

The perception of Education Stakeholders on the effect of teenage pregnancy on the education of teenage mothers in selected public secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Mombasa, Kenya

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Abstract: The Kenya Government has a policy requiring teenage girl children to go back to schools after deliver their babies in case they get pregnant when still in school. Studies indicate that Mombasa has the highest number of such girls in secondary schools. The attitude of education stakeholders on the issue of teenage pregnancy and how returning girls can learn and succeed in life are important. This study therefore investigated the attitude stakeholders on the issue of teenage pregnancy on some selected Catholic sponsored public secondary schools in the Arch diocese of Mombasa. The main research question was: What is the status of teenage pregnancy and the perception of stakeholders on its influence on the education teenage mothers in selected Catholic sponsored secondary schools in the Arch diocese of Mombasa Convergent Mixed methods design was used to carry out the study. Research focused on children aged between 13 to 18 years in the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa Sponsored Public Secondary Schools by drawing a sample of 344 respondents using both probability (stratified and simple random sampling) and non-probability (purposive) sampling techniques. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students and teacher counselors while interview guide was used to collect data from teenage mother students, principals and pastoral personnel within the location of the study. The study found that the attitude of education stakeholders in the schools and out of school were negative to the education of girls returning to schools after pregnancy. The study recommended the strengthening of the Programme of Pastoral instruction to the schools to strengthen the girls morally, physically and academically to enable them cope with the negative attitude that they have to live with on a daily basis.

Introduction

The Catholic Church has a Programme of Pastoral Instruction (PPI) in all the secondary schools in Kenya in general but those they sponsor in particular. All the four secondary school classes have a syllabus for PPI that is supposed to be completed at the end of each class. The syllabus focuses on the teachings of the Catholic Church as enshrined in the Holy Bible to bring up a righteous and God fearing youth who lives according to the Way of Jesus Christ. The teaching focuses on the spiritual, social, economic and academic issues affecting the youth (Commission for Education and Religious Education (CERE, 2019). According to CERE, PPI provides a holistic Catholic Teaching approach and encompasses CBC in line with changing dynamics of education and addressing emerging Christian issues and how they affect the youth in a practical manner

What is teenage pregnancy and what are its effects on teenage mothers in the targeted Counties in Mombasa Archdiocese?

Teenage pregnancy is a multi-sectoral problem that cuts across health, education and religion. There are over 800,000 teenagers become pregnant each year (National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy, 2011) in Kenya. This is the gap the researcher will like to answer as many countries have incorporated Programme of Pastoral Instruction (PPI) education to solve teenage pregnancy in their school curriculum yet the number of teenage pregnancies is still on an alarming trend. This has been blamed on overcrowded classes, inadequate manpower and emphasis on imparting academic knowledge hence teacher's tendencies to neglect provision of Programme of Pastoral Instruction (PPI) education. Olenja et al., (2019) established that teenage pregnancy is prevalent in Kajiado West, partly due to normative belief that girls who have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are ready for sex and childbearing. Adolescent girls' sexual activity starts as early as 9-10 years of age. Many contributing factors, including poverty, peer pressure, cultural practices (FGM and traditional sleeping arrangements), long distances to schools, and use of boda-boda transportation manifest simultaneously to put girls at risk of teenage pregnancy. There is evidence from that point to the multifactorial

nature to the causes of teenage pregnancy that range from: individual, home, community or school associated (Panday et al., 2015). There is a number of individual secondary student behavior which are responsible for teenage pregnancy such as: early sexual activity, poverty, multiple and concurrent partnership, home environment (FAWE, 2019). The rate of teenage pregnancy in Sub Saharan Africa has serious implication for the health, social, economic and educational sectors. Niger is one the most affected countries with 51% of the adolescent children getting pregnant, followed by Chad at 48%, in the third positions is Uganda at 33%, then Tanzania at 28% and Kenya at 26%” (Loaiza & Liang, 2013). In Kenya, approximately, 13,000 teenage girls drop out of school annually due to pregnancy (Onono et al., 2020). Young mothers are themselves children and often are not prepared or too naïve to care of another child. They have very limited choices in all aspects of life are restricted. The suicide rate among pregnant teenagers is ten times than that of the general population. In many Sub- Saharan African countries teenage mothers face the challenges of: school dropout, low completion rates and teenage mothers’ re-admission programs in schools have been a subject of interest to academics, researchers, and policy makers for a long time. UNESCO (2022) reports that approximately 130 million children dropout of school in developing world and miss out on their basic right to education.

The high dropout rate requires concerted multipronged effort by the different social agents to mitigate its negative consequences at both the individual and social level (UNESCO, 2022). Willan (2013) found that in South Africa revealed that a moderate 30% of adolescent girls reported negative impact of early pregnancy on their secondary school education. Teenage pregnancy remains one of the main hindrance to Kenya’s attainment of Universal Free Primary and Secondary Education. Despite the fact Kenya has developed an elaborate system of laws and policy framework to protect and implement the right to education, girls’ education there are a myriad of issues that hinder this such as: early marriages and pregnancies, sexual abuse, gender stereotypes and social norms which overburden them, and poor economic conditions which disproportionately affect them (Mutua, 2017). Girls from poor households have a challenge get an education because their parents marry them off early (Shefer et al., 2013). Study findings by Mumah et.al (2014) show the extent to that pregnancy and abortions were rampant among school-going teenage girls. This correlates with the rate of dropout as well as gender disparity at the primary and secondary level.

Challenges associated with teenage pregnancy in Developing Countries

There are a number of health challenges that pregnant teenagers face such as: low birth weight, premature labor, anemia, and preeclampsia are connected to the biological age, being observed in teen births even after controlling for other risk factors. According to Shefer et al. (2013), poor school performance by teenage girls could be an indicator of teenage pregnancy. The poor performance may lead to the girls repeating, then peer pressure and other reasons leads the girls to experiment with sex (Young et al., 2018). The girls also suffer from low educational expectations; they are not certain whether they will complete their studies and as such, have little incentive to avoid pregnancy. The dearth of complete information on sexuality either at school or at home makes teenage girls to rely on peer misinformation and may, therefore, succumb to peer pressure that may lead early sex and eventually early pregnancies (Panday et al., 2015). Sexual harassment by peers and teachers is another school-based factor that leads girls into having sexual intercourse (Syomwene & Kindiki, 2015). The fact that young girls may be faced with a dearth of access or inconsistent use of contraceptives may lead to teenage pregnancies, this can be attributed to lack of sex education (Willan, 2013).

A survey on school attendance in Kenya indicated that there was a drop in attendance in the last four years of secondary school with pronounced gender gaps indicating more girls were affected. There are a number of reasons that account for this including: child labor, early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and inaccessible schools (Musonga, 2014). Chua (2022) showed that life skills training reduced significantly and helped in the prevention of a wide range of social evils such as: substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, violence bullying and to promote self-confidence and self-esteem among the adolescents. Roodbari, Sahdipoor, and Ghale (2013) established that life skills training has a positive effect and improves social development, emotional and social adjustment. There is a significant increase in compliance of between the children’s behaviors and public health norms and public expectations something that the current study examined on whether through life skills education the rising teenage pregnancy has got any solution in the society therein.” This study attempts to address this scenario of teenage pregnancy with their retention in schools as teenage mothers to curb the alarming gender gap.

Research Methodology

Convergent Mixed methods design was used to carry out the study. Research focused on children aged between 13 to 18 years in the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa Sponsored Public Secondary Schools by

drawing a sample of 344 respondents using both probability (stratified and simple random sampling) and non-probability (purposive) sampling techniques. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students and teacher counselors while interview guide was used to collect data from teenage mother students, principals and pastoral personnel within the location of the study.

Findings

The research question sought to determine the level of teenage pregnancies in the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa Sponsored Secondary Schools. To answer this question, the researcher used interview and document analysis (records from the teacher counsellors) to get the number of girls that have become pregnant in schools in the last five years. This part of the answer to this research question was based on facts and not perceptions. The second part of this research question was based on how the teacher counsellors, Deputy Principals and Principals perceived, the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the area. The two questionnaires for teenage mothers, student leaders and teacher counsellors had 5 point likert scale items which had statements for them to respond to from SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not sure, D=disagree, to SD=Strongly Disagree. The responses from Teacher counsellors, teenage mothers and student leaders are presented in Tables 11 and 12. Qualitative data was obtained from the principals, their deputies and the Pastoral personnel.

Table I: Number of girls that have become pregnant in the last four years according to T/counselors

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Form One	30	22.7	22.7	22.7
Form Two	65	49.2	49.2	71.9
Form Three	22	16.7	16.7	88.6
Form Four	15	11.4	11.4	100.0
Total	132	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Data

Table 10 shows the number of recorded teenage pregnancies in the last four years as provided by teacher counsellors in the selected schools within the four counties of Kwale, Mombasa, Taita Taveta, and Kilifi. Some individual behaviors of secondary school girls are account for the pregnancy. These include early sexual involvement (Musonga, 2014) that results in multiple and concurrent partnerships with boys and men that may be transactional due to poverty. House hold poverty affects individual attributes of some girls in that it may force girls into survival sex for subsistence” (FAWE, 2019); and for economic security, girls can engage in multiple relations. “The multiplicity of sexual relations reduces the chances that teenagers would use contraceptives to prevent pregnancies hence escalating the problem” (Willan, 2013). “Issues emanating from the home environment that are relational may also contribute to teenage pregnancy. Age appropriate communication delays sexual debut and diminishes negative peer pressure that could lead to unwanted early pregnancies” (Panday et al., 2015).

According to results in table 10, significant percentage of he teenage pregnancies (49.2%) in the last four years within the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa Sponsored Public Secondary Schools as documented by teacher counsellors of the respective schools were in form two with a total number of 65 which represents 49.2% of the total number of pregnancies recorded within this period. Form one recorded the second highest level of teenage pregnancy within the last four years (30) which represents 22.7% of the total pregnancies recorded within this period. However, forms three and four recorded the lowest number of teenage pregnancies over the past four years of 22 and 15 corresponding to 16.7% and 11.4% respectively.

The research question sought to find out the level of teenage pregnancy in schools in the Archdiocese of Mombasa as responded by teenage mother students (M), student leaders (S) and teacher counselors (T) to questionnaire distributed to them by the researcher. Teachers and students were given a questionnaire comprising of statements related to level of teenage pregnancy in schools in the Archdiocese of Mombasa and requested to put a tick (√) on the best option on a five-point likert scale (1-5) to show their level of agreement or disagreement with statements using the Key: SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not sure, D=disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree. Their responses are presented in Table 8

Table 2: Perception of Teenage mothers, Teacher Counselors and Student leaders on the Level of teenage pregnancy in Secondary schools in the Archdiocese of Mombasa

Statement	P	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	S. Dev.
Girl child education is beneficial to the society	M	0(0.00)	13(17.1)	5(6.6)	0(0.00)	58(76.3)	4.08	.559
	S	6(23.1)	6(23.1)	0(0.00)	2(7.7)	12(46.2)	3.31	1.361
	T	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	16(21.1)	60(78.9)	4.79	.415
Many girls become mothers at a tender age of below 18 years	M	16(21.1)	3(3.9)	10(13.2)	42(55.3)	5(6.6)	3.76	.987
	S	5(19.2)	6(23.1)	0(0.00)	14(53.8)	1(3.8)	3.00	1.327
	T	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	30(39.4)	46(60.6)	4.61	.496
Most Of The girls become mothers in form two	M	4(5.3)	26(34.2)	4(5.3)	12(15.8)	30(39.5)	3.50	1.490
	S	2(7.7)	7(26.9)	3(11.5)	7(26.9)	7(26.9)	3.38	1.359
	T	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(2.6)	28(36.8)	46(60.6)	4.58	.561
Poor home background Contribute to teenage Motherhood	M	1(1.3)	9(11.8)	12(15.8)	26(34.2)	28(36.8)	3.97	.963
	S	7(26.9)	2(7.7)	2(7.7)	11(42.3)	4(15.4)	3.12	1.505
	T	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(5.3)	39(51.3)	33(43.4)	4.36	.603
Marital status of parents Contribute to early Motherhood	M	14(18.4)	3(3.9)	16(21.1)	25(32.9)	18(23.7)	3.36	1.454
	S	3(11.5)	6(23.1)	4(15.4)	5(19.2)	8(30.8)	3.35	1.441
	T	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(5.3)	41(53.9)	31(40.8)	4.36	.603
Teenage Mothers drop out of school frequently	M	17(22.4)	31(40.8)	16(21.1)	8(10.5)	4(5.3)	2.36	1.104
	S	2(7.7)	7(26.9)	7(26.9)	5(19.2)	5(19.2)	3.35	1.441
	T	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(8.0)	34(44.7)	36(47.3)	4.42	.614
Teenage Mothers perform poorly in Academic	M	7(9.2)	13(17.1)	18(23.7)	28(36.8)	10(13.2)	3.28	1.173
	S	6(23.1)	5(19.2)	7(26.9)	7(26.9)	1(3.8)	3.15	1.255
	T	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	7(9.2)	25(32.9)	44(57.9)	4.52	.619
Schools Have Few female teachers to act as role models to girls	M	14(18.4)	29(38.2)	18(23.7)	8(10.5)	7(9.2)	2.54	1.183
	S	4(15.4)	8(30.8)	6(23.1)	4(15.4)	4(15.4)	2.85	1.317
	T	18(23.7)	28(36.8)	19(25.0)	6(7.9)	5(6.6)	2.65	1.113
The dropout rate For Girls is mostly Higher than boys	M	29(38.2)	28(36.8)	11(14.5)	4(5.3)	4(5.3)	2.03	1.107
	S	4(15.4)	7(26.9)	8(30.8)	5(19.2)	2(7.7)	2.77	1.177
	T	33(43.4)	26(34.2)	10(13.2)	4(5.3)	3(3.9)	2.83	1.007
Teenage mothers Are allowed back in school to continue with studies	M	32(42.1)	28(36.8)	11(14.5)	2(2.6)	3(3.9)	1.89	1.014
	S	4(15.4)	5(19.2)	5(19.2)	7(26.9)	5(19.2)	3.15	1.377
	T	35(46.1)	27(35.5)	9(11.8)	2(2.6)	3(3.9)	2.59	1.114
Through Programme of pastoral instruction Education students have improved social adjustment and cope with stress	M	1(1.3)	9(11.8)	12(15.8)	26(34.2)	28(36.8)	3.97	.963
	S	7(26.9)	2(7.7)	2(7.7)	11(42.3)	4(15.4)	3.12	1.505
	T	12(15.8)	23(30.3)	7(9.2)	20(26.3)	14(18.4)	3.36	.973
Programme of pastoral Education gives ability to manage emotions	M	4(5.3)	26(34.2)	4(5.3)	12(15.8)	30(39.5)	3.50	1.490
	S	2(7.7)	7(26.9)	3(11.5)	7(26.9)	7(26.9)	3.38	1.359
	T	11(14.5)	19(25.0)	9(11.8)	17(22.4)	20(26.3)	3.68	1.061
Programme of pastoral instruction Education provides the ability to Make Informed Decisions In Life	M	14(18.4)	3(3.9)	16(21.1)	25(32.9)	18(23.7)	3.36	1.454
	S	3(11.5)	6(23.1)	4(15.4)	5(19.2)	8(30.8)	3.35	1.441
	T	2(2.6)	13(17.1)	12(15.8)	27(35.5)	22(28.9)	3.86	.903

*Key: P=Participants, M =Teenage mother students n=76; S=Student leaders n =26 and T=Teachers counselors n=76

As shown in table 9, teenage mother students (M), student leaders (S) and teacher counselors (T) were asked in the questionnaire to indicate their views on whether girl child education is beneficial to the society or not. For teenage mother students 76.3% strongly agreed while 17.1% agreed, with 6.6% not sure to the statement that girl child education is beneficial to the society. Majority of teenage mother students 76.3% were in agreement that girl child education is beneficial to the society which has a direct influence on curbing teenage pregnancy in school going girls and improves on students' academic achievement in secondary schools. For the student leaders, 46.2% strongly agreed and 7.7% agreed; while 23.1% strongly disagreed and another 23.1% disagreed that girl child education is beneficial to the society. Over half of student leaders were in agreement

that girl child education was beneficial to the society and thus helps curbing teenage pregnancy in school going girls and improves on students' academic achievement in secondary schools. For the teacher counselors, 78.9% strongly agreed and 21.1% agreed; hence majority teacher counselors 100% were strongly in agreement that girl child education is beneficial to the society thus curbs teenage pregnancy in school going girls and improves on students' academic achievement in secondary schools. The statement girl child education is beneficial to the society; elicited amongst the highest means of 4.08 for teenage mother students, 4.79 for teacher counselors while student leaders elicited the lowest mean of 3.31, an indication that there was highest agreement level to the statement amongst the teenage mother students and teacher counselors, with standard deviation of 0.559 for teenage mother students and .415 for teacher counselors while 1.361 for student leaders. Most of the teen mothers interviewed said that Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education enables one to respect oneself, respect others, and be obedience in the community and respect the authority.

Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education in the Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa sponsored public secondary schools is provided by the pastoral personnel. Whereas a section of the schools have developed timetable for the teaching of holistic pastoral education, majority of the schools in Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa sponsored public secondary schools utilize unassigned schedules in the timetable such afternoons from 4pm to 5pm or weekends for the teaching of Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education. Even though there is no syllabus for the teaching of Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education, the six major competencies covered in the topic include spiritual, emotional, psychological, social, physical, and intellectual competencies. In open ended questionnaire most student leaders said that:

“Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education creates understanding of one's background and self-acceptance; students gain high confidence and gain high self-esteem; Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education enhances students to know the disadvantages of early pregnancies; Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) create the awareness that may result if one engages in sexual activities; teaches us to think through our decisions and think about our future; helps in making effective decisions and being aware of early teenage pregnancy; through Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education students learn to abstain from pregnancy and dangers of diseases like sexually transmitted infections (STI) and HIV/AIDS.”

Teacher counselors in the same open ended questionnaire had this to say:

“Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education improves self-confidence and esteem which stems from the knowledge gained and make students to have abilities in dealing with life challenges, resilience and self-control, helps them manage their stress and it creates awareness of life outside school.”

Besides, teenage mother students, student leaders and teacher counselors were asked in the questionnaire to indicate their views on whether many girls become mothers at a tender age of below 18 years. For teenage mother students 55.3% agreed and 6.6% strongly agreed while 21.1% strongly disagreed, 3.9% disagreed, with 13.2% not sure to the statement that many girls become mothers at a tender age of below 18 years. Most of teenage mother students 61.9% were in agreement that many girls become mothers at a tender age of below 18 years which have a direct influence on teenage pregnancy in school going girls and thus a negative effect on students' academic achievement in secondary schools. For the student leaders, 53.8% agreed and 3.8% strongly agreed; while 19.2% strongly disagreed and another 23.1% disagreed that many girls become mothers at a tender age of below 18 years. Over half of student leaders were in agreement that many girls become mothers at a tender age of below 18 years and thus have a negative impact on students' academic achievement in secondary schools through increased dropout rate for girls. For the teacher counselors, 60.6% strongly agreed and 39.4% agreed; hence majority teacher counselors 100% were strongly in agreement that many girls become mothers at a tender age of below 18 years hence impacts negatively on students' academic achievement in secondary schools.

The statement many girls become mothers at a tender age of below 18 years; elicited amongst the high means of 3.76 for teenage mother students, 4.61 for teacher counselors while student leaders elicited the lowest mean of 3.00, an indication that there was highest agreement level to the statement amongst the teenage mother students and teacher counselors, with standard deviation of .987 for teenage mother students and .496 for teacher counselors while 1.327 for student leaders. The principals of schools from their interviews indicated that holistic pastoral lessons were well attended to in schools to enable teenagers to know what is good to them and at the same time what ought to be wrong.

However, teachers in their open-ended questionnaire noted that:

“Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education equips most teenagers with knowledge towards making informed decisions in relation to relationships hence curbing teenage pregnancies; the learners are aware of the dangers of becoming a teenage mother in their tender ages and how it impacts on education negatively.”

Most principals noted that: Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education equips learners with knowledge, skills to help make decisions (problem solving) and helps students recognize the impact of their actions. Learners have to take responsibility of what they do and empower them to be less likely to engage in pre marital sex since they are well informed on the consequences with skills such as assertive and self –control. Helps in problem solving in schools, build confidence in different areas of school life. To be able to co- operate and collaborate with others. Guide in decision making process and take responsibility of the impact of the decisions taken and manage peer pressure focusing on the important aspects of school life at their tender ages of less than 18 years. This result concurs with Research by the Kenya Bureau of Statistics (2017) “that one in every four girls aged between 15-19 years in Kilifi County had delivered a child. These were attributed to low level of literacy which made the girls to have limited knowledge and exposure to contraceptives”. On the contrary, Okech and Role, (2015) study revealed “a significant correlation between teaching of LSE and development of character. Teachers and pupils acknowledged the importance of LSE in the development of character. The study identified challenges facing the implementation of LSE”. This study is relevant to teachers, parents, educators, policy makers and stakeholders in education.

From the results, 39.5% of teenage mother students strongly agreed, 15.8% agreed while 34.2% disagreed and 5.3% strongly disagreed, with 5.3% not sure that most of the girls become mothers in form two. Over half of the teenage mother students were in agreement that most of the girls become mothers in form two. For the student leaders, 26.9% strongly agreed and 26.9% agreed while 26.9% disagreed and 7.7% strongly disagreed, with 11.5% not sure that most of the girls become mothers in form two. Over half of the student leaders were in agreement that most of the girls become mothers in form two, an indication that Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education has the capacity to curb teenage pregnancies in the acute stage of girls at form two in secondary schools. From the data collected from teacher counselors, 60.6% strongly agreed and 36.4% agreed while 2.6% were not sure that most of the girls become mothers in form two. A majority of teachers 97.0% were in agreement that most of the girls become mothers in form two, an indication that if Programme of Pastoral instruction (PPI) education can be implemented properly at the class level of form two; then our teenagers will have acquired skills in problem solving about matters teenage pregnancies. The teenagers must have a capacity to look at an emerging problem and devise ways and means of solving the same problem as they reach their critical point in life in form two.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the teenage mothers face discrimination and ridicule among peers and school teachers in school. At home parents see them as a burden and do not wish to assist them. It is also concluded that teenage pregnancies are rampant among the girls in the schools visited and most girls said that they were active sexually. Their level of moral and religious knowledge is very low and they do not see anything wrong with having sex partners before marriage.

Recommendation

The study recommends that the programme of Pastoral instruction should be strengthened in the all the Secondary schools sponsored by the Archdiocese of Mombasa. There is a need to train the parents on pastoral education and how to handle their teenage children with young children.

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