



EFFECTS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY ON THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING OF RURAL WOMEN IN ETCHE ETHNIC NATIONALITY, RIVERS STATE



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ABSTRACT

The study examined the impact of teenage pregnancy on the academic and socio-psychological well-being of rural women in Etche ethnic nationality, Rivers State. The objectives include: to ascertain the factors pre-disposing the girl-child to early motherhood, determine the impact of teenage pregnancy on the academic as well as the socio-psychological well-being of rural women in the study area. One hundred and twenty respondents were used for the study; data were collected with structured questionnaire and through scheduled interview and analysed using frequency and mean statistics. The findings established that negative influences from peers and environment, care free attitude of parents among others were factors that pre-dispose the girl-child to early motherhood. Also the effects include disruption of academic process, school drop-outs and poor public image. It was therefore, recommended that schools and homes should be more protective and shields the girl-child from negative influences. Education of the girl-child should be free and compulsory to enable teenage mothers go back to school after nursing her baby as many would love to do but for financial constraints.

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Contribution/ Originality

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript

1. INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy at whatever stage in life can be a life changing experience that cuts across boundaries of race, educational attainment and socio-economic status (Kost *et al.*, 2010). Motherhood places demands on one's life which were hitherto non-existent prior to the birth of the woman. When a girl that should be in school becomes pregnant, her entire life could be completely altered as her hopes and aspirations could be shattered.

Teenage parents are parents between the ages of 13 and 19 years (Kost *et al.*, 2010). Maynard (1997), believe that teenage pregnancy is a delinquent behavior resulting from stress, dislike, malice, boredom and unhappiness experienced by a teenage girl within her home environment. Other predisposing factors include alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, social and health problems among adolescents and sexual abuses resulting to unwanted sex and pregnancy (Gaby, 2012). Dilworth (2002) observed a relationship between risk behaviours (drinking, smoking and drugs) and likelihood of becoming pregnant among teenagers, while Singh and Daroch (2000) singled out poverty as both the causes and consequences of teen pregnancy and child bearing. S

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Kinby (2001) believes that victims of teenage pregnancy lacked information or probably were not adequately educated on safe-sex either by their parents, schools or development agencies that could have enabled them deal with friends who lure them into sex prematurely. Stressing that, children of single parents are more vulnerable to teenage pregnancy. Again exposure to most sexual content on television, sexuality in the media and pornographic and sex chart rooms by teenagers, could most likely tune them to engage in sexual activities (L'Engle *et al.*, 2006; Park, 2008). Acceptance of gift for sex and some adult deliberately taking advantage of poor teenagers, encouraging them into having sex were also noted as factors responsible for teenage pregnancy (UN, 2001).

The effect of teenage pregnancy not only on the teenage-mother, but also her child could be devastating. Hofforth *et al.* (2001) observed that most teenage mothers could not continue with their education. The observation confirms the fear expressed by Mollborn (2007) that if the teenage-mother eventually gets married, she becomes the primary care-taker and her chances of furthering her education decreases drastically. Day (2009) noted that the consequence extends to the children. According to them teenage mothers face hardships, which extends beyond birth and have higher risks which usually plagued by intellectual language and socio-emotional delays, resulting to their education not doing well in relation to child development and school readiness. Terry-Humen *et al.* (2005) noted problems in cognition, language communication and inter-personal skills among children of teenage mothers compared to those of older mothers. Studies by Hoffman (2006) and Haveman *et al.* (1997) show that less than 2% of young teen mothers of less than 18 years attain college degree before attaining 30 years of age and about 50% of them repeat a grade with lower performance on standardized tests. Teenage pregnancy is phenomenal and cuts across the globe. It is a socio-psychological problem found in both developed and developing societies. In Texas, United States of America 62 out of every 1000 births, were by teenage girls. However, Maynard (1997) and Wilson (1996) observed disproportionate concentration of teen parents in poor communities, characterized by inferior housing, high crime, poor schools and inadequate health care services. This points a clear picture of most rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, including the study area. Well-being is peace of mind, it is good health, it belongs to a community, it is safety, and it is freedom of choice and action. It is also dependable livelihood and a steady source of income it is food (UN, 2001). Therefore, the effects of teenage pregnancy on the educational advancement and social-psychological well-being of rural women is what the study is poised to determine.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to determine the effect of teenage pregnancy on the academic advancement and socio-psychological well-being of women in Etche ethnic nation of Rivers State.

Specifically, the objectives include:

- (i) ascertain the pre-disposing factors to teenage pregnancy among girls in Etche;
- (ii) determine the effect of teenage pregnancy on the academic advancement of women in Etche nation; and
- (iii) determine the effect of teenage pregnancy on the socio-psychological well-being of women in Etche ethnic nation.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Etche ethnic nationality. The ethnic group is politically partitioned into two Local Government Areas, namely Etche and Omuma respectively. It is located at the North East of Rivers State, with an annual rainfall of 2000-3000mm, during the wet season and relative high humidity of about 80% throughout the year. They are predominantly rural and agrarian in nature.

The respondents in the study were selected using multiple sampling techniques. Firstly, the study area was divided into six clustered (clans). Secondly, two communities were randomly selected from each clan, giving a total of twelve communities. Thirdly, ten women were systematically selected from each community, giving a total of 120 respondents which was used for the study. The systematic technique guaranteed that only victims, their mothers and female guidance were chosen for the study. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and interview

schedule for those who could not fill the questionnaire. Frequency counts and mean statistics were used to analyze the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table-1. Factors pre-disposing teenage girls to early pregnancy

S/N	Factor	Mean	Remark
1.	Parental negligence	3.42	Accept
2.	Peer pressure	3.44	Accept
3.	Alcohol and other substances abuse	3.23	Accept
4.	Poverty	3.81	Accept
5.	Exposure to obscene and pornographic images	3.43	Accept
6.	Negative influences within the environment	2.72	Accept
7.	Rape and other sexual abuses	2.83	Accept
8.	Poor mentoring	2.91	Accept
9.	Negative use of social media	3.30	Accept
10.	Single parenting and domestic violence	3.23	Accept
11.	Child/Teenage Marriages	2.33	Reject
12.	Child labour/ trafficking	2.24	Reject
13.	Unhealthy adventures	3.32	Accept
14.	Enticement by adult males	2.92	Accept
15.	Poor Knowledge of sex and sexuality	3.84	Accept

Source: Field study, 2014 Mean Value > 2.50 Accept
Mean Value < 2.50 Reject

Data on Table 1 show respondents opinion of factors predisposing teenage pregnancy among women in the study area. The following factors were considered causes of the vulnerability of teenagers to early pregnancy. They include; negligence on the part of parents, peer grown influence, alcohol and other substances abuse, poverty and exposure to obscene and pornographic images, with mean values of 3.42, 3.44, 3.23, 3.81 and 3.43 respectively. Also considered were negative home and school environment influences, rape and other sexual abuses, poor mentorship, negative or wrong use of social media and single parenting, with mean values of 2.72, 2.83, 2.91, 3.30 and 3.23, respectively. Others were unhealthy adventure (3.33), enticement by adult males (2.94) and poor knowledge of sex and sexuality (3.82). While child labour/trafficking (2.32) and child/teenage marriage (2.34) were not considered as a predisposing factor to teenage pregnancy. The findings disagreed with [Maynard \(1997\)](#). Maynard reported that stress; dislike, malice, boredom and unhappiness experienced by teenager within her home environment could lead to delinquent behaviours including teenage pregnancy, but confirmed ([Gaby, 2012](#)) linked teenage pregnancy with alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, social and health problems among others. The findings also buttressed those of [Singh and Daroch \(2000\)](#); [Park \(2008\)](#) and [Kinby \(2001\)](#) on issues of peer pressure, single parenting and exposure to sexual content on electronic or print media. However, teenage marriage, child labour and trafficking were not considered strong factors to induce teenage pregnancy. The respondents maintained that child trafficking is still alien to them as mothers do not give out their children to strangers for whatever reason.

Table-2. Effects of teenage pregnancy on educational advancement on women

S/N	Factor	Mean	Remark
1.	Reduces career opportunities	3.62	Accept
2.	Decrease chances of furthering education	3.61	Accept
3.	Poor academic achievement	3.72	Accept
4.	Majority could drop out school	3.91	Accept
5.	Victim's children also not perform well academically.	3.53	Accept
6.	Victims spend longer time in school	4.00	Accept
7.	Increases the number of illiterate women and children.	3.82	Accept

Source: Field study, 2014 Mean Value > 2.50 Accept Mean Value < 2.50 Reject

Table 2 shows respondents opinion on the effects of teenage pregnancy on the academic advancement of women in the study area. The effects include reduction in career opportunities of women, decreased chances of furthering their education poor academic achievement and major inability of majority of the victims to complete their studies with mean values of 3.62, 3.61, 3.72, and 3.91, respectively. Others include poor academic achievement of victims', children compared with those of adult parents, tendency of victims spending longer time in school and increase in the number of illiterate women and children, with mean values of 3.53, 4.00 and 3.82, respectively. The findings corroborate those of the [National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy \(2004\)](#); [Perper *et al.* \(2010\)](#) and [Terry-Humen *et al.* \(2005\)](#) respectively. The National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy, observed a correlation between earlier motherhood and failure to complete high school. Just as [Perper *et al.*](#) observed inability of teenage mothers to attain higher education, [Terry-Humen](#) noted that children of teenage mothers perform below average when child development and school readiness were compared. The results were not surprising as when teenagers become pregnant, they become primary caretaker which invariably affects their educational attainment ([Mollborn, 2007](#)).

Table-3. Effects of teenage pregnancy on the socio-psychological well-being

S/N	Factor	Mean	Remark
1.	Increased gender discrimination	3.30	Accept
2.	Reduce victims to the last rung of social ladder.	3.12	Accept
3.	Victim may suffer social ostracism.	3.03	Accept
4.	Result to depression and emotional trauma.	3.61	Accept
5.	Early motherhood could be stressful	3.42	Accept
6.	Lead to destitution	2.81	Accept
7.	Reduce self esteem	3.33	Accept
8.	May cause serious health problem	3.42	Accept
9.	May create animosity between families.	3.51	Accept
10.	Result to fear and deprivation	3.53	Accept
11.	Victim may be confused in life	3.24	Accept
12.	Frustration and disappointment	3.13	Accept
13.	Victims may be forced into early marriage.	3.61	Accept

Source: Field study 2014
 Mean Value > 2.50 Accept
 Mean Value < 2.50 Reject

Data on Table 3 show respondents opinion on the effects of teenage pregnancy on the socio-psychological well-being of teenage mothers. The following factors were accepted as possible effects; increased gender discrimination, damage to the social status of the victim, rejection and abandonment by their loved ones and peers, depression and emotional trauma and stress, with mean values of 3.30, 3.12, 3.03, 3.61 and 3.42, respectively. Also it was agreed that teenage pregnancy may lead to destitutions (2.81), reduce the victim's self esteem (3.33), result to serious health challenges (3.42) and create serious animosity between families (3.51). Other effects include fear and deprivation, life long confusion, frustration and disappointment of oneself and loved ones and early marriage, with the mean values of 3.53, 3.24, 3.13 and 3.61, respectively.

These findings were obvious and commonly experienced in many patriarchal societies in Sub-Saharan Africa. In such societies, educating a woman is considered a waste of resources among the poor and illiterate families. Early pregnancy only helped to increase this belied and deny other girl children the opportunity of acquiring western education. Many victims experienced regret and disappointment, reporting the psychological and emotional trauma they went through while the pregnancy lasted, even after delivery. According to them, the most painful experience was the rejection by relatives and peers, most of them never wanted them come closer. Worse still, was the denial of responsibility by the male counterparts. Majority of them were also teenagers, this pitch the two families into legal tussle resulting to long lasting acrimony, and eventual forced marriage between two under aged persons. The stress associated with pregnancy, depression and emotional trauma, sense of rejection by friends of relatives, lowered self-

esteem, fear of the unknown in future and deprivation were some of the challenges faced by teenage mothers which negatively affect their socio-psychological well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

Teenage pregnancy effect the educational attainment and socio- psychological well-being of the affect teenage girl. To reduce its effect it was therefore recommended:

1. That the home and school environments should be protective enough to shield the children from exposure to negative influences, by parents and teachers been concerned about the well-being of the girl child through education about sex and sexuality and the danger inherent.
2. The education of the girl child should be made free and compulsory at the basic education level. Free basic education for the girls will increase school enrolment of teenagers who hitherto were out of school as a result of exorbitant fees.
3. Social welfare agencies (public and private) should redouble efforts in educating, counseling and rehabilitation of victims. By these efforts many of them could be encouraged to continue their education of engage in other meaningful activities to avoid early destitution and other life threatening experiences resulting from early motherhood.

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