

## **INCIDENCE AND CAUSES OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY ABUJA**

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the causes and effects of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The specific objectives were to identify the causes of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in FCT, the effects of teenage pregnancy on secondary school students in FCT and the coping strategies adopted by secondary school students while pregnant in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. 28,386 female students in secondary schools in Abuja make up the study population, a sample of 381 female secondary school students were randomly selected and used. Teenage Pregnancy among Secondary School students questionnaire (TPSSQ) was used in this study to collect data from the sampled respondents. The data collected were subjected to SPSS analysis based on the research questions. The findings from the study showed that secondary school students in FCT are aware of the causes of teenage pregnancy and it also has an effect on them as teenagers. The study recommended that Teenagers should be enlightened about the consequence of engaging in sex at the early stage of their lives and parents should stand at best to meet the needs of the teenage child and Parents should not be too harsh on teenagers but they should be approachable so as the children can confide with them whenever there is a pressure from peers.*

**Key words:** Teenage, Pregnancy, FCT

### **Introduction**

Teenagers are regarded as an adolescent who are in a stage between childhood and adulthood. They are also either regarded as older children or younger adults. According to Lawin (2006), a substantial proportion of the members of every society in the developmental stage are termed “adolescence” or otherwise called “teenage”. It is a transitional period between the end of childhood and beginning of adulthood or maturity. Persons within this age categories are sexually active and adventurous because this is when sexual maturity starts (Bissell, 2000). Hence, they tend to want to relate with the opposite sex more (Carrera, 2012). Children at this stage are said to be in a state of confusion because they are curious about sex (Langham, 2015).

Pregnancy is a physiological process, presenting with history of missed period, fatigue, breast enlargement and tenderness, abdominal distension, nausea and vomiting together with light-headedness (Langham, 2015). Pregnancy is expected to

occur by default after marriage, which is a universal social institution between adult males and females and through marriage; these adults acquire new social status as husbands and wives (United Nations, 1990). However, pregnancy now occurs in children especially those in their teens. Teenage pregnancy is a situation whereby a female person is pregnant in her teen ages (Nyakubega, 2009). This is as a result of lack of knowledge or ignorance about sexual behavior activities. Teenage pregnancy is a global issue as it occurs in both developed (like USA) and developing countries like Nigeria. Adolescent/teenage pregnancy is characterized as pregnancy that occurs between the maternal ages of 14 and 19 years (WHO, 2006).

In Nigeria, teenage pregnancy takes place in both rural and urban areas across regions but it is more prevalent in rural areas. Also, teenage pregnancy is more prevalent in northern than in southern part of the country due to the prevalence of early marriages. While teenage pregnancy may be attributed to early marriages in the north, most pregnant teenagers are not married in the south. In fact, most of the pregnant teenagers are usually rejected by their lovers who impregnated them leaving them with the option of either aborting the pregnancy or becoming single mothers at an early age. Such persons are usually subject of stigmatization and low-self-esteem in the society. Some of the single parents are supported by their own parents (especially mothers). In more difficult situations, the parents (especially the fathers) tend to neglect the pregnant teenagers and their children and this may force the pregnant teenagers to result to abortion or even leave the child at a dumping site. Teenage pregnancy can therefore be regarded as a major source of children in orphanages. At times, teenage pregnancy is a result of sexual abuse or rape (Langham, 2015).

According to Jackie, (2012) low self-esteem is among the causes of teenage pregnancy. Children who are not shown love and affection from parents will seek it out with their peer group. Many adolescents report feeling pressured by their peers to have sex before they are married.

According to Duncan (2007), the transition from childhood to teenage may cause unstable emotions to some teenagers, and this may cause complex teenage psychology break on teenagers. Complex teenage psychology can result in immature and irresponsible behaviour which in turn may be another cause of teenage pregnancy. Meanwhile, weak family bonding fails to provide the emotional support that they need during their transitional term. This lack of attention and affection from the family causes depression and push them to look for love and attention from others especially from the opposite sex.

In situations where real love exists between the male and female person, such that the male person accepts responsibility for the pregnancy, unplanned marriage may follow thereby leaving both persons to be struggling to take care of the pregnancy as well as the child as soon as it is born into the world.

This may worsen the poverty situation of the parents because most often than not, both parents do not have any tangible means of livelihood at this point in time.

Teenage pregnancy is attributed with negative consequences on both the teenage mothers and their children. The consequences to the teenage mothers include

low educational attainment, remaining unmarried, and living in poverty while the children who are products of teenage pregnancy are more likely to be born with low birth weight, grow up poor, live in a single-parent household, experience abuse and neglect (Maynard, 2007). Additionally, the daughters of teenage mothers are more likely to become teenage mothers themselves, while the sons are more likely to be incarcerated (Maynard, 2007). Teenage pregnancy also impact the rural economy due to loss of productive man hours especially when the teenage mothers are having complications attributed to the immature nature of major organs.

Teenage pregnancy has therefore become a social menace that prevents many youths in the Federal Capital Territory from reaching their goals in life. It therefore becomes imperative for any government that is concerned with the sustainable development of the nation to pay rapt attention to investing in the sex education of teenagers and other category of youths especially in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This is because a productive adulthood can only be assured if the childhood had a good foundation.

Teenage pregnancy as observed by Melissa (2012), could lead to incomplete education, unemployment and other numerous emotional traumas. Early motherhood had been linked to effects the psychological development of the child adversely. Beside psychological physical risks cannot be ignored. Teenage girls' body is not as developed as adult women in term of childbearing. Thus, they are often to face certain complications during pregnancy. Lack of sexual education caused teens get abortions since they realize that they are not ready yet to take responsibility to be a parent at such a young age and they still have many things to chase in life. The chance of maternal death cannot be ruled out in effecting teenage pregnancy by child. The percentage of teenage pregnancy in the society is growing at along rate. It is perceived that lack of adequate knowledge about sex education to teenage girls make them to be sexually active which eventually leads to pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy has been found to have negative and social long lasting effects on the life of secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. It is in the light of this that this study is carried out to examine the causes and effects of teenage pregnancy in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. This study sought to

- To identify the causes of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja
- To identify the effects of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja
- identify the coping strategies adopted by the secondary school students while pregnant as teenagers.

In addition, the following research questions and hypothesis guided the study:

- what are the causes of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja?
- what are the effect of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja?

- What are the coping strategies adopted by secondary school students while pregnant as teenagers?

**Method**

The study employed a descriptive survey design method. The study population comprised of all the female secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory Abuja. The population of female secondary school students is 28,386(Secondary Education Board, 2017). A proportionate stratified sampling was further used to select respondents and a total of total of 381female secondary school students were randomly selected to form the sampled from the entire population.

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire validated by experts in the field of research. The pilot test was conducted using 30 parents around Kwali Area council of FCT who will not take part in the study and using a Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient was used to analyse the responses. That yielded a reliability index of 0.73, indicating that the questionnaire was reliable. The questionnaire was designed along four point scale titled: Teenage Pregnancy among Secondary School students questionnaire (TPSSQ) which comprised sixteen (16) items. The TPSSQ was made up of two sections: A, and B. Section A sought information on demographic data about the respondent while sections B were made up of four clusters of 4 items each. Mean statistics was used in analyzing all the questions.

**Results**

**Table 1:** causes of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja?

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Socio-economic background made	3.33	0.87	Agree
2	me to get pregnant	2.43	1.11	Disagree
3	Peer pressure influenced me to get	3.44	0.69	Agree
4	pregnant	2.80	1.07	Agree
5	Lack of Sex Education made me to	3.19	0.82	Agree
	get pregnant			
	The non-used of contraceptives	<b>3.10</b>	<b>0.88</b>	
	during sexual intercourse			
	Caused by early marriage and			
	traditional gender roles			
	<b>Sectional Mean/Std. Dev.</b>			

Table 1 shows response to items on causes of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. The mean shows agreement with all the items except item 2. The sectional mean of 3.10 provides basis for the decision that the stated items are the causes of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in FCT since the mean is above 2.50 (midpoint on a 4-point Likert scale).

**Table 2:** Effects of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja?

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	I will not complete my education if I get pregnant as a teenager	3.02	0.95	Agree
2	I may risk my health during childbirth	3.14	0.96	Agree
3	I may lose the love affections and care	3.19	0.87	Agree
4	from my parents.	3.29	0.95	Agree
5	I will be Isolated and rejected by my	2.91	1.02	Agree
6	parents	2.79	0.96	Agree
	My friends will Isolate and even reject my company	<b>3.06</b>	<b>0.96</b>	
	I will not have any financial support			
	<b>Sectional Mean/Std. Dev.</b>			

Table 2 shows response to items on effects of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The mean shows agreement with all the items. The sectional mean of 3.06 further provides basis for the decision that teenage pregnancy have an effect on secondary school students in FCT since the mean is above 2.50 (midpoint on a 4-point Likert scale).

**Table 3:** Coping strategies adopted by secondary school students while pregnant as teenagers?

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
12	Personal resolution	2.29	1.04	Disagree
13	External encouragement	1.76	0.84	Disagree
14	Giving the baby to another person	1.80	0.87	Disagree
15	for nursing	1.82	0.82	Disagree
16	Migrated to another environment	2.12	0.96	Disagree
	I tried to abort the pregnancy	<b>1.96/0.91</b>		
	<b>Sectional Mean/ Std. Dev.</b>			

Table 5 shows response to items on coping strategies adopted by secondary school students while pregnant as teenagers. The mean shows disagreement with all the items. The sectional mean of 1.96 further provides basis for the decision that secondary school students do not practice this form of coping strategy among them since the mean is below 2.50 (midpoint on a 4-point Likert scale).

### **Discussion**

The study revealed that teenage pregnancy is found among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory. This is not surprising because a lot of factors like peer pressure, socio-economic background of the parents, lack of sex education in the various secondary schools in FCT and proper orientation about early marriage could be some of the causes of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in FCT. This view is supported by Nyakubega (2009). Who observed that teenage pregnancy is as a result of lack of knowledge or ignorance about sexual behavior activities. Also, Jackie, (2012) reported that low self-esteem is among the causes of teenage pregnancy. Children who are not shown love and affection from parents will seek it out with their peer group. Many adolescents report feeling pressured by their peers to have sex before they are married.

The study also revealed the effects of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in FCT. From the study, teenagers drop out of school as a result of teenage pregnancy, their health are also at risk and they equally lose the love and affection of their love ones if they get pregnant at teenage stage. They are also isolated by friends and family and most times are in need of financial assistance. This as observed by Melissa (2012), stated that teenage pregnancy could lead to incomplete education, unemployment and other numerous emotional traumas. Early motherhood had been linked to effects the psychological development of the child adversely. Such persons are usually subject of stigmatization and low-self-esteem in the society. Some of the single parents are supported by their own parents (especially mothers).

The study further found out the coping strategies adopted by teenage pregnancy among secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory. The respondents did not agree with all the stated items. This is quite surprising, probably as teenagers and secondary school students, they feel shy discussing their coping strategies.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn; that teenage pregnancy is found among secondary school students in FCT. This may be as a result of lack of sex education and peer influence.

The study equally concluded that teenage pregnancy has a negative effect on secondary school students in FCT.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been advanced.

1. Teenagers should be enlightened about the consequence of engaging in sex at the early stage of their lives and parents should stand at best to meet the needs of the teenage child.
2. Parents should not be too harsh on teenagers but they should be approachable so as the children can confide with them whenever there is a pressure from peers
3. Governments should contribute in the effort to reduce teenage pregnancy in the Federal Capital Territory by providing stable funding for comprehensive educational and support services to pregnant and parenting teenagers.

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