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**COPING WITH PREGNANCY IN ACADEMIC ENVIROMENT EXPIRENCES OF PREGNANT STUDENTS IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN GHANA**

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Contents

[Abstract 1](#_heading=h.gjdgxs)

[Introduction 1](#_heading=h.30j0zll)

[Materials and Methods 2](#_heading=h.1fob9te)

[Study design 2](#_heading=h.3znysh7)

[Results 2](#_heading=h.2et92p0)

[Participant’s partner’s frequency of visiting 2](#_heading=h.tyjcwt)

[Planning pregnancy 3](#_heading=h.3dy6vkm)

[*Discussion of Results* 4](#_heading=h.1t3h5sf)

[Conclusion 5](#_heading=h.4d34og8)

[References 6](#_heading=h.2s8eyo1)

# Abstract

In the Ghanaian culture, women are expected to reproduce and bear children when they get to a mature age, this age usually crosses with the time in which females attend college or other academic institutions, in this study the effect of pregnancy on academic performance in university is looked at, measured and analyzed. This research is a case study with a qualitative and quantitative design (mixed) which means that questionnaires were distributed to collect data other than that the research’s also conducted interviews with the participants, and it was conducted and collected back in October 2016 till May 2017, for analyzing the data the research team used SPSS version 23. This study found that the majority of its 30 participants are between the age of 26 – 30 years old, and 66.7% of these participants had no previous children and this pregnancy is their first, this current pregnancy made the participants face various different problems whether it was financial problems, physiological problems, and academic challenges, these varying issues made these first-time child-bearers to come up with diverse coping mechanisms to blend academic work with pregnancy in university that has limited regard for their pregnancy.

# Introduction

Females face a challenge by combining and mixing academic life and reproduction intentions, whether it was at universities or other educational institutions, most relative pregnancy research and articles focus on pregnancy in different situations and there is a lack of research about this subject, this research though highlights the difficulties that females face during this difficult time whether this difficulty came from the pregnancy itself or the academic environment. The reason I picked this article is due to the similarity I found between it and my future research, this article is like a gold mine for me reading it made a lot of things clear, this article as mentioned before has both designs ( qualitative and quantitative) which makes it more informative, other than that this article was published on 26th Of May 2018,

List of keywords used to find this article :

[pregnancy in universities](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=pregnancy+in+universities), Pregnant + college, Pregnant university issue, pregnant issue, pregnant students' effects on school, pregnant students' academic life, pregnant females at university.

# Materials and Methods

## Study design

 As mentioned this research was a case study with a combined method of (qualitative and quantitative) approach, the authors explained this approach for its benefits (it gives a better understanding of the research objective), the qualitative method shows the experiences of participants, while the quantitative method allows for measuring the social world objectively.

Study population and sampling and data collection

 The data necessary for this research to be conducted was collected from 30 different pregnant female students, in their university hall resident located in Winneba An Ajumako campus, it was done between October 2016 – May 2017, the interviews were conducted face to face with the selected participants these interviews were recorded on paper and via audio voice capture, quantitative data, on the other hand, were collected from structured questionnaires

# Results

 From the 30 participants in this study, 50% of them were between the age of 26 and 30 years old, other than that 83.3% of these female participants were married and 66.7% were bearing a child for the first time, most of them 56.7% were students without any other occupation, 90% from the participants belonged to Christianity, with 36.7% of these students living on their own.

## Participant’s partner’s frequency of visiting

 First of all, The residency of the participants varied while the majority of the pregnant female student (87%) lived outside the university halls, and a small percentage live inside university halls, these live alone and on their own, however, those who live with that parents their partners tend to visit them only when required, from this study it has been found that there is about 14.29% from participants do not get visits from significant other at all during pregnancy, this leads them to feel lonely, while this might happen in other countries in Palestine this might not happen as this society is a conservative, I do not believe that pregnant women in our universities would face this issue of loneliness.

### Planning pregnancy

 From studying these 30 pregnant females, the research found out that 60% did get pregnant by choice or planning while the other 40% did not plan for their pregnancy, the reasoning for their pregnancy those who planned it, was simply to finish their role as child-bearer before the age of 35, the others stated that were old enough to have a baby on their own, however, I do not this might be true for Palestinian universities as the majority of female students are just getting into adulthood as they age only between 18-22 years old with some exceptions for others.

#### Likelihood of pregnancy again in school

 A small portion of 26.7 stated that would like to get pregnant again while in school if they had a second chance, on the other hand, 73.3% indicated that they would not like to be pregnant if they had a second chance and they have their reasons from school being difficult to want to space their pregnancies.

##### Likelihood of advising other students to become pregnant at school

 A big portion of 76.7% said they would not advise other colleagues to get pregnant while at school, To this indicates that a big portion struggle when pregnant at school where it was the whole experience or just some minor inconvenience, but those who said that would advise other classmates for becoming pregnant state they would do it because they think they are old and they might not get another chance to get pregnant in the future, again while this might be true for these participants it may not be true for students in our Palestinian universities, the reason behind that is that our female students are fairly young.

###### Challenges confronting pregnant university students

 Students face different various challenges during the pregnancy, from financial challenges to physical discomforts, for the latter 60% of the participants said they have had vomiting, nausea, physical tiredness, and salivating or spitting, These symptoms are normal in pregnancy as they might appear with different severity for pregnant women, as for the financial challenges they were present even though some of the participants of this study had a job with salaries, but it wasn’t enough to support them or their pregnancy during the semester, participants expressed they try to save money by either walking to campus if they live nearby, but it is usually a different case as most of the participant cant walk a far distance.

*Challenges associated with combining pregnancy with studies*

 Participants show that these challenges are difficult as they are facing problems to be as competent as their non-pregnant colleagues, whether by missing lectures or insufficient amount of self-studying, others stated that they have short attention of span and low concentration so they tend to sleep in lectures rather than missing them, others tend to miss lectures to go to antenatal care visits or vice versa.

Effect of pregnancy on the academic performance of pregnant students

 Although it is stated that academic life is difficult, this research shows that 93.75% of participants did not fail any test or assignments or any other form of academic testing, to be this shows that pregnancy just makes the journey of learning more rough but in the end, you reach the same goal.

# *Discussion of Results*

 In this research participants are adults between the ages of 21-30 and are married, 36.7% of them were trained teachers with jobs to ensure their financial dependency, the rest were unemployed and depended on their significant other or partners to support themselves, 26.7% of them were first-year students, 66.7% of participants had no children, in this research it is shown that carrying a pregnancy effect negatively on student studies and academic performance in different ways, due to various challenges like financial, physical or other problems, this matches with my hypothesis for my research, other than that this research shows that for women to effectively cope with this pregnancy they need a friendly environment to support them in lectures or anything they might need.

# Conclusion

 This research showed me some real golden points to guide me to good research of my own, by using the mixed design (quantitative and quantitative) it would be more effective to get clear data. the results in this research gave me a clear view of how I’m going to collect data and about what I’m going to ask. It also gave me a background about the subject itself, although this research did not go into details about the pregnancy stages and how would it affect the academic performance but all in all it was somewhat satisfying, something that bothered me that the samples were limited to only 30 pregnant women participated in this research, this would make me think that this data would not be accurate, on the other hand by using the qualitative design the authors gave us an insight to what these pregnant students go through while being pregnant in school from various aspects, another thing that the authors might miss is that they didn’t mention of gestational age and its effects on this experience. All in all this research was like a gold mine, and it opened my eyes and organized my thought.

# References

Fred Yao Gbagbo, Priscilla Araba Etuah, Jacqueline Nkrumah. (2018, May 26). Coping with pregnancy in Academic Enviroment Exeriences of Pregnant Students in A Public University in Ghana. (Q. Tang, Ed.) *Woman's Reproductive Health*, 11.