

# POVERTY AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY: THE DYNAMICS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Yetunde F. Oke <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> LAUTECH Teaching Hospital, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.

<sup>a</sup> Corresponding author: akinfesola2004@yahoo.com

© Ontario International Development Agency. ISSN 1923-6654 (print)  
ISSN 1923-6662 (online). Available at <http://www.ssrn.com/link/OIDA-Intl-Journal-Sustainable-Dev.html>

**Abstract:** Poverty has dual dynamics in teenage pregnancy. Being a determinant as well as a consequence of teenage pregnancy especially in developing countries, many of the individual and environmental risk factors that are determinants of teenage pregnancy may be tied into experiences of poverty. The environment that poverty creates, lack of resources and support, the resulting perceptions of limited educational and financial opportunities may reduce the cost of teen pregnancy and motherhood for adolescent females. Having a child may be perceived as the only way to bring meaning into the adolescent's life.

**Keywords:** Legal adulthood, Poverty, Teenage pregnancy, Socio economic status,

## I. INTRODUCTION

A teenager has been defined as a person within the ages 13-19[1]. And poverty is defined as income per capital less than or equal to one dollar per day in dollar adjusted for purchasing power [2]. The teenage period is described as transitional years and is one of mental and physical development, experimenting and taking risks. The riskiest of all teenage behaviour is that of sexual activity. Teenage pregnancy is defined as a teenaged or underage girl, usually within the ages of 13-19, becoming pregnant. The term in everyday speech usually refers to women who have not reached legal adulthood, which varies across the world, who become pregnant [3]. A studies done by McDevitt (1996) and Save the Children found that, annually 15 million children are born to women under age 20 worldwide, more than 90% in developing countries[4]. Worldwide rate of teenage pregnancy range from 143 per 1000 females 15 -19 years of age in some sub-Sahara Africa countries to 2.9 per 1000 in South Korea. So, the highest rate of

teenage pregnancy in the world is in sub-Sahara Africa, where women tend to marry at an early age[5].

Poverty has dual dynamics in teenage pregnancy. Being a determinant as well as a consequence of teenage pregnancy especially in developing countries, many of the individual and environmental risk factors that are determinants of teenage pregnancy may be tied into experiences of poverty. The environment that poverty creates, lack of resources and support, the resulting perceptions of limited educational and financial opportunities may reduce the cost of teen pregnancy and motherhood for adolescent females. Having a child may be perceived as the only way to bring meaning into the adolescent's life.

Teenage pregnancy is an epidemic that has long lasting repercussion for the parents, child and the society in general. The teenage parent risks being stigmatized isolated from their peer group and sentenced to a life of poverty. Poverty may be a pre-existing condition rather than an effect of teenage pregnancy. Perhaps the most important consideration of teenage pregnancy is the impact it has on the unplanned child. Teen parents are known to start a vicious cycle that is hard to break once it gets started and where teen pregnancy is high, it can be argued that a high number of children are beginning their lives from disadvantaged points.

The persistently high teenage pregnancy rate with its attendant consequences being recorded in many parts of the world has been known to contribute significantly to high maternal and infant morbidity and mortality especially in developing countries. In addition its effect on population growth rate, development and HIV prevalence is significant,

thereby contributing to the already high level of poverty in developing countries.

Teenage pregnancy also hampers further education of female adolescents and earning capacity in later years. This results in limiting their contribution to the nation's economic development. Despite family life education in schools and family planning programmes, high prevalence of teenage pregnancy and accompanying negative consequences is still being recorded in Nigeria.

The objective of this study was to assess the impact of poverty as a determinant and consequence of teenage pregnancy in Osun state, Nigeria.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive, cross sectional study of poverty as determinant and consequence of teenage pregnancy in Osun state, Nigeria using multistage sampling method. The level of confidence was specified as 95% and tolerable error margin was 5%. The largest sample size that satisfied all objective was used and sample size of 400 was calculated using stacal. The research instrument used was a set of pre-coded, pre-tested, semi-structured interviewer administered questionnaires arranged in three sections and a focus group discussion guide. Data was analyzed using SPSS software version 15 and Text-based alpha computer software.

## III. RESULTS

Mean age of the respondents was 16.5 +/- 2.0. 140 (70%) of the pregnant teenagers had primary school education or no education compared to 110 (55%) of the non-pregnant teenagers (control group) with at least junior secondary education (p value < 0.05). One hundred and thirty-five (67.5%) of the study group were unemployed or unskilled while 112 (56%) of the control group were skilled workers or in school (p value<0.05)

Moreover 138 parents (69%) of the pregnant teens were in the low socioeconomic class being either unemployed or unskilled workers compared to the control group where 89 parents (44%) were professional or skilled workers (p value<0.05). In addition the income of 134 parents (67%) of the pregnant teenagers were less than two dollars per day while only 87 of the non pregnant teenagers' (43.5%) parents have the same income (p value<0.05). One hundred and thirty of the pregnant teenagers (65%) live in poor neighborhoods (with lack of access to basic amenities) while 90 of the non pregnant teenagers (45%) that is the control group live in good neighborhood (p value< 0.05). Most of the pregnant teens, 190 (95%) did not have plans for higher education, unlike the control group where

80% of the cohort have plans for higher education (p value<0.05)

In addition it is noteworthy that 136 (68%) of the pregnant teenagers have no financial support or income less than one dollar per day while 85 (42%) of the control group receive support of over one dollar per day (p value<0.05). One hundred and forty of the pregnant teenagers (70%) do not have access to health services and other basic facilities while 90 (45%) non pregnant teenagers have access` to health services and other basic facilities.

The result of the focus group discussion showed pre-existing poverty in most of the pregnant teenagers and consequent poverty after delivery.

## IV. DISCUSSION

Poverty as a determinant and consequence of teenage pregnancy in the developing countries has been highlighted in previous studies[6]. Various reasons have been attributed to this ranging from early age at marriage, poor knowledge, unavailability and low use of contraception and poor economic infrastructure. Poor teenagers have few opportunities and reasons to avoid or delay childbearing and simply see no reason not to get pregnant. Pregnant teenagers in the Nigerian environment have low level of education and low socioeconomic status as revealed by this study in which 70% of the pregnant teenagers have primary education or lower and 67.5% of them were unemployed or unskilled workers compared to the none pregnant teenagers where just 45% have the same level of education and 44% were unemployed or unskilled. In addition 69% and 67% of their parents were unemployed or unskilled workers and had income less than two dollar per day respectively compared to 44.5% and 43.5% respectively in the non pregnant teenagers . This result corroborates the findings in previous studies done in Nigeria and South Africa [6,7]. It is worthy of note also that 65% and 95% of the pregnant teenagers were living in poor environmental condition and had no plan for higher education respectively compared to 45% and 20% of the non pregnant teenagers respectively. And these findings are similar to those of previous studies done in USA [8, 9]. Determining poverty as a consequence of teen pregnancy on the lives of teenagers is complicated because of the difficulty in distinguishing between pre-existing condition and those that are a result of the early pregnancy. For example in developed countries the greater dependence on welfare is often associated with teenage pregnancy. However since poor adolescent are at high risk for teen pregnancy, poverty may be a pre-existing condition and an effect of the pregnancy.

	Pregnant teenagers	Non-pregnant teenagers
Pry education or less	140	90
Junior sec education or more	60	110
Unemployed or unskilled worker	135	88
Skilled worker or schooling	65	112

Table 1.Socio-demographic characteristics of Respondents before pregnancy

	Pregnant teenagers	Non-pregnant teenagers
Parents unskilled or unemployed	138	89
Parents skilled or employed	62	111
Parents income<2 dollars/day	134	87
Good living environment	70	110
Poor living environment	130	90
Plan for higher education	10	160
No plan for education	190	40

Table 2: Socio-economic characteristics of Respondents &amp; parents before pregnancy

	Pregnant teenagers	Non-pregnant teenagers
Out of school	136	70
In school	64	130
Receiving support or income	64	115
Not receiving support or income	136	85
Poor living condition	134	88
Good living condition	66	112
Access to social & health facilities	60	110
No Access to social health facilities	140	90

Table 3.Socio-demographic characteristics of Respondents AFTER delivery

The vicious cycle of poverty for pregnant teenagers and their children begins with early childbearing among the poor teenagers. One of the determinants of poverty may be the fact that in many countries teenage childbearing is associated with the premature termination of education as shown in this study of which 68% of the teenage mothers were out of school compared to just 35% of the non pregnant teenagers who were out of school, which correlate with previous studies in Nigeria (Osogbo) and United State [10, 11]. In addition 68% and 70% of the pregnant teenagers had no financial support and access to social facilities especially health facilities respectively compared to 42.5% and 45% among the non pregnant teenagers in similar conditions. This is accordance with previous studies done in Nigeria (Osogbo) and United Kingdom [10, 12].

#### V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion this study has demonstrated that poverty has a dual function as a determinant and consequence of teenage pregnancy. Stakeholders should improve socioeconomic status of the family and societal status of the girl child through provision of adequate girl child education, access to social facilities and empowerment of girl-child.

#### REFERENCE

- [1] The American Heritage @ Dictionary of English Language.4<sup>th</sup> edition copyright @ 2000 published by Houghton Mifflin Company.
- [2] WHO (1999) The World Health Report 1999 Making a Difference. World Health Organization, Geneva.
- [3] McDevitt TM (1996) World Population Profile: 1996, US Bureau of the Census, Report WP/96:1-511
- [4] WHO discussion papers on adolescence (2004) Adolescent pregnancy issues in adolescent and development: 5-10
- [5] Ogunniyi S.O., Dare FO, Makinde O.O. et al. (1991) Pregnancy in teenagers in Ile-Ife, Problems and Perinatal Outcome. Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology ,11: 182-18517
- [6] Department of Health (2004). The 2003 South African Demographic and Health Survey. Retrieved from <http://www.doh.gov.za/facts/sadhs-f.html> on 1/03/2008 at 8.00GMT
- [7] Coley R.L, Chase-Lansdale P. L. (1998) Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood: recent evidence and future direction. American Psychologist 53:152-166
- [8] Gourdon CP(1996) Adolescent decision making: a broadly based theory and its application to the prevention of early pregnancy. Adolescence 31:561-584
- [9] Adekanle DA, Adeyemi AS, Odu OO (2008) Teenage and Non-teenage pregnant women in Southwestern Nigeria: a descriptive study. Calicut Medical Journal 6(3);e5
- [10] The National campaign to prevent teen pregnancy. Not another single issue; teen pregnancy prevention's link to other issues 2002. Accessed at [www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/introduction.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/why-it-matters/pdf/introduction.pdf) on 1/05/ 2006 at 13.00GMT
- [11] Raatikainen K, Heiskanen N, Verkasalo PK, Heinonen S(2000) Good outcome of teenage pregnancy in a high-quality maternity care. Eur J Public Health 16(2):157-61
- [12] McDevitt, T. M. World Population Profile:1996, US Bureau of the Census, Report WP/96:1-5