

**EFFECTS OF TEENAGE MOTHERHOOD ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING:  
A CASE OF TEENAGE MOTHERS IN KAKINGA SUBCOUNTY, BUNYANGABU  
DISTRICT**

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**M23B15/067**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
BACHELOR OF SOCIAL WORK OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

**March, 2026**



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## DECLARATION

I, MATSIKO MARY, declare that this research report titled “Effects of Teenage Motherhood on Psychological Wellbeing: A Case of Teenage Mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District” is my original work and has not previously been submitted to any university or institution of higher learning for the award of any academic qualification.

All sources of information used in this research have been duly acknowledged and cited.

Signature: Mary

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> / March / 2026

## **APPROVAL**

This research report titled “Effects of Teenage Motherhood on Psychological Wellbeing: A Case of Teenage Mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District” has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

Supervisor’s Name: Dr. Patience Kibuuka Kirabo

Signature:

A small, square, brown-toned image containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'P. Kibuuka Kirabo'.

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2026

## **DEDICATION**

This research report is dedicated to my family and friends who have continually supported my academic journey and encouraged me throughout the process of completing this study. Their patience, guidance, and motivation have been a constant source of strength during my studies

A warm thanks to my Supervisor who has greatly supported me throughout the whole process of my proposal to finishing May the Almighty God reward you abundantly and all Staff of Uganda Christian University especially the School of Social Science to where I belong.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Almighty God for granting me life, strength, and wisdom throughout the process of conducting this research. His guidance enabled me to successfully complete this academic work.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor for the professional guidance, constructive comments, and encouragement provided throughout the research process. Their academic insight greatly improved the quality of this study.

Special appreciation goes to the lecturers and staff of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Uganda Christian University for the knowledge and mentorship they have provided during my academic training.

I am also grateful to the respondents in Kakinga Sub-County who willingly participated in this research and shared their experiences. Without their cooperation, this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I thank my family members and friends for their moral support, patience, and encouragement throughout my academic journey.

## **ABSTRACT**

Teenage motherhood remains a significant public health and social concern, particularly in developing countries where teenage girls often experience early pregnancy and childbearing. This study examined the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District, Uganda.

The study adopted a mixed-methods cross-sectional research design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from fifty teenage mothers through structured questionnaires, while additional insights were obtained through key informant interviews and focus group discussions involving health workers, community leaders, and social workers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that a significant proportion of teenage mothers experience psychological distress manifested through stress, anxiety, sadness, and reduced self-esteem. Financial hardship, school dropout, parenting stress, and community stigma emerged as the major challenges affecting their emotional wellbeing. Despite these challenges, family support and religious engagement were identified as key coping mechanisms that help teenage mothers manage emotional stress.

The study concludes that teenage motherhood significantly affects the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers due to limited social-support and psychosocial support services. The study therefore recommends strengthening community-based counseling services, expanding adolescent-friendly mental health programs, promoting educational

reintegration for teenage mothers, and enhancing community sensitization initiatives to reduce stigma.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

FGD -----Focus Group Discussion

KII-----Key Informant Interview

MoH -----Ministry of Health

UBOS -----Uganda Bureau of Statistics

UDHS -----Uganda Demographic and Health Survey

UNFPA -----United Nations Population Fund

UNICEF ----- United Nations Children’s Fund

VHT ----- Village Health Team

WHO ----- World Health Organization

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Teenage motherhood remains a significant public health, social, and psychological concern worldwide, particularly in low and middle-income countries. While much of the existing literature has focused on the physical health and educational consequences of adolescent pregnancy, increasing attention is being given to the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers. Psychological wellbeing encompasses emotional stability, mental health, self-esteem, coping capacity, and the (World Health Organisation, 2022) ability to manage stress and social relationships. Teenage motherhood often occurs at a developmental stage characterized by emotional vulnerability, identity formation, and dependency, making adolescent mothers particularly susceptible to psychological distress.

Globally, the World Health Organization estimates that approximately 21 million girls aged 15-19 years become pregnant each year, with about 12 million giving birth, the majority of whom live in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Health Organization, 2023). Evidence shows that teenage mothers experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, emotional stress, and low self-esteem compared to their non-parenting peers and adult mothers (Hodgkinson, 2014); (UNICEF, 2021). These psychological challenges are often linked to stigma, disrupted education, poverty, limited social support, and inadequate access to adolescent-friendly mental health services.

In Uganda, teenage motherhood remains prevalent despite national policy interventions. The Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2022 reports that 25% of girls aged 15-19 have begun childbearing (Uganda Bureau of Statistics; ICF, 2022). Beyond physical health risks, teenage mothers in Uganda frequently experience psychological distress manifested through

fear, stress, depression, shame, and feelings of hopelessness, particularly during pregnancy and the postnatal period (Nabunya, 2021). These psychological effects can undermine maternal functioning, parent-child bonding, and long-term wellbeing for both the mother and child.

At the local level, Kakinga Sub-County in Bunyangabu District continues to record high numbers of teenage mothers. Health facility records from Kakinga Health Centre III indicate that a significant proportion of antenatal and postnatal care clients are teenage girls. While health and social challenges among teenage mothers are often reported, limited empirical attention has been given to their psychological wellbeing within this rural context. This study therefore seeks to examine the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District.

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

### Global Perspective

Teenage motherhood is recognized globally as a major development and mental health concern. Complications related to pregnancy and childbirth are among the leading causes of death for girls aged 15-19 years; however, psychological consequences are equally significant and often underreported. (World Health Organization, 2023) Studies conducted across low- and middle-income countries show that adolescent mothers are at increased risk of depression, anxiety disorders, emotional trauma, and low self-worth due to early assumption of parental roles, interrupted life trajectories, and limited psychosocial support (Hodgkinson, 2014) (United Nations Population Fund, 2022); (United Nations Population Fund, 2022) Social stigma and discrimination further intensify psychological distress, particularly in settings

where early motherhood is socially condemned.

### **Regional Perspective: Sub-Saharan Africa**

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for nearly half of all global adolescent pregnancies, with an adolescent birth rate of approximately 102 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 (World Health Organisation, 2022). The region is characterized by high poverty levels, gender inequality, early marriage, and weak mental health systems. Empirical studies indicate that teenage mothers in Sub-Saharan Africa frequently experience psychological challenges such as depression, stress, fear, and social isolation, often compounded by family rejection and partner abandonment (Neal, 2020; Atuyambe, 2015); Limited availability of adolescent-focused mental health services means that many teenage mothers' psychological needs remain unmet.

### **National Perspective: Uganda**

Uganda has one of the highest teenage motherhood rates in East Africa, with 132 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 years (Uganda Bureau of Statistics; ICF, 2022). National studies indicate that teenage mothers in Uganda are vulnerable to psychological distress arising from stigma, school dropout, economic hardship, and limited family support, (Nabunya, 2021). Although policies such as the National Adolescent Health Policy (Ministry of Health Uganda, 2019) recognize adolescent mental health, implementation remains weak, particularly in rural districts. Psychological support services for teenage mothers are often limited to informal family structures, which are themselves strained by poverty and social norms.

### **Local Context: Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District**

In Kakinga Sub-County, teenage motherhood remains a persistent challenge. Records from

Kakinga Health Centre III indicate that teenage girls account for a notable proportion of antenatal care attendance. Health workers and community leaders report that many teenage mothers present with signs of emotional distress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal during antenatal and postnatal visits. Social stigma, limited parental support, school dropout, and economic dependency are common experiences that negatively affect psychological wellbeing. Despite these observations, there is limited documented research focusing specifically on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, creating a gap in evidence for effective psychosocial interventions.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite national and district-level interventions aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy and improving adolescent health, teenage motherhood remains a significant concern in Uganda. National data indicate that 25% of girls aged 15-19 have begun childbearing (Uganda Bureau of Statistics; ICF, 2022), a situation that is more pronounced in rural settings.

Teenage motherhood often involves early assumption of parenting responsibilities, interruption of education, social stigma, and economic dependency. Evidence shows that these conditions expose teenage mothers to psychological challenges including stress, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Hodgkinson, 2014); (World Health Organisation, 2022). However, while considerable attention has been paid to the physical and reproductive health outcomes of teenage pregnancy, limited empirical evidence exists on how teenage motherhood affects the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers, particularly in rural areas such as Kakinga Sub-County in Bunyangabu District.

The lack of localized evidence on the psychological effects of teenage motherhood constrains

the design of targeted psychosocial and mental health interventions for teenage mothers. This study therefore seeks to examine the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District.

This study therefore seeks to examine the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

#### General Objective

1. To assess the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District.

#### Specific Objectives

1. To identify the psychological challenges experienced by teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County.
2. To examine the factors contributing to psychological distress among teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County.
3. To assess the coping mechanisms and support systems available to teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What psychological challenges do teenage mothers experience in Kakinga

Sub-County?

2. What factors contribute to psychological distress among teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County?

3. What coping mechanisms and support systems are available to teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County?

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

### **1.6.1 Subject Scope**

The study focuses on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers, specifically examining stress, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, emotional trauma, and coping mechanisms.

### **1.6.2 Geographical Scope**

The study will be conducted in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District, Western Uganda.

### **1.6.3 Time Scope**

The study covers the period from 2022 to 2025, during which teenage motherhood has remained prevalent in the district.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be significant to:

Health professionals, by providing evidence to strengthen adolescent-friendly mental health and psychosocial services.

Social workers and community development officers, by informing the design of targeted psychosocial support and counselling interventions.

Policy makers and educators, by highlighting the psychological needs of teenage mothers and

informing supportive school re-entry and welfare policies.

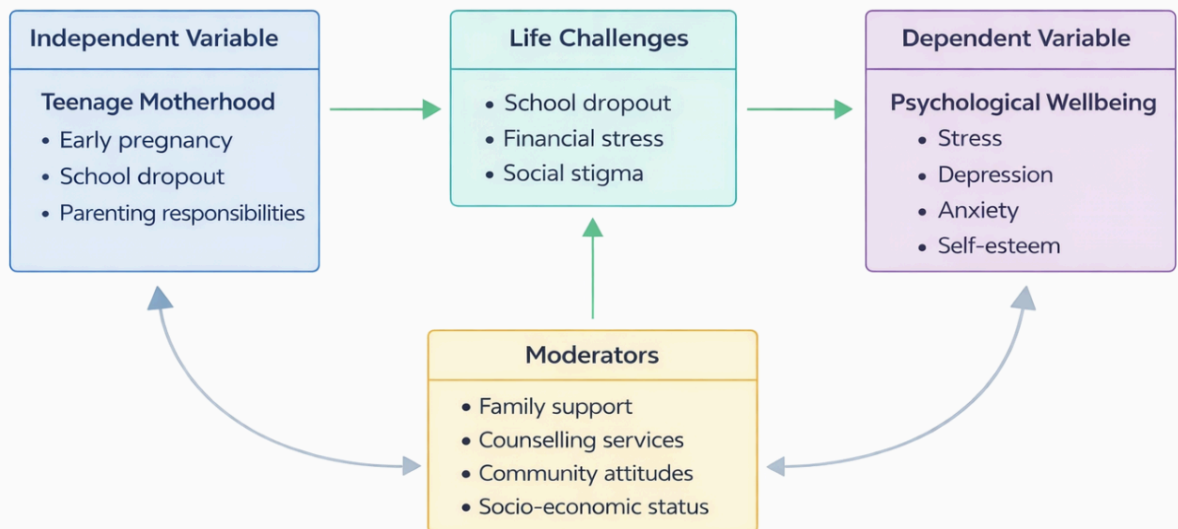
Parents and community leaders, by enhancing understanding of the psychological effects of teenage motherhood and reducing stigma.

Researchers and academics, by contributing localized evidence on adolescent mental health in rural Uganda.

### 1.8 Conceptual Framework

The study is guided by Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Life-Course Theory (Elder, 1998). The framework illustrates the relationship between teenage motherhood (independent variable) and psychological wellbeing (dependent variable), influenced by intervening and moderating factor.

#### Conceptual Framework Figure



## **Explanation of the Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between teenage motherhood and the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District. In this study, teenage motherhood is the independent variable and is characterized by early pregnancy, school dropout, and parenting responsibilities. These conditions expose adolescent mothers to significant changes in their social and economic lives, which shape their overall experiences during early motherhood.

The framework further demonstrates that teenage motherhood affects psychological wellbeing through a range of life challenges, including financial stress, social stigma, and disruption of education. These challenges act as key pathways through which teenage motherhood influences mental health outcomes. The dependent variable, psychological wellbeing, is reflected in conditions such as stress, depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, which indicate the emotional and mental state of teenage mothers.

However, this relationship is influenced by moderating variables such as family support, counselling services, community attitudes, and socio-economic status. Positive support systems can reduce the severity of psychological distress and enhance coping, while negative social environments and economic hardship may intensify emotional challenges. Therefore, the framework shows that teenage motherhood affects psychological wellbeing both directly and indirectly, with the extent of impact depending on the level of support available to the teenage mother.

## **1.10 Chapter Summary**

Chapter one has provided the foundation upon which this study is built by presenting the key elements that guide the research. The chapter introduced the study by outlining the background to teenage motherhood and its growing social and psychological implications among adolescent girls, particularly within rural communities. It highlighted how early pregnancy and the transition to motherhood at a young age may affect the emotional stability, mental health, and overall wellbeing of teenage mothers. The statement of the problem clearly identified the persistent challenge of teenage motherhood in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District, emphasizing the limited attention given to the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers despite increasing concern about teenage pregnancy in Uganda.

The chapter further presented the purpose of the study, which is to examine the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in the study area. In order to achieve this aim, specific objectives and research questions were formulated to guide the investigation and ensure that the study remains focused on key aspects of the problem. The scope of the study was also defined in terms of geographical coverage, content focus, and the time frame within which the study is conducted. Additionally, the significance of the study was discussed to demonstrate how the findings may contribute to knowledge, inform policy interventions, and support community efforts aimed at addressing the challenges faced by teenage mothers.

Furthermore, the chapter presented the conceptual framework that illustrates the relationship between teenage motherhood as the independent variable and psychological wellbeing as the dependent variable, while recognizing the influence of moderating factors such as family support, counselling services, community attitudes, and socio-economic conditions. This

framework provides a guide for understanding how different factors interact to influence the emotional and psychological experiences of teenage mothers. Overall, the chapter establishes the context, justification, and direction of the study, thereby preparing the ground for Chapter Two, which reviews existing literature and empirical studies related to teenage motherhood and psychological wellbeing.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature on teenage motherhood with particular emphasis on the psychological well-being of teenage mothers. The literature review provides a conceptual and empirical foundation for understanding how early motherhood influences the mental health and emotional experiences of adolescent girls. Teenage pregnancy remains a significant public health and social concern in many developing countries, where young mothers often face numerous psychological, social, and economic challenges. These challenges include social stigma, disrupted education, financial dependency, and limited access to mental health services, all of which may negatively affect their psychological wellbeing.

The chapter reviews theoretical perspectives that explain how teenage motherhood influences psychological outcomes among young mothers. These theories provide a conceptual framework for understanding how early life events, social environments, and socio-economic conditions shape mental health outcomes among adolescent mothers. In particular, the chapter examines Life-Course Theory, Social Learning Theory, and the Social Determinants of Mental Health Framework. Each of these perspectives offers important insights into how teenage motherhood may affect the psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls through different pathways, including developmental disruptions, social interactions, and structural inequalities.

In addition to theoretical perspectives, the chapter reviews empirical studies conducted at global, regional, national, and local levels. These studies explore various psychological

outcomes associated with teenage motherhood, including depression, anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, emotional trauma, and coping mechanisms. By examining existing research from different contexts, the chapter highlights patterns, similarities, and differences in the psychological experiences of teenage mothers. The chapter also identifies gaps in the current body of knowledge, particularly the limited localized research on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in rural communities such as Kakinga Sub-County in Bunyangabu District. These gaps provide justification for conducting the present study.

## **2.1 Theoretical Literature Review**

Theoretical perspectives play an important role in guiding research by providing explanations for relationships between variables and helping researchers understand complex social phenomena. In the context of teenage motherhood, theoretical frameworks help explain how early pregnancy and motherhood influence the psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls. These theories provide insight into the processes through which social experiences, environmental factors, and developmental transitions affect mental health outcomes among teenage mothers.

Several theoretical perspectives have been used to explain the challenges faced by adolescent mothers. These perspectives emphasize different factors such as life transitions, social interactions, and socio-economic conditions that shape the psychological experiences of teenage mothers. In this study, three theoretical frameworks are considered particularly relevant: Life-Course Theory, Social Learning Theory, and the Social Determinants of Mental Health Framework. Each of these frameworks provides a useful lens for understanding the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers and the factors that influence their emotional and

mental health outcomes.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives helps provide a comprehensive understanding of teenage motherhood as both a developmental and social phenomenon. While Life-Course Theory focuses on how early life events influence future outcomes, Social Learning Theory highlights the role of social interactions and environmental influences in shaping behavior and emotions. The Social Determinants of Mental Health Framework, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of structural and socio-economic factors in shaping mental health outcomes. Together, these perspectives provide a strong theoretical foundation for examining the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County.

### **2.1.1 Life-Course Theory**

Life-Course Theory suggests that experiences occurring during critical stages of life can significantly influence an individual's long-term health, social development, and psychological wellbeing. According to Glen H. Elder Jr., life events that occur during adolescence can have lasting consequences because this stage represents a critical period of personal development and identity formation (Elder, 1998). During adolescence, individuals typically undergo important developmental transitions such as completing education, forming social relationships, and preparing for future careers. When pregnancy and motherhood occur during this stage, these normal developmental processes may be disrupted, potentially affecting the individual's psychological and socio-economic trajectory.

Teenage motherhood is often considered a major life transition that may alter the expected life course of adolescent girls. Research suggests that early motherhood can limit educational attainment, reduce employment opportunities, and increase economic dependency, all of

which may contribute to psychological distress among young mothers. According to (Hoffman, 2008), teenage mothers frequently experience long-term social and economic disadvantages that increase their vulnerability to chronic stress, depression, and emotional difficulties. The challenges associated with balancing parenting responsibilities with personal development can place significant psychological strain on adolescent mothers, particularly in environments where social support is limited.

In rural communities such as those found in Uganda, the life-course implications of teenage motherhood may be even more pronounced due to limited educational opportunities and economic resources. Early pregnancy often leads to school dropout, which restricts future employment prospects and increases financial dependence on family members or partners. Over time, these challenges may negatively affect the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers by creating feelings of frustration, uncertainty, and reduced self-confidence. Life-Course Theory is therefore relevant to the present study because it helps explain how teenage motherhood may shape the long-term psychological experiences of young mothers in Kakinga Sub-County.

### **2.1.2 Social Learning Theory**

Social Learning Theory emphasizes that human behaviour and emotional responses are largely shaped through observation, imitation, and interaction with others. According to Albert Bandura, individuals learn behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions by observing how others behave and how society responds to certain actions (Bandura, 1977). In the context of teenage motherhood, adolescent mothers may develop perceptions about themselves based on the reactions they receive from family members, peers, and community

members. Positive social support may promote resilience and emotional stability, while negative social reactions such as stigma and criticism may contribute to poor psychological wellbeing.

Teenage mothers often face negative societal attitudes due to cultural norms that discourage early pregnancy. These reactions may include criticism, social isolation, and moral judgment from family members or community members. When adolescent mothers repeatedly encounter such negative responses, they may internalize these attitudes and develop feelings of shame, guilt, or low self-worth. Studies indicate that teenage mothers who experience strong social stigma are more likely to report symptoms of depression, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem. Social Learning Theory therefore helps explain how social environments and interpersonal interactions can influence the emotional wellbeing of teenage mothers.

Empirical research conducted in Uganda supports the relevance of Social Learning Theory in understanding the psychological experiences of teenage mothers. (Nabunya, 2021) found that adolescent mothers who received supportive responses from family members and peers were more likely to develop positive coping mechanisms and maintain better mental health outcomes. In contrast, those who experienced rejection or criticism were more likely to experience emotional distress and social withdrawal. These findings highlight the importance of supportive social environments in promoting the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers.

### **2.1.3 Social Determinants of Mental Health Framework**

The Social Determinants of Mental Health Framework emphasizes that mental health outcomes are strongly influenced by social, economic, and environmental conditions.

According to the World Health Organization, factors such as poverty, education level, gender inequality, employment opportunities, and access to healthcare play a significant role in shaping mental health outcomes across populations (World Health Organisation, 2022). These determinants influence individuals' exposure to stressors and their ability to access resources that promote psychological wellbeing.

In the context of teenage motherhood, many of these social determinants interact to increase vulnerability to psychological distress. Teenage mothers often face multiple socio-economic challenges including poverty, limited education, unemployment, and social stigma. These challenges can create chronic stress and emotional instability, particularly in rural communities where access to support services is limited. (Hodgkinson, 2014). argue that teenage mothers living in disadvantaged environments are more likely to experience mental health challenges due to limited access to counselling services, healthcare resources, and economic opportunities.

In Uganda and other developing countries, structural inequalities further exacerbate the psychological challenges faced by teenage mothers. Limited availability of adolescent-friendly health services, combined with social stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy, often prevents young mothers from seeking professional psychological support. In rural communities such as Kakinga Sub-County, these structural barriers may significantly affect the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers. The Social Determinants of Mental Health Framework is therefore relevant to the present study because it highlights how broader social and economic conditions influence the mental health outcomes of adolescent mothers.

## **2.2 Global Empirical Literature on Teenage Motherhood and Psychological Wellbeing**

### **2.2.1 Prevalence of Psychological Distress among Teenage Mothers**

Teenage motherhood has increasingly been recognised as a significant public health and social issue across the world because of its close association with psychological distress among young mothers. Adolescence is a developmental stage characterised by emotional growth, identity formation, and the pursuit of education and career aspirations. When motherhood occurs during this stage, adolescents often experience competing responsibilities that may exceed their emotional and psychological preparedness. According to the World Health Organization, teenage mothers frequently experience elevated levels of psychological distress due to the social, economic, and health challenges associated with early pregnancy and parenting (World Health Organisation, 2022). The transition into motherhood during adolescence can disrupt the normal developmental trajectory, particularly when young mothers lack adequate support systems or face stigma from their communities.

Empirical studies conducted across different regions consistently show that adolescent mothers report higher levels of mental health challenges compared to adult mothers. Research examining maternal mental health in low- and middle-income countries indicates that teenage mothers are significantly more likely to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and emotional instability. These psychological challenges often arise from a combination of factors such as limited education, financial dependence, social rejection, and the pressure of parenting responsibilities at a young age. Studies by Hodgkinson and colleagues demonstrate that adolescent mothers are approximately two to three times more likely to develop depressive symptoms than older mothers because they face additional stressors including interrupted schooling and unstable social relationships (Hodgkinson, 2014). Similarly, reports

from UNICEF emphasize that teenage pregnancy is frequently accompanied by emotional distress resulting from reduced opportunities for education, employment, and personal development (UNICEF, 2021).

Furthermore, psychological distress among teenage mothers is often compounded by the broader socio-economic conditions in which they live. In many countries, teenage mothers come from disadvantaged backgrounds where poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to healthcare services are already prevalent. These structural challenges increase vulnerability to mental health problems during pregnancy and after childbirth. Research conducted by Saul Hoffman indicates that early motherhood often leads to long-term social and economic disadvantages that can intensify psychological stress over time (Hoffman, 2008). Consequently, understanding the prevalence of psychological distress among teenage mothers is essential for developing interventions that address both the immediate and long-term mental health needs of adolescent mothers.

### **2.2.2 Depression and Anxiety among Teenage Mothers**

Depression and anxiety are among the most widely documented psychological challenges affecting teenage mothers across the world. Depression among adolescent mothers is commonly characterised by persistent sadness, loss of interest in daily activities, emotional exhaustion, and difficulty coping with the responsibilities of parenting. Anxiety, on the other hand, often manifests as excessive worry about the future, fear of social judgment, and uncertainty about the ability to provide adequate care for a child. According to global reproductive health reports published by the United Nations Population Fund, adolescent mothers frequently experience heightened emotional vulnerability because the demands of

motherhood coincide with a developmental period that is already psychologically complex (United Nations Population Fund, 2022).

A growing body of research has demonstrated that teenage mothers face a significantly higher risk of postpartum depression compared to adult mothers. Studies conducted in several developing countries indicate that adolescent mothers frequently report feelings of hopelessness, social isolation, and emotional exhaustion during pregnancy and the early stages of child-rearing. These mental health challenges are often intensified by limited social support, unstable relationships with partners, and financial insecurity. Research by Hodgkinson and colleagues suggests that many teenage mothers struggle to cope with the transition into parenthood because they have not yet developed the emotional maturity and coping skills required to manage the demands of childcare (Hodgkinson, 2014). Additionally, studies cited by UNICEF highlight that adolescent mothers who lack access to supportive family structures are particularly vulnerable to depression and anxiety (UNICEF, 2021).

Beyond individual psychological factors, depression and anxiety among teenage mothers are also influenced by broader social and cultural contexts. In many societies, teenage pregnancy is strongly stigmatized, which can intensify feelings of shame and social rejection among young mothers. This social pressure may lead adolescent mothers to withdraw from peers, community activities, and educational opportunities, further deepening emotional distress. Research conducted by Sarah Neal shows that the experience of stigma and reduced social support significantly contributes to anxiety and depressive symptoms among teenage mothers (Neal, 2020). These findings suggest that addressing depression and anxiety among adolescent mothers requires a comprehensive approach that includes both psychological

support services and community-based interventions aimed at reducing stigma and promoting social inclusion.

### **2.2.3 Stigma, Self-Esteem, and Emotional Trauma**

Stigma remains one of the most significant social challenges affecting teenage mothers and has profound implications for their psychological wellbeing. In many societies, adolescent pregnancy is viewed as a violation of cultural or moral expectations regarding sexuality and family formation. As a result, teenage mothers often face negative labeling, discrimination, and judgmental attitudes from family members, peers, and community leaders. According to the United Nations Population Fund, stigmatization of adolescent mothers frequently leads to feelings of shame, guilt, and social exclusion, all of which contribute to poor mental health outcomes (United Nations Population Fund, 2022). The experience of stigma can significantly undermine a young mother's sense of identity and belonging within her community.

One of the major psychological consequences of stigma is the development of low self-esteem among teenage mothers. Self-esteem refers to an individual's perception of their own worth and capability, and it plays a critical role in shaping emotional wellbeing. Teenage mothers who experience constant criticism or rejection may begin to internalize negative societal attitudes about early pregnancy. Research conducted by Hoffman indicates that adolescent mothers who perceive themselves as failures or burdens to their families are more likely to develop feelings of inadequacy and reduced confidence (Hoffman, 2008). Such internalized stigma can discourage teenage mothers from seeking support, returning to school, or participating in community activities.

Emotional trauma is another important outcome associated with stigmatization of teenage

mothers. Adolescents who experience severe social rejection or family conflict following pregnancy may develop long-lasting psychological distress, including chronic stress and emotional instability. Studies reviewed by the World Health Organization indicate that teenage mothers who face strong community stigma often experience persistent anxiety, social withdrawal, and feelings of loneliness (World Health Organisation, 2022). Addressing stigma through community awareness programmes and supportive policies is therefore essential for improving the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers and enabling them to rebuild their confidence and social integration.

#### **2.2.4 Coping Mechanisms and Psychological Support**

Despite the numerous psychological challenges associated with teenage motherhood, many adolescent mothers develop coping strategies that help them adapt to their new roles and responsibilities. Coping mechanisms refer to the behavioural and emotional strategies individuals use to manage stress and overcome difficult situations. Research on adolescent motherhood indicates that family support is one of the most important protective factors that helps teenage mothers maintain psychological stability. When parents, relatives, or guardians provide emotional encouragement and practical assistance, young mothers are better able to manage parenting responsibilities and cope with stress. Studies reported by UNICEF suggest that strong family relationships significantly reduce the likelihood of depression and anxiety among teenage mothers (UNICEF, 2021).

Another important coping strategy frequently identified in global studies is participation in religious or community-based support networks. In many cultural contexts, religious institutions provide emotional guidance, counselling, and a sense of belonging for teenage

mothers who may otherwise feel isolated. Peer support groups also offer opportunities for adolescent mothers to share experiences, receive advice, and build resilience through collective encouragement. Research conducted by Tahiru demonstrates that teenage mothers who participate in support groups or counselling programmes often report improved emotional wellbeing and increased confidence in their parenting abilities ( (Tahiru, 2024).

However, coping strategies are not always positive or effective. Some teenage mothers respond to overwhelming stress by withdrawing socially or avoiding responsibilities associated with childcare and education. In extreme cases, maladaptive coping behaviours such as substance abuse or emotional detachment may emerge. According to the World Health Organization, access to adolescent-friendly counselling services and mental health programmes plays a crucial role in helping young mothers develop healthy coping mechanisms (World Health Organisation, 2022). Strengthening psychosocial support systems is therefore essential for promoting the long-term psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers.

## **2.3 Regional Literature: Sub-Saharan Africa**

### **2.3.1 Psychological Challenges among Teenage Mothers**

Teenage motherhood in Sub-Saharan Africa is widely recognised as a major social and public health issue that significantly affects the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers. The region continues to record some of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the world, largely due to factors such as poverty, gender inequality, limited access to reproductive health education, and cultural practices that encourage early marriage. According to the World Health Organization, adolescent girls in Sub-Saharan Africa face a disproportionately high

burden of early pregnancy, which is frequently associated with psychological stress, fear, and emotional instability (World Health Organisation, 2022). These challenges arise because teenage mothers must cope with parenting responsibilities while simultaneously navigating the developmental changes of adolescence.

Empirical studies conducted in several African countries show that adolescent mothers often experience multiple psychological difficulties during pregnancy and after childbirth. Research carried out in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania indicates that teenage mothers frequently report symptoms of depression, anxiety, and emotional distress as a result of the social and economic pressures associated with early motherhood. According to research conducted by James Atuyambe, adolescent mothers in East Africa often struggle with feelings of shame, fear, and uncertainty about their future due to the disruption of their education and life aspirations (Atuyambe, 2015). Similarly, studies reviewed by Sarah Neal highlight that teenage mothers in many African communities experience psychological distress resulting from stigma, social isolation, and economic vulnerability (Neal, 2020).

In addition to social pressures, structural challenges within many African societies further contribute to poor psychological outcomes among teenage mothers. Limited access to education, health services, and economic opportunities places adolescent mothers at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers who remain in school. Many teenage mothers also face unstable relationships with partners or lack adequate family support, which increases their emotional vulnerability. These combined factors create a situation in which adolescent mothers experience persistent stress and uncertainty regarding their future wellbeing. Addressing these psychological challenges therefore requires comprehensive

interventions that integrate reproductive health services, mental health support, and educational opportunities for young mothers across the region.

### **2.3.2 Role of Family and Community Support**

Family and community support play a critical role in shaping the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Adolescents who become mothers often rely heavily on family members for emotional guidance, financial assistance, and childcare support. When families provide understanding and encouragement, teenage mothers are better able to cope with the challenges associated with early parenting. Studies conducted in several African countries indicate that supportive family environments significantly reduce the risk of depression and anxiety among adolescent mothers (Atuyambe, 2015). In such contexts, families act as protective social networks that help teenage mothers regain confidence and continue pursuing educational or livelihood opportunities.

Community acceptance is another important factor influencing the mental health outcomes of teenage mothers. In many African societies, community attitudes toward adolescent pregnancy can either support or hinder the psychological adjustment of young mothers. Communities that adopt supportive approaches such as encouraging teenage mothers to return to school or participate in social activities tend to promote better emotional wellbeing among adolescent mothers. According to research synthesized by United Nations Children's Fund, community-based support programmes that provide mentorship and peer counselling have been effective in helping teenage mothers overcome stigma and rebuild their self-esteem (UNICEF, 2021).

However, not all teenage mothers benefit from supportive environments. In many

communities across Sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent pregnancy is strongly stigmatized, leading to rejection or criticism from family members and community leaders. Such negative reactions can intensify emotional distress and reduce the likelihood that teenage mothers will seek help or participate in social programmes. Research indicates that young mothers who experience rejection from their families are more likely to develop feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and low self-esteem. Strengthening family-centred interventions and community awareness programmes is therefore essential in creating environments that promote the psychological wellbeing and social reintegration of teenage mothers.

### **2.3.3 Mental Health Service Gaps**

Despite the high prevalence of psychological distress among teenage mothers in Sub-Saharan Africa, access to mental health services in the region remains extremely limited. Many countries face severe shortages of trained mental health professionals, inadequate funding for mental health programmes, and weak integration of mental health services into primary healthcare systems. As a result, the psychological needs of teenage mothers are often overlooked within broader maternal and reproductive health programmes. According to the World Health Organization, mental health services in many African countries remain underdeveloped, leaving large segments of the population without access to adequate psychological care (World Health Organisation, 2022).

In addition to limited infrastructure, social stigma surrounding mental health problems further discourages adolescent mothers from seeking professional support. In many African communities, mental health challenges are poorly understood or associated with negative cultural perceptions, which may prevent young mothers from openly discussing their

emotional difficulties. Consequently, teenage mothers often rely on informal support networks rather than professional counselling services. Research indicates that the absence of adolescent-friendly mental health programmes contributes to the persistence of untreated depression, anxiety, and emotional trauma among teenage mothers in the region (Neal, 2020).

The gap in mental health services highlights the need for integrated interventions that address both the physical and psychological needs of adolescent mothers. Experts recommend that maternal and reproductive health programmes incorporate mental health screening, counselling services, and community-based psychosocial support initiatives. Such interventions can help identify psychological distress early and provide appropriate support to teenage mothers. Expanding access to adolescent-friendly mental health services is therefore essential for improving the overall wellbeing of teenage mothers in Sub-Saharan Africa and reducing the long-term social consequences associated with early motherhood.

## **2.4 National Literature: Uganda**

### **2.4.1 Psychological Wellbeing of Teenage Mothers in Uganda**

Teenage motherhood remains a significant social and public health concern in Uganda, with important implications for the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers. Uganda continues to report relatively high levels of teenage pregnancy compared to many other countries in the region. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, approximately one in four Ugandan girls aged between 15 and 19 years has either begun childbearing or is pregnant with their first child (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Early motherhood often exposes adolescent girls to numerous social and economic challenges that affect their mental health, including disruption of education, financial dependency, and social stigma within their

communities.

Empirical research conducted in Uganda shows that teenage mothers frequently experience psychological distress during pregnancy and after childbirth. Studies by Harriet Nabunya highlight that adolescent mothers in Uganda commonly report symptoms of depression, anxiety, and emotional stress linked to social isolation and limited support systems (Nabunya, 2021). Similarly, research conducted by James Atuyambe found that teenage mothers often experience fear, shame, and emotional instability following pregnancy due to negative reactions from family members, schools, and community institutions (Atuyambe, 2015). These emotional responses are intensified when teenage mothers are forced to discontinue their education or face rejection from their social networks.

In addition to these social pressures, the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Uganda is also influenced by broader structural challenges such as poverty and limited access to mental health services. Many adolescent mothers live in rural areas where health facilities are poorly equipped to provide counselling and psychosocial support services. According to the Ministry of Health Uganda, mental health services in Uganda remain under-resourced, particularly in rural districts where adolescent mothers may lack access to professional psychological support (Ministry of Health Uganda, 2019). Consequently, teenage mothers often struggle to cope with emotional stress without adequate guidance or intervention.

#### **2.4.2 Stigma, School Dropout Rate, and Psychological Distress**

Stigma and school dropout remain two of the most significant factors influencing the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Uganda. Education plays an important role in shaping adolescents' social identity, self-esteem, and future opportunities. However, when

girls become pregnant during their school years, they often face discrimination and social pressure that forces them to discontinue their education. According to the Ministry of Education and Sports Uganda, teenage pregnancy continues to be one of the leading causes of school dropout among adolescent girls in Uganda (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2021). Leaving school prematurely can have serious psychological consequences because it limits future opportunities and reduces the confidence of young mothers.

Several studies conducted in Uganda have documented the negative psychological effects associated with school dropout among teenage mothers. Research by Harriet Nabunya indicates that adolescent mothers who drop out of school often experience feelings of regret, shame, and loss of identity, particularly when they compare themselves with peers who continue with their education (Nabunya, 2021). Similarly, findings by James Atuyambe reveal that stigma from teachers, classmates, and community members significantly contributes to emotional distress among teenage mothers (Atuyambe, 2015). These experiences often undermine the self-confidence of young mothers and reduce their motivation to pursue further education or employment opportunities.

Furthermore, stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy can lead to social exclusion and psychological trauma among adolescent mothers. Community attitudes toward early pregnancy are often negative, which may result in verbal criticism, discrimination, and rejection. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, many teenage mothers face social stigma that affects their ability to participate in community activities and access educational opportunities (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Research also indicates that persistent exposure to stigmatizing attitudes can contribute to chronic stress, low self-esteem, and

long-term emotional vulnerability among adolescent mothers in Uganda. Addressing stigma and promoting inclusive education policies are therefore critical for improving the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers.

#### **2.4.3 Policy Environment and Mental Health Support**

Uganda has developed several policies and programmes aimed at improving adolescent health and supporting young mothers. These policies seek to address challenges related to teenage pregnancy, reproductive health, and mental wellbeing among adolescents. The government, through the Ministry of Health Uganda, has implemented initiatives that promote adolescent-friendly health services and community awareness programmes aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy and supporting adolescent mothers (Ministry of Health Uganda, 2019). These policies recognise that teenage pregnancy is not only a health issue but also a social challenge that requires coordinated interventions across multiple sectors.

Despite these policy efforts, significant gaps remain in the implementation of mental health support programmes for teenage mothers. Many health facilities in Uganda focus primarily on physical maternal health services while neglecting the psychological needs of adolescent mothers. According to reports by the World Health Organization, mental health services in Uganda remain limited due to shortages of trained mental health professionals and inadequate funding for psychosocial programmes (World Health Organisation, 2022) As a result, many teenage mothers do not receive the counselling and emotional support necessary to address mental health challenges associated with early motherhood.

In addition, community-based support programmes for teenage mothers remain inconsistent across different districts in Uganda. While some non-governmental organisations provide

counselling, education, and economic empowerment programmes for adolescent mothers, such initiatives are not universally available. Research conducted by Nabunya and Sewamala suggest that financial empowerment and social support programmes can significantly improve mental health outcomes among adolescent mothers by reducing stress and increasing their sense of independence (Nabunya, 2021) Strengthening these support systems and integrating mental health services into adolescent reproductive health programmes would therefore play a crucial role in improving the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Uganda.

### **2.5 Local Literature: Bunyangabu District and Kakinga Sub-County**

Teenage pregnancy remains a major social concern in many rural districts of Uganda, including Bunyangabu District. Local government planning documents indicate that early pregnancy continues to affect adolescent girls' educational attainment, health outcomes, and overall wellbeing. According to the Bunyangabu District Development Plan (2020/2021-2024/2025), teenage pregnancy contributes significantly to school dropout, early childbearing, and increased socio-economic vulnerability among adolescent girls within the district. These challenges often expose teenage mothers to psychological stress, emotional instability, and uncertainty about their future opportunities. Similar findings have been reported nationally by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, which notes that rural districts tend to experience higher levels of teenage pregnancy due to poverty, limited reproductive health information, and restricted access to adolescent-friendly health services (Uganda Bureau of Statistics; ICF, 2022)).

At the community level, teenage mothers frequently face social stigma and limited support systems, which further affects their psychological wellbeing. In many rural communities

within the Rwenzori sub-region, cultural expectations surrounding sexuality and motherhood can lead to negative attitudes toward adolescent pregnancy. Teenage mothers may experience criticism, rejection, or social isolation from family members, peers, and community leaders. Reports published by local media outlets such as the Daily Monitor and the New Vision have documented cases of teenage mothers in the Rwenzori region struggling with emotional distress, disrupted education, and social exclusion following early pregnancy (Dan, 2021) ; (Ninsiima, 2022). These experiences can significantly affect the self-esteem and emotional wellbeing of adolescent mothers.

Despite the recognition of teenage pregnancy as a major social problem in district reports and media coverage, there is still limited empirical research focusing specifically on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers at the sub-county level in Bunyangabu District. Most available reports primarily emphasize the prevalence of teenage pregnancy, reproductive health concerns, and educational consequences, with relatively little attention given to the mental health outcomes of adolescent mothers. As noted by the Ministry of Health Uganda, mental health issues among adolescents in rural communities often receive limited research attention due to inadequate data and limited mental health services at local health facilities (Ministry of Health Uganda, 2019). The absence of detailed studies examining psychological wellbeing among teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County therefore highlights a significant research gap, which justifies the need for the current study.

## **2.6 Thematic Synthesis of Literature**

### **2.6.1 Depression and Anxiety**

The literature reviewed at global, regional, and national levels consistently demonstrates that

teenage mothers face an increased risk of depression and anxiety compared to women who become mothers at a later age. Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by emotional growth, identity formation, and social transition. When pregnancy and motherhood occur during this stage, young mothers are often required to assume adult responsibilities before they are psychologically prepared. Studies indicate that the sudden transition into parenthood can create emotional pressure, particularly when teenage mothers lack financial independence, social support, or stable relationships. According to the World Health Organization, depression is one of the leading causes of illness among adolescents worldwide, and adolescent mothers are particularly vulnerable due to the combined pressures of parenting, stigma, and limited opportunities for education and employment (World Health Organisation, 2022).

Empirical research conducted in different regions further confirms the strong relationship between teenage motherhood and psychological distress. Studies in low- and middle-income countries show that adolescent mothers frequently report symptoms such as persistent sadness, emotional exhaustion, and anxiety about the future, and difficulties adjusting to the responsibilities of childcare. (Hodgkinson, 2014). Found that teenage mothers are significantly more likely to experience postpartum depression compared to adult mothers due to social isolation, financial dependence, and limited emotional support. Similarly, reports by the United Nations Children's Fund indicate that adolescent mothers often face anxiety related to economic insecurity and fear of social judgment, particularly in communities where teenage pregnancy is highly stigmatized (UNICEF, 2021).

Within the Ugandan context, similar patterns of psychological distress among teenage

mothers have been documented. Research conducted by (Nabunya, 2021) indicates that adolescent mothers frequently experience anxiety and depression due to disrupted education, social stigma, and uncertainty regarding their future opportunities. Studies in rural communities also highlight that the absence of adequate mental health services often prevents teenage mothers from receiving professional counselling and psychosocial support. As a result, many young mothers must cope with emotional stress without adequate assistance. These findings suggest that depression and anxiety remain central psychological outcomes associated with teenage motherhood and therefore represent important variables in examining the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers.

### **2.6.2 Stress, Low Self-Esteem, and Emotional Trauma**

Another major theme emerging from the reviewed literature is the relationship between teenage motherhood and psychological outcomes such as stress, low self-esteem, and emotional trauma. Early motherhood often exposes adolescents to a combination of social, economic, and emotional pressures that can significantly affect their psychological wellbeing. Teenage mothers are frequently required to balance childcare responsibilities with the challenges of adolescence, including the pursuit of education and social identity formation. According to the United Nations Population Fund, adolescent pregnancy often disrupts the educational and social development of young girls, leading to increased stress and emotional instability (United Nations Population Fund, 2022). These pressures can be particularly severe in communities where teenage mothers receive little support from their families or social networks.

Low self-esteem is also commonly reported among teenage mothers as a consequence of

stigma and discrimination associated with early pregnancy. Self-esteem refers to an individual's sense of self-worth and confidence, and it plays a critical role in shaping psychological wellbeing. Studies indicate that teenage mothers who experience rejection or criticism from family members, peers, or community members may internalize negative perceptions about themselves. Research conducted by (Hoffman, 2008) suggests that adolescent mothers who perceive themselves as social failures or burdens to their families often develop feelings of worthlessness and diminished confidence. Such experiences may discourage young mothers from returning to school, seeking employment opportunities, or participating in community activities.

Emotional trauma may also arise when teenage mothers experience severe social rejection or family conflict following pregnancy. In many societies, adolescent pregnancy is associated with moral judgment and stigma, which can lead to social isolation and strained family relationships. According to the World Health Organization, persistent exposure to stigma and social discrimination can lead to long-term psychological consequences including chronic stress, anxiety, and emotional trauma (World Health Organisation, 2022). Research in Uganda also indicates that teenage mothers frequently experience feelings of shame, embarrassment, and social withdrawal due to community stigma (Nabunya, 2021). These findings highlight the importance of addressing stress, low self-esteem, and emotional trauma when examining the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers.

### **2.6.3 Coping Strategies and Support Systems**

Despite the numerous psychological challenges associated with teenage motherhood, the literature also highlights the importance of coping strategies and support systems in helping

adolescent mothers manage stress and maintain emotional wellbeing. Coping strategies refer to the behavioral and emotional responses individuals use to deal with difficult situations. Research shows that family support is one of the most significant protective factors influencing the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers. When young mothers receive emotional encouragement and practical assistance from parents or relatives, they are better able to manage childcare responsibilities and adapt to their new roles. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, strong family support networks significantly reduce the likelihood of depression and anxiety among adolescent mothers (UNICEF, 2021).

Community-based support systems also play a crucial role in helping teenage mothers cope with the psychological challenges of early motherhood. Peer support groups, counselling services, and mentorship programmes provide young mothers with opportunities to share experiences and receive guidance from others who understand their situation. Studies indicate that teenage mothers who participate in such support networks often report improved self-confidence and emotional stability. (Tahiru, 2024). Notes that structured counselling programmes and community interventions can significantly improve mental health outcomes among adolescent mothers by promoting resilience and strengthening coping skills.

However, the literature also reveals that many teenage mothers lack access to adequate psychosocial support systems. In many developing countries, mental health services remain limited and are rarely integrated into maternal and adolescent health programmes. According to the World Health Organization, shortages of trained mental health professionals and limited funding for psychosocial programmes continue to restrict access to counselling services for young mothers (world health organization, 2023). Consequently, some teenage mothers adopt

negative coping mechanisms such as social withdrawal or avoidance of community participation. Strengthening family support systems, community programmes, and adolescent-friendly counselling services is therefore essential for promoting the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers.

## **2.7 Research Gaps**

Although a substantial body of literature exists on teenage pregnancy and its social consequences, several important gaps remain in the current body of knowledge. First, most studies on teenage motherhood focus primarily on national or regional trends, with limited attention given to localized contexts. In Uganda, available research often examines teenage pregnancy at national or district levels without providing detailed analysis of the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers at the sub-county or community level. As a result, there is limited empirical evidence specifically addressing the psychological experiences of teenage mothers in Bunyangabu District and Kakinga Sub-County.

Second, existing studies often emphasize the prevalence and causes of teenage pregnancy rather than the psychological consequences experienced by young mothers. While many reports highlight issues such as school dropout and early childbearing, relatively few studies provide comprehensive analysis of mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, emotional trauma, and low self-esteem among teenage mothers in rural communities. This gap limits understanding of how teenage motherhood affects the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers in specific social and cultural contexts.

Third, although several policy initiatives and community programmes have been introduced to address adolescent reproductive health in Uganda, limited research has evaluated the

effectiveness of psychosocial support systems available to teenage mothers. There is also insufficient integration of theoretical perspectives with empirical studies examining teenage motherhood and mental health outcomes. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing evidence-based interventions that support the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers. The current study therefore seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District.

## **2.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed theoretical and empirical literature on teenage motherhood and its implications for psychological wellbeing. The chapter began by examining theoretical perspectives that explain how early life experiences, social environments, and socio-economic conditions influence mental health outcomes among adolescent mothers. It then reviewed empirical studies conducted at global, regional, national, and local levels to understand the psychological challenges faced by teenage mothers, including depression, anxiety, stress, low self-esteem, and emotional trauma.

The literature review also highlighted the role of coping strategies and support systems in influencing the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers. Evidence from different studies indicates that family support, counselling services, peer networks, and community-based interventions can significantly improve mental health outcomes among adolescent mothers. However, many teenage mothers continue to face social stigma, limited access to mental health services, and inadequate support systems, particularly in rural communities.

Finally, the chapter identified several gaps in existing literature, particularly the limited availability of localized studies focusing on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in

Bunyangabu District. These gaps provide justification for conducting the present study in Kakinga Sub-County. The next chapter presents the research methodology that will be used to investigate the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers and to generate empirical evidence addressing the identified research gaps.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodological approach used to examine the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District. It outlines the research design, area of study, sources of data, population and sampling techniques, variables and their measurement, data collection procedures, instruments, quality control measures, data analysis methods, ethical considerations, and anticipated methodological constraints. Clear and systematic methodology enhances the validity and credibility of research findings (Creswell, 2018).

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopts a mixed-methods cross-sectional research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design is appropriate because it enables the collection of numerical data on psychological wellbeing indicators while also capturing in-depth personal experiences of teenage mothers. According to (Tahiru, 2024), mixed-methods research strengthens findings through triangulation of data sources.

A cross-sectional design allows data to be collected at a single point in time from teenage mothers experiencing motherhood during adolescence. (Brayman, 2016), notes that cross-sectional studies are suitable for describing characteristics and experiences of a population at a specific time.

### **3.2 Area of Study**

The study will be conducted in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District, located in Western Uganda. The area is predominantly rural, with livelihoods largely dependent on subsistence

agriculture. Kakinga Sub-County is characterized by strong cultural norms, limited access to adolescent-friendly mental health services, and persistent cases of teenage motherhood.

Kakinga Health Centre III will serve as a key entry point for identifying teenage mothers, as health records indicate a high number of deliveries among girls aged 13-19 years. The social and economic conditions in the sub-county make it an appropriate setting for examining psychological wellbeing among teenage mothers.

### **3.3 Sources of Information**

#### Primary Sources

Primary data will be collected directly from respondents with firsthand experience of teenage motherhood. These include:

Teenage mother experiencing motherhood during adolescence.

Health workers providing maternal and adolescent health services.

Teachers and school administrators.

Community development officers and local leaders.

Primary data enable the collection of context-specific and current information (Mugenda, 2003).

#### Secondary Sources

Secondary data will be obtained from:

Health facility records

District reports

Government policy documents

Published research articles and reports

Secondary sources will complement primary data by providing background information and trends relevant to teenage motherhood and psychological wellbeing.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling Techniques**

#### **3.4.1 Target Population**

The target population comprises teenage mothers aged 13-19 years residing in Kakinga Sub-County who have given birth.

#### **3.4.2 Accessible Population**

The accessible population will include teenage mothers who can be reached through: - Health centres - Village Health Teams (VHTs) - Local council records - Community networks

#### **3.4.3 Sample Size**

The sample size of 50 teenage mothers will be determined based on the estimated number of teenage mothers recorded at Kakinga Health Centre III and surrounding villages. According to health facility records and Village Health Team (VHT) estimates, approximately 80-100 teenage mothers are expected to reside within the sub-county. Using a manageable proportion appropriate for descriptive cross-sectional studies (Mugenda, 2003), a sample representing approximately 50% of the accessible population will be considered adequate to generate reliable descriptive statistics while remaining feasible within time and resource constraints.

Additionally, 5 key informants will be selected to provide expert perspectives on adolescent

mental health and community support systems. Two focus group discussions comprising 10 teenage mothers will be conducted to allow in-depth exploration of shared psychological experiences and coping mechanisms. The integration of quantitative and qualitative participants will strengthen triangulation and will enhance the validity of the study findings (Creswell, 2018).

#### **3.4.4 Sampling Techniques**

Simple random sampling will be used to select teenage mothers for the questionnaire to minimize selection bias.

Purposive sampling will be used to select key informants and focus group participants based on their knowledge and experience (Brayman, 2016).

### **3.5 Variables Definition and Measurement**

#### **Independent Variable**

Teenage motherhood, defined as becoming a mother between the ages of 13 and 19 years.

#### **Dependent Variable**

Psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers.

#### **Indicators of Psychological Wellbeing**

Psychological wellbeing will be measured using indicators such as:

Stress levels: The extent to which teenage mothers report experiencing psychological strain related to parenting demands, economic hardship, and social pressures.

Symptoms of depression: The frequency of reported depressive manifestations such as

persistent low mood, hopelessness, loss of interest, and fatigue within a specified period.

Anxiety levels: The degree of recurrent worry, fear, or nervousness associated with motherhood responsibilities and community reactions.

Self-esteem: The measured level of self-worth and personal confidence as perceived and reported by the teenage mother.

Emotional trauma and coping ability: The presence of distress linked to adverse experiences (e.g., stigma, rejection) and the strategies employed to manage such psychological distress.

### **3.6 Procedure for Data Collection**

The data collection process will follow these steps:

Obtaining authorization from Uganda Christian University and local authorities.

Community entry and mobilization with support from VHTs and local leaders.

Administration of questionnaires to selected teenage mothers using face-to-face interviews.

Conducting key informant interviews in private and convenient settings.

Facilitating focus group discussions with teenage mothers to explore shared psychological experiences.

Recording and documentation of responses using notes and audio recordings with consent.

### **3.7 Data Collection Instruments**

Structured Questionnaire

The questionnaire will collect quantitative data on psychological wellbeing indicators such as

stress, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, and coping mechanisms.

#### Interview Guide

An interview guide will be used to collect qualitative data from key informants regarding psychological challenges and support systems for teenage mothers.

#### Focus Group Discussion Guide

The FGD guide will facilitate discussion on shared emotional experiences, stigma, coping strategies, and available psychosocial support.

#### Document Review Checklist

This will be used to extract relevant secondary data from reports and records.

### **3.8 Quality Control Measures**

To ensure reliability and validity:

Pre-testing of instruments will be conducted in a nearby community with similar characteristics.

Daily review of completed questionnaires will be done to identify errors.

Triangulation of data sources will be applied to enhance credibility.

Accurate transcription of qualitative data will be ensured.

### **3.9 Data Processing and Analysis**

#### Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be coded and analyzed manually using descriptive statistics such as

frequencies and percentages. Results will be presented using tables and charts, which are suitable for small sample sizes (Mugenda, 2003).

### Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data will be transcribed and analyzed thematically. Themes will be developed in line with the study objectives, following the approach recommended by (Braun & Clerke,

### 2006) **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

The study will observe ethical standards including: - Informed consent and assent for minors - Confidentiality and anonymity of participants - Voluntary participation - Sensitivity to emotional distress - Ethical approval from relevant authorities (Brayman, 2016)

### **3.11 Methodological Constraints**

Possible limitations include:

Fear of stigma affecting openness of respondents

Time constraints

Mobility challenges for teenage mothers with infants

To mitigate these, the researcher will ensure confidentiality, build rapport, and use community support structures.

### **3.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodology used to investigate the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District. The next chapter will present data analysis and discussion of findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the findings of the study on the effects of teenage motherhood on psychological well-being among teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District. The analysis is based on data collected from 50 respondents using questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions.

The findings are presented in line with the research objectives and structured according to the questionnaire sections. Both quantitative and qualitative findings are integrated in order to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of teenage mothers in the community. While the quantitative data provides measurable patterns of psychological experiences, the qualitative insights help explain the emotional realities behind those patterns.

Before presenting the statistical tables, the chapter also incorporates respondent voices and lived experiences, reflecting the real emotional context in which teenage motherhood occurs in rural communities. This approach strengthens the analytical interpretation of the findings and enhances the credibility of the results through methodological triangulation.

### **4.1 Response Rate**

A total of 50 questionnaires were administered to teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, and all were successfully completed and returned, representing a 100% response rate.

This exceptionally high response rate indicates strong participation and interest among respondents. It also suggests that teenage mothers in the community were willing to share their experiences regarding the psychological challenges associated with early motherhood.

The full participation provided sufficient data to generate reliable conclusions regarding the psychological well-being of teenage mothers in the study area.

The high response rate further strengthens the validity of the findings since the analysis reflects the perspectives of the entire sampled population.

#### **4.2 Section A: Background Information of Respondents**

Understanding the background characteristics of respondents is important because demographic and social factors influence the psychological experiences of teenage mothers. Variables such as age, education level, living arrangement, number of children, and sources of support provide important contextual insight into the conditions under which teenage motherhood occurs.

Before presenting the statistical distributions, several respondents expressed how early motherhood has affected their personal lives and developmental stage.

One participant in the focus group discussion explained:

“I became a mother while I was still trying to understand my own life. Sometimes I feel like I skipped my childhood and suddenly became responsible for another life.”

Another teenage mother shared:

“My friends are still in school, but I spend most of my time thinking about how to take care of my baby. It makes me feel different from other girls my age.”

Such narratives illustrate the emotional and developmental transition experienced by teenage mothers, which helps explain the demographic patterns presented in the following tables.

#### 4.2.1 Age of Respondents

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
13–15 years	9	18%
16–17 years	21	42%
18–19 years	20	40%
Total	50	100%

##### Analysis

The results show that the largest proportion of respondents (42%) were aged between 16 and 17 years, followed closely by those aged 18-19 years (40%), while 18% were between 13 and 15 years.

These findings indicate that teenage motherhood in the study area is most prevalent during mid to late adolescence, a period characterized by intense psychological and social development. Adolescents at this stage are typically engaged in identity formation, peer interaction, and educational progression. However, the transition to motherhood during this stage introduces significant emotional responsibilities that may disrupt normal developmental processes.

Several respondents expressed feelings of emotional pressure linked to their age. One young mother explained:

“Sometimes I feel like I am too young to handle everything. I am still learning about life myself, yet I have to take care of a child.”

This statement reflects the psychological tension between developmental immaturity and

parental responsibility, which may contribute to feelings of stress and emotional instability among teenage mothers.

The findings therefore suggest that teenage motherhood occurs at a critical stage of psychological development, making young mothers particularly vulnerable to emotional stress, anxiety, and uncertainty about their future.

#### **4.2.2 Highest Level of Education Attended**

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
None	6	12%
Primary	23	46%
Secondary	18	36%
Vocational	3	6%
Total	50	100%

#### **Analysis**

The results reveal that 46% of respondents had only attained primary education, while 36% had reached secondary level, 12% had never attended school, and 6% had received vocational training.

These findings indicate that teenage pregnancy significantly disrupts educational progression. Many teenage mothers are forced to drop out of school after becoming pregnant, which limits their educational attainment and future employment opportunities.

One respondent emotionally expressed:

“I wanted to finish school and become a teacher, but when I became pregnant everything stopped. Now I worry about what my future will be.”

Education plays an important role in shaping self-esteem and future aspirations. When educational opportunities are interrupted, teenage mothers may experience feelings of regret, hopelessness, and reduced confidence about their future prospects.

The findings therefore suggest that educational disruption is a key structural factor contributing to psychological distress among teenage mothers.

#### **4.2.3 Current Living Arrangement**

Living Arrangement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
With parents/guardians	24	48%
With partner	12	24%
Alone	5	10%
Other relatives	9	18%
Total	50	100%

#### **Analysis**

The results indicate that 48% of teenage mothers live with parents or guardians, while 24% live with their partners, 18% live with other relatives, and 10% live alone.

Living arrangement is an important factor influencing emotional well-being because it determines the level of social and financial support available to teenage mothers.

Respondents living alone expressed higher levels of emotional distress. One participant

stated:

“When you stay alone with a baby, everything becomes difficult. There are days when I feel very stressed because there is no one to help me.”

Comparative observations from the dataset show that respondents who lived with parents or guardians reported slightly lower levels of stress, suggesting that family support may act as a protective factor against psychological distress.

These findings highlight the important role of family networks in buffering emotional stress among teenage mothers.

#### 4.2.4 Number of Children

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage (%)
One child	38	76%
Two children	12	24%
Three or more	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Analysis

The results show that 76% of respondents had one child, while 24% had two children.

This indicates that most respondents are first-time mothers who are still adjusting to the emotional and practical responsibilities of motherhood. First-time teenage mothers often experience uncertainty and anxiety as they navigate childcare responsibilities without

sufficient preparation or guidance.

One respondent explained:

“I did not know how difficult it would be to raise a baby. Sometimes I feel scared that I might not do things the right way.”

Such experiences demonstrate how parenting stress contributes to psychological vulnerability among teenage mothers.

#### **4.2.5 Main Source of Daily Support**

Source of Support	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family	26	52%
Partner	11	22%
Self	6	12%
Community	5	10%
Other	2	4%
Total	50	100%

#### **Analysis**

The findings show that family members provide the main source of support for 52% of respondents, while 22% rely on partners, 12% depend on themselves, and 10% receive support from the community.

These findings emphasize the critical role of family structures in supporting teenage mothers.

One teenage mother explained:

“If my mother did not help me, I do not know how I would survive. She supports me with food and helps take care of the baby.”

However, reliance on family support also reflects economic dependency, which may create feelings of inadequacy or guilt among teenage mothers who feel unable to support themselves independently.

#### **4.3 Psychological Well-being of Teenage Mothers**

Before presenting the psychological well-being statistics, many respondents described feeling emotionally overwhelmed after becoming mothers at a young age.

One participant expressed:

“There are days when I feel tired and stressed because the baby cries at night and I still have many responsibilities during the day.”

Another explained:

“Sometimes I feel worried about my future because I do not know how I will provide for my child.”

These emotional experiences reflect the psychological realities that underpin the quantitative results presented below.

### 4.3.1 Feeling Overwhelmed by Motherhood Responsibilities

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Never	4	8%
Rarely	7	14%
Sometimes	15	30%
Often	16	32%
Always	8	16%

#### Analysis

The findings reveal that 48% of respondents reported often or always feeling overwhelmed by motherhood responsibilities, while 30% reported feeling overwhelmed sometimes.

This indicates that a large proportion of teenage mothers experience frequent emotional pressure associated with childcare responsibilities.

Adolescents are typically still developing coping mechanisms and emotional regulation skills. Therefore, the sudden transition to motherhood can create psychological strain.

The results suggest that early motherhood introduces emotional responsibilities that many adolescents are not fully prepared to manage, contributing to high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion.

### 4.4 Experiences Linked to Teenage Motherhood

Teenage mothers in the focus group discussions described numerous challenges affecting their emotional well-being.

One participant explained:

“When I became pregnant, I had to stop school. Since then I keep thinking about what my life would have been like if I had finished my studies.”

Another respondent stated:

“Sometimes people in the community talk badly about us, and it makes you feel ashamed.”

These experiences help explain the patterns observed in the following statistical findings.

#### **4.4.1 Challenges Faced Since Becoming a Mother**

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Financial hardship	36	72%
Stopping school	31	62%
Parenting stress	29	58%
Community stigma	27	54%
Lack of partner support	22	44%
Family rejection	14	28%

Analysis

Financial hardship emerged as the most frequently reported challenge (72%), followed by school dropout (62%) and parenting stress (58%).

Financial difficulties create continuous pressure for teenage mothers who must provide for

their children without stable income sources.

The results indicate that economic and educational disruptions significantly influence the psychological well-being of teenage mothers.

#### **4.5 Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems**

Teenage mothers adopt different coping strategies to manage emotional stress.

One respondent shared:

“When I feel stressed, I talk to my mother because she understands what I am going through.”

Another participant said:

“Prayer helps me feel strong even when things are difficult.”

These statements reflect the cultural and social coping mechanisms used by teenage mothers.

##### **4.5.1 Coping Strategies Used**

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Talk to family	19	38%
Prayer/religious activities	13	26%
Talk to friends	11	22%
Keep quiet/handle alone	7	14%

Analysis

Family support and religious coping emerged as the most common coping strategies.

However, the presence of respondents who handle stress alone (14%) suggests the existence of emotional suppression, which may increase vulnerability to long-term psychological distress.

#### **4.6 Qualitative Findings (Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions)**

In addition to the quantitative data collected through questionnaires, qualitative data were obtained through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The interviews involved health workers, community leaders, and social workers, while the focus group discussions involved teenage mothers residing in Kakinga Sub-County. The purpose of collecting qualitative data was to gain deeper insight into the lived experiences behind the statistical patterns identified in the survey results.

Thematic analysis of the interview responses revealed several key issues affecting the psychological well-being of teenage mothers. These included psychological distress associated with early motherhood, community stigma and discrimination, socio-economic challenges affecting emotional well-being, coping mechanisms adopted by teenage mothers, and gaps in psychosocial support services. The qualitative findings therefore complement the quantitative results by providing contextual explanations for the psychological experiences reported by respondents.

##### **4.6.1 Psychological Challenges Identified by Key Informants**

Key informants consistently emphasized that teenage mothers often experience emotional distress after becoming mothers at an early age. Health workers explained that many teenage mothers struggle with anxiety, sadness, and feelings of being overwhelmed due to the sudden transition into parental responsibilities.

A health worker working in the community explained:

“Many of these girls are emotionally overwhelmed because they are still developing themselves, yet they suddenly become responsible for raising a child.”

During the focus group discussion, one teenage mother expressed the emotional burden associated with early motherhood:

“Sometimes I feel stressed because I am trying to care for my baby while also worrying about what my future will look like.”

These statements illustrate the psychological pressure associated with teenage motherhood. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, emotional growth, and social exploration. When motherhood occurs during this stage, the sudden shift in responsibilities can disrupt normal psychosocial development and contribute to emotional distress. Studies on adolescent mental health show that teenage mothers often experience higher levels of psychological stress and emotional vulnerability compared to older mothers because they are still undergoing cognitive and emotional development (World Health Organisation, 2022); (Hutchison, 2019)

The qualitative findings therefore help explain the quantitative results presented earlier in the chapter, where 48% of respondents reported often or always feeling overwhelmed by motherhood responsibilities, while 62% reported anxiety about their future. The convergence of these findings indicates that teenage motherhood significantly affects emotional stability among adolescents in the study area.

#### **4.6.2 Influence of Stigma on Psychological Well-being**

Another important theme that emerged from the qualitative data was the influence of community stigma and social judgment on the psychological well-being of teenage mothers. Key informants reported that teenage pregnancy is often viewed negatively within the community, leading to feelings of shame, rejection, and emotional distress among young mothers.

A community leader explained:

“In our community, teenage pregnancy is often seen as a mistake that brings shame to the family. Because of this, many girls feel judged and isolated.”

Similarly, a teenage mother participating in the focus group discussion shared:

“Sometimes people in the village talk about us as if we have ruined our lives. Hearing those words makes you feel embarrassed and unhappy.”

These experiences demonstrate how social stigma can contribute to psychological distress. Adolescents often depend heavily on peer acceptance and social belonging for emotional stability. When teenage mothers experience discrimination or judgment from their communities, they may develop feelings of shame, social withdrawal, and low self-esteem. Research has shown that stigma associated with adolescent pregnancy often leads to social exclusion and emotional distress among young mothers, which may negatively affect their psychological well-being (United Nations Population Fund, 2022); (Hoffman, 2008).

The influence of stigma observed in the interviews is consistent with the quantitative findings where 57% of respondents reported emotional hurt due to stigma, and 54% identified

community stigma as one of the major challenges associated with teenage motherhood. Therefore, the qualitative findings reinforce the argument that stigma remains a significant social factor influencing the psychological well-being of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County.

#### **4.6.3 Socio-economic Factors Affecting Mental Health**

Socio-economic challenges were also widely discussed during the interviews and focus group discussions. Key informants emphasized that financial hardship, school dropout, and lack of partner support significantly affect the emotional well-being of teenage mothers.

A social worker working with young mothers in the area explained:

“Many teenage mothers become dependent on their families after leaving school. This makes them feel uncertain about how they will support themselves and their children in the future.”

During the focus group discussion, one teenage mother expressed similar concerns:

“I worry because my baby needs food and clothes, but I do not have a job. Sometimes it feels like the future is very uncertain.”

These responses illustrate how economic dependency and interrupted education contribute to emotional stress and anxiety. Education is widely recognized as a key determinant of self-esteem, economic independence, and social mobility. When teenage mothers are forced to discontinue their education, they often experience feelings of regret and limited life opportunities.

The qualitative evidence corresponds with the survey results where 72% of respondents reported financial hardship, and 62% indicated that they had stopped attending school after

becoming mothers. Additionally, 78% of respondents reported that financial challenges significantly affect their emotional well-being.

Previous studies have also shown that economic insecurity and educational disruption increase psychological vulnerability among adolescent mothers because they restrict access to employment opportunities and future life planning (UNICEF, 2021); (world health organization, 2023). Therefore, the qualitative findings confirm that socio-economic factors are critical determinants of psychological well-being among teenage mothers in the study area.

#### **4.6.4 Coping Experiences Shared During Focus Group Discussions**

Despite the emotional challenges associated with teenage motherhood, the focus group discussions revealed that many teenage mothers rely on informal coping strategies to manage psychological stress. Family support and religious faith emerged as two of the most common coping mechanisms.

One teenage mother explained:

“When I feel overwhelmed, I talk to my mother because she encourages me and reminds me that life can still improve.”

Another participant highlighted the role of religious faith:

“Prayer helps me feel strong. When things become difficult, I ask God to give me strength to continue caring for my child.”

These coping mechanisms demonstrate the importance of social and spiritual support networks in helping teenage mothers manage emotional challenges. Social support is widely

recognized as an important protective factor against psychological distress. According to the Social Support Theory, individuals who receive emotional and practical assistance from family members and social networks are better able to cope with stressful life events (Elder, 1998)

The coping strategies described by participants also correspond with the quantitative findings where 38% of respondents reported talking to family members, and 26% relied on prayer or religious activities as coping mechanisms.

However, the qualitative findings also revealed that some teenage mothers cope with stress by remaining silent or handling their problems alone. Psychological studies suggest that emotional suppression may increase vulnerability to long-term mental health challenges if individuals lack access to professional counselling or structured psychosocial support (Tahiru, 2024)

#### **4.7 Gaps in Psychosocial Support Services**

A final theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis was the limited availability of professional counselling and mental health support services for teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County. Key informants noted that most teenage mothers rely primarily on family members for emotional support because formal psychosocial services are scarce in rural communities.

##### **4.7.1 A health worker explained:**

“There are very few counselling services available for teenage mothers in rural areas. Most of the time these girls rely on family members rather than trained professionals.”

This observation was also reflected in the survey findings, where 76% of respondents reported

that they had never received counselling or mental health support.

The absence of structured psychosocial programs means that many teenage mothers must cope with emotional distress without professional guidance. Research on adolescent mental health highlights that access to counselling and youth-friendly mental health services is essential for improving emotional resilience and reducing psychological distress among vulnerable adolescents (World Health Organisation, 2022); (Atuyambe, 2015)

Therefore, the qualitative findings highlight the urgent need for stronger mental health support systems for teenage mothers within rural communities such as Kakinga Sub-County

#### **4.7.2 Integrated Interpretation of Qualitative Findings**

Overall, the qualitative findings provide deeper insight into the psychological experiences of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County. The interviews revealed that teenage mothers frequently experience stress, anxiety, stigma, and economic uncertainty, all of which contribute to psychological vulnerability. These experiences are closely linked to socio-economic conditions such as poverty, educational disruption, and limited social support.

Importantly, the qualitative findings reinforce the patterns observed in the quantitative data, demonstrating strong triangulation between the two data sources. While the statistical results highlight the prevalence of psychological distress among teenage mothers, the interview narratives explain the social and emotional realities underlying these patterns.

Together, the findings suggest that improving the psychological well-being of teenage mothers requires a multidimensional approach that addresses economic empowerment, community attitudes, and access to psychosocial support services.

#### **4.8 Summary of Key Findings**

The study findings indicate that teenage motherhood in Kakinga Sub-County is strongly associated with considerable psychological vulnerability among young mothers. A substantial proportion of respondents reported experiencing emotional stress, anxiety, sadness, and reduced self-confidence after becoming mothers at an early age. Both quantitative survey data and qualitative insights from key informants and focus group discussions demonstrate that the transition into motherhood often occurs before many adolescents have developed the emotional maturity or social support structures necessary to manage such responsibilities. This psychological strain is consistent with global evidence indicating that adolescent mothers frequently experience higher levels of emotional distress compared to their non-parenting peers (World Health Organisation, 2022). The findings therefore confirm that early motherhood significantly affects the emotional stability and overall psychological well-being of young mothers.

The results further reveal that socio-economic and social factors play a critical role in shaping the psychological experiences of teenage mothers. Financial hardship, school dropout, and community stigma emerged as the most dominant challenges affecting respondents. Many teenage mothers reported that the loss of educational opportunities limited their future prospects and contributed to feelings of uncertainty and regret. In addition, limited financial independence increased dependence on family members, which often intensified stress and feelings of inadequacy. Qualitative findings further showed that negative community attitudes and social labeling frequently undermine the self-esteem of teenage mothers and reinforce emotional isolation. These findings correspond with broader research which shows that adolescent pregnancy often disrupts education and exposes young mothers to socio-economic

vulnerabilities that negatively affect mental health (UNICEF, 2021).

Despite these challenges, the study also identified important coping mechanisms that support the psychological resilience of teenage mothers. Family support, emotional encouragement from relatives, and engagement in religious or faith-based activities were reported as key sources of comfort and emotional stability. These forms of informal support helped many teenage mothers adapt to their new roles and manage stress. However, the findings also reveal a significant gap in formal psychosocial support systems, as access to professional counselling and structured mental health services remains limited within the community. Consequently, while informal support networks provide some relief, the absence of organized psychological support programs continues to constrain the ability of teenage mothers to effectively manage emotional challenges. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening community-based counselling services and youth-focused psychosocial interventions to improve the psychological well-being of teenage mothers (United Nations Population Fund, 2022).

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives, the conceptual framework, and existing scholarly literature. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the results presented in Chapter Four and explain their implications for understanding the psychological well-being of teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District.

### **5.1 Discussion of Findings**

The discussion of findings is organized according to the specific objectives of the study in order to ensure consistency with the conceptual framework and research design. Each objective is examined through interpretation of the empirical findings presented in Chapter Four and comparison with existing literature on adolescent motherhood and psychological well-being.

#### **5.1.1 Psychological Well-being of Teenage Mothers in Kakinga Sub-County**

The findings of the study revealed that a substantial proportion of teenage mothers experience

psychological distress characterized by stress, anxiety, sadness, and reduced self-confidence. Many respondents indicated that they frequently feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities associated with motherhood and remain uncertain about their future prospects. These findings demonstrate that early motherhood places considerable emotional pressure on adolescent girls who are still undergoing psychological and social development.

Adolescence is widely recognized as a critical developmental stage during which individuals establish identity, emotional regulation, and social relationships. The transition into motherhood during this stage introduces responsibilities that may disrupt these developmental processes. As a result, teenage mothers may struggle to balance childcare responsibilities with their own developmental needs, thereby increasing their vulnerability to emotional strain and psychological instability.

The study further revealed that feelings of emotional distress among teenage mothers are intensified by experiences of social stigma and negative community perceptions. Many respondents reported feeling emotionally hurt and socially isolated due to judgment from community members. These experiences undermine self-esteem and may contribute to feelings of shame and withdrawal from social interaction.

These findings are consistent with global research indicating that teenage mothers are more likely to experience emotional stress, depression, and anxiety compared to their non-parenting peers (World Health Organisation, 2022) Similarly, studies by (UNICEF, 2021) highlight that adolescent mothers often face psychological vulnerability due to limited social support, interrupted education, and economic dependency.

Qualitative evidence from key informant interviews and focus group discussions further

reinforced these observations. Community stakeholders reported that teenage mothers frequently display signs of emotional stress and low self-confidence. Participants in the focus group discussions openly expressed concerns about their future and described the emotional challenges associated with raising a child at a young age. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings therefore strengthens the credibility of the study and confirms that teenage motherhood significantly affects psychological well-being in the study area.

### **5.1.2 Challenges Associated with Teenage Motherhood and Their Influence on Psychological Well-being**

The study established that teenage mothers in Kakinga Sub-County face multiple socio-economic and emotional challenges that directly influence their psychological well-being. Among these challenges, financial hardship emerged as the most prominent factor affecting the emotional stability of teenage mothers.

Many respondents indicated that they struggle to provide basic necessities for their children due to limited access to income-generating opportunities. This financial dependency creates continuous stress and anxiety as teenage mothers attempt to fulfill parental responsibilities without stable economic support. Economic insecurity therefore acts as a major psychological stressor that contributes to emotional vulnerability.

School dropout was also identified as a significant challenge affecting the psychological well-being of teenage mothers. Many respondents reported that pregnancy forced them to discontinue their education, which disrupted their future aspirations and reduced opportunities for socio-economic advancement. Educational disruption often leads to feelings of regret and uncertainty about prospects, thereby intensifying emotional distress among teenage mothers.

These findings are consistent with research indicating that adolescent motherhood often interrupts educational trajectories and restricts access to employment opportunities, thereby increasing psychological vulnerability (United Nations Population Fund, 2022). Without educational qualifications or economic independence, teenage mothers frequently experience long-term socio-economic disadvantages that negatively affect mental health.

Community stigma and social rejection were also identified as major factors influencing emotional well-being. Respondents reported experiencing judgment, discrimination, and social labeling from community members. Such experiences often lead to emotional pain, reduced self-esteem, and withdrawal from community participation. Similar findings have been reported in studies which show that stigma associated with teenage pregnancy contributes to social exclusion and psychological distress among adolescent mothers (Hoffman, 2008)

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teenage motherhood is accompanied by complex socio-economic challenges that significantly shape the psychological well-being of adolescent mothers.

### **5.1.3 Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems Available to Teenage Mothers**

The study revealed that teenage mothers adopt various coping strategies to manage the emotional challenges associated with early motherhood. These coping mechanisms include seeking support from family members, engaging in religious activities, discussing challenges with friends, and in some cases handling problems independently.

Family support emerged as one of the most important protective factors influencing psychological well-being. Teenage mothers who received emotional encouragement, childcare

assistance, and financial support from parents or relatives appeared to cope better with the challenges of motherhood. Supportive family environments therefore play a critical role in reducing feelings of stress, isolation, and emotional instability.

Religious engagement also emerged as a significant coping mechanism. Many respondents reported that prayer and participation in faith-based activities provide emotional comfort and hope during difficult periods. Religious institutions in rural communities often function as informal support systems that help individuals manage emotional challenges and maintain resilience.

These findings align with the Social Support Theory, which emphasizes that strong social networks enhance an individual's ability to cope with stressful life experiences (Bandura, 1977). Emotional and practical assistance from family members and community networks can therefore help mitigate psychological distress among teenage mothers.

However, the study also revealed that a notable proportion of respondents cope with emotional challenges by remaining silent and handling their problems alone. This coping strategy may indicate emotional suppression, which can increase vulnerability to long-term psychological distress if individuals lack access to professional counseling services.

The findings further revealed that most teenage mothers have limited access to formal mental health support services. The absence of structured psychosocial programs means that teenage mothers rely primarily on informal coping mechanisms that may not adequately address deeper emotional challenges.

#### **5.1.4 Relationship Between Findings and the Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework guiding this study proposed that factors associated with teenage

motherhood influence the psychological well-being of adolescent mothers, while coping mechanisms and support systems act as moderating variables.

The study findings strongly support this theoretical assumption. Socio-economic factors such as financial hardship, school dropout, stigma, and lack of partner support were found to contribute significantly to emotional distress among teenage mothers. These factors directly affect psychological outcomes such as stress, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem.

At the same time, coping mechanisms such as family support, religious engagement, and peer interaction were identified as moderating influences that partially reduce psychological strain. However, the effectiveness of these coping strategies varies depending on the level of support available to teenage mothers.

The findings therefore validate the multidimensional relationships proposed in the conceptual framework and demonstrate that psychological well-being among teenage mothers is shaped by a combination of socio-economic conditions, social attitudes, and support systems.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the study on the effects of teenage motherhood on the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers in Kakinga Sub-County, Bunyangabu District. The conclusions are based on the key findings and their interpretation in relation to existing literature. The chapter further provides recommendations aimed at addressing the psychological challenges faced by teenage mothers, followed by suggestions for further research.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that teenage motherhood has significant and multifaceted implications for the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers in Kakinga Sub-County. The study established that teenage mothers experience considerable emotional challenges including stress, anxiety, sadness, and reduced self-confidence. These psychological difficulties largely arise from the abrupt transition into motherhood during adolescence a developmental stage characterized by identity formation, emotional growth, and dependency. This finding is consistent with the observations of

(Nabunya, 2021) and the (World Health Organisation, 2022), who argue that adolescent mothers are particularly vulnerable to psychological distress due to limited coping capacity and premature exposure to adult responsibilities.

The study further concludes that socio-economic challenges play a central role in shaping the psychological experiences of teenage mothers. Financial hardship emerged as a dominant stressor, with many adolescent mothers lacking stable income sources to support themselves and their children. This creates persistent economic pressure, which significantly contributes to emotional distress. Similar findings have been reported by (Hodgkinson, 2014), who emphasize that financial instability is closely associated with increased levels of depression and stress among teenage mothers. In addition, educational disruption resulting from school dropout was identified as a major contributor to psychological distress. The inability to continue education limits future opportunities and often leads to feelings of regret, hopelessness, and diminished self-worth among teenage mothers, a pattern also highlighted by the (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Community stigma and negative social perceptions surrounding teenage pregnancy were also found to significantly affect the psychological wellbeing of adolescent mothers. Many respondents reported experiences of social isolation, shame, and discrimination, which further intensify emotional distress. These findings align with (Neal, 2020) and the (United Nations Population Fund, 2022), who note that stigma remains a critical factor contributing to low self-esteem and emotional trauma among teenage mothers. The internalization of negative societal attitudes often leads to long-term psychological challenges and reduced social participation.

Despite these challenges, the study established that coping mechanisms and support systems play a crucial role in moderating psychological outcomes. Family support, particularly from parents and guardians, emerged as the most significant protective factor. Teenage mothers who received emotional and practical support from their families demonstrated relatively better coping abilities and emotional stability. This finding is supported by (UNICEF, 2021), which highlights the importance of family support in reducing depression and anxiety among adolescent mothers. Religious engagement and community support also contributed to emotional resilience by providing a sense of belonging and moral guidance.

However, the study further concludes that formal psychosocial support systems remain largely inadequate in the study area. Limited access to professional counselling services and adolescent-friendly mental health programs restricts the ability of teenage mothers to address deeper psychological challenges. This observation is consistent with the (World Health Organisation, 2022), which reports that mental health services in many developing countries are under-resourced and poorly integrated into primary healthcare systems. As a result, many teenage mothers rely on informal support mechanisms that may not sufficiently address complex mental health needs.

Overall, the study confirms that teenage motherhood occurs within a complex socio-economic and cultural environment that profoundly influences psychological wellbeing. Addressing the emotional needs of teenage mothers therefore requires comprehensive and integrated interventions that combine economic empowerment, educational opportunities, community sensitization, and accessible mental health services.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

### **6.2.1 Recommendations to Government**

The Government of Uganda, particularly the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, should strengthen community-based mental health and counselling services targeting teenage mothers. There is a need to integrate adolescent-friendly psychosocial support programs within existing health facilities, especially at lower-level health centres. According to the (World Health Organisation, 2022), integrating mental health services into primary healthcare improves accessibility and early intervention. In addition, the government should reinforce policies that support the re-entry of teenage mothers into the education system, as continued education has been shown to improve self-esteem and long-term socio-economic outcomes (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

### **6.2.2 Recommendations to Non-Governmental Organizations**

Non-governmental organizations working in adolescent health and maternal welfare should design and implement integrated intervention programs that combine psychosocial counselling with economic empowerment initiatives. Providing vocational training, life skills education, and income-generating opportunities for teenage mothers would significantly reduce financial dependency and enhance their psychological resilience. (UNICEF, 2021) emphasizes that economic empowerment programs play a critical role in improving mental health outcomes by reducing stress and increasing self-reliance among adolescent mothers.

### **6.2.3 Recommendations to Community and Religious Leaders**

Community leaders and religious institutions should take an active role in addressing stigma and promoting social acceptance of teenage mothers. Community sensitization campaigns should be implemented to challenge negative cultural perceptions associated with teenage

pregnancy. Research by (Neal, 2020) shows that reducing stigma improves social integration and emotional wellbeing among adolescent mothers. Religious institutions should also strengthen counselling services and provide supportive environments where teenage mothers can receive guidance and emotional support.

#### **6.2.4 Recommendations to Families and Guardians**

Families and guardians should provide consistent emotional, social, and practical support to teenage mothers. Supportive family environments play a critical role in reducing stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation. Parents should encourage open communication and provide guidance that enables teenage mothers to cope with their new responsibilities. In addition, families should support adolescent mothers in returning to school or engaging in vocational training, thereby improving their future opportunities and psychological wellbeing.

#### **6.2.5 Recommendations for Future Researchers**

Future researchers should conduct more comprehensive and longitudinal studies to examine the long-term psychological outcomes of teenage motherhood. There is a need to explore how early motherhood affects mental health over time and to evaluate the effectiveness of psychosocial support programs. Researchers should also consider expanding the scope of study to include larger and more diverse populations across multiple districts to enhance the generalizability of findings.

### **6.3 Areas for Further Research**

Further research should explore the long-term mental health outcomes of teenage mothers, particularly how psychological challenges evolve beyond adolescence into adulthood. There is also a need to assess the effectiveness of community-based counselling programs, peer

support groups, and economic empowerment initiatives in improving psychological wellbeing. Additionally, future studies should examine the role of educational reintegration in enhancing both the socio-economic and mental health outcomes of teenage mothers. Comparative studies between rural and urban settings would provide valuable insights into how contextual differences influence the psychological experiences of adolescent mothers (World Health Organisation, 2022).

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## **APPENDIX I: Quantitative Data Tables and Analysis Outputs**

### Writing

This appendix presents the structured quantitative data tables used in Chapter Four of the study. The dataset includes cleaned, coded, and analyzed variables reflecting responses from the field. The tables summarize key findings on teenage motherhood, including frequency distributions, percentages, and relationships between study variables. These outputs form the basis of the statistical interpretations discussed in the main body of the research.

Attached File Title:

**“Processed Quantitative Data Tables for Teenage Motherhood Study”**



Processed  
Quantitative Data Tables

## **APPENDIX II: Primary Dataset on Teenage Motherhood**

### Writing

This appendix contains the primary dataset collected during the field study on teenage motherhood. It includes raw responses obtained from participants before statistical processing. The dataset captures demographic characteristics, socio-economic factors, and behavioral variables relevant to the study. It serves as the foundational evidence supporting the study's analysis and findings.

Attached File Title:

**“Raw Field Data on Teenage Motherhood in the Study Area”**



Raw Field Data on  
Teenage Motherhood

### **APPENDIX III: Raw Data and Summary Analysis**

#### Writing

This appendix provides both the raw dataset and preliminary summary analysis of the study variables. It combines unprocessed data with basic statistical summaries such as totals, averages, and categorized responses. This appendix enhances transparency by demonstrating how raw data was transformed into meaningful analytical outputs used in the research findings.

Attached File Title:

**“Combined Raw Dataset and Summary Analysis for Teenage Motherhood Study”**



Combined Raw  
Dataset and Summa

Note: Double-click the icon above to open and view the dataset in Microsoft Excel.