

IMPACT OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND EARLY MARRIAGE ON PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING OF PREGNANT TEENAGERS IN LAGOS STATE: SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS.

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Abstract

The study examined the impact of teenage pregnancy and early marriage on psychosocial well-being of pregnant teenagers in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. The study was guided by four formulated hypotheses. The descriptive research design was adopted in the study. One hundred and fifty (150) participants (pregnant teenagers) were selected through purposive sampling technique as sample size for the study. A self-developed questionnaire titled “Impact of Teenage Pregnancy and Early Marriage on the Psychosocial Well-being of Pregnant Teenagers Questionnaire (ITPEMPWPTQ)” was used for data collection. The results of the study showed that teenage pregnancy has significant impact on depression trauma among pregnant teenagers, teenage pregnancy has significant impact on social relationships among pregnant teenagers, teenage pregnancy has significant impact on social stigma of pregnant teenagers and early marriage has significant impact on emotional stability among pregnant teenagers. It was therefore, recommended that the government and other stakeholders in women affairs and development should strive to create conducive enabling, socio-political and economic conditions which will discourage teenage pregnancy and early marriage. Also, the traditional belief that the position of a woman is in the kitchen should be done away with. All hands should be on deck to ensure that teenage pregnancy and early marriage become reduced if not completely eradicated in the society since it is not only the girl-child that suffers but the society at large.

Key Words: *Teenage Pregnancy, Early Marriage, Psychosocial Well-being*

Introduction

The issue of pregnancies and early marriage among teenage girls seem to be one key social problem facing not only Nigeria, but also several other nations of the world. Surveys by investigators such as Briggs (2009), Gyepi-Garbrah (2011), Onuzulike (2003) and others revealed that teenagers become sexually active at an early age with corresponding high fertility. Teenage sexual activities in Nigeria also tend to be on the increase (Nwosu, 2008). A major consequence of this increase in sexual activities among teenagers is out of wedlock pregnancies that may result in abortion, childbirth or even death. Teenage is often used interchangeably with adolescence. World Health Organization – WHO (2007) opined that, teenage is the period between 10 and 19 years when the secondary sex characteristics appear. Turner and Helms (2011) reported that the teen years fall between the ages of 13 and 19 years. Pregnancy as defined by Gordon (2003) is a condition in which a female carries in her womb, the young before it is born. Similarly, Skyes (2010) defined pregnancy as the condition of carrying a developing offering in the uterus. A look at the two definitions of pregnancy above could reveal that pregnancy is meant for procreation and continuity in the human society. Nwosu (2008) is of the opinion that when

pregnancy occurs at the appropriate time and in wedlock, it is a welcome development, but if a teenager engages in pre-marital sex that may result in pregnancy, she is putting herself in a responsibility that she is inadequately prepared for. Teenage pregnancy therefore means conception by girls between the ages of 13 and 19 years. According to Allan Guttmacher Institute – (AGI) (2008), teenage pregnancy is an undesirable phenomenon. Onuzulike (2003) supported this when she observed that teenage pregnancy interferes with expectation regarding education, self-realization and economic prosperity among the affected teenagers. 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, 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, 2010).

Teenage pregnancy according to Kost, (2010) is therefore a major concern to world communities. Teenage pregnancy has attracted a great deal of concern and attention from religious leaders, policymakers, and social scientists, particularly in the developed and less developed countries especially in Nigeria. The continuing apprehension about teenage pregnancy is based on the perceived impact it can have on the lives of the girls and their children as a woman must be physically and medically matured before procreating. Some teenagers die or lose their babies in the process of giving birth because the body of a teenage girl is not always mature enough to handle pregnancy and the stress involved. While teenage pregnancy is seen as aberration in some society it is highly celebrated in some other societies as it is in line with their culture and societal norms.

Chigona and Chetty (2011) contend that teenage pregnancy has militated against the educational success of girls and that though the girls are allowed to return to school after becoming mothers, they face many challenges in trying to balance motherhood and the demands of school. O'Hollaran (2012), adolescent mothers who stay in school are almost as likely to graduate (73 per cent) as women who do not become mothers while in high school (77 per cent) and children of teen parents perform worse in school than children of older parents. Most teenagers face years of regret for their decisions to have sex, their potential as young adults is never realized, and they become a burden on their families and society because their poor performance at school placed a limit on their educational and economic stability (Gallop, 2010). When pregnancy interrupts an adolescent's education, a history of poor academic performance usually exists (Jonathan, 2007). Jonathan (2007) further stated that having repeat births before 18 years of age has a negative effect on high school performance and completion rate.

Early marriage, or child marriage, is defined as the marriage or union between two people in which one or both parties are younger than 18 years of age (Bayisenge, 2010). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2004) recognizes the right to "free and full" consent to a marriage, acknowledging that consent cannot be "free and full" when one of the individuals involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner. Nonetheless, in many low- and middle-income countries, particularly in poorer rural areas, girls are often committed to an arranged marriage without their knowledge or consent. Throughout the world, marriage is regarded as a moment of celebration and a milestone in adult life. Sadly, the practice of early marriage gives no such cause for celebration. All too often, the imposition of a marriage partner upon a child means that a girl or boy's childhood is cut short and their fundamental rights are compromised. Young girls lose their youth and are required to take on roles for which they are not psychologically or physically prepared. Many have no choice about the timing of marriage or their partner. Some are forced into marriage, while others are too young to make an informed decision. Premature marriage deprives them of the opportunity for personal development as

well as their rights to full reproductive health and wellbeing, education, and participation in civic life (UNICEF, 2011).

Marriage before 18 is a violation of human rights, compromising the development of girls and often resulting in early pregnancy and social isolation, with little education and poor vocational training reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty. Ambert (2012) recognized that marriage before the age of 18 years old should not be permitted since children do not have the 'full maturity and capacity to act. Ambert stated that once married, the girl assumes the multiple roles of wife, daughter-in-law, housekeeper, caretaker and a mother. This transition can be psychologically and emotionally stressful for a young girl. Early marriage has profound impact of divorce and unhappiness in marriage (Akpan, 2013). Child marriage is now widely recognized as a violation of child right as she loses her basic rights to health, education, development and equality.

For many young girls in developing countries, marriage is perceived as a means of securing their future and protecting them (Akpan, 2013). Their families force girls into marriage while they are still children in the hope that marriage will benefit them both financially and socially. On the contrary, early marriage violates the rights of children with often more negative consequences on the girls than the boys. They are required to do a disproportionate amount of domestic chores, which includes new roles and responsibilities as wives and mothers. Additionally, girls are made to be responsible for the care and welfare of future generations while still children themselves. Young mothers with no decision-making powers, restricted mobility and no economic resources are likely to transmit this vulnerability to their offsprings.

Early marriage means early sexual activity, which increases the ratios of unwanted pregnancies and hence leading towards frequent abortions, HIV and other sexually transmitted disease (Jacubowski, 2012). Underdeveloped physiology, lack of information, low self-esteem and less awareness is leading young females to the high risk of maternal mortality and morbidity as compared to the females who are married after the age of 20. Physiological aggression from any of the partner may lead to psychological aggression making the relation between the two persons worst which for sure affects the girl first as she is in her teens and male is mature. (Murphy, 2014). Health problems related to pregnancies are high and are found to be the root of obstetric labor, obstetric fistula and other complications. If the newborns survive it may have low birth weight and the female itself may prone to anemia, and due to poor developed body, large number of child bearing years there are more chances of miscarriages, heart diseases, low body weight, malnutrition, atherosclerotic risk and hormonal imbalances. Girls aged between 10-14 are five times more likely to die in pregnancies as compared to other females married in appropriate age (Ahmed, 2013).

Jacobowski (2012) stated that early marriage not only exploits women's physical well-being but it also affects their mental peace and if not taken care of, these females may tend to attempt suicide. Marriage at early age appear fascinating to such teenagers as they think of love and good care but they do not know the responsibilities which they have to shoulder after marriage; often girls are abandoned to work load and bad family approach towards them. Marriage at young age is not supposed favourable to girl's protection and other economic reasons as teenage is for education, maturity, grooming oneself and an age for learning various life experiences.

In developing countries such as Nigeria, teenage pregnancies are associated with many social issues, including lower educational levels, higher rates of poverty, and other poorer "life outcomes" in children of teenage mothers. Teenage pregnancy in developing countries is usually outside of marriage and carries a social stigma in many communities and cultures (Ukekwe, 2011). Okereke, Uwakwe and Nwamuo (2013) stated that discrimination against the pregnant teenagers and the violation of her rights as this often result in less access for girls to education, nutrition and physical and mental health care.

Such girls are also often being subjected to various forms of cultural, social, sexual and economic exploitation and to violence. Against this background, this study examined impact of teenage pregnancy and early marriage on the psychological and social well-being of pregnant teenagers in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Statement of the Problem

Teenage motherhood and early marriage are not new phenomena in human societies, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Across the ages and cultures, the phenomenon of “babies making babies” has sufficed. Through sexual assaults and the obnoxious practice of early marriage, increasing number of girls are being ushered into early motherhood through teenage pregnancies with little considerations for the impact this may have on their psychosocial wellbeing. It appears women, who become teenage mothers and wives, when compared to those who delay childbearing and marriage past the teen years, are more likely to be psychologically and socially disadvantaged. Young girls are married when they are still children and hence, they are forced to go through the difficulties and consequences of early pregnancies and other responsibilities. In most cases, they do not develop properly; physically and psychologically, and may not as well have access to education and are more prone to diseases arising from pregnancies and isolation. Nonetheless, pregnancy is usually welcome when it occurs at the appropriate time such as a mature age and in wedlock. On the contrary, it is most unwelcome when it occurs outside of wedlock or during the teen years, when the individual should be acquiring skills in formal or non-formal settings. The implications these have for the girl-child is a concern. Furthermore, various reasons have been adduced for the existence of teenage pregnancy and early marriage while they still persist despite the efforts being made by the relevant stakeholders to address these social problems. This study hence investigated impact of teenage pregnancy and early marriage on psychosocial well-being of pregnant teenagers in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Purpose of the Study

This main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of teenage pregnancy and early marriage on psychosocial well-being of pregnant teenagers in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. The study specifically aims:

1. To determine the influence of teenage pregnancy on depression trauma among pregnant teenagers.
2. To examine the influence of teenage pregnancy on social relationships among pregnant teenagers.
3. To examine the influence of teenage pregnancy on social stigma of pregnant teenagers.
4. To find out the influence of early marriage on emotional stability among pregnant teenagers.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. Teenage pregnancy does not have any significant influence on depression trauma among pregnant teenagers.
2. Teenage pregnancy has no significant influence on social relationships among pregnant teenagers
3. Teenage pregnancy has no significant influence on social stigma of pregnant teenagers.
4. Early marriage does not have any significant influence on emotional stability among pregnant teenagers.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design while the population comprised all pregnant teenagers in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State. A sample size 150 participants was drawn from the study population. Ten health centres were selected by simple random sampling technique representing 83% of the comprehensive health centres in the study location. A sample of 15 participants was selected from each of the health centres using purposive sampling technique (since the study has a target population which is pregnant teenagers). Thus, a total of one hundred and fifty (150) participants were used for the study. The participants were pregnant teenagers within the age range of 13 to 19 years. A researcher constructed questionnaire titled “Impact of Teenage Pregnancy and Early Marriage on the Psychological Well-being of Pregnant Teenagers Questionnaire (ITPEMPWPTQ)” was used in data collection. The validity of the instrument was established through experts’ opinion while the reliability was determined through a pilot study by test retest. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained indicating a high reliability. The instrument was hence used for the study. The questionnaires were administered to the participants at the study locations and retrieved upon completion. The formulated hypotheses were analysed using Chi-square (χ^2) statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis One: Teenage pregnancy has no significant impact on depression trauma among pregnant teenagers.

Table 1: Chi-square (χ^2) analysis of impact of teenage pregnancy on depression trauma among pregnant teenagers

Variables	N	LS	Df	χ^2_{cal}	χ^2_{tab}	Remark	Decision
Teenage pregnancy	150	0.05	12	48.39	21.03	Significant	H ₀₁ Rejected
Depression trauma							

Evidence from Table 1 indicates that χ^2 calculated value of 48.39 was greater than χ^2 table value of 21.03 at 0.05 level of significance given 12 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that teenage pregnancy has significant impact on depression trauma among pregnant teenagers.

Hypothesis Two: Teenage pregnancy does not have any significant impact on social relationships among pregnant teenagers

Table 2: Chi-square (χ^2) analysis of impact of teenage pregnancy on social relationships among pregnant teenagers

Variables	N	LS	Df	χ^2_{cal}	χ^2_{tab}	Remark	Decision
Teenage pregnancy	150	0.05	12	51.65	21.03	Significant	H ₀₂ Rejected
Social relationships							

Evidence from Table 2 indicates that χ^2 calculated value of 51.65 was greater than χ^2 table value of 21.03 at 0.05 level of significance given 12 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that teenage pregnancy has significant impact on social relationships among pregnant teenagers.

Hypothesis Three: Teenage pregnancy does not have any significant impact on social stigma of pregnant teenagers.

Table 3: Chi-square (χ^2) analysis of impact of teenage pregnancy on social stigma among pregnant teenagers

Variables	N	LS	Df	χ^2_{cal}	χ^2_{tab}	Remark	Decision
Teenage pregnancy	150	0.05	12	44.06	21.03	Significant	H ₀₃ Rejected
Social stigma							

Evidence from Table 3 indicates that χ^2 calculated value of 44.06 was greater than χ^2 table value of 21.03 at 0.05 level of significance given 12 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that teenage pregnancy has significant impact on social stigma among pregnant teenagers.

Hypothesis Four: Early marriage does not have any significant impact on emotional stability among pregnant teenagers.

Table 4: Chi-square (χ^2) analysis of impact of early marriage on emotional stability among pregnant teenagers

Variables	N	LS	Df	χ^2_{cal}	χ^2_{tab}	Remark	Decision
Early marriage	150	0.05	12	42.77	21.03	Significant	H ₀₄ Rejected
Emotional stability							

Evidence from Table 4 indicates that χ^2 calculated value of 42.77 was greater than χ^2 table value of 21.03 at 0.05 level of significance given 12 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This shows that early marriage has significant impact on emotional stability among pregnant teenagers.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one states that teenage pregnancy does not have any significant impact on depression trauma among pregnant teenagers. This hypothesis was rejected as the result of the hypothesis revealed that teenage pregnancy has significant impact on depression trauma among pregnant teenagers. The reason for this finding may be due to the fact that pregnant adolescents tend to be critical of themselves, have poor self-esteem, may become negative, pessimistic, and feel unloved. This finding supports Marcus, Flynn, Blow & Barry (2013) who reported depression as one of the that there are emotional reactions in adolescent pregnancy. Pregnant adolescents tend to be critical of themselves, have poor self-esteem, may become negative, pessimistic, and feel unloved. Also, Mollborn and Morningstar (2013) opined that young mothers, in particular, are at risk for elevated prevalence of depressive symptoms, and rates of postpartum depression among adolescent mothers may be double that of older mothers. Kekesi's (2013) study reported having experienced a lot of ill treatment from their family members, especially their parents who felt betrayed by their children falling pregnant. Participants indicated that they were no longer treated like other members of the family, as was the case before pregnancy. Pregnancy made some of the participants to feel rejected by friends. It is these feelings which may result in severe psychological conditions like depression.

Hypothesis two states that teenage pregnancy does not have any significant impact on social relationships among pregnant teenagers. Hypothesis two was rejected as the result of the hypothesis revealed that teenage pregnancy has significant impact on social relationships among pregnant

teenagers. A number of studies have indicated that becoming a mother during adolescence interferes with the manner in which the teenager in question relates to other people. A study by De Visser and Le Roux (2013) found that many teenage mothers felt that their pregnancy upset their parents. Other studies also found that fathers tended to be angered by their daughters' pregnancies. In some cases, this anger would even lead to the fathers threatening to chase their teenage daughters out of the house (Parekh and De la Rey, 2012). In a study by Kaplan (2013), some teenage mothers indicated that mothers were resentful toward them. Some of the teenage mothers even contemplated moving out of the house as a way to resolve the problems that they had with mothers. Apart from the problematic relationships that teenage mothers develop with significant others, there are also indications to suggest that adolescent motherhood may lead to clashes between the teenager's parents as they try to come to terms with the situation. Ritcher and Mlambo's (2015) study also perceived their pregnancies to be a crisis for themselves and their families. It was also reported that having a child did not raise one's social status; instead this experience was perceived as a disgrace in the eyes of parents and the community. Egbule and Ugoji (2010) asserted that the social results of teenage pregnancy are unfortunate.

Hypothesis three states that teenage pregnancy does not have any significant impact on social stigma among pregnant teenagers. The hypothesis was rejected as the result of the hypothesis showed that teenage pregnancy has significant impact on social stigma among pregnant teenagers. The reason for this may be that the obviousness of the pregnancy makes it easy for mockers to attach mocking names, insults as well as particular perception to the individual accruing to stigmatizing. This finding corroborates Wiemann, Rickert, Berenson and Volk (2015) who reported the feelings of stigmatization as prevalent among pregnant adolescents. In their study they expressed that two out of five adolescents (39.1%) reported feeling stigmatized by their pregnancy. Also, Ritcher and Mlambo (2015) reported that significant proportions of pregnant adolescents feel stigmatized by pregnancy and are at increased risk of social isolation and abuse leading to educational disruption. These young women may then need special attention during and after pregnancy to develop concrete strategies to care for themselves and their children.

Hypothesis four states that early marriage does not have any significant impact on emotional stability among pregnant teenagers. Hypothesis four was rejected as the result of the hypothesis revealed that early marriage has significant impact on emotional stability among pregnant teenagers. This is in line with Blacburn and Bessell (2011) assertion that the younger the child, the greater the danger that marriage poses to their health, well-being and emotional stability. Mahtab (2010) reported that 17% of girls in least developed countries are married by their fifteenth birthday and consequently suffer a range of acute negative emotional, physical and psychological impacts due to their immaturity. According to Anderson (2007), girls younger than the age of 15 are at a much higher risk of experiencing complications during sexual intercourse, pregnancy and childbirth due to their underdeveloped bone structure, pelvis and reproductive organs, which in turn affect their emotional stabilities. Hutchison and McNal (2010) also noted that early marriage contributes to a series of negative consequences both for young girls and the society in which they live. It is a violation of human rights in general and of girl's rights in particular. For both girls and boys, early marriage has profound physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional impacts.

Conclusion

This study has shown that teenage pregnancy and early marriage is an accepted cultural practice in many countries especially in developing countries with more prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa. Teenage pregnancy and early marriage can violate the rights of girls. The numerous severe consequences that result from the practice of teenage pregnancy and early marriage as identified remain a concern. Teenage pregnancy and early marriage is intrinsically linked to depression trauma, poor social relationship, social stigma and low emotional stability. The study concluded that there is significant impact of teenage pregnancy and early marriage on psychological and social well-being of pregnant teenagers. From the findings of the study, suitable recommendations have been provided which when duly implemented would help in addressing the problem of teenage pregnancy and early marriage in our society.

Sociological Implications.

The family is the oldest human institution and its social functions are critical to the growth and survival of every society. Socialization of societal members of which the family is a primary agent is central to individual's contribution to societal functioning towards a healthier society. Marriage is a legal social provision through which families are instituted while pregnancies are pathways through which the family delivers on its social mandate of procreation for societal continuity. However, teenage pregnancy and early marriage have been shown in this study to be problems having detrimental outcomes on the girl-child. Specifically, teenage pregnancy and early marriage impact the psychosocial variable of social relationships, social stigma, emotional stability and depression trauma among pregnant teenagers.

Women and girls with compromised psychosocial well-being are less able to effectively deliver on their social functions be it in the family, the workplace or other societal spheres. Teenage pregnancy and early marriage stand in the way of achieving the 5th sustainable development goal which is on gender equity and equality. The girl-child whose childhood had been stolen by teenage pregnancy and early marriage will be unable to compete effectively with her male counterparts in all indices of human contributions to national developments. The world has come a long way in the 21st century! Every society including Nigeria must continue to evolve and tease out all impediments to the girl-child effective functioning and contributions to national development such as teenage pregnancy and early marriage. To this end, this study has proffered some solutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need to intensify social awareness on the detrimental effects of early marriage and teenage pregnancy on the girl-child; her health, education and contributions to nation building.
2. The government and other stakeholders in women affairs and development should strive to create conducive enabling, socio-political and economic conditions which will discourage teenage pregnancy and early marriage and the traditional belief that the position of a woman is in the kitchen.
3. Enactment of laws regulating marriage in the country will be of tremendous help in the fight against early marriage because almost the majority of perpetrators are practicing it (early marriage) under the influence of ignorance. Making laws and sensitizing the public on the effects of early marriage on girls' child and the entire society will bring it (early marriage) to an end.

4. More effort should be given to providing social support structures for pregnant teenagers both at home and in the learning environment. Facilities like student counselling centres and peer support groups could probably be made available to this group of individuals. There is need to establish effective guidance counselling programmes in schools right from primary school so as to encourage child education.
5. There is a need to develop programmes that will empower teenagers to cope with the challenges that they face during their pregnancy. Developers of such intervention programmes will need to involve the teenagers themselves if such interventions are to be effective.
6. Religious leaders should tackle the problem of teenage unwanted pregnancies and early marriage through moral instructions in churches and mosques.

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