

# Exploring Mechanisms Used by Young Mother Learners in Striking a Balance Between Training and Child Care Demands at Bigwa Folk Development College in Morogoro Tanzania

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**Abstract:** Young motherhood is associated with several challenges to girls, among them being the attainment of educational goals while taking care of parenting responsibilities. Young motherhood is currently a common global problem. Many girls around the world with ages between 15 and 19 increasingly become mothers at this age instead of being at school. Consequently, fail to reach their intended dreams. The purpose of this study was to explore mechanisms used by young mother learners in striking a balance between training and child care demands at Bigwa Folk Development College in Morogoro, Tanzania. The study adopted an interpretive approach and a case study design, to gather insight and in-depth information on the subjective experiences of participants. The study employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques in which data were saturated at 16 participants. Additionally face to face and documentary interviews were used as data collection methods, the data obtained were analyzed by using qualitative content analysis. The study revealed that employees were leaving their children at home with caretakers, using the existing support systems, sacrificing other duties to study, registering their children at nursery school, and engaging in petty business. The researchers recommend some issues including establishing the special program and student group at the college where students will address their issues without fear, finding donors for young mother learners who will support them financially and other important materials, sensitizing parents on the importance of supporting young mother learners in attaining their education dreams.

**Keywords:** *Young Mother Learners, Training, Child Care, Folk Development College.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Young motherhood is associated with several challenges to girls, among them being the attainment of educational goals while taking care of parenting responsibilities. Young motherhood is currently a common global problem. Many girls around the world with ages between 15 and 19 increasingly become mothers at this age instead of being at school. Every year around 21 million girls aged 15-19 years in developing regions become pregnant (WHO, 2020). There are differences in rates across the regions, for example, the rates in East Asia are 7.1% likewise, in Ethiopia the total fertility ranges from 7.2% in Somalia range from 3% in Kenya the rate

range from 18%, and in Tanzania, the rate of teenage motherhoods is 27% (Njoka, 2016, TDHS, 2016).

Teenage motherhoods have an impact on girls' education attainment, this group is more likely to face limits in the attainment of their education goals compared to non-pregnant girls (Undie *et al.*, 2015). According to WHO (2020), teenage pregnancies are the main cause of school dropout, UNFPA (2018) estimates that nearly 13,000 girls were dropping out of school due to pregnancy each year, which may lead the country to lose manpower.

However different strategies have been taken to ensure girl students complete attain their education goals. Such measures include the adaption of both Agenda 2063 and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for African countries which tend to eliminate all gender disparities in education levels.

In the short run the implementation of these strategies, lead to the formulation of different policies and programs aiming to re-admission and continuing of young mothers and pregnant girls at primary and secondary schools. For example, 26 African countries established laws and policies which guarantee girls the right to go back to school after pregnancy (HRW, 2018) which helps to reduce the disparities of gender in the attainment of education. Despite the campaigns made by African Unions and United Nations on establishing laws, and policies that allow pregnancies and young mother students to be at schools Niboye (2018) and Adofo (2017) reported that, young mother learners in Folk Development College have poorer academic achievement, they are likely to have a high rate of missing lessons, some of them drop out of school and others are facing economic hardship.

Watson (2017) asserts that young mother learners do not pay attention in class and doing classwork due to the parenting role they have. Additionally, Karim (2017) observed that young mother learners are likely to experience trauma and eventually develop bad behaviors which may affect children throughout their lives. Maemeka *et al.*, (2018) said that student mothers manage to attend school and have good academic achievement when they get support services they have from their parents. Chauke (2018) argues that stakeholders have to play a role as the principal supporter of young mothers, morally and financially. When young mother learners lack support from stakeholders is often very difficult for them to get enough time for attending school, and nurturing their children to a standard.

Nowadays there is an increasing number of students with families in Folk Development College in Tanzania (KTO, 2018). Researchers (for example; Adofo 2017, Niboye 2018, Chauke 2018, Danky *et al.*, 2019, Karim 2017, Mwaifuge 2015), argued that this group faces several challenges in learning which are brought by child-rearing, pregnancy caring which significantly led to the academic failure of the students. While the challenges young mothers face in learning are well documented, the strategies they employ in striking a balance between taking care of their children and meeting college learning demands are not well known especially in Folk Development Colleges. Therefore, this study aims to unveil such strategies basing on the experiences of young mothers studying at Bigwa Folk Development College in Morogoro, Tanzania.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

According to Ghose & John (2017), young mother are women between the ages of 11 and 19 who become pregnant and parent their children. This group is associated with challenges of missing education rights compared to non-mothers; they are forced to leave schools for attending other roles including parental role. Vehoev (2015) argued that child care is the skill of looking after children by a day care center, babysitter, or other providers, this care can be provided either by parents (family), Centre or supports from friends. All of this was to ensure that child health, safety, and security issues are well managed. Lining with this assertion it is viewed that in the absent of biological mother children can be cared through supports from different angles, pertaining that the services should be well managed and sufficiently. According to KTO (2018), Folk development College was established in Tanzania around 1975 at the rural areas as part of functional literacy programs which was third phase of the adult Education programs, young adults who are out of formal education including girls students who were expelled out from primary and secondary schools because of pregnant, with the purpose of providing training such as vocational training and general knowledge such as entrepreneurship, life skills, civic education, and communication skills which will help participants to develop skills to acquire formal employment or self-employment. Despite of these efforts, young mother learners in these colleges are experienced with challenges of making a balance between parenting and meeting training requirements (KTO, 2018). However, Folk development Colleges are partially funded through government to cover remaining costs of running the courses including recover of fees and students' accommodations, while other expenses such as food, medical care for students and their children, and learning materials are covered by NGOs such as KTO, and KAMFED (Niskanen, 2018).

### ➤ *Theoretical Framework*

The finding of this study was bult on the Power-Load Margin. This theory is developed by McClusky's (1963). The theory was found relevant because it provides analysis on the different roles young mother learners used in competing to achieve education endeavor. This theory shows a connotation between load and power in career. In this theory load is termed as set of demands required to maintain autonomy, while power described as a set the resources a person has at her disposal to cope with the load, where by margin is the relationship existing between power and load. Moreover, this theory asserted that the greater the power in relation to the load the more the margin available, also when there is a surplus of power, a margin is present to handle the load, and when the margin is increased there is reduction in the load or increase in the power (Mwaifuge, 2015). Furthermore, McClusky, (1963) classified load in to two elements; internal and external element. External element is associated to commitments of family, career and community, internal load

involves life expectations developed by people such as desires, aspirations and future goals. While power is described as an individual's physical and mental abilities which involved both internal and external resources. The external power includes social and economic abilities and family support where by internal power consists of skills and experiences with facilities successful performance such as personality, resiliency and coping skills. In relation to this study load includes young mothers' responsibilities such as caring for their babies, school routines which needs extra power either from the management, parents, fellows and community to enable them to cope with the dual roles they have.

#### ➤ *Empirical Studies*

Danky *et al.*, (2019) explores the struggles and coping strategies of student mothers at the University of Cape coast in Ghana, the study found that young mother learners manage to balance the dual responsibilities of taking care their children and attending school when they are keeping children at daycare centers, rising loans and relying on husbands and friends support, the study recommended that special services such as lactating rooms, daycare centers, and counselling services to the student mothers in all education centers.

Additionally, Chauke (2018) conducted a study on the challenges experienced by teenage mothers in secondary schools, the study observed that teenage mothers had difficulty in balancing schooling and take care of their children because they lack support from their educators, peers, parents, and the community at large, the study recommended that, for teenage mothers to succeed with their schooling maximum support is needed from all stakeholders, that peers, parents, educators, and the whole community structures. Also, Karim (2017) studies on the challenges experienced by young mother learners upon re-entry to formal primary school, found that lack of much-needed financial, emotional and social support was a challenge for the young mother learners in their coping with education successfully, hence the study recommended that young mother learners should be given support from stakeholders, and parents in taking care their children and assisting them meeting school requirements such as buying school uniforms, exercise books, and school fees.

#### ➤ *Conceptual Framework*

The study used narration in presenting the framework of this study, basically the study aimed at exploring mechanisms used by young mother learners in striking a balance between training and taking care children. young mothers have demanding roles which are needed to be accomplished, they are required to be ideal mothers in the image of the society which made them take care their children by feeding them, attending them to the clinic and hospital when they are sick, sheltering them, and clothing them, at the same time they are required to be an ideal student by attending class regularly, doing assignment and meeting deadlines, sitting for the examination, doing projects, and having all school

requirements such as pens, exercise books, and school uniforms. In meeting the idealized mothers and students need enough time and resources for young mother learners, due to the inadequate of these made young mother to use support system, sacrifice least duties, engaging in petty business in order to balance the dual role they have.

### III. METHODOLOGY

In this study qualitative case study design was used, this enabling to get an in-depth understanding of the strategies used by young mother learners in balance between training and child caring demands at Bigwa Folk Development College. qualitative research has the advantage of uncovering the lived experiences of individuals by enabling them to interpret and attribute meaning to their experiences and in the process construct their worlds. Additionally, purposive and snowball sampling techniques was employed in selecting participants in which data were saturated at 16 participants, the sample consisted nine (9) young mother learners, five (5) teachers, and two (2) matrons. In depth semi structured interviews, and documentary reviews was used as data collection methods. Through interviews researcher were able to listen to participants' stories and thereby capture the deep meanings of their lived experiences.

Documentaries such as attendance registers, and examination results were reviewed. It is believed that triangulating data-collection methods increases the reliability and validity of the collected information. Ethical measure that guarantees trustworthiness were observed, where by permission to carry out the research was sought from Bigwa Folk Development College, participants were participated without been forced by researcher and they were free to withdraw at any stage of the research, names were not used to ensure the participants' anonymity. Lastly data obtained were done through the coding of transcribed data and field notes. Through coding, data in this study was reduced in to manageable forms and patterns and themes were identified.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. *Performance Status of Young Mother Learners*

The total number of young mother learners at Bigwa Folk Development College were of which 28 of them were single, living with their parents, and guardians, while 11 young mothers living with their parents. The majority of young mother learners are from poor families, and they became mothers when they are at primary and secondary level which made them to be out of formal education due to the Tanzanian education law, and policy which bans pregnant students, and young mothers to stay at primary and secondary school. alternative to that they joined Bigwa Folk Development College as an alternative to formal education for archiving their educational goals.

This implies that educational law and policies has impact in the attainment of the ones' educational goals particularly girls, nevertheless, students from the poor families are more vulnerable in fulfilling their future dreams as they engaged in sexual relations in a tender age because of their economic hardship and finally they get pregnant. Generally, the academic performance of young mother learners is not very low, the evidence of their academic performance for four years 2018 to 2021 show that only one student scored grade 'A' nine (09) 'B' grade, thirty-two (32) 'C' grade, twenty-seven (27) 'D' grade and sixty-seven (67) obtained 'F' grade. This performance revealed that despite of the challenges facing young mother learners in taking dual roles they can perform better when they get support from stakeholders. These findings are concurred with Chauke (2018) who found that young mother learners manage to stay at schools and they perform good in their academics as they get support in taking care their children by their parents, peers and NGOs.

### B. Mechanisms Used by Young Mother Learners

#### ➤ Leaving their Children with Care Takers

The study found that young mother learners leave their children at home with care takers when they are going to school, this makes them to get enough time for accomplish their academic routines such as affording to submit assignment on time, paying attention in the classroom, as well as attending lesson regularly. Moreover, the study found that young mothers' children are given sufficient services by care takers. One of the participants reported that:

*“My aunt treats my child as hers. She is freely to feed my child, taking her to the hospital when am at school. Sometime all people around me are supportive. No one want to see my child is suffer when am not around home” (Young mother learners at Bigwa folk development college)*

Another respondent reported that:

*“Services which my child got from my mum is sufficient, my baby enjoys to stay with my mum when am at school, she cares her friendly” (Young mother learner at Bigwa folk development college).*

The finding is in line with Danky et al (2019) who posited that, young mother learners managed to attend school regularly and try to balance their dual roles of taking children and attending schools when they are keeping children at daycare centers and relying on husbands.

#### ➤ Support System

The study found that majority of young mother learners manage to meet school requirements and attending children demands through supporting from their family, peers, college and support from NGOs. They get support on taking care their children, in fulfilling school requirements such as buying

school uniforms, paying them school fees, exercise books, and giving them pocket money. One participant said that:

*“I have managed to attend school due to support I have got from my family and peers. They are supporting me in providing different services to my child when am at school, really my child is enjoying with the services she gets from my parents and am comfortable for being at college” (Young mother learner at Bigwa folk development college).*

Another participant also had this to say:

*“The college supporting us on taking care our children, there is a child caregiver who is paid salary by the college. She is taking care our children when we are in the lesson, it is somehow helpful for us. Additionally, it is easy to observe the services which our children get as well as staying with them for long time” (Young mother learner at Bigwa folk development college).*

This finding is contrary with Chauke (2018) who observed that teenage mother had difficulty in balancing schooling and take care of their children because they lack support from their educators, peers, parents, and community. Furthermore, the finding also build in power-load Margin theory by McClusky's (1963), which asserts that the great the power in relation to the load the more the margin is available. The available support system used by young mother learners help them to reach the margin point.

#### ➤ Registering Children Nursery Schools

The study found that majority of the young mother learners at Bigwa folk Development College are registered their children at nursery schools so that they can get enough time for accomplishing school routines. During the interview session young mother reported that when children are at school, they are able to attend classes and completing school works. They also used school bus to transport their children to and from school, this minimizes the role of young mother on taking their children at school. additionally, when children are at school they get food, and playing with their fellows, this minimizes the disturbance of missing their mothers during the day time. For young mothers who registered their students at boarding school have enough time to concentrate with academic roles compared to those who registered their children at day school. during the interview session young mother said they are only free at a day time because their children are at school and they used the day time to attend classes and doing academic works because when they are coming back, they are busy with cooking for their children and family. This is also in agreement with Danky et al., (2019) who was of the view that, some of young mother students either take their children with them, use paid domestic workers or take them to day care centers, and leave children with neighbors.



➤ *Sacrifice Other Duties in Order to Study*

As the young mother learners combine academic work with motherhood responsibility, they are more likely to experience conflicting of these roles thus causing stress. In balancing of these dual roles, the study found that young mother learners at Bigwa Folk Development College stop some of roles and making concentrate on others. When they are at home they stopped washing and cleaning the house, outing with their family, attending church services and programs frequently with their children, taking the children to school, and in most of the time they prepared food in late time. They used to stop these least duties in order to make the time of study is going regularly with the family. The findings shows that academic programme has big toll on the organization of the home in the absence of the mother. One of the respondents said:

*“...it come a time to stop the least duties to ensure that my studies do not affect much, despite that I am only girl in my family some time I sacrifice other duties, when I go back home, I prepared dinner in alate time in order to accomplish my academic works, I do also stop to clean the houses in order to attend school.....” (Young mother learner at Bigwa folk development college).*

The finding corroborates with that of Adofo (2021) who established that, student mothers coped with the financial challenges in various ways such as support from husbands, students' loans, assistance from relatives and soft loans from parents and friends, and doing temporary jobs.

➤ *Engaging in Petty Business*

The study revealed that young mother learners are doing petty business in order to minimize the challenge of economic hardship caused by the dual role they have. It is observed that for student to attend training needs to have all school requirements such as uniforms, exercise books, pens, texts books, and school fees which all of these need money. Similarly, young mothers need money for taking care of their children and paying house rent. Due to the economic hardship experienced by young mothers the study observed that young mothers were doing petty business such as selling vegetables in the town, braid people's hairs, washing dishes in the restaurants, washing cars, and pebble knocking during the holidays time so that they can earn some money which may help them to accomplish both academic and child care demands. Thank you, God, *“now I can attend school and meeting the demands of my child from the money which I get after braid people hair during weekend, it is supportive for me,”* remarked one of the members during the interview.

Another participant said that:

*“.....In order to ensure am proceeding with schooling I need money to supporting me, academically and care of my child, I used to sell vegetables during the holidays with my*

*mom in town, also some time I took part time in washing cars at the town to get money for paying the one who is taking care of my child....” (Young mother learner at Bigwa folk development college).*

Despite of these efforts made by young mothers the study the study observed some of the consequences related to these strategies. The interviewed participants claimed that they are rarely attending to schools because most of the time are in the town for searching jobs, one said that she attended school fifth times per month because of poor economic situation of her family and finally she performed poor in her examination. This implies that economic hardship has impact to the academic achievement of young mothers. This finding also agrees with that of ... who found out that.

## V. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to explore mechanisms used by young mother learners in striking a balance between training and taking care children at Bigwa Folk Development college. Particularly, the study wanted to reveal strategies used by young mother learners to balance between attending training and taking care of children at Bigwa Folk Development College. From the finding of the study, it is concluded that attending dual roles affect young mother learners' performance. They are unable to fulfill school requirements and child care demands effectively even though they adopt different strategies in balancing their dual roles including leaving their children with care takers, support system, registering their children nursery schools, sacrifice other duties in order to study, and, engaging in petty businesses.

## VI. RECOMMENDATION OF THE STUDY

The study recommends some issues including establishing the special program and student group at the college where students will address their issues without fear, finding donors for young mother learners who will support them financially and other important materials, sensitizing parents on the importance of supporting young mother learners in attaining their education dreams.

## VII. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The study suffers from two limitations which open up a new avenue for future research. *Firstly*, the study focused on the experiences of young mother learners in striking a balance between training and child care demands at Bigwa Folk Development College. It is known that Folk Development College is part of the government education institution found in the rural area. The study did not cover the private colleges where young mother students are registered for accomplishing their educational goals. For this case, there is lacking information on the experiences of young mother learners on

how they are striking a balance between training and meeting child demands at private colleges. It is important to have a comparative study between a private college and folk development college on the experiences of young mother learners on how they are striking a balance between training and child care demands. For this reason, the researcher suggests a similar study be conducted to compare experiences of young mother learners in striking a balance between training and child care demands in the private college.

Secondly, the study is limited to the sample size used. The study used a small size that cannot be generalized to a larger population. In this study, Bigwa Folk Development College was used as a case to grasp a knowledge on the experiences of young mother learners in striking a balance between training and child care demands, which cover a small area among the total folk development available in Tanzania. It is therefore suggested that there is a need to conduct a similar study on the larger sample by adopting a survey design to generalize the finding.

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