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**Psychological experiences of pregnant students at the University of Venda, Limpopo Province, South Africa**

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# **Abstract**

After noticing the increasing number of pregnant women among students in university, many studies have made to study the psychological effects of studying on the pregnant female students especially those who didn’t plan their pregnancy. One of these studies was made in the University of Venda, in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The study was made with 12 pregnant students using a qualitative approach by interviewing them. The study findings showed that pregnant students encountered various negative experiences, such as maternal stress, inability to cope, poor concentration and anxiety. Depending on these results the study recommended that universities should help those students by offering adequate services such as antenatal care to help decrease stress and anxiety resulting from study.rom the study, it is recommended that the institution should offer adequate services to pregnant students, such as providing antenatal care services at the university clinic to alleviate stress, anxiety and the dropout rate among pregnant students.

# **Introduction**

We aimed to chose a topic that relates to marginalized population in university such as students with disabilities or chronic diseases, but due to the lack of numbers we found out that pregnant students can be easier to find especially in our society because a lot of girls get married before finishing their study so we agreed to chose them to be our study population and to study what effects does the study make on them and on their mental health and how their academic performance get affected because of their pregnancy and how can the university help them through this period to make it easier for them.

This article was published in 2020 related to our topic so I chose It to be a reference and help me during our research and making an idea about how to do our research and know the followed methods. This study targeted 104 pregnant students in University of Venda and by convience sampling approach, 12 pregnant students were selected to collect data from them following a qualitative phenomenological design through interviewing them.

**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.

# **Study overview**

This study focused on female students with unplanned pregnancy due to the increased number of young pregnant students in universities who suffers from pregnancy related complications like maternal stress which leads to other complications like learning and memory difficulties which makes them drop out of college or affect their academic performance negatively.

# **Study Methods and settings**

This research used a qualitative phenomenological design to study the psychological effects of study on pregnant students.

The study was conducted in 2016, at the University of Venda, situated in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The study targeted 104 pregnant students enrolled at the University of Venda, Limpopo Province. A convenience sampling approach was used to select 12 pregnant students12 and data collection was through interviews

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect the data asking the students about the their psychological experience as pregnant students. Interviews were recorded to capture the non-verbal responses of the interviewed student. Researchers analyzed the interviws using An Interpretative Phenomenological Analyses

# **Results**

## **Participants’ age and level of study**

The study targeted 12 pregnant students aged between 19 and 30 with the majority in their 3rd year and all of the participants were not married and they all asked about the factors related to psychological experiences

## **Discussion**

The psychological experience of pregnant students includes

**1.Maternal Stress and anxiety**

The majority of participants reported their feeling of anxiety and stress and the contributed factors were poor support and rejection by partners

The study revealed that the most reason for stress is the lack of support which makes students to miss classes and sometimes dropout college, another reason for stress was the fear of parents and who have high expectations from their daughters and the feeling of shame. The last stress factor is the excessive worry about the well-being of the child and fear of labor especially if the partner didn’t support the mother and abandon her and the baby

**2.inability to cope**

Participants reported that moving between classes made their pregnancy harder for them, also lack of support made them fail to cope, another reason is playing many roles at a time during pregnancy makes it harder for them especially when they have no support. However, some participants reported that coping isn’t a problem for them.

**3.Poor concentration**

This was mostly reported by pregnant students in 2nd and 3rd trimester, four participants reported that their poor concentrating was due to their feeling of fatigue. This lack of concentration was related inability to get rest especially when they have many school works and demands which caused lowering in academic performance of pregnant students

**4.low self-esteem**

Gaining weight during pregnancy was the main reason for two participants to lose their self-esteem about how they look which caused them more stress and affected their mental health.

## **Recommendations**

After noticing the large psychological effect of pregnancy on pregnant students, the study recommends that universities should provide antenatal care which includes psychological support by making counseling about mental health and coping strategies in order to help reduce stress on pregnant students and help them have a healthy pregnancy that doesn’t affect their mental health or academic performance.

# **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study revealed that pregnancy can be a difficult period on any pregnant especially those in universities because of the large negative effect on their mental health and mostly if the pregnancy was unplanned. All of this causes decline in their academic performance and it’s the university duty to help those students manage their stress and providing facilities with their academic life..

In my opinion, this research had many limitations such as the small number of targeted sample, limiting the research to be done only on unplanned pregnancy because planned pregnancy can cause different effects so I don’t think that I got the needed information about our research topic which aims to study the specific effect of pregnancy on academic performance due to physical and psychological effects of pregnancy .

# **References**

Augustin,K,& Lindokuhle,R ,& Seani,A. (2020). Psychological experiences of pregnant students at the University of. *African Journal of Reproductive Health September* , 24 (3): 18.