

Rescue Mission: Socio-Economic Empowerment of Teenage Mothers in Yilo Krobo Rural Communities Through Textiles Entrepreneurial Skills

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ABSTRACT

Rural communities are often saddled with high unemployment rates among youth and teenage mothers, who face social stigma and a cycle of poverty. To address these challenges, this study implemented an intervention project focused on textiles to empower teenage mothers in the Yilo Krobo municipality of Ghana. Using a mixed-methods sequential exploratory design, the study sampled 85 teenage mothers from Aboabo, Nkurakan, and Huhunya through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Results showed that 57.8% of the participants earned an income from various jobs but faced challenges like limited access to resources and social discrimination. To combat these issues, training in textiles—specifically in tie and dye, macramé, and appliqué—was introduced as a way to build entrepreneurial skills. This initiative enabled teenage mothers to overcome socio-economic barriers, create marketable products, and craft unique stories of creativity and success in the growing textile industry.

Keywords: Teenage pregnancy, textiles, entrepreneurship, socio-economic, rural community

1. INTRODUCTION

Laurenzi et al. (2023) and Nketia (2022) posit that teenage pregnancy in developing countries is a common issue, particularly in rural areas where young girls often lack access to sexual and reproductive health services. This poses a significant challenge to the socio-economic development of such countries (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2013; Amo-Adjei., 2023). Teenage mothers in rural communities often live in poverty and are unable to complete their education (Ababio et al., 2022), which limits their employment opportunities and exacerbates their financial difficulties (Makiwane et al, 2017; 2018). In addition, many of them face social stigma, which further reduces their chances of being economically empowered and socially mobile (Skovdal et al, 2022). Early child birth has been associated with medical complications for the mother and the infant as well as adverse outcomes such as reduced educational achievement and economic instability later in life (Stoner et al., 2019). The cyclical effect of teenage motherhood has become a threat not only to the lives of the individuals involved but to society as a whole because they

leave school and infrequently return to school following childbirth (Stoner et al., 2019). Sadly, there are over 192,500 school dropouts in Ghana, with over 102,000 being girls. Up to 30% of school dropout cases occurring among girls are attributed to teenage pregnancy, which emanates from social and economic factors (Akurugu, 2022; Dubik et al., 2022). Ghana Health Service District Health Information Management Health System (DHIMS) reports that the Eastern Region holds the second highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Ghana with about 10,865 teenage pregnancies (UNFPA Ghana, 2022) representing a percentage margin of 17.8% (UNICEF Ghana, 2020). Abotsi (2020), Walden et al. (2021), and Ababio et al. (2022) postulate that the typical teenage mother in the Yilo Krobo Municipality is a school dropout who is unable to go back to school even after she puts to bed. Pregnancy among teenage girls within the Yilo Krobo Municipality is extremely common due to a lack of formal education, parental guidance and financial support, among others (Agyemang, 2020; Ehiawey, 2022). Interventions are therefore needed to promote their continued social inclusion and decent livelihoods (Okine and Dako-Gyeke, 2020).

Rural communities are mostly populated with unemployed youths and teenage mothers who face numerous challenges such as social stigma which contributes to a cycle of poverty that can be difficult to break (Kumar et al., 2018). To ease their financial difficulties, the youth and teenage mothers living in these rural communities must be exposed to interventions that can support them to continue their education or improve their employment opportunities (Whitworth and Cockerill, 2014; Ndinda, Ndhlovu and Khalema, 2017). On this issue, Rashid et al. (2018) posit that teenage mothers in rural communities often have experiences in textile crafts, making entrepreneurship in textiles a suitable opportunity for them to develop their skills and generate income for themselves and their children. The idea is that entrepreneurship skills development is a viable strategy for empowering teenage mothers and also reducing poverty in rural communities (Saleem and Zaidi, 2020; Hossain et al., 2024; Salam et al., 2024). This is because entrepreneurs make a relevant contribution to economic growth and the dynamics of the economy (Davidsson, 2006; Zhao et al., 2023; Audretsch et al., 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teenage Pregnancy in Ghana

Teenage pregnancy (TP) is a global public health issue in highly developed and developing countries with the latter being the most affected (Yakubu and Salisu, 2018; Eronel et al., 2020; Tetteh et al., 2022). Annually, an estimated 21 million girls aged 15–19 years in developing countries become pregnant with approximately 12 million of them giving birth (Darroch et al., 2016; World Health Organisation, 2019; 2024). In Africa, the prevalence of adolescent pregnancy has been reported at 18.8%; the sub-Saharan African region accounts for 19.3% (Kassa et al., 2018). Meanwhile, among five countries in Africa, 25.4% of TP prevalence among adolescent women aged 15–19 years exists (Tetteh et al., 2020).

The Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 2014 indicates that about 14% of pregnancies were amongst adolescents aged 15–19 years (GSS, GHS and ICF International, 2015). Globally, adolescent pregnancies are more likely to occur in marginalized communities, commonly driven by poverty, lack of education and employment opportunities (UNICEF, 2021; Amoadu et al., 2022; World Health Organisation, 2019; 2024). Initiatives such as sexual and reproductive health rights education, sensitization on the use of contraceptives, and the move to prevent child marriages have been implemented (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2013; UNFPA, 2016). Though some achievements have been made, there is a lot more to be done as various studies indicate TP is endemic in Ghana, especially in the rural areas (Ahinkorah et al., 2019, Bain

et al., 2020).

2.2 Teenage Pregnancy in the Yilo Krobo Municipality

In the Yilo Krobo Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana, more than thirty-three (33) female students were not able to sit for their BECE due to pregnancy (Bedzo and Manortey, 2019). Teenage pregnancies are still a major health concern in the municipality (UNFPA Ghana, 2022; Agblevor et al., 2023) and interventions such as education and parental guidance are needed to curb this canker. The increasing number of teenage girls getting pregnant in the Yilo Krobo Municipality is worrying and needs to be addressed to prevent families and society from experiencing further challenges that could erode their dignity any further.

2.3 Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers in Rural Communities

Teenage pregnancy and motherhood are global public health issues (Visacri et al., 2023) and in many cases, significantly challenge adolescent girls' education and economic prospects. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2022) report reveals that 16 million 15-19 years girls give birth every year mostly in low- and middle-income countries across the world, with two million of them aged under 15 years. Teenage mothers face significant challenges, and their impact is often long-lasting. Adolescent girls who become mothers are more likely to drop out of school, face health complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and experience poverty and social exclusion.

In rural areas, teenage motherhood (TM) is even more prevalent, with higher rates of poverty and limited access to resources and services (Senkyire et al., 2022). These factors make it challenging for teenage mothers to achieve economic independence and improve their social status. Furthermore, teenage motherhood can also have negative consequences for their children's health and development, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

The challenges facing teenage mothers in rural communities are numerous and multifaceted. Firstly, access to vocational training and business development training may be limited in some rural communities. This can make it difficult for teenage mothers to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to start and run successful textile businesses (Amod, Halana and Smith, 2019). In some cases, vocational training programs may be available, but they may be poorly resourced or inadequate in terms of their curriculum or teaching methods (UNFPA, 2022). In rural communities, teenage mothers' challenges are further compounded by the limited access they have to education, health care and economic opportunities. In many cases, girls in rural areas have limited access to vocational training and face significant barriers to starting their businesses. This lack of economic opportunity perpetuates the cycle of poverty, making it difficult for teenage mothers to provide for themselves and their children.

Secondly, teenage mothers face social and cultural barriers that make it difficult for them to start and run successful businesses. For example, they may face stigma and discrimination due to their status as unmarried mothers. This can make it difficult for them to access resources such as credit, raw materials, and equipment. In some cases, they may be excluded from formal markets or face discrimination from customers or suppliers (Mukherjee et al., 2020). Furthermore, teenage mothers may lack access to the resources necessary to start and run successful businesses. For example, they may lack capital to invest in their businesses, which can limit their ability to expand or innovate. They may also lack access to reliable sources of raw materials or equipment, which can limit the quality or quantity of their products. Finally, they may lack access to markets, either due to their remote location or limited knowledge of marketing and sales strategies (Salvi, 2019; Finlay et al., 2024).

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach that involves collaboration between

government agencies, NGOs, and local communities. This may involve improving the quality and availability of vocational training and business development programs, addressing social and cultural barriers through community education and awareness-raising campaigns, and providing access to financial and other resources to support the growth and sustainability of textile businesses (UNICEF Ghana, 2022). In response to these challenges, there is a growing interest in developing interventions that can support teenage mothers' economic empowerment in rural communities (Harper et al., 2018; Nabugoomu et al., 2020b; Kohli et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship skills development in Textiles has been identified as a promising strategy for empowering teenage mothers and reducing poverty in rural communities (Mnubi, 2020; Edgar, 2022). Entrepreneurship skills development in Textiles with regards to the study involves training teenage mothers in textile design and production, providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to start their textile businesses.

2.4 Entrepreneurship skills development in the Ghanaian context

In the process of acquiring, nurturing, and honing the abilities and knowledge necessary to excel in entrepreneurial endeavours within the economic, cultural, and social landscape of Ghana (Boateng, 2021), a wide range of competencies are critical for individuals to become successful entrepreneurs. As indicated by the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Plan (NEIP), which is a government initiative aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and job creation in Ghana (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2019; Adu et al., 2020), entrepreneurship skills development must also provide aspiring Ghanaian entrepreneurs with mentorship and access to resources that will enable them to thrive in the local business environment. Many academic institutions in Ghana are also offering entrepreneurship programmes that focus on developing skills relevant to the local context (Arthur and Adom, 2019). This study, however, focuses on entrepreneurship skills development in textiles designed for teenage mothers in rural communities of Ghana.

2.5 Entrepreneurship Skills Development in Textiles

Entrepreneurship skills development in textiles involves the production, marketing, and distribution of textile goods such as fabrics, garments, accessories, bags, shoes, and headgear (Dissanayake and Weerasinghe, 2021). The field of textiles has significant potential for generating income, creating employment opportunities, improving the economic well-being of individuals and providing education, especially in developing countries (Sahu et al., 2021). The study builds on SDG 4 which states 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UN, 2017; UNICEF, 2024). The researcher provided training in practical skills acquisition in Textiles for youths, especially teenage mothers. Several studies have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship skills development in textiles particularly for empowering and reducing poverty among youths and teenage mothers. For instance, in Nigeria, Chima-Kio (2023) found that entrepreneurship skills development in textiles improved the economic well-being of youths increased their self-confidence and decreased poverty among them.

Similarly, Khurana (2018) examined the role of textiles and apparel entrepreneurship in improving the livelihoods of women in Ethiopia and concluded that entrepreneurship skills development in textiles positively impacts women's economic empowerment and poverty levels in the region. In Bangladesh, Hossain (2022), Emon and Nipa (2024), and Moral et al., (2024) found that entrepreneurship skills development in textiles improved women's economic well-being, increased their decision-making power, and enhanced their social status. In the same vein, Sahu et al. (2021), Hamadziripi (2017) and Kunene (2009) found that in South Africa, entrepreneurship skills development in textiles had a positive impact on teenage mothers' self-esteem and self-confidence, and improved their ability to provide for themselves

and their families. In addition, other studies highlight the importance of providing comprehensive support to teenage mothers beyond entrepreneurship skills development. For instance, Mkwanzani et al. (2021), Kurebwa (2019), and Ncube (2021) found entrepreneurship skills development insufficient on its own to improve teenage mothers' economic well-being in Zimbabwe. Extra support for teenage mothers is needed in a comprehensive package of education, healthcare, and social protection programmes that would improve their lives (Morgan et al., 2022).

Furthermore, other studies emphasize the importance of involving the wider community in entrepreneurship skills development programmes meant for teenage mothers. For example, in a study conducted in Uganda, Nabugoomu et al. (2020b) found that involving community members, particularly women, in entrepreneurship skills development programmes improved the sustainability of the programmes and reduced stigma towards teenage mothers who participated in them. In Jordan, Ali, Udin and Abualrejal (2023) found the need to involve local government and non-governmental organizations in entrepreneurship skills development to improve their effectiveness and sustainability. This means getting communities involved in programmes that are meant to support teenage mothers typically in rural communities can help to sustain those programmes.

2.6 The Concept of Entrepreneurship Skills Development Strategy in Textiles

The concept of entrepreneurship skills development strategy in textiles involves a range of interventions aimed at equipping teenage mothers with the skills and knowledge necessary to start and run successful textile businesses (Olanipekun et al., 2021). According to Nabugoomu et al. (2020a), these interventions include vocational training, business development training, mentorship programs, and access to resources such as capital, raw materials, and equipment. Vocational training programmes provide teenage mothers with practical skills related to textile production (Apriana et al., 2019), such as sewing, weaving, and dyeing. These programs may be delivered through formal and informal education or community-based organizations. Business development training programmes, on the other hand, provide teenage mothers with the skills and knowledge necessary to manage a successful textile business, such as marketing, financial management, and record-keeping (Mamun and Haq, 2023). Mentorship programmes can also be an important part of textile entrepreneurship skills development, as they provide teenage mothers with access to experienced entrepreneurs who can offer guidance and support (Boldureanu et al., 2020).

Access to resources such as capital, raw materials, and equipment is also critical for the success of textile businesses (Chinnah and Cyril-Egware, 2023), teenage mothers may face challenges accessing these resources, as they may lack collateral or credit history to secure loans, and may not have the financial resources to purchase raw materials or equipment (Baxter et al., 2022). Strategies to address these challenges may include microfinance programs, where small loans are provided to help start or expand a business, or resource-sharing programs, where equipment and materials are shared among entrepreneurs. Overall, textile entrepreneurship skills development is a comprehensive strategy for empowering teenage mothers in rural communities (Akinmoye and Ogunduyile, 2020). By providing them with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to start and run successful textile businesses, they can become financially independent, improve their standards of living, and provide better opportunities for their children.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several educational theories provide a basis for understanding the importance of entrepreneurship skills development for teenage mothers' empowerment. The study's theoretical framework relates to the theories

and models that are relevant to entrepreneurship skills development and teenage mothers' empowerment in particular. The section focused on selected theories to determine the connection between empowerment through entrepreneurship skills and poverty reduction among teenage mothers in rural communities. The theories are Self-Efficacy Theory and Human Capital Theory.

3.1 The Self-efficacy theory

The Self-efficacy theory emphasizes the importance of developing teenage mothers' belief in their abilities to start and run a successful textile business (Pukkinen et al., 2024). The term 'self-efficacy' was first coined by psychologist Albert Bandura (1977) as a personal judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations". Self-Efficacy is a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's original concept has been worked on by other psychologists from several perspectives. To give an example, Kolb and Kolb (2009) think that believing in one's abilities can be vital in measuring cognitive strength. Moreover, the concept involves the effort and persistence that help someone to overcome obstacles that would interfere with their inborn capabilities to achieve goals. Marsh et al. (2019) describe self-efficacy as being future-oriented (prospective: "What can I do?" according to Bandura 1997 or even more prospective "What am I able to come up with?") The Self-efficacy theory is a psychological construct that explains how an individual's belief in their abilities to execute a task or handle a situation influences their behaviour and success in achieving their goals (Lazarides and Warner, 2020).

In the context of entrepreneurship skills development for teenage mothers' empowerment, the Self-efficacy theory posits that teenage mothers who believe in their abilities to start and run a business are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship and succeed (Poi, 2023). Self-efficacy is a critical construct in entrepreneurship because it influences an individual's decision to pursue entrepreneurship and their perceived ability to succeed in their business ventures. Self-efficacy levels increase an individual's motivation to pursue their goals and their resilience in the face of challenges and setbacks (Lidiawati et al., 2020). Therefore, developing teenage mothers' self-efficacy in entrepreneurship skills development in textiles is a critical component of their empowerment process (Banerjee et al., 2023). Entrepreneurship is a challenging but rewarding endeavour that requires unique sets of skills and qualities (Lyons et al., 2020). Studies have shown that people with high levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship, and those with low levels are less likely to do so (Shen et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has also been found to have a positive effect on entrepreneurial performance, as it enables entrepreneurs to overcome the challenges they face in their businesses (Memon et al., 2019; Soomro and Shah, 2022).

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is, however, not a fixed trait and so it can be developed over time through experience and education (Adeniyi, Derera and Gamede, 2022). Hence, individuals who want to become entrepreneurs have to work on developing their entrepreneurial self-efficacy as it can greatly impact their success as entrepreneurs. Several factors influence the development of self-efficacy in entrepreneurship skills development in textiles. These factors may include mastery experiences, social modelling, and social persuasion (Lewis et al., 2022). Mastery experiences refer to the individual's ability to succeed in executing a task, which enhances their belief in their abilities (Kumar et al., 2022). In the context of entrepreneurship skills development in textiles, mastery experiences can be achieved through training and practical experience in textile design and production (Mawonedzo et al., 2020). This includes learning technical skills such as sewing, hand embroidery, macramé, patchwork and applique as well as business skills such as marketing and accounting. Through practical experience and training, teenage mothers can

develop mastery experiences that enhance their self-efficacy and entrepreneurship skills development in textiles (Gafa, 2021). Self-efficacy theory concerning this study emphasises the importance of boosting teenage mothers' belief in their capacity to create a textile business and make it work successfully.

3.2 Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory states that education and training are essential investments in individuals' economic well-being (Schultz, 1961). Ross et al. (2023) posit that the human capital theory can increase the productive capacity of individuals through greater education and skills training. Thus, education and training can include acquiring entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, such as financial literacy, marketing, and business management (Bilal et al., 2024). Limiting the training to the study will involve hand-made embroidery, applique, patchwork and macramé. The development of the above skills can improve teenage mothers' employability, income-earning potential, and overall economic status. The human capital theory which emphasizes the importance of education and training for improving individuals' economic well-being (Schultz, 1961) in this context, will enable teenage mothers to acquire valuable skills and knowledge that can enhance their economic prospects and reduce poverty within the Municipality.

4. METHODS

In line with the research questions and objectives that were designed to guide this study, the sequential exploratory approach of mixed-methods design was adopted for the study. According to Fetters et al. (2013), a sequential exploratory design is a mixed methods study design where the quantitative phase of data collection and analysis follows the qualitative phase of data collection and analysis. The researcher considered sequential exploratory design an appropriate means to explore the teenage pregnancy phenomenon in-depth with some individuals but also wanted to expand these findings to a larger population (Munce et al., 2021; Ivankova and Clark, 2023). This strategy was employed with the descriptive research method in qualitative research design (Siedlecki, 2020).

The study was conducted in Aboabo, Nkurakan and Huhunya in the Yilo Krobo Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana. Similar to other parts of the region, the people are mostly small-scale farmers, traders and others in beads processing and arrangement. Together with the mentioned reason, the area is highly in connection with the study as teenage pregnancy is a significant issue in the area. The study employed a purposive sampling technique to draw a sample size of 95 teenage mothers from the selected communities (Aboabo - 27, Nkurakan - 41 and Huhunya – 27). However, 10 of the teenage mothers withdrew their participation giving a respondent rate of 89.5% and a final sample size of 85 teenage mothers.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the office of the Head of Department, Educational Innovations in Science and Technology, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, and was sent to traditional rulers to obtain permission to enter the communities and carry out the various training activities and ultimately conduct the study. Data was therefore obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The purpose of the study was also clearly explained to the study participants who decided to be part of it. They were given adequate time to familiarize themselves with the aim of the study and the questionnaire that was administered so that they could depict their true views on the topic as required by the questions. The researcher thus assisted the respondents who needed clarification on questions they had difficulty with. Respondents who could not read or write well were assisted with the needed explanations or clarifications in Akan, Krobo or Ewe as they required as well as translating their responses into English and recording same on paper. Since the study was voluntary, none of them was

coerced to get involved. No monetary payments were made to anyone of them. The participants were also asked not to write their names on the questionnaire to ensure anonymity. The research data has remained confidential since its collection in this reporting stage.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The textiles business involves the production, marketing, and distribution of textile goods such as fabrics, garments and accessories like bags, shoes, and headgear (Udochukwu et al., 2021; Azam et al., 2022) and this makes it imperative to have essential Textiles entrepreneurship skills (Reike et al., 2023). Upon this premise, this section of the presentation looks at how teenage mothers can be equipped with essential Textile entrepreneurship skills aimed at mitigating the socio-economic challenges that confront them. The section is therefore subdivided into six portions, with each subsection addressing thematic areas of the research objective.

5.1 Socio-economic Status of Teenage Mothers

Entrepreneurial skills help teenage mothers overcome the challenges they may face as they start and grow their businesses (Abu et al., 2018). Being trained and equipped with some vocational skills in textiles was envisaged to give these teenage mothers some leverage to explore other fields to generate income for themselves. They were asked to describe their basic source of income and how they survive in their current state of motherhood.

The data gathered from these questions indicated that 26 (representing 30.5%) of teenage mothers rely on family support while 10 (representing 11.7%) rely on support from the government/ social welfare. Interestingly, the remaining 49 (representing 57.8%) of the sampled teenage mothers have varied forms of employment. The distribution of the teenage mothers’ source of obtaining income is presented in Table

Table 1: Teenage Mothers’ Sources of Obtaining Income

Income Source	Frequency	Percent
Family support	26	30.5
Self-employment/business	34	40.0
Part-time employment	7	8.2
Full-time employment	8	9.4
Government assistance/Welfare	10	11.7
Total	85	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The sources of income of the teenage mothers as indicated in Table 1 raise questions on income sustainability. For a teenage mother to rely on family support (26 or 30.5%) and government/welfare (10 or 11.7%) as their financial backbone shows that 36 (representing 42.2%) of them are not financially independent. It also brings the state of these teenage mothers’ employment and socio-economic status to bear (Gyasi et al., 2023) hence the need for vocational training and entrepreneurial skills to empower them since teenage empowerment enables income generation (Mukherjee et al., 2019) and reduces poverty (Hapazari and Hapazari, 2019).

5.2 Challenges Faced in Developing and Applying Entrepreneurial Skills as a Teenage Mother in Yilo Krobo Municipality

Entrepreneurship skills development is a promising strategy for empowering teenage mothers and reduci-

ng poverty in rural communities (Forkuor and Korah, 2023). Many of these teenage mothers are confronted with numerous challenges. These obstacles present real situations for them that hinder their attainment of employable skills for a sustainable livelihood. The researcher therefore interviewed the teenage mothers further to solicit their views on some of the challenges they envisaged with the intended entrepreneurship training for them. Their responses were transcribed and coded into thematic areas as follows:

Interviewee 1: “Limited Access to Resources: Rural areas may have limited access to financial resources, business support services, and educational opportunities. Accessing startup capital or loans can be especially challenging for me as a teenage mother”.

Interviewee 2: “Childcare Responsibilities: Balancing the responsibilities of childcare with entrepreneurship can be demanding. Finding affordable and reliable childcare options can be a hurdle. This has always been my dilemma as a teenage mother”.

Interviewee 3: “Social Stigma: I often face social stigma and judgment, which affect my confidence and hinder my ability to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities”.

Interviewee 4: “Limited Education: as a teenage mother I have limited access to education due to early parenthood, which has affected my business knowledge and skills”.

Interviewee 5: “Lack of Role Models: In rural areas, role models are rarely to come by and with this state of my, getting guidance and inspiration becomes difficult”.

Interviewee 6: “Isolation: to me, rural life for the teenage mother is like living on an island. So how can I get networking opportunities and access to a support system”.

Interviewee 8: “Transportation: the reliable transportation situation here is unreliable and makes it rarely possible to attend business-related events, access markets, or reach customers”.

Interviewee 9: “Market Access: the small and less diverse market, limits the customer base for certain businesses. So how can I find ways to expand the market. It is a challenge”.

Interviewee 10: Infrastructure: the infrastructures here are nothing to write home about. No high-speed internet, I mean nothing like technology so it won’t even cross your mind to consider online business activities and e-commerce ventures”.

Interviewee 11: “Financial Insecurity: Financial instability is a common challenge for me as a teenage mother. It makes it difficult to invest in a business or absorb financial setbacks”.

Interviewee 12: “Work-Life Balance: Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is challenging when parenting responsibilities are coupled with the demands of entrepreneurship”.

Interviewee 13: “Lack of Support Networks: business support networks are few, such as incubators or business associations, which can provide guidance and resources to teenage aspiring entrepreneurs”.

Interviewee 14: “Market Competition: In some rural areas, competition can be fierce, especially in sectors with limited opportunities, making it harder to establish a unique business”.

Interviewee 15: “Seasonal Challenges: Rural businesses may face seasonal fluctuations in demand, which can impact cash flow and sustainability so am scared of venturing into it”.

The numerous challenges voiced out by these teenage mothers include “limited access to resources and services”, and thus pose as obstacle for teenage mothers to achieve economic independence and improve their social status (Dzotsi, Oppong Asante and Osafo, 2020; Adangabe, Emmanuella, and Tigdig, 2021). Limited access to vocational and business development training in these rural communities – Aboabo, Nkurakan and Huhunya in the Yilo Krobo Municipality – makes it difficult for teenage mothers to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to start and run successful textile businesses with some fears arising

from “lack of support networks”, “market competition”, and “social challenges”. Perhaps, exclusion from formal markets, and discrimination from customers or suppliers (Mukherjee et al., 2019) made some teenage mother view their market access as a huge challenge as they face “social stigma and discrimination” due to their status as unmarried teenage mothers. In other jurisdictions, the lack of access to markets is due to the remote location of the communities demarcated as rural in the Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2022).

5.3 Interest in learning more about Textiles and Entrepreneurial Skills

As the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022; 2023) emphasizes, entrepreneurship skills development in textiles fosters economic growth, job creation, and innovation. The researcher therefore solicited the teenage mothers’ views to identify their interest in learning textiles entrepreneurial skill. The questionnaire item indicated categorical ‘yes’ and ‘no’ responses as recorded in Table 2. Hence, 75 (representing 88.3%) who responded ‘yes’ expressed diverse views which were transcribed and coded into thematic areas.

Table 2: Textiles and Entrepreneurial Skills Learning Interest

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	75	88.3
No	10	11.7
Total	85	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Since textile entrepreneurial skills can help individuals identify opportunities, take calculated risks, and contribute to economic development (Chinnah, 2020; Sahu, 2021), the results in Table 2 suggested that the majority (75, representing 88.3%) of teenage mothers were interested to learn more about textiles and entrepreneurial skills. Their reasons for learning more about textiles and entrepreneurial skills as transcribed and coded from the interview are elaborated below:

Interviewee 1: “Career Advancement: Textiles and entrepreneurial skills can significantly enhance my career prospects. For instance, if I am working in the fashion industry, I might want to delve into textiles to understand fabric properties and trends better. This knowledge can lead to promotions, higher-paying positions, or greater responsibilities within their current organization”.

Interviewee 2: “Business Ownership: Entrepreneurial skills are essential for those interested in starting and managing their businesses. Learning how to create a business plan, secure funding, and navigate legal and financial aspects can empower me to turn their business ideas into reality”.

Interviewee 3: “Financial Independence: Entrepreneurship offers the potential for financial independence. I want to delve into entrepreneurship because I can have the opportunity to control my income and financial future. I see it as a path to financial stability and self-sufficiency”.

Interviewee 4: “Passion and Interest: Genuine interest and passion are powerful motivators for learning. I am inherently passionate about textiles, fashion, and entrepreneurship. I want to pursue knowledge in these areas because it aligns with my interests and hobbies”.

Interviewee 5: “Creativity and Innovation: The fields of textiles and entrepreneurship often demand creativity and innovation. Entrepreneurs need to come up with unique product ideas or innovative solutions to problems in their industry. Learning in these areas can stimulate my creativity and provide an outlet for innovative thinking”.

Interviewee 6: “Problem Solving: Entrepreneurship involves identifying and solving problems, which can be intellectually stimulating. I enjoy tackling complex issues and in finding practical solutions I may find entrepreneurship as intellectually rewarding”.

Interviewee 7: “Autonomy: Entrepreneurship offers a high level of autonomy. As a teenage entrepreneur, I will have the freedom to make decisions, set my own goals, and shape my businesses according to my vision. This independence can be appealing I can control my work and destiny as well.

Interviewee 8: “Personal Growth: Learning new skills is a form of personal growth. It can boost my self-confidence, provide a sense of accomplishment, and help me develop as a professional”.

Interviewee 9: “Community Impact: as an entrepreneur, I can have a positive impact on my community. By creating jobs, supporting local economies, and contributing to community development, I will play a significant role in improving the quality of life in my area”.

Interviewee 10: “Networking: Learning about textiles and entrepreneurship often involves connecting with others in the industry. Building a network can lead me to valuable partnerships, mentorships, and opportunities for collaboration”.

Interviewee 11: “Legacy Building: I aspire to leave a lasting legacy through my entrepreneurial endeavours. I want to create businesses or products that will be remembered and continue to thrive even beyond their involvement”.

Interviewee 12: “Global Opportunities: Textiles and entrepreneurship are not confined by geographic boundaries. I can tap into global markets, work with international suppliers, and reach customers worldwide, providing opportunities for global expansion”.

Interviewee 13: “Diversification: Diversifying my skill set is a prudent strategy to reduce risk. In learning about textiles and entrepreneurship I can serve as a backup plan or a way to explore new avenues alongside an existing career, providing financial security and flexibility”.

Interviewee 14: “Market Demand: If there is a strong market demand for textile-related products or entrepreneurial services, I can seek to meet that demand by acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills. I will see it as a practical way to fulfil a market need”.

Entrepreneurial skills are necessary to enable individuals to excel within the economic, cultural, and social landscape of Ghana (Boateng, 2020). The 14 responses recorded from the interview of the teenage mothers indicated that entrepreneurial skills are essential drivers for “career advancement, business ownership, financial independence, passion and interest, creativity and innovation, problem-solving, autonomy, personal growth, community impact, networking, legacy building, global opportunities, diversification, and market demand. This provides aspiring Ghanaian entrepreneurs, especially teenage mothers with mentorship and access to resources that will enable them to thrive in the local business environment (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2019). Perhaps, the identified factors in the responses motivated the youths and teenage mothers of the Yilo Krobo Municipality to learn about textiles and entrepreneurship. These factors are interconnected but vary based on the respondents’ unique circumstances, goals, and values.

5.4 Exposure to Textiles Entrepreneurial Related Activities

Exposure to entrepreneurship skills development in textiles improves the economic well-being of youths, increases their self-confidence, and decreases poverty among them (Chima-Kio, 2023; Sahu, 2021). Owing to this, the teenage mothers were asked about their quest to explore any textiles and entrepreneurial skills.

The data in Table 3 shows that 10 (representing 11.7%) of the teenage mothers declined to have exposure to any textiles and entrepreneurial skills presented.

Table 3: Exposure to Textiles-Related Entrepreneurial Activities

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	75	88.3
No	10	11.7
Total	85	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

On the other hand, the varied views expressed by the 75 (representing 88.3%) teenage mothers on their quest to have more exposure to textiles and entrepreneurial skills have been transcribed and coded for presentation. Table 3 also suggests that the majority 75 (representing 88.3%) of the sampled teenage mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality yearned for exposure to textiles and entrepreneurship skill showed their need for improvements in their lives like Khurana (2018) found among the Ethiopian women studied concerning textiles and apparel entrepreneurship skills.

The world of textiles and entrepreneurship is a vibrant and diverse realm, offering a myriad of opportunities for those who dare to immerse themselves in its intricacies (Okai-Mensah et al., 2022a; 2022b; Kabir et al., 2019). To anyone with a deep-rooted passion for fabrics, fashion, or design, or is driven by the desire to carve an entrepreneurial path, there are numerous avenues to gain exposure and expertise in the field of textiles. So, the interview responses that the 75 teenage mothers gave as reasons why they want to explore various ways to delve into textiles and its related entrepreneurial activities, shed light on the exciting possibilities that await them while they are willing to embark on this journey. Some of the transcribed responses are the following:

Interviewee 1: “Formal Education and Courses: One of the most structured approaches to learning about textiles and entrepreneurship is through formal education. Some were willing to further their education if they had the financial support to pursue fashion design and textile or start their small businesses in Textiles”.

Interviewee 2: “Hands-On Workshops and Classes: Teenage mothers express immense interest in acquiring hands-on learning experiences in Textiles if they get the opportunity. They wish there were workshops and training sections dedicated to textile techniques such as fabric decoration, weaving, screen printing, applique, hand embroidery, patchwork and macramé which are widely available on local and foreign markets. These workshops will provide opportunities to teenage mothers not only to learn essential skills in Textiles but also to create their textile art or garments which will eventually lead to a Textile business”.

Interviewee 3: “Networking and Mentorship: Networking events, meetups, and conferences focused on textiles and entrepreneurship offer a unique opportunity to connect with experts and like-minded individuals. Building a network can lead to collaborative ventures, mentorship relationships, and potential business partnerships. Seasoned professionals can provide guidance, share their experiences, and offer valuable insights”.

Interviewee 4: “Participation in Entrepreneurial Competitions: If you're inclined toward entrepreneurship, consider participating in entrepreneurial competitions and startup accelerators. These platforms not only provide mentorship and funding opportunities but also offer exposure to your textile-related business ideas. Presenting your ideas can sharpen your entrepreneurial skills and open doors to investment”.

Interviewee 5: “Collaborations and Partnerships: Collaborating with local artisans, designers, or textile artists can be a catalyst for creativity and exposure. Joint projects not only provide learning opportunities but also offer a platform to showcase your work. Through collaborations, you can explore new techniques, styles, and markets”.

Interviewee 6: “Internships and Apprenticeships: Real-world experience is often the best teacher. Seek internships or apprenticeships with textile companies, fashion brands, or entrepreneurial ventures. Practical exposure to industry operations, production processes, and market dynamics can be immensely valuable in shaping your understanding of textiles and entrepreneurship”.

Interviewee 7: “Attending Textile Art Exhibitions: Art exhibitions focused on textiles provide an opportunity to gain inspiration and exposure to different styles and techniques. Observing the works of renowned textile artists can expand your horizons and fuel your creative aspirations”.

Interviewee 8: “Volunteering: Volunteering with organizations supporting textile artisans, promoting sustainable textiles, or offering entrepreneurial education can provide hands-on experience. Volunteering not only allows you to apply your skills but also contributes to a meaningful cause, amplifying the sense of purpose in your journey”.

To this end, the realms of textiles and entrepreneurship offer a rich tapestry of learning opportunities, creative expression, and entrepreneurial pursuits (Padi et al., 2022; Kilu et al., 2024; Sanda, et al., 2024). It is also important to state that their paths may be structured through formal education or hands-on practical training (Apriana et al., 2019). The key to success in this entrepreneurship journey seems to be an open mind, a passion for learning, and a determination to explore the limitless possibilities that await those who dare to immerse themselves in these captivating domains. The textile industry is wide, fragmented and highly integrated with a variety of actors in it (Kabir et al., 2019; Sarpong et al., 2024) so whether the study respondents were driven by artistic expression or entrepreneurial ambitions, the world of textiles is wide enough to welcome all who seek to weave their own unique stories of success and creativity through skills in textiles.

5.5 Textiles Skills and Knowledge

Vocational training programmes can be organized to equip teenage mothers with the necessary skills to start and run successful textile businesses (Arora and Mehta, 2023). This section of the presentation thus delves into some of the textiles and entrepreneurial skill training that can equip, empower and socio-economical sustain the teenage mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. Hence, the teenage mothers were taken through some intervention projects in textiles. The systematic procedure of the training is provided in the following sections with their corresponding illustrations.

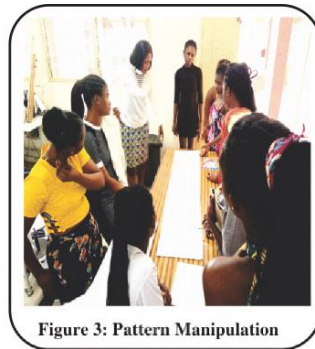
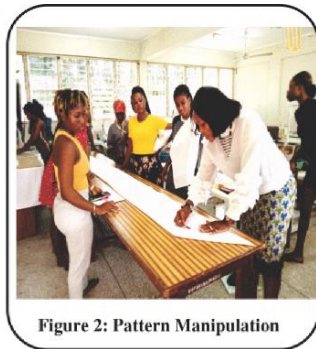
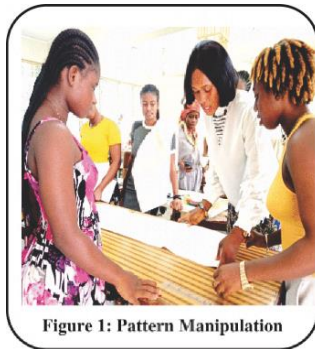
Training Session One: Fabric Identification

At the foundation of textiles lies the ability to distinguish between various types of fabrics, understand their unique properties, and discern their suitability for different applications. Mastery in fabric identification includes the recognition of natural fibres, such as cotton, silk, and wool, as well as synthetic fibres like polyester and nylon. This knowledge is important because fabric choice determines the look, feel, and overall quality of clothing and garments in clothing. This training session equipped teenage mothers to identify the various types of fabrics and the specific kinds of activities the fabrics can be used for. For instance, mercerized cotton was identified as the best fabric for tie-dye works and was used for some of the intervention projects.

Training Section Two: Textile Design

The art of textile design entails the skill to create and manipulate patterns, colours, and textures that are

not only visually appealing but also functional. A deep understanding of design principles is crucial in this realm. Teenage mothers were therefore taken through some textile designing processes as illustrated in Figure 1- Figure 4.



Source: Field Survey, 2023

Training Session Three: Dyeing and Printing

Proficiency in dyeing techniques and textile printing methods is indispensable for adding vibrant colours and intricate patterns to textiles. Techniques range from traditional screen printing and block printing to cutting-edge digital printing methods. In this training session, the teenage mothers were guided to design and produce tie-dyed works using cotton as the basic fabric. Figure 5 – Figure 14 reveals the training activities that the teenage mothers were taken through.



Source: Field Survey, 2023

Training Session Four: Sewing Fashionable Items

For those teenage mothers who were inclined towards fashion, sewing skills and garment construction techniques are essential. This encompasses pattern making, precise cutting, and skilful assembly of

clothing items. The training session engaged teenage mothers in producing sewn items as illustrated in Figure 15 and Figure 16.



Source: Field Survey, 2023

Hence, textile entrepreneurship skills development is a comprehensive strategy for empowering teenage mothers in rural communities (Akinmoye and Ogunduyile, 2020). It is a dynamic field that offers an expansive canvas for teenage mothers seeking to master their craft and achieve entrepreneurial success. Whether their journey is primarily textile-focused or entrepreneurial, the training sessions enabled them to develop specialised skills and knowledge areas to unlock opportunities, meet market demands, and craft unique narratives of accomplishment and creativity in the ever-evolving world of textiles and entrepreneurship.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Teenage pregnancy shatters the educational and economic empowerment that could have provided employable skills and secured jobs to school-going female teenagers (Morgan et al., 2022; World Bank, 2024). It contributes to unemployment and poverty worsening the woes of students' education in rural communities (Becquet et al., 2019; Salifu and Biney, 2023) like Aboabo, Nkurakan and Huhunya in the Yilo Krobo Municipality. In a worse scenario, these rural teenage girls are stigmatized, and socially alienated (Ruzibiza, 2021; Ahinkorah et al., 2021; Morgan et al., 2022) and on top of poverty denies them the ability to take care of themselves and their children, making their return to school a mere rhetoric (Stoner et al., 2019; Reyes, 2020; Naidoo et al., 2021; Anima et al., 2022).

To avert the challenging situation, Kafai et al. (2014) proposed that entrepreneurial skills in textiles provide new skills to these teenage girls and enable them to start small businesses. The textile entrepreneurial training programmes (Akinola et al., 2023) have the potential to boost the financial status of female teenage school dropouts and make them self-sufficient (Pöllänen and Weissmann-Hanski, 2020).

Thus the training sessions in this study thrives on the wheels of a rescue mission. It provides teenage mothers in Aboabo, Nkurakan and Huhunya communities in the Yilo Krobo Municipality with skills in tie and dye, and the production of functional items such as macramé, appliqué, crocheting, patchwork and hand-made embroidery. With the necessary resources, training, and support these teenage mothers have developed their entrepreneurial skills in Textiles geared towards the improvement of their livelihoods and families.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Considering the training sessions, it is evident that empowering teenage mothers in the Yilo Krobo Municipality through entrepreneurship skills in textiles holds immense promise for poverty reduction. The training sessions enabled teenage mothers to develop specialized skills and knowledge areas to unlock opportunities, meet market demands, and craft unique narratives of accomplishment and creativity in the ever-evolving world of textiles and entrepreneurship. It is therefore recommended that government agencies, NGOs, and local communities should periodically organize vocational training and entrepreneurial skills development for teenage mothers to empower them socio-economically.

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