives and they assumed that achieving this immediate objective will provide better opportunities for them in the future such as becoming an educationalist, health professional or a banker. Almost all the participants in my study discussed how they encouraged and reassured themselves of achieving their goal and felt that was the only way to break any negative perceptions about them. In all these, they still acknowledged that there were challenges they encountered as pregnant and adolescent mothers. These findings confirm with those of Nkwemu, Jacobs, Mweemba, Sharma, & Zulu (2019) who revealed that adolescent mothers in some cases form their basis of motivation by identifying what is significant that will support them to achieve their objective. My study again coincides with an earlier study by Ntinda, Thwala, & Dlamini (2016) which reported that when adolescent mothers generate their source of motivation, it helps them to improve their self-efficacy and this

may be due to the adolescent mothers' determination to pursue their goals amidst their struggles.

Many of the female adolescents in my study also found other sources of motivation, they occupied themselves with various activities that brought them joy and fulfillment. Their narrations showed that they visited friends and some family members, this helped them a lot especially those who felt lonely and experienced unhappiness. Contrary to narrations, some of the participants reported that visiting friends and family members did not necessarily motivate them to pursue the purpose but somewhat it made them fulfilled and relaxed. My study suggests practical intervention to develop an approach that will encourage pregnant and adolescent mothers to cope well during their transition phase without depending too much on other people to motivate them. Self-motivation approaches will help adolescent parents develop a desire to believe in themselves even amid challenges, hence maintaining their sense of positive self-concept. Consequently, my findings add to the literature by showing that pregnant and adolescent mothers in some cases can set up goals through their determination to avoid adverse judgment and maintain a positive self-representation, this may eventually help them improve their self-motivation and performance to a higher level (Jones et al., 2019).

7.4.3 Pursuing goals

Although almost all the pregnant and adolescent mothers I interviewed reported encountering challenges during their transition, they were still determined to pursue their goals. They concentrated on being resilient which comprised recognizing their weaknesses and working towards their purpose of going back to school or learning a trade. The findings of my study revealed that for some of the participants, to achieve their objective, they perceived that their challenges provided an opportunity for reflection and transformation, they were determined to change some adverse mindsets. An analysis of their comments, highlight that majority of the pregnant and adolescent mothers in my study mostly wanted to add value to their lives in the form of education or apprenticeship which would help them attain economic independence. As reported previously there is a considerable and conclusive body of research describing adolescent mothers as resilient and aspire to become better persons than they were before getting pregnant (Campbell & Hart, 2019; Kelly & Millar, 2017; Mangino, 2008; Pellegrino, 2015).

Some participants in my study noted they went back to continue their education after initially dropping out from school due to their pregnancy, they expressed their renewed commitment and acknowledged that it was a smooth decision for them to go back to school. Studies by Watson & Vogel (2017) and Chigona & Chetty (2008) both found that most adolescent mothers do not put their education on hold, however, those who delay their education ultimately go back to school to pursue their education. Their findings illustrated that setting up a goal to pursue it can be inspiring and gives adolescent mothers hope for the future while offering them some form of reassurance. Xiong (2015) who researched adolescent mothers' experiences and how the role of early motherhood shaped their lives discussed similar findings whereby adolescent mothers in her study narrated how despite the struggles they encountered they were motivated to pursue their goal, they believed that the challenges associated with being an adolescent mother had empowered them to remain focused to rise to the difficulties of their transition phase and were willing not to give up but stay stronger, resilient and humble. The adolescent mothers in Watson and Vogel's study articulated having a continuous self-evaluation of the beliefs, capacities, and awareness to focus on their goals while overcoming the problem of self-doubt to build their self-confidence that will push them to pursue their goals. Furthermore, they suggested that hope gave their participants the strength to overcome their struggles and also the courage to persevere to achieve their purpose.

7.4.4 Relationship with significant others

In my study, the emergent theme of the child as the agent of change previously discussed, emphasized a few significant areas where affirmative descriptions were distinct, and one of these focused on the subject of relationship with significant others. Tuffin et al. (2018) assert that fatherhood contributes to decreasing adolescent disengagement and a desire for increased extended family connections. This reflection on the significant social relationships conveys with it the possibility of adolescent fathers becoming more affectionate and this is apparent in recent research (Chideya & Williams, 2013; Nunes Bueno et al., 2012; Uengwongsapat et al., 2018). Furthermore, Tuffin et al. (2018) highlight that youthful self-absorption provides an avenue for better consideration and kindness. The findings in my study showed that adolescent fatherhood reduced their detachment and offered the opportunity to improve their relationship with their significant others. The response of these adolescent fathers indicated the significance of social relationships during their transition phase to early fatherhood. The participants in my

study also discussed how the birth of their child became a stimulus to improve the relationship with other family members. This finding endorses that of (Jaime, Robbins, & De Los Santos (2015) whose research participants reported that the birth of their child positively influenced their relationship with their parents. Similar to the adolescent fathers in my study, some of the participants of Jamie and colleagues elucidated that they were eager to be better fathers than their fathers who were mostly not involved in their upbringing and they were keen on doing this by way of intergenerational repair.

Having also created an opportunity to rebuild their relationship with the mother of their child, this was very paramount since it facilitated the kind of relationship they could build with their child (Lau Clayton, 2016). However, according to Jaime et al. (2015), the birth of a child in some circumstances can generate tension in the relationship while in others it rather reinforces the relationship and brings the couple together. Findings in my study showed that some of the adolescent fathers were keen on building a good relationship with their child and also wanted to get involved in the upbringing of their child, others also stated that though they wanted to get involved in caring for their child because they were not in good relationship with the mother of their child, they did not have the opportunity to get involved in caring for their child. This finding is consistent with Parra-Cardona, Sharp, & Wampler (2008) and Wilkes et al. (2012), both of which studies found that adolescent fathers' desire to be involved in caring for the child and be a good father was made extremely difficult if they were not in good relationship with the mother of their child. Similarly, Uengwongsapat et al. (2018) found that adolescent fathers are likely not to get involved in caring for their child if they are not in a good relationship with the mother of the child.

7.4.5 Meaning of fatherhood

A unique reference that was dominant in my study was the drive towards self-development and empowerment. Previous studies have shown how adolescent fathers have expressed their views about moving away from negative behaviors to become good fathers to their children (Finch & Bacon, 2016; Jaime et al., 2015; Johansson & Hammarén, 2014; Wilkes et al., 2012). These supplements the credence of confirmation demonstrating that fatherhood can become a meaningful turning point for otherwise aimless adolescents and it is appropriate with the interpretation of a positive change. The psychological and emotional effect of fatherhood was identified to play a major role

when, as caring fathers, the participants in my study expressed the emotional relationship and unconditional affection they had for their children. Some of the adolescent fathers articulated that fatherhood offered them the opportunity to expand awareness of their self-control, it also provided them with a resilient commitment around which they could focus their strengths. Furthermore, although they were aware of their age as adolescents, they stressed that the realization that they were capable of creating a life and the uniqueness that is connected to it guided them to a better desire and self-actualization. The findings of my study are similar to what Enderstein & Boonzaier (2015) found in their narrative analysis of adolescent fathers' meaning of fatherhood. In both studies, participants emphasized the ability of fathers to be available and offering monetary, emotional, and psychological support to their children. According to Jaime et al. (2015), these findings conflict with the dogmatic definition which emphasizes the biological, financial, and functional relationships of fathers to their children.

For many of the participants in my study, the meaning of fatherhood was the focus of their narratives. The responsibility and maturity of being a father were a result of the changing characteristics that were identified during the narratives. The participants stated that before they became fathers, they felt disorganized and perplexed, however, the birth of their children was a foundation to transform into better individuals with determination and focus. The findings of my study align closely with Johansson & Hammarén's (2014) study who revealed that fatherhood can serve as a stimulus to intense psychological transformation. Furthermore, the findings in my study also provided a distinctive, more constructive interpretation of the meaning of fatherhood. Some of the adolescent fathers narrated how fatherhood and starting a family had become a process of self-inspiration. According to some of the participants they initially felt disillusioned describing the preliminary stages of their transition to fatherhood as being trapped into a situation that was difficult to escape however through their identity development as fathers, they came to accept their responsibilities and felt part of their community. This can be interpreted as an indication of new outlooks of articulating and constructing adolescent fatherhood.

7.4.6 Identity development

Fatherhood stimulates modification in every man concerning identity, the process of transformation is sometimes challenging and can be more conspicuous among adolescents. Interpreting identity at a crucial adolescent developmental phase

demonstrates the difficult task of undertaking an instantaneous and unanticipated change (Frewin, Tuffi, & Rouch, 2007). The adolescent fathers in my study did not deny their responsibility to be devoted fathers, they were positioned between the enticement of liberation, autonomy, and the obligations and accountabilities of fatherhood. Initially, they all encountered an identity dilemma, they were confused about their new identity as fathers. While engaging in the struggle to establish an identity as fathers, they became indecisive about achieving their purpose as adolescents. Accomplishing the role of a father as an adolescent is about accelerated maturity as it prompted the adolescent fathers in my study to ascertain and experience diverse purposes, views, and values. Nevertheless, some of the adolescent fathers kept their views of transition to fatherhood open as they struggled to decide on how to ascertain their obligations as adolescents and as fathers. Contrary to unconstructive stereotypes that portray adolescent fathers as unenthusiastic to relinquish the attitude of freedom connected with an adolescent identity (Rozie-Battle, 2003; Sriyasak et al., 2015), participants in my study were eager to overcome the emotional uncertainty trapped with adolescent fatherhood and commit to positively developing their identity as good fathers.

Consequently, it was evident that most of the participants illustrated a sense of self, identifying their transition phase as a pivotal point, allowing themselves to recognize and accept their fatherly responsibilities. They, therefore, acknowledged that this turning point had its challenges they had to overcome, but persistently talked about it with a resilient gesture which suggested perseverance and courage rather than incompetence suggested by the adverse descriptions regarding adolescent fatherhood. The bewildering description of parenting has been the psychological measurement used for adolescent fatherhood. According to Tuffin et al. (2018), there is the probability that some adolescent fathers consciously strive for fatherhood, nevertheless, none of the adolescent fathers in my study deliberately sort to become fathers, they all stated they were not prepared for fatherhood, however, since it had already happened they would strive to cope with the challenges associated with adolescent fatherhood.

7.4.7 Struggles as an adolescent father

My study expands on the developing body of knowledge about adolescent fathers' willingness to be involved as fathers. Furthermore, it provides an interface into research that sturdily indicates that adolescent fathers sometimes struggle with issues connected

to their transition to parenthood. It was illustrated in the findings of my study that despite the adolescent fathers' enthusiasm to get involved in the upbringing of their child, they were still confronted with immense difficulty and struggled with circumstances sometimes beyond their control. Though a number of my participants indicated they were empowered due to their challenges to pursue intergenerational restoration, it was however obstructed by the fact that they were obliged to financially and emotionally provide for their child. My findings also confirm and expand upon knowledge focusing on the struggles in gaining an equilibrium between spending quality time with their child and spending time accomplishing their ambitions, the need to deal with stigma, adverse general stereotype, and deprivation of liberty as an adolescent. Specifically, the subsequent results corroborate the above-mentioned findings: intergenerational repair (the desire of adolescent fathers to ensure that their child receives an improved childhood experience), challenges of adolescent fatherhood (individual, financial and communal), the significances of fatherly responsibilities (capable of supporting in caring for the emotional and financial needs of offspring) and focus on aspirations (education and better employment opportunities) (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; De Jesus Sampaio et al., 2014; Dornig et al., 2007; Lemay et al., 2010; Tuffin et al., 2010).

Regardless of the struggles, adolescent fathers in my study faced, findings revealed that participants drew informal social support from some sources, including family, partners, peers, and some community members. In the various accounts, the adolescent fathers stated that receiving some form of support lessened their worries which eventually enabled them to cope effectively in their struggles as adolescent fathers.

7.5 Social Support

The third sub-research question addressed in my study queries, "who do female adolescents and male adolescents rely on during their transition to early parenthood? The female and male adolescents in my study spoke of how they were supported, encouraged, and guided when they became parents. For many of my participants, receiving support from family, father/mother of child, peers and some community members was an important influence in their transition to parenthood as it also positively affected their parental behavior. Research on social support has constantly demonstrated that an individual's awareness of the accessibility of others as a resource contributes meaningfully to how the individual adjusts to anxiety (Priel & Besser, 2002), and the

absence of social support significantly influences the health outcome of an individual (McLeish & Redshaw, 2017). It was notable that most of the participants in my study received some form of social support during their transition to adolescent parenthood, majority of the participants perceived themselves as having satisfactory functional social support because they felt some form of confidence to confide either in their family, father/mother of the child, peers or some community members.

7.5.1 Family support

The main source of social support the participants in my study received was from their family and it plays a vital role in decreasing anxieties during their transition phase to adolescent parenthood. As demonstrated in the previous section, despite the aspirations of pregnant and parenting adolescents to be good parents to their children, these adolescents encounter considerable impediments to parenthood. The challenges even become worse for those living in underprivileged situations, this indicates the need for support and encouragement especially from family (Lau Clayton, 2016). The transformations that take place within the context of adolescent parents can also take place within the family structure if the family is perceived from a general viewpoint. Therefore, the family during the transition phase may have to adjust to support the female or male adolescent transitioning into early parenthood. Adolescent parenthood mostly occurs based on cultural characteristics and also grounded on the values and perceptions that have been fostered in a family throughout generations (Könzgen Meincke & Carraro, 2009). The family is seen as a faction of individuals whose members are described as related but may or may not be closely connected (Nunes Bueno et al., 2012). In the context of my study, the family members emphasized predominantly as forming the social support network for the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents were parents, grandmothers, aunts, uncles, siblings, and mothers in law. Previous studies have also shown how parents and grandparents offered financial and emotional support to adolescents during their transitions to early parenthood (Mangeli, Tirgari, Cheraghi, & Rayyani, 2018; Yurdakul, 2018).

It is worth highlighting that the activities that occur within the family and the quality of relationships is fundamental for adolescents in understanding how to become effective parents. Consequently, for adolescents to transition well into early parenthood, it is paramount to develop excellent communication skills within the family. This will

eventually promote and help to establish a more effective relationship between adolescent parents and their family members (Nunes Bueno et al., 2012). The findings of my study revealed that the family had a convincing influence on the adolescents, reassuring them to fully experience the process of parenthood. The kind-heartedness and thoughtfulness from some parents made some of the participants feel protected and motivated to transition well into parenthood while aspiring to go back to school. This resonates with other researchers (De Jonge, 2001; Deave et al., 2008; Mngadi, Zwane, Ahlberg, & Ransjo-Arvidson, 2003) who found that adolescent parents regularly rely on support from their family which builds awareness of comfort and acknowledgment of the parenting responsibilities. Research by Puspasari, Nur Rachmawati, & Budiati (2018) also supports such findings with assertions that adolescent parents who receive support from their families develop better resilience during their transition phase. The findings of my study suggest that adolescent parents who live with their families and receive support may have better health and economic outcome which may improve the prospects of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents.

7.5.2 *Father of child support*

The nature and level of support received from the father of the child are crucial to how well adolescent mothers cope during their transition phase (Melvin & Uzoma, 2012). More than half of the participants described how the fathers of their child initially denied responsibility for the pregnancy due to fear of the future, to accept responsibility some of the young men had to be compelled by the family of the female adolescent and this sometimes made the fathers of the babies somehow accept responsibility. My findings revealed that some of the fathers of the child were willing to take up responsibility however they were not financially stable as some of the young men were also students hence, they also depended on their parents for support. This finding endorses that of Kaye (2008) whose research participants reported that some of the males who impregnated them were also students and therefore were not capable of supporting them and this was a major source of stress for them. The responses from the pregnant and adolescent mothers in my study also indicated that some of the fathers of their child tried to provide them with financial and emotional support and this went a long way to positively affect their psychological health and the well-being of their child. While some of the adolescent women valued and appreciated the support they received from the father of their child, others stated that because they were neglected in the initial stages of their pregnancy by

the father of the child, they decided to cut links with them and because of this they did not receive any form of support from the father of their child. This result corroborates with findings from other scholars (Gee & Rhodes, 2003). Receiving social support from the father of the child has been linked with a better-quality financial standing and emotional well-being, such as better self-esteem and a decrease in anxiety in other studies of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents (Maputle, 2006).

7.5.3 Mother of child support

An added benefit for transitioning well into fatherhood was the support from the mother of their child, this was very important for the adolescent fathers in my study. They presumed that the emotional support they received from the mother of their child was an important element for them to develop a good relationship with their child. The participants recalled being appreciative of the mother of their child as it helped them to prepare for their responsibility and at the same time diminished their insecurity, fears, and anxieties of adolescent fatherhood. In their narrations some of the adolescent fathers stated that the obligations attached to fatherhood became very strenuous for them, however, the emotional support they received from the mother of their child brought them some kind of emotional strength and comfort. This finding is consistent with Reeves (2006) whose study found that mother of child support was essential for coping with the transition to fatherhood as it prevented them from indulging in reckless behaviors. One participant in Reeves's study in his narration revealed that the support and love he received from the mother of his child was a catalyst for rescuing him from alcohol addiction. Likewise, Uengwongsapat et al. (2018) found that adolescent fathers felt empowered when they received support from the mother of their child. Besides being emotionally supported by the mother of their child, some of the participants in my study also stated they were financially supported by the mother of their child this was because they were not gainfully employed however the mother of their child had some form of financial stability. I would like to state that these adolescent fathers received support from the mother of their child because of the good relationship they had with them. The findings of my study, therefore, suggest that being in a healthy relationship with significant others has a long-lasting benefit during the transitional phase of adolescent parenthood.

7.5.4 Peer support

The present findings on the level of the social support offered to my participants elucidate that, peer support is also a paramount source of emotional support for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. There has been some preceding research that had demonstrated that the supposed support of peers sometimes exceeds that of some family members (McLeish & Redshaw, 2015; Melvin & Uzoma, 2012). The finding in my study is predominantly important because of some earlier assumptions in literature that peers are incapable of offering constructive support to adolescent parents (Humberstone, 2018; Schrag & Schmidt-Tieszen, 2014). The support peers provide has been ignored due to the supposition that adolescent parents are unable to retain their friendship with their peers (Maxwell, 2002). My findings sturdily demonstrate that peer support remains paramount for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. Hearing the voices of my participants, the experiences, and the support they received from their peers, had helped them to learn how to negotiate for resources and support needed to accomplish their objectives. This is predominantly essential considering the inverse connection between social support and depression and the high rate of anxiety among pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents (Logsdon, Gagne, Hughes, Patterson, & Rakestraw, 2005). There is a considerable adverse connection between support received from peers and self-reported anxiety among participants in my study. The findings of my study resound with that of McLeish & Redshaw (2015) who elucidate how peer support contributes to the positive outcomes for pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in their adaptation to parenting skills. In my study, the relationship that the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents acknowledged as being meaningful, not only had a comparable blend of all the support they received; but the participants also alluded it was within the perspective of the relationship that they felt loved.

Trust is fundamental to social relationships, my study also revealed that pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents appreciated the trust that exists between them and their peers. Similarly, Krugu, Mevissen, Munkel, & Ruitter (2016) have reported that adolescent mothers are more comfortable discussing their problems with a peer if they feel confident of their trust in the relationship. The component of trust is perceived as essential in building a good relationship between adolescent parents and their peers (Fagan et al., 2007; McLeish & Redshaw, 2015). These researchers consent that willingness to confidently communicate one's experience to the other person is important

to a positive relationship as it is a channel for ascertaining trust. The findings in my study highlight the opinion of the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents who articulated the impact of the value of trust that played an important part in developing their social skills as adolescent parents. They acknowledged the time some peers spent with them when they felt lonely, sharing anecdotes of the constructive experiences of early parenthood, and this had a positive influence on the participants' perception during their transition phase to early parenthood.

7.5.5 Community Support

In sharing the experiences of appreciating the support received, the participants in my study asserted that though some community members did not treat them with respect because of the implication of their situations, some community members supported them during their transition phase. The pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents thought that having someone from the community apart from their families and peers to provide them with some form of support was a great relief for them. Some of the participants though stigmatized and labeled as bad in their communities, expressed the need for encouragement and reassurance that, all is not lost but there is hope for the future. Moreover, though they were aware that their community frowned upon adolescent pregnancy and early parenting they still needed guidance and motivation from individuals in their communities whom they were comfortable with and could trust. Studies conducted by Mngadi et al. (2003) and (McDonell, Limber, & Connor-Godbey, 2007) indicated that providing emotional support to adolescent parents can have an optimistic impact on their parenting skills and also affect how they respond to difficult situations surrounding them.

Furthermore, Muzik, Kirk, Alfafara, Jonika, & Waddell (2016) emphasizes the importance of adolescent parents having mentors they can trust for advice and encouragement, that is an individual who is not necessarily a family member who can give them the necessary support throughout their journey of early parenthood. In my study, not only did the adolescent parents receive support from their parents or other elderly individuals in their families but also other elderly members of their communities acted as mentors during the adolescent's transition phase. It is evident in my findings, that these trusting relationships allowed pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents to develop their self-confidence. While they frequently experienced difficult moments, they

also illustrated remarkable coping strategies as they equalized their obligations of parenthood while trying to achieve their objectives as adolescents. Receiving support from some community members was regarded by some of my participants as an esteemed means of support and was instrumental in forming their identity as adolescent parents.

7.6 Coping Strategies

The fourth sub-research question addressed in my study asked participants, how they manage their difficult circumstances as pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. I categorized the various activities the participants engage in and the strategies they adopted into six main emergent themes. These were: self-reliance, self-compassion, self-control, self-encouragement, positive self-talk, and acceptance. These strategies characterize what the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents reported engaging in during their difficult moments in their transition phase. As I have already discussed in the previous sub-sections, coping strategies comprise yet another phase in the adolescents' lives of making sense of their experiences as young parents. These different coping strategies are discussed consecutively below.

7.6.1 Self-reliance

The female participants in my study adopted several emotional strategies to cope with their transition to early motherhood. The most commonly adopted was a self-reliant attitude which was considered as a significant turning point to living optimistically as a pregnant adolescent or an adolescent mother. Self-reliance appears to serve as a pivot around which a positive experience with adolescent pregnancy transcends. As such, the ability to independently take responsibility for situations and not to blame others for incapability. Some studies (Marceau et al., 2015; McNamara et al., 2018; Nourian et al., 2016) likewise described self-reliance as a coping strategy. In reviewing the strategy of the female participants, my study elucidates that self-reliance was considered useful and consequently an important coping strategy in diverse ways. Firstly, self-reliance acted as a form of assurance that facilitated their positive behavior towards achieving their aspirations. Furthermore, self-reliance was considered important in assisting the female participants to create an ambiance favorable in reflecting on their strength and weakness which enabled them to form an attitude of self-awareness. My findings suggest that self-reliance can have a positive impact on an individual's feelings, thoughts, and decision making about parenting and future aspirations.

7.6.2 *Self-compassion*

A pertinent finding in my study was the female participants' description of self-compassion as a form of coping strategy, thus accepting themselves as they are and working towards self-improvement. This concurrence of accepting oneself and transformation could be expounded by self-compassion ability to offer an awareness of protection (Gilbert, 2009) in a way that adolescents are prepared to be transformed without being astounded by their inefficiency (Muris, Otgaar, Meesters, Heutz, & van den Hombergh, 2019). Some researchers have revealed in their studies that adolescents are capable of positively coping with the difficult situation in life rather than an adverse approach (Bluth, Mullarkey, & Lathren, 2018; Ștefan, 2019). For example, rather than blaming other people for their predicaments as a means of easing their anxiety, some of my female participants concentrated on self-capability and chose to seek information that will improve their responsibilities as mothers. Implementing a self-compassionate approach as a coping strategy empowered my female participants to modify their behaviors, hence resonating with the submissions of other researchers that self-compassion may be a significant turning point for transformation (Campion & Glover, 2017; Kroshus, Hawrilenko, & Browning, 2020; Neff, 2019). An additional impact of how self-compassion is comprehended is the idea of retaining a self-effacing approach, the female participants in my study shifted their attention away from other people and focused on being caring and appreciative to themselves, they made their necessities their precedence. Concentrating on one's priority is an important component of self-compassion for female adolescents and this is consistent with Gilbert's (2009) theory of self-compassion as involving the habit of taking time to cherish and sustain. In the context of adolescent pregnancy and parenting, this theme could suggest a unique approach to understanding the self-centeredness that stereotypically describes adolescence.

7.6.3 *Self-control*

The female adolescents in my study learned to control their emotional feelings and uncertainties to reduce the stress of their transition to early motherhood, this is similar to the findings of Allemand and colleagues (Allemand et al., 2019). Self-control is deeply connected with an abundance of adverse consequences for adolescents (Franken et al., 2016). Duckworth elucidated in her research that individuals who exhibit self-control as a coping strategy have a higher tendency of adapting positively in challenging circumstances hence the probability of amending their psychological, behavioral, and

considerable desires to achieve their long-standing objectives (Duckworth, 2011). Certainly, positively adapting to difficult situations is an essential approach that can support female adolescents during their transition period to early motherhood. Some studies have described self-control and modifying behavior to the anticipation of self as an operative coping strategy to reduce anxiety while predicting unhealthy behavior (Fergusson et al., 2013; Moffitt et al., 2011; Tangney et al., 2004). Finkenauer and colleagues in their study mentioned that self-blaming, indecision, and getting irritated are the least convenient attitudes to ease anxiety (Finkenauer et al., 2005). Nevertheless, modifying an attitude towards oneself is an appropriate approach that can be used to cope with difficult situations and strengthen self-actualization (Napholz, 2002). In my study, self-control was mentioned as a supportive strategy for stress reduction among my female participants, and it was perceived as a self-examining approach to monitoring their advancement towards achieving their aspirations. I discovered in my findings that some of the female participants had reduced their level of uncertainty and disappointments when they were organized and did not blame themselves for getting pregnant as adolescents. However, it is important to be alerted that not all pregnant and adolescent mothers could be prepared to implement a self-control strategy during their transition to early motherhood.

7.6.4 Self-encouragement

The adolescent fathers' narratives demonstrated that they experienced some difficulties as their obligations as individuals. For this reason, they felt capable to resolve their difficulties through their self-pursuit. As I have illustrated previously, the male participants in my study were appreciative of the encouragement they received from people around them, however, they felt they cannot always depend on reassurance from other people hence the need to reassure themselves during the difficult times of their transition to early fatherhood. These adolescent fathers' perception of self-encouragement can be considered as reinforcing their abilities to overcome their challenges and concentrate on becoming good fathers while pursuing their purpose as young men. Even when self-encouragement as a coping strategy is taken into account, I presumed that the adolescent fathers highlighted taking up accountabilities for a wasted opportunity. This finding agrees with other studies (Frewin et al., 2007; Jaime, 2014). Certainly, my study confirms that self-encouragement can be used as an approach to reduce stress, particularly the more self-encouraging the male participants were, the less

probable they were to perceive stress and felt confident. This is coherent with an earlier study (Saljughhi & Sadeghi, 2017) that found that individuals who are encouraged feel less anxious and enthusiastically participate in positive activities. Additionally, my findings also revealed that perceived stress affects emotional well-being, male participants who demonstrated an increased self-encouragement were perceived to be less anxious while their emotional well-being improved during their transition to adolescent fatherhood. This is coherent with the view that it is fundamental to study how self-encouragement affects the emotional well-being of people (Huh & Kim, 2017). My study elucidated the negotiating function of perceived stress in the link between self-encouragement and emotional well-being. Hence, I anticipate that my findings can stipulate information that may be beneficial in therapeutical interventions in the emotional well-being of adolescent parents.

7.6.5 Positive self-talk

The findings highlight the significant role of positive self-talk during a transition, a conventional finding given positive self-talks are considerably connected with adolescent well-being (Calvete & Cardenoso, 2002) and it may enable adolescent parents to focus on achieving their objectives while supporting to expedite their capability to cope well with negative thinking (Hidayat & Budiman, 2014). Conversely, negative self-talk is a significant predictor of adolescent loneliness and low self-esteem; particularly studies have shown that thoughts of personal disappointment considerably predict adverse circumstances (Ford, 2015). Distinctly in my study, was that although not all the male participants stated that they use positive self-talk as a coping strategy, the majority of the participants narrated how they replaced negative statements with positive self-talk anytime they felt anxious and this empowered them to understand the positive side of fatherhood. Adolescent fathers who exhibited a positive self-talk attitude were perceived to have gained a better-quality of emotional well-being. The effect was an enhancement in their performance as adolescent fathers and this was evident throughout their accounts. While there is a relationship between positive self-talk and well-being, my findings support the evidence identified previously that using progressive positive self-talk can specifically be connected to positive consequences among adolescents (Calvete & Cardenoso, 2002). Adolescent fathers in most cases take time alone to reflect and relax, improve the self, and deal with emotional stresses and this is considered a reflection of emotional development (Martin, Wood, Houghton, Carrol, & Hattie, 2014).

7.6.6 Acceptance

Readily accepting to be a father is one of the shared occurrences of adolescent males in encountering fatherhood in adolescence. The operational and self-absorbed acceptance of adolescent fatherhood is connected to the feeling of the obligation they have for their children and the mother of their children which is as a result may have caused the male participants' desire to experience the feeling of fatherhood. The male participants in my study spoke of a profound moment during their transition phase, where there was a shift from being a young boy to the level of being a father. They talked about accepting the reality of becoming a father even if it was not comfortable for them as they felt it may hinder their progress in life. However, adapting to their unchangeable circumstance helped them to maintain their psychological well-being and gave them the capability to fully take up their responsibility as fathers. A qualitative study conducted by Moridi and colleagues supports these findings, suggesting that acceptance can be one of the important focus in the adaptation process during a transition. Their findings showed that their study participants demonstrated an attitude of self-actualization and assurance when they accepted their circumstances as adolescent parents (Moridi et al., 2019). The male participants acknowledged that being a young father can be associated with some challenges however acceptance seemed to support them to cope better with their challenges. More, acceptance is connected with less depression, less discomfort-related stress, and enhanced well-being (Nakamura & Orth, 2005). Some of the male adolescents in my study also mentioned that they resolved to live in progression with their primary opinions, they were unwavering to set up specific objectives and work rigidly towards it and was mainly possible as a result of their concentration on being self-assured, brave and responsible. Based on my study, although some of the male participants reflected positively on their circumstances, modifying and regulating their personalities as adolescents was very challenging during their transition into early fatherhood.

7.7 Conclusions and key reflections

In the previous section, I discussed and presented my findings in connection to the main themes that emerged from the data collected. The study emphasized the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality, Ghana, providing insight into their transition phase. Recent studies have demonstrated the challenges adolescents encounter when they become pregnant and the stigma attached to their transition to adolescent parenthood, highlighting some of the negative stereotypes linked

to their experiences (De Jesus Sampaio et al., 2014; Ellis-Sloan, 2014). In light of the emerging scholarly research on adolescent parenting and the recent consistent rise in adolescent pregnancy and parenting in sub-Saharan Africa with the highest fertility globally and Ghana recording a 14% of adolescents between 15-19 year old's becoming parents (Ghana Statistical Service & Ministry of Health, 2018; Ruzibiza, 2020), I considered it very necessary to investigate into the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in Ghana. In this study I aimed to expand on the existing literature focusing mainly on the limited research on the lived experiences of both pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana, addressing the following main questions:

1. What are the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early motherhood?
2. What are the experiences of adolescent fathers, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early fatherhood?

In answering the research questions, my purpose was to also explore how adolescents feel when they realize they are pregnant or going to be a parent, how they feel during challenging times of their transition, who supports them, and how they cope with their difficulties. In answering these main research questions, I present in the subsequent section final deliberations on the empirical and theoretical assessment completed in my study based on Schlossberg's Transition Theory. I conclude this section with a reassertion of my contribution to the field and recommendations for public health policy and interventions.

7.8 Empirical Findings: reflections on the main research questions

RQ1: What are the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early motherhood?

My study has shed light on significant lived experiences of selected pregnant and adolescent mothers in a designated municipality in Ghana. Through in-depth interviews, I encouraged the female participants to narrate their experiences of being and becoming adolescent mothers, my empirical analysis demonstrated:

Pregnant and adolescent mothers' experiences varied during their transition to motherhood. The female adolescent narratives reveal the stigma, disappointment, and regret connected with adolescent pregnancy and motherhood experienced in the Ghanaian setting, as well as the additional burden associated with their society expectation of motherhood. I have argued that not only did these female adolescents feel stigmatized but also felt unwelcome because they got pregnant as adolescents and this had a lot of negative emotional impact on their well-being. However, some of them did not allow their situations to affect them hence the determination not to give up but rather encouraged them to pursue their future aspirations. The majority of the pregnant and adolescent mothers in my study though desired to become good mothers to their children, struggled with the responsibilities connected with motherhood as they still had to depend on family members for support. Nevertheless, they perceived that though challenging the transition phase gave them a perseverance and chance to transform their lives. It is important to gain an understanding of the difficulties female adolescents are confronted with during their transition to adolescent motherhood within the economic, social, and cultural background, as it creates the initial stage in promoting an opinion of adolescent pregnancy and motherhood that incorporates their views as well. Additionally, understanding the circumstances and situations in which pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers find themselves can be a more efficient approach to develop interventions that will meet their specific needs.

The ability to develop positive outcomes as a pregnant adolescent or an adolescent mother cannot be established as the challenges and risk involved is high. These risks may comprise of health concerns, not able to successfully receive a good educational qualification, living in poverty, and being unemployed. My study findings have elucidated that the female participants encountered difficulties such as financial instability, inability to continue education, and emotional distress. Nevertheless, amid their difficulties, they derived various sources of motivation to maintain their desired self-perception. Despite the difficulties in transitioning well into early motherhood, they were often encouraged to pursue their goals believing that accomplishments such as going back to school or learning a trade will produce a positive outcome for them and the future of their children.

As highlighted in chapter 5, social support appeared as another predominant superordinate theme across the female participants' accounts. The experiences narrated by the pregnant and adolescent mothers highlighted how they received informal social support from their families, peers, community members, and fathers of their children. The analysis from the female participants' narratives illustrated that they valued the emotional, material, and informational social support they received as it facilitated their transition to adolescent motherhood. In terms of the family support received, the findings of my study showed that the female participants' main source of material and emotional support came from family members, and these were given in the form of finance, child care, and guidance. The support received from family members such as parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunties empowered the female participants to feel loved and accepted, this can be associated with an improvement in their self-esteem. Based on the female participants' accounts, it is clear that receiving sufficient and continuous social support from family members influences pregnant and adolescent mothers' in enhancing their potential prospects.

Furthermore, the female adolescents demonstrated from their accounts that receiving social support from the father of their children contributed positively to the health outcome of their children. However not all the fathers provided the support, either because they were not in the position to support because they were students or not gainfully employed. The female participants' narratives also highlighted how the support they received from peers and some community members in the form of advice transformed their self-perception. The analysis revealed how the support influenced their thinking ability as they were encouraged to focus on the positive aspect of their transition phase rather than the negative aspect. This finding is fundamental in the interpretation of adolescent pregnancy and motherhood in a particular context such as the Ghanaian settings where pregnant adolescents and adolescent mothers are labeled as bad girls. For this reason, the female adolescents found some form of comfort from the support they received from some peers and community members and did not take for granted the assistance no matter how insignificant it was, some of the female participants referred to such supports as a stress reliever. Generally, my findings highlighted how the systems of social support can be considered as a factor that influences the positive modifications during the transition to adolescent motherhood.

The findings I discussed in chapter 6 concerning the fourth superordinate theme, highlight significant dynamics connected with some emotional and problem-solving approaches the female participants utilized to cope better with their transition to motherhood. The findings shed light on how strategies such as self-reliance, self-compassion, and self-control are a fundamental aspect of coping with difficult situations as pregnant and adolescent mothers. Self-reliance was considered as a strong conjectural prominence as it had a lot of implications on the female participants' self-expression, self-acceptance, and self-knowledge in their obligations as mothers creating a constructive outcome on their uniqueness as mothers. My study has demonstrated that pregnant and adolescent mothers through their self-reliance attitude became empowered to think autonomously and trust their disposition. It has also been shown through the findings in my study that embracing one's distinctiveness is a key element of a self-reliant person. The female participants demonstrated this quality and this also enabled them to strive towards their purpose as adolescents. Apart from developing a self-reliant attitude as a form of coping strategy, the female adolescents also developed a self-compassion and a self-control approach which had a major positive impact on their behaviors during their transition phase to adolescent motherhood. The analysis revealed how the female adolescents displayed a sense of kindness and empathy for themselves instead of judging and blaming themselves for getting pregnant and becoming mothers at a younger age. No matter how upsetting their circumstances were, they considered it as part of human life which could be overcome with time.

RQ2: What are the experiences of adolescent fathers, and what are their coping strategies during their transition into early fatherhood?

My study additionally explored the lived experiences of some adolescent fathers in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana. The analysis of data showed that although each of the male participants transitioned into early fatherhood differently their past experiences had a significant influence on how they acknowledged the news of becoming a father. The male adolescents in my study noted how becoming a father distorted their relationship with some of their family members, their educational ambitions, and the overall outlook of their prospects. My findings shed light on how readily the male participants altered their concentration from their goals and purposes to do their best to provide for the needs of their children immediately they realized they were going to become fathers. The male participants' narratives reveal the transitional phase that began with a sense of

unpreparedness hence the feeling of worry and fear at the news of becoming a father. By allowing the adolescent fathers to share their experiences of fatherhood and its meaning, the analysis also elucidated that the adolescent fathers had mixed feelings about their circumstances and this was an important strategy they utilized to manage their adverse experiences. In other words, they were empowered to cultivate an attitude of self-encouragement during their transition phase as a result of their capability to cope well with the mixed feelings they experienced. Despite the male participants' unpreparedness for fatherhood, there was a significant influence in their lives as their transition into fatherhood became an instrument of transformation. My findings highlight the importance of the positive transformation that occurred which inspired the male participant to focus on defining their new identity as fathers.

The views of the male participants in my study illustrate that fatherhood is a transformative phase that may provide an opportunity to move from defiance into determined adolescent men. Participants were conscious of the fatherly obligations and the changes that had taken place in their lives. It can be comprehended in the findings and descriptions that, the adolescent fathers in my study were willing to get involved in caring for their children, however, some claimed it became difficult especially when the relationship with the mother of their child was not stable. Their willingness can be demonstrated through their narratives, though there is a debate in the literature over issues such as adolescent fathers' unwillingness to get involved in bringing up their offspring. Interestingly, the narratives of the adolescent fathers in my study do not demonstrate any form of unwillingness to get involved though in the initial stages of their journey to become fathers they felt disappointed, angry, and worried as they moved through their transition phase, they were determined to be good fathers. My study highlights that even though adolescent fathers tried their best to keep up to their obligations, the challenges involved were not ignored. There were accounts of financial distresses, relationship problems with family members and mother of their child, and a blend of roles as a father and as an adolescent.

The male participants in my study explained how they placed a lot of importance on the support they received during their transition phase to early fatherhood. In terms of establishing significant interactions, the adolescent fathers identified relationships that had been strengthened with their family members, mother of their children, peers, and even some members of their communities through the support they were given, this was

very crucial in affecting their constructive identities as fathers. This confirmation stimulated the adolescent fathers' consciousness of self-worth in their obligations as fathers producing an encouraging outcome on their personalities as fathers. My findings demonstrate that the adolescent fathers appreciated the financial and emotional support they received from some of their family members and this enabled them to develop an encouraging outlook of themselves as fathers. Some of the male adolescents also acknowledged receiving both financial and emotional support from the mother of their child. They referred to the social support from the mother of their child as, enhancing their well-being while reducing doubts, fear, and uncertainty of adolescent fatherhood. The adolescent fathers' accounts, in highlighting the support received from the mother of their child, also reveal the social support their peers and some community members provided which positively impacted their self-enhancement and capabilities as young fathers.

The adolescent fathers' accounts, in highlighting some of the activities they engaged into enabled them to cope well with difficult circumstances during their transition phase to early fatherhood, this revealed three approaches connected to their coping strategies. My study shed light on approaches such as self-encouragement, positive self-talk, and acceptance as a significant strategy adopted to cope with challenging moments as adolescent fathers. Narratives from the male participants elucidated that self-encouragement was the topmost strategy they utilized as it enhanced their self-confidence facilitating their capabilities to strive and achieve their objectives not underestimating their struggles as adolescents. The male adolescents recognized that there were times when they needed to reflect on their desires to be good fathers to their children and this appeared to be a constrain but with self-encouragement, they decided not to allow their difficulties to overwhelm their ambitions. The findings in my studies also illustrate that these adolescent fathers through a positive self-talk approach minimized negative thoughts that may have hindered their accomplishments as young fathers. It has also been indicated through my findings that adolescent fathers do their best to commit to their obligations as fathers by accepting responsibility while retorting to modifying their way of thinking that harmonizes confidently to their opinions of life.

7.9 Theoretical reflections: Schlossberg's Transition Theory

The narratives shared by the participants in my study propose a comprehensive interpretation of Schlossberg's transition theory. The findings of my study support that Schlossberg's transition theory can function as an effective model to understand the process of development.

It served as a lens to explore the four main factors of components that influenced my study participants' ability to cope during their transition phase to adolescent parenthood. While scholarly research has highlighted concerns regarding the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents, there is a paucity of research exploring how adolescents engage in the process of a transition to parenthood which involves a series of phases whether moving in, moving through, or moving out of a situation. In analyzing the narrative accounts of my study participants, I comprehended that Schlossberg's transition theory which views transition more holistically can be utilized to capture participants' perception of their experiences in early parenthood and how they influence the success of their transition by focusing on the four key sets of components: situation, self, support, and strategies.

7.9.1 Situation

The first main factor, situation comprises elements such as a trigger, timing, control, and whether an individual's evaluation of the transition is beneficial or unconstructive. In my study, the transitions were unanticipated, majority of the adolescent pregnancies were triggered by their educational levels. The narrations of most of the participants illustrated that they were either in Junior Secondary Schools or in Senior Secondary Schools. Some of the participants also came from low-income families and this might have also triggered their transition into adolescent parenthood. In terms of timing, most of the participants in my study stated that their transition occurred at the wrong time as they were not prepared to be parents. Hence did not initially have control over their situations as they struggled to come to terms with them. However, they steadily developed strategies that helped them to gradually have a grip over their difficult situations. Conclusively, the participants' evaluation of the transition as beneficial or not varied based on each participant's perception. Fundamentally, I would categorize the situation in which the adolescents found themselves to be initially a liability. However, amid their challenges, their children became an asset instead of a liability to them. There was a general sense of initial disappointment, fear, regret, and mixed feeling surrounding the transition period of

adolescent parenthood. Despite the difficulties, there was a sequence of optimism during the transition phase.

7.9.2 Self

The second factor in the coping assets and liability is the self, and this constitutes considering the personal and demographic characteristics and the psychological resource. Though my study participants had different opinions about themselves and the difficulties they encountered, they illustrated an encouraging aptitude and preparedness to overcome their difficulties by modifying their behavior to move forward to achieve their purpose. Additionally, their demographic characteristics and psychological resources had a great impact on their transition phase. It is also worth noting that my study participants regularly drew upon their own past experiences to help them negotiate well during their transition phase. Through their challenges as adolescent parents, they were empowered to understand themselves better and demonstrate responsibility for their assurance in life. When faced with a difficulty in their responsibility as young parents, most of them developed an attitude that enabled them to perceive their transition phase as a pivotal point in their lives.

7.9.3 Support

Support can be in different forms and may include family, partner, peers, and community. Some of this support can be classified as a liability, as discussed earlier, some of the female participants in their narratives reported not receiving enough support from the father of their children because they did not accept the pregnancy or they were students and did not have any source of income. The majority of the participants reported receiving some form of support from either their families, father/mother of their child, peers, or community members. One of the main sources of support came from family members and this served as an asset for most of the participants in my study as they transitioned to parenthood. Participants consistently stated how the support they received positively influenced their transition phase. Furthermore, participants also mentioned the significance of having parents who are supportive and understand the difficulties of parenting a child as an adolescent. Being supported by the father or mother of the child offered participants the opportunity to navigate their transition successfully, while support from peers and some members of their communities enhanced their identities as adolescent parents.

7.9.4 Strategies

The concluding element is strategies and can be classified under three types: changing the situation, changing the meaning, and managing the stress to help with relaxation after encountering difficulty. With regards to the participants in my study, they were able to use some forms of strategies as assets during their transition phase. The most essential and emergent factor that was noticeably dominant as an asset by my study participants as those that supported them to manage stressful situations after going through a difficult time. The participants elucidated that self-encouragement and self-reliance were key elements to positively negotiate the transition to parenthood. Although there were several strategies and phases of effective achievement, pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents who participated in events that permitted them to manage stress and relax felt they were more capable to accept their responsibilities as parents. From positive self-talk to self-compassion and acceptance and self-control comprised approaches they applied to manage anxieties and distress challenges was a clear asset in their transition phase.

The phase of every transition is viewed holistically by Schlossberg; therefore, I viewed the transition as an absolute complete process of development. My findings elucidated that, most of the study participants appeared to be in the “moving in” or “moving through” phase of Schlossberg’s transition theory. The majority of the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents endeavored to utilize their assets of situation, self, and strategies to control the liabilities of support to enable them to modify their behavior to accept their responsibility as parents throughout their transition phase. Though most adolescents encounter a lot of challenges with adapting to become parents, the majority of my study participants narrated that though they faced difficulties they did not allow their struggles to overcome them.

7.10 Contribution to the field of study

My findings, while considered in the context of previous studies on the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in Ghana, emphasized the challenges they experience as young parents. Specifically, my findings provide evidence that these pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the initial stages of their transition phase feel stigmatized, regretful, and unprepared for parenthood, highlighting the necessity for

a tailored and dedicated approach to better comprehend and tackle the challenges of these pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in Ghana. Reflecting on my findings, public health practitioners and policymakers must understand the challenges pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents encounter and how they cope with difficult times and the consequences these challenges have on their long-term wellbeing and that of their children.

My findings add to the existing literature on the experience of becoming a parent from the perspectives of the adolescents in my study emphasizing how the transition to parenthood comprise moving from the reality of been a young person to a new reality of becoming a parent, also highlighting the acceptance and ability to adapt to the role of being a parent through predetermined characteristics connected with the phase of adolescence. As demonstrated throughout my analysis the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents consistently emphasized making sense of their experiences, for some of them parenthood empowered them to develop their self-identity and were motivated to pursue and achieve their objectives. In capturing the pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents' experiences and assessments of their transition phase, my study ascertains that it is important to utilize an empirically centered approach that will develop and implement interventions that tackle the emotional and socioeconomic consequence of adolescent parenthood while reducing the overburdened expectations of the society.

This study offers further insights into the support pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents receive to cope well during their transition phase. Pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents get various forms of support from family, mother/father of their child, peers, and sometimes community. This support which is in the form of emotional, informational, and financial resources play important role in lessening anxieties and worries among most pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. My findings highlight the significance of receiving social support as a pregnant or adolescent parent as it offers the possibility to develop a self-assertion attitude which may decrease the impact of stigma. As demonstrated throughout the analysis my study participants frequently appreciated the support offered them and did not take it for granted highlighting that receiving support may eventually result in an improved self-image and better quality of life.

Finally, my findings indicate that my study participants were able to devise various coping strategies during their transition phase in the form of self-reliance, self-compassion, self-control, self-encouragement, positive self-talk, and acceptance. Many of the study participants were self-determined and wanted to take responsibility for their lives, they did not allow the feeling of uncertainty to overwhelm them hence influencing their future aspirations. While perceived as an effective form of coping strategy for young parents ambitious to achieve their objectives, these approaches were quite demanding for those who did not receive support and could not build their form of confidence due to emotional and financial constraints.

7.11 Limitations of my study

There are a few limitations connected with my study that mandate additional deliberations. As with all phenomenological research, this study has a reliability weakness, researchers must bracket their own experiences and seek to achieve in-depth lived experience information from their study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers must be able to justify in their findings that the results obtained and analyzed from their study are not biased to achieve reliability (Silverman, 2013). Although I may have justified and demonstrated that my findings are a result of the data I collected and analyzed, another researcher may find it difficult to conduct the same study in the future and reach the same conclusions. On the other hand, within the research design and the analysis of my findings, I aimed to confirm that my findings are dependable by ensuring that the research process I used was consistent and conducted with cautious consideration to the guidelines and conventions of qualitative methodology. Given the contextual description of my study, I anticipate that if my findings are dependable, it will be easier to discover a coherent pattern of reaction that will persistently be established over time.

Another limitation relates to the fact that, though all the interviews were conducted in the native language of my study participants I had to employ experienced translators to translate raw data to English to facilitate easy and faster transcription. I did this because though as the researcher I could speak the native language fluently I could not interpret the data efficiently for a good analysis, this can be an issue affecting the quality of my data. To deal with this specific limitation, I did my best to employ two translators who did double translations to increase the transparency and credibility of the data. Also,

during the transcription and analysis phase, I endeavored to double-check the data by comparing the translated data to the raw data collected.

There is always the risk of a probable ethical issue when researching individuals. One of my leading priorities was the well-being of my study participants who were already vulnerable due to the situation most of them found themselves as pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. I utilized exceptional precaution to reduce the possibility of causing both physical and or psychological harm, to each of my study participants. Consequently, assigning secondary prominence to the research questions. This elucidates that if I have to choose between causing harm to any of my study participants, I have to place less importance on the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

7.12 Future study recommendations

My study emphasizes a few concerns which call for a suitable opportunity for future research. The analysis in my study placed importance on exploring the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana, emphasizing the need for public health policies to tailor interventions that will provide culturally personalized support services to pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. My study emphasized that it is very important that policymakers concentrate on building shared accountability which will provide a shift in having a better understanding of the needs of adolescents who experience challenges during their transition phase to adolescent parenthood. Future research could explore a further comprehensive emphasis on the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents utilizing longitudinal qualitative research. Using a longitudinal approach will expedite the explanation of a deeper understanding of the processes involved in the experiences of transition to parenthood, this will enable researchers to focus on the narratives and trajectories on each pregnant and adolescent parent, capturing critical moments and process involved in their transition phase.

As I listened to my study participants share their challenges of managing their lives, I realized that most of their narratives focused on aspects of their experiences happening outside the environment of their school settings, further research could be established on my findings by providing an additional detailed assessment of the challenges pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents who go back to school encounter with their fellow

students and teachers and how this affects their coping strategies and aspirations as young parents. Reflecting on the methodology I chose for conducting this research and the concentration on individual interpretations and narratives, my findings characterize a fixed and skewed evaluation of the lived experiences of adolescents' experiences of transitioning to parenthood. Future research exploring the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents could concentrate on collecting data using other forms of methodologies such as ethnography, case study, and grounded theory to attain a wider assessment on the challenges, support, and coping strategies of adolescents transitioning into early parenthood. Conclusively, while the literature has demonstrated the efficacy of Schlossberg's theory in practice, research supporting its rationality is deficient (Evans et al., 2010). Nevertheless, my research recommends that as a theoretical framework, it captures adolescents' perceptions of their experiences in early parenthood.

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ERKLÄRUNG

CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

- 2016-2021 **PhD Candidate:** Institute of Educational Science, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany.
- 2011 – 2012 **Master of Public Health (MPH):** University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom.
- 2007 – 2010 **BSc (Hon) Public and Community Health:** De Montfort University, United Kingdom.
- 1998 – 2001 **HND Statistics:** Ho Polytechnic, Ghana.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2016 – 2021 PhD Research Scholarship from German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)
- 2011 – 2012 Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarship: Rotary District 1070, UK
- 2008 – 2009 Involve Student Community Action (De Montfort University), UK
- 1996 – 1997 International Award for Young People (St Roses Secondary School), Ghana

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Dec.2014-Till Date **Assistant Research Fellow:** School of Public Health, University of Health and Allied Sciences Ho, Ghana
- Nov.2013-Nov.2014 **Senior Research Officer:** Dodowa Health Research Centre, Ghana
- Jan.2014- Nov.2014 **Institutional Review Board Administrator:** Dodowa Health Research Centre, Ghana
- Jan.2013- Oct.2013 **Project Coordinator:** Rotary Club of Leicester: Rotary District 1070 Grant
- April 2012-Nov.2012 **Nursing Assistant:** NHS Lothian Staff Bank, UK
- Jan.2009-Oct 2010 **Health Care Support Worker:** NHS Leicester Partnership, UK

VOLUNTARY SERVICES

- Aug 2015-Till Date **Sexual and Reproductive Health Facilitator:** Nneka Foundation, Ghana
- Oct.2007-May 2009 **Sexual Health Clinic Assistant:** Involve- De Montfort University, UK

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS

- Sept. 2020 ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING - Society for Social Medicine & Population Health (Online)
- Sept. 2020 EARA 17th CONFERENCE - Adolescence in a rapidly changing world (Online)
- March 2019 AfHEA 5th CONFERENCE – Securing PHC for all: the foundation for making progress on UHC in Africa
- Sept. 2018 ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING - Society for Social Medicine & Population Health, Glasgow, UK
- Feb. 2018 MAXQDA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE - User Conference, Berlin, Germany
- Sept. 2017 GLOBAL EVIDENCE SUMMIT - Using Evidence: Improving lives. Cape Town, South Africa
- March 2017 TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL SUPPORT - Everyday Life Perspectives and Political Insights. Mainz, Germany.
- Jan. 2017 2ND EMERGING FORGIVENESS RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE - Can Forgiveness Be Strengthened in Africa. Accra, Ghana
- Oct. 2016 WRITING UP THEORY AND DATA - Transnational Social Support Training Group. University of Hildesheim, Germany.
- Jan. 2016 1ST EMERGING FORGIVENESS RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE - Can Forgiveness Be Strengthened in Africa. Accra, Ghana
- Dec. 2007 MEDICINE FOR MEMBERS - University Hospitals of Leicester NHS. Leicester, UK

PROFESSIONAL TRAININGS

May 2018	MOOC on Implementation Research (IR) with a focus on infectious diseases of poverty, WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)
July 2015	Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), University of Adelaide, Comprehensive Systematic Review Training. University of Health and Allied Sciences, Hohoe Campus, Ghana
June 2015	Professional Development Training (Pedagogy), University of Health and Allied Sciences, Hohoe Campus, Ghana
May 2015	Good Clinical Practice for Clinical Trials Training, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Hohoe Campus, Ghana
June 2009	PROACT-SCIPr-UK (Leicestershire Partnership Trust (NHS) Leicester, UK
Jan. 2008	Safer Sex Awareness (Leicester City Community Safer Sex Project) Leicester, UK
March 2008	Pregnancy Testing (Leicester City Community Safer Sex Project) Leicester, UK
February 2001	Corporate Leadership and Creative Skills Development training. Ho, Ghana

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Society for Social Medicine & Population Health

European Association for Research on Adolescence

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed assent and consent statement

Informed assent form

This informed assent form is for children aged 10-17 years.

This informed assent form has two parts:

- I. Information sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- II. Certificate of assent (for signatures if you agree to take part)

You will be given a copy of the full informed assent form.

Part I. Information sheet

I am a PhD student at the Institute of Education, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany. I am currently undertaking a study on the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality.

Confidentiality

The information that you will give us will be kept strictly confidential and used for the intended purposes only. The information will be accessible to only the study investigators, your answers will be anonymous, and at no time will a link be made between the answers given and the names of people who were involved in the discussion.

Possible Risks and Benefits

There are no direct benefits or risks to you for your participation in this study. However, it might benefit you, your community and the nation in future. When we have finalized our study, we would like to share the results with you through the gatekeepers in your community.

Voluntariness

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will not affect you adversely in any way. The interview will last a maximum of about sixty minutes. If you have any questions before the interview starts, we are happy to answer them. If you agree to participate after having received the above information, we will indicate on a form your agreement to do so.

Withdrawal

You have the right to refuse to participate in the discussion at any time. Your refusal will not in any way prejudice or affect you.

Interviewer: I have checked with the participant and he or she understands the information about the study and the requirements for participating in the interview.

Name _____

Contacts

If you have any questions, now or in the future, about this study, please contact Mrs. Sitsofe Gbogbo. The Ghana Health Service Ethics Review Committee has reviewed and given approval for this study to be conducted. If you have questions with regards to your rights as a participant in the study, you can contact Mrs. Sitsofe Gbogbo on 0209610405. Also, if you need further clarification about this study, please contact the Ghana Health Service Ethical Review Committee, Madam Hannah Frimpong on 0507041223.

Part II: Certificate of assent

I have been invited to participate in a study understanding the experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents. I have read this information (or had the information read to me), and I understand it. I have had my questions answered and know that I can ask questions later if I have them. I agree to take part in the study

(initial of Respondent)

Interviewer’s signature:

I have accurately read or witnessed the accurate reading of the assent form to the potential participant, who has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the participant has given assent freely.

Name of Interviewer

Signature of interviewer

Date

A copy of this informed assent form has been provided to the participant.

(Signature of the principal investigator or assistant)

Part II: Certificate of consent

I have been invited to participate in a study that seeks to explore and examine the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality. I have read this information (or had the information read to me), and I understand it. I have had my questions answered and know that I can ask questions later if I have them. I agree to take part in the study. _____ (initials).

Respondent’s signature (only if the respondent consents):

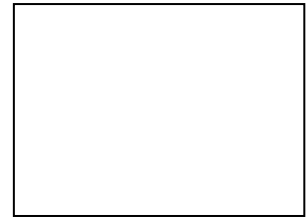
Print name of respondent:

Signature of respondent:

Date:

(dd/mmm/yyyy)

Thumbprint of the
Respondent:



Witness' signature: (A witness' signature and the respondent's thumbprint are required only if the respondent is illiterate. In this case, a literate witness must sign. If possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection with the study team.)

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, who has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the participant has given consent freely.

Print name of
witness:

Signature of
witness:

Date:

(dd/mmm/yyyy)

Interviewer's signature:

I have accurately read or witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, who has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the participant has given consent freely.

Print name of interviewer:

Signature of interviewer:

Date:

(dd/mmm/yyyy)

A copy of this informed consent form has been provided to the participant. _____
(signature of the principal investigator or assistant).

Appendix 2: Timeline Infographic

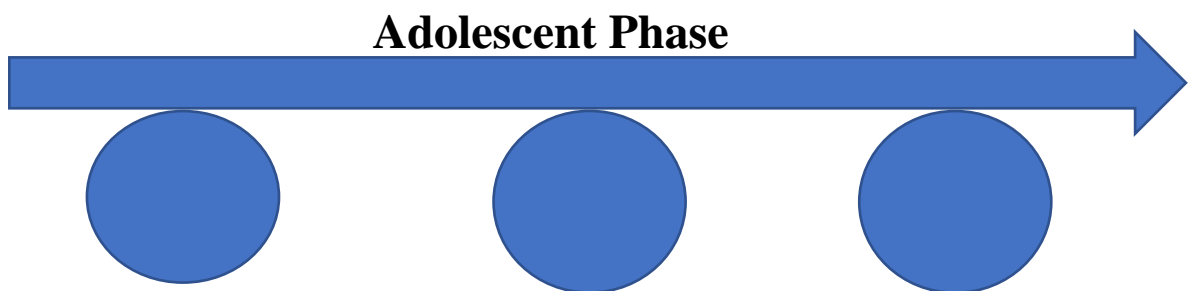
Main Occurrences in My Life Phase

1.

2.

3.

4.



Appendix 3: In-Depth Interview Guide

INTRODUCTION

Thank you all for coming today/tonight. My name is _____ and I am a student of University of Mainz. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study which seeks to explore and examine the lived experiences of pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents in the Hohoe Municipality of Ghana. Evidence from this research will aid us make recommendation to stakeholders on how to establish and maintain health services that will adequately meet the needs of young people especially pregnant adolescents and adolescent parents.

We would like to ask your permission to record this discussion to enable us to capture all the important information you will give us. We assure you that this information is only for research and nothing else.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Give me a brief background about yourself. How would you describe your life before becoming pregnant/ a parent? How would you describe yourself?
2. What are some of your current experiences while pregnant/ as a parent? What are some of the challenges?
3. How do you handle the challenges you face as a pregnant adolescent/parent?
4. How did you feel when you heard you were going to be a parent?
5. Tell me about how your parents and people around you responded to the fact that you were going to be a parent and what are some of the supports you received from them?
6. How will you describe a good parent, what does it mean to be a good parent?
7. How do you feel as a parent when you are confronted with difficult situations with reference to how to bring up your child? (PROBE: feeling confident in parenting, confidence in being true to oneself, feeling prepared and proud)
8. What are your goals as a parent and what do you desire most?
9. What are your dreams for your child, how would you want your child to be brought up?
10. What do you like about being a parent?