Scanning the Horizon for ODL: Strategies for Educational planning for teen girls in Lagos Rural communities

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ABSTRACT

The provision of formal education for girls who dropped out or never had the chance to enrol in schools has been an intervention in very few countries of the world. It is quite unfortunate to note that gender disparity still exists. Despite the fight against homelessness and the scourge of destitute embarked upon by Lagos state government in a bid to turn the state to a model city, some communities still remain dinghy and destitute prone. Teen pregnancy, Illiteracy and other at risk behaviours remains the bane amongst teen girls in these communities. More worrisome are recent revelations that these pregnancies are owned by miscreants, pickpockets and jobless drug addicts. These factors further throw this population of girls into abject poverty. How then do we engage this group of girls in sustainable economic/educational development ventures through ODL?
The study sought to investigate the causes and implications of this on the teenage girls. What educational strategy intervention through ODL can achieve among this teens in Ajido and Jeba communities of Badagry, Lagos is discussed. The outcome and impart of the study would be applied to the larger community – Nigeria.
Survey research design was adopted for the study. Multi stage sampling techniques was used to select 186 respondents; a close ended self structured questionnaire was employed for data collection. Inferential statistics of T-test was used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 alpha levels.
The study found positive relationship between familial factors and risk behaviour among teen girls in the communities. Also extra-familial variables contribute immensely to teen girls at risk behaviour. These call to question the issue and implication for empowerment of such teen girls which will among other things promote healthy behavioural choices for them. What will sustainable empowerment achieve among these teen girls? The implication for this was discussed.

Keywords: ODL; Girl Child; At risk behaviour, Rural area

INTRODUCTION

Nations all over the world continues to yearn for development. The yearnings are seen through the use of education for all as an instrument for making the society literate.
The Dakar Education for all (EFA) goals number 2 specifically stipulates that by 2015, all children, 'especially the girl child in different circumstances and those belonging to minorities has access to a complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality' Attainment of this declaration has been difficult since then. Africa as a continent is experiencing a sharp increase in the number of children of school age; but the irony is that Africa has the lowest ratio in school enrolment. UNESCO and UNICEF estimates that the number will further rise by 52 percent during the period of 1995-2020.

These mirrors the gruesome challenge being faced and yet to be faced. There are still many cultural and social set up that inhibit the enrolment of girls in schools, especially those that helps keep women in subordinate position. This has helped in hampering their mental, social and emotional development.
Although, achieving high representation of the girl child in education has been a thing of priority for Africans and the whole world. It is however unfortunate that this have not been achieved. The teenage girls of the impoverished in the rural areas are left out; - girls aged 11 – 16years are largely excluded from both the process and outcome of education (where there is any at all). Nigeria government has taken many steps towards attainment of the Millennium development goals, however, such has been bedevilled with many problems that have made it unattainable such as failure of age-long methods of trying to reach the unreached, poverty and illiteracy. Also the little efforts made at addressing the access to education for the unreached is bedeviled with several challenges, which include poor syllabus content, location, arrangement and selection of method and approaches that have failed to match the needs of the teenage girl child. Apparently, this has resulted in two third of the teenage girl child dropping out and engaging in at risk behaviour.
The rural communities are therefore areas with needs for 'unpopular subjects matter'. Incidentally, the teen girl child here is the bridge to building a learning society, and as such is urgently in need of support and guidance relating to their urgent needs which are traditional and multi-dimensional**.**
At risk behaviors contributes to prevention of future successes and development in youths. It has a cumulative effect such as teen pregnancy and it is also significantly impact on the lives of such girls.

At Risk Behaviour

At risk behaviour has no universal consensus definition. It is the behaviours that put the youth at risk for negative consequences for example poor health, injury and death. Behaviours that are at risk contribute to preventable societal vices in adolescents and extend to adulthood. Considerable empirical evidences have shown that risk factors adopted in childhood years may elevate the chances of problems such as psychological problems, and physiological problems, stress and lifetime poverty. The national survey of Children health (NSCH) (2011) reported that in 2007 there were 13.5 million children living in rural, small or isolated areas. These children, according to the survey were 22 times more likely to have been abused and 44 times more likely to have lacked parental care and mentoring. These adverse experiences put the teen girls, in vulnerable conditions that include substance use, high school dropout and inappropriate sexual behaviour. The report further indicated that families with children in rural communities are more likely to fall below the federal poverty level than those in urban areas.
Chronic physical conditions, chronic emotional, behavioural or developmental conditions are all resultant effects of at risk behaviours in rural areas. According to RAC, (2011b) teenagers in rural areas are more likely to engage in at risk behaviours as those in urban areas, the problem may be the same but rural communities have limited resources to deal with the consequences.
A major problem facing teen girls with at risk behaviour in rural communities is the non availability or limited access to treatment or intervention programmes. This has resulted in non identification of such girls at the onset and inability to address their needs at the appropriate time before they go into full blown anti social behaviours. In addition to this, prevention and intervention programmes are often non existence in rural areas. Funds available are often more than not allocated to treatment, the failure to provide prevention and intervention programmes often lead to interruption of affected teen girls' developmental processes.

What then are the causes of at risk behaviour among teen girls? Although an extensive review of literature on at risk behaviour is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that families are embedded in a cultural framework that influences at risk behaviours. This study will therefore be based on teen pregnancy as its purview.

Teen pregnancy in Ajido and Ajara communities of Lagos

Lagos state with a population of 20 million (National Population Commission, 2008), prides herself as the most populous cosmopolitan state in Nigeria. With 20 local government areas, the State has put in place many mitigating process on making the state a model city. Badagry is one of the local government areas of Lagos state. Ajido and Jeba communities are 2 neighbouring rural communities

in Badagry. Investigations revealed that there is a preponderance of teenage mothers. No fewer than hundred babies are currently being nursed by the teens in these localities. Unfortunately, the babies are said to be as a result of indiscriminate sexual behaviours borne out of pandemic poverty ravaging the communities.
Investigations further revealed that unless urgent steps are taken to stem these tides of unwanted pregnancies, more of these future leaders may have their life truncated by even worse societal consequences.
It is in the view of the need to redress this debilitating risky behaviours that this study south to assess the impact of familial and extra familial factors on at risk behaviours among teen girls as well as its implications. The study will also discuss the educational strategies that could promote healthy behavioural choices among the girls and at the same time provide them with sustainable livelihood.

Research Question

This study shall find answers to the question of what are the factors contributing to at risk behaviours among teen girls in rural areas.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between familial factors and the causes of at risk behaviors among teen girls.

1. There is no significant relationship between extra familial factors and causes of at risk behaviours among teen girls in the communities

Methodology

Research Design
Descriptive survey method was used to carry out this study. The target population comprised the teen girls in Badagry , Lagos State. Ajido and Ajara communities were randomly selected. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to select equal number of respondents from the two communities – 93 teen girls to make a total of 186 girls (both teen mothers and pregnant teens). This number constitutes the respondent for the study.

An instrument titled' Factors causing the Preponderance of teen Pregnancy and its Implications' (FPTPI) was used to generate the data for the study. The instrument was divided into two sections, the section A was to elicit the background data of the respondents while the B section delves into the perceived factors contributing to preponderance of teen pregnancy. This section was equally divided and subsumed into six sub headings namely: (Familial Factors and Extra familial factors) Parental cognitive impairment; Poverty; Low sexual Knowledge; Environment lacking stimulation; Lack of Family support and monitoring; Culture tolerant of risk ; Each of these themes has four questions each; these questions were to elicit responses relating to each sub head. A T-test statistic tool was used to analyze the data for the results.

RESULTS

Research Question: What are the factors contributing to the preponderance of teen pregnancy?

Table 1: Perceived factors contributing to the preponderance of teen pregnancy?

Factors	No. of Respondents	Score	Cal. Mean	Norm. Mean	Decision
Environment lacking stimulation	186	5311	13.26	10.00	Positive
Low Sexual knowledge	186	5329	13.31	10.00	Positive
Parental low	186	5363	13.09	10.00	Positive

cognitive impairment					
Lack of family support and Monitoring	186	5150	13.06	10.00	Positive
Poverty	186	5250	12.81	10.00	Positive
Culture tolerant of risk	186	5151	12.81	10.00	Positive

From the Table 1 above, the respondents for the study shows that Environmental lacking stimulation (x =13.26); Low sexual knowledge (x =13.31); Parental low cognitive impairment (x = 13.09); Lack of family support and monitoring (x = 13.06); Poverty (x =12.81); Culture tolerant of risk (x =12.81). It is revealed that all of this has higher calculated mean than the normative mean of x=12 for all the factors. This shows that the respondents believed that the above listed factors contribute greatly to the preponderance of teen pregnancy.

Hypothesis 1.

There will be no significant relationship between extra familial factors and causes of at risk behaviour among teen girls.

Table 1.

Factors	**Each factor**	**No.**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t-value**	**DF**	**Sig.**
Extra Familial factor	Socio- economic At risk behaviour	36 150	15.69 16.17	3.1 5.19	.529	184	.598
Extra familial factor	Poor neighborhood At risk behaviour	36 150	17.22 17.19	2.22 2.40	-0.081	184	.936
Extra familial factor	Negative school climate At risk behaviour	36 150	17.31 17.49	1.82 1.90	-542	184	.589
Extra familial factor	Environment lacking stimulation At risk behaviour	36 150	16.69 16.79	3.42 2.48	.185	184	.854
Extra familial factor	Peer pressure At risk behaviour	36 150	16.97 16.25	2.41 2.63	-1.508	184	.133
Extra familial factor	Culture tolerant of risk At risk behaviour	36 150	16.75 16.43	2.59 2.60	-.658	184	.513

The table two above reveal that all the respondents (teen mothers and pregnant teens) agreed that all Extra familial factors has a relationship with at risk behaviors – Socio economic status(t= .529) p> .598; Poor neighborhood (t= 0.081) p>.936; Negative school climate (t= -542) p> .589; Environment lacking stimulation (t= .185) p>.854; Peer pressure (t= 1.508) p> .133; Culture tolerant of risk (t= .658) p> .513. The indication of these figures is that the teen girls believe that extra familial factors have a great influence on the causes of at risk behaviours. Therefore the hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between Familial factors and causes of at risk behaviour among teen girls.

Table 3.

Factors	Each factor	N	Mean	SD	T- value	Sig.
Familial factor	Low monitoring	126	16.75	2.96	.102	.919
	At risk behaviour	60	16.69	2.00		
Familial factor	Low sexual knowledge	126	16.90	2.16	.404	.688
	At risk behaviour	60	17.17	1.34		
Familial factor	Lack of family support	126	16.50	2.48	2.081	.043
	At risk behaviour	60	21.83	15.93		
Familial factor	Parent's cognitive impairment	126	17.45	8.74	-.499	.620
	At risk behaviour	60	16.17	2.59		
Familial factor	Poor communication	126	17.63	1.60	.537	.594
	At risk behaviour	60	17.92	1.83		
Familial factor	Early exposure to sex	126	16.80	1.76	-.708	.482
	At risk behaviour	60	16.25	3.79		

Table 3 above shows the t- values for Low parental monitoring (=t- .102)p >.919; Low sexual knowledge (=t-.404) p>.688; Parent's cognitive impairment (= t-.499) p> .620; Poor communication (=t-.537) p>.594; Early exposure to sex (=t-.708) p>.482. These clearly show here that Familial factors and at risk behaviours contribute to preponderance of teen pregnancy. However, the value for Lack of family support shows a t-value of 1.01, with significance of p<.043. The indication here is that some of the respondents differs in their view of lack of family support been a contributing factor to at risk behaviour. The result approves the rejection of null hypothesis 1.

Discussion

The purview of this study is to determine factors responsible for at risk behaviours among teen girls in rural areas. Factors such as (Familial) –Parental low cognitive impairment, Early exposure to sex, Poor communication, Lack of family support, low monitoring and lack of sexual knowledge; (Extra familial) Environment lacking stimulation, Socio economic status, culture tolerant of risks and Peer pressure were implicated. These findings support that of Tolan, Gorman-Smith & Henry (2003), who posited that early experience of low parental involvement as well as negative behaviour management contributes to the development of early and persistent conduct problems. As teens experience risk factors, in-out-of-home settings such as neighbourhood, problems may be magnified and move towards poor outcomes such as early sexual orientation with its resultant effect of teen pregnancy. Lack of family support was identified as a factor contributing to at risk behaviour in teen girls. This is identified by Dodge& Pettit (2003) when they opined that teen's disposition and quality of immediate family environment relates in a reciprocal and dynamic manner across childhood to promote risk of future behaviour problems.

The socio economically disadvantaged environment / neighbourhood has a great potential of exacerbating at risk behaviour among teens. Brooks-Gunn, Duncan & Aber (1997), posited that low-family level socio economic status during childhood is one of the largest and most consistent predictors of later conduct of problems in this case teen pregnancy.

Monitoring and support was another factor that causes at risk behaviour among teen. This was supported by findings of Ingoldsby, Shelleby, Lane & Shaw (2012), where they posited that parent involvement and monitoring practices such as direct surveillance and effective management of teen

girls' activities as well as collective socialisation practices among neighbours are also predicted conduct problem trajectories. Low or no supervision emerge as an especially strong predictor among low income teens. Also the quality of teen's relationship with the environment was demonstrated to uniquely confer risk and protection from at risk behaviour in various studies. Based on the findings, this study therefore exposed the implication of teen girls' involvement in at risk behaviour.

Implication

Involvement in at risk behaviour is seen as the harbinger of more serious problems. Socially a teen girl without any form of education will engage in at risk behaviour which can lead to not only unwanted pregnancy but other transmitted diseases. It is a way of further perpetuating poverty in the lives of such teens. The preponderance of unwanted pregnancy as a form of at risk behaviour also has its cost implication on the individual and the society as a whole. It has been observed that it leads to avoidable loss of public costs which in turn leads t higher rate of incarceration and less well- educated women folk in the work force. This is against the Millennium development goals of providing education for all and mitigating the effect of poverty for all. We therefore provided the following strategy of educational planning for the affected teens.

Open and Distance Learning: Horizon for the Inclusion of teen girls in Sustainable Education

Empowerment is a process as well as an outcome. Open and Distance learning has indeed come to stay as the bridge builder between the reached and unreached. It has become the acceptable and indispensable part of the mainstream of education both in developing and developed nation respectively.COL and ADB, 1999 sees it as being the contributing factor to social, educational and economic development for the past 20 years. In Open and distance learning, learners are spatially separated by time and space, (place and location). Learners enrol on programmes of their choice, at their own chosen place, at affordable costs which are complemented at the learner's own time and pace (Alaezi,2006).ODL has bridged the gap of expanding needs of large number of learners from increasingly diverse background; it is also a bridge builder for emergence of new career and occupation as well as aiding economic restructuring, changes in workplace and career patterns.

This form of education emphasizes the transformative synergies that can occur between school, family, community and cultural experiences. For the teen girl, attaining basic education and employable skills is an important part of preventing and breaking the cycle of poverty. Through ODL, they can assess instructional materials, interventions and best practices from anywhere and at any time. The ODL policy briefing on International Council for Open and Distance Learning (2013), stated that ODL can increase access, provide learning and training relevant to authentic learning needs, increase productivity, develop learning culture, increase portability of training and reach target groups with limited access to conventional education and training. The teen girl's needs as dimensional as it is are all embedded in all the aforementioned. Therefore the teen girl's literacy access and skills training with Gender-responsive pedagogy will be a flexible accessible strategy for giving them a new lease of life towards sustainable development that will promote healthy behavioural choices.

Summary and Conclusion

A combination of factors predisposes teen girls to at risk behaviour. Their life is full of challenges; therefore opportunities must be given to them to live their lives. Issues of poverty, anti social behaviours, learning deficits as well as dysfunctional development associated with their age must be tackled. In as much as they are the mothers and leaders of tomorrow, they therefore remain the bridge to a learning and prosperous society. It is therefore, imperative to instigate tangible and sustainable development through educational strategies to help them be economically productive.

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