




## Exploring psychosocial challenges of pregnant and parenting student mothers at a university in Ghana: A dilemma between discontinuity and moving on

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**Abstract** – This study explored the psychosocial challenges of pregnant and parenting student mothers at a University in Ghana. It adopted a qualitative phenomenological research approach underpinned by an interpretive paradigm. Participants involved pregnant and parenting student mothers pursuing degree programmes during the 2023/2024 academic year. Twelve participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. This study employed in-depth semi-structured interviews and observation for data collection. Thematic results indicated that pregnant and parenting student mothers face various psychological challenges such as stigmatisation, discrimination, guilt feelings and low self-esteem, and difficulty with concentration and learning. They revealed that pregnant and parenting student mothers cope with these psychosocial challenges by avoiding contact with other students, prioritising and planning, and making sacrifices as coping strategies and making sacrifices. The study concludes that pregnant and parenting student mothers pursuing higher degrees at the university are fraught with numerous psychosocial challenges emanating from colleagues, friends, and lecturers. It further concludes that pregnant and parenting student mothers adopted avoiding contact with other students, prioritising and planning and making sacrifices coping strategies. It is recommended that school counsellors should organise group guidance for pregnant and parenting student mothers to enable them to cope with their situation. This would help the smooth integration of pregnant and parenting student mothers and improve their psychological outcomes, which may enhance their academic pursuits.

**Keywords:** Parenting student mothers, Pregnant student mothers, Psychosocial challenges

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### I. INTRODUCTION

PREGNANT and parenting student mothers in higher education are growing rapidly. According to research, this group of students faces increased pressure and stress while pursuing their degree (Brown & Nichols, 2012). Pregnant and parenting students face numerous challenges when attending regular education, particularly in tertiary institutions. Pregnancy and parenting may be difficult and stressful experiences for anyone, especially university students (Buku et al., 2018). Undoubtedly, pregnant and parenting student mothers in higher education institutions face some problems that distinguish them from pregnant and parenting mothers who are not students, as well as students who are not pregnant and parenting mothers.

Berg and Mamhute (2013) posit that most pregnant and parenting mothers prioritise their children's and families' needs and wish over their own. Pregnancy and parenthood in tertiary institutions are often unplanned, exposing students to a variety of psychosocial issues. According to Nordzi et al. (2022), pregnancy and parenthood are distinct experiences and one of women's most critical social expectations at various periods. Pregnancy and parenthood are usually accepted in Ghana's higher institutions due to their distinct, naturally given role in guaranteeing procreation and life preservation. To close the gender gap in higher education, most women in tertiary institutions are now required to combine academic work with other responsibilities as wives or mothers, and some of them become pregnant and take on the role of

parenting while studying. As the number of adults enrolled in higher institutions grows, so will the population of pregnant and parenting student mothers, and the psychological and social obstacles that these students face should not be ignored.

Evidence from Scotland suggests that the number of students who fall pregnant during their studies will rise. A positive association exists between students' increasing age and their likelihood of having children (Orr et al., 2008). Similarly, figures from the United Kingdom show that 35% of all female first-year students are 30 or older. Even though Ghanaian institutions allow pregnancy and parenting in school, the hardships associated with these roles do not preclude these students from meeting the university's academic standards (Etuah et al., 2018). Furthermore, the stigmatisation that most pregnant and parenting student mothers face is associated with the label, which frequently defines pregnant students by their roles as pregnant or parenting rather than as students (Brown & Amankwaa, 2007; Duquaine-Watson, 2007). Brown and Nichols (2012) stated that many students felt that their pregnancy and parenting roles had become the focus of their colleagues' conversations, limiting their engagement with peers.

Wambu (2018) identified various social and psychological barriers that affect student moms when they pursue or complete their technical education. The most common obstacles faced by student mothers were stigma and prejudice (90.6%), low self-esteem and guilt (84.1%), and a lack of concentration (75%). Respondents reported feeling stigmatised by professors and fellow students due to mockery in front of their classmates. Magwaza (2003) claims that such women were made to feel

guilty, and Pillow (2006) agrees, stating that society expects moms who fail to perform ideal mothering tasks to feel bad. To prepare for, attract, and retain this population, tertiary institutions must become more aware of the psychosocial obstacles these students face while striving for academic success. Unfortunately, there appears to be a lack of literature that examines the psychological issues of both pregnant and parenting student moms in a single study.

Moreover, Lynch (2008) contends that in many circumstances, the fear of being labeled inept or incapable prevents some students from requesting assistance from academic staff members. Similarly, most research has focused on the psychological issues of adolescent student moms (Buku et al., 2018), pregnant students' challenges (Nordzi et al., 2022), and motherhood and higher education (Amos et al., 2021). This has resulted in a population gap, which this study hopes to expand to include pregnant and parenting student women. Notably, in Ghana, many students now enroll in tertiary educational institutions while pregnant or as parents, while others become pregnant and take on parental responsibilities during their studies. For most of these students, the combined tasks of pregnancy and parenting and the intense academic expectations of university life may be rather overwhelming.

According to Adofo (2013), for student mothers in Ghana to effectively fulfill multiple duties, they used simultaneous management tactics and organisational ways to adjust to contradictions caused by concurrent tasks. Similarly, Forster et al. (2012) claim that student women employed several tactics, including delegating household tasks, prioritising, planning, and organizing activities, to ensure their family life did not suffer while attending university. Similarly, Moghadam et al. (2017) report that simultaneously being a student and a mother was difficult but manageable, requiring planning in various areas. According to Stephenson (2013), troubled pupils avoid surroundings that make them uncomfortable. Moreau and Kerner (2013) supported this argument, stating that the nature of parenting and academic work requires care.

Additionally, Bosch (2013) contends that student mothers had to make many sacrifices to spend time socializing and resting. Similarly, Anane et al. (2021) believe that student mothers should limit the amount of time spent with colleagues and friends if it is not necessary for academic purposes. According to Ajandi (2011), the student-mother must miss certain social activities organized by the faculty, department, and university authorities for students to manage themselves, academic work, and child-rearing responsibilities appropriately. Anane et al. (2021) also believe that most student-mothers may cut back on the number of hours they sleep.

Despite the psychological challenges that pregnant and parenting students face, they are held to the same demanding academic standards as all other students at the university. This problem has gained the attention of many stakeholders, including academics and researchers since it has the potential to reduce mental health, which could influence academic production. This study is intended to investigate the psychological issues faced by pregnant and parenting student mothers at Ghanaian public colleges. This study provides tailored recommendations for policy development and implementation and improves counselling practice. Furthermore, this study is significant because it will add to the knowledge of how pregnant and parenting student moms deal with these psychosocial problems while pursuing a postsecondary education. The study's findings would also prompt the Ministry of Education to develop a practical and feasible policy framework for pregnant and parenting student mothers' education in Ghana.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What psychosocial challenges do pregnant and parenting student mothers face at a selected university in Ghana?
2. What strategies do pregnant and parenting student mothers adopt to cope with their psychosocial challenges?

## III. METHODS

### Research paradigm

The interpretive paradigm underpins the study, which holds that a deeper understanding of the social environment can be gained by exploring participants' experiences, feelings, and perspectives (White et al., 2011). The rationale for using this paradigm is founded on the Ryan (2018) concept, which assumes that truth and knowledge are subjective because of differences in our culture and life experiences. Given this assumption, learning from the interpretive paradigm suggested by Berryman (2019) further explains the belief that social construction, language, shared consciousness, and other social interactions are important means for interpretive to invent facts. Carey (2012) believes that the meanings can be understood and shared in qualitative research through the exploration of human language. Therefore, it is essential to understand who is interpreting, why, and how they are interpreting, which is independent of the researcher. This paradigm was vital in understanding pregnant and parenting student mothers' subjective and unique psychosocial challenges and their strategies to cope with challenges as they navigate tertiary education. These challenges are conceptualised as lived experiences and can only be understood better by allowing the participants, who are information-rich, to narrate and share their unique stories.

### Research approach

The study was conducted using a qualitative research approach. The rationale for using this approach was that it allowed the researcher to conduct extensive research and gather firsthand information about the psychosocial challenges faced by pregnant and parenting student mothers at a selected university in Ghana. A qualitative research approach was employed for this study because it helped to get insights into pregnant and parenting student mothers' experiences, behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, and motivations amidst the psychological challenges they are confronted with daily. This approach allowed the researcher to observe the participants and conduct in-depth face-to-face interviews to unearth their subjective psychosocial challenges and how they can cope (Corner et al., 2019). Notably, this approach provided textual and complex descriptions of why and how pregnant and parenting student mothers experience certain psychosocial challenges and possible ways of adapting. Besides, the qualitative approach in this study was seen as effective in determining and identifying intangible factors such as socio-economic status, social norms, and gender roles that contribute to the psychosocial challenges of pregnant and parenting student mothers and the available support strategies to help them cope (Cleland, 2017).

### Research design

The study adopted the phenomenology research design. This research design emphasises people's subjective interpretations and experiences of the world (Mater & Oranga, 2023). Moreover, the goal of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of this experience, both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced (Teherani et al., 2015). Also, it provides in-depth and detailed information, offers flexibility in data collection methods, and minimises the chance of missing data. This study used this research design to understand and describe how the world appears to pregnant and parenting student mothers regarding their psychosocial challenges and how they can cope with them in their quest to attain tertiary education. Parents of pregnant and parenting student mothers' psychosocial challenges and coping strategies are unique and can only be understood through exploration of their lived experiences. It helped explore why and how participants experience certain psychosocial challenges and the strategies they adopt to cope with them, as it uniquely affects them differently than their other students.

### Participants

The population consisted of pregnant and parenting student mothers enrolled in undergraduate programmes during the 2023/2024 academic year. Twelve pregnant and parenting student mothers were selected through purposive and snowball sampling strategies. The sample included seven pregnant students and five student mothers. The

inclusion criteria for sample selection were that the student should be pregnant or parenting children while attending a selected university and completing undergraduate programs, whether married or single. This was done to provide multiple views, as married people's experiences differ significantly from those of single people.

#### Data collection instruments

The study used a self-constructed, semi-structured interview to solicit responses from pregnant and parenting students' mothers. The semi-structured interview was structured in three sections. Section A elicited information on the participants' demographic data in terms of age, number of children, duration of pregnancy, level of study, and programme of study. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted face-to-face and one-on-one, which was appropriate due to the sensitive nature of the issues under investigation and needing in-depth exploration. Consequently, in-depth interviews are optimal for collecting data on individuals' perspectives, histories, and experiences, particularly when exploring sensitive topics.

#### Procedure

Data was gathered using an in-depth semi-structured interview and observation. The researcher captured the profound meanings of participants' lived experiences by listening to their stories during interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Participants were watched both during and outside of lectures. The observation was conducted to understand and describe participants' natural behavior as it occurs and to triangulate verbal and nonverbal cues to gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial challenges faced by pregnant and parenting student mothers at the University of Education, Winneba. The researcher believes that using multiple data collection methods improves the reliability and validity of the information gathered (De Vos et al., 2005). The interviews were conducted face-to-face. Each interview session lasted 30 to 35 minutes and was taped. This elicited information about the sociodemographic features of pregnant and parenting student women, as well as their psychosocial issues and coping mechanisms. The researcher created an interview protocol to maintain uniformity throughout the interview and guide the procedure. The interview guide was utilised to collect data (Durdella, 2019).

#### Data analysis

The data was analysed thematically using the research questions formulated to guide the study. The themes and sub-themes from the data were categorized based on the many study objectives, revealing consistency, similarity, and difference patterns. To ensure verbatim quotations from participants, pregnant and parenting student moms were assigned the serial numbers PPSM 1 to PPSM 12, where PPSM stands for Pregnant and Parenting Student Mother. The use of participant triangulation ensured the study's credibility. Participant triangulation was done using the instrument to collect data from pregnant and parenting student mothers who were purposefully chosen to participate in the study.

Following transcription of the audio tape data, the transcribed data was returned to the participants for confirmation of their responses. In addition, errors and misreporting were found and eliminated from the final written data by comparing it to the audio-taped data. According to Bryman (2016), qualitative researchers use trustworthiness criteria to evaluate the quality of their investigations. Trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility improve the researcher's capacity to analyze and convince readers of the accuracy of their results. The researcher must know validity threats throughout the design, data collection, analysis, and reporting stages. The trustworthiness of the study method was assessed using the trustworthiness criteria provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which include credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Creswell (2014) description of member verification refined this even more.

#### Ethical considerations

Ethical standards that ensure reliability were maintained; thus, authorisation to conduct the research was obtained from the respective students' Heads of Departments. Participants received accurate and

thorough information about the study's purpose. They were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they might withdraw at any point during the study. Code names were employed to protect the participants' anonymity. They were promised their information was primarily for academic purposes and would be handled with the utmost discretion.

## IV. RESULTS

Psychosocial challenges encounter by pregnant and parenting student mothers in a selected university in Ghana.

It emerged from the findings of research question 1, which focused on this theme, that pregnant and parenting student mothers experienced psychosocial challenges in a variety of ways. The most common forms of psychosocial challenges faced by these students include stigmatisation, discrimination, guilt feelings and low self-esteem, and difficulty with concentration and learning.

#### Stigmatisation

Most participants reported that they were stigmatised by their coworkers, which had a detrimental influence on their psychological condition. Some acknowledged that their classmates were dismissing them as incompetent and unmotivated. This type of stigmatization occasionally intimidated some of them.

One of the participants recounted that:

*"My coursemates and some lecturers judged me while pursuing my degree. It made me feel like I was not taken seriously as a student. When my lecturers learned I was pregnant, they seemed disappointed and questioned whether I could handle motherhood and academics"* (PPSM-2).

Another participant added that:

*"Some of my peers made assumptions about my abilities and commitment to my studies because I was a nursing mother. It was disheartening. Finding childcare while attending lectures has been a great struggle, and many times, I felt like I did not belong on campus as a mother"* (PPSM-5).

#### Discrimination

Discrimination against pregnant and parenting student mothers has a lot of implications for their psychological and social lives. These put them at a disadvantage because they either feel secluded or detached from friends and colleagues, putting them at a complex task of not knowing where to get help or seeking clarifications on coursework.

A participant narrated her ordeal as follows:

*"I faced discrimination from some lecturers who were unwilling to accommodate my pregnancy-related needs, which made balancing school and motherhood even more challenging. Why should I be discriminated against simply because I am pregnant, knowing very well that this is a tertiary institution?"* (PPSM-7).

Another participant buttressed this assertion by adding that:

*"Feeling like I have got to choose between my education and my child is unfair and unacceptable. I am not asking for special treatment, just basic respect and understanding as I navigate being a student and a parent"* (PPSM-12).

#### Guilt feelings and low self-esteem

Most of the participants had a sense of guilt and low self-esteem for being pregnant or student mothers.

A pregnant student mother, in her narration, admitted that:

*"Hmmm ... I think a lot about my situation and feel that I have disappointed my parents, who promised to send me to get employment at the Ghana Cocoa Board when I graduate from my first degree, but this unforeseen pregnancy has come to mar the relationship that existed between me and my parents. This has left me wondering when I will get this opportunity again. She began sobbing"* (PPSM-10).

Another pregnant student mother added:

*"It hurts me a lot that I could not wait to have completed school and secured a job before giving birth. Hmmm... taking care of my children is not easy at all because my husband is a peasant farmer, and all the responsibilities of our children's education rest on me. I feel guilty because I have set a bad precedent for my younger siblings"* (PPSM-11).

#### Difficulty with concentration and learning

Difficulty in concentration and learning was identified as one of the

themes that emerged from the study. Academic achievement largely depends on one's ability to concentrate fully during lectures and have ample time to learn and comprehend what has been taught. This requires skillfully balancing pregnancy and parenting on the part of pregnant and parenting student mothers amidst other challenges confronting them.

A pregnant student's mother had this to say:

*"Hmm! Most of the time, I feel drowsy at lectures because sitting for three hours is not easy, and even at certain times, one lecture continues just after another. In such instances, I do not have full concentration, which mostly affects my private learning since I did not understand well during lectures" (PPSM-1).*

Another participant corroborated this by emphasising that:

*"I am unable to concentrate on my academic work very well because I had some health complications during delivery, and this has since affected my academic work. I visit the hospital twice a week, which mostly interferes with some of my lecture periods. I either attend some lectures late or am absent myself since my health poses a great challenge. My academic performance is as good as I wished, but what can I do?" (PPSM-9).*

Coping strategies adopted by pregnant and parenting student mothers at a selected University in Ghana to cope with psychosocial challenges.

Pregnant and parenting student mothers were interrogated on the strategies they adopt in dealing with the numerous psychosocial challenges that confront them while pursuing their education at the university. In their narration, it emerged that to cope with their academic work, they adopted several coping strategies to navigate these challenges. They avoided contact with other students, prioritising and planning, and made sacrifices.

Some participants identified avoidance of biting comments as a strategy to avoid ridicule from their colleagues.

A pregnant student's mother had this to say:

*"... I have decided not to move with most of my coursemates anymore because their comments hurt me. This has helped me overcome a lot of hurt I feel from my coursemates and lecturers" (PPSM-10).*

A parenting student mother buttressed this by adding that:

*"After all, I did not come here because of somebody, and if my child is always seen as a disturbance to them, I would prefer to be alone than to move with people who will not understand me. Though it is hurtful to be seen walking alone, for now, that is my only option" (PPSM-8).*

Some of the participants also mentioned during the interview that they had to make a lot of sacrifices to mitigate these psychosocial challenges they encountered.

A pregnant student's mother shared her challenges as follows:

*"At times, I have had to sacrifice my lecture periods and attend antenatal care or seek medical attention when I realise that I am not feeling well. At other times, I have to deprive myself of rest and attend group study meetings because I do not want to trail in any of my courses, as this can spoil my GPA" (PPSM-6).*

Relatedly, another parenting student's mother added:

*"In most instances, I have got to sacrifice the food I like best and give it to my child, especially when I see it was not enough. I will eat after my child is satisfied and some food is left. If my child is sick, I forget my lectures and send her to the hospital. I had left my hair unplaited and resorted to natural hair because I can only get money at the end of the month" (PPSM-4).*

Furthermore, most participants also identified prioritising and planning as effective strategies for coping with the psychosocial challenges confronting them in their academic pursuits.

A student's mother shared her views as follows:

*"I plan my time so that I can meet deadlines and carry out my academic responsibilities as expected of me. Most of the time, I used my weekends to do my assignments, go for group discussions, and sometimes visit the library to learn before the lecture. At other times, instead of having a nap, I must sacrifice and attend to issues that need immediate attention, such as assignments, presentations, and due quizzes" (PPSM-3).*

A pregnant student mother further substantiated this, adding:

*"I mostly start serious studies when the semester begins. I prioritise*

*activities, attend to the ones that need immediate attention, and push others forward so I do not put undue pressure on myself. I sometimes do my assignments far ahead and wait for the submission time. Because I do not want to be late for lectures and group discussions, I mostly set off early from my hostel" (PPSM-5).*

## V. DISCUSSION

The data highlighted some of the psychosocial challenges confronting pregnant and parenting student mothers. This study found that pregnant and parenting student mothers experienced psychosocial challenges such as stigmatisation, discrimination, guilt feelings, low self-esteem, and difficulty with concentration and learning. According to the research, most of the pregnant and parenting student mothers interviewed agreed that they were stigmatised by their colleagues, which had a severe influence on their psychological health. Some acknowledged that their classmates were dismissing them as incompetent and uncommitted. This type of stigmatization occasionally intimidated some of them. These findings support studies conducted by Brown and Amankwaa (2007) and Duquaine-Watson (2007), which discovered that the stigmatization that most pregnant and parenting student mothers face is associated with the label, which frequently defines pregnant students by their roles as pregnant or parenting rather than as students. This is supported by Brown and Nichols (2012), who found that many students felt that their pregnancy and parenting roles had become the entire focus of their colleagues' conversations, limiting their engagement with classmates.

Another psychological challenge that pregnant and parenting student mothers faced was discrimination. This finding is consistent with Lynch's (2008) study, which discovered that the fear of being labeled incompetent or incapable in many circumstances prevents some pregnant and student mothers from seeking help from academic staff members. This can make pregnant and parenting student women feel marginalized, alienated, and unsupported, resulting in poor academic performance, emotional suffering, and mental health difficulties. Participants reported feeling stigmatised by professors and fellow students due to mockery in front of their classmates. Wambu (2018) confirmed that stigma and prejudice account for 90.6% of the many socio-psychological challenges that student moms face in their efforts to seek or complete their technical education.

The findings revealed that several pregnant and parenting student mothers feel guilty and have low self-esteem. Guilt and low self-esteem can lead to increased stress, worry, and depression, all of which have a bad impact on mental and physical health during pregnancy, as well as parenting skills. This is congruent with Wambu (2018) findings, which found that poor self-esteem and guilt were responsible for 84.1% of the psychosocial issues faced by pregnant and parenting student women. Similarly, shame and low self-esteem can inhibit academic progress by causing pupils to struggle with motivation, focus, and self-doubt. Magwaza (2003) claims that such women were made to feel guilty, and Pillow (2006) agrees, stating that society expects moms who fail to perform ideal mothering tasks to feel bad.

It emanated from the data that pregnant and student mothers struggle to concentrate and learn effectively. Thus, when pregnant women and pregnant student mothers encounter the problem of concentrating and learning, it might result in poor academic performance, worse grades, and diminished academic accomplishment. This is consistent with the findings of Wambu (2018), who discovered that a lack of concentration accounts for 75% of the psychological issues that pregnant and parenting student mothers face.

Despite the psychological problems that pregnant and parenting student mothers face while pursuing higher education, they used a variety of coping strategies, including avoiding contact with other students, prioritising and planning, and making sacrifices to navigate these challenges.

Avoiding contact with other students appeared as a major theme in terms of how pregnant and parenting student mothers deal with the

psychological challenges they face. This finding supports Stephenson's (2013) claim that troubled pupils avoid places that make them uncomfortable. This is consistent with the findings of Buku et al. (2018), who hypothesised that students in such situations chose to be alone rather than interact with colleagues and friends.

Another recurring theme from conversations with pregnant and parenting student mothers was the importance of prioritising and planning in dealing with the numerous psychosocial obstacles that they face. This is consistent with Moghadam et al. (2017), who stated that being a student and a mother was difficult but manageable, requiring planning in multiple areas. Similarly, results supported Moreau and Kerner's (2013) finding that the nature of parenting and academic duties necessitated careful planning to combine these activities. This finding is supported by Forster et al. (2012), who claim that student women employed some tactics, such as delegating household tasks, prioritising, planning, and organising activities, to ensure that their family life did not suffer while attending university.

The data revealed that most pregnant and parenting student mothers used sacrifice as a coping technique for the psychosocial obstacles they faced. This finding is consistent with the findings of Bosch (2013), who indicated that student mothers had to make various sacrifices during times of socializing and sleeping. Similarly, Anane et al. (2021) stated that student-mothers must limit the amount of time spent with colleagues and friends if it is not necessary for academic purposes. This is also compatible with Ajandi (2011), who believes that the student-mother should miss certain social activities organised by the Faculty, Department, and University authorities so that students can manage themselves, their academic work, and child-rearing responsibilities effectively. Furthermore, Anane et al. (2021) agree that most student-mothers may reduce their sleeping hours.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study has provided evidence-based information that pregnant and parenting student mothers pursuing higher degrees at the university face significant psychological hurdles from colleagues, friends, and lecturers. The study also highlighted that pregnant and parenting student mothers face psychological challenges such as stigmatisation, discrimination, guilt feelings and low self-esteem, and difficulty concentrating and learning. They used coping strategies to deal with these challenges, such as avoiding contact with other students, prioritising and planning, and making sacrifices. It was therefore recommended that school counsellors organise group counselling for pregnant and parenting student mothers to enable them to cope properly with their situation. This will help in the smooth integration of pregnant and parenting student mothers and, as a result, improve their psychological outcomes, which will go a long way toward enhancing their academic pursuits. It is critical to take into consideration the psychological makeup of any individual, particularly pregnant and parenting student mothers who are also students and must fulfill the University's academic requirements just like all other students.

Given this, the study's findings regarding its implications for counselling practice should be carefully considered. The study found that pregnant and parenting student mothers face a variety of psychological challenges. These challenges would undoubtedly impact their psychological, social, and intellectual lives. As a result, pregnant and parenting student women require counseling on the importance of developing self-esteem, assertiveness, and resilience through assertive training and cognitive restructuring. These approaches will assist pregnant and parenting student women in replacing irrational, distorted ideas with more accurate, useful, and adaptive ones, allowing them to communicate effectively with colleagues, friends, and lecturers.

### Conflict of interests

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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