

Teenage Pregnancy And Development: A Case Of Primary And Secondary Schools In Mbire District, Mashonaland Central, Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

This study explores the impact of teenage pregnancy on development in Mbire district, Zimbabwe. The research reveals that teenage pregnancy has severe developmental consequences, including increased school dropouts, perturbed illiteracy rates, decreased standards of living, increased sexually transmitted infections, and heightened risk of cervical cancer. The study identifies individual level factors, marriage and law, social/interpersonal factors, and structural factors as major drivers of teenage pregnancy and development. The research concludes that teenage pregnancy has different forms of impact, including psychological, medical, economical, educational, and social impacts. The study recommended that the government should ensure that girls have access to quality education and opportunities for personal and economic development, construct more schools in the district thereby increasing access to education and reducing the risk of teenage pregnancy and development, harmonize laws that prohibit child marriage and ensure that they are enforced effectively, censor media and technology to protect teenagers from harmful content and provide safety nets for OVC, including educational assistance, healthcare, and economic support.

Key words: Teenage Pregnancy, Adolescents, Teenagers, Developmental Consequences, Primary and Secondary Schools

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I. Introduction

Teenage pregnancy and development are two interrelated concepts that have enormous negative consequences on people's standards of living, exposure to greater risk of socio-economic problems, greater likelihood of health and perinatal deaths, poor academic performance, and high illiteracy levels (WHO, 2011; Lloyd, 2019). Mbire district has the highest teenage pregnancy rate of 60% and developmental deficiency in literacy, Human Development Index, and income levels (Zimstat, 2022). Therefore, the study aims to explore the impact of teenage pregnancy and development on the Mbire community, examine the association between social/cultural factors and incidences of teenage pregnancy and development, investigate the drivers of teenage pregnancy and development, and examine the role played by parents in addressing teenage pregnancy and development. According to UNICEF (2014), the prevalence of teenage pregnancy is a significant concern in developing countries, where girls are often forced into early marriages and childbirth. This phenomenon has severe consequences on the girl child's education, health, and economic well-being (UNICEF, 2014).

II. Related Literature Review

The literature review highlights the complexity of teenage pregnancy and development, and the various factors contributing to the phenomenon. Individual level factors, such as lack of knowledge on contraceptives, risky sexual behaviours, and low educational attainment, contribute to teenage pregnancy and development (Shrestha, 2012; Mchunu et al., 2012). Marriage and law, social/interpersonal factors, and structural factors also play a significant role in shaping the practice of teenage pregnancy and development (Wadesango et al., 2011; Chikwinya, 2016). According to Lloyd (2019), teenagers enrolled in school are less likely to have ever had sex than those not enrolled. A study conducted in South Africa revealed that adolescents who engage in unprotected sex do not think about the risks involved (Mchunu et al., 2012). The review highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing teenage pregnancy and development. The complex interplay between individual, social, and structural factors necessitates a multi-faceted approach to mitigate the consequences of teenage pregnancy (WHO, 2011). Furthermore, the literature suggests that cultural and traditional practices, such as child marriage and lobola, contribute to the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and development (Wadesango et al., 2011). Therefore, it is essential to address these practices through awareness campaigns and policy

interventions. The prevalence of teenage pregnancy and development is a significant concern in developing countries, where girls are often forced into early marriages and childbirth (UNICEF, 2014). This phenomenon has severe consequences on the girl child's education, health, and economic well-being (UNICEF, 2014). A study conducted in Zimbabwe revealed that the prevalence of teenage pregnancy is highest in Mashonaland Central province, where 25% of girls aged 15-19 years have begun childbearing (Zimstat, 2022). The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address the specific needs of girls in this region.

Theoretical Framework and its Applicability to the Study

The study is built on two theoretical frameworks: Social Learning Theory and Social Norms Theory. The Social Learning Theory suggests that behaviours are learned and influenced by social context, including the media (Bandura, 1977). The Social Norms Theory explains that the practice of teenage pregnancy and development is a collective of individual behaviours influenced by what people in a community do and perceive to be the correct path (Bicchieri, 2006).

III. Research Methodology

The study used a qualitative research design to explore the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy and development. The sampling method used was purposive sampling, and the sample size was 15 participants, including teenage girls, parents, District Schools Inspector (DSI), Guidance and Counselling (G&C) teachers, and chiefs. The data was collected using interviews and focus group discussions. This qualitative data was thematically analysed.

IV. Research Findings And Analysis

The study reveals that teenage pregnancy has severe developmental consequences, including increased school dropouts, perturbed illiteracy rates, decreased standards of living, increased sexually transmitted infections, and heightened risk of cervical cancer. The drivers of teenage pregnancy and development include economic status, orphanhood status and vulnerabilities, media and technology, risky sexual behaviours, traditional/cultural practices. The study's findings suggest that teenage pregnancy has different forms of impact, including psychological, medical, economical, educational, and social impacts. The research highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing teenage pregnancy and development, including strengthening Guidance and Counselling and NGO educational assistance programs, provision of girls' education rights and opportunities, construction of more schools in the district, harmonization of laws that prohibit child marriage, censorship of media and technology, provision of safety nets for OVC, and conducting awareness campaigns against detrimental cultural and traditional practices. The study reveals that economic status is a significant driver of teenage pregnancy and development, with many girls from poor households being forced into early marriages or engaging in transactional sex for economic survival (Mushwana et al., 2015). This finding is consistent with previous research that highlights the link between poverty and teenage pregnancy (UNICEF, 2014).

The study also highlights the role of media and technology in shaping teenage girls' behaviours and attitudes towards sex and relationships. The easy access to social media and the internet has exposed many teenagers to explicit content and risky behaviours, increasing their vulnerability to teenage pregnancy and development (Shrestha, 2012). The research also underscores the importance of parent-child communication in preventing teenage pregnancy and development. Many participants highlighted the lack of open and honest communication between parents and children as a significant factor contributing to teenage pregnancy (Mchunu et al., 2012). This finding suggests that parents play a critical role in shaping their children's attitudes and behaviours towards sex and relationships. The study's findings have significant implications for policy and practice. There is a need for a comprehensive approach to addressing teenage pregnancy and development, including strengthening Guidance and Counselling and NGO educational assistance programs, provision of girls' education rights and opportunities, construction of more schools in the district, harmonization of laws that prohibit child marriage, censorship of media and technology, provision of safety nets for OVC, and conducting awareness campaigns against detrimental cultural and traditional practices.

V. Conclusion And Recommendations

The study concludes that teenage pregnancy has severe developmental consequences and that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the phenomenon. The research highlights the importance of understanding the complex factors contributing to teenage pregnancy and development and the need for a multi-sectoral approach to addressing the issue. The study's findings have significant implications for policy and practice, and it is essential to implement the following recommendations to prevent teenage pregnancy and development in Mbire district and other similar contexts.

- There is a need to strengthen Guidance and Counselling programs in schools to provide teenagers with accurate information about sex, relationships, and reproductive health. NGOs can also play a critical role in providing

educational assistance to teenage girls, particularly those who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy or marriage.

- Girls' education is critical in preventing teenage pregnancy and development hence the need to ensure that girls have access to quality education and opportunities for personal and economic development.
- The lack of access to schools is a significant barrier to girls' education in Mbire district hence the need to construct more schools in the district thereby increasing access to education and reducing the risk of teenage pregnancy and development.
- Child marriage is a significant driver of teenage pregnancy and development hence the need to harmonize laws that prohibit child marriage and ensure that they are enforced effectively.
- The easy access to social media and the internet has exposed many teenagers to explicit content and risky behaviours hence the need to censor media and technology to protect teenagers from harmful content.
- Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) are at increased risk of teenage pregnancy and development hence the need to provide safety nets for OVC, including educational assistance, healthcare, and economic support.
- Detrimental cultural and traditional practices, such as child marriage and lobola, contribute to the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and development hence the need to conduct awareness campaigns to challenge these practices and promote positive cultural values.

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