



## PREVALENCE OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** The prevalence of teenage pregnancy among school-girls in the education of the girl-child has become alarming because of the sayings that goes that educate a woman and you educate a nation. Yet the girl-child are often faced with challenges of access, equality, performance and ladders in terms of schooling. The study sought to establish the prevalence and consequences of teenage pregnancy among school girls in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria. One research question was formulated to guide the study. Survey design was utilized to unveil the implications. A sample size of 200 was drawn from school dropout girls and their parents/guardians, teachers, students in schools, youth and women leaders using the stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire/checklist was used to collect the data which was analyzed using percentages. Poverty, lack of sex education, alcohol, drug abuse, inferiority complex, loss of self-esteem, social rejection, malnutrition and peer influence were identified as the factors that triggers teenage pregnancy and their consequences in the study area. It is recommended that schools be made free, qualitative and engaging in order to motivate the girl-child towards completion of school.

**Keywords:** Teenagers, Pregnancy, Causes, Incidence, Consequences, School Girl.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is viewed as ‘a teenager or underage girl usually within ages of thirteen to seventeen years becoming pregnant. The word teenager is often interchangeably used with adolescence. The world health organization WHO (1997) had posited that it is the period between 10 and 17years when the secondary sex characteristics appears. The issue of pregnancies among teenage girls seems to be one of the contemporary social problems facing Calabar south local Government area of Cross River State.

The incidence of teenage pregnancy has assumed an alarming proportion in Calabar south Local government area of cross river state. Indeed, in order to drive home the seriousness of this situation, Cross River State in some desperate moves has tried through formal legislation to stem the tide of this unwholesome practice but all to no avail. Hardly does a day pass without the news of adolescent below the age of seventeen (17) years being delivered of babies who are mostly love babies. The most worrisome aspect of this situation is that the adolescent mothers

usually end up in many cases losing their lives in the process of giving birth and others dropping out from schools.

The issue of teenage pregnancy is no longer a new thing in Calabar south local Government area. Various reasons have been advanced for its existence but the basic problem is the persistency and the geometric progression of its expansion despite all the efforts that has been made by both government, schools, religious organizations and non – governmental organizations at resolving some identified factors leading to this cankerworm in Calabar south Local Government area.

Furthermore, the situation of teenage pregnancy is at an alarming rate in Calabar South as a result of the following factors perceived to be the causes which include curiosity of the adolescence to find out what sex is like, peer group influence, mass media influence while the effects include school dropout, inadequate care for the child born by teenage mother, health problems etc.

The study aimed at unveiling the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in Calabar, Cross River State with particular emphasis to determine the causes of teenage pregnancy, the associated effects



of teenage pregnancy, develop counselling interventions and also posit strategies aimed at curbing the menace of teenage pregnancy in the study area.

**Teenage** pregnancy carries a social stigma in many communities and cultures. A lot of researchers have attributed the increase in teenage pregnancy in Calabar south to a number of factors. Isangedighi (1990), after conducting a research in Cross River State on sexual behavior of secondary school students concluded the following to be the causes of teenage pregnancy in Calabar south; curiosity of the adolescent to find out what sex is like. Exposure to modernity. Peer group influence, permissiveness of parents and the fast eroding social morality and values.

Also, Akwa (2004) maintains the following to be the causes of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria schools; lack of discipline, rape, poor, socio-economic status, Teachers influence towards sex education curriculum, ignorance and cultural influence.

Other factors include absence of parental care and guidance, peer pressure, ignorance on the part of the teenager on sex related issues, financial hardship, low level of education, cultural and religious beliefs, sexual assault and many more.

According to research performed by the Guttmacher Institute, one in four teenage girls gets pregnant by age eighteen, half become pregnant by age twenty-one. Eighty –five percent of teen pregnancies are unintended, half end in births, a third in abortion and the rest in miscarriage. Several studies have reported an increase in pregnancy complications associated with teenage pregnancy (Jimoh & Abdul, 2004; Nilli *et al.*, 2002, Ezegwu, Ikeago & Ogbuefi, 2012) such as anemia, pregnancy induce hypertension, preterm labour, obstructed and prolonged labour, unsafe abortion and high incidence of operatives deliveries due to physical immunity of the pelvis of the teenage mothers as well as low birth weight babies and even death (Henry, Ugboma, Obuna, Ndukwe & Ejikweme, 2012; Koster, Kemp & Offei, 2001).

Social consequences of teenage pregnancies include cases of dropping out of school (Federal ministry of Health reports of 2011), child labour, abandonment, abortion and loss of skill and opportunities to find a job due to little or no education (Alika, 2012) among others.

Isangedighi (1990) collected data from 290 male and 570 female secondary school students aged 15 and 18 years who were from Anambra, Edo, Delta, Cross River, Imo and Lagos States. In the south, and Benue in the North on their sexual behavior. The study

revealed that 25.4 percent of males and 41.3 percent of the females saw sex as being very necessary. Only 5.7 percent of both male and female respondents had not had sex. It was also gathered that 57.2 percent of the sexually active male students had their fellow secondary school mate as sex partners. About 40.3 percent of the males and 29.3 percent of the females were sure that their fathers knew they were sexually active while 43.3 percent of the boys and 44.3 percent of the girls were sure that their mothers knew of their sexual exploits with the opposite sex.

Thus Isangedighi concluded that the curiosity of the adolescence to find out what sex is like has also led to increase in teenage pregnancy.

## 2.1 METHODOLOGY

Research question: the study formulated one research question which included thus; what are the contributing factors to teenage pregnancy of school girls?

**2.2 Methodology adopted for the study:** The study adopted a survey research design and employed same for the study because it focuses on determining the nature of situations, as at the time of investigation. It suits this particular study since it concerns itself with ascertaining and establishing the status quo, facts or pieces of information at the time of research, presenting such information as they are presented.

## 2.3 Population used for the study:

The population for the study comprised of women and youth leaders in the Calabar metropolis, teachers of secondary schools, the teenage pregnant girls themselves, parents, guardians, relations of pregnant teen girls and students (girls) currently not enrolled in junior secondary school 3 (JSS3) and senior secondary school 3 (SSS3) and are on the street/hospitals, traditional birth places and private clinics in Calabar.

The stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select 8 wards, 16 women leaders, 16 youth leaders, 16 teachers, 64 students (girls) currently enrolled, 64 dropout girls and 64 parents/guardians/relatives of the dropout, yielding a sample size of 240 population size. The survey instrument further consisted of a checklist, titled school teenage pregnancy among the checklist.

## 3.1 RESULTS

The research question sought to establish the contributory factors of school dropout among secondary school girls in Calabar Metropolis. Data were analyzed using percentages and the results are presented in Table 1.



**Table 1: Triggers/consequence of teenage pregnancy among school girls in Calabar Metropolis (N=200)**

Triggers factors	yes	(%)	No	(%)	Total No.	Total percentage
Poverty	175	89	25	11	200	100
Lack of sex education	129	62	71	38	200	100
Alcohol	106	58	94	42	200	100
Drug Abuse	112	74	88	26	200	100
Inferiority complex	42	25	158	75	200	100
Malnutrition	5	04	195	96	200	100
Social rejection	110	62	90	38	200	100
Loss of self- esteem	134	73	66	27	200	100
Abandonment	150	75	50	25	200	100

### Triggers of Teenage pregnancy as revealed from the present study included

1. Lack of sex education: there is no substitute for a home in which sex is approached in a Frank and sensitive way in which questions are greeted in an open manner, in which the beauty of sex within marriage and the dangers of sex outside marriage is discussed in a biblical context and in which an adolescent is calmly prepared for the onset of puberty and the first strings of sexual drives and impulses as presented in the Table 1.

2. Inferiority complex: teenage girls who feel insecure about their bodies, uncomfortable with the physical changes they are experiencing or uncertain about who they are or where they fit into, many turn to sexual involvement and pregnancy as a way of convincing others and themselves that they are capable of being wanted and loved, that they are as much a 'woman' as anyone else (Table 1).

3. Alcohol and drug influence: is another factor that adds to the danger of the teen years is, for many, the initial encounter with alcohol and drugs. Often, a teenager who is struggling with the discovery of her sexuality and the power of her first relationship with a boy finds herself at a party or other environment in which alcohol drinks or drugs are easily accessible (Table 1).

### Consequences of teenage pregnancy as revealed from the study includes

i. Loss of self-esteem: teenage mothers carry the social wage of second related girls. They become object of community gossips. In some societies like in Akwa Ibom state, they are largely regarded as 'second hand' where potential suitors are not

enthusiastic in taking them for wives. They are therefore faced with difficulties in finding husbands. Having lost self-esteem, many of them take solace in prayer houses to bring succor to their plight.

ii. Social rejection: Pregnant teens are faced with rejection as they become a social taboo not being able to fit into any stratum in the society where they can be recognized. They may even loose the privilege to associate with their age grade and to participate in their activities, especially in the rural areas where there is still emphasis on morality.

iii. Malnutrition: some of these teenage girls are from low economic background, they manage to survive and now the encounter the problem of how to feed themselves as well as their babies.

### 3.2 Discussion

Counselling implications for intervention:

1. Counselling young people on the dangers of premarital sex in this era of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.
  2. Organizing campaigns to create awareness on health needs of adolescents
  3. Developing a curriculum that will give students appropriate information about sex education.
  4. Planning and organizing of conferences, seminars, workshops and interactive session between parents and adolescents
- Expected roles of students in curbing the menace of teenage pregnancy

- i. Report any abusive act by teacher, friends and strangers
- ii. Any case of rape should be reported as soon as possible.

Conclusion:

The government should endeavor to create the enabling economic environment. A situation where government has taken the initiative to impoverishes the people by sterile economic policies is certainly detrimental and does not in any way help prevent parent from turning their children (daughters especially) into articles of trade. In the present circumstances, there is no amount of preaching that can change the order of things if an integrated approach is not used to attack this problem. Educate the people, help raise their standard of living by reducing the cost of living, create employment opportunities, once the people can feed well, live well, they will then better appreciate government campaigns on the evils of child abuse, child or teenage pregnancies, the



church, the mass media, non-governmental organization (NGOs), Mothers societies, the political class and school must cooperate to wage war against adolescent pre-marital exposure, pregnancy and abortion.

Based on the findings of this study, the following are hereby recommended in trying to proffer solutions or recommendations to the questions of teenage pregnancy, what readily comes to mind is the relationship between parent and their daughters. Parents should be able to establish a strong bond of relationship with their daughters, they should open, relate, associate and establish a good rapport with their daughters so as to allow their daughters confide in them. By so doing, the parent will be able to earn their daughters respect and confidence. Parental care is important, parent should provide the basic amenities needed by their wards. Also parents should teach their children sex education.

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