

## **The Consequential Effect of Unplanned Pregnancy on Adolescent Girls in South West Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the consequential effect of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls in South West, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the factors responsible for unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls, the consequences of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls, the possible control measures to adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy and the relationship between unplanned pregnancy and psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls in South West, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study was all the adolescent girls in the South West, Nigeria but a total of 1200 between the ages of 12 and 19 years and selected using multistage sampling technique, participated in the study. A self-design questionnaire titled "Unplanned Pregnancy and Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire (UPPWQ)" was the instrument used to collect data. The instrument was validated by various experts using face and content validity. For the reliability of the instrument, test-retest method was employed which yield a reliability coefficient of 0.79. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy remains a critical issue among South West, Nigeria, and there are severe consequences including permanent school dropout, health complications, social rejection, and significantly diminished future opportunities for affected girls. The study also revealed negative correlation between unplanned pregnancy and psychological well-being among adolescent girls.*

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*Based on the findings, the study recommended the implementation of a comprehensive approach that combines improved family engagement and parental communication, coordinated prevention frameworks involving schools and community organizations, school-based programs integrating sex education with community involvement, and psychological support services to effectively address adolescent pregnancy and its associated consequences.*

**Keywords:** adolescent girls, consequential effect, unplanned pregnancy, South West, Nigeria

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## INTRODUCTION

The adolescence years are a very important time when young people go through major physical, mental, and social changes. For Nigerian girls, this time of change becomes even harder because of many problems, including not having enough education about reproductive health, poor healthcare services, cultural beliefs that support early marriage, and money problems (Amoran, 2012). When adolescent pregnancy happens during this time, it adds extra stress that can seriously affect the mental health of these young girls. The adolescent years are a time of big biological, social and mental development. It is a time of chance when many things can be done to prepare for healthy adulthood. Adolescent pregnancy usually means pregnancy in girls who are between 12-17 years old or younger (Ganchimeg, Ota, Morisak, Laopaiboon, Lumbiganon, Zhang & Mori, 2014). Getting pregnant early in life today is seen as breaking a girl child's rights because it can cause physical, emotional and social harm to adolescent girls and can badly affect their education. Adolescent pregnancy continues to be a serious social and public health problem in Nigeria, with major effects on adolescent girls, families, communities, and the whole economy. Adolescent pregnancy happens directly because of willing or unwilling sexual activities involving adolescent girls. This is mostly because parents don't pay enough attention to their children. Today, children grow up in a society where open or hidden information about sex before marriage, including adolescent girls, is shared through music, movies, friends and magazines. This culture has badly damaged the moral values of adolescent girls (Slowiski, 2015). Even though many organizations around the world try to use education to promote responsible sexual behavior and show the bad results of sex before marriage, like mental effects, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy, adolescent, including those in Southwest, Nigeria, don't seem to control their sexual behavior because even today, adolescent pregnancies keep happening around the world with many of the affected adolescent girls having to choose between having an abortion, keeping the pregnancy and leaving school or even killing themselves (Panday *et al.*, 2015). This situation has led to many awareness programs in secondary/high schools created to solve the problem of adolescent pregnancy, trying to reduce how often it happens.

Nigeria, as Africa's biggest country with over 200 million people, provides a special situation for studying adolescent pregnancy. The country's different ethnic, religious, and cultural background

shapes attitudes and practices about adolescent girls' sexuality, marriage, and having children. In northern Nigeria, cultural and religious beliefs often support early marriage, with girls as young as 12 being married, which leads to having children early. On the other hand, in southern Nigeria, while early marriage happens less, adolescent girls face big challenges like poor knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, limited access to birth control, and sexual abuse (Abiodun *et al.*, 2016).

The education system in Nigeria makes the adolescent pregnancy problem more complicated. Even though there are policies to promote girl-child education, many secondary schools don't have complete sexuality education programs. Okonofua *et al.* (2021) found that only 43% of secondary schools in their study across multiple states had any kind of sexuality education, and most of these programs focused on not having sex rather than complete reproductive health information. This gap in education leaves many adolescent girls unable to make smart decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. Poverty also plays a big role in adolescent pregnancy rates among Nigerian secondary school girls. Money problems can lead to sexual relationships for survival, making girls more likely to have unplanned pregnancies (Odimegwu & Adedini, 2013). Also, girls from poor families often can't access birth control services and face bigger challenges in continuing their education if pregnancy happens (Onyeka *et al.*, 2011).

However, when adolescent pregnancy happens or becomes common in secondary schools, it can have a big effect on the mental well-being of the students.

Psychological well-being means the overall mental, social and emotional health of a person, and it is affected by different factors. The adolescent years are an important time in life, and it is when adolescent face many challenges that can affect their mental and social well-being. In Nigeria, several things affect the mental and social well-being of adolescent girls, including cultural and social rules, adolescent pregnancy, family relationships, school stress, and being exposed to violence and crime. These factors often lead to mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and suicide. Research has shown that the mental and social well-being of Nigerian adolescent is badly affected by poverty, social inequality, and lack of access to education and healthcare services. Also, traditional cultural practices and gender rules can greatly impact the mental health of adolescent girls. Some of the mental well-being issues that might be connected to adolescent girls' pregnancy include low self-worth, social isolation, depression and being cut off from others (Ayodele *et al.*, 2025). Many factors cause unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls in Nigeria such as access to sex education, culture, religion, peer pressure, media, poverty, among others.

Poverty remains a main cause, often leading to sexual relationships where young girls trade sexual favors for money, school fees, or other things they need (Ajayi & Akpan, 2021). Limited access to complete sexuality education and reproductive health services makes the problem worse. Many Nigerian schools offer poor or abstinence-only sex education, leaving students unable to make smart decisions about their sexual health (Okonofua *et al.*, 2021). Cultural and religious factors also play big roles. Early marriage is still common in parts of Nigeria, especially in northern areas where cultural beliefs support female adolescents marrying and having children before finishing secondary education (Erulkar & Bello, 2022). Peer pressure and media influence also contribute to early sexual activity among adolescent. Research by Adebayo *et al.* (2022) showed that being exposed to sexually explicit content through social media is connected with more sexual activity among secondary school students in city areas.

Adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy remains a big social and public health challenge in Nigeria, with far-reaching results for the affected girls, their families, communities, and the whole nation. The problem of adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy in Nigeria creates special challenges within the country's social, cultural and economic situations. In Nigeria, how common adolescent girls are impregnated varies across regions but stays consistently high in both rural and urban areas. According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), about 19% of women aged 15-19 had started having children as of 2023, with higher rates in northern regions compared to southern states (Nwafor *et al.*, 2024). The educational effects of adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy are especially damaging. When adolescent girls become pregnant, many are forced to leave school either because of official school policies, unofficial shame, or the practical challenges of continuing education while pregnant or caring for a baby. Adebayo and Igbokwe (2023) found that 72% of pregnant adolescent girls in southwestern Nigeria stopped their education, with only 18% eventually returning to finish their secondary education.

The factors connected with adolescent girls' pregnancy in southwestern Nigeria are strongly linked with poverty and low standard of living (Owoseni, 2020). The researcher found that 70% of prenatal care clients in southwestern Nigeria are adolescent girls. They drop out of school because of this and they choose low-paying jobs that keep them in poverty. Most of them depend on social welfare which is as little as five thousand naira per month and very irregular. Despite all these problems, adolescent girls keep getting pregnant every day, this made the researchers want to study the consequential effect of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls in south west Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite numerous awareness campaigns and educational interventions, unplanned pregnancy is perceived to be a persistent and alarming issue among adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria.

The problem manifests in multiple dimensions: adolescent girls are dropping out of school at unprecedented rates due to pregnancy, leading to truncated educational pursuits and limited future opportunities. Many of these pregnant adolescents may face severe psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and social isolation, which significantly impacts their overall mental well-being. The cycle of poverty is perpetuated as these young mothers often resort to menial jobs that barely sustain them, with many depending on irregular and inadequate social welfare support. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive reproductive health education in schools, combined with cultural factors, peer pressure, and socioeconomic challenges, continues to expose adolescent girls to the risk of unplanned pregnancies. The consequences may extend beyond the individual girls to affect their families, communities, and the broader society through increased healthcare costs, social welfare burdens, and loss of human capital. Without a thorough understanding of the specific factors contributing to unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls in southwest and its impact on the psychological well-being of affected girls, effective intervention strategies cannot be developed to address this multifaceted problem that threatens the future of young Nigerian women and the development goals of the nation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine the consequential effect of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls in south west Nigeria. The study specifically:

- i. identified the factors responsible for unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria;
- ii. examined the consequences of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria;
- iii. assessed the possible control measures to adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy in south west, Nigeria;
- iv. examined the relationship between unplanned pregnancy and psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria;

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- i. What are the factors responsible for unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria?
- ii. What are the consequences of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria?
- iii. What are the possible control measures to adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy in south west, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:

- i. Unplanned pregnancy will not significantly influence psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a descriptive research approach of the survey type. The population for the study consisted of all the adolescent girls in secondary schools in the Southwest of Nigeria, comprising of six states namely, Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo. All the south west states have similarity in culture, language, food, among others, though with slight differences in geographical sizes, dialect, and so on. The secondary schools used included all the government owned secondary schools in south west Nigeria. The ages of adolescents that participated in the study were between 12 – 19 years. The sample for this study consisted of 1,200 girls. The method of selection was multistage sampling technique. The first stage involved the use of simple random sampling technique by balloting system to select three states out of the six states in Southwest Nigeria. The three states thus selected were Lagos, Oyo and Ekiti States. The second stage entailed the use of purposive selection to select the government owned secondary schools in the states. The third stage also involved the use of stratified simple random sampling technique to select the sample from the schools selected. A questionnaire titled "Unplanned Pregnancy and Psychological Well-Being Questionnaire (UPPWQ)" was the instrument used to gather data for the study. To make sure the tool was valid, face and content validity by different experts were conducted. The reliability was tested using the test-retest approach to get a reliability score of 0.79 which was considered reliable. The collected data were examined using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics like mean count and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were examined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** What are the factors responsible for unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria?

**Table 1: Mean Score for Factors Responsible for Unplanned Pregnancy among Adolescent Girls**

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree		$\bar{x}$	SD
		f	%	f	%		
1	Lack of proper sex education leads to adolescent pregnancy in schools.	1068	89.0	132	11.0	3.42	0.76
2	Poor family supervision and guidance causes girls to engage in early sexual activities.	1032	86.0	168	14.0	3.35	0.78
3	Peer pressure influences adolescent girls to have unprotected sex.	972	81.0	228	19.0	3.24	0.84
4	Poverty forces some adolescent girls into relationships that lead to pregnancy.	900	75.0	300	25.0	3.08	0.92
5	Easy access to social media and adult content encourages early sexual behavior among adolescents.	936	78.0	264	22.0	3.15	0.88

N = 1200

Mean cut off = 2.50

Grand Mean = 3.25

Table 1 presents the factors responsible for unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls. The analysis shows that all five factors were rated above the cut-off mean of 2.50, indicating strong agreement among respondents. The grand mean of 3.25 demonstrates that students perceive these factors as major contributors to unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls in their area.

**Research Question 2:** What are the consequences of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean Score for Consequences of Unplanned Pregnancy on Adolescent Girls**

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree		$\bar{x}$	SD
		f	%	f	%		
1	Pregnant adolescent girls often drop out of school permanently.	1104	92.0	96	8.0	3.48	0.71
2	Adolescent pregnancy leads to health problems for both mother and baby.	1044	87.0	156	13.0	3.38	0.77
3	Adolescent mothers face rejection from family and friends.	948	79.0	252	21.0	3.19	0.86
4	Pregnant adolescents lose their childhood and become adults too early.	1008	84.0	192	16.0	3.31	0.81
5	Adolescent pregnancy limits future career and education opportunities.	1080	90.0	120	10.0	3.45	0.74

N = 1200

Mean cut off = 2.50

Grand Mean = 3.36

Table 2 shows the perceived consequences of consequences of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls. The analysis reveals unanimous agreement across all five items above the cut-off mean, indicating strong awareness of the negative consequences. The grand mean of 3.36 demonstrates clear understanding of the severe consequences associated with unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls.

**Research Question 3:** What are the possible control measures to adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy in south west, Nigeria?

**Table 3: Mean Score for Possible Control Measures**

S/N	Items	Agree		Disagree		$\bar{x}$	SD
		f	%	f	%		
1	Schools should provide comprehensive sex education to all students.	1128	94.0	72	6.0	3.56	0.68
2	Parents should openly discuss reproductive health with their adolescent daughters.	1092	91.0	108	9.0	3.49	0.72
3	Free contraceptives should be made available to adolescents in schools.	756	63.0	444	37.0	2.81	1.02
4	Strict school rules and monitoring can help prevent adolescent pregnancy.	828	69.0	372	31.0	2.95	0.94
5	Community leaders and religious organizations should educate adolescents about the dangers of early pregnancy.	1056	88.0	144	12.0	3.41	0.78

N = 1200

Mean cut off = 2.50

Grand Mean = 3.24

Table 5 presents the possible control measures to adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy. The analysis shows that all five control measures were rated above the cut-off mean of 2.50, indicating strong support for preventive interventions. The grand mean of 3.24 demonstrates strong endorsement of comprehensive prevention strategies combining educational, familial, institutional, and community approaches to address unplanned pregnancy among adolescent girls.

### Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis One:** Unplanned pregnancy will not significantly influence psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls in south west, Nigeria.

**Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis showing the relationship between unplanned pregnancy and psychological well-being**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	P
Unplanned pregnancy	1200	15.05	3.84	-0.671*	0.000
Psychological Well-Being	1200	40.09	11.24		

p &lt; 0.05

(Significant Result)

Table 4 shows a significant negative relationship between unplanned pregnancy and overall psychological well-being among adolescent girls,  $r = -0.671$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that unplanned pregnancy will not significantly influence psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls was rejected.

## DISCUSSION

Factors responsible for unplanned pregnancy identified the inadequate sex education as one of the primary factor contributing to unplanned pregnancy aligns strongly with existing literature. Ajayi and Nwokocha (2022) found that over 70% of female students across Nigeria's geopolitical zones had limited understanding of pregnancy prevention methods due to inadequate sexuality education. The finding that poor family supervision contributes significantly to adolescent pregnancy is supported by Adegoke and Olasupo (2023), who demonstrated that girls from households with limited parental supervision were more likely to experience pregnancy. Additionally, the role of peer pressure identified in this study corresponds with research by Johnson and Akintola (2023), who found that adolescents whose close friends had experienced pregnancy were significantly more likely to become pregnant themselves. These factors likely persist because the Nigerian educational system and cultural context often lack comprehensive frameworks for adolescent sexual health education and open parent-child communication about reproductive matters.

The study's findings regarding the severe consequences of unplanned pregnancy on adolescent girls, particularly educational dropout and limited future opportunities, are well-documented in a study by Adebayo and Igbokwe (2023) who found that 72% of pregnant secondary school students in southwestern Nigeria discontinued their education, with only 18% eventually returning to complete their studies. The health risks identified by respondents align with research by Okonofua *et al.* (2023), who documented that adolescent mothers in Nigeria face significantly higher rates of obstetric complications compared to adult women. The social rejection consequences noted in the study are consistent with findings by Oyediran and Isiugo-Abanihe (2023), who observed that unplanned pregnancy frequently leads to social stigmatization and discrimination within communities. The unanimous recognition of these severe consequences

likely stems from students' observations of peer experiences and community awareness of the challenging outcomes faced by adolescent mothers.

Findings on control measures to adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy revealed that the strong endorsement of comprehensive sex education as a primary control measure reflects evidence from intervention studies. Okonofua *et al.* (2023) demonstrated that secondary schools implementing structured sexuality education programs recorded significant reductions in pregnancy rates compared to control schools. The emphasis on parental communication aligns with research by Akinwande (2024), who found that girls whose parents openly discussed reproductive health were more likely to delay sexual debut and use contraception when sexually active. The support for community involvement mirrors findings by Adesina *et al.* (2024), who documented significant reductions in adolescent pregnancy rates following community-based interventions involving various stakeholders. The strong agreement on these control measures likely reflects students' recognition of the knowledge gaps and support deficits they experience in their current environment.

The strong negative correlation between unplanned pregnancy and psychological wellbeing of adolescent girls demonstrates the comprehensive impact of adolescent childbearing on mental health outcomes, indicating that adolescent girls' unplanned pregnancy significantly reduces overall psychological well-being. This finding aligns with longitudinal research by Obembe and Johnson (2023), who found that women who experienced adolescent pregnancy demonstrated higher rates of anxiety disorders and depressive symptoms compared to those who began childbearing after adolescence. The relationship highlights how adolescent pregnancy affects multiple dimensions of psychological functioning, creating long-term implications for mental health and life satisfaction. The strong negative correlation likely results from the cumulative impact of multiple stressors including educational disruption, social stigma, economic hardship, and premature adult responsibilities that collectively overwhelm the psychological resources of adolescent girls.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, the study concluded that unplanned pregnancy remains a critical issue among adolescent girls in South west, Nigeria, with inadequate sex education, poor family supervision, peer pressure, poverty, and media exposure identified as primary contributing factors. The research reveals severe consequences including permanent school dropout, health complications, social rejection, and significantly diminished future opportunities for affected girls. The strong negative correlation between unplanned pregnancy and psychological well-being demonstrates the profound mental health impact on adolescent pregnancy among adolescent girls in southwestern Nigeria.

## Recommendations

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

1. Developing targeted family engagement programs to improve parental supervision and communication about reproductive health within households.
2. Creation of multi-sectoral prevention frameworks involving schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations to address the severe educational, health, and social consequences of adolescent pregnancy.
3. Establishment of comprehensive school-based prevention programs that combine sex education, parental involvement, and community engagement as the most effective approach to reducing adolescent pregnancy rates.
4. Establishment of holistic psychological support services that address the overall negative impact of adolescent pregnancy on psychological well-being.

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