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## Cultural and Socio-Economic Factors Contributing to Upsurge in Teenage Pregnancies in Kabuchai Constituency, Bungoma County Western Kenya

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**ABSTRACT:** Globally, there has been an upsurge (65%) of teenage pregnancies among youths. This survey aimed at identifying cultural and socioeconomic factors contributing to increased teenage pregnancy in Kabubuchai constituency, Bungoma, Western Kenya. The survey aimed at assessing the extent to which cultural and socio-economic factors have contributed to the increase in teenage pregnancy in Kabuchai constituency, Bungoma, Kenya; The study adopted social learning theory developed by Albert Bandura in 1977 which elucidates the importance of environment to the behaviour of a student. The target population was teenagers from 9 to 19 years of age both in school and at home, key informants who are school principals, a sample of parents a total of 170 participants were included in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select 100 teenagers, 20 principals and 50 parents were purposively selected. This survey used structured questionnaires and key informant interviews as research instruments. Statistical package for social science (SPSS) was used to analyse data. Collected data was presented in the form of tables and percentages. Inferential statistics employed to measure associations of variables, 0.05 p value was used as a value of statistical significance. analyze quantitative data. The survey found out that majority of girls who got pregnant were between 15-19 years (57%) n=, it also highlighted that (50%) n=62 of the pregnant girls were from poor backgrounds, among these, 18-19 (31.5%) n= were married either with two or three children. 80% pregnant girls were from poor background, 55% were girls of single parents with a number of children from different fathers. In conclusion Cultural practices such as early marriages, poverty, parental role modelling played a major role in the increase in teenage pregnancy cases in Kabuchai sub county, stakeholders, teachers, parents and youths need to take an initiative in helping to solve this disturbing situation. These were recommendations deduced from the survey; The government to ensure the needy children are supported by paying their school fees to avoid keeping girls away from school for a long time as this exposes them to sex due to idleness. and provide for them the basic needs from school kitty organized from different departments. The local government this include the chiefs and village elders should work hand in hand with the school administration to stop early marriages in the society and report to higher authorities those men marrying young girls who have not completed school.

**KEY WORDS:** Teenage pregnancy, Cultural, Socio-economic, factors, contribution

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### BACKGROUND

#### INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is defined as any pregnancy from 9 years to before the age of 20 years. Globally, about 16 million girls aged between 15 to 19 years old give birth each year this is an alarming concern owing to the fact that most girls aged below 20 years are usually still in school (Gwido and Alemu, (2015). Although different countries have innovative approaches to control such cases and surge access to basic education for girls, teenage pregnancy is still an issue of concern. There are various factors that have been associated with teenage pregnancies such as media usage, peer pressure, drug and substance abuse. In Sub Saharan Africa, it is estimated that in low and middle income countries,

Approximately, 20% of all girls become mothers before they attain 16 years of age (WHO, 2008). Data from demographic health Surveys indicated that teenage pregnancy rates in Sub Saharan Africa ranged from a low of 6.2 percent in Brazaville to a high of 27 percent in Swaziland (World Bank, 2005). In Sub Saharan Africa, teenage pregnancy has had negative impacts on social and economic development. It has led to an upward trajectory of school dropouts (Namunwa & Melisa, 2012)

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A study carried out in Ghana found out that teenage pregnancy exposes young girls to medical, social and economic problems. The study highlighted that many parents relied on relatives such as aunts and teachers to provide sex education and guidance to their children because parents had cultural beliefs which stopped them from talking directly to their girls on matters concerning reproductive health. This left the girls more vulnerable and resulted to early teenage pregnancies (Ahorlu (2015)). In Tanzania, teenage pregnancy had risen resulting to high levels of educational wastage through increased dropout and infant mortality. It was also reported that socio-cultural factors such as early initiation ceremonies had an impact on sexual practices. Teenagers who participated in initiation ceremonies were engaged in premarital relationships as compared to those who did not engage in initiation practices (Mauna,2015)

A study carried out in Kenya showed that 14.8% of 15-19 year old were either pregnant or wives with one or two children [Kenya Demographic and Health Surveys (KDHS), 2008/2009], an age group that should ideally be at secondary school level. Another study by the Kenya Human Rights Commission/Reproductive Health and Rights Alliance (KHRC/RHRA) in 2010, revealed that unwanted pregnancy and abortions were common among school going youth, which denotes that among factors contributing to gender disparity in school completion rates is teenage pregnancy which this study attempted to examine critically. Issues emanating from the home environment that are common in nature may also contribute to teenage pregnancy. Bungoma county categorized second in the top ten counties recording the highest rates of teen pregnancies in 2018 while in western Kenya it recorded the highest number of teenage pregnancies with 21,220 teenage pregnancies in 2018 alone, 24,106 girls in 2019 and in 2020 recorded 3317 in the first quarter of 2020. This is a worrying trend among all stakeholders (Munyua et al;2020). Another study carried out in Zimbabwe, teenage pregnancy is on the increase and particularly in rural areas.) The study identified factors contributing to teenage pregnancy in Zimbabwe as socio-economic background, peer influence and traditional role (Mutanana and Mutara ,2015)

Adebayo and Asebiomo (2019) revealed that inadequate knowledge on reproductive health education, peer pressure and lack of parental guidance Waweru (2020) investigated on socio-economic factors contributing to increase in pregnancy cases in public secondary schools in Gatanga Sub County, Kenya it was revealed that poverty and peer pressure influenced teenage pregnancy. Substance use among adolescents increases the risk of unplanned pregnancy and media or internet were causes of teenage pregnancy among youths (Waweru, 2020).

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Every student has a right to quality education according to the Kenyan constitution,2010 and the big four agenda, vision 2030. However, one of the hindrances to this has been the teenage pregnancies that are affecting girls at between the age of 10-19 years of age. Nationally, Kenya has recorded approximately 266105 teenage pregnancies of age 15-19 years and 13 821 of 10-14 years in the year 2023 alone. Bungoma County has been ranked the first county with the largest number of teenage pregnancies (13141) from ages 15-19 years citing Cheptais Subcounty to be the highest area with number of teenage pregnancies (2336). Some of the consequences that have resulted from this including dropping out of school and maternal deaths. Despite of the upsurge in numbers and seriousness of the situation at hand, there been minimal recorded evidence of studies on the same, therefore this has prompted this study in order to find out the contributory factors on the same.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Cross-sectional survey research design employed. 100 teenagers from a school of 1250 students in Mt. Elgon, Bungoma County. A reliability index was then calculated using test-retest. The reliability score of 0.70 was achieved which is acceptable. Descriptive statistics used for interpretation. Structured questionnaires to the students and scheduled interviews to the key informants. Results were presented in the form of percentages and tables

## **RESULTS**

### **Introduction**

The chapter focuses on discussion of the findings of the study as they were presented to the respondents in questionnaire form according to the objectives of the research.

### **An Overview of the Findings**

The findings of the study were acquired from the questionnaires in which demographic data was collected. It involved the gender of the respondents and age of the respondent, the findings then followed the questions related to the first objective which was to determine how economic status of parents contribute to teenage pregnancy, the extent to which explicit social media content affects teenage pregnancy and how cultural beliefs influences teenage pregnancy. Data collected was presented in tables and graphs

### **Response Rate**

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100 questionnaires were administered 90 of them were filled and turned in successfully. This was represented as 90% of the total respondents. The percentage was sufficient since the recommended **percentage for fair distribution is 50%** (Mugenda and Mugenda 2003 in Nyaboke *etal*; 2020)

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage	
Responded	100	90	
Not responded	10	10	
Total	100	100	
Age	N	n	%
10-14	100	10	10
15-19	100	90	90
Total	100	100	100

Source:( Field data 2024)

### Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	37	37
Female	63	63

From table 1 above 37% of respondents were female and 63% male. This shows unequal gender distribution.

Variable	N	N	%
Non Employed parents	100	77	77
Parent untimely clearing of fees	100	82	82
Non Provision of basic needs	100	72	72

The results expressed that most participants approved that there is significant relationship between economic status of parents, occupation of the parents, school fees clearance and basic needs of the student. The results directed the researcher to determine that economic status affects the increase of teenage pregnancy. Results highlight that Parents determine the schooling of their children in relation basing on their income they earn (Nyaboke,2020)

### Influence of social media Effects of social media material on teenage pregnancy

Variable	N	n	%
Ownership of smart phone	100	69	69
Access to pornographic material	100	64	64
Attempt to experiment what they watch in social media	100	63	63

The results revealed that phonography is a prime basis of education and it offers a script that will lead to sexual experiences which results into indulging in early sex leading to early pregnancies. Results are in line with ( ChinkSun, &Ana Bridges ,2016 in Nyaboke,2020)

### Cultural Believes and Practices Effects of cultural believes on teenage pregnancy

VARIABLE	N	n	%
Cultural factors deterring teaching sex education	100	89	89
Effect of cultural cultural believes on teenage pregnancy	100	71	71
Impact of early marriage on the increase of teenage pregnancy	100	92	92

The study established that Lack of sex education among teenagers, forced early marriages in some families after female circumcision is a source and a lead to the teenage pregnancy (sharma,2015).Some teenagers 15-19 years were married with two or three children, the study reflects findings by Nyaboke (Nyaboke,2020)

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

### Summary of Findings

#### 5.2.1 Economic Status of the Parents

It is evident that the economic status of parents is a factor that backs an increase in teenage pregnancy. Teenagers are entirely dependent on their parents for all needs. Affected families are vulnerable to poverty and have financial constraints when it comes to providing education to their teenage girls. This exposes them to teenage pregnancy.

#### Social Media (Pornographic site)

The accessibility to this social media platform is easy through the cyber that are in cheptais sub county, from the findings, a good number have access to the smartphones which gives them access to pornographic materials, written literature which are full of sexual scenes and this pollutes their mind and what they take in finally they bring it out by engaging into the sexual activities which is a great contribution to teenage pregnancy.

#### Cultural Beliefs

Cultural beliefs are fading away because of the westernization effect and so the society still has a few people holding on to the beliefs concerning the girl child. According to the society of Kanduyi sub county a girl is believed to have the main function as childbearing as a way of giving back to the society. This has led to early marriages that succumb the girl to teenage pregnancy.

1. The County government of Bungoma through school administration should identify the girls with financial hurdles and provide them with basic needs from school kitties organized from different departments.
2. Ownership of smartphones early while in school should be discouraged
3. The local government this include the chiefs and village elders should work hand in hand with the school administration to stop early marriages in the society and report to higher authorities.

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