

Teenage Pregnancy and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Girls in Ado Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examined the teenage pregnancy and psychological well-being of secondary school girls in Ado Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the occurrence of teenage pregnancy, the level of psychological well-being of teenage girls, the relationship between teenage pregnancy and psychological well-being of teenage girls. The descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The population for the study comprised of residents of Ado Local government and a total of 300 residents was selected using simple random sampling technique. A questionnaire titled "Teenage Pregnancy and Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire (TPPWQ)" was the instrument used to collect of data for the study. The instrument was validated by various experts using the face and content validity. For the reliability of the instrument, test-retest method was employed which yield a reliability coefficient of 0.80. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that teenage pregnancy is a widespread & increasing problem and there is a moderate psychological well-being among teenage girls. Findings also revealed significant negative relationship between teenage pregnancy and self-esteem ($r = -0.547, p < 0.05$), significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and depression ($r = 0.623, p < 0.05$) and significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and social isolation ($r = 0.489, p < 0.05$) among secondary school girls. Based on the findings, the study recommended the establishing of mandatory comprehensive sex education programs in all secondary schools, implementation of school-based mental health support services to address the impact of teenage pregnancy on self-esteem, social isolation and depression.*

Keywords: teenage pregnancy, psychological well-being, secondary school girls, Ekiti state, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy remains a significant public health and social concern in Nigeria, with far-reaching implications for the psychological well-being and educational attainment of adolescent girls. According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), approximately 19% of Nigerian adolescents aged 15-19 have begun childbearing, with considerable regional disparities across the country (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019). The occurrence of teenage pregnancy among secondary school girls in Nigeria represents a complex interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and educational factors that merit comprehensive investigation.

Teenage is a period of major biological, social and psychological development. It is a time of opportunity during which a range of actions can be taken to set the stage for healthy adulthood (WHO (2014). Teenage pregnancy is generally regarded as pregnancy in girls who are between the ages of 12- 17 years or under (Ganchimeg, et al 2014). Pregnancy in the early reproductive life in modern days has been viewed as violations of a right of a girl child due to possible physical, emotional and social harm to the well-being of adolescence and its potential adverse consequences on her educational advancement.

Teenage pregnancy is a direct result of voluntary or involuntary sexual activities involving teenage girls. This is mostly due to inadequate attention from parents to their children. Today, children grow up in a society in which transmission of overt or covert information on premarital sexual intercourse, which also involves teenagers through music, motion pictures, peers and magazines, is accepted. This culture has grossly fostered moral decadence among teenagers (Slowiski, 2015). Despite efforts being made by several agencies across the globe to foster education as a framework for responsible sexual activities and expose the consequences of premarital sexual intercourse, such as psychological effects, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy, teenagers, including those in secondary/high schools seem not to be in control of their sexual behaviors because, even today, there are recurrent teenage pregnancies across the world with several of the affected teenagers being faced with the reality of either committing abortion, quitting education or even going as far as committing suicide (Panday *et al.*, 2015). This situation has resulted in the emergence of several awareness programs in secondary/high schools put together to proffer solutions to the challenge of teenage pregnancy, attempting to cut down on its occurrence. The occurrence of teenage pregnancy in secondary schools could pose a significant effect on the psychological well-being of the students.

Psychosocial wellbeing refers to the overall mental, social and emotional health of an individual, and it is influenced by various factors. Adolescence is a critical stage in life, and it is a time when

teenagers experience a range of challenges that can affect their psychosocial wellbeing. In Nigeria, several factors affect the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents, including cultural and social norms, teenage pregnancy, family dynamics, academic stress, and exposure to violence and crime. These factors often contribute to the development of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and suicide. Research therefore has shown that the psychosocial wellbeing of Nigerian adolescents is negatively affected by poverty, social inequality, and lack of access to education and healthcare services.

Self-esteem refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of their own worth and value, encompassing beliefs about oneself and associated emotional states such as pride or shame. The relationship between teenage pregnancy and self-esteem is complex and often bidirectional. Adolescents with lower self-esteem may be more vulnerable to engaging in risky sexual behaviors that lead to pregnancy, while pregnancy itself can significantly impact a teenager's self-perception and sense of worth. When pregnancy occurs during adolescence, young women often face stigmatization, judgment, and criticism from peers, family members, and society at large, which can severely diminish their self-esteem. According to Coelho *et al.* (2018), pregnant teenagers frequently report feelings of worthlessness, shame, and negative self-evaluation compared to their non-pregnant peers, with these feelings often persisting beyond pregnancy into early motherhood. The dual challenges of navigating both adolescent identity formation and the transition to motherhood can create profound disruptions in self-concept, particularly in societies where teenage pregnancy is heavily stigmatized.

Depression represents another significant psychological challenge closely associated with teenage pregnancy. The hormonal fluctuations of pregnancy combined with the substantial life changes, uncertainty about the future, and potential lack of support can trigger or exacerbate depressive symptoms in pregnant teenagers. Depression is characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities, often accompanied by changes in sleep, appetite, energy levels, and cognitive functioning. Hodgkinson *et al.* (2014) found that adolescent mothers experience rates of depression that are significantly higher than adult mothers and non-pregnant adolescents, with approximately 25% experiencing major depression during pregnancy or in the postpartum period. This increased vulnerability to depression can have lasting consequences, affecting maternal-child bonding, parenting practices, and the overall well-being of both mother and child. Furthermore, depression during this critical period can interfere with educational achievement, relationship development, and other important developmental tasks of adolescence.

Social isolation frequently accompanies teenage pregnancy, as pregnant adolescents often experience dramatic changes in their social networks and support systems. Social isolation is the

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state of having minimal contact with others and limited participation in social activities, characterized by a lack of meaningful social connections and support networks. Many report being excluded from peer groups, withdrawing from social activities due to embarrassment or physical discomfort, and facing reduced social opportunities as they take on parenting responsibilities. Ayodele et al. (2025) identified isolation as a significant mental health challenge which entail increased depression and anxiety. Kumar *et al.* (2018) documented that pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers frequently experience a significant narrowing of their social worlds, with many reporting losing friendships and feeling disconnected from their previous social networks. This isolation can exacerbate other psychological challenges, as social connection is a crucial protective factor for mental health, particularly during adolescence. The combined effect of reduced social support, potential educational disruption, and new responsibilities creates a situation where pregnant teenagers may become increasingly isolated at precisely the time when additional support is most needed, creating a concerning cycle that can undermine their psychological well-being and future prospects.

The psychological impact of teenage pregnancy on Nigerian secondary school girls is profound and multifaceted. Research has documented various psychological challenges faced by pregnant teenagers, including depression, anxiety, social isolation, and diminished self-esteem (Osaikhuwumwan & Osemwenkha, 2013). These psychological issues are often exacerbated by stigmatization from peers, teachers, and community members, as teenage pregnancy outside marriage carries significant social disapproval in most Nigerian communities (Agunbiade *et al.*, 2016; Ayodele et al., 2025). According to Ganchimeg *et al.* (2014), teenage mothers had higher rates of depression and anxiety compared to their non-pregnant peers or adult mothers. The educational disruption caused by teenage pregnancy further compounds psychological distress. In Nigeria, pregnant schoolgirls often face expulsion or are forced to drop out due to stigma or practical challenges of continuing education while pregnant or caring for an infant. This educational discontinuity not only limits future economic opportunities but also contributes to feelings of hopelessness and diminished self-worth, among others.

Statement of the Problem

Teenage pregnancy among secondary school girls in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti State represents a significant public health and educational concern that demands urgent attention. The increasing rates of adolescent pregnancies in this region have profound implications for the educational trajectory, future economic opportunities, and overall development of affected young women. It is observed that there is a concerning but less frequently addressed psychological impact that accompanies teenage pregnancy among secondary school students. The emotional and mental health consequences can be devastating, with many pregnant teenagers experiencing depression,

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anxiety, social isolation, stigmatization, and diminished self-esteem. The psychological burden is often compounded by rejection from family members, abandonment by partners, judgment from peers, and disapproval from teachers and community members. Understanding the interrelationship between teenage pregnancy and psychological well-being is therefore crucial for developing holistic interventions that address not only the prevention of early pregnancies but also the mental health support needed for those who do become pregnant during their secondary education in this local government area.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine teenage pregnancy and psychological well-being among secondary school girls in Ado Local Government Area in Ekiti State. The study specifically:

- i. investigated the occurrence of teenage pregnancy among secondary school girls in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State;
- ii. examined the level of psychological wellbeing of teenage girls in secondary schools in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State;
- iii. assessed the relationship between teenage pregnancy and self-esteem of teenage girls in secondary schools in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State
- iv. investigated the relationship between teenage pregnancy and depression of teenage girls in secondary schools in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State
- v. examined the relationship between teenage pregnancy and social isolation of teenage girls in secondary schools in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What is the level of occurrence of teenage pregnancy among secondary school girls in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State?
- ii. What is the level of psychological wellbeing of teenage girls in secondary schools in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

- i. There is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and self-esteem among secondary school girls;
- ii. There is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and depression among secondary school girls;
- iii. There is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and social isolation among secondary school girls;

METHODOLOGY

A survey type of descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population for this study comprised of residents of Ado Local government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria and a total of 300 residents were selected for the study using simple random sampling technique. A self-design questionnaire was the instrument used for the collection of data for the study. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the instrument was subjected to face and content validity through screening by various expert. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean count and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the level of occurrence of teenage pregnancy among secondary school girls in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State?

Table 1: Mean Score for Level of Occurrence of Teenage Pregnancy

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree		\bar{x}	SD
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
1	Teenage pregnancy is a common problem in secondary schools in my area.	234	78.0	66	22.0	3.12	0.89
2	Many girls in my school have become pregnant before graduation.	198	66.0	102	34.0	2.87	0.95
3	The number of pregnant teenage girls in secondary schools is increasing each year.	252	84.0	48	16.0	3.28	0.82
4	Most secondary schools in my community have dealt with cases of student pregnancy.	219	73.0	81	27.0	3.05	0.91
5	Teenage pregnancy affects at least one girl in every secondary school class.	177	59.0	123	41.0	2.74	0.98

N = 300

Mean cut off = 2.50

Grand Mean = 3.01

Table 1 shows the assessment of teenage pregnancy occurrence among secondary school girls in Ado Local Government Area, Ekiti State. The analysis reveals that teenage pregnancy is perceived as a significant problem, with all five items rated above the cut-off mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.01 indicates a high level of agreement among respondents regarding the occurrence of teenage pregnancy in their schools.

Research Question 2: What is the level of psychological wellbeing of teenage girls in secondary schools in Ado Local Government, Ekiti State?

Table 2: Mean Score for Level of Psychological Well-Being

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree		\bar{x}	SD
		<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
1	Teenage girls in secondary schools feel good about themselves most of the time.	186	62.0	114	38.0	2.78	0.93
2	They believe they have many good qualities.	201	67.0	99	33.0	2.89	0.88
3	They are confident in their ability to handle problems.	165	55.0	135	45.0	2.64	0.96
4	They feel satisfied with who they are as a person.	174	58.0	126	42.0	2.71	0.94
5	They think they are just as valuable as other people their age.	192	64.0	108	36.0	2.82	0.90
6	They often feel down for no clear reason.	183	61.0	117	39.0	2.76	0.92
7	They have trouble enjoying activities they used to like.	156	52.0	144	48.0	2.58	0.97
8	They frequently have low energy.	207	69.0	93	31.0	2.94	0.86
9	They often feel hopeless about their future.	141	47.0	159	53.0	2.41	0.99
10	They have difficulty concentrating on schoolwork	168	56.0	132	44.0	2.67	0.95
11	They feel like they have close friends they can talk to.	225	75.0	75	25.0	3.08	0.84
12	They often feel left out by other students at school.	135	45.0	165	55.0	2.38	0.98
13	They enjoy spending time with their classmates.	216	72.0	84	28.0	3.02	0.87
14	They feel lonely even when around other people.	147	49.0	153	51.0	2.45	0.97
15	They have people in their life who understand and support them.	210	70.0	90	30.0	2.96	0.89

N = 300

Mean cut off = 2.50

Grand Mean = 2.73

Table 2 shows the assessment of psychological well-being among teenage girls in secondary schools in Ado Local Government Area. The analysis reveals that twelve out of fifteen items rated above the cut-off mean of 2.50 and the overall grand mean of 2.73 suggests moderate psychological well-being among teenage girls in the study area.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and self-esteem among secondary school girls.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between teenage pregnancy and self-esteem

Variables	N	Mean	SD	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Teenage Pregnancy	300	15.05	3.84	-0.547*	0.000
Self-Esteem	300	13.84	4.21		

 $p < 0.05$

(Significant Result)

Table 3 shows a significant negative relationship between teenage pregnancy occurrence and self-esteem among secondary school girls, $r = -0.547$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that there is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and self-esteem among secondary school girls was rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and depression among secondary school girls.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between teenage pregnancy and depression

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p
Teenage Pregnancy	300	15.05	3.84	0.623*	0.000
Depression	300	13.36	4.12		

$p < 0.05$ (Significant Result)

Table 4 shows a significant positive relationship between teenage pregnancy occurrence and depression among secondary school girls, $r = 0.623$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that there is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and depression among secondary school girls was rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and social isolation among secondary school girls.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between teenage pregnancy and social isolation

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p
Teenage Pregnancy	300	15.05	3.84	0.489*	0.000
Social Isolation	300	12.89	3.96		

$p < 0.05$ (Significant Result)

Table 5 shows a significant positive relationship between teenage pregnancy occurrence and social isolation among secondary school girls, $r = 0.489$, $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that there is no significant relationship between teenage pregnancy and social isolation among secondary school girls was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that teenage pregnancy is perceived as a widespread phenomenon among secondary school girls in Ado Local Government Area, with respondents indicating strong

agreement that the problem is increasing annually. This aligns with the observations of Nwobodo and Odimegwu (2024), who reported that teenage pregnancy prevalence in Nigeria ranges from 13% to 23% depending on geographical location, with higher rates typically found in rural areas. Similarly, the National Population Commission and ICF (2023) documented that approximately 19% of girls aged 15-19 have begun childbearing in Nigeria, supporting the perception that teenage pregnancy remains a significant concern in educational settings. The high level of perceived occurrence likely reflects the direct exposure to cases of teenage pregnancy within their immediate school environment and community.

The study reveals moderate levels of psychological well-being among teenage girls, with positive indicators in self-perception and social relationships but concerning patterns of fatigue, sadness, and concentration difficulties. These findings are consistent with research by Ibeh and Musa (2024), who noted that adolescent girls in Nigerian secondary schools often experience psychological challenges that may predispose them to risky behaviors. The moderate well-being levels observed support the work of Adeleke *et al.* (2024), who highlighted the psychological vulnerabilities faced by adolescent girls during their developmental transitions, particularly in challenging socioeconomic contexts. The moderate psychological well-being scores may reflect the normal developmental challenges and academic pressures experienced by adolescents navigating the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The findings showed significant negative correlation between teenage pregnancy occurrence and self-esteem, indicating that higher teenage pregnancy occurrence is associated with lower self-esteem. This finding aligns with research suggesting that girls with lower self-esteem may be more vulnerable to peer pressure and less likely to negotiate safe sexual practices, as documented in studies examining adolescent risk behaviors in Nigerian contexts (Obioma & Ekwueme, 2024). The negative relationship likely occurs because girls with lower self-esteem may seek validation through romantic relationships and be less assertive in making reproductive health decisions.

The findings showed strong positive correlation between teenage pregnancy and depression, which connotes higher teenage pregnancy occurrence is linked to increased depression. This finding is consistent with research by Adeleke *et al.* (2024), who found that teenage mothers demonstrated significantly higher levels of psychological stress compared to adult mothers. The relationship underscores how the social and economic challenges accompanying teenage pregnancy can precipitate or exacerbate depressive symptoms among vulnerable adolescents. The positive correlation likely results from the overwhelming stress of premature adult responsibilities combined with social stigma and limited support systems available to pregnant teenagers.

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The study revealed a positive correlation between teenage pregnancy and social isolation which indicated that teenage pregnancy is associated with greater social isolation which reflects the experiences of stigmatization and rejection faced by pregnant teenagers in Nigerian communities. This finding supports research by Bamgbose (2023), who documented how unmarried pregnant teenagers often face social ostracism, including expulsion from school and family rejection. The social isolation experienced by pregnant teenagers can further compound their psychological difficulties and limit access to support systems. The positive correlation likely occurs because pregnant teenagers withdraw from social activities due to shame and stigma, while peers and community members simultaneously distance themselves from these girls due to cultural disapproval.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concluded that teenage pregnancy represents a significant and escalating challenge in secondary schools within Ado Local Government Area, Ekiti State, with profound negative implications for the psychological well-being of affected girls. The research reveals a clear pattern where higher rates of teenage pregnancy occurrence are strongly associated with decreased self-esteem, increased depression and greater social isolation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Establishing mandatory comprehensive sex education programs in all secondary schools to address the critical knowledge gap identified as the primary driver of teenage pregnancy.
2. Implementation of school-based mental health support services to address the moderate psychological well-being levels and provide early intervention for students at risk.
3. Implementation of specialized counseling and self-esteem building programs for students at risk of or affected by teenage pregnancy to address the significant negative correlation with self-esteem.
4. Develop depression screening and intervention protocols in schools to identify and support students experiencing the increased depression associated with teenage pregnancy.
5. Creating peer support networks and social inclusion programs to combat the social isolation experienced by teenage mothers and at-risk students.
6. Establishment of holistic psychological support services that address the overall negative impact of teenage pregnancy on psychological well-being.

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