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TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN NIGERIA: CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Teenage pregnancy also known as adolescent pregnancy is the pregnancy that occurs in female under the age of twenty (20). According to research, back in the 1800s and part of 1900s most female were given out in marriages once they are able to conceive a child, meaning once the female child starts her period cycle, they are encouraged to get a husband. This act which was brought on mostly because of some traditional beliefs. It is no doubt that teenagers still get married at this modern age but it is considerably at a low level compared to the 1800s and 1900s. This brings me down to my topic: teenage pregnancy in Nigeria, causes and effects.

Teenage pregnancy according to my understanding is a pregnancy that occurs in young girls that may have chosen to engage in sexual intercourse ending in an accidental or unwanted pregnancy at a young age between 13 to 19years usually when they are still is secondary school or high school. Teenage sexual activities in Nigeria also tend to be on the increase. A major consequence of these increased sexual activities among teenagers is out of wedlock pregnancies that may result in abortion, childbirth or even death. Pregnancy at whatever stage in life can be a life changing experience that cuts across boundaries of race, educational attainment and socio-economic status.

When a girl that is originally meant to be in school with people of her age mate suddenly gets pregnant, this could psychologically deter or mar the girl’s whole existence putting her in a position where her friends and some extended family members can make gest of her and make her feel miserable especially when the pregnancy was not by choice. Apart from being made gest of, all her hopes and dreams of maybe becoming the best architect or medical doctor there is is shattered and this sometimes leaves the victim to live in isolation. Apart from the mentioned consequences, during child birth, victims may go through complications sometimes resulting in a medical condition known as Vesicovaginal fistula (**VVF**) very common among young child bearing.

It is no doubt that most teenagers of this era derive great pleasure in watching pornographic videos, which often drives them to involve in sexual immoralities including sex some of which are unprotected with hopes of the girl not getting pregnant but this sometimes led to unwanted teenage pregnancy which is the course of discussion. Approximately 60% of adolescent mothers live in poverty at the time of the birth of their babies and “approximately 73% go on welfare within 5 years of giving birth”, its associated motherhood is characterized with shame, disgrace, and school dropout sometimes end up the individual’s dreams of achieving higher pursuits.

Maynard (1997) believe that teenage pregnancy is a delinquent behavior resulting from stress, dislike, malice, boredom and unhappiness experienced by a teenage girl within her home environment. Other predisposing factors include alcoholism, drug addiction, and sexual promiscuity. According to Kinby (2001) victims of teenage pregnancy lacked information or probably were not adequately educated on safe-sex either by their parents, schools or development agencies that could have enabled them deal with friends who lure them into sex prematurely. He stressed further that children of single parents are more vulnerable to teenage pregnancy. In the same vein exposure to sexual content on television, sexuality in the media, pornographic and sex chart rooms by teenagers, could most likely tune them to engage in sexual activities.

The issue of teenage pregnancy is no longer a new thing in any society be it developed, developing or less developed nations. This great problem as I would like to tag it has become so rampant in our societies that some people are beginning to think it is normal and okay to bear children at such young age where most of the times it is the parents of the children involved who takes up responsibilities of taking care of this child or as case maybe children. In conclusion, teenage pregnancy is something everyone of age should be properly educated on in other to avoid being a victim of circumstances.

How can we resolve the problems of teenage pregnancy in our societies?