



Research Paper

Causes of Teenage Pregnancy among the basic school students at Adawomase In the Ashanti Region Of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Teenage pregnancy is a phenomena that many communities in Ghana do not entertain due to its devastating effects it has on their victims and society at large. The study on the above topic was carried out at Adanwomase in the Ashanti Region of Ghana to sensitize the school children on the dangers of teenage pregnancy. The study employed a qualitative designed, and made use of interviews and observation as the main instruments for collecting data for the study. The sampling technique used for sampling the population for the study was random technique; which sampled from the Students, Teachers and Parents who were the target population. It was revealed that, poverty, lack of parental control and peer influence are some of the causes of teenage pregnancy in the area; and some of the consequences of the teenage pregnancy are School drop out, stigmatization and health implications.

KEY WORDS: *Teenage pregnancy, Peer influence, Chastity, Sex education, Abstinence*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is one of the vices Ghanaian society has frowned upon and all the ethnic groups try to advise their constituents to live chaste lives to avoid teenage pregnancy before getting to adulthood hence marriage.

In view of these, some ethnic groups in Ghana have rites put in place to encourage the young girls to preserve their womanhood pure for their husbands. Among the Krobo people in the Eastern Region of Ghana, they have *Dipo* which need to be performed for a girl before being married. Among the Akan communities as well, they have *Bragoro* which is also done for a girl to symbolically initiate her into womanhood. The story is not different from the Ewes in the Volta Region of Ghana as a young girl is expected to undergo the *Gbotowowo* rites before getting married to a man .

In all these ethnic groups, the moral uprightness that go with these rites are paramount. As a girl who gets herself pregnant before these rites bring shame upon herself and that of her family. Moreso, any girl who fails to go through this ritual also incurs insults on herself and the family.

But on the contrary, teenagers each new day get pregnant in our schools, homes, communities as is reported in the media often. A teenager according to Wilson et al (2002) is young person between the ages of 9- 18 yrs. The Ghana 1992 constitution as well acknowledged an adult as somebody from 18yrs and above. So therefore, it could be deduced from the constitution that anyone who falls below the 18 yrs of age could be regarded as a teenager. Even though the law forbids people from engaging in sexual acts with under 18yrs age

as it amounts to defilement, parents keep mute of such developments whenever they happen in the communities. Others as well treat such issues as family affairs hence most of the culprits are not brought to face the full rigours of the law.

Fortunately, the law enforcement agencies such as DOVSU unit of the Ghana Police Service, CHRAJ and Ministry of Women, Children and gender protection nowadays advocate for the victims of any sexual harassment to be bold and report to the appropriate authorities for sanctions to be given to the offenders. With this, the harassment of girls most of which leads to teenage pregnancy could be eradicated. The focus of the study therefore is to discuss the causes and effects of teenage pregnancy among the young basic and Senior High School girls. And it seeks to bring out to fore the factors that trigger this menace, the effects it has on them and the possible measures which can be put in to check this problem from occurring.

Statement of problem

Teenage pregnancy is considered a social vice for that matter not encouraged by communities in Ghana. Observation and media reportage however shown that, in the churches, schools and homes, teenage pregnancies still do occur. In light of this that this study is carry out to educate the masses about the dangers that associate with this social menace; so that the young people would be well informed when they are making decision on sexual issues.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The following sub topics have been reviewed in relation to the topic under study.

- The concept of teenage pregnancy
- Causes of teenage pregnancy
- Effects of teenage pregnancy
- Measures of checking teenage pregnancy

Aryetey (2002) explained teenager as a young person between the ages of 9 and 18 and added that any child who becomes pregnant during this time is regarded teenage pregnant mother. He explained that, teenage pregnancy goes with some bad effects that come onto the teenage mothers hence advice that, the young girls should remain chaste until such a time that they are of age to marry.

Kohler et al (2007) also explain that when adolescent becomes pregnant, then teenage pregnancy occur. They as well supported Aryetey that this type of pregnancy is not the best so every community frowns upon it. They substantiate further by identifying some measures that can serve as a remedy to this phenomenon as abstinence from sex and the use of contraceptives, as well as sex education. They however advised the young people to rather choose abstinence as is the only way out to avoid pregnancy and the contraction of the sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

According to Plotnick (1992), when an adolescent gets pregnant as a result of premarital sex, then that occurrence could be deemed as teenage pregnancy. He supported the argument of the other scholars that adolescent pregnancy goes with certain negative consequences for both the mother and the child. They opined further that, because premarital and child bearing occur in the teenager, they carry social disapproval and are regarded as deviant.

Josephina (1978) shares her thoughts that teenage pregnancy happen when young people become mothers. Like the other colleagues, she explain that in most cases, that lead to deficiency in education by the young mother, as well as problems with child bearing in the future. She maintained that the younger the parents at birth, the greater the educational setback.

Bratati et al (2009), on their part describe teenage pregnancy as “at risk pregnancy”.

As to what constitute a teenage pregnancy, the views of Wilson et al (2002) is that when girls who are 19 yrs and below get pregnant. They were emphatic that a greater proportion of the teenage pregnancies are unplanned, unwanted and out of wedlock. They again explain that in Ghana nowadays, young girls between 10 and 11 are seen becoming teenage mothers.

Causes of teenage pregnancies in Ghana

According to Wilson et al (2002), the following constitute the causes of teenage pregnancies among the young people:

a. Exposure of the teenagers to pornographic materials through the media. They opine that, children of today are privy to devices such as VCD, DVD, internet, Radio as well as television which expose them to movies some of which are not helpful to this young people. As the old adage goes *Practice makes man perfect*. As these young people observe the movies, they turn to practice them leading to the unwanted pregnancies. The daily papers such as *People and Places* (P&P) as well expose ladies with their erotic parts. These pictures arouse the sexual pleasures of these young ones.

- b. Peer influence and pressure: some friends can connect their colleagues to men / boys through misinformation. They cite example of a girl who confessed to the mother that the friends were teasing her of not having a boyfriend hence linking her to one which resulted to teenage pregnancy. Some friends as well display the items their boys buy for them hence luring other innocent ones into it.
- c. Lack of parental control : some parents do not monitor their children either through lack of education or broken homes. Some parents don't even care about things that their children wear and even where they get those things from. This care-free attitude of the parents give room to children to feel at ease and go out with boys leading to unwanted pregnancies. In addition some parents too work for long hours and most of the time are not at home to watch what their kids do. These expose them to early sex hence pregnancy.
- d. Lack of education on matters of sex: most parents who supposed to inform their children on issues of sex themselves are not well informed. So these children depend on their friends for advice most of which are bad ones resulting in the unplanned pregnancies.
- e. Poverty : some parents are not able to meet the needs of their children. So they resort to picking boyfriends to providing for them who in return also demand for sex which eventually lead to pregnancy.

Kerby (2001) agrees with Wilson et al that causes of teenage pregnancy could be link to family structure in a sense that , how the family is made up of can negatively affect the sexual behaviour of a child. He as well identify economic disadvantage as Wilson et al explain as poverty. Peer pressure , emotional distress and individual sexual beliefs.

Woodward (2008) substantiates the causes of teenage pregnancy that women abuse , violence and family strife especially during childhood are some of the immediate causes of the unplanned pregnancies. He opines further that the greater the number of abuse childhood experience , the higher the likelihood of teenage pregnancy. He goes further that , women who experience incarceration of a family member, household abuse or parental domestic violence or verbal abuse were more likely to become pregnant as teenagers.

Coley et al (nd) explain that girls with low educational aspirations are more likely to become teenage mothers than the high achievers. They add that alcohol and drug use , poverty and single parenting as other causes of teenage pregnancy.

So the scholars for this sub topics have all established that , poverty , parental negligence , peer pressure and low level of education could be linked to the causes of teenage pregnancy. It could also be deduce from the argument of the scholars that , unwanted pregnancies are not something that is welcome and is also frowned upon .

On the prevention of the teenage pregnancies, all the scholars who contributed to the review agreed that , abstinence from sex , use of contraceptives and condom use and more education on issues related to sex are some of the ways by which teenage pregnancies could be prevented. But for all the preventive measures enumerated , all the contributors agreed that the best option among the lot is the abstinence.

Presentation and Discussion of findings

Observation and interviews were some of the research instruments used for the study. The target groups for the study was students (from basic to Senior High level) , teachers who are stakeholders in bringing up these young students as well as their parents whose influence greatly affect the behaviour of the children. The sampling technique used to sample the population of the study was Random technique. The total population of the study was 20 consisting of 10 students in the Junior High School and Senior High Schools , 4 Teachers and 6 parents. The breakdown can be seen on table 1 below:

Table : 1 Population distribution of the study

Target population	Accessible population
Students	10
Parents	06
Teachers	04

Total number of population = 20

Out of 10 teenagers who were interviewed on the causes of teenage pregnancies , 6 out of them representing 60% stated that , they are forced to go for boyfriends so that they can buy them food items and also give them some money. Three out of them thus 30 % explained that they could not exactly state the causes of the things that make teenagers get pregnant. 1 person couldn't comment on the effects the teenage pregnancy could have on them . 70 % of them explained that they feel shy when they carry their teenage babies among their school mates. They explained further that, their parents sack them from home; and the teenage children fathers too , some of them are not responsible so sometimes they are forced to stay with their grand mothers or

mothers in laws under unfriendly conditions. They added that they don't get enough food for their children which necessitate them to travel in search of work to get enough to cater for the child thereby dropping out of school. 20 % of the respondents explained that even though teenagers suffer during child birth , there are other members of the family who could contribute in taking care of the new mother and child. So giving birth at tender age should not be the end of them. They revealed that , one can give birth after which she can still go back to school . 1 out of the respondents as usual declined to answer this very question on the interview guide as well .

Respondents were equally interviewed on the ways by which the teenage pregnancies could be stoped, 50 % agreed that teachers should teach them on issues related to sex in school so that their mates could not tell them stories which are not true about sex , to mis inform them. 40% suggested that their parents should be more vigilant to observe their behaviour at home as to the sources of the dresses they wear , the kinds of friends they keep; this way their in and out would be known and necessary advice given should there be any danger. 10 % as well didn't give any tangible information on teenage pregnancy.

On the parts of the students , 3 out of them representing 75 % expained that lack of parental care , poverty , peer influence as some of the things that trigger the young ones to engage into premarital sex which eventually lead to teenage pregnancy. This revelation has gone to confirm the assertion of the earlier contributors to this study. Thus Aryetey (2002) , wilson et al (2002) , Kerby (2001) , Wooward (2008). The 15 % Of the teachers as well added that individual desires also lead them to engage in those act. They explained that some girls are from good homes , good parents yet they follow boys. So they believe that the desires of the individuals also matter. They therefore suggested that teachers and parents should always discuss issues with their children that way , they would be able to advice them appropriately.

Six parents interviewed agreed that more education on sexual issues should be taught in schools so that their colleagues would not misled them. They were emphatic that , students have confidence in their teachers so whatever the teachers tell them they internalise it for ever; so if teachers are able to educate them well on issues of sex , they would be well informed. All the parents agree as well that , their wards most at times are led astray by their own peers who might have been spoilt already.

On the effects teenage pregnancy could bring on them, all of them unanimously thus 100% stated that the phenomenon should be discourage among the youth as it leads to termination of school by the mothers, birth complications and contraction of sexually transmitted infections.

The students interviewed also shared their thoughts that , teenage pregnancy delays their academic progress, expose them to stigmatization from their peers and they as well experience unfriendly treatment from their parents.

The 6 mothers in the population aslo express that , it is their joy to see their children growing into adults. So they would not like seeing them becoming drop out as a result of teenage pregnancy. The families also face public ridicule as a result of the premarital sex from the child. The parents shared as well that the premarital pregnancies could lead to health complications.

The students again on the preventive measures , 50% believe that it woud be best to stay away from sex . 40 % explained that , they can resort to family planing methods such as taken of pills and the use of condoms. 10% as such explained that they can take to the natural menstrual cycle and they would avoid sex during the period of ovulation and enjoy sex during the free peiod. This later preventive method could be challenge on the basis of its reliability but that remains the view of the respondents for which she is entitle to.

So looking at the facts and responses from the respondents , it could be established that teenage pregnancy is something that parents , families and institutions frown upon and would wish it ceases to exist among the young persons. All the stake holders would wish teenage pregnancy is completely eradicated as it does more harm than good to the young ones who are the future leaders. So more is needed to be done by all parties involve to bring this social canker to the barest minimum.

III. CONCLUSION

The paper revealed that teenage pregnancy occurs among girls below the age of 19 yrs. Some of the ourences that trigger this social menance are poverty , lack of parental care , peer inflence and sexual misinformation. The consequences of teenage pregnancy are: drop out from school , improper care from the teenagers parents as well as stigmatization from friends.

IV. RECOMENDATIONS

The authors want to recommend that the Ghana Education Service should intensify sex education and its related disciplines in the curricula , to educate the younger ones on the issues related to sex so they could be well informed.

The school Health Education programme (SHEP) in the schools should be re structured so could informed the children about the dangers of indulging in premarital sex.

Religious bodies should roll out programmes to educate parents on how to be responsible to their childrens welfare so that they would not fall prey to men who would want to offer them favours.

The law enforcement agencies in Ghana should be strenghten to give stifer punishment to those men who would take advantage of young girls leading to their pregnancies.

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