

## ERADICATING TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN IREWOLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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**Abstract:** For the purpose of social transformation, development and sustainability, the call for gender equality across the globe is desirable. There has been a lot of scholarly contributions as regards Sustainable Development Goals. However, less attention is paid to the girls' education which is often hindered by teenage pregnancy. Girls' education is one of the major Sustainable Development Goals under Gender equality. This study aims at investigating the causes of teenage pregnancy and its adverse implications on girls in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State. The selection of the said Local Government is informed by the discovery that the area can be associated with the subject-matter. The local government is predominantly an agrarian environment. Participatory observation, descriptive survey, oral interview and focus group discussion are the methods employed to gather data for the study. Both the quantitative and the qualitative research instruments are applied in the study. The study establishes that both social and cultural factors contribute to the menace of teenage pregnancy in the local government investigated. The study suggests among other things that there is an urgent need to re-orientate the minds of the young girls in the local government and the need to empower those who are already victims of the ugly age-long trend.

**Key words:** Teenage pregnancy, Sustainable Development Goals, Irewole Local Government, Reorientation

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## 1. Introduction

In recent times, there have been various attempts by different scholars on the attainment of 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. However, inadequate attention has been paid to the issue of teenage pregnancy which has serious implications for achieving some of the seventeen (17) identified Sustainable Development Goals. For instance, teenage pregnancy will adversely affect gender equality; reduction in child mortality, eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and efforts to improve maternal health as well as combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Therefore, this study becomes necessary for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals as it affects girls' education.

In African context, an expectant mother is expected to be matured physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically, socioeconomically and spiritually. Hence, it is not the responsibility of a girl within the ages of thirteen to nineteen to be a mother. It is an unfortunate situation when any girl becomes pregnant before the age of twenty. A phenomenon where under-aged girls are sexually active and become pregnant is referred to as teenage pregnancy. Briggs (2001); Onuzulike (2003); Ayuba et al. (2012); Alabi & Oni (2017) and Adebola (2018) are some of the scholars who have investigated issues relating to teenage pregnancy in recent times. The investigators are of the opinion that teenagers are sexually active and they have high fertility rate.

Adolescence is the period between the age of 10 and 19 years when the individual moves from the initial appearances of secondary sexual characteristics to full sexual maturity and it is a time when psychological and emotional processes are developed from those of a child to those of an adult (WHO, 1981). Ezeorah (1982); Melgosa (2001); Akella & Jordan (2015) and Alabi & Oni (2017) among other researchers have posited that the teen years run from thirteen to nineteen years. According to Maduforo and Ojebade (2011), teenage pregnancy is when a young woman who has not done her 20th birthday as at the time the pregnancy ends, whether or not the woman is lawfully married.

Teenage pregnancy is one of the major social challenges in the contemporary period not only in the developing nations but also in the industrialized countries. The social background of an individual contributes immensely to the construction of his/her life on sociocultural and other wise. Mills (1959) has observed that an individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period. He can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those individuals in his circumstances. All of such personal troubles are offshoots of social structure. Adebola (2018) has submitted that teenage pregnancy can also be life threatening because such adolescent girls may be immature and physically unable to handle the rigor of child labor and delivery.

In 2012, the British Council Nigeria advised that it is important to pay attention to the situation of women and girls particularly in a nation like Nigeria because it has the highest population in Africa. More importantly, 47% of Nigerian women are mothers before they reach the age twenty (20). Consolidating the view of British Council Nigeria, the United Nations Population Fund (2013) has also revealed that there are 580 million adolescent girls in the world; four out of five of them live in developing countries.

The World Health Organization (2014), in its fact-sheet has reported that adolescent pregnancy is one of the major contributors to maternal and child mortality, and to the cycle of ill-health and poverty. In a sentence, relying on Olorunsaiye et al. (2021), one could sum it up that teenage pregnancy is a form of car crash. There is, therefore, the need to pay adequate attention to this social menace so that some of the sustainable Development Goals can be achieved. According to the Sustainable Development Commission, sustainable development is development that can meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs. Premised on the foregoing, Mailafia (2018) sees sustainability as “a rate of growth in output that can be maintained over a sustained period of time without creating other significant challenges, particularly for future generation.”

The choice of Irewole local government area of OsunState, Southwestern Nigeria for the study is guided by the fact that there are reports which indicate a prevailing situation of teenage pregnancy in Ikire and its environs that make up the local government.

## **2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify basic causes and negative effects of teenage pregnancy with a view to recommending workable solutions to the social menace. Simple random sampling is used in selecting the respondents. Fifty respondents (50) are selected from five communities in the Irewole local government Area. Descriptive survey technique, participatory observation, focus group discussion and oral interview are the research tools for data gathering. With these research methods, it is possible to understand meaningful relationships through interpretation of social knowledge and experiences ( Kvale, 1996; Husley, 2011, p. 33; Akella & Jordan, 2015, p. 44).

In psychology, human behaviour is one of the central issues that attract a lot of attention. A person’s perception and way of handling his or her feelings which guide his or her relationship with others are products of his or her behaviour. By extension, it deals with the biological facts of existence and the relationships between biology and behaviour. The behavioural theories are concerned with observables such as stimuli and responses while cognitive theories explain mental processes which are involved in thinking, problem solving, decision making, perception and attribution. Motive is the root cause of any behaviour. Motivation is the major spring of behaviour. Psychologists see motivation as “all the processes involved in arousing, directing and sustaining a behaviour directed towards the achievement of a goal”. It energizes and regulates behaviour towards the satisfaction of needs. According to Maslow, human actions may be classified into two major systems of needs; namely, the basic needs and the Meta needs. The basic needs consist of psychological needs (security, love and self-esteem) and physiological needs. Meta needs on the other hand, are higher level needs and they are concerned with cognitive needs, aesthetic needs and the need for self-fulfilment. Simply put, these two broad types of needs are regrouped as deficiency needs and growth needs. Basic physiological and psychological needs are named deficiency needs because when they are not satisfied, individuals may engage in behaviours designed to get those needs satisfied. The Meta needs are described as growth needs since activities relating to them do not result from deficiencies or lack of such needs. For instance, a teenage girl who is starving will not pay any attention to self-esteem.. She will not be ashamed of committing illicit sexual intercourse. She will engage in sexual act with either older men or younger opposite sex that can meet her financial and other needs. In Maslow’s theory, which he called his hierarchy of needs, he determined that when one level of a person’s needs is satisfied, then the next level has the greatest influence on that person’s behaviour (Riddle, 2001).

### 3. Results

There are two major categories of causes of teenage pregnancy in Irewole Local government area of Osun State. They are the social factors and the cultural factors. This section presents how variables in each of the two classifications are responsible for teenage pregnancy in the studied area.

#### ***3.1 Family Background***

A family is the nucleus of any society. It is a very significant agent of socialisation and mobilisation. A family provides the first orientation for its members which could make them acceptable members of a larger society. In Africa, the patriarchal ideology is a serious issue. Eruaga (2014) says it is “socially, culturally and religiously ingrained and operates through the exploitation, inferiorisation and dehumanisation of women. The ideology conceives women as objects of men’s sexual, economic and material exploitation.” Eruaga (2018) goes further by adding that:

Patriarchy relegates the female sex to a position of insignificance and inconsequentiality where she is visited with all forms of inhuman treatment.

As a matter of fact, certain factors affect the effectiveness of people who are products of a given family in their communities. One of such factors is educational background that depends largely on their families’ takes on western education. Access to Western education or level of education attained determines whether somebody will be described as educated or illiterate. Low level of education has been identified as one of the factors that determine the possibility for a poor living condition of members of a family. Findings from the study indicate that some of the victims of teenage pregnancy are products of low income earners at both the formal and the informal sectors. Besides, it is established that some families have an unpleasant history of their children being victims of teenage pregnancy as a result of poverty. According to one of our respondents in an oral interview, “Even the supposed brilliant girls who are from poor homes are not left out. They strongly believe that their mothers will take care of their babies for them when they have unplanned pregnancy. Many of the girls regretted their actions later because they might not be able to further in their education or learn a tangible handiwork. Worst still, they usually do not settle down with the father of their children born out of wedlock”.

In this case, the poverty in the family has adversely affected their teen to become a victim of teenage pregnancy and become disorientated in life. It is, therefore, evident that poor family background in terms of socioeconomic power is one of the major causes of teenage pregnancy in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State.

#### ***3.2 Occupation***

The work that people do in a community or a society places them on a social status. Many societies around the world are controlled by capitalist tendencies that partitioned individuals or groups of people into classes. Difference in socioeconomic power, therefore, leads to disparities in social stratification and purchasing ability. Fcai (2006) notes that:

Women are judged to be less valuable than male. They cannot participate fully in economic and public life: have limited access to positions of power, have narrower employment choices and lower earning than men and must struggle to reconcile their traditional roles. Too often they have little or no voice in decisions made in their communities. Preference for son is common in many cultures.

In Irewole Local government, the inhabitants could be grouped into the rich, the middle class and the poor. The major occupation in the local government is farming; particularly crop productions with the use of primitive tools and methods of farming. Findings from this study reveal that poor farming techniques and unfavourable climate condition, possibly as a result of climate change or other natural disasters negatively affect crop yields. Poor harvest has made the farmers to be poorer and their lives have become more miserable. Some of the farmers could not adequately provide for their immediate family members with regard to their various levels of needs. An extract from our interview reads thus:

“My father is a farmer and my mother is a petty trader. Many a time, it is difficult to get money to pay my school fees with that of my younger ones because we are six children. And this caused me to ask boys and even men for money. Many of them often want sex in exchange for their money. It is always irresistible. Unfortunately I became a victim of teenage pregnancy which ordinarily was not my fault”.

From the extract above, it is suffice to say that the occupation of one’s parents could be a major social factor to determine whether or not a teenager would be a victim of teenage pregnancy in the location that serves as the site for this study.

### ***3.3 Parenting***

This is another serious cause of teenage pregnancy in Irewole local government area of Osun State as indicated by this study. Parenting, which entails the totality of ways and strategies adopted in bringing up a child, contributes significantly to the product a child is made up of. Many bad children in the society are products of poor parenting and toxic relationship between fathers and mothers. Most children from broken homes/single parent homes often turn out to be wayward and emotionally unstable as well as dangerous. The total absence of either a father or a mother in the raising of a child has adverse effects on such a child in his or her journey in life. The high-handedness of some step-mothers or step-fathers makes many children to run away from their homes. As a result of lack of proper home-training and absence of sense of belonging, many underage girls become victims of rape and teenage pregnancy. In the words of one of the girls that were interviewed, “Getting pregnant at JSS II is never anything strange around here. It appears like a normal thing for a girl who has not been exposed to using contraceptives or pregnancy prevention methods. My mother told me she got her first pregnancy when she was fifteen due to hardship she suffered in the hand of her step-mother. I got mine at age fourteen. My mother is a single-mother. Around here, a lady, especially those from poor background, who is twelve years old, has at least one or two boyfriends. And, most time, her mother knows about it.” Both the father and the mother have different roles to play in order to bring up a child that will contribute meaningfully to the development and the sustainability of socioeconomic spheres of a given society.

### ***3.4 Influence of the New Media***

The new media influence is again a serious threat to the development of young minds. It is, therefore, one of the causes of teenage pregnancy. It causes a lot of distractions in modern societies around the world. In today’s world, a child of eight years has access to social media not only the radio and the television but also to social media platforms like Facebook, Youtube, WhatsApp, Tiktok and others through smart phones. Some adult contents in most of these social media platforms capture and corrupt the minds of children as well as misguide them. An excerpt from our interviews reads thus: “Since the day I watched an adult-content film (pornography) on a friend’s cell phone in my JSSI, I had never remained the same. Two weeks after, I was deflowered. I was eleven years going to twelve that time. I was unable to continue my education after my junior WAEC because I got pregnant.” This is rather

unfortunate. By imitating what they see on the social media, many children become victims of circumstances. Access to adult contents such as pornographic images, films, erotic scenes and sensual pictures on the social media should be censored. One way to do that is by asking parents to make use of built-for-purpose applications to restrict the access their wards have via their cell phones, tablets, laptops and desktops computers.

**3.5 Religious Belief**

Religious issues could be categorized as cultural factor because religion is a part of a people’s culture. Apart from the family, the school and the mass media, the religion that we practice is a very potent agent of socialisation, mobilisation and mind shaping or modeling. Whether traditional or orthodox, religions have serious influence on an individual as a member of a society. There are certain practices which are permitted by one religion that is not allowed in another religion. For example, traditional religion and Islam do not see anything bad in polygamy. However, Christianity frowns at it. The acceptable marriage practice in Christianity is monogamy; that is, a man to only one wife. Abuku (2013) observes thus:

Some common factor which have inhibited this awareness have been either cultural or societal, some religious and at times just downright selfishness on the man’s part to maintain the status quo. Even politics have served as an inhibiting factor.

Another related issue about religions as it affects teenage pregnancy is early marriage. While in certain religions, a female child who has started her menstruation is no longer encouraged to be under the roof of her parents, there is nothing wrong about a girl staying with her parents even till she gets her BSc., MSc or PhD.

Many under aged girls who were victims of teenage pregnancy were influenced by religious beliefs. An extract from our interviews run thus: “I did not attempt to go for abortion because my religion does not allow it.”

**4. Data Analysis**

This section of the study seeks to present a statistical explanation of findings in Irewole local government area of Osun State as regards teenage pregnancy. This is necessary for a quick grasp of the subject and a vivid picture of the situation for a better understanding. Since the study adopts both qualitative and the quantitative approaches, this section is justifiable.

**Table 1:** Abortion is high among teenage girls in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	30	60
<b>Disagreed</b>	20	40
<b>Total</b>	50	100

Table 1 shows that 60% of the respondents agreed that abortion is high among teenage girls in Irewole Local Government Area of Osun State, while 40% disagreed.

**Table 2:** Teenage pregnancy is the bane of poverty and economic misfortune in some families in the local government investigated.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	35	70
<b>Disagreed</b>	15	30
<b>Total</b>	50	100

Table 2 shows that 70% of the respondents agreed that Teenage pregnancy is the bane of poverty and economic misfortune in some families in the local government investigated, while 30% disagreed.

**Table 3:** Low level of education and poverty are the major causes of teenage pregnancy in the local government investigated.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	35	70
<b>Disagreed</b>	15	30
<b>Total</b>	50	100

Table 3 shows that 70% of the respondents agreed that low level of education and poverty are the major causes of teenage pregnancy in the local government investigated while 30% disagreed.

**Table 4:** Some cases of school drop-outs are caused by teenage pregnancy in the local government investigated.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	35	70
<b>Disagreed</b>	15	30
<b>Total</b>	50	100

Table 4 shows that 70% of the respondents agreed that some cases of school drop-outs are caused by teenage pregnancy in the local government investigated, while 30% disagreed.

**Table 5:** Peer pressure and new media influence are also responsible for teenage pregnancy in the local government investigated.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	40	80
<b>Disagreed</b>	10	20
<b>Total</b>	50	100

Table 5 shows that 80% of the respondents agreed that peer pressure and new media influence are also responsible for teenage pregnancy in the local government investigated while 20% disagreed.

**Table 6:** There is inadequate care for the children born by teenage mothers.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	40	80
<b>Disagreed</b>	10	20
<b>Total</b>	50	100

Table 6 shows that 80% of the respondents agreed that there is inadequate care for the children born by teenage mothers while 20% disagreed.

**Table 7:** Most of the teenage mothers have no any skill acquired for socioeconomic sustainability in the local government investigated.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	35	70
<b>Disagreed</b>	15	30
<b>Total</b>	50	100

Table 7 shows that 70% of the respondents agreed that most of the teenage mothers have no any skill acquired for socioeconomic sustainability in the local government investigated while 30% disagreed.

**5. Socioeconomic Implications of Teenage Pregnancy**

Teenage pregnancy is an ugly trend socioeconomically or otherwise. There are lifetime regrets, hardships, stigmatisation and unending poverty in a family or a community in general from one generation to another. Jennings (1996) debunks male chauvinism, dominance and relegation of women in every sphere of latter’s existence, ranging from the private to the public spaces. She regrets the prevalence of such practice of men “whether as a father, husband or son at the household level, or village leaders and politicians at the village and state levels respectively.”



The victims of teenage pregnancies are unable to contribute anything to the ecosystem of their community. They basically become consumers and not producers or employers of labour. A lot of them become unemployed or underemployed. They tend to remain perpetual dependant like parasites that feed on their hosts. In fact, some of them do take to begging or prostitution to feed themselves and their children. A small percentage of them hawk all manner of things by the road side from morning till night. In the course of this research work, a bike-man (an okada rider) told us that he has about four concubines who are young girls that are not up to twenty years but they are already mothers without husbands. Some live in rented one-room apartment while others still live with their parents.

More so, the study establishes that teenage pregnancy is the bane of poverty and economic misfortune in some families over the years. There is lack of proper care for most of the children born by teenage mothers. Such children are bedeviled by diseases which are ordinarily avoidable or preventable through proper feeding and good hygiene. Because many of the children do not even know their biological fathers, they are stigmatized by the society as bastards (*omo àlé*). The future is doubtful and bleak for majority of such children born through teenage pregnancy. For instance, some of the children in this category, run away from home at a very young age to be sleeping under the bridges in big cities like Lagos and Ibadan which are not too far from Osun State. They become drug addicts, pick-pockets, gangsters, cultists, area boys, political touts, only to mention but a few.

## **6. Recommendations**

From the study, there are a number of things that could be done to eradicate or minimize the adverse effects of teenage pregnancy in Irewole local government area of Osun State and by extension elsewhere in Nigeria. These include reorienting the minds of teenage pregnancy victims and empowering them with vocational skills such as soap making, candle making, bead making, bag making, makeup artistry, and hairdressing. Efforts should also be directed toward eradicating street hawking by teenage girls, providing them with role models and mentors, and reducing their access to adult content on new media platforms. Additionally, political will is essential to curb teenage pregnancy through effective legislation, including setting a minimum marriage age for girls. Furthermore, ensuring formal education for girls must be prioritized as a genuine and long-term solution.

## **7. Conclusion**

From the study, it is evident that the simple average of 71.43% of the respondents agreed to the fact that the issue of teenage pregnancy in Irewole local government is undoubtedly a phenomenon which truly bedeviled the area. In sum, the study has navigated the major causes and effects of teenage pregnancy in the selected local government area of Osun State with a view to suggesting ways of eradicating or at least minimizing the social menace. Poor family background, occupation of the parents, poor parenting, peer pressure, religious beliefs and new media influences have been identified as the potential causes of teenage pregnancy in the area studied. It is evident that the behaviour of many teenage girls who are victims of unplanned pregnancies can be tied to Maslow's hierarchy of need. Hence, the stakeholders, ranging from the parents, community heads, local and state governments as well as well-meaning individuals in the society should be concerned about solving the problem. They should provide succour to the victims of teenage pregnancy through socioeconomic empowerment schemes and projects. If the society actually wished to attain the planned Sustainable Development Goals, there is the need for the eradication of teenage pregnancy everywhere. We cannot have gender equality when a very high proportion of our young girls are out of school as a result of unplanned pregnancy.

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