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### TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND ITS EFFECTS

**Teenage pregnancy**, also known as **adolescent pregnancy**, is pregnancy in a female under the age of 20. Pregnancy can occur with **sexual intercourse** after the start of ovulation, which can be before the first menstrual period (menarche) but usually occurs after the onset of periods.

Pregnant teenagers face many of the same pregnancy related issues as other women. There are additional concerns for those under the age of 19 as they are less likely to be physically developed to sustain a healthy pregnancy or to give birth. For girls aged 15–19, risks are associated more with socioeconomic factors than with the biological effects of age. Risks of **Low birth weight**, **premature labor**, **anemia** and **pre-eclampsia** are connected to biological age, being observed in teen births even after controlling for other risk factors (such as accessing prenatal care etc.). Teenage pregnancies are associated with **Social issues**, including lower **educational** levels and **poverty**. Teenage pregnancy in developed countries is usually outside of marriage and is often associated with a **social stigma**. Teenage pregnancy in developing countries often occurs within marriage and half are planned. However, in these societies, early pregnancy may combine with **malnutrition** and **poor health** care.

In 2015 about 47 females per 1,000 had children well under the age of 20. Rates are higher in Africa and lower in Asia In the developing world about 2.5 million females under the age of 16 and 16 million females 15 to 19 year old have children each year. Another 3.9 million have **abortion**. It is more common in rural than urban areas. Worldwide, complications related to pregnancy are the most common cause of death among females 15 to 19 year old. Teenage pregnancy (with conceptions normally involving girls between age 16 and 19), was far more normal in previous centuries, and common in developed countries in the 20th century. Among Norwegian women born in the early 1950s, nearly a quarter became teenage mothers by the early 1970s. However, the rates have steadily declined throughout the developed world since that 20th century peak. Among those born in Norway in the late 1970s, less than 10% became teenage mothers, and rates have fallen since then.

In United States, the **Personal responsibility and Work Opportunity Act** of 1996 included the objective of reducing the number of young Black and Latina single mothers on welfare, which became the foundation for teenage pregnancy prevention in the United States and the founding of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, now known as Power to Decide.

To illustrate how serious the situation of early pregnancy is in Nigeria, I took a look at the recently published “Demographic and Health Survey 2013.” In Nigeria, an estimated 23 percent of women aged 15-19 years have begun childbearing, of which 17 percent have had their first child and 5 percent are pregnant with their first child. Also, 32 percent of teenagers in rural areas have begun childbearing, as opposed to 10 percent in the urban areas of Nigeria. The report shows disparities within the geopolitical zones as follows: Northwest (36 percent); Northeast (32 percent); North Central (19 percent); South Central (12 percent); South East (8 percent); and South West (8 percent). The statistics reveal a direct relationship between level of education and rate of early pregnancies. The northern parts of Nigeria, with the lowest literacy rates, have the highest rates of early pregnancies. The explanation given is that the higher the level of education, the higher the level of contraceptive use and awareness about risks and complications associated with early pregnancy. There is also a correlation between poverty levels and early pregnancies.

#### EFFECTS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY.

- The medical, social and economic cost of unplanned teenage pregnancies can be devastating to mothers and their children. Teen mothers are more likely to have medical complications during pregnancy and prolonged labor. Their babies are more likely to be born prematurely and to have low birth weights. These are caused by inadequate pre-natal care and poor nutrition often experienced by teenage mothers living in conditions of poverty (Dryfoos, 1990).
- Teenage parenthood creates a number of economic and social disadvantages for young mothers. They are less likely to graduate from high school or attend college. The lack of educational achievement makes it more difficult for them to obtain adequate employment. They have a lower standard of living and are more likely to require public assistance. Their marriages are more likely to be unstable and they often have more children than they intended (Furstenberg et al., 1989).
- Children born to teen mothers also are at disadvantage. They show lower levels of cognitive functioning and more behavioral and emotional problems, while boys appear to be more affected than girls. The children of teenage mothers do poorly in school and are likely to become pregnant themselves. Teen mothers may also have less knowledge about child rearing than older mothers and may provide their babies with fewer opportunities for stimulation.
- The effect of teenage pregnancy is not only on the teenage-mother, the effect on her child could also be devastating. Hofforth et al., (2001) observed that most teenage mothers could not continue with their education. The observation confirms the fear expressed by Mollborn (2007) that if the teenage-mother eventually gets married, she becomes the primary care-taker and her chances of furthering her education decreases drastically. Day (2009) noted that the consequence extends to the children. According to them teenage mothers face hardships, which extends beyond birth and have higher risks which usually plagued by intellectual language and socio-emotional

delays, resulting to their education not doing well in relation to child development and school readiness.

- According to Melissa (2012) teenage pregnancy could lead to incomplete education, unemployment and other numerous emotional traumas. Early motherhood had been linked to effects the psychological development of the child adversely. Beside psychological physical risks cannot be ignored. Teenage girl's body is not as developed as adult women in term of childbearing. Thus, they are often to face certain complications during pregnancy.

Teenage pregnancy has a detrimental effect on the education and future plans of teenagers. This is because the teen- age mothers attend school irregularly and some- times drop out of school. Teenage pregnancy is a social as well as an economic issue as it portends low education and employment, high rate of poverty and the psycho-social stigma it carries more so when it is out of wedlock. The correlation between earlier childbearing and failure to complete high elementary school reduces career opportunities for many young mothers.

To reduce its effect it was therefore recommended:

- That the home and school environments should be protective enough to shield the children from exposure to negative influences, by parents and teachers been concerned about the well-being of the girl child through education about sex and sexuality and the danger inherent.
- The education of the girl child should be made free and compulsory at the basic education level. Free basic education for the girls will increase school enrollment of teenagers who hitherto were out of school as a result of exorbitant fees.
- Social welfare agencies (public and private) should redouble efforts in educating, counseling and rehabilitation of victims. By these efforts many of them could be encouraged to continue their education or engage in other meaningful activities to avoid early destitution and other life threatening experiences resulting from early motherhood.
- Teenage programs should be tailored to the needs of individual communities and include health promotion information and advice, especially on risk taking behavior.
- Federal and state governments can contribute in the effort to reduce teenage pregnancy by providing stable funding for comprehensive educational and support services to pregnant and parenting teenagers.
- Parents should not be too harsh on teenagers but they should be approachable so as the children can confide in them whenever there is a pressure from peers.
- Teenagers should be enlightened about the consequence of engaging in sex at the early stage of their lives and parents should stand at best to meet the needs of the girl child.