THE NEXUS BETWEEN POVERTY AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN ILORIN TOWNSHIP

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KEYWORDS
Teenager, Poverty, Pregnancy, Ilorin Township

ABSTRACT
Poverty is a hydra-headed monster which affects and destroys anything it touches. In sub-Saharan Africa and indeed Nigeria, the prevalence of poverty is very high with over 110 million Nigerians still living below the poverty line. In Kwara state, the situation is not different as the poverty rate in the state according to the report published by the United Nations Global Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index as of 2023 is 38.9%. This percentage cuts across every part of the country including Ilorin which is the capital of Kwara State has taken its toll on teen girls. Many teen girls between the ages of 13 to 19 years in Ilorin Township have become victims of teenage pregnancy and dropped out of school. An in-depth study reveals that the major cause of this act is poverty as many of the girls were easily lured into sex because of their poor economic condition which makes any little gift item or money attractive. The implication of early sexual activity and pregnancy on the girls and their families goes beyond physical look as many of them are psychologically traumatized, demoralized and can barely pick up the pieces of their lives, thus finding themselves continuing the line of poverty from their parents and wards to the child they deliver. This paper is therefore aimed at discussing and analyzing the connection between poverty and teenage pregnancy in Ilorin Township.

Introduction

Poverty is a multi-dimensional challenge and could span a whole lot of issues of human deprivation. Poverty does not have a uniform or wildly acceptable definition rather, the concept is defined and explained based on certain criteria like growth, good health, and equity (Oladeji, 2015).

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, (2023), poverty is the state of being poor or indigent, want or scarcity of means of subsistence. This definition above shows clearly that poverty is the state of having less than required for a better living. UNICEF (2020), identifies the lack of basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter as a characteristic of poverty. In this sense, poverty is the deprivation of the material requirements for minimally acceptable fulfilment of human needs including food. This deprivation goes far beyond lack of private income, it includes the provision of basic health, education and essential services that must be provided by society to prevent people

from falling into poverty (Olorunsanya, Falola, Ogundeji, 2011).

The United Nation's Global Multi-Dimensional poverty index has three dimensions in estimating overall poverty, they are education, health and living standards (United Nations Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index Report, 2023).

In Africa and indeed Nigeria, the level of poverty is high. According to the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report, as of 2022 Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% of people in urban areas. Approximately 70% of Nigeria's population live in rural areas, yet these areas are home to 80% of poor people; the intensity of rural poverty is also higher: 42% in rural areas compared to 37% in urban areas, the subsequent report released by the World Bank in 2022 showed that only 38% of Nigeria could be considered poor. The situation has worsened in 2022 and 2023, as the country has become one of the poorest countries in the world following the UN report on Nigeria's Common Country Analysis, with over 80% of Nigerians living below the poverty line. Poverty and hunger have remained high in rural households, remote communities and female-headed households and these cut across the six geo-political zones with prevalence ranging from approximately 17.7% in the South West to 74.3% in the North and North East (United Nations Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index Report, 2023). Female children from poor homes tend to engage in sex early in life and the consequence is teenage pregnancy.

Teenage pregnancy on the other hand is more common among young girls who have been disadvantaged in childhood and have a low expectation of education or the job market. Youths living in poverty have a teen pregnancy rate which is higher than their counterparts who are not poor (Gender and Health, 2008). This foregoing clearly shows that teenage pregnancy encompasses the three multi-dimensions used in estimating overall poverty by the United Nations which are education, health and living standard. This paper attempts to discuss and analyze the connection between poverty and teenage pregnancy in Ilorin township between the period of 2010 to 2022, how it has increased over the years and its resultant effect. For presentation, the historical research method was adopted, it included the use of secondary and primary information obtained from the library, selected junior secondary schools in the Ilorin Township, maternity clinics, Kwara State Ministry of Health, Kwara State Ministry of Education and oral information from some affected teenagers, parents, wards and teachers.

Poverty in Kwara State and Ilorin Township

Kwara state is located in the North Central part of Nigeria with coordinates 8^0 30' 0 N, 4^0 33' 0 E. The state was created on the 27th of May 1967 by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. At its creation, the state was made up of former Ilorin and Kabba provinces of the then Northern Region and was initially named the West Central State but later changed to Kwara a local name for the River Niger (Wikipedia, 2023). The state has since 1976 reduced considerably in size as a result of further state creation exercises in the country. These creations took place in 1976 and 1991 respectively, which led to the creation of Benue State and later Kogi State. The state consists of sixteen Local Government Areas, which are, Asa, Baruten, Edu, Ekiti, Ifelodun, Ilorin East, Ilorin South, Ilorin West, Irepodun, Isin, Kaiama, Moro, Offa, Oke-Ero, Oyun and Patigi (Kwara State Government, 2018).

The population of Kwara State was 2,371, 089 based on the 2006 national census (NPC, 2006). The State comprises different ethnic groups but is currently dominated by three major ethnic groups i.e. the Yoruba, Nupe and Baruba. However, some Fulanis and Hausas are spread across the state with other ethnic groups from different parts of the country such as Igbos, Igbira, Igala, etc (Kwara State Government, 2018).

Agriculture is widely practised among the people and the principal cash crops are cotton, cocoa, coffee, kola nut, tobacco, beniseed and palm produce. Available mineral resources in the state are gold, limestone, marble, feldspar, clay, kaolin, quartz and granite rocks.

The state is divided into two main parts which are the rural and urban settlements. Ilorin which is the capital is the major urban centre along with a few other centres in the state. However other vast areas of the state fall under the rural area with less socio-economic development (Kwara State Government, 2018). It is important to note that the majority of the people in the

urban areas are civil servants with quite some businessmen, women and artisans.

Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara State is located on Latitude 80 30 N and Longitude 40 35 E, it lies in the plain of the North Central part of Nigeria. The city which lies along the Lagos to Kaduna highway is about 306 km from Lagos, 600 km from Kaduna and about 500km from Abuja, the Federal Capital city of Nigeria. At present, the city of Ilorin cuts across 3 Local Government Areas namely Ilorin West, Ilorin East and Ilorin South Local Government Areas. The evolution of Ilorin began with the early traditional areas built up around the township centre. The trend revealed that the city has four major residential districts which are identifiable on the urban landscape, these are the traditional/core areas such as Oja-Oba, Okelele, Gambari, Balogun Fulani, Ajikobi and Alanamu, the transitional/mixed residential zones such as Taiwo, Gaa-Akanbi, the Government Residential Areas (GRA) and the modern well-planned housing estates such as Oloje, Irewolede, and Adewole housing estates.

The creation of Kwara State in 1967 and the choice of Ilorin as the state capital resulted in its rapid population increase and area expansion. Today, Ilorin has witnessed more physical expansion and open-up of new road networks resulting in the city enveloping many of the smaller settlements surrounding it. The absorbed settlements are Kulende, Elekoyangan and the Polytechnic permanent site campus along Jebba Road to the Northeast. GaaAkanbi, Ero-Omo, Olunlade and Ganmo which are found along the Ilorin Ajasse-Ipo road to the South-east, Ogidi along Ilorin-Kaiama road to the west, Sobi Barracks, Alagbado along Ilorin-Shao road to the north and Agunbelowo, Olorunsogo, Odota etc. along Ilorin-Lagos road to the south-west (Ahmed, 2013). The Ilorin population was projected with an annual growth rate of 2.84% (NPC, 1991) and at the 2006 headcounts; the city has reached 1,064,000 by population (NPC, 2023). Although, Ilorin developed as an administrative centre both economic and social activities have greatly influenced its growth in recent times. The major occupations of the indigene are farming, pottery making, and weaving. There is also a greater percentage of the people who engaged in trading activities, while others are self-employed in various other areas such as mechanics, carpentry, and artisans among others.

A survey by Olorunsanya, Falola and Ogundeji shows that more household heads in the urban area have formal education than in the rural areas as most of the educated people in the rural areas migrated to the urban areas for white-collar jobs rather than farming in the villages (Olorunsanya, Falola and Ogundeji, 2011).

In Ilorin township, there are more non-farmers than in the outskirts of Ilorin, the study made by Olorunsanya, Falola and Ogundeji further shows that there are poor and core (extremely) poor people in the interior of Ilorin and villages outside Ilorin. According to them the high incidence of poverty among the people in Ilorin township could be connected with their low level of income, as over 50% earned not more than N10,000 as income per household per month as against 14% for the urban household.

Poverty incidence is highest among households with no formal education and lowest among those with post-secondary education as educated members are more liable to adopt new technology than their unlettered counterparts. Furthermore, many of the people in Ilorin Township adopt the large household size, this has also contributed to the high incidence of poverty in the township, because of the inability of the household head to adequately cater for the dependents (Aigbokhan, 2019).

With this status, Ilorin Township and by extension, Kwara state has been reported by the World Bank as being poor with a 20.4% poverty rate (United Nations Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index Report, 2023).

The main causes of poverty in Kwara State and Ilorin township are inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate physical assets, such as land and capital and minimal access to credit facilities by the poor. Other causes include inadequate access to a market where the poor can sell their goods and services; low endowment of human capital, inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty and lack of participation, urbanization is also identified as one of the causes of poverty in the state (Bello et al., 2009).

The present state of poverty in Kwara State has a devastating effect on the socio-economic development of the state capital and the people. Vices such as teenage pregnancy, armed robbery, street children hawking, domestic slavery, drugs, malnutrition, prostitution, rituals,

and kidnapping among others have become very rampant in the state and Ilorin Township.

Teenage Pregnancy in Ilorin Township

Teenage pregnancy is a pregnancy that occurs within the age bracket of thirteen to nineteen years of age. It is the pregnancy of young immature girls of secondary school age which occurs between the onset of puberty and late adolescence. This is a period characterized by a great sexual drive in both boys and girls. It is also described as an out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Teenage pregnancy is a major public health and social problem the world over and its incidence is on the increase. Concern about the increase in unmarried adolescent pregnancy has been expressed throughout Africa. There is a consensus that this is a phenomenon with detrimental effects on African society. The observed consequence includes contributions to higher infant mortality, potential barriers to the development of women, increased maternal morbidity and mortality and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (Adebola, 2020). It is contributing substantially to overall fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa. Taken as a region, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest level of early childbearing in the world. Teenage pregnancy constitutes a health hazard both to the mothers and the fetus. The mother is at increased risk of pregnancy-induced hypertension, anaemia, obstructed labour and its sequelae. They are also three times more likely to die as a result of the complications of pregnancy and delivery than those aged 20-24. The fetus is prone to be delivered preterm, small for gestational age and has an increased risk of pre-natal death (Adebola, 2020). Many issues have strongly influenced the pattern of adolescent pregnancy, these include the declining age at menarche the increase in the number of years spent in school and the influences on the timing of marriage. Adolescents who have finished at least 7 years of schooling (in developing countries) are more likely to delay marriage until after the age of 18 years.

This increases the length of time that they are exposed to the risk of adolescent pregnancy. The reason for teenage pregnancy varies from country to country and from region to region within the same country. Factors that are associated with teenage pregnancy include rapid urbanization, low socio-economic status, low educational and career aspiration, residence in a single-parent home and poor family relationships. In 2010, Nigeria's adolescent fertility rate was 111 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 19, and Nigerian women averaged more than five births during their lifetime (Adebola, 2020).

Globally, people regard teenage pregnancy as a social and moral problem which often results in shame and distress to the teenager, discrimination against her illegitimate child and added responsibility and expenses to the teenager's family in general. Indeed, Oguguo sees teenage pregnancy as a result of accidents and therefore is seen as a social problem (Oguguo, 1996).

Socioeconomic circumstances play a major role in the rate of teen pregnancy in Nigeria. Most of the girls because of their background see no reason not to get pregnant. For some disadvantaged youth, particularly girls whose self-esteem tends to drop as they mature, sexuality is all they have to value. Furthermore, lack of opportunity and hope for the future has been identified as a driving force behind high rates of teen pregnancy (Gender and Health, 2008).

Children of teenage parents are also more likely to have problems and eventually become teenage parents themselves, thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty begun by teenage birth. Young girls from low-income families are reported to get pregnant at a higher rate than those from middle and upper-income families.

The rate at which teenage girls get pregnant in Ilorin Township is high and the number continues to increase as the year goes. In 2015, over 30 per cent of girls in a junior secondary school within the township were reported to have engaged in sexual intercourse and got pregnant before the senior secondary school certificate examination (Lawal, 2015).

The case is the same in Irepodun, Igbaja, Ifelodun, Moro and Kiama Local Government Area of Kwara State where teen girls dropped out of school because of pregnancy (James). In Ilorin the state capital the situation is not different but rather higher, especially in the township where there is a poor level of education, low income earned by parents and large family size. The core Ilorin township (Gambari, Alanamu, Ajikobi and Balogun Fulani)

reveals a high prevalence of teenage pregnancy. This sad situation has become the norm of the day and it is not condemned by their parent and wards rather these girls are encouraged. Between the periods of 2010 to 2015, the township recorded an increase in teenage pregnancy.

Table 1: Number of pregnant teenage girls registered at the maternity clinic in Ilorin Township from 2018 to 2019,

Names of Hospitals	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ajikobi Cottage Hospital	10	12	15	20	18	21
Okelele L.G.A maternity and dispensaries	12	11	18	16	22	19
Temitope Hospital	8	12	7	10	15	16
Total	30	35	55	57	60	56

Source: Authors survey, 2016

Table 1 above shows an increase in teenage pregnancy within the township, these figures, however, represent the number of pregnant teen girls that are registered at the hospital, many of them due to poverty do not go to the clinic but rather use the traditional birth attendance while others deliver at home with the help of experienced mothers.

The Relationship between Poverty and Teenage Pregnancy in Kwara State

There are many causes of teenage pregnancy as identified by Adebola, in Ilorin Township however Poverty has been identified as the major cause of teenage pregnancy in Kwara state. The two evils relate side by side and carry each other along. Counselor Peter O.A who is the state PRO II of the School Counselor Association of Nigeria in Kwara State disclosed that during their field research of over 55 secondary schools in Kwara state, it was discovered that the rate of sex abuse has continued to increase because many girls are lured into it for gift items and money (Lawal, 2015). The irony of it all is that the money that is often used to lure these girls is very little, but because of their background, they tend to succumb cheaply to the temptation. According to a teenage mother, poverty is the major cause of teen pregnancy in Ilorin and has led to its continual increase. Girls from a more privileged home do not fall easily into sex and even if they do they can afford contraceptives to avoid pregnancy which the poor ones cannot. Furthermore, many influential parents and wards tend to guard their female children and provide everything they need to concentrate on their education and disregard untimely sexual relationships (Ahmed, 2022).

Teenage pregnancy in some cases is also used by girls from poor homes as a ticket to leave their parent's houses and have their status changed without considering the dangerous effect on them, their children, and their parents (Adams, 2022). The implication of this deliberate pregnancy ends a lot of them in their parents' houses hence the continuity in the line of poverty.

Some parents and wards who are poverty-stricken arrange for their daughters to be impregnated with the hope of getting them married to the men involved, this arranged sexual act is usually a 50/50 chance, as only in a few cases is such successful.

Some teen girls who are from poor homes do not have access to education. In Ilorin, many teen girls are seen roaming around the street

while others hawk to feed themselves and their families. Ninety per cent of these girls eventually get pregnant and become a mother still relying on petty trading and hawking for survival. Hawking itself has led many girls into early sexual activity among many vices they are exposed to (Olorunmaiye et al, 2022).

The poverty level and the quest to make ends meet in the township expose the teen girls to sexual vices such as rape, sexual abuse, molestation and sexual intimidation. Furthermore, because of their poor background many of them are unable to resist any of this and when raped would not be able to report to the authorities and seek medical help, and in the long run end up becoming pregnant unwillingly (Olorunmaiye, 2022).

Poverty in the state has also been held responsible for loose or poor parenting, as a result of lack of basic needs and the continued strive to make ends meet, many poor parents barely have time for their children, thus giving them unlimited freedom to engage in any sexual vices.

Poverty has also erased the concern for future ambition among the teen girls, many of them do not care for the future all they want is what they can get in the present, and this situation and mindset exposes them to peer pressure in their environment. As a result of this, they prefer to join their friends than remain outside, the effect of poverty and teenage pregnancy have been explained explicitly that the socio-economic condition in Nigeria means that those who live in poverty are often exposed to more "live" sexual activity because families are regularized to live in small houses where there is lack of privacy for the parents, children that grow up under such situation can easily engage themselves on sexual activity as soon as they entered the puberty age (Joubert, 2019).

The traditional practice of giving teenage boys room out of the main building in Ilorin township has also been identified as one of the causes of teenage pregnancy. polygamous marriage is very common in the study area with wives fighting for rooms for their sons, the teen boys often use this independence to perpetrate different acts one of which is engaging in sexual activity with teen girls around which in most cases are not known by the parents until the supposed girl gets pregnant and points out the boy (Ibrahim, 2022).

Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on Girl Child

The effects of teenage pregnancy are enormous and can continue from generation to generation. The effects of teenage pregnancy are as follows, it leads to early marriage which may also result in medical implications during childbirth. In some parts of Kwara state and Ilorin township, early marriage is highly practised and encouraged by the community, so as soon as a teenager gets pregnant she is married off to the man, irrespective of his background, age, financial status and level of education. It is important to note that the percentage of these married girls that successfully stay married is low as many of the girls end up living with their parents, (Ogiri, Shittu and Yakub, 2013), corroborated this finding that early marriage and traditional gender rules are important causes of teenage pregnancy, as it is seen as a proof of the girl's fertility, especially in Northern Nigeria.

Another effect is the educational implication, the pregnant teenage girls have to drop out from school to nurture their pregnancy, as a result of this, many of the girls find it difficult to go back to school because they are now saddled with the responsibility of taking care of their baby and by extension their new family (Bisell, 2000).

Table 2; The number of teen girls that dropped out of school on account of teen pregnancy

Names of school	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Ojagboro secondary school	5	6	3	10	8	9
Adeta secondary school	3	2	5	7	3	5
Government-day secondary school	4	6	3	1	3	5
Total	12	14	11	18	14	19

Source: Authors survey, 2023

Teenage pregnancy disrupts the normal life course of the teenager who is now proposed to become a mother, a role which is only causally prepared for and often feels unready to assume, this situation often leads to divorce, separation, child abandonment, living in poverty, health problems and become socially dependent (Miller, 2006). This has also led to a high number of abandoned babies dropped at unhealthy places in the state of Ilorin metropolis over 20 babies were rescued and handed over to the police force in 2023.

Psychologically, teenage pregnancy harms the mother and the baby. This is usually associated with pre-natal, child delivery, and post-natal care. Many unfortunate girls end up with virginal fistula disease while others suffer from mental depression and other problems associated with early delivery. Furthermore, most teenage mothers can barely take care of themselves and talk more of the baby who needs utmost care to survive and grow up. Basic needs such as good food, shelter, clothing and education often elude the child, therefore continuing the cycle of poverty (Martin, 2007).

Conclusion

This paper examined poverty and teenage pregnancy in Ilorin township with a focus on four wards: Ajikobi, Alanamu, Gambari and Balogun Fulani. The paper reveals that poverty is quite high among the dwellers in the township because many of the people are into farming (substance) and few are civil servants who earn less than N10:000 monthly, artisans and businessmen. Furthermore, the level of income earned by these people is low when compared to those in the urban areas of G.R A, Irewolede, Adewole e.t.c who live a modern life. However, because of their low level of income, and interior location, exposure to current trends eludes them. In the capital's urban areas, there are equally many people living in poverty but not as high as those in the interior. The poverty experienced by these people placed a barrier to what they can access in terms of good living. The effect of poverty is higher on teenage girls who at the adolescent stage need lots of care and financial support from their parents or guardian.

This study highlighted the intricate relationship between poverty and teenage pregnancy in Ilorin Township, shedding light on the socio-economic challenges that exacerbate this issue. The findings underscore that poverty is a significant driving force behind the high rates of teenage pregnancy, as economic hardship compels many young girls to engage in early sexual activities for financial support. This situation not only disrupts their education and prospects but also perpetuates a cycle of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage.

Addressing teenage pregnancy in Ilorin Township requires a multi-faceted approach that targets the root causes of poverty. This includes improving access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for young girls and their families. Effective poverty alleviation programs, combined with comprehensive sex education and accessible reproductive health services, are crucial in empowering girls to make informed choices about their lives and futures.

The persistent issue of teenage pregnancy in Ilorin Township serves as a reminder of the broader socio-economic inequalities that need to be addressed. By tackling these challenges head-on, we can ensure that every girl has the opportunity to thrive and contribute positively to her community, free from the constraints of poverty and early motherhood. The study, therefore, shows that poverty is the major cause of teenage pregnancy in the township, as many of the girls are lured into early sexual activity due to their parent's and guidance's poor status.

Recommendation

The study recommends that teenage girls should be exposed to early sexual education in primary 5 to 6 and early secondary school.

Sensitization programmes should be organized and carried out to sensitize and enlighten the girls on the effect of early pregnancy on their physical, emotional and psychological health.

The government on their part should provide empowerment to indigent girls and scholarships to keep them in school

Parents should be discouraged from allowing their children to be exposed to sexual activity at an early age and should also be encouraged to discuss sex-related topics with their children to build a confident relationship between the parent and daughter before being exposed to the world.

Mothers should monitor the movements and the behaviour of their daughters as soon as they attain the age of puberty and guide them accordingly.

NGOs should come to the aid of street hawkers and domestic servants, providing them with financial and psychological help to pursue their dreams and ambitions in life.

Schools should have a well-trained guardian counsellor who will be ready to attend to students who have trouble with male students and those from poor homes who may feel intimidated by the lifestyle of their mates from comfortable homes.

Furthermore, community engagement and support systems are essential in creating a protective environment for adolescents. Policies that promote gender equality and protect girls from exploitation and abuse must be enforced rigorously. Only through a concerted effort involving government, non-governmental organizations, and the community can the cycle of poverty and teenage pregnancy be broken, paving the way for a healthier, more prosperous future for the youth of Ilorin Township. Religious bodies and leaders should also discourage this vice as it is frowned upon by God which is clearly stated in the Holy Scriptures.

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