
**EARLY PREGNACIES AND SCHOOL DROP OUT IN UGANDA: THE CASE STUDY OF
NDEJJE DIVISION IN LUWERO DISTRICT.****1 Namugga Harriet, 2 Okee Jill Margaret, 3 Kalikola Jacob****1, 2, 3 Metropolitan International University****ABSTRACT**

This research report study aimed to investigate the “early pregnancies and school drop out in Uganda: the case study of Ndejje division in Luwero district”. Questionnaires were used to collect data under a case study research design. Qualitative and quantitative means were used to analyze the data. The objectives of the study used were; to investigate the factors that exposes the girl child to early pregnancies in Ndejje division, Luwero district, to find out how early pregnancies contributes to school drop outs in Ndejje division, to find out the measures to be taken to reduce on the high rate of early pregnancies in Ndejje division. To achieve this objective, the study sampled 90 form four girls (30%) from 8 schools, their 8 head teachers of Study using stratified random sampling, division education officer, mayor and other politicians using purpose sampling method. Results indicate poverty is one of the factors associated with early marriages and of all the respondents, 11.3% responded that poverty was factor contributing to teenage pregnancy. Perhaps most of the teenagers lived in urban power areas commonly known as slums where parents struggle to provide rent and money for food. Government through the members of parliament and the ministry of education should amend the law in order to allow the pregnant students to continue attending classes until they produce and even after producing, they should continue with their studies.

Key words: early pregnancies and school drop out**Background of the study:**

Pregnancy related school dropouts have become a matter of public concern in the world today. Several studies have shown that age at first intercourse is reducing, suggesting that today’s young adults are becoming sexually active at an increasingly younger age (Victor et al., 2023). In addition, some studies have shown that few adolescents use contraceptives and are at risk of pregnancy (Jac & Kazaara, 2023).

This results in situations such as dropping out of school, poverty, early marriage and contracting sexually

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transmitted diseases (Sub-county et al., 2023). As reported in the December 2017 edition brief of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), in the developed countries such as the USA, early parenthood is seen to be adding a great burden to the already challenging navigation of adolescence (John et al., 2023).

In Africa, especially the sub-Saharan Africa countries, there are concerns about high rates of pregnancy-related school dropouts, also leading to the reported gender disparities in education in the developing world (Shamim et al., 2023). Schoolgirls who become pregnant have fewer opportunities to complete their education after childbirth and have fewer opportunities for socioeconomic advancement (Suzan & Kazaara, 2023).

Many African governments have also included family life education programs in their school curriculum in an attempt to educate adolescents about the consequences and responsibilities associated with sexual activity (Jac & Kazaara, 2023). The high rates of schoolgirl pregnancies suggest that these family life programs have their shortcomings and indicate that educational policies should be used not only to reduce the incidence of schoolgirl pregnancies but also to assist pregnant schoolgirls to complete their education (John et al., 2023).

Uganda's education policy also fully embraces the "Education for all" notion irrespective of sex, religion, ethnic and social background, economic status and color. The Ministry of Education endeavors to eliminate gender disparities and promote social equity through provision of basic education to all, including females (Brighton et al., 2023). One of the Ministry's strategies to meet educational objectives is to increase the course completion rate through reduction of dropout rates. The Ministry is fully aware that the dropout rate for girls is higher than that of boys and also that pregnancy and subsequent drop out of the girls from school contributes to the very disparities the educational policy seeks to eliminate. The statistics on school drop out of the teenage mothers in Uganda reveal that the problem has been demanding urgent solution.

Statement Problem

Early pregnancy has a direct implication on school dropout among girls and a subsequent contributor to the disparities experienced in the education of both girls and boys (Zulaikah & Rebecca, 2023). A

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number of studies concur that many young women drop out of school as a result of pregnancy (John et al., 2023). In Uganda, a study conducted in 2017b estimated that about 20% of female students drop out of secondary schools because they were pregnant (Division of Family Health/GTZ Support Unit, 1988; Barker and Rich, 1990).

However, whereas there have been issues raised with regard to early pregnancy and its subsequent influence on school dropouts, the literature available is really not about schoolgirl pregnancy at all, but instead on the relationship between school exit and subsequent child bearing. This is the case because there is no data on the number of girls who get pregnant while in school but only data on those who leave school because they are about to give birth (John et al., 2023). The widespread perception is also that girls who become pregnant and drop out may have to accept a low-paid job, enter a premature marriage, or become the head of an impoverished household, relying on meager assistance from her family and the child's father. This study seeks to establish the extent to which teenage pregnancy contributes to school dropout among girls in Rubaga Division.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the factors that expose the girl child to early pregnancies in Ndejje division, Luwero district.
2. To find out how early pregnancies contribute to school dropouts in Ndejje division
3. To find out the measures to be taken to reduce the high rate of early pregnancies in Ndejje division

Methodology

Research design

The study used descriptive survey. It is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2004). This design was used to explain or explore existing status of two or more variables at a given point in time (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). It was on this basis that the design was adopted to examine early pregnancy and secondary school completion rates in Ndejje Division.

Target Population

The study was carried out on the students and teachers from the selected secondary schools within

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Ndejje division, parents, educational officials and other stakeholders. Students were selected in order to give us their story of what can lead them into early pregnancies and how these pregnancies can affect them leading to them dropping out of school. Educational officers were selected in order to get the government position on the state on early pregnancies in the area under study.

Sample size and sampling procedure

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), asserts that the main consideration for determining the sample size is the capability to collect in depth data at affordable costs in terms of time, finances and resources. According to Kerlinger (2004) an ideal sample size was between 10%-30%. Depending on the data to be gathered and analyzed. Using this, the researcher sampled 90 form four girls (30%) from 8 schools, their 8 head teachers of Study using stratified random sampling, division education officer, mayor and other politicians using purpose sampling method.

Research instruments

This study was undertaken through the use of questionnaires and interview schedules as the main tool for primary data collection and document reviews as the tool for secondary data. Questionnaires are quite useful when responses are required from a large number of respondents (Orodho, 2004). The students' questionnaire that was administered by the researcher himself comprised of two sections. The first section collected information on the background while the second section solicited information on perceptions of learners on teenage pregnancy risk factors, contraceptive use and communication barriers on sexual issues.

Validity of the instruments

Validity is the degree the research instruments measure the variables they are intended to measure. Content and face validity of the instruments was determined before deployment. Content validity refers to the representativeness of the items on the instrument as they relate with content being measured, whereas face validity is the appeal and appearance of the instrument (Kathuri and Pals, 1993). To check on the validity of the instruments the questionnaires, and interview guides were drawn as per the study objectives were presented to the research supervisors and other educational planning experts from Metropolitan International University.

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Data Analysis Techniques

After sorting, classifying, coding, and tabulating, the data obtained was analyzed using the narrative analysis where by data collected was presented in the descriptive form using SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS**Table 1: Teachers Guidance and Counseling Skills**

teachers' guidance skills	Number	Frequency
Never	6	60
Ever	4	40
Total	10	100

Source; Researcher, 2022

The results in table 1 above indicate that teachers rarely carry out guidance and counseling session with the learners. This means students rarely get advice regarding sexual education such as how to use contraceptives, management of menstrual period, staying focused to their education, saying no to early marriage, reporting to the authority in case they are being forced into marriages thus making them vulnerable to early marriages.

Factors that expose the girl child to early pregnancies in Ndejje division, kampala district

Results indicate poverty is one of the factors associated with early marriages. Of all the respondents, 11.3% responded that poverty was factor contributing to teenage pregnancy. Perhaps most of the teenagers live in urban power areas commonly known as slums where parents struggle to provide rent and money for food (Aisha et al., 2023). Consequently, Parents fail to provide basic needs to their children and they leave them to find options for themselves, parents give away their young girls into forced marriages to get money for survival or are encouraged to engage in sexual activity to get money for the family to live on (Shamim et al., 2023). The study findings also indicate that congestion in the slum areas also expose children to early sex resulting into early pregnancies and marriages (Joventa et al., 2023). Parents who cannot afford to build separate houses for their children therefore expose their sex

life to the children. These teenagers therefore tend to imitate their parents and therefore engage in sexual activities at the very early age of their teens leading to the early pregnancy and marriages.

Measures to be taken to reduce on the high rate of early pregnancies in Ndejje division

The information in this section was to answer the third research question which stated that “What should be done to minimize the cases of early marriages around Ndejje division”. This was to give possible way in which the increased cases of teenage pregnancies can be reduced. Teachers suggested that much emphasis should be put on sensitization of the students through education such as teaching them how to use contraceptives. This is in line with the WHO’s recommendations for increasing the use of contraception are informed by 7 graded and 26 ungraded studies conducted in 18 countries, as well as the conclusions of a panel of experts. The studies were conducted in Bahamas, Belize, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, China, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda, Mali, Mexico, Nepal, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Thailand. Parents requested and encourage political leaders, planners and community leaders to formulate and enforce laws and policies to prohibit marriage of girls before 18 years of age. Once these laws are designed, they should be implemented without any kind of discrimination. This means that the governments have the power to reduce on the increased cases of early marriages and teenage pregnancies in the area under study. Implement interventions to inform and empower girls, in combination with interventions to influence family and community norms, to delay the age of marriage among girls under 18 years of age. Increase educational opportunities for girls through formal and non-formal channels, to delay marriage until 18 years of age

Conclusion

The study was about the influence of early pregnancy towards school dropouts in Uganda and taking Ndejje division as a case study. The study findings indicated that congestion, peer pressure, environment, poverty and parental negligence are one of the factors that expose young girls to early pregnancies in the area under study. The study also indicates that failure to introduce sexuality education to the learners such as teaching them how to use condoms and other contraceptive puts them at risk of getting early pregnancies and this is also coupled with permissiveness in the community where students and

individuals are free to do whatever they think is correct and this have contributed to high rate of

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anti-social behavior such as drug abuse which leads to rape. The researcher concluded that to greater extent, early pregnancies contribute towards school drops since it makes parents to lose trust in the child and can't pay school fees even after producing, increases on the young girl's responsibility and also makes the child to lose interest in learning.

Recommendations

Parents should be aware of their responsibilities. despite of looking for money to meet the basic needs, parents should also get time to be with their children to listen to their problems and protect them from bad people.

Government through the members of parliament and the ministry of education should amend the law in order to allow the pregnant students to continue attending classes until they produce and even after producing, they should continue with their studies.

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