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Relationship between Early Pregnancy and School Dropout among Adolescent Girls in Arkansas, USA

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Abstract

Pregnancy related school dropout is an issue of public concern worldwide nowadays. The study sought to determine the effects of early pregnancies on school dropout among adolescent girls in Arkansas, USA. The study utilized the descriptive research design. The target population included school girls' students in secondary schools based in Arkansas. Notably, the target population was 419 respondents. The data collection instruments included questionnaires. The study found that early pregnancy and school dropout among adolescent girls in Arkansas is related. Teen pregnancy compromises young girls' development opportunities. Drop out of school hinders their formal education, resulting in employment and productive disadvantages while making them vulnerable to poverty, violence, crime and social exclusion. Teen pregnancy and early motherhood represent a cost of opportunity for women, given the lack of adequate conditions, poor understanding and inadequate approach to the problem, resulting in the interruption of formal education or definite dropout by adolescent girls. The study recommended that strategies to prevent adolescent pregnancy be developed, such as community programs to improve social development, responsible sexual behavior education, and enhanced contraceptive counseling and delivery. The study also recommended that programs be tailored differently for girls who have dropped out of school, those in school and at risk for pregnancy, and those who are in school and become pregnant. The research suggests that there is a need to continue improving programmes to decrease teenage pregnancy and a need to try and increase the number of teenage mothers who go back to school to finish their education.

Keywords: *Early Pregnancy, School Dropout, Adolescent Girls, Arkansas, USA*

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1.0 Introduction

Pregnancy related school dropout is an issue of public concern worldwide nowadays (Dangal, 2018). Many studies have actually revealed that age at first intercourse is decreasing, recommending that today's teens are becoming sexually active at an increasingly younger age. On top of that, few school girls use contraceptives and are at risk of pregnancy. This causes scenarios like leaving of school, poverty, very early marriage and contracting sexually transmitted infections. Although early marriage and pregnancy are mostly connected to school dropout, proof confirming a direct and causal connection is limited (Delprato, Akyeampong, Sabates & Hernandez-Fernandez, 2018). Early pregnancy can be the main reason of dropping out of school. Female learners leave or are taken out of learning institutions since they are pregnant or married; however, female learners who have dropped out of school are more likely to marry and conceive (Birchall, 2018).

Secondary school dropouts are aged 16 to 24 who are not registered in a learning institution and have not finished secondary school (Fine, 2020). The dropout rate has reduced substantially, from fifteen in 1970 to six percent in 2016. In 1972, the dropout rate was 21% among non-Hispanic black young people, 12% among non-Hispanic white young people, and 34 % amongst Hispanic youth. Dropout rates for Hispanic youth were highest in the late 1980s and very early 1990s, at 36% (McMillen, 2018). Rates have from then reduced substantially for every group. In 2016, the dropout rate for black youth got to a historically low level of 6%, while rates amongst Hispanic youth reached a historically low level of 9%. Furthermore, these rate estimates do not consist of institutionalized private citizens, a population that has increased substantially from the 1980s, specifically amongst young black and Hispanic males. Teenagers who have not finished secondary school are incarcerated at higher rates than those with higher levels of education accomplishment (Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin & Palma, 2019). It is likely that the estimates of dropout rates, particularly those from the past few decades, would be somewhat greater if institutionalized private citizens were added to these estimates, although it is not clear by how much.

Teenager pregnancy has decreased 42% from its highest in 1990 and the U.S. teen birth rate is currently at an all-time low (Ventura and Freedman, 2020). Despite this excellent progression, it is still the situation that almost 3 in 10 girls in the U.S. will undoubtedly be pregnant before the age of twenty. The USA has the most significant rate of female learner's pregnancies in the developed world, roughly 750,000 pregnancies to teenagers yearly. When the U.S. wants to be more competitive in the international economy, their teen maternity rates are relatively more than their trading counterparts and rivals. Both teen parents drop out of secondary school and kids of teen parents suffer significant academic difficulties (Melton, 2019). Too-early pregnancy and parenthood not just make it hard to finish studies, occupation, and other life goals for teen parents, yet it additionally impacts the prospects of their kids. The study reveals that children of teen mothers begin school at a disadvantage and fare worse than those born to older parents. Kids born to teen mothers start preschool with low levels of school preparedness (consisting of lower math and reading scores, language and communication abilities, social skills, and physical and social wellness), related to kids born to women in their twenties.

The definition of a school dropout could be established from who reports the student's missing from the institution. For the female learner who is expecting, the precision of the scenario likewise

relies on the reports of the pregnancy. A dropout is defined by Neild, Stoner-Eby & Furstenberg (2018) as a learner who has terminated school before graduation without the intent of returning. School girl normally does not plan to become pregnant; therefore, it is typically not deliberate. The pregnancy takes place in most instances as an accident as the majority of them are still underage or teens. Teen pregnancy refers to a girl aged 19 or less becoming pregnant (Kost and Maddow-Zimet, 2020). Teenager pregnancy compromises girls' development opportunities, as dropping out of school prevents their formal learning, leading to work and productive disadvantages while making them at risk of hardship, physical violence, criminal offense, and social exemption.

Teen pregnancy has a straight implication on school dropout among female learners and is a subsequent contributor to the disparities encountered in the learning of both female and male learners. A variety of researchers agree that most girls quit learning institutions as a result of pregnancy. However, there have been concerns raised regarding teen pregnancy and its subsequent impact on school dropouts. A prevalent assumption is that girls who become pregnant and drop out might need to accept a low-paid job, get in a premature marriage, or become the head of a low-income family, depending on meager aid from her family and the kid's father. Thus, the study was considered worthy of examining the relationship between pregnancy and school dropout among Adolescent Girls in Arkansas, USA.

2.0 literature review

Gorleku (2016) performed research to determine the impacts of teen pregnancy on the academic achievement of the girl-child in Switzerland. A complete sample size of fifty-five (55) respondents was utilized for the research. A set of questions, comprehensive interviews, focus group conversations and monitoring were used to collect data for the research. With respect to variables that bring about teenage pregnancy, it appeared that inadequate parenting, poverty and peer impact is the major causes of teenage pregnancy. The research likewise disclosed that the majority of teenage mothers leave school. The research advised that teen mothers need to be aided in their psychosocial development and task skills development.

Zuma and Potgieter (2019) conducted a study concentrating on the academic effects of female learner pregnancy. Utilizing the information gathered in chosen learning institutions in Alaska State, research determines elements related with female learner pregnancy along with the possibility of leaving school and succeeding re-enrollment of female learners who become pregnant. Evaluation is derived from the information gathered from secondary female learners, education officials and educators on variables that incline girls to pregnancy, the extent to which teen pregnancy leads to dropout and the ultimate chances of re-admission. The information reveals that female learners in high schools are actually currently sexually energetic though they do not have the pertinent information to assist them to make the best decisions as far as their sexuality is concerned. The little details that they have are not conclusive and it appears that they wish for details that would certainly work for them. Plans on re-admission have actually been developed but the degree to which it is used is still a suspicious concern. Many gaps additionally exist in record maintaining of the girls that conceive while studying and what becomes of them when they dropout. Such documents would certainly be crucial in determining for certain if these learners become pregnant prior to leaving of school or otherwise and consequently tracking them down for re-admission purposes.

Simon, Małgorzata & Beatriz (2017) performed a study on how teen mothers are faced with numerous issues that may hinder them from finishing secondary school in Austria. The first objective of this research was to determine teen mothers' academic, social, and individual influences connected to high school dropout. The second objective was to determine the Resiliency Framework for mothers who left of learning institution and the mothers that preceded their learning. The third objective was to check out exactly how teen mothers perceive their academic, social, and individual impacts and to establish whether durability vary in each group. Research conducted a two-level chance layout to choose the 8th quality sample. The example targeted 1,500 high schools. Twenty-three learners from each school were picked to take part. The population of interest consisted of teen mothers who left school and teenager mothers that proceeded. The research watched the second follow-up wave of the NELS information. The sample included of 572 individuals. There were 278 teenage mothers who were categorized as dropouts and 294 teenage mothers who were presently registered in high school. There were considerable forecasters of secondary school dropout for teen mothers in the areas of peer academic desires, school environment, future participation, and childcare. This research found that dropouts scored significantly lower on peer educational goals. Additionally, dropouts viewed their college environment as adverse or hostile which even more enhanced the probability of dropping out. Dropout learner's recorded smaller household participation and much less count on between their parents. Finally, dropouts were less most likely to assume parental duty and had much less involvement with their kid. Dropout learners have a higher likelihood of having less protective variables and even more danger elements than current learners. Teen mothers that left school had less favorable supportive avenues. The outcomes of this research showed that dropouts are less socially qualified with healthy relationship, have fewer problem fixing abilities, and high reliance on others.

Arceo-Gómez and Campos-Vazquez (2019) analyzed whether school enrolment was connected with female learners pregnancy in Mexico. The school enrolment from 2000 to 2011 for 15 457 girls aged 12-- 18 years and connected them to the estimated perception date for every pregnancy during this time. Examination of the impact of time-varying school enrolment on teen pregnancy utilizing a Cox proportional hazard design, adjusting for: age; fiscal year; family socioeconomic standing; house dimension; and gender, educational accomplishment and employment of family head. A second analysis contrasted the incidence of pregnancy among school enrollees by calendar time: school term versus school holiday. School enrolment was connected with reduced teen pregnancy rates. This association was durable to prospective misclassification of school enrolment. For those registered in school, pregnancy occurred less generally during academic year than throughout school vacations. Girls that quit learning institution may be at higher risk for teen pregnancy and can likely take advantage of receipt of accessible and high quality sex-related health services. Preventative measures are made to keep teenage female learners in school or addressing the underlying causes of dropout may likewise assist decrease the incidence of teen pregnancy.

Masterson (2018) assessed information from girls aged 13 to twenty years registered in school in Paraguay to approximate the relationship in between pregnancy and subsequent; failure and subsequent pregnancy. A heavy curve to compute 1-, 2-, and 3-year threat differences and take the chance of ratios and IP-weighted low architectural cox model to approximate a hazard ratio (HR) for each relationship was utilized. Dropout from learning institution was related to subsequent

pregnancy and pregnancy was related to subsequent school dropout. Girls who enrolled in school however went to fewer days had a greater risk of pregnancy than those that went to more school. Pregnancy is both a cause and a repercussion of school dropout. Consideration of school participation and learning achievement can eventually improve pregnancy prevention initiatives in this population. Programs ought to be customized in different ways for girls who have left school, those who remain in school and in jeopardy for pregnancy, and those who remain in school and become pregnant.

Berg and Nelson (2016) conducted a study on management data from numerous sources brought together to evaluate pregnancy and secondary school dropout in a group of teenager females that were 9th graders. Rates of maternity and dropout are significantly greater among Hispanic senior high school learners than among African-Americans or non-Hispanic whites. Other researches of teenage female's pregnancy and dropout normally concentrated on pregnancy rates conditional on dropout standing, or dropout rates conditional on fertility. Estimates of joint probability distribution conditional on specific, family members, area, and secondary school features are noted. Community features have big impacts on pregnancy and dropout. Immigrant Hispanic young females' pregnancy rates are substantially less than native-born Hispanic young females' pregnancy rates. Above-normal-age standing in the 9th grade is among the greatest forecasters of pregnancy and dropout in future years. Ethnic disparities in age distributions within grade level appear to describe a huge portion of ethnic disparities in pregnancy and dropout rates.

Sethi, Yon, Parekh, Anderson, Huber, Rakovac and Meinck (2018) performed a research in Malta where there was problems concerning high rates of pregnancy-related school dropouts. Female learners who conceive have lower chances of completing their leaning after the birth of their first kid and have lower chances for socioeconomic development. The study utilizes information from a country wide representative example of Malta females along with target group interviews to define the influence of female learner's pregnancy, and to determine aspects that promote going back to learning institution of female learners who did leave as a result of pregnancy. Outcomes show that the issue of female learner's pregnancy might be much more serious than is generally thought. Even though the concern is improving, there is a demand for continued increase in programmes to minimize teen pregnancy, and a need to attempt and enhance the variety of teenage mothers that go back to learning institution to finish their studies.

Pradhan, Wynter and Fisher (2019) performed a study on the relationship in between education and teen pregnancy in low- and lower-middle-income nations. Teen pregnancy discourages females from accomplishing academic objectives and from maximizing their human capital. 9 out of 4,980 articles checked met the essential standards for analysis, from 2008 to 2018. The outcomes reveal getting to higher levels of learning is hindered by teen pregnancy in low- and lower-middle-income nations. For that reason, community service policies and programs ought to target accessibility to education and school retention as deterrence to teenage pregnancy.

Manlove (2020) analyzed the academic data of Alabama State secondary schools' pupil dropout due to pregnancy. The resultant conversation of the analysis was made under the sub-headings: factors that influence pregnancy amongst secondary schoolgirls; what the law of Alabama says on the school girls that fall pregnant; frequency of the problem in schools; and impacts of school girls' maternity to the state and to the girl learner. Research concluded that although pregnancy among schoolgirls is an international issue, due to various socio-economic elements that affect the degree

of education and the development in medicine. Within the states the problem is more acute in rural than in urban schools. The prevalence of the problem, is suggested that, has cost ramifications to the government. Governments incur expenses on the affected girls in different ways such as costs on joblessness, cost on the girl's health throughout pre-natal care and the cost increase if they happen to have actually contracted the HIV virus or fall unwell because of AIDS-related illness. Additionally, cost is incurred on post-school programmes focused on habits rehabilitation of the afflicted girls.

3.0 Research Findings

The research utilized the descriptive research design. The target population included school girls' students in secondary schools based in the United States. Notably, the target population was 419 respondents. The data collection instruments included structured questionnaires. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

4.1 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis was performed to examine the association between the variables. The results presented in Table 1 describe the correlation results

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

		School Dropout	Early Pregnancy
School Dropout	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Early Pregnancy	Pearson Correlation	.178 **	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000

The correlation results from Table 1 show that early pregnancy is positively and significantly associated with school dropout ($r=.178$, $p=.000$). The results concur with Birchall (2018) who found that female learners absolutely leave or are taken out of learning institution since they are pregnant or married; however female learners who have currently dropped out of school are more likely to marry. Dungal (2018), articulated that pregnancy related school dropout is an issue of public concern worldwide nowadays

4.2 Regression Analysis

The model fitness is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Model Fitness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.154a	0.314	0.291	0.000

The results from Table 2 show that early pregnancy was found to be satisfactory in explaining the school dropout among school girls' in Secondary Schools in the USA. This was supported by the coefficient of determination, also known as the R square of 0.314. This signified that early pregnancies explain 31.4% of the variations in the school dropout among secondary schools girls in the USA.

The study results on the analysis of variance is summarized in Table 3

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.283	1	1.283	2.634	.000b
	Residual	1.947	4	0.487		
	Total	3.230	5			

The results in Table 3 indicate that the overall model was statistically significant. The results imply that early pregnancies is a good predictor in explaining the school dropout among the girls in Secondary Schools in the USA as the reported p-value was 0.000, which was less than the conventional probability significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the school can decrease early pregnancies to decrease the level of school dropout in the county.

Table 4: Regression of Coefficient

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.021	0.003		9.151	0.005
School Dropout	0.164	0.085	0.245	3.171	0.022

The study results, as depicted in Table 4 showed that early pregnancy is positively and significantly related to school dropout ($\beta=.1645$, $p=0.022$). The results implied that when the early pregnancy increases by one unit, the school dropout will increase by 0.1645 units while holding other factors

constant. The study results concur with Melton (2019) who discovered that both teen parents that drop out of secondary school and kids of teen parents suffer significant academic difficulties. Manlove (2020) found that pregnancy among schoolgirls is an international issue due to various socio-economic elements that affect education. Moreover, Simon, Małgorzata and Beatriz (2017) found that dropouts scored significantly lower on peer educational goals. Additionally, dropouts viewed their college environment as adverse or hostile, which enhanced the probability of dropping out. Dropout learner's recorded smaller household participation and much less count on between their parents. Manlove (2020) indicated that pregnancy among schoolgirls is an international issue due to various socio-economic elements that affect the degree of education and the development in medicine. Within the states, the problem is more acute in rural than in urban schools.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that early pregnancy and school dropout among adolescent girls in Arkansas is related. Teen pregnancy compromises young girls' development opportunities. Drop out of school hinders their formal education, resulting in employment and productive disadvantages while making them vulnerable to poverty, violence, crime and social exclusion. Teen pregnancy and early motherhood represent a cost of opportunity for women, given the lack of adequate conditions, poor understanding and inadequate approach to the problem, resulting in the interruption of formal education or definite dropout by adolescent girls. Although the pregnancy rate in adolescents has declined steadily in the past years, it remains a significant public health problem with lasting repercussions for teenage mothers, their infants and families, and society as a whole. Successful strategies to prevent adolescent pregnancy need to be developed, such as community programs to improve social development, responsible sexual behavior education, and enhanced contraceptive counseling and delivery. The study also recommended that programs be tailored differently for girls who have dropped out of school, those who are in school and at risk for pregnancy, and those who are in school and become pregnant. Preventive interventions designed to keep young women in school or addressing the underlying causes of dropout may also assist in decreasing the cases of teen pregnancy. The research suggests that there is a need to continue improving programmes to decrease teenage pregnancy and a need to try and increase the number of teenage mothers who go back to school to finish their education.

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