

PREGNANCY; AN APPRAISAL ON FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES STUDENTS EDUCATION, A FOCUS ON ALVAN IKOKU FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION OWERRI)

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to appraise the effects of pregnancy on the education of female students. In carrying out the research, survey design is used as the research design, four research questions were formulated, which sought the effects of pregnancy on the education of female undergraduates. The population of this study consists of all the regular students in all the faculties of the institution in 2015/2016 academic session; seventeen thousand nine hundred students. Simple random sample technique was used and the sample size is twenty, which was used in the analysis of the research with a mean calculation, based on the average score as the decision line. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The data were analyzed with the use of mean calculation, with the average mean as the decision line. The result from the average on each question shows that pregnant students do not attend lectures regularly. They hardly write and submit their assignments as at when due. They do not have enough time for their studies. The paper recommends amongst others that a health programme be set up in higher institutions to cater for the pregnant and nursing-mother students.

Keywords: Pregnancy, Female Students, Education, and Academic Performance.

Introduction

Every society desires education to enhance the ultimate development of its members, so that they can contribute effectively to the development of the society itself. Education is the veritable means of achieving solution to the problems facing the society. Today, through education, development of science and technology keeps improving for the betterment of the global village at large.

In Nigeria, the national policy on education describes education as a vehicle for the attainment of just equalitarian society and of free and equal opportunities for all citizens, irrespective of gender, religion or tribe. Before 1970, in the Nigeria society, educational opportunities were rarely given to women. Only very few women from wealthy homes were sent to school. It was thought that males, as the breadwinner and the head of the family should be educated so as to fend for his family while the woman whose position is limited to the home front, should stay in the house, to take care of the home, by cooking, sewing, doing domestic chores and most importantly breeding offspring. So, boys were sent to school whereas girls were trained at home. It was not until 1970, during the oil boom, which brought social awareness, higher standard of living, technological advancement and also urbanization, that education of girls was seen as a necessity.

An educated woman is an asset to herself, family and the society. A woman's position is no longer limited to the house, as long as she is educated. She can still manage the home effectively while taking active part in providing for the family, alongside with the man. Women now feature in all occupational fields be it, mining, engineering, medical, education, military, paramilitary, politics, ministries. Girls are now given the opportunity to go to school.

In this present age, because of the depressed Nigerian economy, boys and young men no longer see tertiary education as the key to success or at least to easy wealth. Therefore, many boys and young men now choose to go into business, learn trades or acquire skills instead of spending four years or more to obtain a university degree or a Higher National Diploma and an additional one year of compulsory national youth service, before barging into the labour market to join a multitude of job seekers. They reason that a man needs to earn a living early in life so as to be financially balanced and well equipped to face the society; that is, to stand up to the financial responsibilities expected of his age group, and to get married and start a family. As a result, there are often times more girls than boys in the tertiary institutions even in departments that are thought to

be male-oriented, there can be found a fair number of girls. This group of people who want to make money quickly make do with a secondary school education. They usually aim at marrying undergraduate students, and then see them through school. And because of the poor economy of the country many parents who cannot afford to see their daughters through school, and those who feel that a woman's education is more beneficial to her husband than to her parents, give out their daughter's hand in marriage, before they gain admission or during their first two undergraduate years. So, the most readily available suitors are usually those who got only secondary school education and who have become wealthy or at least well-to-do businessmen or tradesmen. Once the marriage ceremony has been performed, it is consummated, thus procreation begins and the woman's education becomes secondary.

The pre-ponderance of getting married while still in school especially in tertiary institutions has made the presence of pregnant women among them, a common phenomenon. It is generally believed that a state of pregnancy result in change which may plausibly affect a woman's quietude towards schooling and learning. Among unmarried students, pregnancy has been viewed with trepidation anathema and a burden to be avoided if possible, even so among legally married female students, because of the discomforts of pregnancy and its long duration which can stand in the way of academic pursuits. The spinster students on the other hand dread pregnancy because of the same reason and because it is illegal. If a spinster student gets pregnant, the dangers involved are many. It will not only hinder her academic pursuits but she will either have the child out of wedlock or resort to abortion which might cause damage to her fertility in future. At worst she will be married off to the man responsible for her pregnancy. That is, if he owns up. And if he denies, she might end up being married off to an elderly widower. So, getting pregnant while still in school can mar their dreams of getting married to responsible men, and dreams of academic excellence and of getting good jobs. Getting pregnant while in school causes difficulties in coping with studies.

Changes in the body chemistry accessioned by pregnancy often unleash, in the student anxiety, frustration and at times denial of certain common privileges.

Pregnant students often suffer social isolation from both sexes. The progression of such isolation even by close friends affects their self esteem and increases their level of anxiety and frustration. Such students usually relapse to recluse especially during the period of pregnancy and after.

Again, the unpredictable nature of changes in the body chemistry of a pregnant woman makes the student not to be equal to the academic rigors expected of her. Such a student may experience difficulties in shifting between classes, scrambling for seats in the classroom, sitting down for long hours to study and concentrating enough without distraction.

Similarly, pregnant students are often denied hostel accommodation, leaving them the option of shuttling from the town to school daily. This becomes an extra financial challenge that would be encountered, taking into cognizance the high cost of house rent.

Finally some of the pregnant students who are unmarried have other psychological and sociological problems arising from the uncertainty of present and future financial burden of taking care of her pregnant self, her studies and then caring for a baby that will come soon, given that her parents may not be in support of her condition. Parents may also be unaware.

It is no exaggeration that the convergence of patterns of problems necessarily impact negatively on the student's level of school adjustment and academic achievement.

This theory is of utmost importance to this study because it will help to explore the relationship between all pregnant students and their academic attainment, and also find out if they are motivated to carry out their academic duties responsibly or not.

Causes Of Teenage Pregnancy

Rhode (2004) posited that one of the causes of teenage pregnancy is; poverty of parents and guardians. Many of the pregnant teenagers in the society today are from poor homes who cannot afford the basic needs of life; food, clothing and shelter. Males in the society thus easily lure such girls into sexual intercourse, which in turn results into unwanted pregnancy and early marriage.

According to Deborah (2010), religion is another major factor that influences teenage pregnancy. In some countries in the world, education of female children is considered a taboo because of religious indoctrination. In the northern part of Nigeria for example, female children are usually given out in marriage prematurely because of the associated bride price. Female children are thus considered as tickets for wealth making in this part of the country. Dareke (2007) asserted that lack of staff penalty for those involved in it by government, further encourages teenage pregnancy. Today, there is no universal legislation against teenage pregnancy thus encouraging further indulgence in it by youths.

According to Akindelly (2010) several factors are influencing the menace of teenage pregnancy in the society. The first among the factors is lack of proper moral upbringing of female children by their parents. There is no doubt that parents occupy significant position in the laying of a solid foundation for their children. When they fail to discharge their responsibilities in this regard, particularly in the area of the training of their children about the dangers inherent in premature sex, such children will not count it as a sin to indulge in premature sex. Indecent dressing also contributes to teenage pregnancy. When girls dress indecently, exposing parts of the body that are meant to be covered, they are only inviting the opposite sex. Girls who dress indecently are often urged into sex or are raped, resulting in pregnancy.

Anamonye (2010) is of the view that indiscipline on the part of some teachers contributes to the spread of this issue in the society. In many schools today, some female pupils/students are involved in illicit and clandestine relationships with male teachers because of promises of marks upgrading, money and other benefits from such male teachers. Peer influence goes a long way in influencing the act. Friends lured many of the victims in the society today into the relationship with men.

Peters (2008) opined that some of the factors that contribute to adolescent pregnancy are poverty and areas with low practice of human rights.

Impact/Consequences of Teenage Pregnancy

According to Males (2009), one of the most traumatic and devastating influence of teenage pregnancy is making it difficult for the girl to continue with her education or at least to graduate with good grades.

Rhode (2004) posited that the issue of premature pregnancy has several consequences. It is increasing the population growth rate in the society. Many babies are being born through it and cannot be catered for by the available resources. Many pregnant girls end up dropping out from school to avoid shame, thus undermining government efforts towards ensuring education for all and the millennium development goals of education in the nearest future. Bruce (2004) stated that due to poverty, many of those involved in premature pregnancy die as a result of poor medical attention or none at all. Some end up having serious medical disorders that may last a lifetime. A good number do not ever get to finish schooling.

Measures To Be Taken In Order To Reduce Teenage Pregnancy

Akindelly (2010) stressed that “it has become imperative for the menace of teenage pregnancy to be eradicated or controlled in the society in view of its negative consequences. Several measures can however be adopted to achieve this goals. First among these is the need for parents to be more alive to their responsibilities at the home setting.

They should strive to educate their children on the dangers that are inherent in premature sexual intercourse and the need to always relate with only the good pupils/students. They should strive even harder to pay their children’s school fees until they graduate, before marrying them off.

Perper (2010) gave his view that there is need for teachers to be morally upright in the school system. They should abstain from illicit relationship with their female students. Institutions administrators should however strive to maintain discipline in their domains and erring teachers and female students serve as deterrents to others.

Furthering his comment, Perper said that government should further strive to educate the masses on the dangers involved in premature sex and the issue of early marriage, particularly in those parts of the country that are indisposed to female education. Students in co-educational institutions should refrain from the influence of bad friends on them and should only associate with good students.

Nyakubega (2009) carried out a research on the factors associated with adolescent pregnancies among secondary school students at Targa high school in Tanzania, the result was that low socio economic status was found to be an important cause for adolescent pregnancies as 57.1% of respondent suggested. Other factors responsible were luxury and deprivation of education to girls (43.5% and 16-5% respectively). Source of reproductive health education was contrary to most previous studies as 82.6% reported to get it from parents and health centers, while schools and peer groups contributed only 29.1% and 7.2% respectively.

A study showed that adolescent pregnancy is a multifaceted problem as it involves social, political, cultural, educational and economic factors. Some of the risks that the newborn babies are exposed to are premature delivery, cerebral palsy and mental retardations due to birth defects. Adolescent pregnancies are also associated with abortions and STDs including HIV/AIDS.

Results

The presentation is done using the research questions as focus. Analysis of data with respect to research questions.

Research Question 1:

To what extent do pregnant students attend lectures?

Table: 4. 1: responses on 20 pregnant Students’ attendance to lectures.

S/N	Item statement	Population	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	Pregnant students attend lectures regularly.	20	1	1	3	15	28	1.4
2	Pregnant students do not attend lectures regularly.	20	16	2	1	1	73	3.65
3	Pregnant students attend lectures a few times in a semester.	20	17	1	1	1	74	3.7
4	Pregnant students do not attend lectures at all.	20	10	4	2	4	60	3

Grand Mean: $\frac{11.75}{4} = 2.93$

Table .1 indicates that the research question was rejected as the grand mean is 2.93 this means that the number of those who agreed that pregnant students attend lectures regularly is less than the number of those who disagreed. Therefore, pregnant students do not attend lectures regularly.

Research Question Two

To what extent do pregnant students write and submit their assignments?

Table .2 sought to know if pregnant students write and submit their assignments when due.

S/N	Item statement	Population	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	Pregnant students write and submit their assignments when due	20	2	1	1	16	27	1.35
2	Pregnant students do not submit their assignments on time.	20	17	1	1	1	74	3.7
3	Pregnant students write a few assignments.	20	16	2	1	1	73	3.65
4	Pregnant students find it difficult to write assignments.	20	17	4	1	0	76	3.8

Grand Mean = $12.5 \div 4 = 3.1$

The responses to research question two indicate the mean score as 3.1 this implies that majority of the respondents support that pregnant students do not write and submit their assignments when due.

Research Question Three

To what extent do pregnant students have time to read their books at home?

Table .4 responses to know if pregnant students have enough time to read their books at home.

S/N	Item statement	Population	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	Pregnant students have enough time to read their books at home.	20	1	2	3	14	30	1.5
2	Pregnant students do not have enough time to read their books at home.	20	17	2	1	0	76	19
3	Pregnant students do not read their books at all.	20	17	1	1	1	74	3.7
4	Pregnant read a little.	20	18	1	1	0	77	3.85

Grand Mean = $12.85 \div 4 = 3.2$

Table 4.3 above reveals that pregnant students do not have enough time to read their books at home.

Research Question Four

Does health problem distract pregnant students from paying attention to their studies?

Table 4.4 Responses on how health problems distract pregnant students from paying attention to their studies.

S/N	Item statement	Population	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	Health problems distract pregnant students a lot from paying attention to their studies.	20	19	1	0	0	79	3.95
2	Health problems distract pregnant students a little.	20	18	1	1	0	75	3.85
3	Pregnant students cope with health problems.	20	0	1	1	18	23	1.15
4	Pregnant students have difficulty concentrating on their studies because of pregnancy-induced discomforts.	20	16	2	1	1	73	3.65

Grand Mean = 12.6 = $\frac{3.15}{4}$

The responses of the respondents reveal a green light of acceptance. This implies that health problems distract pregnant students from paying attention to their studies.

Conclusion

Because the relationship between academic failure and undergraduate pregnancy is so strong and because pregnancy affects educational achievement of the students themselves as well as the well-being of their infant children, those concerned about educating young people should also be concerned with preventing undergraduate pregnancy. Moreover, given the increasing demands for good academic qualification to obtain well paying jobs, it is more important than ever for girls to finish their schooling as soon as possible, before going into marriage.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the data the researcher thereby recommends that;

1. Accommodation should be provided for pregnant students within the campus
2. Since female students especially married female students desire education even when pregnant, they should be encouraged to pursue this goal. Lecture time should be fixed to accommodate them.
3. Knowledge on reproductive biology if taught in schools from elementary level will help in combating the problem of teenage pregnancy.

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