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The Aftermath Implications of Teenage Pregnancy on the Girl Child Education

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate: i) impact of teenage pregnancy on the girl child attending government secondary schools ii) the level of academic accomplishment of the pregnant teenagers at the public secondary schools. The research design for this study was a descriptive survey. The study population made up of 800 teen mothers. A sample of 200 teen mothers in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, who had dropped out of secondary school as a result of teen pregnancies, was chosen through simple random sampling. The instrument utilized to collect the data was questionnaire which was administered to the participants, validated by three experts and its reliability was tested using Cronbach alpha (α = .68). The participants were also interviewed. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages. The results showed that young women who became pregnant while in school face a variety of difficulties, including early marriage, rejection by the family, disassociation from former classmates, social isolation, frequent absences following pregnancies, poor academic performance, and reasons for dropping out of school. The findings revealed that teen pregnancies affect the relationship of the girl child, family and peer group and also have an impact on young girls' academic performance in public secondary schools. We deduced from the literature review that adolescent pregnancy is a widespread problem that demands attention due to its effects on the education of girls. Some recommendations were also made.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent pregnancy has been the subject of a long-running public outcry, and it has now emerged as a major issue in Nigeria and its educational system. Numerous research on the best effective way to address the issue have been conducted as awareness of the impact and results of teen pregnancy on educational, social, and economic institutions has grown. Early childbirth and adolescent pregnancies are significant social issues that cannot be ignored. It has had an impact on other social vices or issues such as unwed pregnancies, child abuse and neglect, welfare reliance, child health, well-being, a rise in teenage abortions, school drop-out among females, and workforce development (Atteh, 2011). Both emerging and developed countries are impacted by the issue of early or teen pregnancy (Alabi & Oni, 2017).

An individual's potential to contribute to society can be continuously developed through education, which is a lifelong process (Effie, 2011; Clementina, 2015). Teenagers need it for their growth because it prepares them for the world of jobs and adult life (Sibeko, 2012; Clementina, 2015). Ryan (2013) asserts that adolescent pregnancy is a significant global problem, with the United States leading the way with around a million pregnancies among teens each year. Many concerned people and organizations have become aware of it, including policymakers, religious leaders, social scientists, and the general public in both industrialized and developing countries, such as Nigeria.

Today, a concerning number of girls between the ages of 13 and 19 is getting pregnant. An intricate problem that affects people all around the world is teenage pregnancies and the consequences that follow (Kirchengast, 2016; Bruce et al., 2020). Because of the negative effects on society and the country as a whole that early pregnancy has, which affects both developing and developed countries, it becomes a global issue and a significant problem for the country's policymakers and other concerned persons (Bruce et al., 2020). Bruce, Mugo, & Claire claim that although the US has a high percentage of teenage moms (60%) there is a significant difference in early child pregnancy rates in developed and poor nations. Teenage birth rates in the US are typically four times higher than those in the European Union. Females under the age of 19 who are pregnant make up a greater percentage of the population in the sub-Saharan region (Mkwananz & Odimegwu, 2015; Bruce et al., 2020).

The adolescent year is between the 13th and the 19th year, according to Turner & Helms (1993). Teenage is occasionally used to denote adolescence interchangeably. According to the World Health Organization-WHO (UNICEF, 2009), secondary sex

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characteristics first appear between the ages of 10 and 19 during adolescence. The adolescent years are defined by Melgosa (2001) as the 13th through the 19th years of a person's life. When a person enters the second genital stage of psychological development, this stage of life is considered as additional, extremely sensitive, and significant aspect of their life. According to Ukekwe (2001), it is the most important time in a person's life and, if not handled properly, especially for women, might have the most disastrous effects in later years. According to Onuzulike (2002), adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood that gives people the chance to let go of their childish ways and adapt to adult behaviour. The precise year that a teen begins or ends is a topic of debate among researchers. According to some experts, teens are defined as all those between the ages of 13 and 19, who make up around 20% of the global population. It is a crucial time in a person's life that heralds the onset of puberty and biological maturity.

Through interactions with their surroundings, people pick up particular behaviours. It is important to remember that these behaviours are a product of external stimuli. The study on the factors that contribute to teen sex first focused on the individual level, particularly the impact of the teens' individual physical and psychological characteristics (Odiri et al., 2023). Aspects of the environments that adolescents are a part of, such the community and the school, are receiving more and more attention in recent years. These studies have repeatedly demonstrated that the area in which young people reside has an impact on their sexual behaviour. Given that some youngsters want to get pregnant, pregnancy in them often connects to a need to feel amazing and sensible as a lady (Odiri et al., 2023). When faced with changes or when they require a strong feeling of assurance about the future, young women may turn to sex and pregnancy. This tactic is used to persuade others including oneself that one is equally as human as everyone else (Eruesegbefe, 2005; Odiri et al., 2023; Ihejirika & Wealth Ngowari, 2022). Some immature young women use pregnancy as a tool to hold onto a partner and exert pressure to marry him (Oboawharhe, 2022).

Ekwueme (2000) estimates that there are 400,000 unplanned births in Nigeria each year, half of which are carried by young women who are unmarried and between the ages of 15 and 19. She also noted that there were significant rates of production among women between the ages of 15 and 19, with an average of 164 live births per year, among the 31 countries where statistics were collected. Over a million young adult women in Nigeria experience frequent pregnancies, according to Audu. J A (1997). Around 400,000 of them are teens or younger. According to Ekwueme, adolescent females in Nigeria frequently have pregnancies. She was aware of this due to how rapidly young people start having sex, especially in schools with mixed-gender students.

According to Maemeko et al. (2018) research, female children's capacity to finish their education was negatively impacted by adolescent pregnancies. According to NISR (2019), which was cited in Bruce et al. (2020), 7% of girls in Rwanda between their teenage years of 15 and 19 have become mothers due to adolescent pregnancy, which is less compared to all for other Sub-Saharan African countries. Many scholars agree that premature pregnancy prevents many teens from completing their education, which causes school dropout. Her entire life may be entirely turned around when a female child who is meant to attend school gets pregnant, destroying all of her hopes and expectations (Alabi & Oni, 2017). According to Mukashema (2018), just 5% of females who fell pregnant while attending school had the opportunity to complete their education.

According to common perception, teen pregnancy is one that happens when a female child is under the age of 18 (Egbule & Ugoji, 2000). Teenage pregnancy is defined as a pregnancy that occurs in young girls between the ages of 13 and 19. It can be characterized as underage pregnancy, which occurs when a woman is between the ages of 13 and 19 (Alabi & Oni, 2017). Most of these births are unplanned and unwanted, and they occur as a result of a lack of knowledge about contraception, reproductive health, and the risks associated with pregnancy. When a young woman becomes pregnant while unmarried, it is an unwanted and unpleasant pregnancy. Generally speaking, it is understood to be a girl or lady who fell pregnant before reaching sexual maturity (Oguguo, 1996). Being pregnant is the condition in which a woman or girl has an embryo or fetus growing inside of her (Clementina, 2015). Typically, pregnancy results from sexual activity between a young girl in puberty and a boy who has reached puberty. Until the baby is delivered, the adolescent girl's menstrual cycle will often stop at this stage. Pregnancy is the result of young girls' eggs being fertilized by puberty-aged male sperm.

The majority of boys and girls start dating extremely young in order to have a boyfriend and girlfriend. Since some parents don't frown upon it, they view sex as cool, enjoyable, and accepted by society. These kids are frequently pressured by the young males to engage in early intercourse, which occasionally leads to adolescent pregnancy. Teen pregnancy is a significant social issue that is on the rise everywhere. Adolescent parents are defined as parents between the ages of 13 and 19 by Kost, Kathryn and Henshaw (2014). Maynard, mentioned in Alabi & Oni (2017), claims that adolescent pregnancy is an antisocial behaviour that results from a young girl's environment-related stress, dislike, unhappiness, and boredom. While teen pregnancy is unusually honoured in some countries or cultures, it is regarded as taboo in others. Adolescent pregnancies appear to be a social problem that Nigeria and numerous other countries are now dealing with. It appears that teenage pregnancies or sexual activity are on the rise in Nigeria (Alabi & Oni, 2017).

Unmarried pregnancies, which can lead to abortion, delivery, or even death, are a prominent effect of this rise in sexual activity among teenagers. Early marriage is accompanied by early sexual activity, which raises the likelihood of unintended pregnancies and, as a result, makes abortions more common as well as HIV and other STDs (Jensen & Thornton, 2003; Emeri et al., 2022). Young girls have a greater chance of maternal mortality as well as morbidity than females who marry after the age of 20, due to physiological differences, a lack of knowledge, low self-esteem, and a lack of awareness

Society and Teen Pregnancy

In specific social hierarchies, the prevalence of young pregnancies is significantly influenced by early marriage and shared leadership roles. For example, early pregnancy is widely seen as a blessing in several sub-Saharan African countries since it shows the young woman's productivity. Depending on how frequently young couples get pregnant while still in high school, different countries have different average marriage ages (Odiri et al., 2023). According to Scott (2001) pre-marital sex is accepted in society as normal, which has led to an increase in early births and teen pregnancy. Teen pregnancy among secondary school students is disturbingly on the rise and has practically become a part of life in Nigeria and other places. Teen pregnancy requires immediate treatment in order to be minimized or stopped due to the negative consequences (Egbule & Ugoji, 2000). Teenagers are indulging in indiscriminate premarital sex without regard for their safety or the consequences of their actions as a result of the boyfriend/girlfriend (lovers) relationship syndrome becoming so prevalent (Okonofua, 2005).

Early sex and teen pregnancy have the most effects on the girls' children. The youngsters' inability to regulate their emotional feelings causes them to rush into inappropriate sex in the hopes that no one would notice, which has an impact on both their well-being and the problem of uncontrollable many sex partners. Due to its sensitivity, schools and parents do not teach this group of students about sex education. Teenagers are frequently not taught about sex education because parents believe it is too delicate to be addressed both at home and in school.The majority of government family planning initiatives targeted solely married couples.The fact that female education is currently being hindered by teen or early pregnancies is alarming. Although many countries have advanced methods for combating it, pregnant adolescents in secondary schools continue to face the negative effects that come with being adolescent mothers, including family rejection and segregation, consequences of being adolescent mothers (medical problems and premature marriage), isolation from other students and separation from former friends, lack of community support, and misrepresentation (Bruce et al., 2020).

Reasons for Teenage Pregnancy

According to research studies, issues like sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, and drug addiction have an impact on teen pregnancy. It has been seen that teen pregnancy can occur as a result of accepting an unwanted gift from boys or men for sex. Some adults take advantage of young, vulnerable females who are underage by luring them into sexual encounters with them, which can occasionally result in an early pregnancy (Alabi & Oni, 2017). Okon (2005) asserts that the rise in teen pregnancies is caused by a number of well-known factors, including a lack of sex education, the invasion of pornographic resources, broken homes, parental neglect, a desire for materialism and wealth, a lack of knowledge about how a teen's body changes, a lack of employment, unfavourable peer groups, unfavourable parents, and cultural moral laxity.

Atteh (2011) outlined some of the personal factors, local environment, alcohol and drug use, yearning for independence, inadequate sex education, family, government, friends, and companions as well as the media. She also discussed the low level of religious commitment, inferiority complex, and contraceptive failure. Many parents are preoccupied, which prevents them from providing their early teens with the guidance and support they need to make good decisions about things like sex. The kid will undoubtedly turn to allies to make the decision about whether to have sex if she feels she can't talk to her family about it because they forbid it or because they can't be found which might result in falsehoods and probable teen pregnancy (Maemeko et al., 2018).

Some teenagers are frequently coerced into engaging in early sex when their parents are unable to provide for their basic needs and they are forced to submit to forces outside by being given trivial gifts and food items. Some people are frequently subjected to an attack when selling or trading on the street; all of these are effects of poverty. The earnings of parents constitute one of the variables that might influence a young woman's pregnancy. Teens' sexual behaviour is greatly impacted by their parents. A child's opinions, assistance and socioeconomic standing have a big influence on how they make choices (Odiri et al., 2023). with low earnings find it challenging to meet the demands of or care for their children. The parent's financial situation affects the development of their children. Children abandon school and participate in illicit behaviours when parents cannot afford to provide for, take care of, and afford their educational needs (Odiri et al., 2023).

Teenagers and adolescents are continuously exposed to knowledge about sexuality through advertising, soundtracks, and broadcast movies. The mass media has spread a variety of communications to teens, some of which might have been shown to affect their sexual behaviour, such as stimulating films, television viewing of sexually charged content, sex novels or illustrations, and pornographic films for teenagers (L'Engle et al., 2006; Alabi & Oni, 2017, Odiri et al., 2023). Teenagers who cannot comprehend sex will always become suddenly pregnant. Some youngsters don't understand the typical and usual viewpoints linked with experiencing sex; these adolescents could hear things they shouldn't. Teenagers face a variety of hazards, such as as unplanned pregnancies, AIDS and HIV infections, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and sexual assault, yet they lack the information to help them prepare for this challenging journey into adulthood. Young people typically lack the knowledge essential to decide on sexual activity that might change their life in an educated manner.

One of the factors contributing to teen pregnancies, according to Odiri et al. (2023) is an absence of sexual education. He also talked about how little knowledge pupils have about sex and sexuality in secondary schools. The teenagers need permission to talk about the way their bodies work, how to safeguard their bodies from harm, and the effects of engaging in a sexual activity pattern.

Effects of Adolescent Pregnancy on Academic Achievement

Teen pregnancy is said to be one reason why female students drop out of school (Gyan, 2013). Teenage pregnancy has caused the girl to miss numerous school events, including lessons, assignments, and assessments (Bhana et al., 2010). In his review, Kons et al. (2022) stated that teen pregnancy has a significant impact on the educational success of the female child and has led to the majority of pregnant school teenagers quitting school. According to a study by Bruce et al. (2020) pregnancy is the only reason that women drop out of school. Their research showed that pregnant women frequently missed class, which ultimately lowers their academic performance. It was revealed that after becoming pregnant, their performance drastically decreased. Because of the situation most likely attendance implications, according to Okonofua (2005), the adults are not pleased with it. Because they feel guilty and believe they are too young to be pregnant, these teen mothers avoid prenatal and postnatal care. Occasionally lead to resentment, sadness, illegal abortions, and the abandoning of infants.

According to many academics, many young people drop out of school as a result of being pregnant (Bruce et al., 2020). Only 5% of teenage girls who became pregnant while still enrolled in school, according to Haguruka (2018), continued to be students. Family dynamics, rejection, and child separation have been major obstacles that have an impact on pregnant girls' academic performance. Some people continue to believe that young pregnancies cannot be effectively accepted in their culture, and as a result, their families remove their daughters after they become pregnant or isolate them from other family members (Bruce et al., 2020). Schoolgirls who become pregnant are separated from their friends during pregnancy since their reasoning at the time is different (Ellis, 2018).

Many of their lifelong friends notice when they return to school after becoming pregnant that they do not want to associate with them or want to connect with them. They are defamed by their classmates because they are pregnant (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). These young ladies long for their friends and experience loneliness. Wilson (2003) argued that some of them have trouble making new friends due to a lack of time because a large portion of their time is spent outside of school looking for necessities of life because they are being rejected by their families and communities, which results in poor academic performance, absences from school activities, and school dropout. According to (Maemeko et al., 2018) when adolescent girls who want to have children become pregnant while they are still in school, their performance suffers in comparison to how well they did in school before the pregnancy. Additionally, compared to women who put off having children, adolescent mothers are less likely to attend school. Despite this, more young moms continue attending class after giving birth. The question of whether the young woman would have completed secondary school if she hadn't given birth is in any case unsatisfactory.The reasons why students drop out of school, such as poor academic performance, are also signs that they will become pregnant as adolescents.

Early motherhood significantly lowers young women's academic achievement. Pregnancy is the primary cause of young women leaving school on time because 70% of teenage mothers leave secondary school (Guttmacher, 2009). Only 30% of young moms finish their secondary education by the age of 30, compared to 76% of women who put off starting a family until they are at least 21. The implications of teen pregnancy are extensive. Yampolskaya et al. (2002) estimate that 60% of teen women who give birth to children living in poverty, disgrace, and shame, drop out of school, and occasionally even end up giving up on their hopes of pursuing higher goals. When compared to the children of young adult women in developed nations like Mexico, the United States, Austria, and Canada, research studies have shown that the children of teenage mothers have lower educational achievement, increased poverty levels, and lead an intolerable life as a result of teenage pregnancy (Yampolskaya et al., 2002). Over thirty-one per cent (31%) of girls in South Africa who are 18 years old have given birth at least once, according to research (Karra & lee, 2012). They claimed that this percentage demonstrated how teenage pregnancies are increasingly impeding girls' access to higher education. According to Marteleto et al. (2008), who were cited by Clementina (2015), one of the major barriers to women's educational success has been teenage pregnancies in schools. According to Chang'ach (2012), teenage pregnancies have long-term impacts on young mothers' ability to advance in their careers, which may lead to poverty extending from generation to generation.

Pregnancy as a student affects a girl's education and frequently shortens her future, according to Kanku (2010). A student who becomes pregnant early has disadvantages in her education and finances, which could delay her degree completion. They frequently miss school for a variety of pregnancy-related reasons (Rangiah et al., 2012). According to Sibeko (2012), the girl's academic performance decreased both during and after her pregnancy, compared to how she performed prior to getting pregnant.

Rationale of the Study

There is a notable lack of studies addressing this issue in the context of Nigerian secondary schools, particularly in areas like the Ethiopia East local government area in Delta state, despite the substantial body of research highlighting the effects of teen pregnancy on education. While earlier studies by authors like Clementina (2015), Sibeko (2012), and Mamhute (2011) have shed light on the difficulties pregnancy presents for female students, little is known about the dynamics of the Nigerian secondary school system, its policies, and the specific effects of teen pregnancy on academic goals in that country.

Research Aims and Questions

The aim of the study is to investigate: i) impact of teenage pregnancy on the girl students attending government secondary schools ii) the level of academic accomplishment of the pregnant teenagers at the public secondary schools. The Research questions are: i) what effect does a teenage pregnancy have on the girl students attending government secondary schools in the Ethiopia East local government area? and ii) What level of academic accomplishment do pregnant teenagers at the public secondary schools in the local government of Ethiopia East have?

METHODS

The study population made up of 800 teen mothers in Ethiopia East Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, who had dropped out of secondary school as a result of teen pregnancies. A sample of 200 teen mothers was chosen through simple random sampling. The instrument utilized to collect the data was structured questionnaire which was administered to the participants. The instrument was validated by three experts and its reliability was tested using Cronbach alpha which yielded .68. The participants were also interviewed; both instruments were constructed to gather information on the effects and problems they experience as teenage pregnant girls. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages. The study covers only teen pregnant women.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Research question 1

What effects does a teenage pregnancy have on the girl students attending government secondary schools in the Ethiopia East local government area? Table 1 showed that 130 (65%) of teen mothers had early marriages as a result of their pregnancies. As a result of their early pregnancy, 110 (55%) and 180 (90%) teen mothers acknowledged that they had faced rejection and discrimination from their families respectively. Based on the above data, 170 (85%) and 175 (87.5%) of the teen mothers acknowledged that their friends had already been taken away as a result of their teen pregnancy.

Research question 2

What level of academic accomplishment do pregnant teenagers at the public secondary schools in the local government of Ethiope East have? Table 2 revealed that 150 (75%) teenage moms had a poor academic performance as a result of their early pregnancies. Table 2 finding showed that 170 (85%) of teen mothers acknowledged they missed school activities due to pregnancy. 190 (95%) of the pregnant teens believed that their early pregnancy was the cause of their decision to leave school. 5% of young ladies who became pregnant while enrolled in school chose to continue their education.

Discussion

The findings revealed that the participants agreed that due to early pregnancy they got into early marriages. The findings showed that as result of teen pregnancy they were rejected and discriminated by their family members. The findings also revealed that as result of early pregnancy they were separated and isolated from their friends or peer group. In table 1 we discovered that majority of the participants agreed that having children while still a teenager leads to early marriage which was corroborated by Bruce et al. (2020) study, which claimed that having children while still a teenager leads to early marriage. From table 1, it revealed that majority of the participants agreed that they are faced with rejection and discrimination by their parents or families as result of teenage pregnancy which corroborated with the findings of Wilson (2003) and Bruce et al. (2020) Bruce

Table 1. Evaluation of teenage school dropped out Mothers due to Pregnancy

Statement	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Early marriage	130	65	70	35
Rejection by the family	110	55	90	45
Discrimination from the family	180	90	20	10
Separation from former friends at school	170	85	30	15
Isolation from the other students	175	87.5	25	12.5

Table 2. Assessment of Mothers about their Academic Attainment after Pregnancy

Statement	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Low performance due to pregnancy	150	75	50	25
Frequent absenteeism after pregnancy	170	85	30	15
Teenage pregnancy the cause of dropout	190	95	10	5

(2020), who claimed that teen pregnancy, had a negative effect on the families relationship. Also in table 1, it was indicated that 170 (85%) and 175 (87.5%) of the participants agreed that their friends and classmates were separated or isolated from them as a result of pregnancy, and became lonely and miss their friends which was in agreement with study of Ellis (2018), and Bruce (2020).

The findings showed that because of early pregnancy they could not do well as result had poor academic performance. The finding revealed that as result of early pregnancy they were not regular in classes therefore missed their classes. The findings also revealed that due to early pregnancy it caused them to drop out of school. Table 2 above revealed that majority of the participants agreed that as a result of their early pregnancies their academic performance was negatively affected which was supported by Maemeko et al. (2018) who claimed that when teens become pregnant while enrolled in school, their performance suffers compared to before the pregnancy. Also supported by Kons et al. (2022) findings who claimed that adolescent pregnancy, has an impact on a female child's academic performance. The study by Bhana (2010), which claimed that teenage pregnancy has caused the girl to miss many school events such as lessons, assignments, and tests, was corroborated by Table 2's finding that 170 (85%) of teen mothers acknowledged they missed school activities due to pregnancy. 190 (95%) of the pregnant teens believed that their early pregnancy was the cause of their decision to leave school, supporting Kons et al. (2022) claim that teen pregnancy led to a significant increase in the proportion of pregnant teenagers who left school. According to Bruce (2020) study, pregnancy is the single factor that causes females to leave school. Haguruka (2018) added evidence for this by noting that just 5% of young ladies who became pregnant while enrolled in school chose to continue their education.

Limitations and Suggestions

Despite being important, this study's focus on pregnant teen moms was limited by issues with participant involvement. Despite pledges of secrecy, participants' reluctance to discuss their pregnancies during their school years made administering questionnaires and conducting interviews difficult. Future research could broaden recruitment strategies by working with dependable people like school counselors, employ alternative data collection techniques like virtual interviews, and improve informed consent processes to build rapport and trust, addressing these limitations by fostering a more inclusive environment for insightful data on the effects of teen pregnancy on education.

CONCLUSION

We deduced from the literature review that adolescent pregnancy is a widespread problem that demands attention due to its effects on the education of girls. According to the study's findings, teen pregnancies have an impact on young girls' academic performance in public secondary schools. This is a serious issue that has to be addressed in order to prevent female dropout rates and enhance female students' academic performance in public secondary schools. Therefore, it is recommended that parents or guardians should constantly set aside time to talk with their kids about the implications of getting pregnant as a teen. Before entering a friendship that will lead to pregnancy, young females should think about the effects of adolescent pregnancy. Parents should try to give birth to number of children they can cater for and also should not neglect the education needs of the girl child.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Both authors agree the final version of this article and we want to disclose that there is no potential conflict of interest.

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