



PEER INFLUENCE, SELF-ESTEEM AND ATTITUDE TO LIFE AS PREDICTORS OF PRE-MARITAL ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY IN OWERRI MUNICIPAL IMO STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

Adolescent pregnancy out of wedlock is often accompanied by unimaginable crisis with negative implication on the well-being of pregnant adolescents. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate peer influence, self-esteem and attitude to life as predictors of adolescent pregnancy in Owerri Municipal Imo State Nigeria. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select one hundred pre-marital pregnant adolescents attending antenatal clinic from ten community maternity centres in Owerri Municipal Imo state, Nigeria. A researcher's made questionnaire was used and three research questions were answered at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analysed using Multiple Regression statistical tool. There was significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Also, the independent variables accounted for 66.4% of the total variance on the prediction of pre-marital adolescent pregnancy. In order of magnitude, of the contribution: peer influence contributed most to the prediction of pre-marital adolescent pregnancy ($\beta = 0.594$, $t = 9.805$, $P < 0.05$) followed by attitude to life ($\beta = 0.462$, $t = 7.243$, $P < 0.05$) and self-esteem ($\beta = 0.188$, $t = 4.161$, $P < 0.05$) to adolescent pre-marital pregnancy. Therefore, counselling programmes should be put in place and used as a measure to guide and lead adolescents to the path of self-discovery.

Keywords: Adolescent pregnancy, Attitude, Peer Influence, Self-Esteem, Owerri Municipal, Imo State

Introduction

One major contemporary social problem confronting most countries in the world is adolescent pregnancy. This problem has been a source of worry for policy makers, social workers and other human service providers due to its turnaround effects on the girl-child and society at large. Thus, with the increasing number of adolescents in developing countries, adolescent pre-marital sexual activity is also on the rise resulting in the occurrence of unintended pregnancy and other sex related health problems which in no small measure affect their physical, social, emotional, spiritual and psychological well-being (Okoiye, 2008). Adolescent pregnancy out of wedlock is often accompanied by unimaginable crisis with negative implication on the well-being of pregnant adolescents. This makes adolescent pregnancy a critical reproductive health phenomenon that requires the attention of stakeholders due to the fact that it has grave repercussions in their making of life choices (Ioannidi-Kapolou, 2024). Alike and Egbochuku (2009) found that most adolescent girls' dropout of school as a result of pregnancy and early marriage.

Sieving, Eisenberg, Pettingell and Skay (2016) noted that the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy is most times influenced by peers' attitudinal disposition towards life that impacts negatively on their sexual risk behaviours in the likes of: friends' sexual behaviours, adolescents' perceptions of friends' behaviours and attitudes, and level of involvement with friends. Furthermore, these perceptions may be shaped by a combination of friends' attitudes and adolescents' own attitudes towards life. Thus, adolescents who are highly involved with their friends may find themselves in social contexts that encourage early dating and entry into romantic relationships, which have been linked to earlier sexual initiation and pregnancy (Sieving et al., 2016).

Meddinus and Johnson (2017) opined that the causes of unwanted pregnancy include crave for money and materials. They further said that broken/separated homes, inadequate or absence of sex education, general moral laxity, influence of peers and exposure to pornographic materials are factors that could influence the occurrence of pre-marital adolescent pregnancy. It also corroborates with the findings of Hurlock (2019) who discovered that sexual irresponsibility among some children could be as a result of peer group influence. A study carried out by Iseingedighi (2020) revealed that some adolescents saw sex as being necessary and sexually active male student' had their fellow secondary school mates as sex partners. Iseingedighi (2020) concluded that the curiosity of the adolescents or teenagers to find out what sex is like, couple with their exposure to modernity, peer group influence, permissiveness of parents and the fast-eroding societal morality are contributory factors to adolescent pregnancy among secondary school students.

According to Jackie, (2022) low self-esteem is among the causes of teenage pregnancy. Children who are not shown love and affection from parents will seek it out with their peer group. Many adolescents report being pressured by their peers to have sex before they are married. According to Joubert (2018), the transition from childhood to adolescent may cause unstable emotions to some adolescents that might result to the development of low self-esteem and cause complex psychological breakdown on them. However, depleted self-esteem could result to the expression of immature and irresponsible behaviour which in turn may be led to the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy as weak family bonding fail to provide the emotional support that they need during their transitional life experience could engineer their intention to look for love and attention from others especially from the opposite sex. As cited in Okoiye (2008); Amobi and Anthony (2004) in their study identified adolescent attitude to life as one of the factors influencing unintended pregnancy among unmarried adolescents in a rural community in south-east Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The developmental experience of some pregnant adolescent in Nigeria is quite heartbreaking as they are made to suffer neglect, deprivation and stigmatization. Their education is interrupted as pregnant adolescents are not allowed to attend school which could make them have limited opportunities in life if care is not taken. Thus, most pregnant adolescents experience major stressors, most importantly,

dropping out of school, sexual partner's negative attitude, religious sanction, discrimination and stigmatization as a result of unintended pregnancy. This limits their opportunities to develop their intellect and contribute to the technological advancement of the country.

Significance of the Study

Through the findings of this study, the consciousness of the society will be drawn to the plight of the unfortunate adolescents who either by adventure or no fault of theirs became pregnant and eventually became a mother at a very tender age.

The findings of the study would bring to the awareness of the government the necessity of providing counselling services in schools as a means of minimizing maladaptive behaviour that facilitates the occurrence of this phenomenon that is imparting negatively on the social, psychological, economic and moral development of the society at large.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What relationship exists between the independent (Peer Influence, Self-Esteem and Attitude to life) and dependent variables (Adolescent Pregnancy)?
2. What joint impact do the independent variables (Peer Influence, Self-Esteem and Attitude to life) have on the dependent variable (Adolescent Pregnancy)?
3. What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (Peer Influence, Self-Esteem and Attitude to life) on the dependent variable (Adolescent Pregnancy)?

Method

Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised of one hundred pre-marital pregnant adolescents attending antenatal clinic from ten community maternity centres in Owerri Municipal Imo state, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The samples for the study consisted of 100 pre-marital pregnant adolescents in Owerri Municipal of Imo state, Nigeria. The samples were purposively selected from ten local government own maternity clinic attending antenatal and based on their interest to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

The instruments used for this study were researchers made questionnaires. The questionnaires adopted the modified Likert self-rating pattern of 4= truly like me, 3= like me, 2= truly unlike me and 1= unlike me. The items in the questionnaire were divided into sections, A, B, C, D and E. Section A is on personal information such as the sex, age, father's occupation, etc. Other sections are in scale-like format with varied items. Section B contains 6 items on adolescent pregnancy (My being pregnant make me see myself as a failure, I realise that am too young to be a mother, my being pregnant made me drop out of school); section C contains 8 items on peer influence (My friends influenced me to have sex, My friends influenced me to have a boy-friend) section D contains 6 items on self-esteem (At times, I think I am no good at all, I feel I do not have much to be proud of, I certainly feel useless at times), and section E contains 6 items on attitude to life (I like putting on dresses that exposes some part of my body, I do not like education, Schooling is boring to me, I like developing relationship with the opposite sex) etc. These sections have simple straight forward positively and negatively worded items. The reliability of the instruments was calculated using a test-re-test method and the coefficient alpha for each of the scaled items were; section B adolescent pregnancy 0.78, section C, peer influence, 0.82, section D attitude, 0.72 and section E, 0.76 this shows the instruments are reliable.

Procedure

The researchers obtained permission from the matrons of the maternity centres used for the study. The consent of participants was equally sought and obtained. The researchers with the assistance of some nurses administered copies of the instruments to the participants used for the study with explanation on how to complete them and the purpose of the research. Thereafter, the respondents completed the copies of the questionnaires and they were collected back for data analysis.

Method of Data analysis

Data were analysed with Multiple regression statistical tools at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One

What relationship exists between Peer Influence, Self-Esteem, Attitude to life and Adolescent Pregnancy?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations among the variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Adolescent Pregnancy	100	40.11	11.62	1.000			
Self-Esteem	100	10.04	4.62	.442*	1.000		
Attitude to life	100	40.03	11.24	.568**	.472*	1.000	
Peer Influence	100	51.32	15.61	.712***	.661*	.629*	1.000

** Correlation Significant at 0.01 levels

Table 1 above shows there was significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables: peer influence ($r = 0.712$, $P < 0.05$); attitude to life ($r = 0.568$, $P < 0.05$); self-esteem ($r = 0.442$, $P < 0.05$) and adolescent pregnancy. The result indicates that the inter play of peer influence; self-esteem and attitude to life have negative influence on pregnant adolescents.

Research Question Two

What joint impact do the independent variables (Peer Influence, Self-Esteem and Attitude to life) have on the dependent variable (Adolescent Pregnancy)?

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis showing joint impact of the independent variables on Adolescent Pregnancy

Adolescent Pregnancy						
Multiple R	=	0.711				
Multiple R ²	=	0.682				
Multiple R ² (Adjusted)	=	0.664				
Standard Error of Estimate	=	5.3484				
Source of variation	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean square	F-Ratio	P	
Regression	26541.124	4	66385.281	559.95	<.05	
Residual	11262.764	95	118.555			
Total	37803.888	99				

Table 2 shows that the independent variables had significant joint impact on the dependent variable (Adolescent Pregnancy) ($R = 0.711$, $P < .05$). The combination of the independent variables accounted for 66.4% of the total variance on Adolescent Pregnancy (adjusted $R^2 = 0.664$). The analysis of variance of the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio value which was found to be significant at 0.05 Alpha level, $F(4, 95) = 559.95$, $P < 0.05$). The weight of the F-Ratio indicates that the independent variables have significant joint impact on pre-marital adolescent pregnancy.

Research Question Three

What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (Peer Influence, Self-Esteem and Attitude to life) on the dependent variable (Adolescent Pregnancy)?

Table 3: The relative contribution of each of the independent variables to Adolescent Pregnancy

Variables	B	Std.Error	Beta	T	Sig.	P
(constant)	8.242	4.220		4.685	.000	<.05
Self-Esteem	.173	.049	.188	4.161	.000	<.05
Attitude to life	.368	.063	.462	7.243	.000	<.05
Peer Influence	.577	.071	.594	9.805	.000	<.05

Dependent –Variable: Adolescent Pregnancy

Table 3 indicates the contributions of each of the independent variables to the prediction of adolescent Pregnancy. In terms of magnitude of the contribution: peer influence contributed most to the prediction of Adolescent Pregnancy ($\beta = 0.594$, $t = 9.805$, $P < 0.05$) followed by attitude ($\beta = 0.462$, $t = 7.243$, $P < 0.05$) and self-esteem ($\beta = 0.188$, $t = 4.161$, $P < 0.05$) to adolescent Pregnancy.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of the study revealed that there was significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables: peer influence ($r = 0.712$, $P < 0.05$); attitude ($r = 0.568$, $P < 0.05$); self-esteem ($r = 0.442$, $P < 0.05$). This implies that issues of peer influence, attitude to life and self-esteem could predict the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy. Consistent with the finding of this study is the reported finding of Sieving, Eisenberg, Pettingell and Skay (2016) that the occurrence of pre-marital adolescent pregnancy most times is influenced by peers' attitudinal disposition that impacts negatively on their sexual risk behaviours in the likes of: friends' sexual behaviours, adolescents' perceptions of friends' behaviours and attitudes, and level of involvement with friends. Also, they found that adolescents who are highly involved with their friends may find themselves in social contexts that encourage early dating and entry into romantic relationships, which have been linked to earlier sexual initiation and pregnancy (Sieving et al., 2016).

The findings of the study indicates that the independent variables had significant joint predictive impact on the dependent variable (Adolescent Pregnancy) ($R = 0.711$, $P < 0.05$). The combination of the independent variables accounted for 66.4% of the total variance on Adolescent Pregnancy (adjusted $R^2 = 0.664$). The analysis of variance of the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio value which was found to be significant at 0.05 Alpha level, $F(4, 95) = 559.95$, $P < 0.05$). These suggest the fact that peers influence, attitude to life and self-esteem predisposed the sexual behaviour of pregnant adolescents negatively. This is consistent with Meddinus and Johnson (2017) who reported that the causes of unwanted pregnancy include crave for money and materials. They further stated that broken/separated homes, inadequate or absence of sex education, general moral laxity, influence of peers and pornographic materials are some of the factors that could influence the occurrence of pre-marital adolescent pregnancy. It also corroborates with the findings of Hurlock (2019) who reported that sexual irresponsibility among some children could be as a result of peer group influence. A study carried out by Iseingedighi (2020) revealed that adolescents saw sex as being necessary.

The study revealed that in terms of magnitude of the contribution: peer influence contributed most to the prediction of Adolescent Pregnancy ($\beta = 0.594$, $t = 9.805$, $P < 0.05$) followed by attitude ($\beta = 0.462$, $t = 7.243$, $P < 0.05$) and self-esteem ($\beta = 0.188$, $t = 4.161$, $P < 0.05$) to adolescent Pregnancy. This shows that peers to a large extent impart on the expressed sexual behaviour of pregnant adolescents. This corroborates the reported findings of Iseingedighi (2020) that the curiosity of the adolescents or teenagers to find out what sex is like, couple with their exposure to modernity, peer group influence, permissiveness of parents and the fast-eroding societal morality are contributory factors to adolescent pregnancy among secondary school students.

Implication of the Study

The finding of this research provides reasonable information that can be applied in understanding of the developmental challenges of adolescents considering the fact that adolescent pregnancy has the tendency to put an end to the educational dreams of pregnant adolescents and they have a very good chance of living in poverty. Also, it is of note that adolescents are sexually active and the occurrence of their unintended pregnancy could be as a result of adolescents' curiosity to find out what sex is like,

their exposure to modernity, peer group influence, permissiveness of parents and the fast-eroding social morality are contributing factors to adolescent pre-marital sexual indulgence and pregnancy.

Conclusion

The issue of adolescent pregnancy in Nigeria is worrisome and of great concern to all. Therefore, counsellors should put in place counselling sessions to reduce the impact of peer influence, negative attitude and self-esteem that can predisposed the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers wish to make the following recommendations:

Counselling programmes should be put in place as a measure to guide and lead adolescents to the path of self-discovery.

Adolescents should be given adequate information on how best to overcome the challenges of negative peer influence that could make them get pregnant and mar their developmental life experience.

Adolescents should be made to appreciate the need to develop positive self-esteem and attitude to life as it could help them overcome negative influence in their environment.

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