

Teenage Pregnancy as A Major Challenge in The Educational System in Developing Countries

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Abstract- *The issue of teenage pregnancy has across the years had a negative impact on the learning and educational systems for most of the developing countries around the world. Girls with promising futures have had their educational life cut short due to teenage pregnancies. Failure by the governments in some of the developing nations, to implement the right measures aimed at dealing with the issue has led to a significant rise in the cases of teenage pregnancy. According to the study, various measures should be implemented in dealing with social vice. Firstly, the inclusion of sex education in the curriculums for the developing nations could play a critical role in the lowering of the cases of teenage pregnancy. The promotion of awareness to communities on the negative effects that are associated with some of the backward cultural practices is another strategy that can be embraced for dealing with the social vice. The secondary data collection method has been applied in the research and data was gathered from secondary sources, mainly journals. The expected outcomes for the study included a negative correlation between teenage pregnancy and the academic performance for the victims; failures by some of the schools to effectively attain learning goals; and an increase in the cases of girls dropping out of school. The study concluded that teenage pregnancy is a major challenge in the developing nation's education system. The issue is directly linked with high school drop-out rates among the girls and low academic performance.*

Indexed Terms- *Teenage pregnancy, Educational system, Developing country, Academic performance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In most of the developing countries globally, teenage pregnancy remains one of the challenges that affect the educational systems. Some of the main causes of teenage pregnancy in the developing countries include

weak policies and measures aimed at dealing with the vice, uncivilised cultural beliefs, limited access to sex education, and high illiteracy levels. It is clear that because of teenage pregnancy, the educational system is impacted greatly. Educational policies in developing countries need to be more considerate regarding this issue. Any new curricula should prioritize sex education and awareness needs to be promoted about the negative effects associated with teenage pregnancy. This research is significant as it discusses the challenges facing developing nations regarding teenage pregnancy and provides potential solutions to mitigate these issues.

II. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Teenage pregnancy is one of the significant challenges that impact the learning system in both advanced and emerging economies. Most of the girls affected drop out of school. According to Güneş (2016, p.260), early pregnancies have a psychological impact on teenage girls. Failure to implement corrective measures for dealing with the same has in the past contributed to the rise of the cases worldwide. Effects of the vice on an educational system include the segregation of victims, a decline in academic performance, and an increase in dropouts. Compared to advanced nations that schools in developing countries are worst affected by issues of teenage pregnancy. There are many reasons to rise in cases of early pregnancy. Firstly, the high poverty rates are to blame for the rapid rise in cases of early pregnancy. Schools provide an effective environment that can help in addressing the issue. However, obstacles such as culture and lack of adequate resources limit the educational facilities in most of the developing economies from mitigating the social vice.

III. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of this study is to analyse the impact of teenage pregnancy on the educational system. It will

also investigate the effects of peer pressure, social media, culture, low levels of education, and shortage of access to reproductive health information and sex education on teenage pregnancy in schools in developing nations. Finally, this study will investigate and analyse the measures that can be applied to the extenuation of the problem.

IV. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the modern world, teenage pregnancy remains one of the main educational problems that affect the performance of learners. Dixon (2014, p.39) posits that limited or lack of sex education plays a major role in the rise of the vice around the world. Other causes of teenage pregnancy include high illiteracy levels in societies and backward cultural practices. The study utilised the information from the research to identify further factors that contribute to an increase in teenage pregnancy in developing countries. Upon completion of the study, there was a greater understanding of the issue and its effects on learners, the system, and society as a whole in the emerging economies. The paper also provided a better insight into the measures that can be applied for the extenuation of teenage pregnancy.

V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the major challenges facing developing countries regarding teenage pregnancy?
2. What are some of the solutions that can be implemented to mitigate this issue?

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

- **Teenage Pregnancy in the Educational System**
Teenage pregnancy is an educational problem that affects both advanced and developing economies. In the emerging countries, premature child-bearing and the eventual dropping out of the school of the learners is an issue that bedevils the education sector as a whole. Developed economies such as the UK and US have implemented various strategies that have been critical in the lowering of the percentage of teenage pregnancy as well as learners that drop out of school due to the vice. Huang (2017) highlights that estimated 20,000 girls under the age of 18 give birth on a daily

basis in the emerging nations. According to Huang (2017), complications that are related to teenage pregnancy are the leading causes of death among adolescents between the ages of 15 to 19 in the developing economies. Various factors contributed to half of these teenage pregnancies that are unintended. They include low levels of education, customs that allow the girls to marry at an early age, and the lack of access to reproductive and sex education resources. Cultural backgrounds in some of the schools may hinder teachers from effectively teaching students about the negative impacts of engaging in premarital sex. For instance, in some of the cultures in Kenya, Botswana, and Zimbabwe, girls are married at an early age, and it makes it hard for the educational sectors to address the challenge of teenage pregnancy effectively.

- **Factors Influencing Teenage Pregnancy in Developing Countries**

Compared to the advanced nations, most of the developing countries struggle with high rates of teenage pregnancy, and in return, it has a negative impact on the affected learners. Spandana, Reddy, and Giri (2016, p.9460) argue that the vice can be addressed as long as the right measures are put in place. In the developing economies, various factors contribute to the ascent in the cases of the teenage pregnancy that in turn lead to the dropouts. Poverty is one of the main issues that contribute to high teenage pregnancy rates in developing economies. An estimated 45% of households in Zimbabwe are categorised as living below the poverty line (Hadley, 2014, p.35). Such families are faced with the challenge of taking their children to school and expose their daughters to early child-bearing. High poverty rates in the developing economies, according to Hadley (2014, p.35), are to blame for a rapid rise in the social issue of teenage pregnancy. Wall-Wieler, Roos, and Nickel (2016) state that addressing the challenge of poverty is the first step in dealing with the same.

Low levels of education are another factor that contributes to the rise in teenage pregnancy in developing economies. Girls in some of the countries in Africa are unable to attend school because of the distance of schools from home and cultural beliefs. Consequently, it hinders them from having access to information on reproductive health and the negative

effects of teenage pregnancy. MacLure et al. (2012, p.455) claim that low literacy levels are the reason why some households stick to cultures that allow their daughters to be married at an early age. Such cultures lead to high rates of teenage pregnancy, particularly in developing countries. When young girls are forced out of school to marry at an early age, their educational goals are halted. Low-level education also serves as a trigger to peer pressure among the young girls that engage in premarital sex. Exposure to teenage pregnancy among girls that are vulnerable to peer pressure is high.

Backward cultures are also linked to high pregnancy rates in developing economies. Some communities in Africa emphasise on the need for the male children to have education while the female children are denied education and are instead married off for dowry. Such mentalities and outdated cultures contribute to an increase in teenage pregnancy in developing countries. Inasmuch as the government in collaboration with the non-governmental organisations in some of these countries has been on the forefront in trying to eradicate the culture, the practices are still on-going. Dixon (2014, p.42) argues that teaching students in schools about the negative impacts of their cultures can help in the eradication of the effects of traditions on high teenage pregnancy education.

Another cause of the ascent in teenage pregnancy in most of the developing countries is the minimal or lack of access to sex education and information on reproductive health. In the emerging economies, the awareness is not as prevalent as in the advanced nations, and it exposes the young girls to premature pregnancy. The school curricula in most of these schools hardly offer sex education or reproductive health education to the students. In the process, it denies the adolescent girls and boys an understanding of the impacts that come along with engaging in premarital sex (Greslé-Favier 2013, p.612). The lack of sex education in schools makes young girls vulnerable to early marriages. High illiteracy rates in the communities also hinder parent from communicating with their daughters about significances of education and the consequences of teenage pregnancies. Gyan (2013) looks at teenage pregnancy as a vice that can be addressed through sex education and promotional awareness on the need for the support of healthy

morals in the community. MacLure et al. (2012, p.460) support Gyan's (2013) argument by stipulating that lack of educational resources and particularly limited sex education is the reason behind the rise in teenage pregnancies in areas that are poverty-stricken in Africa.

- Impacts of Teenage Pregnancy on the Educational System

Teenage pregnancy is an issue that has a negative impact on the educational system around the world. In developing countries, the former is one of the main causes of school dropout among adolescent girls. According to Quist-Adade (2017, p.11), when a young girl is impregnated, chances that she will continue with education are usually slim. In some of the schools in Africa, for instance, stigma starts with top leadership. The principal or headmaster may send the learner home without having to identify the person that impregnated her and whether the sexual activity that led to the teenage pregnancy was forced or consensual. Quist-Adade (2017, p.13) states that the victimisation of pregnant female learners forces them out of school. High school dropouts in Tanzania have across the years been attributed to teenage pregnancies (Ingham 2012, p.256). Other than pregnancy-related issues, some of the learners develop a negative attitude to schooling after birth, further eliminating their educational goals.

Another significant impact of teenage pregnancy on education is that it lowers academic performance for the affected learners. Maemeko, Nkengbeza, and Chokomosi (2018, p.90) claim that in most cases, the academic performance of adolescent mothers that opt to continue with their schooling lowers significantly. Wall-Wieler, Roos, and Nickel (2016) support Maemeko, Nkengbeza, and Chokomosi's (2018, p.90) argument by stating that when a young learner gives birth, she is forced to balance between taking care of her child and her education. In most cases, her academic performance is affected negatively, as evidenced by her poor grades. Consistent poor grades in schools may also force the young girls to give up with their education and pursue early marriages.

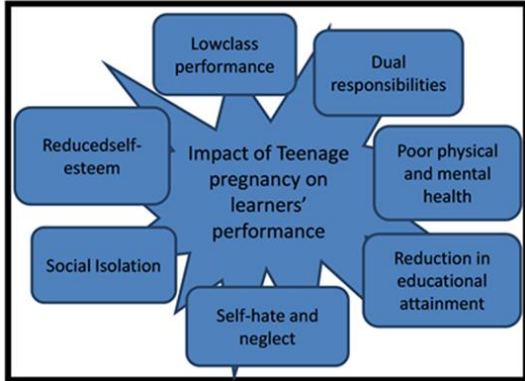


Figure 1: Effects of teenage pregnancy on learners
(Source: Wall-Wieler, Roos, and Nickel 2016)

- Current solutions for dealing with teenage pregnancy

The inclusion of sex education is one of the measures that are applicable in most of the developing countries that are aimed at dealing with the challenge of teenage pregnancy. In developing nations such as Kenya and Nigeria, the solution has been effective in lowering cases of pregnancy among teenage girls. According to Ingham (2012, p.255), sex education equips learners with knowledge on the negative effects that come along with engaging in sexual activities at an early age. The governments and stakeholders in the education sector have to continue ensuring that sex education is deeply inscribed in the school curricula, and this is because of its high success rates.

- Recommendations for the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy

Schools are categorised as safe environments that can help in the prevention and eradication of teenage pregnancy. Emphasis on the need for sex education from as low as third grade is one of the strategies that can be used for addressing the problem. Brindis (2017, p.1) states that teachers need to be on the forefront in enlightening learners about safe sex, abstinence, and the negative effects that may come along with engaging in premarital sex. Such talks or sex education have to be open, and the teachers need to allow the learners to ask any questions. The approach equips youngsters with knowledge about teenage pregnancy and its impacts, and in the process, it helps in the prevention of the problem occurrence.

The governments in most developing countries are in the process of putting reforms in the educational sector. In Kenya, for instance, primary school education is free, and it provides low-income families with the opportunity of taking their children to school. Cantlay (2015, p.524) states that free primary education in institutions is beneficial in that it helps in the eradication of early marriages and teenage pregnancies. Furstenberg (2016, p.5) argues that governments and non-governmental organisations need to promote awareness in areas that have in the past reported high rates of teenage pregnancies about the positive impacts of parents taking children to school.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology section focuses on the techniques used for the collection of data. Most of the developing countries are faced with the challenges of teenage pregnancy in the educational system. In this research, only the secondary data collection methods were used (Schindler and Cooper, 2019, pp.34). The reason for ruling out primary collection methods is because of the difficulties that would come along with trying to get participants from the developing countries. Additionally, it would have been expensive for the researcher to travel to the developing countries to gather information on teenage pregnancy.

Various factors led to the selection of the secondary data collection method for this research paper. Firstly, it was easy for the researcher to access books, journals, or government documents and many other sources. It helps researcher in consider different author perspective on a particular topic. Secondly, the internet has articles and statistical data on teenage pregnancy in the developing countries. According to respective researcher adopted secondary method for gather data or information about the teenage pregnancy a major challenge in the educational system in the developing counties. It is so because through this method they able to collect data through existing documents or articles or books.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

- Teenage pregnancy is a social vice that has negative psychological effects on the affected girls.
- Developing countries are known for their high rates of teenage pregnancy and this is one of the main challenges of their educational systems. In countries such as Kenya, the issue of teenage pregnancy has been on the rise during the past few months, and this has been attributed to the fact that children are not in schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The vice of teenage pregnancy is directly linked to the weak measures by the government in dealing with it. Weak government policies create a platform that can allow for the perpetrators of teenage pregnancy to go unpunished.
- Most of the teenage pregnant girls are forced to drop out of school to give birth and take care of their children. When such girls return to school, it may be hard for them to catch-up with their classmates in terms of the content that is covered in school. Consequently, this may have a negative impact on their academic performance.
- Depression is another negative effect that is associated with teenage pregnancy in developing nations. Victims of teenage pregnancy are psychologically tormented and this may result in depression.

RESULTS

- Teenage pregnancy results in high dropout rates and low academic performance in developing countries.
- Pregnant teens face various psychological implications, such as depression and anguish from society. It is difficult for them to return to their studies and results in them relinquishing their academic goals.
- When compared to developed countries, the education system of developing countries does not have sufficient measures in place to combat the issue of teenage pregnancy.
- Backward cultures, limited sex education in the school curriculums, and weak policies are among

the main causes of teenage pregnancies in most of the developing nations.

RECOMMENDATION

- The introduction of sex education in curriculums can equip learners with knowledge on the negative effects of teenage pregnancy and how to prevent the social vice.
- Governments in the developing nations need to be at the forefront in the implementation of policies that can effectively address the teenage pregnancy vice.
- The government, in collaboration with teenage pregnancy activists in the developing nations, need to promote awareness to communities that still hold onto their backward cultures. Convincing such communities to shun their uncivilised cultural beliefs such as early marriages can create a platform for dealing with teenage pregnancy.
- Parents should be actively involved in educating the teenagers about the consequences of this vice, taking more responsibility at home, and taking extra care when looking after children at the teenage level.

CONCLUSION

Teenage pregnancy is one of the leading educational problems around the world and particularly in developing countries. Some of the significant factors contributing to adolescent pregnancy in the emerging economies include high poverty rates, access to social media among the teenage girls and boys, low educational levels, and limited emphasis on the essence of sex education in schools. Impacts of the menace on the educational system include high school dropout rates, deterioration of the performance for the learners after giving birth, and the decline in the quality of education as a whole. Measures such as the inclusion of sex education in the school's curriculum, the reforms, and raising awareness on the negative impacts of premarital sex can help in addressing the said problem. Based on the above research, teenage pregnancy is an issue that needs to be given attention by all stakeholders in the educational sector.

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