



## DETERMINANTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY AMONGST TEENAGERS IN BENIN CITY: A REFLECTIVE DISCOURSE

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### Abstract

The incidence and prevalence of pregnancy among girls between 13 and 19 years in Benin City has become quite alarming and worrisome to parents and the government, especially as it has continued to defy efforts aimed at stemming the tide. The study therefore sought to investigate the determinants and social implication of this social problem in Benin City. The descriptive survey design which involved the administration of self-designed questionnaire to 800 respondents was adopted while the simple percentage and frequency distribution was used to analyse the data collected from the study. The social learning theory was used as the theoretical foundation for the study. The study reveals that a combination of multifaceted causative factors such as sexual and drug abuse, poverty, media influence, peer pressure and parental negligence were the factors responsible for its continued high incidence. The study further revealed that teenage pregnancy had very severe implications on the health and social wellbeing of the teens and society. It therefore recommends that parents, religious bodies, the school, media and government should be alive to their various responsibilities in ensuring that this social problem is curbed.

**Keywords:** Sexual Activities, Teenagers, Teenage Pregnancy, Poverty, Social Wellbeing.

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### Introduction

When a married woman's pregnancy test result is positive, it elicits joy, and the foetus is heartily welcome. The reverse is however the case when a teenager's pregnancy test result is positive. The reason for this is not unconnected with its attendant challenges and social consequences. This challenge is however not limited to developing countries but also include developed ones. The World Health Organisation (2014) has reported that teenage pregnancy is still the leading contributor to maternal and child mortality and the cycle of ill-health and poverty. It further notes that about 16 million females between 11-19 give birth each year. Unfortunately, the rate of teenage pregnancy is higher in Africa than the rest of the world. UNFPA (2012) insists that although there has been a slight decline in teenage pregnancy in developing countries, in the last twenty years, Africa still tops the list of continents with the highest number of teenage pregnancies in the world.

Of the about 580 million teenage girls in the world as at 2013, four out of five of them are resident in

developing nations (UNPF, 2013). Teenage pregnancy is of grave concern to the Nigeria public because it has the highest population in Africa. Evidence exists to show that about 44.5 million females between 10-20 years get pregnant and this actually makes up about one-third of the total population. (Onwumere, 2019). It must however be pointed out here that the rate of teenage pregnancy varies from state to state and nation to nation (Akanbi, Adetoro & Okoya 2013). In Nigeria, the prevalence and incidence of teenage pregnancy is far higher in the Northern part of the country than the Southern region. That is ostensibly, due to the phenomenon of child marriage in the region. The reverse is the case in the East and South of Nigeria (Envuladu, Anke, Zwanikkan & Zoaka, 2017). Although, recent studies conducted by Akanbi, Ope, Adeloye, Amoo, Iruonagbe & Omojola (2021) indicates that the incidence of teenage pregnancy occasioned by child marriage is still a common practice in Northern Nigeria in spite of the public outcry against it. Teenage pregnancy which is a condition in which an under-aged usually between 13-19 years becomes pregnant is a global



issue with major concern to the world communities. America as developed as it has the highest occurrence of teenage pregnancies with about 1, 000, 000 teenagers getting pregnant annually (Alabi & Oni, 2017). This high rate of teenage pregnancy was further aggravated by the closure of educational institutions across the globe due largely to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study by Mutaka (2021) shows that 20% of schools recorded between 1-3 females not returning to college because they have been put in the family way. Due however to poor record keeping, accurate statistics cannot be put forward in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

One of the major challenges facing Nigeria as a country today has to do with teenage pregnancy which has been further aggravated as a result of the thriving child marriage phenomenon practiced mainly in Northern Nigeria. This social menace removes the child from the teenager and instead makes her perform adult functions such as sexual intimacy, procreation and nursing or raising babies. (Brown, 2013). The alarming and unabated soaring of the social malaise of teenage pregnancy has remained a major source of worry to the, government family and religious bodies particularly those of the Christian faith (Ayuba & Gani, 2012). The concern expressed by stakeholders in relation to teenage pregnancy stems from the general consensus in literature that females who become pregnant and give birth as teenagers face increased risk of pregnancy related complications and even death. This is besides the social and economic implications of teenage pregnancy which are grave and life-long (Kassa, Arowojolu, Odukogbe & Yalaw, 2018). Pradham, Wynter & Fisher (2018) argued that the above social implications could trigger a cycle of poverty, health, school dropout, unemployment and low social status in life.

As frightening as these consequences of teenage pregnancy appears, one is taken aback by the persistent rise in the occurrence of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria. Scholars are not agreed on the main causative or motivating factor responsible for the continued increase in teenage

pregnancy. Although they are quick to attribute the persistence in the ugly social malaise to sexual abuse and activity of the teenagers, lack of parental guidance, poverty, peer pressure and new media influence. (Hashmi 2013, Chiazor, Ozoya, Idowu, Uduma, & Osagiede, 2017, Mangatu & Kisimbi, 2019 & Quinlivan, Tan, Steel & Black, 2004).

Statistics reveal that although the high incidence of teenage pregnancy is fast becoming a thing of the past in developed nations with occurrence as low as 3% in Sweden for instance (Gilda, Finer, Bankole, Eilers & Singh, 2015), the same cannot be said of Nigeria with about 22.9% of the world's teenage pregnancies in 2010. (National Population Commission, 2010 & WHO, 2010) It must be stated here however, that in spite of these research, works on the causative factors influencing teenage pregnancy and the programmatic efforts to reduce the rate with specific reference to Benin City have been minimal. This is thus the gap that this study was designed to fill.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions were formulated and these guide the study. They include;

1. What are the causative factors responsible for the persistent increase in teenage pregnancy in Benin City?
2. What are the social consequences of teenage pregnancy in Benin City?

### **Objectives of Study**

The research was primarily designed to investigate the determinants and implications of pregnancy amongst teenagers in Benin City. The specific objectives however are to:

1. Identify the causative factors responsible for the persistent increase in teenage pregnancy in Benin City.
2. Examine the social consequences of teenage pregnancy in Benin City.

### **Brief Review of Related Literature**

There is a plethora of literature on teenage pregnancy as constituting both health and social issues (Anayochukwu, 2022) albeit majority of



these are by foreign scholars. This social phenomenon takes place among all racial, cultural and social-economic groups (Mathewos & Mekuria, 2018) and we dare say in all societies irrespective of the development they have attained. Although, it is a global concern, the occurrence of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria is however alarming as Isiugo-Abanihe (2011) reports that about one million teenage girls get impregnated annually.

For one thing, most teenage pregnancies are generally unplanned for as pregnant teenagers are singles, immature to raise a child save for those pregnancies that occur due to child marriage. A teenager is anyone between the ages of 13-19 years. It therefore follows that a teenage pregnancy connotes pregnancy of any girl between the age of 13-19 years. In other words, conception by a woman before attaining the age of 20 years irrespective of whether the pregnancy resulted in childbirth or was removed through abortion (Fagbamigbe, Afolabi & Yusuf, 2019).

### **Causative Factors of Teenage Pregnancy**

#### **Lack of Parental Guidance**

Children are gifts from God (Holy Bible), and parents are supposed to nurture, guide, protect and teach the societal values that will make them function well in society. Unfortunately, many families shirk these timeless responsibilities as they delegate their house helps to stand in their stead. There is communication problem between parents and children at home, and the probability of a teen getting pregnant if there is little or no communication and guidance cannot be overstressed (Saika, 2019; Quintiran, Tan -Steele & Blacky, 2004).

#### **Peer Pressure**

Authors are generally agreed that peer pressure remains one of the forces that continues to destroy teenagers across the universe (Hashimi, 2013). Most times, young teenagers tend to bond and relate with themselves, as they seek their peers as set standards of human behaviour while serving as role models. The attitude, action, inaction and behavioural patterns of teens are greatly influenced by their peers (Widman, Choukas-

Bradely, Helms, Prinstain, 2016). This implies that if a peer that is held in high esteem amongst the group approves sexual activity as normal, all other peers will automatically toe the line.

#### **Undue Media Influence**

Chiazor et al (2017) have observed that, due to modernization and the world now being a global village, the notion of sexuality has significantly shifted from what it used to be. In the years gone by, sexuality was only permitted within marriage, pregnancy outside of wedlock was frowned at, particularly amongst Africans. The reverse appears to be the case today, as premarital sex, once seen as an abomination is encouraged by some members of society through the instrumentality of social media.

#### **Poverty**

In Nigeria today, most households can barely feed due to the harsh economic reality. The poor economic situation of most homes has unfortunately impacted on the general wellbeing and education of teenagers. A lot of teenagers have taken to doing menial jobs, hawking of goods and the likes for survival and to support the family. Unfortunately, this exposes them to rapists and men of low virtues who take advantages of their vulnerability to impregnate them. Put simply, female teenagers from poor homes are more susceptible to chances of being impregnated (Mangatu & Kisimbii, 2019 & Amoran, 2012).

#### **Sexual and Drug Abuse**

Cases of Rape and sexual violence perpetrated against teens exist some teenagers are unable to resist or refuse sex due to widespread nature of sexual violence. Elfeinbein and Felice (2011) observed that about one third of females in some nations have admitted that their first sexual experience was through rape or coercion. Besides sexual abuse, drug use and abuse have been noted as contributing factors to teenage pregnancy, as drugs tend to remove inhibition to unintended sexual acts. The study by Abalkhailli (1995) further lends credence to this.



### **Social Consequences of Teenage Pregnancy**

#### **Medical Issues**

There is no gainsaying the fact that teenage pregnancy could result in health complication. For one thing, most pregnancies by teenagers are often unplanned or unintended. In a bid to removing the unwanted fetus, the teenage girl could go to quack medical personnel to procure abortion. Some teenage girls either have their womb perforated or died in the course of procuring the abortion. Some others have had complications at child birth due to inability to push or loss of blood due to inability for the placenta to be delivered. Some of the teenage girls are anaemic during pregnancy due to poor nutrition occasioned by the harsh economic reality of the time. It is for this reason that scholars have insisted that teenage pregnancy has serious health implications. Factors related to nutrition that place the adolescent at risk during pregnancy include low pre pregnancy weight, insufficient weight gain, obesity, existing medical complications, dietary faddism, pica, and low income or ethnic variances. (Block, Saltzman & Block, 1981)

#### **Incomplete Education**

It is a truism that when a teenage girl is put in the family way, she naturally will drop out of school to avoid the shame usually associated with such incidence. Besides, the first trimester of pregnancy is usually associated with early morning sickness, and no school authority upon detection of its student been pregnant will retain her in the school. In most cases, once a teenager drops out of school, it is often a near impossibility to return to the same school after giving birth to the baby. The implication of this simply put is that in Nigeria teenage pregnancy and motherhood marks the end of school attendance (Gyan, 2013).

#### **Economic Hardship**

One of the implications of teenage pregnancy is that it leads to economic hardship on the part of the teenage girl and her parents. The parents have to contend not only with their child, but also with their grandchild in term of proving for their wellbeing. The teenage girl could invariably end up a pauper as she has no skill or an educational

certificate to work with, and this makes her a dependent (Chirozva, 2014)

#### **Child Abandonment**

Most teenage pregnancies are usually unintended and unwanted. Some of the pregnancies could be as a result of sexual cohesion or rape. At other times, if the teenage girl is sexually promiscuous, she may find it difficult to identify the man who has put her in the family way. No wonder cases of abandonment of newborn babies is rampant in Benin city. A teenager who cannot fend for herself is most likely to dump or abandon an unwanted child (Guttermacher Institute, 1999) got out of wedlock.

#### **Stigmatization and Drug Misuse**

Incidence like teenage pregnancy is not a thing to be proud of, neither is it a thing that glorify the name of a family. Instead, such occurrence not only bring shame but also disrepute to the family name and integrity. In Africa, once a family has been stigmatized with such negative occurrence it is often difficult to wear out. Another latent function of teenage pregnancy is that it often leads to misuse of drugs. In a bid to get rid of unwanted pregnancy, some teenagers misuse and abuse drugs, and regrettably, some of them have had to stay on such drugs even after the sad occurrence (Guttermacher Institute, 1999)

#### **Theoretical Orientation**

This study adopted the social learning theory in its explanation of the topic under focus. Bandura (1977) who is closely associated with the theory held that the theory stresses on the significance of the social context, and argued that people learn by observing the action of others. He further noted that the teenagers imitate adults' actions that they see in contrived social settings. Akers & Sellers (2004) have identified differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement and imitation as the four basic premises upon which learning theory is anchored.

In relation to the topic under focus, the theory can be effectively used to understand the prevalence and incidence of teenage pregnancy. Teens who are in close contact with adults who engage in





sexual activities are most likely to imitate and follow in the steps of such adults by engaging in sexual acts without knowing the full implication thereof. Teenagers who have observed adults involved in sexual activities, coming home with goodies and appearing as the happening “babes” would admire them, seeing only the benefits and ignoring the latent effect which is pregnancy. Furthermore, the friends a teenager keeps also determines her involvement in sexual acts and pregnancy. The social circle communicates values and behaviour to be adopted and if the value is that of sexual activeness and even having babies out of marriage, the teen would do so.

### Methods and Materials

The study employed the descriptive survey research design to explore the determinants and social implication of teenage pregnancy in Benin City. Benin City is one of the oldest and 4<sup>th</sup> largest cities in Nigeria, located in the south western part of the country, about 40 miles from the Gulf of Guinea. It is the capital of Edo State with about 1,841,000 million people of which about 136,450 are teenagers (National Population Commission, 2022).

A total of 800 respondents consisting of 200 female teenagers, 200 social/welfare officers, 200 parents and 200 officials of the ministry of women affairs and social development were sampled and administered the research instrument with the assistance of three trained research assistants. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted with some of the respondents selected using the systematic random sampling method.

The instrument employed to gather data from the respondents was the questionnaire which reliability was obtained by a pilot test that showed a consistency of 0.94 while it was face validated before its administration. The instrument was self-designed and consisted of two sections; A and B. Section A dealt with the demographic variables of respondents while Section B focused on the determinants and social implications of teenage pregnancy. Data generated from the study was analysed using simple percentages and frequency distribution.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

This section is devoted to data presentation and discussion of findings which are done in line with the specific objectives of the study.

**Table 1:** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
10-19	200	25
20-29	100	13
30-39	200	25
40-49	250	31
50 and above	50	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	780	98
Islam	20	2
A.T.R.	-	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational status</b>		
No formal education	20	2
Students (colleges)	200	25
Secondary	180	23
Tertiary	400	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	450	56
Single	350	44
Divorced	-	-
Separated	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Students	200	25
Public servants	500	62
Business	100	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2022

Table 1 indicates that respondents within the ages of 10-19 years were 200 (25%), those between 20-29 years were 100 (13%), while those within the ages of 30-39 were 200 (25%), 40-49 years were 250 (31%) and those who were 50 years and above were 50 (6%). This indicates that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 40-49 years. On religion, 780 (98) of the participants were Christians, Muslims accounted for 20 (2%) while there were no African traditional religion practitioners. On educational status, 20 (2%) of the participants had no formal education, 200 (25%) were students in colleges, 180 (23%) had



secondary, while 400 (50%) had tertiary education.

On marital status, 450 (56%) of the respondents were married, 350 (44%) were single and none were neither divorced nor separated. As for occupation, 200 (25%) of the participants were schooling, 500 (62%) were in public service while 100 (13%) were in business.

**Table 2:** Percentage Score of Reasons for teenage pregnancy

What are the reasons for teenage pregnancy?	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sexual abuse	80	10
Lack of parental guidance	100	13
Media influence	100	13
Peer pressure	80	10
Social media influence	50	6
Drug abuse	50	6
Poverty	100	13
All of the above	240	30
None of the above	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2022

Table 2 indicates that 10% of the surveyed participants affirmed that sexual abuse is a reason for teenage pregnancy, 13% mentioned lack of parental guidance as a reason, media influence accounted for 13%, while peer pressure was 10%, social media influence and drug abuse summed up to 6% respectively, while 30% highlighted all the above reasons. This finding is further given credence to by the works of Saika (2019), Hashimi (2013), Chiazor et al (2017), Mangatu & Kisimbii, (2019) & Amoran (2012) and Elfeinbein and Felice (2011) where they argued that lack of parental guidance, peer pressure, media influence, poverty, sexual and drug abuse respectively were some of the determinants of teenage pregnancy in Benin City.

**Table 3:** Percentage score of social consequences of teenage pregnancy

What are social the consequences of teenage pregnancy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Medical issues	100	13
Incomplete education	80	10
Economic hardship	70	9
Child abandonment	100	13
Social stigmatization	50	6
Drug misuse	50	6
All of the above	350	44
None of the above	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field survey, 2022

Table 3 indicates that 13% of the surveyed participants affirmed that medical issues are social consequences of teenage pregnancy, 10% mentioned incomplete education, economic hardship had 9%, 13% stated child abandonment while social stigmatization and drug abuse accounted for 6% respectively, and 44% highlighted all the above reasons. This finding is further given credence to by the works of Block, Saltzman & Block (1981), Gyan (2013), Chirozva (2014) and Guttermacher Institute (1999) where they argued that health issues, incomplete education, economic hardship, child abandonment, stigmatization and drug abuse respectively were some of the social implications of teenage pregnancy in Benin City.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study explored the determinants and social implications of teenage pregnancy in Benin City and found out that there is a high incidence of the social malaise due mainly to multifaceted causative factors. The study equally revealed that teenage pregnancy beside being a social problem is also a public health matter which has been of great concern and worry to stakeholders. The worries stem from the fact that, the social consequences of teenage pregnancy are grave and, in some cases, life threatening. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- There is the need for parents, schools, religious bodies and the press, to embark on aggressive campaign and enlightenment of teenagers on the ills of teenage pregnancy. This will likely free teens from the unwholesome grips of peer pressure and media influence.
- Government should cushion the harsh economic situation of its citizens by putting in place palliative measures, as well as increasing the salaries and wages of its working population. This will in no small measure, reduce the effect of poverty on teenage pregnancy, as teens ill not have to go hawking in order to support their parents



and get pregnant in the process.

- As a high percentage of teenage pregnancy is due to sexual coercion and abuse, government should endeavour to mete out appropriate legal sanctions against adults who abuse and coerce teenagers into sexual acts, whether it results in pregnancy or not. This will serve as deterrent to potential abusers and rapists.
- Government should take decisive actions against hospitals and patent chemist stores where teenagers go to procure abortion and drugs. This is against the background of abortion being illegal in Nigeria. Besides, easy accessibility to abortion services would remain an aid to teenage pregnancy and sexual activities. Contraceptive drugs should not be sold across the counter to teenagers, so as to discourage their involvement in illicit sex and the attendant repercussion-pregnancy.

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