TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN BENIN CITY: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES FOR FUTURE NATIONAL LEADERS.

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ABSTRACT

The uprising of young girls carrying babies in the state (Edo State) capital, has been alarming as this speaks of some dysfunctional attitude and lapse in the social system, teenage pregnancy has been a universal phenomenon, and the Africa situation especially Nigeria society is not exempted, from the national population census of 2006 till date there has been drastic increase in the fertility level of the country and Edo state fertility rate is on the increase. This expository study examines the social causes and the danger of teenage pregnancy in Benin City and its aftermath effect to future leaders (female). Conclusions and recommendations will be based on the findings from the field study in some given location within the state capital.

Keywords: teenage, teenage pregnancy, Benin City, child bearing, motherhood

INTRODUCTION

The idea of fertility dwells more on the female conception, as most girls wants to become a woman with high reputation one day and attain for themself a career that will stand her out. To achieve this she will desire to get married, have her own family, and in this case carry her own baby by being pregnant for the man that would be her husband. When this is cut short abruptly, it becomes a problem to be solved. Teenage pregnancy is a major threat in the society and it is a major health concern because of its high morbidity and mortality for both mother and child. The Encarta Dictionary of English, the concept of teenage is an early 20th century word, which represents the age between 13-19 years and mostly used for the girl child. The UNICEF (2011) defined adolescence/ teenage as the period between 10 and 19 years old. The teenage period is a critical part of development in the life cycle, a time of physical and emotional changes as the body matures. A good example is the concept of the teenage girls. Jones, Frank Allen, and Meyer, William J. (2008) opined that the concept adolescence is a stage of maturation between childhood and adulthood. The term denotes the period from the beginning of puberty to maturity; it usually starts at about age 14 in males and age 12 in females. The transition to adulthood varies among cultures, but it is generally defined as the time when individuals begin to function independently of their parents. Madufooro. And Ojebode. (2011), added that, the adolescent period is one of rapid growth and development that includes physical, psychological, intellectual, and social changes. This growth and development creates increased demands for energy and nutrients, because nutrition and physical growth are integrally related, inadequate energy and nutrients can slow or stop linear growth (stunting) and delay sexual maturation.
However teenage pregnancy looks at the age at which the female young folks become pregnant and are expecting to deliver their baby. Within this age the female child was suppose to be in school, where she will be taught or learn one form of trade or craft that will keep her relevant in the society. Adekanle D. et al (2008) asserted that the occurrence of teenage pregnancy is less rampant in developed countries as compared to developing countries like Nigeria with its lowest incidence rapidly decreasing, with the lowest incidence of 3% reported in Sweden. In Nigeria and other developing countries in Africa, teenage pregnancy occurs more commonly and the incidence ranges from 3.7% to 21.9% of all pregnancies. Tempo-Mwanawenge (2007) asserted that child bearing during the teenager years also frequently has adverse social consequences, particularly on female educational attainment because women who become mothers in their teen are likely to curtail education.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is a growing society with majority of her population being of their youthful age, she is also regarded as the giant of Africa considering the population size. It is alarming to know that most of the country’s female citizen that are of the adolescent age are becoming pregnant or have had their first pregnancy before the age of 18 years. According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2008, findings shows that teenage pregnancy are on the increase, and further went on to add that the rate for teen motherhood increase steadily from age 15 to 19, with especially large increase between the ages of 16 and 17 and between the ages of 17 and 18, with the former occupying 24.2% of the teen within the age limit, while the later carries a 35.7%. The South-South Nigeria is the fourth highest carrier of this situation with about 12% of the entire situation in the country.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (2009) asserted that, unplanned pregnancies among Nigeria teenagers and young women have risen despite improvement in educational level. In 2003, 16% of pregnancies among girls and women aged 15-24 years had been unintended compared with 10% in 1999. The study from the New York based Guttmacher institute (1999), said that, low use of contraceptive was partially to blame. The idea of early marriage is not left out from the scheme of things, as Ugiagbe et al. in Eghafona and Osunde (2012) states that, child marriage was not common among the Benins but a girl can be betrothed to a man at early childhood or age, but the marriage will not take place till the girl reaches puberty or come of age. In all, when a girls are given out in marriage at early age there is tendency that once intimacy comes in that leads to sexual activities, there are every cause for the girls’s child to be pregnant.

CAUSES OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN NIGERIA

The country has experienced a dramatic increase in the population of her citizen, and this can be caused by an increase in the fertility level in society. Teenage pregnancy in Nigeria is caused by various factors, one of these factors are man-made in nature. In the Nigeria society, tradition has placed a very high value on female self dignity and this has kept them ‘clean’. As Caldwell et.al (1991), asserted that, in the traditional African society of which Nigeria is a typical example, virginity at marriage was near universal for all unmarried female adolescent. Though this was in place, a sharp transformation has brought a change in the values that were once cherished to what is now referred to as out-dated and out of fashion. Oladosu (1993), states that many traditional values and societal practices have, however undergone changes with the advent of colonialism and traditional sexual values are not an exception. He further expatiated by listing the features of the tradition that has taken place, they include: an almost non-existent value placed on virginity at marriage, individual choice of marital partner and an increase in the incidence of monogamous marriage.

Sams (2008), added that there are some factors that led to early motherhood especially in Developing countries, they include: Educational failure, Poverty, Unemployment and low self esteem. According to Teen Pregnancy Stats, Facts and Prevention (2012),” There are many reasons that teenagers
become pregnant. Some of them want to have babies. However, the fact of the matter is that most teen pregnancies are unintentional (80 percent). Additionally, most of them occur to unwed teen mothers. This means that even though most teens do not want to become pregnant, they are still becoming so as a result of sexual activity. While actual force to have sex is rare, many teenage girls (especially those under the age of 15) feel pressured to have sex. And, of course, the more intercourse a teenager has, the more likely it is that a teen pregnancy will eventually result.

- **UNWANTED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE**

  Rape does happen and is one of the reasons that teen pregnancies occur. Rape by boyfriends, family members and even strangers can result in teen pregnancy. However, many teenagers feel pressure of a more subtle kind. Most teenage girls who engage in sexual activity, and especially those who do so before the age of 15, admit that they wish they had waited. But often they feel pressure from their boyfriends: three out of four girls (75 percent) report that the reason they have sex is because their boyfriends want them to. Most of these teens regret it later, whether or not they become pregnant.

- **INCONSISTENT USE OF BIRTH CONTROL**

  Even though the use of contraceptives has increased among teenagers, its use remains spotty. Teens may use birth control to help prevent teen pregnancy, but most do not use contraceptives consistently. Erratic contraceptive use, however, is better than none. A sexually active teen that does not use any birth control has a 90 percent chance of becoming pregnant within a year. Some of the reasons that birth control is not used include the following: uneducated about birth control, uncomfortable using birth control methods and unable to access reliable birth control.

- **ABSTINENCE-ONLY SEX EDUCATION**

  Despite recent government efforts to fund abstinence-only sex education, the vast majority of teenage boys and girls (62 percent and 70 percent) have initiated vaginal sex by the age of 18. Because of their nature, abstinence-only programs leave out educational information on birth control. These programs have never been shown to actually reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy. However, they are the programs that receive the most funding from the government. There are state governments that forbid any sort of teen sex education in schools at all. This means that teens that experiment may not have information on birth control and are more likely to engage in activity that results in teen pregnancy. Despite governmental focus on abstinence-only education, a majority of parents feel that sex education in schools should include information about contraceptives in addition to abstinence. 89 percent of parents feel that in addition to education about the benefits of teen abstinence, teenagers should also receive education on condoms and other birth control methods. Only 15 percent of American adults feel that abstinence-only education should be taught in schools. Most medical organizations and practitioners support comprehensive sex education.

**EFFECT OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY**

The reason is that an early pregnancy can have harmful implications on girls’ physical, psychological, economic and social status (Tsai and Wong 2003). It has been found (DoH 1999) that teenage mothers have poor antenatal care as they do not attend their antenatal appointments, they tend to deliver low birth weight babies, premature babies and babies who die during the first year of their life. Additionally the infant mortality and morbidity rates are higher for infants delivered by teenage mothers than infants delivered by older women. (Anderson et al. 2000) Also, it is more likely that these children will be raised in Single-parents families and to live in poverty (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). Also, as studies have shown (Moffitt et al. 2002) early motherhood is associated with low educational achievement, long term benefit receipt, low
or no income, low occupational status, or unemployment and therefore, it can affect teenage girls’ well being. (Tsai and Wong 2003).

According to Sams (2008), Effects of teen pregnancies on the children involved:

- These children are far more likely to grow up in poverty.
- To have more health problems
- To suffer from higher rates of abuse and neglect.
- To fail in school.
- To become teen mothers.
- To commit delinquent acts and adult crimes.
- To incur failed adult marriages and other relationships.

However, the Wikipedia on teen pregnancy classify the effect of teenage pregnancy in the following order:

➤ MEDICAL EFFECT

Maternal and prenatal health is of particular concern among teens that are pregnant or parenting. The worldwide incidence of premature birth and low birth weight is higher among adolescent mothers. According to Banerjee, et al, (2009), teenage mothers between 15–19 years old are more likely to have anemia, preterm delivery, and low birth weight than mothers between 20–24 years old. Guttmacher Institute. (1999), States that, research indicates that pregnant teens are less likely to receive prenatal care, often seeking it in the third trimester, if at all. The Guttmacher Institute also reports that one-third of pregnant teens receive insufficient prenatal care and that their children are more likely to suffer from health issues in childhood or be hospitalized than those born to older women. Many pregnant teens are at risk of nutritional deficiencies from poor eating habits common in adolescence, including attempts to lose weight through dieting, skipping meals, food faddism, snacking, and consumption of fast food.

Sanchez et al. (1997), asserted that, inadequate nutrition during pregnancy is an even more marked problem among teenagers in developing countries. However Peña et al (2003), opined that the Complications of pregnancy result in the deaths of an estimated 70,000 teen girls in developing countries each year. Young mothers and their babies are also at greater risk of contracting HIV. (Locoh, 2000). The World Health Organization estimates that the risk of death following pregnancy is twice as great for women between 15 and 19 years than for those between the ages of 20 and 24. The maternal mortality rate can be up to five times higher for girls aged between 10 and 14 than for women of about twenty years of age. Illegal abortion also holds many risks for teenage girls in areas such as sub-Saharan Africa. (Mayor, 2004).

➤ PSYCHOSOCIAL

According to Stepp, (2009), there are various psychosocial effect of teenage pregnancy in the society, these examines the effect on the mother, the child and on other family members. Teenage parents who can rely on family and community support, social services and child-care support are more likely to continue their education and get higher paying jobs as they progress with their education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In expatiating the reality of teenage pregnancy, functionalism is assumed the ideal theory.
Functionalists often describe society as an organism with a life of its own, above and beyond the sum of its parts. French sociologists Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim and American Talcott Parsons assumed functionalist approaches in depicting social phenomenon. The tenet of the theory is that society is seen as a system made up of interrelated parts, all interacting on the basis of a common value system or consensus about basic values and common goals. Every social custom and institution is seen as having a function in ensuring that society works efficiently.

The development of functionalism was based on the model of the organic system found in the biological science, it reflect the entire body structure where all the organs and tissue function together for the healthy living of the whole biological entity. With this analogy, the functionalist theory ascertained that for the society to survive, every basic institution in its domain must function. The social institutions, such as the family, which could be referred to as the smallest unit of the society or the ‘atom’ of the human society, and other institutions like religion are analyzed as part of the social system, rather than an isolated unit. These institutions are understood with reference to the contribution they make to the system in its entirety. However the theory postulated that a dysfunctional part will lead to a dysfunctional system if not rectified.

LABELING THEORY

This theory proposes labelling as a basis for its approach to teenage pregnancy as a menace. The critical issue in this theory looks at why certain behaviour is define/labelled as deviant, it examine how people react to what is done. Not all who engage in certain kinds of behaviour are labelled deviant, but some are.

This theory posit that the interest of dominant group are served by defining as deviants a class of social marginal individuals, whose individual problem becomes the power concern of the helping professionals Phohl, (1977). This perspective, supported by some empirical work using officially reported cases of teenage pregnancy, argues that even though teenage pregnancy occur in all society it affect only a few minority, no matter the class or ethnic group.

In summary, the concept of functionalism postulate that all functional part of a system will lead to the full functional system and a dysfunctional part if not rectify will cause a dysfunctional system. Teenage pregnancy in the society is seen as dysfunctional in the social system, this is because most of the girl child and women that were drawn in the concept of pregnancy in Nigeria society are mostly regarded as irresponsible. Teenage pregnancy in the Nigeria society is seen as a menace, and is dysfunctional in the society. However if these dysfunctional abnormalities is not corrected by regular health education, awareness on the dangers of unprotected sex among teenagers and provision of implementable policies that will enhance the reduction in teenage pregnancy in Nigeria.

On the use of labeling theory, teenagers that get pregnant are seen as deviants in the society, not knowing fully the cause. Pregnant teenagers are seen as irresponsible and are mostly labeled ‘useless’ in some part of the society, however parent should ensure they bring up their children in the biblical proverbial way. Train the child in the right way and educate the child on the danger of being pregnant at an early age and the disease that they (the children) may contact if they engage in indiscriminate sex.

METHODOLOGY

Data attainment: The study is conducted in three communities in Benin City namely: Ogbe quarters, new Benin quarters and the Uselu quarter in Benin City. The strength of the research is based on the method that is used which include a qualitative and a quantitative method of research data, the data for
analysis is perceived from primary source in Benin city of Edo state, it was used to authenticate the research findings and in getting the research respondent a cluster sampling was used to stratify the study area, then a simple random sampling method was used in getting the respondents in the stratified study area. The study population comprises women who had their first pregnancy before the age of 18years and also those that are pregnant and are of age 18years and below. They formed the respondents in the area of the study and were analyzed. The corresponding outcomes are demonstrated from the analysis of collected data.

FINDING AND CONCLUSION

Teenage pregnancy have been discussed in the above content, result from the respondent shows causes of teenage pregnancy and the people’s perception on the danger to future leaders in the state.

TABLE 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC OF RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sex:</th>
<th>Marital status:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (0) 0%</td>
<td>Single (186)62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How old are you?</td>
<td>female(300) 100%</td>
<td>married(114)38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 14yrs</td>
<td>(48)16%</td>
<td>divorced(0)0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19yrs</td>
<td>(114)38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24yrs</td>
<td>(60)20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 25yrs</td>
<td>(78)26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level of respondents</td>
<td>Primary(24)8%</td>
<td>JSS(48)16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSS(108)36%</td>
<td>school dropout(84)28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious affiliation:</td>
<td>Christian(198)66%</td>
<td>ATR(30)10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim(72) 24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental background of respondents:</td>
<td>Living with both parents (48) 16%</td>
<td>living with single parents (132) 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>living with relatives (120) 40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation of respondents:</td>
<td>Hawker (81) 27%</td>
<td>jobless (51) 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>house helps (69) 23%</td>
<td>students (90) 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents socio-economic status:</td>
<td>Upper class (9) 3%</td>
<td>middle class (105) 35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lower class (186) 62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: fieldwork 2012

IMPLICATION OF THE TABLE 1

Since fertility is basically a female issue, all the respondent were females, with majority of them within age 15-29years (38%) and 25years and above (26), however those above the age of 25 years and above had their first pregnancy before 18years of age. From the analysis, the result shows that 88% of the respondents have below a tertiary institution degree and some are school dropout. Since Benin City is more of a Christian religious state it is obvious from the result that 66% of the entire respondents were Christians and the other 34% are either Muslims or traditional worshippers. 62% of the respondents asserted that they were single, while most of the married respondents had their first pregnancy at an early age of marriage (before age 18).

Parental background shows that majority of the respondents were either living with single parents( either their Mum or Dad) or with relatives, and this girls end up doing odd jobs like hawking, house-helps and other jobless. Only a few of them claimed to students, however the result shows that majority of the respondent asserted that their parents were from the lower class with 62%, while 35% claimed to have a middle class parents. This shows that socio-economic class of parents has a role to play in adolescent pregnancy.
TABLE 2: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN BENIN CITY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of teenage pregnancy</th>
<th>Early marriage</th>
<th>Socio-economic status</th>
<th>Peer influence</th>
<th>Poor parenting</th>
<th>Unprotected sex</th>
<th>Religious affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers (Percent)</td>
<td>36 (12%)</td>
<td>49 (16%)</td>
<td>75 (25%)</td>
<td>63 (21%)</td>
<td>57 (19%)</td>
<td>20 (6.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of teenage pregnancy on the individual</th>
<th>Makes her irresponsible</th>
<th>early motherhood</th>
<th>school dropout</th>
<th>carries stigma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers (Percent)</td>
<td>30 (10%)</td>
<td>105 (35%)</td>
<td>90 (30%)</td>
<td>75 (25%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of teenage pregnancy to the society</th>
<th>Population explosion</th>
<th>irresponsible children</th>
<th>increase in school dropout</th>
<th>increase in child street hawking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers (Percent)</td>
<td>45 (15%)</td>
<td>72 (24%)</td>
<td>126 (42%)</td>
<td>57 (19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: fieldwork 2012

The following were listed as the causes of teenage pregnancy in the city metropolis, but are not limited to the following; early marriage, socio-economic status, peer influence, poor parenting, unprotected sex, religious affiliation. However the impact of this menace is enormous as it affect both the individual and the society. For the individual, the menace of teenage pregnancy is seen as making the individual irresponsible, makes her an early mother, as this usually have some medical effect on both mother and child, teenage pregnancy usually carries some stigma and makes most teenage mother “school dropout”.

On the lager society, teenage pregnancy causes population explosion, when the girl child start child bearing at an early age, there are tendency that more children are likely to be born before they get to the age of menopause, it is also acclaimed that it produces irresponsible children, as most teen mothers lack the basic training for raising up children in the society, the menace also increase the amount of school dropout for the girl child, when this happen the likes of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, would never have been the Minister of Finance in this country, as such position are very sensitive and are not given to school dropout, Abike Dabiri-Erewa a member of the House of Representative, Professor Dora Akunyili, and Professor Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufai. These personalities are not school dropout, and they were able to attain certain high position and are known all over the country and beyond. Finally the menace have caused an increase in child street hawking, this is because most mother could not afford to care for their children and so they engage this young one into street hawking so that they can contribute to the welfare of the home at a very young age and this will make them vulnerable and prone to danger on the street.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEDATION

The study concludes that the impact of teenage pregnancy, if not checked properly, to some families, will create an everlasting stigma, bad reputation, endangering of the girls child in Benin city, which is a microcosm of the larger society(Nigeria) at the nearest future, exposing the girl child to some advance diseases that affect them later in life and other negative consequences which brings down the identity of the society in which the menace is perpetuated. On the premise the following recommendation were made:

1. Teenage pregnancy is a menace in the society and should be discouraged in its entirety; teenagers should be enlightened and given free and compulsory education so that they will have less time for irrelevant issue that is immoral. Parents should also monitor the activity of their daughters and caution them on the dangers of been pregnant in their teen.

2. The policy maker should make policy that will create an enabling environment that will reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy in the country, so that they can see, feel, believe and work for the country’s vision for prosperity and also attain the Millennium Development Goal Strategy of 2015.

3. The government should help to train her citizen so that they will bring out the best of themselves in the near future, for instance Medical doctors, Academics technicians etc teenagers that were trained, thereby contributing to their countries. The government should re-invest into the society, by building infrastructural facilities for instance, schools for training her citizens to be the best in any field of their
choice, Hospitals for better health care services, industries in other to employ most of her citizen and also reducing the poverty level in the country. All these will help the country in meeting the MDGs of the United Nations in 2015.

4. The community leaders have a role to play too, they should ensure that the government provides infrastructural facilities and as much, protect these facilities, because these facilities could aid the development of the children in the area. They should also motivate their community members toward partnering with the government in maintaining government facilities. This could be proper usages, reporting damages early, participating in policy making and implementing etc.

5. Community leaders should try and revisit the some cultural belief that encourages some acts that promote teenage pregnancy in the society, religious leaders are not left out as they are also in the main stream of the activities of these act, they should practice what they preach and discourage marriages that has link with young girls that not of age in the society, thereby reducing early marriage and motherhood.

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