



Academic Challenges Facing Pregnant Students at the Ada College of Education, Ghana

David Doe Ayornoo¹ & Frederick Mensah Bonsu² 

¹ Ada College of Education, Ada East District-Greater Accra, Ghana.

² Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana.

ABSTRACT

The study sought to find out the support system put in place at the Ada College of Education to create a conducive learning environment for pregnant students. This work is hinged on the social theory of humanism by Kwame Gyekye, which is centered on catering for the individual's welfare, interest, and dignity in Ghanaian society. Through an unstructured interview guide whilst employing the interpretive approach, data gathered on the life of pregnant students in the college was interpreted. The study revealed that the academic programme is very stressful for pregnant students. There is also virtually no room for relaxation which is much needed. This is coupled with the fact that certain tutors do not treat pregnant students with care but rather embarrass them for their condition. These and other issues make the college quite unsafe, especially for students who are pregnant women and not married students. The study thus recommends that the Ministry of Education and the school authorities need to address some of these challenges pregnant students face at the College. This study contributes to the existing research done on the welfare of students with various health conditions.

Correspondence

Frederick Mensah Bonsu

Email: fredmensahbonsu72@gmail.com

Publication History

Received 21st March, 2022

Accepted 4th May, 2022

Published online 4th August, 2022

Keywords: *Pregnant Students, Environment of Care, Academic support and engagement.*

© 2022 The Author(s). Published and Maintained by Noyam Publishers.

This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world, there exists young women who become pregnant while in school. Research across the globe previously focused on pregnant secondary school students who became dropouts but the trend has changed and many students who become pregnant whilst in school are encouraged to stay and complete school. This is however not the case in many societies.¹ Ghana which is the focus of this

¹ T. M. Phiri, P. Nyamaruze and O. Akintola, "Stress and coping among unmarried pregnant university students in South

study has seen an increase in young women who are getting pregnant whilst in school. What makes this situation worrying is that some of those who become pregnant are between the ages of 14-17 and are considered minors under the care of their parents.

All over the world, university campuses are places where students engage in a lot of sexual activity because of a lack of parental supervision. Students attempt to fit into campus sexual culture, and their desire to entertain themselves often leads to unplanned pregnancies. This consequently leads to emotional and psychological stress that impedes higher academic progress because students are not able to cope with the work schedule when they become pregnant. They often drop out as a result.²

This trend of pregnancy among students is also becoming evident in the Ada College of Education which is a higher educational institution where the average age of students ranges between 18 and 21. Whiles in college, students are expected to do a maximum of 89 credit hours, which include project work, on-campus, and off-campus teaching practice. In the final year, students do one-year teaching practice in the public basic schools, mostly in the villages, irrespective of the conditions in which they find themselves.³ Most often, these communities are in the very deprived areas of the country, some with unmotorable roads with limited transportation. The learning process at the College can be described as generally stressful for students and one wonders how pregnant students are able to cope with the system. This research, therefore, seeks to find out the challenges pregnant women face and the support systems available to them to ensure that they are able to study in a conducive environment.

A Brief Background of the Ada College of Education

The Ada College of Education located in Ada Foah, a locality on the southeast coast in the Ada East district – in the Greater Accra Region, was established in 1965 by the Convention People's Party government for the training of excellent professional teachers for the elementary schools in Ghana.⁴ JMT Dosoo being the first Principal of the college admitted the first batch of students on September 25, 1965. The following year (1966) there was a military coup d'état and so the College did not admit any students. But in 1967, also in 1968 and 1969, and 1970 and 1971, the school with the help of the Principal, and elders of the community was able to admit students. Then in 1974, the government turned it into a secondary-vocational institute. However, in 1975, it was reverted to a training college with an enrolment of 70 students, and that is how it has been till now (2020) with 923 students, and 39 teachers. Right from the era of the first Principal, admissions were an all-male student affair. It was not until 1976 that the institution became a mixed one. The vision statement of this institution is, "To become a centre of excellence reputed for training disciplined and self-motivated teachers," while the mission statement is, "To train teachers imbued with academic and professional competencies, skills, and attitudes in General, Technical, as well as Science Education for basic schools in Ghana." The motto of the college is, "Curiosity, Awareness, and Compassion".⁵

Africa." *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 21 (817), (2021): 1 - 13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-021-04288-1>

² Thabethe Rebecca Lindokuhle, *Lived Experiences of pregnant students at the University of Limpopo Province* (Master's dissertation, University of Limpopo, 2017).

³ Interview granted by E. Huago, Vice Principal, Ada College of Education, November 3, 2019.

⁴ Ada College of Education, *Home – Ada College of Education*, accessed January 20, 2022. <https://adacoe.edu.gh>.

⁵ Ada College of Education, *History of AdaCoE*, accessed January 20, 2022. <https://adacoe.edu.gh>.

Academic Structure

Time Table - At the Ada College of Education, the academic timetable covers from Monday to Friday every day, of the week, and classes started at 7.00 am and end at 3.30 pm or 4:30 pm depending on the educational schedule of the students(DBE or Degree).⁶

Quizzes and Examinations - There is a one-week period set aside for quizzes at Ada College of Education. The students wrote three quizzes every day from Monday to Friday. Close to examination week, teachers who for some reason had not been able to complete their syllabuses organised lessons for students outside the official interactive teaching and learning period.⁷

Grading System - This is the system used in the Universities affiliated with Ada College of Education. The DBE students are graded according to the University of Cape Coast grading system, which was 80-100 = A; 75-79 = B+; 70-74 = B; 65-69 = C+; 60-64 = C; 55-59 = D+; 50-54 = D; and 0-49 = E. However, some B. Ed students are graded according to the University of Education, Winneba grading system, which was just like that of the University of Cape Coast. Students are dismissed if they fail in more than 12 credit subjects. They are also withdrawn if they fail all supplementary examinations. In total, the DBE students must have had a maximum of 89 credits, and are to be awarded a Diploma certificate; they must not fall below the Grade Point Average (GPA) of 1.5 in all subjects. The B. Ed students, however, must attain a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 1.0. Thus, the College assigned 60 percent for End-of-Semester Examination, and 40 percent for the Continuous Assessment. This applies to DBE students. But there was also 40 percent for End-of-Semester Examination, and 60 percent for the Continuous Assessment which applied to B. Ed students. The students are supposed to participate in two continuous assessments and other assessments like group presentations, project work, and assignments.⁸

Project Work - All final year students undertake a project. The purpose of the project work is to expose students to research skills so that they would understand challenges in education, and offer solutions to the challenges.¹⁶ For those of them who may want to further their education, it prepared them for the research component, particularly at the post-graduate level. Students make deductions of pupils' behaviour in the classroom, by the use of reflective, analytical, and open-minded approaches and gave solutions to promote teaching, assessment, and learning environments. Project work attracts 3 credit papers. Students are assigned supervisors to guide them in writing and they commute from their teaching posts to campus every week or two for guidance.

Teaching Practice - This is one of the important exercises the Colleges of Education have for their students. The teaching exposes students to teaching skills like the making of lesson notes, teaching lessons, how to engage with students, and how to design, produce, and use teaching-learning materials in teaching.¹⁷ The students must keep to professional attitudes and values, and exhibit a detailed understanding of concepts, and methods of teaching. At Ada College of Education, there are two forms of this exercise – an on-campus, and off-campus teaching practice.

⁶ Interview with E. Huago, Vice Principal, Ada College of Education, November 3, 2019.

⁷ Interview with E. Huago, Vice Principal, Ada College of Education, November 3, 2019.

⁸ Interview with E. Huago, Vice Principal, Ada College of Education, November 3, 2019.

On-Campus

On-campus teaching practice has two separate sessions of on-campus teaching practice. The first is held in year two of the first semester, while the second is held in the second semester of the same year. The first exercise is non-scoring, while the second is scored.¹⁸ As part of the preparation for the second on-campus teaching practice, all the DBE second-year students are assigned supervisors during the examination period at the end of the first semester, and they must prepare their lesson notes adequately, and teaching-learning materials, under the guidance of the supervisors before they leave campus for the holidays. In the following semester, five-days on-campus teaching is held in the second or third week under the supervision of the college tutors. The exercise begins at 2.30 pm and ends at 5.00 pm after students have been in the classroom for about 7 hours. The college tutors call students at random to teach, assess them, and submit their scores to the Teaching Practice Unit, now called the Supported Teaching in Schools Unit.

Off-Campus

Before student teachers are assigned basic schools to practice teaching, the Coordinators of Ada College go around scouting for vacancies in the basic schools.⁹ The coordinators then assign the students to the schools based on the courses they offered. The science and mathematics students are assigned to primary schools, while the technical students are assigned to junior high schools because most of the courses offered by the technical students are not taught in the primary schools. All third-year DBE final year students go through a two-week on-campus orientation in August each year, in the college. This off-campus teaching practice lasts for 32 weeks in two semesters. There are another two weeks of orientation in schools before the actual programme. While there at their teaching posts, they are expected to learn and put into practice what they have studied, such as the preparation of scheme of work, weekly forecast, lesson notes, preparation of teaching-learning materials, and face-to-face teaching of a class under the supervision of a mentor.

Visits to Schools

The degree students practicing teaching began with six weeks of teaching practice observation in some partner schools. Early in the morning by 6.30 am, the college bus transports the degree students to some partner schools to observe teaching from Mondays to Thursdays.¹⁰ After the daily observation exercise, both mentors (class and subject and subject teachers) and mentees (students in teaching practice) fill out their part of an Observation Form. At the end of the six-week exercise, the Heads of the partner schools (Lead Mentors) are also required to fill out the Observation Form detailing their general overview of how students fared in the exercise. The forms are given back to the Coordinator of Supported Teaching in Schools for validation and approval. The affiliate universities through the college score and grade individual students based on their performance in the observation exercise. Again, during vacation, both First Year students and Second Year students embark on a 20-day observation exercise in the basic schools, and the Lead Mentors in the schools rate them over 15% during the period. The report is sealed and sent back when the college reopens.

⁹ Interview with S. P. Atali, Supported Teaching in Schools Deputy Coordinator, Ada College Education, January 7, 2020.

¹⁰ Interview with S. P. Atali, Supported Teaching in Schools Deputy Coordinator, Ada College Education, January 7, 2020.

The academic activities of the college should generally include some flexibility for pregnant students so that their psychological, social, and emotional care well-being is not tampered with but from the rigorous academic schedule mentioned above it appears this is not the case.

The Social Theory of Humanism

Kwame Gyekye's social theory of humanism adapted from J.K. Antwi's work undergirds this work. His theory posits that at the center of the societal value systems in Ghana is the concern for human welfare.¹¹ It is this human welfare that underpins this research. As part of the value systems, the Ghanaian community has, in essence, communal and individual interests such as human needs, human interests, and human dignity. These communal and individual interests must influence all actions of the people. Admittedly, Ghanaians are connected to the extent that the success of an individual impinges on the success of the community to which he or she belongs and vice versa. Thus the society cannot promote the individual's welfare, interest, and dignity outside of its communal system. Hence, under the situation being discussed, all stakeholders of Ada College of Education – management, staff, and students, in general, have a duty of care to ensure that there is a congenial academic environment that supports the psychological, social, and emotional needs of all students and in this context pregnant students to realize their academic goals.

The Challenges of Pregnant Students

Pregnant students due to their condition cannot regularly attend lectures, tutorials, group discussions, and write some examination papers. Their colleagues and some lecturers often pass comments like, 'no one forced you to get pregnant', 'we came to the university to study, not to get pregnant'. Such comments are demoralizing.¹²

Most pregnant students witnessed a decline in their academic performance because they were tired, could not be part of discussions on academic work, could not concentrate on academic work, experienced body discomforts, dizziness, morning sickness, frequently spat saliva, and generally underwent body pains.¹³ Morning sickness debarred students from going to lectures. Also, due to antenatal care visits, pregnant students could not be part of suddenly arranged lectures.

A similar study conducted at the University of Ghana revealed that pregnancy as a medical condition does affect students' concentration and academic output of pregnant students. Pregnant students, who frequently experience such discomforts in our view, could feel emotionally detached from the academic community but in our opinion, colleges and universities of today should be able to put measures in place to cater to the intellectual, health, and emotional needs of all categories of students, including pregnant students.

In another study conducted at University of Cape Coast, Ghana, the same trend prevailed. One would, therefore, think that academic institutions should be a bit more flexible in the application of rules guiding academic operations. To do this, there should be a documented pregnancy policy. Again,

¹¹ J. K. Antwi, "The value of a person in Akan traditional life and thought: A contemporary inquiry." *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3 (2), (2017): 93-101.

¹² Lindokuhle, *Lived experiences of pregnant students at the University of Limpopo Province*.

¹³ Priscilla Araba Etuah, Fred Yao Gbagbo and Jacqueline Nkrumah, "Coping with pregnancy in academic environment: Experiences of pregnant students in a public university in Ghana," *Journal of Woman's Reproductive Health*, 2 (2), (2018): 1-11.

lecturers, tutors, and students should be given periodic education on sexual relationships so that they can better relate to and show maximum care for pregnant students.¹⁴

In a study conducted at the University of Venda, Limpopo province, researchers observed that the demands of academic work compelled students to study for hours on end, resulting in poor concentration in class. This lack of concentration could be attributed to cognitive changes in pregnant women and this situation could end in poor academic performance. Most parents become so disappointed about their daughters who end up pregnant in school. They would have preferred that their daughters would complete university and get married before having children. Thus, pregnant students do not receive enough support from their parents, friends, and family members. The lack of financial support from loved ones could end in poor concentration on academic work and poor performance.¹⁵ At the Imo State University at Owerri Nigeria, aside from the medical condition, pregnant students contend with other external factors that are beyond their control, and yet they have to manage their situation with the utmost care and planning.¹⁶

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the exploratory case study design under the qualitative approach. This design is best because the researchers needed to be more flexible and go through the whole procedure of interviews for some clarification to get to the desired outcome in delving into the personal experiences of the phenomenon of pregnancy among students to conceptualize the phenomenon at a higher level.¹⁷ The target population for this study was 15 pregnant students – 3 first year, 5 second year, and 7 third year students. This was the total number of pregnant women on campus. They were asked open-ended questions on timetabling, quizzes and examinations, project work, on-campus teaching practice, and off-campus teaching practice and how they are able to cope with the system. The authors ensured that their methods of approach did not contradict the ethics of research and they communicated the purpose of the study to all potential respondents whom they met and who were ready to participate in the research. Their views were also to be kept confidential.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The population for the study was 15 pregnant students – 3 in the first year, 5 in the second year, and 7 in the third year. The following themes were used in the interviews: timetabling, quizzes and examinations, project work, on-campus teaching practice, and off-campus teaching practice. The findings are discussed below:

Time Tabling Schedule

Among the participants, 9 pregnant students said they woke up so early by 3.00 am to wash down from Mondays to Fridays, because they had a lot of activities to perform, beginning with the early morning

¹⁴ Kobina Esiah-Donkoh, Kweku Esiah-Donkoh, and Hagar Asare, "Coping in silence: Challenges faced by pregnant-students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana." *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 2 (10), (2014): 222-233.

¹⁵ Mutshinyalo Lizzybeth Netshikweta, "The problems associated with pregnancy amongst student nurses in the Northern Province," (Master's dissertation, University of South Africa, 1999).

¹⁶ Clementina Ezenwuba, "Perceived effects of pregnancy on academic performances of female nursing students in Imo State University Owerri Nigeria." *South American Journal Academic Research*, 2 (1), (2015): 1-27.

¹⁷ Allen Rubin and Earl Robert Babbie, *Research methods for social work* (6th ed.) (Belmont, USA: Thomson Higher Education, 2008).

duties at 5.00 am. They got up in the wee hours of the day to avoid the embarrassment they went through whenever they joined their colleagues to wash in a common washroom, for they laughed at their appearance and shared what they saw with other students on campus as a way of mocking them. They were not able to wash after performing their morning duties because if they did, they would be late to class due to the number of people waiting to wash, and the long time they spent washing and preparing themselves for academic work. After that, they presented themselves for a compulsory morning devotion from 6.15 am to 6.45 am, and began classes at 7.00 am. The other respondents who failed to wash down so early suffered lateness and were asked to stay outside the classroom until the early morning class was over. One participant said:

Some colleagues and I were absent at morning devotion. We were asked to carry twenty buckets of stone chippings each, some students helped me to complete the punishment.

It appeared once a student became pregnant, her situation introduced a new routine as an add-on to the already tight curriculum, further aggravating the stress levels in her life. And the system did not make enough room for a safe and successful academic environment.

All the participants confirmed that they sat in class to study for too long a time, and because the break periods were too short, they felt very uncomfortable because they experienced an intense urge to vomit, and mild dizziness. Thus, they got tired, restless, drowsy, bored, and easily lost concentration. This revelation supported that of Esiah-Donkoh, Esiah-Donkoh, and Asare who found that pregnant students faced the challenge of dizziness, vomiting, and tiredness.¹⁸

Apart from missing classes to attend antenatal clinics, 7 pregnant students mentioned that they missed classes, particularly in the afternoons because they were weak and tired after such long hours of being in the classroom, but some college tutors who equally missed classes arranged to teach them from 7.00 pm onwards. Though they recovered the lost time, they felt that they had not put in much effort like others. Nevertheless, other tutors did not care to arrange classes with them, and therefore they had to overwork themselves to study late into the night, to catch up. It was evident that some tutors of the College appeared not to have made some adjustments in the curriculum to address the social and emotional needs of pregnant students as suggested by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration.¹⁹

A few of the participants said they could not make effective use of the time to study at night because if they walked in the dark to do their private studies in the academic blocks, some persons might cast spells on them, and they might lose their babies. It appeared this had some cultural undertones which instill some fears in pregnant women generally. Due to this belief, they lay in bed to study but they end up falling asleep. Moreover, these pregnant students were not happy that some college tutors passed comments to mock them each time they accidentally dozed off or were not inattentive in class. These views agreed with the findings of Esiah-Donkoh, Esiah-Donkoh, and Asare on some negative comments by university lecturers against pregnant students. Their findings indicated

¹⁸ Esiah-Donkoh, Esiah-Donkoh and Asare, "Coping in silence: Challenges faced by pregnant-student at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana." 222- 233.

¹⁹ National Policy Board for Educational Administration, *Professional standards for educational leaders*, 2015, accessed January 20, 2022. https://www.npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf

that some lecturers were usually fond of making biting comments like, "no one forced you to get pregnant" Comments like this were embarrassing.²⁰

Others also complained about the attitude of some tutors going to the extent of using their fists on them anytime they asked questions in class about a topic they did not understand and wanted further clarification. The use of the fist on pregnant students is abuse and constitutes a violation of human rights to equality, education, and human dignity.

In all of these, it appeared the role of college counsellors and psychologists in ameliorating social, emotional, and psychological abuse was visibly missing. Nonetheless, according to some of the respondents, some college tutors were friendly and even called to check on them, especially when they were ill. One student said:

When I was pregnant, I became sick. One student went for a taxi to send me to the hospital A tutor asked the taxi driver to go back and then he went and brought his car and personally sent me to the hospital.

Juxtaposing some tutors' use of the fist on some pregnant students as against the friendly call on pregnant students by some tutors, it is not out of place to adduce that some tutors were well aware that it was part of their responsibility to offer care on all counts to students under their care.

Despite having to sit for such a long time in the classroom with its accompanying effects on pregnant students, all the interviewees alluded to the fact that they better understood what they were taught in the classroom because the majority of the tutors used learner-centered approaches to teaching. After all, the weekly tutor Professional Development sessions encouraged the use of learner-centered approaches to teaching. One pregnant student put it this way:

Before the beginning of the seminars, a tutor will come to class and talk and talk and talk until the end. But now, their approach to teaching is different, so we easily understand.

It may very well be that the learner-centered approach to teaching reduced the stress in students and made them easily comprehend what was taught.

Quizzes and Examinations

According to respondents, some quizzes, and examination questions covered topics that had been dealt with already in previous semesters. 8 participants mentioned that, because the quiz and examination questions covered topics taught in previous semesters, they had to sit for long hours to study, to get good grades. The result was that they got very tired and weak on the days of examination. According to them, if they failed to burn the midnight oil, their performance may be abysmal. Thus, despite being late to class at times, sleepy in class, missing class, and tired, interestingly, they did better than before when they were not pregnant. The reason for this unexpected turn of events was not clear and must be delved into. The rest of the participants however mentioned that they did not perform well academically. Their performance was on average because apart from rising too early and staying up past their bedtime till midnight, feeling tired and weak, they retained too little. All these may well be

²⁰ Esiah-Donkoh, Esiah-Donkoh, and Asare, "Coping in silence: Challenges faced by pregnant-student at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana." 222- 233.

the reason for the abysmal performance. This was expected, particularly because of their condition. This affirmed Etuah, Gbagbo, and Nkrumah's findings of pregnant students declining in academic performance due to tiredness, and absence from class.²¹

Project Work

Among the participants, 11 of them said they travelled weekly or bi-weekly to the College for their supervisors to guide them in writing their project work. In doing that they most often boarded about two, or three rickety cars or motorbikes, and travelled on rough roads to the campus, depending on the location, and how distant they were away from campus. This is because they had no hand in the decision as to where to practice teaching. This often left them with sharp pains in their lower abdomen, and at times their pregnancy was threatened. However, those who were known to be pregnant before the last lap of the academic year were made to do the project work while practicing teaching in nearby schools, close to the College. This is a feather in the cap of the institution.

The respondents added that upon the smell of the burning fuel in the rickety moving vehicles, they at times developed a feeling of nausea which is uncomfortable. Moreover, some project work supervisors were in the habit of renegeing on their words even when they had arranged with the respondents to meet them on campus – some supervisors were usually not available on campus. At the time of the data collection, a few of them had not been able to meet their supervisors even for the first time after agreeing with them on their topics, six months into the 2019/2020 academic year. Thus, they had become so frustrated, stressed up, and at times felt like giving up on the academic program. This situation was reminiscent of the following statement made by one of the respondents:

*You ask us to come, and you come and they are not there on campus.
You call, call, call on the phone and they will not respond ... and you
go back home, to your station. Me I'm tired*

This situation does not augur well for a safe and successful institutional environment of care. It was no wonder that some students felt like giving up on education when they become pregnant. Thus, the Coordinator of Project work and his team of officials need to put in place measures that will help check project work supervisors and supervisees to be up and doing.

The students in some cases have to part with some money to engage an artisan to craft a teaching-learning material that they would use to effectively deliver a lesson as part of the project work. This, they were expected to demonstrate convincingly in the presence of their supervisors, before the work was finally accepted by the supervisors and graded. The grading by the supervisor was also subjected to an examination by the coordinator of the supported teaching in schools and affirmed or otherwise.

The data supports Ezenwuba's point of the lack of support for students with medical conditions.²² Management of the College, therefore, needs to put in place adequate measures to support the pregnant students during the project work period. They should be placed in schools closer to the College and their supervisors should empathize with their condition and make the process smoother.

²¹ Etuah, Gbagbo and Nkrumah, "Coping with pregnancy in academic environment..." 1-11.

²² Ezenwuba, "Perceived effects of pregnancy on academic performances of female nursing students in Imo State University Owerri Nigeria," 1-27.

On-Campus Teaching Practice

The late posting of notices concerning on-campus teaching practice during examination week, according to 8 participants, made them stay up for more than the usual time to revise for end of semester examination and also work on their teaching practice assignment, to give a good account of themselves. In the process, they put so much pressure on themselves, overworking themselves, and destabilizing their immune system due to lack of sleep. It appears the college authorities in the scheme of things, did not put a high premium on students' welfare. Thus, they performed below average in such a semester. It was no doubt that pregnant students whose immune system was under attack were most likely to fall sick and coupled with the condition in which they found themselves as pregnant students, they were likely not to be in the right frame of mind to undertake any serious revision, pending the examinations.

The rest of the participants alluded to the fact that each time they missed a day's on-campus teaching practice to attend an antenatal clinic, they were scolded on the following day during the peer teaching session, and some angry supervisors compelled them to teach. When teaching, their colleagues occasionally created some scenes of laughter and this got them angry, depressed, and uneasy, and they embarrassed themselves more while teaching. All these appear to add to their already stressed levels.

On the contrary, married pregnant students were treated much better than unmarried pregnant students. This was presumably because Africans, in general, are held in high esteem in marriage and that is what appears to have informed the better treatment by tutors and students towards pregnant students who were married. Nonetheless, on-campus teaching practice according to the respondents is a good initiative because, it is the initial learning experience for them and it exposes them to the dos, don'ts, and challenges of actual teaching and learning in the classroom.

Off-Campus Teaching Practice

According to 8 participants pregnant students were put in very deplorable communities without health facilities, good communication networks, and good drinking water, and had to travel to market centers for food. On market days, they sometimes walked about 1 to 2 kilometers to a point, because scores of people left the village at the same time and as a result, they had to walk a long distance before getting on board a car or motorbike to a market center to buy food items, or attend antenatal clinics, or attend Friday classes, and then return to their teaching posts. By the time they got back, usually, very late, they were tired, or hungry. Due to a bad communication network, they sometimes were not able to call their friends to send them to the hospital whenever they felt very sick and needed emergency care. A few of them experienced one form of accident or the other, and they equally needed to pay for their medical bills as well. Pregnant students who were hard hit like this appeared to be unfairly treated because some of them hid their pregnancy from the tutors until they were found out. College counsellors and psychologists have a role to play in counselling and psyching them up but it appears pregnant students lost out in their programme lineups.

Seven (7) pregnant students also alluded to the fact, that instead of standing up to teach, from 8.00 am to 3.00 pm, they sat down to teach, but they were not able to perform other duties in school due to their condition. They felt sick, or tired after teaching a class of 40 people in three different disciplines per week, marked exercises, and home assignments, and entered pupils' scores in the continuous assessment booklet each week. Thus, anytime pregnant students were away for antenatal visits, their mentors asked their colleagues, that is, practicing teachers step in until they were back. In

such circumstances, they felt cared for and accepted. But anytime link tutors visited the schools for supervision, pregnant students stayed behind to teach until the supervision was over, creating a distressing situation for them. One participant said:

Anytime college tutors are on supervision and in the same week I am to go for antenatal, I become tense and do not know what to do because if tutors come and I am not there, trouble, because, once they leave, I do not know when the tutor will come and supervise me. Meanwhile, every student is supposed to be supervised at least three times a semester.

It appeared pregnant students in practicing schools were treated better by their mentors as opposed to how they were treated by tutors who supervised them from the College. Also, it seemed students were afraid to make their concerns known to the tutors who went for supervision in the basic schools. Moreover, those whose partners refused to be responsible for the pregnancy and wondered about where the next meal would come from, sometimes had no peace of mind to teach. However, for all those interviewed, they disclosed that they learned the art of teaching (how to introduce a lesson, use learner-centered [hands-on, heads-on, and hearts-on] activities, and applied concepts to the immediate environment, among others) through constant practice for 32 weeks, thus the program must be sustained. It was like saying that teaching practice had exposed practicing teachers to the challenges of teaching.²³

The data gathered showed that the circumstances of pregnant students added to the already stressful academic environment where the timetable had invariably no place for rest. Pregnant students who travelled long distances from their off-campus teaching posts to the college for guidance in project work were usually stressed due to the long distance and sometimes the unavailability of project work supervisors on campus. The preparation for on-campus teaching practice which usually coincided with examinations became very stressful to students and sometimes led to low academic performance. While students were away on off-campus teaching practice, they became stressed each time they travelled to learning centres for tutelage. The load of work the college generates is a little too much for one who is pregnant, if that is measured against what a pregnant woman carries (in terms of workload), and experiences (in terms of the environment) at home. Thus, the academic needs of pregnant students in the college were partially met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the discussion above, the various stakeholders have a role to play in ensuring that pregnant students are well catered for in their quest for higher laurels. The Ministry in charge of Education in Ghana and the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission should design a policy document as a guide for all Colleges of Education in Ghana to ensure that the social, psychological, and emotional learning of pregnant students are taken care of. The Ada College management and management of other Colleges of Education should ensure that pregnant students are assigned to partner basic schools, close to the college. Management should relax the timetable so that pregnant students can take a rest from time to time outside of class hours. This should by no means reduce the workload of the students because they need to merit their certificate but they should be given less strict schedules to work with. Again, the

²³ Kwame Akyeampong, Keith M. Lewin and J.S. Stuart, *Teacher Training in Ghana – Does it count?* (Sevenoaks, UK: DFID Education Publication Dispatch, 2003).

college should design a Form for all project work supervisors and supervisees to fill, each time they agree to meet and submit it to the project work coordinator to monitor the process. Management should in the future, construct hostels for pregnant students.

CONCLUSION

This article addressed the challenges of pregnant students at the Ada College of Education. The data revealed that Ada College has not put in place any policy to support pregnant students and this may be the case in other Colleges of Education across the country. There is, therefore, the need to put an efficient support system in place for students who have various health conditions and this includes pregnant women. Various recommendations have been put across by the researchers and it is their hope that other Colleges of Education across the country will take similar steps to make education a smooth process for persons with various health conditions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ada College of Education, 50th Ada College of Education Anniversary Celebration. (2015).
Unpublished manuscript.
- Ada College of Education, "Home – Ada College of Education." Accessed January 20, 2022.
<https://adacoe.edu.gh>.
- Ada College of Education, "History – Ada College of Education." Accessed January 20, 2022.
<https://adacoe.edu.gh>.
- Akyeampong, K., Lewin K. M., & Stuart, J. S., *Teacher training in Ghana – Does it count?*.
Sevenoaks, UK: DFID Education Publication Dispatch (2003).
- Antwi, J. K., "The value of a person in Akan traditional life and thought: A contemporary inquiry." *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3 (2), (2017): 93-101.
- Ezenwuba, C., "Perceived effects of pregnancy on academic performances of female nursing students in Imo State University Owerri Nigeria." *South American Journal of Academic Research*, 2 (1), (2015):1-27.
- Esiah-Donkoh, K., Esiah-Donkoh, K., & Asare, H., "Coping in silence: Challenges faced by pregnant-students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana." *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 2 (10), (2014): 222-233.
- Etuah, P. A., Gbagbo, F. Y., & Nkrumah, J., "Coping with pregnancy in academic environment: Experiences of pregnant students in a public university in Ghana." *Journal of Woman's Reproductive Health*, 2 (2), (2018): 1-11.
- Lindokuhle, T. R., "Lived Experiences of pregnant students at the University of Limpopo Province" (Master's dissertation, University of Limpopo, 2017).
- National Policy Board for Educational Administration, *Professional standards for educational leaders*, 2015, accessed January 20, 2022. https://www.npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf
- Netshikweta, M. L., *The problems associated with pregnancy amongst student nurses in the Northern Province*, (Master's dissertation, University of South Africa, 1999).

- Phiri, T. M., Nyamaruze, P., & Akintola, O., "Stress and coping among unmarried pregnant university students in South Africa." *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 21 (817), (2021): 1- 13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-021-04288-1>
- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R., *Research methods for social work* (6th ed.). Belmont, USA: Thomson Higher Education. (2008).

ABOUT AUTHORS

David Doe Ayornoo is currently the College Librarian, Ada College of Education, Ghana. He holds an MPhil, Religion and Human Values from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana and MA in Governance and Sustainable Development from the same institution. He also holds an M.A in Library Studies from the University of Ghana, Legon. He has Research interests in Religious and Moral Education, Church History, African Traditional Religion, Bibliographic works and academics, Mobile devices and information use and Collection development.

Frederick Mensah Bonsu is currently a Senior Tutor (Religious and Moral Education) at the Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana. He is also a PhD. Candidate at the Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. He holds an MPhil. Religion and Human Values and Master of Education (Educational Administration) from University of Cape Coast, Ghana. He has Research interests in Morality and Social Values in Africa, African Traditional Religion, Church History and Inter-faith and Religious Tolerance.