

Journal of

Gender Related Studies

(JGRS)

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Learners in Iceme Sub County, Oyam District, Northern Uganda**



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Adolescent Pregnancy and Education Attainment of Female Learners in Iceme Sub County, Oyam District, Northern Uganda

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Accepted: 26th Sept 2023 Received in Revised Form: 11th Oct 2023 Published: 19th Oct 2023

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed at determining the factors associated with adolescent pregnancy, motivating factors for girls to stay in school and the effects of adolescent pregnancy on education attainment and livelihoods in Iceme Sub County, Oyam District.

Methodology: The study adopted exploratory study using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Using the principle of data saturation, the study engaged thirty-five participants that included adolescent mothers, school head teachers and other education stakeholders in two selected parishes in Iceme Sub County.

Findings: Analysis of the responses about the causes of adolescent pregnancy generated five major themes, economic status, peer influence, substance use and abuse, inadequate sex education and domestic violence. Factors motivating girls to stay in school included becoming national leaders, better living condition and independence. It was revealed that the effects of adolescent pregnancy include dropping out of school, being chased away from home, developing complications during and after delivery, poverty and producing so many children.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The study suggests adoption of remedial policy measures that include; provision of income generating opportunities to families, strengthening the implementation of policy on domestic violence and violence against children, strengthen peer to peer education/ learning, policy that does not allow sale of drugs and other substance in shops that are not licensed as drug shops and regulated by the National drug authority, provision of counselling and guidance, identification of role models who can offer guidance to girls for them to have a bright future and become national leaders and affirmative action towards girls who return to school after delivery such that they are able to complete their education. This study contributes to the understanding of the plight of adolescent girls face in a post-war region situated in a less-developing nation.

Keywords: *adolescent pregnancy, motivating factors, girls, education attainment, livelihoods*

1. Introduction

Educational attainment is one of the indicators to measure progress towards Sustainable Development Goal Target 4.4: “By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”. High educational attainment is associated with better health, increased civic engagement, decreased violence and crime, and other factors linked to sustainable development. According to Max and Esteban (2016), from a historical perspective, the world went through a great expansion in education over the past two centuries. Global literacy rates have been climbing over the course of the last two centuries, mainly through increasing rates of enrollment in primary education. Secondary and tertiary education have also seen drastic growth, with global average years of schooling being much higher now than a hundred years ago.

Despite all these worldwide improvements, some countries have been lagging behind, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, where there are still countries that have literacy rates below 50% among the youth. Over the past 15 years, girls’ education in the developing world has been a story of progress. Interest and financial backing from the development community have grown steadily in response to accumulating evidence documenting the many benefits of girls’ schooling, and female education is now a major part of global development commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals. Girls’ primary school completion rates are below 50% in most poor countries. According to a 2008 UN report, 113 countries failed to reach the 2005 Millennium Development Goals on gender equality in education. According to Results Educational Fund, (2009), better education yields higher individual income and contributes towards the construction of social capital and long-term economic growth. Worldwide, women with more education delay marriage, are more empowered, and have more economic autonomy. According to Monshipouri and Karbasioun (2003), societies with more empowered women also experience less violence and terrorism along with other criminal behaviors.

Gender is a critical factor in structuring the types of opportunities and life chances faced by individuals and groups, and strongly influences the roles they play within social institutions from the household to the state. Although the roles of men and women vary from culture to culture, there is no known instance of a society in which females are more powerful than males. Men’s roles are generally more highly valued and rewarding than women’s roles (Ibrahim 2004; Giddens 2010). At the heart of the radical feminism is the belief that men are responsible for and benefit from the exploitation of women as well as girl-children. The analysis of patriarchy is a central concern. Patriarchy is viewed as a universal phenomenon that existed across time and cultures. Radical feminists often concentrate on the family as one of the primary sources of the women’s oppression in the society (Igube, 2004; Walby, 1990; Rese, 2005; Igube, 2010) contended that there are some patriarchal structures which restrict girl-children as well as women’s education opportunities and help maintain male domination. These are: paid employment, patriarchal relations within the household, patriarchal culture, sexuality, violence toward female, and the state. Each of these structures has some independence from the others, but they can affect one another,

reinforcing or weakening in different structures. Walby (1990) believes that paid employment has been and remains a key structure in creating disadvantages for women and girl-children in particular.

In a traditional, and even contemporary Nigerian communities, the degree of inequality between men and women in terms of pay, position, condition, and access to well rewarding occupations has declined only slightly. The gap between men's and women's wages has only been reduced a little and women continue to predominate in low-paid, part-time employment. When girls and women decide not to seek for formal education nor seek paid job, they do so more because of restricted opportunities open to them because of cultural values that suggest that mothers and wives should stay at home. The state's policies and priorities are systematically biased toward patriarchal interest. Women have routinely experienced violence and the state effectively condones the violence with its refusal to intervene, except in exceptional cases.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The right to education for student mothers is enshrined in various international instruments that Uganda and Kenya have ratified including the regional African Charter on The Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACWRC). Article 11(6) of the ACRWC stipulates that, state parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children who become pregnant before completing their education shall have an opportunity to continue with their education. Uganda does not have a formal national policy in education to guide action in protecting pregnant and parenting students. In this policy vacuum, the Ministry of Education and Sports in collaboration with development partners rely on a patchwork of good will pronouncements and circulars sent to schools to encourage school administrators to allow girls especially candidates to sit for final exams and through radio programs and school visitations they raise awareness about the importance of protecting the education of student mothers. Adolescent pregnancy accounts for 22.3 per cent of school dropouts among girls aged between 14 to 18 years. Only 8 per cent of the girls that drop out of school are given a second chance to re-enroll (Ministry of Education and sports, 2020). According to Ochen et al (2019), northern Uganda had the highest pregnancy rate in the country before COVID-19. However, Bill and Ojok (2021) state that the number increased during COVID with Oyam district registering the highest number of cases of adolescent pregnancies. Sarah (2022) agrees that the time the lockdown was lifted, one in every five households had an adolescent with either a child or pregnancy. Despite these policies and efforts in both countries, the exclusion of student mothers in education remains high and pregnancy often signals the end of schooling for most girls. There is therefore need to investigate the factors associated with pregnancy among adolescent girls aged 18–25 years in Iceme, Oyam District, Uganda, the effects and impacts of adolescent pregnancy on Education attainment and livelihoods of girls. This study will examine the predictors of adolescent pregnancies among adolescent girls in Iceme, Oyam district of Uganda and its effects on education attainment of female adolescents.

1.2 Objective of the study

This study set to analyze the influence of adolescent pregnancy on education attainment of adolescent girls in Oyam District in particular reference to Iceme Sub County. Specifically, the study responded to three questions, namely: (i) what are the drivers of adolescent pregnancy in Oyam District? (ii) What are some of the motivating factors for adolescent girls to stay in school? And (iii) what are the effects of adolescent pregnancy on adolescent girls continuing with Education and their livelihoods?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The concept of adolescent pregnancy

It is referred to as a girl usually under the age of thirteen to nineteen years becoming pregnant (UNICEF 2015). Adolescent pregnancy can also be termed as adolescent pregnancy and unmarried adolescents that have given birth (Cynthia et al 2008). Other scholars have a different age. WHO (2015) shows that adolescent pregnancy starts at 10 to 19 years of age. It also starts at 15 to 19 years of age Elea Carey (2018). This is an important transformation stage and it is considered a period of vulnerability associated with risk behaviors such as drug abuse, unsafe sexual practices, leading to the risk of infection and unplanned pregnancy (Buratto et al., 2019).

2.2 Potential drivers of adolescent pregnancy

The intersection of poverty and socio-economic vulnerability of young girls remains a long-standing explanation for adolescent pregnancy (Gyan, 2017; Garwood et al., 2015; Gyan, 2013; Monyai & Metsing, 2019). Gyan (2013), for instance, notes the integrated effect of poor parenting, poverty, media influence, peer pressure, and school dropout increases the likelihoods of pregnancy among young girls. Strong associations between adolescent pregnancy and reduced educational attainment are easily observable once these high likelihoods are realized. Panday et al. (2009) affirm that teenage mothers are unlikely to complete school education. The non-completion of primary and secondary school education limits the life earning potentials among the adolescent population, which perpetuates cycles of impoverishment and socio-economic vulnerability. Thus, adolescent motherhood predisposes the girl child to several deteriorating circumstances like multiple unplanned pregnancies, dropping out of school, parental neglect and rejection, and less opportunities in the future. This places them in a situation where fending for themselves and the baby becomes difficult particularly when they are driven away from home. Since poverty is the major predisposing factor to teenage pregnancy, many of them end up perpetuating this trend and their children live in deteriorating conditions (Garwood et al., 2015).

WHO (2022) holds the view that several factors contribute to adolescent pregnancy. In many societies, girls may be under pressure to marry and bear children early, or they may have limited educational and employment prospects. In low- and middle-income countries, over 30% of girls marry before they are 18 years of age; around 14% before the age of 15. Education, on the other hand, is a major protective factor for early pregnancy: the more years of schooling, the fewer early pregnancies. Birth rates among women with low education are higher than for those with

secondary or tertiary education. Some adolescents do not know how to avoid becoming pregnant, or are unable to obtain contraceptives.

Lack of guidance

Ahorlu, Pfeiffer& Obrist (2015) states that Parents and Guardians are reluctant or do not understand the need to educate adolescents about the vice and sexual reproductive behavior which leave the adolescents not properly guided during their adolescent stage of development yet this is the critical stage in which their cognitive, emotional, psychological and social skills mature.

Social Cultural norms

There is also a significant contribution of socio- cultural norms in increasing the rate of adolescent pregnancy as was noted in a study done in Lira District. According to Neema et al (2021), there is a market in Aromo sub-county in Lira District called Moo Cwari (“to look for your husband”) that is designated to the trading of girls. The market day occurs every Tuesday and attracts people from as far as South Sudan, Acholi sub-region and Lango region. The buyers of girls are typically the parents of a young teenage boy or a middle-aged man looking for a second wife. Negotiations usually take place prior to the exchange, and the market is mainly used as camouflage to authorities. At the market, the husband (or parents if it involves a young boy) will bring cows or other livestock as if selling them to the girl's parents. The transaction can be an exchange of two to four cows for one girl. The girl, who has not consented as she is underage and has no ability to provide consent is then forced to follow the new husband and become a wife. A person working at the market described low income and the perception of girls as a source of income as key reasons for these exchanges.

Inadequate enforcement of laws

Pierre Tristan (2019) discusses that many countries have laws against adolescent pregnancy but these laws are not enforced and this increases more cases especially among the old men who always take advantage of the young girls. The Daily Monitor (22 August 2017) mentions that though laws that criminalize one who makes a girl before the age of eighteen are in existence they are not effectively implemented in the country or not even given attention at time and so the neglect of these laws has given men an escape route for making adolescent girls pregnant.

Poverty

The household economic status has an influence on adolescent pregnancy. Acharya (2015) in a study conducted regarding factors associated with adolescent pregnancy in South Asia, found out that adolescents who belonged to middle or poor household have higher chances of becoming pregnant as compared to those who originated from rich households. Parents may marry off their daughters at an early age because of poverty and these early marriages are strongly associated with adolescent pregnancies, Okigbo and Speizer (2015). Amos (2017) supports this idea that household economic status determines the age at first marriage especially for low-income

households and this is because if a family is poor, they might choose to marry off their daughters early to get bride price and this can result in adolescent pregnancies.

2.2 Motivations for girls to stay longer in school

Women are more educated today than at any point in history

According to Graetz, Friedman, Osgood-Zimmerman, Burstein, Biehl, Shields & Hay (2018), In 1960, adult women across the 126 countries had an average of 2.6 years of education. By 2010, that number had nearly tripled to 7.7 years of education. Women have more education today than in 1960 in every single country in our sample. Education for men has also increased, from 3.5 years of schooling in 1960 to 8.2 years in 2010. The country with the largest gain in female schooling, the United Arab Emirates, began at the low level of 0.9 years of schooling for the average woman and shot to 10 years by 2010, but even the country with the smallest gain in adult female schooling over the 50 years, Senegal, shows a marked improvement for women. In every country, women have more education now than ever before.

An educated girl can increase her income

A girl with an extra year of education can earn 20% more income as an adult (The World Bank, 2011). More income means better nutrition and healthcare for her family. Living conditions improve. Income can be the impetus to get out from under the grinding cycle of poverty into a life with choices and opportunities.

She marries later

An educated girl breaks the cultural pattern of girls marrying as children. Girls with higher levels of education are also less likely to have children at an early age (UNESCO, 2013). Marrying later means she won't be a child herself when she becomes a mother.

Her children are healthier

The single biggest factor in reducing the mortality rate among children under five is more education for women. According to LeVine, LeVine, Schnell-Anzola, Rowe, & Dexter (2011), a literate mother has a 50% higher chance of her child surviving past the age of five. More education helps women make better decisions about prenatal care, basic hygiene, nutrition, and immunization, all of which contribute to healthier children. Incredible things happen when a girl gets the education she needs. Her life and the lives of her children improve. She earns an income and contributes to the local economy. She models confidence and self-determination for her children and the girls and women in her community.

2.3 Impact of adolescent pregnancy on Education attainment and livelihoods of adolescent pregnant girls

According to UNFPA (2020), adolescent pregnancy denies girls their childhood, disrupts their education, limits opportunities, increases their risks of violence and abuse and has profound effects on the health and lives of young women. Adolescent pregnancy often leads to school dropouts and

poor or delayed educational achievements. Approximately 15-20 per cent of dropouts for girls in secondary school are triggered by child marriage and adolescent pregnancy (MoES 2020). According to Cahyaningtyasa et al (2020), adolescent pregnancy affects girls' education and income potential as many are forced to drop out of school which ultimately threatens future opportunities and economic prospects. According to The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2006), Poor academic performance in the children of adolescent mothers has also been noted, with many of the children being held back a grade level, scoring lower on standardized tests, and/or failing to graduate from secondary school.

According to Cahyaningtyasa et al (2020), pregnancies among girls less than 18 years of age have irreparable consequences. It violates the rights of girls, with life-threatening consequences in terms of sexual and reproductive health, and poses high development costs for communities, particularly in perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Health consequences include not yet being physically ready for pregnancy and childbirth leading to complications and malnutrition as the majority of adolescents tend to come from lower-income households. The risk of maternal death for girls under age of 15 in low and middle income countries is higher than for women in their twenties. According to World Bank (2020), More than 12 million adolescent girls between ages 15 and 19 gave birth in 2019. Girls who give birth before adulthood are likely to bear increased health risks, social stigma, and adverse economic impacts for the rest of their lives. Consequently, adolescent mothers are less likely to continue going to school, which prevents them from realizing their full potential and finding better economic opportunities, and often results in reduced lifetime earnings. Adolescent pregnancy can also affect future generations, for example daughters of adolescent mothers are at a greater risk of adolescent pregnancy themselves, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty.

This study dealt with adolescent girls of 18 to 25 years of age. The exclusion of girls younger than ten was a missed opportunity to capture other scenarios. Moreover, boys were not part of the study, limiting knowledge of what might be happening in terms of education, health and rites of initiation regarding boys involved in early marriage. Being a male researcher, interviewing girls limited the flow of communication with some participants. There still exists a huge gap in determining the impact of adolescent pregnancy on the education attainment of adolescent female learners. Most of the studies have focused on assessing the causes and consequences of adolescent pregnancy and more emphasis has been put on the health, economic and social consequences while neglecting the area of education attainment of victims of adolescent pregnancy and this indicates a gap. This study therefore seeks to assess the impact of adolescent pregnancy on education attainment and livelihoods of adolescent pregnant school girls. Another gap identified is the geographical gap, though there are a number of studies that have been conducted on adolescent pregnancy most of them have been carried out in Bangladeshi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Senegal among other countries and even the few that have been conducted in Uganda focused on districts like Mbale and Masaka, Western and Busoga regions and this indicates geographical gap the reason for the proposed study

to be conducted in Oyam district. This therefore calls for an in-depth study on the impact of adolescent pregnancy on the education attainment of female learners.

3. Research Methodology

An exploratory study using a qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted (Creswell, 2014). The population included adolescent girls and other relevant stake holders such as head teachers, Education department staff, and probation officer among others who had had experiences with adolescent pregnant girls. The principle of saturation was used in determining the sample size. Phenomenological research is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon. The approach investigated the everyday experiences of human beings while suspending the researchers' preconceived assumptions about the phenomenon. In other words, phenomenological research studies lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how people understand those experiences. Data was collected using qualitative data collection methods to have an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of the respondents about adolescent pregnancy and this approach was very appropriate for this study. Data was analyzed thematically using an excel sheet

The study was conducted in Angweta and Orupu parishes located in Iceme sub county Oyam District. In this study, the study population included 35 education stakeholders ranging from adolescent school girls, parents, education department and local leaders in Iceme Sub County. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select the respondents of the study.

Table 1: Category of respondents to the study

S/N	Category	Popu.	Sample	Sampling Technique
1	Head Teachers	3	3	Census
2	Adolescent mothers	40	28	Simple random sampling
3	District inspector of schools	1	1	Census
4	District Education Officer	1	1	Census
5	Probation Officer	1	1	Census
6	Officer in charge Child and family protection of the police	1	1	Census
Total		47	35	

Source: *Community development department of Oyam District Local Government*

The study put its focus on thirty-five participants and these were considered as the ideal sample size given the area of coverage. Data collection is the period in the researcher's project that involves engaging with a target sample on population from whom data is collected. In this study, one on one interviews were used to capture responses from respondents on adolescent pregnancy. This method was used because, it captured first hand and detailed information, gave space for quick response, it brought out the sensitive information, secured the confidentiality of the respondents and so it was convenient the respondents. An interview guide was used during the one on one or personal interviews. The guide consisted of questions related to the topic aiming at capturing the responses of respondents on adolescent pregnancy. They consisted of open-ended questions which gave a respondent space to clearly define his or her views and drawing from their professional and lived experiences.

3.1 Data Processing and analysis

During data processing and analysis, six key steps were followed to be able to process and analyse the data. This involved reading through written survey responses and other texts, transcribing audio, and recording any patterns that were critical for the study. Data analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data (Savenye, 2004). The data collected in this study was analyzed through the thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to texts such as the interview transcripts (Caulfield 2019).

3.2 Quality measurement

The validity of a research instrument refers to the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure. Face validity refers to the extent to which an instrument 'looks' valid in terms of measuring what it is supposed to measure. Notably, this type of validity cannot be quantified or tested. This was achieved through testing the measures on a small sample before using them in the study to identify potential issues. I used a variety of data sources, such as self-report and observation, to provide a more complete understanding of the concept being measured. To ensure the content validity of an instrument, the researcher usually presents a provisional version to experts in the field for their comments before finalizing the instrument. Content validity was ensured through the expertise of the supervisor make sure the instrument covered the complete content of what was being measured. Questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the research sample shall be completed with the necessary honesty and sincerity required to render the responses maximally valid.

4. Findings and Analysis

4.1 Characteristics of Participants

The study was made up of 35 participants using in-depth interviews. Of these, twenty-five were females, ten were males, and all these were engaged in in- depth personal interviews. All the respondents were Lango. The youngest respondent was 18 years of age, while the oldest was 56 years of age. The average age of the respondents was 19 years.

Table 2: A table showing the social and demographic characteristics of respondents

Ages of respondents	No of respondents
18	2
20	7
21	2
22	10
24	3
25	6
Above 25	5
Respondents currently in school	
Yes	2
No	33
Respondent's Highest level of education	
Primary	27
Secondary	2
Diploma/ Degree	6
How far did the parent go with education	
Primary	26
Secondary	1
Tertiary	4
Parents are deceased	4
Current occupation of respondents	
Farming	20
Business	9
Formal employment	6
Participants with parents alive	
Alive	31
Deceased	4
Current occupation of parents	
Farming	23

Business	5
Formal employment	2
Deceased	4
Those familiar with adolescents who got pregnant	
Yes	35
No	0
Known Pregnant adolescents who went back to school after delivery	2

Source: Primary data

4.2 Causes of Adolescent Pregnancy

Analysis of the responses about the causes of adolescent pregnancy generated five major themes, economic status, peer influence, substance use and abuse, inadequate sex education and domestic violence.

Poverty (Economic Status)

Majority of the study participants associated the level of a family's economic status to the likelihood of occurrence of adolescent pregnancy. They argued that poverty in a home heightens the level of vulnerability of adolescent girls who can't meet all needs and desires driving them into transactional sex with boys and men as seen below;

You cannot be allowed to continue with education when the parents have to marry for your brother and they are poor, all they do is to force you to get married at an early age and you end up getting pregnant (respondent 09, Angweta A village 20th July 2023)

This finding relates to earlier studies that found out that the household economic status had an influence on adolescent pregnancy in that poor parents married off their daughters at an early age as a means of getting wealth and it was the early marriages that led to adolescent pregnancy (Neema et al.2021).

Peer influence

Many adolescents engage in sexual intercourse out of pressure from their peers, as this is one way of enabling them to fit within these peers. The study found out that most of the participants believed that peer influence contributed to the various cases of adolescent pregnancy in the area of study. Peer influence especially among adolescents in the early stages where they are battling with the image of self and identity has an impact on influencing many of them to engage in dangerous sexual activities, which in the end lead them into pregnancy.

Whenever we were coming back from school a certain boy would approach my friend whom I used to go back home with and they would talk for some time as I waited for my friend. She would then tell me the boy was conning her and that he wanted to have

sex with her. She told me that she was afraid of having sexual intercourse since she had not had sex before. The boy would always talk to the girl until one day she told me that they had finally had sex and that it felt so nice and she convinced me also to try it out once an opportunity arises. Because of her influence I had sex with a fellow pupil in primary seven three times and I got pregnant (02, Awangi D village, Orupu Parish)

In the previous study by Ochen, Che Chi and Lawoko (2019) on the predictions of adolescent pregnancy among girls aged 15-19 years in Uganda, it was found out that adolescents who were not sexually abused were less likely to become pregnant but if they are in bad peers could easily get pregnant and the once in a good peer hardly got pregnant suggesting that bad peers highly contribute adolescent pregnancy.

The use of substances and Alcoholism

Participants pointed out that the use of substances among adolescents has exposed them to various risks including in engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse, which may lead to pregnancies. Adolescents have engaged in the use of substances such as alcohol, marijuana, kuber that make them many times lose control of their own bodies once these substances are taken. The participants revealed that adolescents who use these various substances end up engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse with their mates or peers leading to adolescent pregnancy. In studies earlier conducted by Atuyambe et al (2015), Wood and Hendricks (2017), excessive use of alcohol and substance abuse was found to be one of the leading cause of adolescent pregnancy

People are using different drugs that include marijuana, cocaine, mira and alcohol. Medical personnel do not prescribe these drugs. When you take them for the first time, they end up losing self-control. It is really worse for girls. Some boys and men take this opportunity and take advantage of the girls cannot control themselves because they are drunk and intoxicated by the drugs. In process, they end up becoming pregnant (participant 10 from Apyeli village, Angweta Parish)

Insufficient information on sexuality and lack of sexual reproductive health services

Some of the participants revealed that most adolescent girls did not receive information related to sexuality from their parents except from teachers while at school and normally from the sex education classes. This had a great contribution to adolescent pregnancy as they engage in exploration of the different changes that their bodies experience as they grow up into mature people.

Teachers give us little information on body changes, menstruation, and menstrual hygiene during sex education period in school. They may not tell us everything about sexuality. Those adolescent girls who are not in school do not have opportunity to such information (respondent 26 form Aringo Village, Angweta Parish)

The lack of knowledge on issues concerning sexuality among adolescents makes them more prone to becoming pregnant at this stage since they are sexually active with limited information on the various protective measures, which prompts them to engage in unprotected sex exposing them to pregnancy. Previous studies conducted by Mchunue et al (2012); Okigho and Speizer (2015); Mathews and Mekuria (2018), indicated that adolescents who lacked parental guidance and counselling on sexual education were prone to engaging in sexual activities especially in trying to experience what they heard or saw. In addition, the lack of knowledge on the use of contraceptives caused adolescent pregnancies.

4.3 Motivating factors for adolescent girls to stay in school

During the study, the themes that stood out to be motivating factors for girls to stay in school included becoming national leaders and better living condition.

Becoming national leaders

Majority of participants argued that an educated girl is able to become national leaders after completing her studies and become a better person compared to a girl that dropped out of school. Today women such as Maj. RT Jesica Alupu the Vice president of the republic of Uganda. Right Hon. Robina Nabanja the Prime minister of the republic of Uganda are role models to girls who are in school and this motivates them more to continue with their education. Several other women have become national leaders including those coming from Lango sub region and Oyam District in particular. These include Imat Hon. Cecilia Atim Ogwal, Hon Betty Amongi Akena and Hon. Santa Alum Ogwang among others. Many respondents showed admiration for these personalities and wished they could be like such national figures.

I would like to be a national leader in the future like Robina Nabanja and Santa Alum. I want to stay in school and complete my studies so that I can be a national leader (respondent 03 from Akongatar C, Angweta Parish)

If I could go back to school, I would not allow any man to play around with my education by seducing me into a sexual relationship and getting pregnant. I would abstain until I finish my education so that I could become a Member of Parliament like Alum Santa (Respondent 32 from Odongooyee village Orupu Parish)

Better living condition

A good number of respondents revealed that another motivating factor for girls to stay in school is to secure better living standard. Girls who are educated are able to secure good jobs and are able to sustain themselves and their families. Respondents revealed that girls who dropped out of school in most cases end up doing petty jobs such as house maids, working in restaurants, bars and night clubs. These jobs are risky in that there is no job security. One can be employed today and she is relieved of her duties the following day since there are no educational qualifications required and hence no contracts between the employer and the employee.

I have an aunt who is living a comfortable life because she completed her education. Most times she is flying out of the country and she comes back with good things even for us. My mother who dropped out of school in secondary is a peasant who can hardly afford anything. She is always supported by her sister (respondent 14 from Ayita B, Angweta Parish)

Independence

Respondents revealed that girls who stayed in school and completed their education were able to be independent. Girls who dropped out of school were found to be dependent on their parents, husbands or the community where they live. The respondents cited examples of women members of parliament who are able to independently support themselves and also the members of their different constituencies.

When a woman completes her education, she becomes independent. She can have her own house and other properties unlike uneducated woman who depends on the husband for everything (Respondent30 from Ongica A village, Angweta Parish)

4.4 Effects of adolescent pregnancy

Analysis of the responses about the consequences of adolescent pregnancy generated five major themes, dropping out of school, being chased away from home, complications during and after delivery, poverty, producing so many children.

Dropping out of school

Majority of participants explained that adolescents who became pregnant in school were dismissed. This is because many of the schools do not accept pregnant girls to be part of the learners at schools as this can encourage other girls to get pregnant. They further revealed that many girls run away from school once they become pregnant. Participants revealed that pregnant adolescents ended up leaving school as an immediate response to their pregnancy thereby affecting their education attainment.

My sister's daughter was found to be pregnant while at school. When the school authorities invited the parents to come to school, the girl ran away from school for fear of the pregnancy and the reaction of the parents and she never returned to school again. Participant from A focused group discussion Angweta A village, Orupu Parish

This finding relates to previous studies by Robert & Rebecca (2006); Mathura, Greene and Malhotra (2005); MOES (2008); Muganda, Onyando (2008) which revealed that adolescent pregnancy led to school dropouts which interrupted the schooling of a girl child and also school adjustment difficulties since teachers and other duty bearers believe that a girl who is pregnant cannot handle two masters at ago and so have to leave school and take care of the unborn baby. This in the end does not allow girls to attain their dreams for education.

Being chased away from home

A number of respondents argued that when parents learn that their daughters are pregnant, many respond with chasing them away from home because such parents feared facing humiliation that the pregnancy would carry for their families. Fathers are more intolerant to pregnant daughters although mothers tend to be forgiving and can easily allow their daughters to stay in the homes while pregnant to assist them in the entire process of child birth and growth. A few respondents confirmed that other parents chose to keep their pregnant daughters in their homes up to when they gave birth and even gave them a second chance to go back to school. The study revealed that two girls were allowed to go back to school after delivery by their parents

I know of a man who chased away his daughter because she got pregnant while at school and the girl ended up with her relative in Kampala until when she delivered - Respondent 09, Obari A village, Orupu Paris

There is a family that allowed their daughter to deliver and go back to school and now she is back in school - Participant 11, Obari A village, Orupu Parish

Complications during birth and other health problems

The participants in the study explained that adolescent pregnancy was associated with various health difficulties especially during delivery. It should be noted that the body of the adolescent at this age is not mature enough to shoulder the burden of carrying a child and childbirth.

Many girls who get pregnant when they are young always tend to abort and as a result they develop complications that affect their reproduction and others fail to deliver on their own. They end up going through secerian section and others end up with fistula. Participant 05 Ajalo D, Angweta Parish

Due to pregnancy at a young age. They usually consider abortion. Moreover, they do it the unsafe way since they are hiding from their parents. Giving birth as an adolescent as well as carrying a pregnancy at this age paves way for various health complications or both the mother and the unborn baby since the mother's body is considered not to be mature enough to carry on the burden of the pregnancy and giving birth. It was revealed that adolescent pregnancy was associated with various health difficulties and complications for both the adolescent mother and the unborn baby. Due to the fact that their bodies are still young, they are prone to premature births, stillborn as well as unsafe abortions that can take their lives. It also exposed them to contracting sexually transmitted diseases at a very tender age. Elea (2018); Combos et al (2001); WHO (2015); Nivin (2019); Ganchieng et al (2015); Ministry of Health (2009)in their studies revealed that girls who gave birth when their body parts were not matured enough got a lot of health complications before and even after birth since their bodies were weak to handle foreign bodies. Maternal Mortality Resulted from adolescent pregnancy since the birth canals of the girls were not mature to deliver and so some ended up losing their lives in the process of giving birth

Poverty

A good number of respondents revealed that adolescent pregnancy was greatly associated with poverty. The study further revealed that adolescent pregnancy leads to poverty. Once a girl remains in school and completes her education, she is well placed to be in position to get a good paying job. However, when a girl drops out due to pregnancy she ends up in very low paying jobs such as housekeeping, vending fruits, working in the bar among others. With such kinds of economic activities, they cannot fairly meet their day-to-day life needs. Adolescence comes when most of the girls are still in school. This makes them vulnerable to poverty. Once they become pregnant, they drop out of school without a single source of income.

When a girl drops out of school due to pregnancy she ends up in very low paying jobs such as vending fruits, house maid among others. With such kinds of businesses, they cannot even meet their day-to-day life needs. They also lack the qualifications to compete in the job market. They are then trapped in the poverty cycle. Participant 06 Ajalo D, Angweta Parish

Producing so many children

Adolescents who got pregnant ended up producing so many children. This arose from the fact that they started producing at an early age. Given that the rate of fertility is so high from the age of 18 years and above and the fact that these girls are ignorant about the availability of family planning methods to control pregnancy due to early drop out from school, they end up producing so many children. By the time she reaches 30 years assuming that she produces after every two years and she started producing at 16 years, she would have a round 8 children at the age of 30 years. The study revealed that most people who got pregnant and an early age ended up producing a minimum of around 10 children and this poses dangers such as fistula as a result of producing many children.

4.5 Implication for policy and practice

The themes above present challenges for both governance and effective delivery of public goods and services. In the following section, a discussion of the implications on policy and practice of the issues above is presented. The discussion for the drivers of adolescent pregnancy rotated around family's economic status, domestic violence, peer pressure, substance abuse and alcoholism and lack of knowledge and information on sexuality. This therefore requires the following policy interventions. Further, there is need to provide income generating opportunities to families through access to affordable finance as this will help them improve their economic status to be able to provide for the family needs without necessarily marrying off their daughters at an early age or girls failing to provide for their needs and desires and ending up with men and boys who can cater for their needs hence impregnating them. Also, there is need for strengthening the implementation of policy on domestic violence and violence against children. This can go a long way in deterring parents who violate the rights of their daughters leading them to run away from home and eloping with men when they are meant to be in school. Besides, there is need to strengthen peer to peer education/ learning as this can be a better means for adolescents to learn

about sexuality and the associated dangers to early sexual practices. And, there should be a policy that does not allow sale of drugs and other substance in shops that are not licensed as drug shops and regulated by the National drug authority

Parents should continue providing support to their pregnant daughters even when it is a disgrace to their family name. Consider taking care of your child in the situation, give them hope and courage. Where possible, these girls should be give second chances to go back to school. On motivating factors for girls to stay in school, the issues that came out strongly include becoming national leader, better living condition, independence, gender equality and avoidance of early marriage. This therefore calls for the following policy proposal. Further, identification of role models who can offer guidance to girls for them to have a bright future and become national leaders. Also, there should be affirmative action towards girls who return to school after delivery such that they are able to complete their education and be in position to acquire decent jobs and attain better living standard. In addition, there should be a policy that allows pregnant mothers to continue with their education while pregnant and even after giving birth. This will eventually help to scale down the number of school dropouts due to pregnancy

4.6 Coping strategies and lived experiences of pregnant adolescent girls

The study revealed that one of the coping strategies was running to their close relatives. Some girls chose to run to their relatives as a means to avoid embarrassment and mistreatment from the parents. They lived with their relatives until after birth. Another coping mechanism was to ask for forgiveness from their parents and this worked for most of them as they were finally allowed to live at home despite their pregnancy. One more coping strategy was acceptance of the pregnancy. The study revealed that most girls accepted the pregnancy and lived with it until they delivered. Others were reported to have eloped with those responsible for the pregnancy and they settled as husband and wife. Among the support rendered to adolescent pregnant girls include being taken for antenatal care by the close relatives or parents. All respondents pointed out that pregnant adolescent girls received support towards antenatal care by their parents and close relatives. Other support according to the study included provision of good feeding by the parents and other relatives. Many pregnant adolescent girls were reported to have received food items as a way of ensuring their health and safety.

Other support included clothing and other basic necessities that were provided to pregnant adolescents. The study revealed that majority of parents feel the adolescent pregnant girls already wasted their chances by getting pregnant and therefore they should not continue with their education therefore have a very negative attitude towards school going girls who get pregnant while at school. Other parents however feel that these girls should be given second chances as mistake is human. Some parents on that note allowed their daughters to go back to school although with a lot of stigma for both the parents and the daughters. On the part of school authorities, there was mixed reaction. Some school authorities argued that allowing these girls to get back to school would show a very bad example to other girls who may have justification to get pregnant as well

since one can be allowed to continue with education while pregnant less they become a big problem to the parents and the society at large. Other school authorities however argued that stopping these girls from continuing with their education would mean condemning them to everlasting poverty since they would have been denied opportunities that accrue to educated people.

5. Conclusion

The study has revealed that adolescent pregnancy has greatly affected the level of education attainment of girls who got pregnant before completing their education. In the study, there were only two known cases of girls who returned back to school after delivery. There is need for more attention in ensuring that pregnant adolescents go back to schools after delivery. Pregnant girls should be given a second chance to continue with their education after birth by giving them support throughout the period of pregnancy and childbirth.

Recommendations

Considering the fact that there have been laws regarding adolescent pregnancy and yet the rate continues to surge, it is encouraged that the following as a way of reducing the rate of adolescent pregnancy.

- a) Provide income generating opportunities to families through access to affordable finance as this will help them improve their economic status;
- b) Strengthening the implementation of policy on domestic violence and violence against children;
- c) Strengthen peer to peer education/ learning as this can be a better means for adolescents to learn about sexuality and the associated dangers to early sexual practices;
- d) Policy that does not allow sale of drugs and other substance in shops that are not licensed as drug shops and regulated by the National drug authority;
- e) Provision of counselling and guidance especially to girls with great emphasis on ensuring that they focus on their dreams that is completion of their education;
- f) Identification of role models who can offer guidance to girls for them to have a bright future and become national leaders;
- g) Affirmative action towards girls who return to school after delivery such that they are able to complete their education.

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