

Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to Teenager's Pregnancy among Public Secondary Schools Students. An Intensive Systematic Review.

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Abstract: Teenage pregnancy is one of the main community problems that academicians are discussing and that impacts both developing and developed communities. Globally, an expected 23 million girls below the age of 18 years are pregnant yearly, demonstrating that teen pregnancy encompasses a considerable worldwide healthiness problem. The aim of this study was to review the socio-cultural factors contributing to teenage pregnancy among secondary school students. Intensive literature review was carried out to find the factors associated with teenage pregnancy in different countries in comparison with Tanzania in which Kilolo District Council was taken as a case study. Most of the surveyed literatures showed that initiation ceremonies, low level of education of parents, peer pressure from fellow students both boys and girls, lack of exposure of parents to modern technology and the presence of social media like telegram groups contributes to early pregnancy among students. To curb the causes of early pregnancy among secondary school students, traditional rituals must be avoided in certain societies especially in rural areas.

Keywords— Socio-cultural factors, teenage pregnancy, public secondary schools, peer pressure, social media, cultural initiation ceremony, cultural beliefs, female genital mutilation (FGM).

1. INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is one of the main community problems that academicians are discussing and that impacts both developing and developed communities. Its impact on community improvement, mortality rates, educational registration and accomplishment, in addition to teens and psychosocial mind, have reached disturbing levels worldwide. Henceforth, teenage or young female getting pregnant in the range of 10-18 years old is known as a "*teenage pregnancy*" [1, 2]. In comparison with pregnancy after thorough maturity, pregnancy during teenage years stances a greater danger concerning mother's health and child as well [3]. In the teenage period (10-18 years) the body is transforming into a fast physiological development, emotional growth and sexual maturing, so extra demands through pregnancy may unfavorably affect the health and existence of mother and child [4, 5].

Globally, an expected 23 million girls below the age of 18 years are pregnant yearly, demonstrating that teen pregnancy encompasses a considerable worldwide healthiness problem [3]. High problem of teen pregnancy in developing countries, like Tanzania, rises thoughtful health and social challenges [6]. According to [7], WHO developed guiding principles on avoiding teenage pregnancy, but in Tanzania, national indicators disclose high and even rising number of teenage pregnancy [8-10]. Remaining in Tanzania, more than half of women give birth earlier before turning 18 years [7]. This is predominantly a tricky in rural areas, in which 32% of teenagers got pregnant in year 2015–2016 in comparison with 19% in urban areas for the same budgeted year. According to [11], living in unsystematic/unsafe vicinities, lower SES family, living with a single parent,

having older sexually active siblings or pregnant/parenting teenage sisters, and being a victim of sexual abuse. All these factors place teens at an elevated risk of adolescent pregnancy.

Culture, principally through anticipations of the families and societies in general regularly plays an important role in influencing sexual and reproductive behavior of female students. In Tanzania, various cultural groups treat and anticipate female student to act as grown person. The traditional practices of handling a teen as a fully-grown and supposing her to get married and bear children results in sexual affairs and then early marriages. This situation may without doubt leads to unintended teen pregnancy. Commencement ceremonies, such as circumcision (among teen ladies who are matured) or introducing for first time the lady who just started seeing her menstrual cycle (In Zaramo tribe they call "*Mwali*" and the action is known as "*Unyago*") are among the traditional group that indicates womanhood. This indicates that the earlier the age (reported from 9 to 15 years), the earlier the teens enter into an adulthood and this leads to, in the middle of other things, early sex and hence early marriage which can further leads to early pregnancy.

Cultural factors are among key players on the teenage pregnancy as per [12], who enlisted economic factors, cultural ,family construction and low educational accomplishment were all reliably recognized as a possible factors for teenage pregnancy. A study by [13], found that there is a relationship between sexual initiation to the teenagers and the preference of getting pregnancy in which they come out with conclusion that sexual initiation ceremonies exposes young females to the predatory old guys who eventually impregnates the teenagers. The research conducted by [14] in Matjitjileng Village, a sub-rural place located at Mogalakwena Municipality in South Africa, found

that most teenagers got pregnant at the age of 16-19 years and nearly all of them gotten pregnancy due to traditional beliefs in which the society surrounding the village believes that when a lady reaches puberty level then she is free to start exercising sexual intercourse which leads them to end up with either unplanned or planned pregnancy.

In this paper our contribution is based on analyzing the previous works on the factors influencing teenage pregnancy among students in secondary schools in different countries and to come with comparisons whether the same factors are applicable in our study area. As observed the factors for early pregnancy differs from one country to another for example factors associated with early pregnancies in United States of America differs largely with the factors influencing teenage pregnancy in Sub-Saharan region and hence Tanzania.

The paper is organized as follows: part one is about general introduction, part two is dedicated with literature survey or related works, part three deals with the methodology used to come with the study, while part four is about observations and discussions of the previous works and part five concludes the systematic review.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

There are several studies conducted in relation to cultural factors related to female student pregnancy. Various countries in the world, particularly American and European nations reflects the issue of female student pregnancy primarily as a health problem and are in the course of finding solutions for it, while, in many Asian nations, the growth in teen mothers is understood both as a healing plus cultural issue [15]. Besides, substantial differences occur in the rates of female student pregnancies among the ethnic and racial groups within USA. African-American and Hispanic teens give 57% of teen births albeit being 35% of the total population of 13-19 year old females in USA [16]. According to [17], the problems early pregnancy amongst the female students were partially endorsed to a failure in traditional norms and implementation of the Western culture, pornographic movies and non-spiritual music to name a few.

In many developing countries, a large number of teen mothers are found within their minority societies and the notable reason is being neglected by the dominant groups, economic background, and their customs etc. [15]

A study by [18] exposed that early involvement of some cultural undertakings like initiation rites ceremony plays a greater role on early sexual activities which leads to teen pregnancy or to be exposed to the danger of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) due to the circumstance that sexual practices among teens are a common behavior. A study conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) by [19], exposed that, a part from lack of information about sexual and reproduction health and rights, most of the teens from LAC who were exposed to social and cultural norms were very vulnerable to early pregnancy compared to those who were not exposed to cultural norms, thus this indicates

some cultural activities may be prone to teens to attract them to engage into early sexual activities which eventually leads to early pregnancies. According to [20], parental factors were found to be the main contributing factor on the female student pregnancy and in his study he associated parental factor ($P < 0.05$) with societal factor which in turn when combined they form cultural factors and the same factors were also pinpointed by [21].

A study by [22], found that cultural activities in Ghana and some parts of Tanzania has been catalysts for early pregnancy among female students in different schools and areas in general for example they cited the practice of polygamy as one of the source of attractions for young female to engage themselves into early sex because they lack proper supervision from their father at the time they need him. Another study by [23] from Uganda revealed that some factors like traditional, socio-cultural and religious in nature contributed to early pregnancy among female students in different parts of Uganda especially Lila district which has high rate of teenage pregnancy and is mostly caused by traditional beliefs. Socio-cultural and spiritual standards endorse abstinence till marriage.

On the other hand, as in many other communities, a double standard regarding sexuality is customary whereby ladies are anticipated to be shy, affectionate, obedient and passive, whereas boys are encouraged to involve in activities that emphasize their manhood and ambition, thus this may lead to early pregnancy as girls may try to exercise sexual intercourse as a result of a lack of health reproductive education [24]. Another study conducted in Ethiopia by [25], described that, a part from parental divorce, cultural norms were another major factor which contributes very much to the early pregnancy among girls who are still in schools and most of them are due to external force from one of the parent to force their daughters to get involved into sexual activities with the hope of getting married to those dating with. According to [26], there was some indication that marriage at small age, staying in a rural regions, early sexual initiation, being in traditional and religious smaller groups also enlarged the possibility of early pregnancy. So cultural conducts like early marriage and wrong beliefs concerning contraception accelerates the rate of female students to get early pregnancy. Most parents/guardians does not give female students enough information about sexual practices and contraception, as they think it is not appropriate for them to give such information culturally so they use their friends to give those desired and vital information to their daughters which in turn may sometimes be incorrect information that may lead to social attraction and hence early pregnancy to female students [27, 28].

Cultural activities is recognized as one the major factor of pregnancies among female students in tertiary schools as it forbid young female to discuss about sex at their community or home with their parents nor with anyone else [29]. A qualitative research conducted in South Africa cultural inspirations in choice making amongst female students in Khayelitsha exposed that female students are

anticipated not to debate concerning the number of sexual spouses their boyfriend has nor debate about the use of condom [30]. The study respondents further exposed that custom somehow advantaged boys and put female students under male control [30]. This may end up in female students being powerless on negotiating about safe sexual practice like use of condoms and hence driving them at risk for early pregnancy. [31], researched in Giyani Municipality and found that some parents/guardians were unwilling to provide sexual health education to their daughters, as they were scared that their daughters may take this as authorization to get into sexual practices. In addition, [32], provided a study about comprehensive sexual health services being provided in public and non-governmental organization outlets, but still these services were bounded by humiliation from parents, society leaders and religious leaders.

A thorough study conducted in Lindi region by [33] examined teenagers from Mwera or Makonde tribes who customarily have *unyago* training (a traditional maturity commencement ceremony that happens between the age of 5 and 10 years) and in their trainings, the teens are isolated for 2 up to 4 weeks and are trained by *kungwi* (fully-grown up women selected by their parents/guardians) in which participants reflect certain themes of *unyago* to influence the teenage pregnancy as they can inspire concepts and customs of children and this may expose them to early sexual intercourse which eventually leads to early pregnancy. The stated contents may include, how to accomplish evocative dancing, how to satisfy a spouse, and how to exercise sexual activities.

Another study by [34], identified the cultural norms as the main contributing factor on the early pregnancy of teenage girls as most of the traditional believers, believes that getting pregnancy at the early age proves that the lady/girl is fertile so that she can bear the pregnancy and hence give birth in which most of the men will be able to marry her because she has already proved to them that she is matured and fertile. A part from poverty, wish to get money, peer pressure from fellows, and lack of education on sexual health matters, [35-37] found that cultural activities and poor parental guidance, contributes to a large extent the exposure of female students to early pregnancy in rural areas compared to urban areas and this was observed in Mtwara region.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The methodology implemented by this review was “*Internet Search*” and Library usage. The review visited different sources on the Internet through different websites to find confirmation and realities about the requested matters. Wherever possible the websites of the precise resource were consulted, for instance website of some journals which place materials only in html set-up rather than word, pdf or documents. The studied literatures are customarily accessible through Internet. Another technique used is observations in which the researcher was needed to visit different secondary school and hospitals where the researcher met with the respondents who are mainly students who got pregnant while

in schools and the social welfare officers in those hospitals who provided information about the number of students who got pregnancy and visited the hospital for consultations about possible abortions or how to take care of the pregnancy. So in general secondary data sources were largely used in most part to come up with the conclusion.

4. OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Most of the visited literatures indicates that, high rate of teenage pregnancy among secondary school students occurs in rural areas as observed above, and mostly this leads to high exposure of getting pregnancy because of cultural activities being conducted even in this modern world. For example initiation ceremonies in most of the countries introduces teenagers to the world of sexual intercourse because they think now they are grown up so that they can start child bearing activities and hence early pregnancy. For example in Botswana, initiation rites have emblematic implications devoted to them. The ceremonies comprise boys and girls being taken from the society to live single-handedly in the jungle or in definitely equipped outbuildings away from the residents. The teens go through a period of isolation from community, nonappearance from maternal home, for the duration of time they get undisclosed guidelines on how to conduct themselves when they return to the community, families and parents/guardians back home. So generally this process contains revival, which is the act of coming back to the families, and it stresses that teens are now new with new characters because they have become men/women because they have already lost their childhood.



Figure 1: A picture showing teenagers being changed from childhood to womanhood after losing their childhood [38].

Another observation from the surveyed literatures associated with the social-cultural activities on the teenage pregnancy is the level of education of parents/guardians which have very high impact on the students getting pregnancy while still at school. In this observations, parents/guardians with low level of education are not aware with the technological advancement which prohibits some of the cultural activities taking place for example female genital mutilation (FGM) (“*Tohara kwa wanawake*”) in which most of the world organizations are discouraging those kind of cultural activities but because parents are not exposed with technology, they keep encouraging their daughters to undergo

such rituals which eventually exposes them to the risk of getting early pregnancy because after completing the circumcision some of the teens may try to test if they have real became women by starting practicing sexual intercourse and hence pregnancy. So low level of education of parents/guardians may stimulate their daughters to engage in activities which if their parents were educated they would have not participated in those ritual ceremonies. So low level of education is greatly associated with lack of exposure of parents/guardians in those rural areas.

Furthermore, peer pressure from girls who got pregnancy while still at school were another observations which attracted other female young people to get involved into sexual intercourse practices as they ought to imitate those ones whom they were together schooling but they are now breastfeeding their babies. A part from peer pressure from fellow girls, also pressure from fellow boys students traps young ladies to involve into early sexual intercourse without taking care of preventive measures as they have divided responsibilities like the duty of boys is to bring condoms during sexual intercourse so that they prevent ladies from getting pregnancy while girls are tasked to take care of their menstrual cycle or to remember the fertility period so that they do not falls into those days which are in ovulation, but if it happen girls forget their days and they meet sexually with the boys then ladies are advised to use contraceptive pills to avoid pregnancy in case of they met with the boys without using any preventive measures. So generally peer pressure from boys may result into young females getting early pregnancy.



Figure 2: A summary of the observations from the visited literatures about socio-cultural factors on Teenage pregnancy among students.

Last but not least observation is through the use of social media through the use of smartphones in which nowadays they are spread even in rural areas. In this students are exposed into the use of social media through social media like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp applications, Badoo dating site, tinder and the likes in which most of the contents shared involves sexual contents which make teens prone to those sexual activities taking place in those applications. For

example in Telegram application, there are even sex related links which needs or pays teens who are ready to share their nudes nakedly so this attracts most of the teens who are money oriented and came from poor families.

5. CONCLUSION

In Africa most of teenage girls get pregnancy due to various reasons. Large differences in rates were observed in different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and the highest being East Africa. Being socially distinguished contrary to poor economic status, young females become wounded because of gender bias and have a tendency to have little decision-making power because they afraid to get bold decision whether to engage in sexual intercourse or not. So cultural factors mostly causes or contribute to early pregnancy like observed on discussion part for instance, the initiation ceremony in some of the regions or countries puts teenage girls at the risk of getting early pregnancy because they think now they became women after completing initiation rites so they want to try if they are capable of handling husband-wife role. The role of marital status of parents in the contribution of teenage pregnancy should not be ignored because the teens tends to get advice from both parents who are staying or living together as sometimes it occurs the lady is afraid to face mother about maternal issues but she is free to face her father for the same case but if it happens the father is not nearby then it becomes an issue and she may go to neighbor who sometimes may be attracted sexually to the teen and then give her advice which will be on his side, furthermore, some parents tends to bribe their daughters to get partners so that they can gain some finances from those partners and hence expose their daughters to early pregnancy . Peer pressure from fellow students in both sex (boys or girls) may also results into teenage pregnancy as explained in discussion part and this mainly occurs when teen friend talks about condom use on preventing pregnancy them most of the teens will believe that using condoms may not endanger their reproduction activities.

To conclude, the role of social media in the modern world also contributes to a large extent the teenagers to fall into the risk of getting pregnancy as most of the social media nowadays are promoting sexual activities and some of those media offers money to the teens who can send to them videos or pictures containing their nudes thus boosting their financial gain. Finally level of education of parents/guardians contributes to early pregnancy for their daughters especially those families with low level of education and lack of exposure.

6. RECOMMENDATION AND FUTURE WORK

In the future, further research must be conducted on the level of how much teenagers gets pregnancy in secondary schools due to socio-cultural factors and how can these factors be controlled to curb the increasing number of students getting pregnancy. Compulsory sex learning should be introduced in most schools so as to make those female

students aware about the use of contraception means if they have already started to engage in sexual practices. So teenagers basic knowledge about the use of contraception will limit or lower teenage pregnancy.

Also some cultural activities which direct teens to early pregnancy should be abandoned like female genital mutilation which in Tanzania mostly occurs in central zone (Dodoma, Singida and the surrounding regions).

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