



International Journal of Gender and Development Issues



Volume II No. 4 May, 2015

ISSN: 2360-8528

LOW INCOME ADOLESCENT MOTHERS' PERCEPTION OF EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT.

¹Akinnawo, E. O., ¹Meshioye, A. and ¹Alo, S. F.

^{1,1,1}Department of Behavioural Studies,
Redeemer's University, Redemption Camp
Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract

Teenage pregnancy is a major social problem globally because of the consequences and challenges that such a teenager undergoes. The fact that the adolescent mother is also a child that lacks the mental and physical capability to raise a child and meet the demands of parenting also compounds the problem. This study examined low-income adolescent mothers' perception of education as a means of women empowerment. Findings may contribute to the psycho-education and empowerment needs of the adolescent mothers. A sample of 100 adolescent mothers (15-19 years) purposively selected in three different Local Government Areas in Lagos State responded to a self-structured questionnaire. Three hypotheses were tested using Pearson Correlation analysis. Findings revealed a significant relationship between the perception of current status of low-income adolescent mothers and their need for empowerment. A positive significant relationship was observed between women empowerment and perception of education ($r_{xy}(100)=0.390, p<0.05$) as well as perception of vocational training ($r_{xy}(100)=0.449, p<0.05$). Authors concluded that the adolescent mothers perceived their present status as disadvantageous, in the areas of economic self-sustainability and education opportunity. Empowerment programmes for the adolescent mothers particularly vocational training and access to soft loan/financial assistance by Government and Non-Governmental Organisations are recommended.

Keywords: Adolescent mothers, perception of education and women empowerment.

Introduction

Teenage pregnancy is a major social problem globally because of the challenges and consequences on the adolescent mothers and their caregivers. Motherhood poses great challenges on any woman; the fact that an adolescent mother is a child that lacks the mental and financial capabilities to raise a child compounds the problem. A lot of studies have highlighted the disadvantages of adolescent motherhood on their children, these include delayed cognitive development, lower levels of language skills, academic failure, poor social outcomes, risk of becoming the next-generation young teen mothers, and they could also end up in foster care (Jutte, et al., 2010; Staton-Chapman, Chapman, Kaiser & Hancock, 2004).

Adolescent mothers are also more likely than their counterparts to have lower education attainment, lesser job and economic success, and less frequent marital stability (Lounds, 2009; Wright and Davis, 2008).

There is a high rate of pregnancy among adolescent girls in Nigeria like in other Sub-Saharan African countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2009) accounts that 50% of adolescent births take place in Sub-Saharan Africa in which half of the births occur in just 7 countries of which Nigeria is one. Poverty, poor reproductive health services, gender power relations, lack of sexual and reproductive health knowledge, among other factors, contribute to the rising number of unintended pregnancies. In developing countries, adolescent girls who

become pregnant face myriad of challenges, including dropping out of school and their inability to continue because of the enormous pressures they go through; pressures such as stigmatisation and lack of necessary support from their family, friends, schools, social service agencies and other relevant institutions (Agunbaide & Udenkor, 2012; Ekefre, Ekanem & Ekpenyong, 2014; Chigona & Chetty, 2008).

The International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 clearly stated that education remains one of the most critical areas of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence that is essential to fully engage in the development process (UNFPA, 2014). Promoting the education of women cannot be overemphasised. Studies have highlighted the importance of women's education and having educational goals, these include lower fertility rate, increase in child health, children's education and positive self-perception of parenting (Arends-Kuenning & Amin, 2001; DeVito, 2007). Scientific information on the perception of low-income adolescent mothers in Nigeria as part of the determinants of women empowerment, is however, yet to appear in literature.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine low-income adolescent mothers' perception of current status, education and vocational training as a form of women empowerment.

The objectives of the study are:

- 1) to examine adolescent mothers' perception of current status in relation to empowerment opportunities
- 2) to investigate their perception of education as a means of women empowerment
- 3) to examine their perception of vocational training in relation to women empowerment.

Research Hypothesis:

For the purpose of the study, the following hypotheses were postulated:

- 1) There is significant relationship

between the perception of the current status of low income adolescent mothers and their need for empowerment.

- 2) There is no significant relationship between their perception of education and women empowerment.
- 3) There is no significant relationship between their perception of vocational training and women empowerment.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Respondents were randomly drawn from different local government areas within Lagos State. These include:

- a) Agege Local Government
- b) Ikorodu Local Government
- c) Lagos Mainland Local Government

Using a cross-sectional survey, a sample of 100 adolescent mothers aged 15-19 years was randomly drawn from health centers, hospitals and communities within the selected local government areas.

Instrumentation

Structured questionnaire was used by the researchers to collect information for the study. The questionnaire was divided into five parts: sections A, B, C, D and E. Section A contained the demographic information of the respondents. Section B consisted of ten items seeking the perception of their current status, while section C contained twelve items relating to their perception of education. Section D consisted of twelve items seeking information about their perception of vocational skills or training. Section E consisted of eleven items concerning their perception of women empowerment. A five-point Likert scale of 5 category response was adopted for the study. The instrument was given to experts to examine the items and see if each of them was suitable in measuring the desired attributes or objectives. The result found all items of the instrument related to the areas being investigated by the study to have content validity. The researchers also established the reliability of the instrument by

using the test-retest method (21-day interval) to determine the consistency of the instrument. A reliability co-efficient of 0.90 was obtained.

Results

Socio-demographic Characteristics

The age of the adolescent mothers ranged from 15-19 with a mean of 18.75 years. About 66% have completed their SSCE while 34% dropped out before getting to their final year. Some of the adolescent mothers (46%) were from polygamous homes while 54% were from monogamous homes. Majority of their parents (72%) live together. The family size ranged from 3-15 with a mean of 6.0. The ages of their children ranged from 0-4 years with a mean of 1.32 (about one and a half years).

Family Information

The majority (47%) of their fathers were artisans while most of their mothers (88%) were traders. Most of their fathers (52%) held the Ordinary National Diploma certificate while the majority of their mothers (62%) did not complete secondary school.

Nature of Job

The majority of the adolescent mothers (66%) worked as tailors, most of them were apprentices.

Current Income

Most of the adolescent mothers (73%) do not earn any money from their jobs, as they worked as apprentices, while about 10% earned between N15, 000 and N20, 000 monthly. The above socio-demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age (N=100)		
16years	3	3
17years	1	1
18years	14	14
19years	82	82
Family size (N=100)		
1-3people	2	2
4-6people	37	37
7-9people	29	29
10-12people	12	12
13 and above	2	2
Marital Status of Parents (N=100)		
Married	66	66
Separated	10	10
Widowed	18	18
No response	6	6
Type of Family (N=100)		
Monogamy	54	54
Polygamy	46	46
Father's Occupation (N=100)		
Trader/Self employed	43	43
Artisan	47	47
No response	8	8

Mother's Occupation (N=100)

Trader/Self employed	88	88
Artisan	10	10
No response	2	2

Parents Level of Education**Father (N=100)**

< school cert	4	4
SSCE/NECO	35	35
ND/NCE	52	52
B.Sc/HND	7	7

No response

4	4
---	---

Mother(N=100)

<school cert	62	62
SSCE/NECO	33	33
B.Sc /HND	1	1
No response	4	4

Age at Conception (N=100)

15	5	5
16	1	1
17	14	14
18	62	62
19	18	18

Age of child (N=100)

0-6 months	57	57
7-11 months	10	10
1-2 years	31	31
4 years and above	2	2

School year at Conception (N=100)

School Cert	66	66
<School Cert	34	34

Year dropped out of School (N=100)

Completed School Cert	66	66
Did not complete school cert	34	34

Nature of trade/Job (N=100)

Tailoring/Knitting	38	38
Hairdressing	16	16
Trading	4	4
Business	6	6
Teaching	6	6
Nothing	25	25
Others	5	5

Current monthly earning on trade/Job

Nothing	73	73
5,000-9,999	5	5
10,000-14,999	6	6
15,000-19,999	10	10
20,000 and above	4	4

Source: Field Survey

Hypothesis Testing

There is a significant correlation between perception of current status and need for empowerment as predicted in hypothesis 1.

($r_{xy}(100) = 0.148, p > 0.05$), ($p \text{ value} = 0.144$). This finding is presented in Table 2, and it supports the hypothesis.

Table 2: Summary Table of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing the Relationship between Perception of Current Status and Need for Empowerment

Variables	N	R	P
Perception of current status	100	0.148	>0.05
Women Empowerment	100		

A significant positive correlation was observed between perception of education and women empowerment ($r_{xy}(100) = 0.390, p < 0.05$), ($p \text{ value} = 0.000$). This finding

is presented in Table 3, and does not support hypothesis 2.
($p \text{ value} = 0.000$). This finding is presented in Table 3, and does not support hypothesis 2.

Table 3: Summary Table of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Formula Showing the Relationship between their Perception of Education and Women Empowerment

Variables	N	R	P
Perception of education	100	0.390	<0.05
Women Empowerment	100		

A significant positive correlation was observed between perception of vocational training and women empowerment ($r_{xy}(100)$

$= 0.449, p < 0.05$), ($p \text{ value} = 0.000$). This finding is presented in table 4, and does not support the third hypothesis.

Table 4: Summary Table of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Formula Showing the Relationship between their Perception of Vocational Training and Women Empowerment.

Variable	N	R	P
Perception of Vocational training	100	0.449	<0.05
Women Empowerment	100		

Discussion

Most of the adolescent mothers viewed their current status to be a stressful life event because they lacked the necessary support to take care of themselves and their children and they believe they needed to be empowered.

This is indicative in this study as the majority of them (38%) worked in tailoring workshops. Although 66% completed their school certificate, they are unable to continue their education because of little or no support from parents and family members. There is also a

clear indication in the findings as 73% earned nothing from their current trade/job because they worked as apprentices. This is consistent with the views of Agunbiade and Udenkor, (2012) that lack of social support for adolescent mothers results in their completing fewer years of education and holding less prestigious jobs such as petty trading and menial jobs.

Most of the adolescent mothers perceived education to be of great importance to their lives but due to their present situation and lack of support, they are not able to further their education. However, if given the opportunity, they are willing to continue. This is in line with the findings of SmithBattle (2007) as cited in Ekefre et al., (2014) that "teenage mothers usually re-evaluate their focus and educational attainment goal as soon as they are pregnant despite their earlier attitudes towards school and the indicators include improved grades, the resolve to graduate and a new interest to further their education". The report of Ekefre et al., (2014) showed that having a child does reinforce the interest of teenage mothers in education because having education would help them take care of their children, increase their employment possibilities and significantly reduce their dependence on others for support and help.

Findings from the tested hypothesis indicated that the adolescent mothers perceived both formal education and vocational training as significant determinants of women empowerment. From personal discussions during the interview sessions, the adolescent mothers preferred vocational training to formal/basic education, though the authors did not analyse the interview contents empirically. We hope future studies will handle this aspect of the study. Their preference for vocational training may be due to their poor socio-economic background. It could also be because they perceived that in Nigeria there is high rate of unemployment and their probability of getting a job is low. However, they believed that if they learnt a vocational skill, they would be able to earn their income without having to look for jobs.

Conclusion

The majority of the adolescent mothers are from poor backgrounds, having parents who lacked the wherewithal to support them in their current status and situation. They perceived their present status as disadvantageous in the areas of economic self-sustainability and educational opportunity. They perceived education to be of importance to them, as it affords them and their children an enviable future, though they would prefer vocational training. The adolescent mothers, thus, perceived basic education and vocational training as significant determinants of women empowerment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers put forward the following recommendations:

- Parents, particularly mothers, should create time to give sex education to their daughters at home from childhood through early adolescence to late adolescence.
- Government should continue to work with non-governmental organisations to curb the prevalence of teenage pregnancy through functional and objective family life education.
- Schools should endeavour to include entrepreneurship training in their curriculum to empower young girls right from the secondary school.
- Government and non-governmental organisations should set up vocational skill centers where adolescent mothers can enroll; and the curriculum of such centers should include sex education, mothering and psychological education.

References

- Agunbiade, O.M. & Udenkor, V.U. (2012). Adolescent mothers' subjective well-being and mothering challenges in a Yoruba community, Southwest Nigeria. *Social Work in Health Care*, 51, 552-567.

- Arends-Kuening, M. & Amin, S. (2001). Women's capabilities and right to education in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Politics, Culture & Society*, 15(1), 125-142.
- Chigona, A. & Chetty, R. (2008). Teen mothers and schooling: Lacunae and challenges. *South African Journal of Education*, 28(2), 261-281.
- DeVito, J. (2007). How adolescent mothers feel about becoming a parent. *Journal of Perinatal Education*, 19(2), 25-34.
- Ekefre, E. N., Ekanem, S.A. & Ekpenyong, E. O. (2014). Teenage pregnancy and education in Nigeria: A philosophical management strategy. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 4(3), 41-47.
- Jutte, D.P., Roos, N.P., Brownell, M.D., Briggs, G., MacWilliam, L., & Roos, L. L. (2010). The ripple of adolescent motherhood: Social, educational and medical outcome for children of teen and prior teen mothers. *Academic Pediatrics*, 5, 293-301.
- Lounds, T. J. (2009). Midlife impacts of adolescent parenthood. *Journal of Family Issues*, 30(4), 484-510.
- Staton-Chapman, T. L., Chapman, D. A., Kaiser, A.P., & Hancock, T.B. (2004). Cumulative risk and low-income children's language development. *Topics in Early Childhood Education*, 24(4), 227-237.
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2014). Promoting gender and equality. Retrieved from <http://www.unfpa.org/public/International-Conference-on-Population-and-Development/ICPD-Summary>.
- United Nations (1994). Programme of action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. New York: United Nations.
- World Health Organisation (WHO) (2009). Adolescent pregnancy: A culturally complex issue. *Bulletin of World Health Organization*, 87, 410-411.
- Wright, P. A. & Davis, A. A. (2008). Adolescent parenthood through educators' eyes perceptions of worries and provision of support. *Urban Education*, 43, 671-695.