

ACADEMIC CHALLENGES AND THE ISSUE OF PREGNANCY AND PARENTING AMONG STUDENTS OF THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AGBOR: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELING

BY

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Abstract

Recently, the incidence of teenage students' pregnancy and parenting has been on the increase geometrically, in the college of education, agbor. The study therefore explored the possible causes and the academic influence on the teenage students parents in the college. A sample of 300 students, out of which were 50 pregnant and parenting students was used, the population been 3, 388 for year 2 and 3 students. The instrument used for data collection were: influence of povert of students parenting questionnaire(IPSPQ), influence of peer pressure on student parenting questionnaire (IPPSPQ), permissive administrative rule on students parenting questionnaire (PARSPQ) and students academic record (SAR). Two research questions were raised and answered. Percentage and ranking were used to analysed the data collected. The result obtained after the data analysis revealed that poverty and permissive administrative rules are the major factors of student parenting in the college. Based on this, some recommendations; the prohibition of students with tender children in classes and examination halls and also the offer of grands or scholarship to students to alleviate poverty were given.

Introduction

Over the years, in the college, there has been a steady increase in the rate of teenage or adolescents students parenting and pregnancies as observed by the researchers. Teenage parents of students with children and pregnancies as they are referred to in this study, are parents out of wedlock between the ages of 16-19 years. This age bracket forms the bulk of students in the college. This observation was made on the regular students as well as the weekend students, but with more cases are the regular students. Sometimes, in one course combination alone, 5 to 6 students will be seen with tender babies in the lecture rooms struggling to receive lectures with their babies tied to their back. While those with visible pregnancies are between 6-8 in number. This has been the case in the various combination in the school. Most disheartening sometimes in this issue, is the fact that some of these babies were just some weeks old while others in rare cases were 3-6months old. This practice often leads to:

- Distractions in the lecture halls and examination halls.
- Lecturer's molestation by parenting students.
- Campus littering with delicate and tender babies.

·Promotion of unhealthy desire for babies by other students,causing high rate of immorality.-

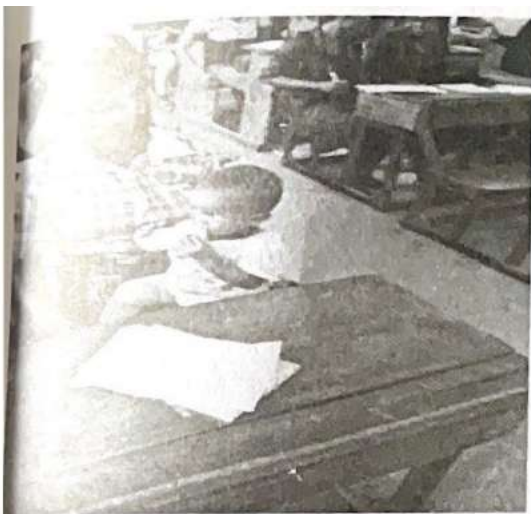
·Health hazard for the babies due to exposure to uncondusive environment.

Lecture halls also referred to as classrooms are seen as a workshop or academic refineries where students are refined academically for the betterment of the society.(Unachukwu &Ugoma,2013).But when infant babies with their student mothers are found in lecture halls where teaching and learning are taking place,nothing much academically is achieved by the parenting students,other students in the hall and even the lecturers.The obvious reason is the usual cries and disturbances of the babies as demanded

by their age.How much attention can a student given to an interesting lecture when babies tantrums and cries break the learning silence in the hall?The situation becomes worse when the babies in the hall are found to be two,three or more.In the process,the parenting students will involuntarily hush at the babies by shouting loudly at them.In some cases,the parenting students will

want to satisfy the babies desires by opening their breasts in the hall and breast-feeding them,with students watching or learning and lecturers watching or teaching.When sometimes the babies are not satisfied and the cries continue,fellow empathetic students will take turn to carry the crying babies and sing lullaby for them to calm the situations,as lectures go on.

The situation is the same during test and examinations.Many times over,babies will be seen crying and crying and their caregivers(who are children themselves)will try to pacify them without success and then break into tears.Meanwhile,the mothers of these babies are somewhere in the examination halls writing exams.The worst is where-the babies will be brought to them in the halls,where breastfeeding will take place.After that, on many occasions,invigilating lecturers who are expected to be vigilant during their invigilation will be appealed to,to help carry the babies from the student parents and their tender caregivers to enable them write.(see images below).





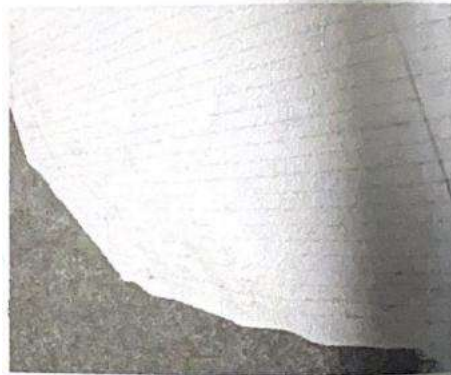
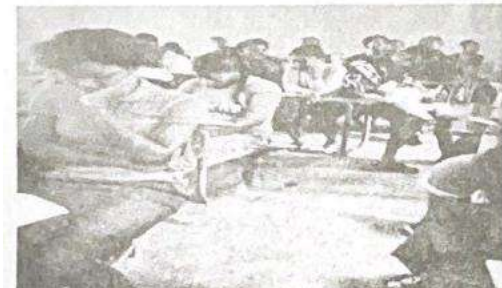
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Teenage male parent with his crying baby
waiting to write exam



teenage student parent
moving from one lecture hall to the



The student parents having been disturbed and distracted, will **sought** for help from fellow students causing noisy atmosphere in an examination hall.

Again, writing examination which involves a lot of anxiety according to Nwadiobi(2011) can bring about a lot of untold inconveniences to pregnant students in examination halls. Some of these inconveniences range from vomiting everywhere, on the table, their scripts, fellow students' bodies and spitting unnecessarily on the floor. Once, a lecturer invigilating an examination, mildly appealed to one pregnant student to try to spit outside to avoid the messing up of the hall, the pregnant student retorted that she does not want to stress herself by going up and down. The lecturer simply swallowed his saliva considering her condition. This practice by the teenagers, (male and female), mostly females, in the college has posed a threat to the academic and non-academic staff of the college who often at the sight of these babies and their teenage mothers in the lecture halls and examination halls, obstructing their normal Now of while parents of these teenager who have become parents themselves

wedlock, are angry and disappointed at their children. The school management is faced with the challenge of eradicating this practice which is forth coming, they too are not happy.

Causes of Teenage/Student Parenting

Most authors suggested or linked **poverty** to teenage/student pregnancy and its subsequent parenting. For example, Keller, Hilton and Ankrah (1999) asserted that in rural communities, family financial exigencies and social custom induced girls to hangout with men and enter into early sexual relationship that lead them into getting pregnant at early stages and becoming parents also at early stages while still in school. Gyan (2013) found out in his research study that 94% of his student parent's respondents agreed strongly that poverty can lead to early parenting.

Another linkage to students' parenting is **home background**. Poor parenting style of *Laissez-Faire or authoritarian*, can force teenagers out of

the home. A family known for domestic violence and lack of love enough from either or both parents for their children, may force teenage girls to seek for that love from their male colleagues outside resulting in sex, pregnancy and parenting.

Peer pressure, listed after poverty was strongly argued as another major cause of teenage parenting. Teenagers who form close associations with peers who are highly wayward and who wished to be sociable become prey to enough sexual relationship that can lead to early parenting. 74% of teenagers respondents to Charles (2013) research study showed strongly that the influence of peer pressure can cause teenage student parenting; abundantly. Another important factor suggested that can cause student parenting is the *lack of workable or permissive administrative rules and regulations*

in the school to guide students on areas such as visible pregnancy and parenting among regular students in the campus and also lack of effective guidance and counselling of students from the counselling unit of the College and even from the students affair departments. There is usually anarchy and chaos in a community where there is no effective rules. That community becomes a jungle where everyone does what he/she likes. Rules and regulations serve as mirror to guide the individual in his excesses in the school environment, in the offices and even outside the school environment. Non-parenting students on seeing the rates of parenting students may feel left-out, hurt, and "not man enough or woman enough". The extent of this will be "if you can't beat them, join them". No doubt, students parents with infant babies will flourish and the objectives of establishing the institution will be defeated.

Challenges involved in parenting

Parenting at any age, can be a real life-altering experience irrespective of race, education and economic status, motherhood and fatherhood readily place demand on the person's life that was not there prior to the birth of the child. When a student becomes pregnant and later a parent, the new responsibility can be overwhelming. For teenage parents, who lack support from their spouses' and parents, and who must carry on with their academic work, this experience can even be more daunting as they try to cope and seek support in adult-oriented system which even experienced older parents may find challenging.

According to Grunsiet (2007), teenage pregnancy that usually lead to parenting, is one major contemporary social problem confronting most countries in the world today. Hence from the first world countries like the United States to the third world countries, this problem has been a source of worry to most people, such as the policy makers, social workers, lecturers and other service providers such as the parents due to negative influence on the girl-child mostly, and the boy-child. Findings from literature revealed that Texas (1997) stated that every year more teenage girls in USA become pregnant, and become parents, many younger than 17 years. Xinhua, (1996) reported that in Ghana, nearly 33.47% of recorded child births occurred to teenagers between ages 13-19 years. According to him, this report was based on child births that were reported in public hospitals, the situation was worse in the rural areas where traditional birth attendants were used and no statistical records were kept. And most disheartening is the report that one out of three girls aged 15-19 residing in the central region of Ghana has had a child (Xinhua, 1996). Research indicates that teenage parents experience reductions in their educational attainments compared to teenager, who are not parents. The effect of this is teenage drop out of school due to the responsibility of caring for children as well as stigmatization and isolations from peers. Brosh, Weigel and Evans (2007) reported that in 2002, only 10% of teenagers between the ages of 15-17 graduated from high school on time, and estimates indicated that 67% of teenage mothers never graduated. Data from the National Education longitudinal study (NELS) listed within Methods

research showed that teenage parents had a total of 11.9 years longer of education compared to those who had no children and who average less than 9 year of education.(Melhado,2007).Gyan(2013)conducted a study in Accra.Ghana on student parenting and academic attainment and found out before pregnancy and parenting),that parenting students when interviewed had 8.6%excellent,11%very good,62.8 %Good and 11.5%average.But after pregnancy and in the period of parenting,there was 0%excellent,0% very good,14.2%Good,34.9%average and 51%below average.

Apart from school drop-out or interrupted schooling by teenage students parenting,Cunningham and Boulton(1996)cited by Gyan(2013), asserted that teenage pregnancy and parenting have a lot of social consequences which include falling prey to criminal activity,abortion, ostracism,child neglect,school adjustment difficulties for both the parents and for their children,adoption,lack of social security,poverity,repeated pregnancies for the female parents and negative effects on domestic life.

There is paucity in addressing the issues of teenage students parenting among students in secondary and tertiary schools in Nigeria,hence,this research study,wished to find out empirically:the major factors responsible for students'parenting and its influence on academic achievement of the students in the College of Education Agbor.It is against this background that this study becomes imperative for counselling against the proliferation of teenage student parenting in the College of Education Agbor and Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

The college of Education Agbor,has over the years been instrumental and foremost in the training of students in Arts,Sciences,and Technology. However,recently,it was observed that teenage students'pregnancy and parenting has rapidly increased in the school from about 10% to 30%.What could be responsible for this academic distraction?What are the educational challenges of teenage students parenting?It is against this background,that this study was aimed at finding out in order to proffer solution through counselling implication.

Purpose of the Study

The geometric rate of teenage students parenting among students of the college of Education Agbor is a serious problem.Research has shown that there is possible low performance academically.The purpose of the study was to examine the causes of teenage students'parenting and its influence on a academic achievement of the students.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. To what extent are the factors such as poverty,peer **pressure** and

permissive administrative rules influence teenage students **parenting** in the College of Education, Agbor?

2. What is the influence of teenage parenting on academic **achievement** of teenage student parents in the College of Education, Agbor?

Method

The Ex-post Factor research design was adopted for this study. This design was appropriate for the study because it is a design in which a cause-effect relationship is investigated by observing the consequences of one occurrence on another. In this study, poverty, peer pressure, academic achievement and permissive administrative rules were observed on students' pregnancy and parenting among students in the College of Education Agbor.

Population of the study was made up of 3,388 students from year two and year three in 2015 academic session. The sample was made up of 300 students. Purposive or judgmental sampling technique was used to select the 300 students from 200 and 300 levels, out of which were 50 students seen with visible pregnancies and as parents on the campus. These groups of students were made to respond to the 5 variable questionnaire:

Influence of poverty on student parenting questionnaire (IPSPQ) Influence of peer pressure on student parenting questionnaire (IPPSPQ)

Permissive Administrative Rules on Students Parenting Questionnaire (PARSPQ)

While the official academic records of the student mothers and those with pregnancies were used to ascertain the cause-effect impact on the academic achievement of student parenting in the College. The use of percentage and ranking techniques were adopted to analyze the data collected. The essence of the ranking is to enable the researchers note the areas mostly affected for urgent attention and counselling.

Results:

The results based on the data collected and analyzed were **presented on** the tables below:

Research Question 1: To what extent do such factors as **poverty, peer** pressure and permissive administrative rules influence **teenage student** pregnancies and parenting in the College of Education Agbor?

1. Poverty
2. Peer pressure
3. Permissive administrative rules.

Influence of Poverty on students parenting Questionnaire				
	Variables	Respondents	Percentage	Rank
	My parents are financially buoyant to sponsor my schooling	90	30%	10 ¹
I	am responsible for my own schooling in the College	210	70%	4
	My parents are not financially buoyant to sponsor my schooling	210	70%	4 ^h
My	studentship in the colleges is being assisted by my friends, finance, boyfriends, girlfriends	210	70%	4
	I take up all kinds of jobs to raise money after school hours	180	60%	h

Table 2: Influences of Peer Pressure on Students Parenting Questionnaire			
Variables	Respondents	Percentage	Rank
My peer group influences me at times in some of the things I do	240	80%	3 ^u

The pressure of my peers on me is very high	240	80%	3u
Sometimes, my peer group dictates my grooming and lifestyle	195	65%	6 ¹ 5
The decisions of my peer groups matter to me a lot	120	40%	gth
It is through my peers I smoke, drink, make boyfriends/girlfriends and club	270	90%	nd 2

TInuences of Permlsslve Admlnfstratlve Rules On Student Farenun				
S / N	Varlables	Respondents	Percenta ge	
1 1	The school authority permits and does not challenge or make rules against students with pregnancies in the school	285	95%	
1 2	The school authority does not bother students witt children in the classes, exam halls or anywhere else lr the school	285	95%	
1 3	Orientation on safe sex, pregnancy and parenting have never been organized for us by the school	165	55%	8
1 4	The counseling unit and the students affair units in the school have always guided us on safe sex, grooming through orientation	285	95%	1
1 5	Academic staff (lecturer) and non-academic staff are not kind to us at all by helping us carry our babies	90	30%	1 0

	during lectures and exams			
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Table 1-3 above showed the areas where students in the College needed guidance, counselling and interventions. While all the variable items on the table are influencing the students pregnancies and parenting, items 1 and 12 and 14 that bothered on permissive administrative rules and safe sex grooming through orientation where 95% of the students agreed that the school authority does not bother them with their pregnancy and their babies: must be given serious intervention as these items were rank 1'. Student needed guidance on items 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 that bothered on poverty and peer pressure since these items ranked 3rd and 4th. Finally, the students needed serious counselling on item 10, ranked 2nd, because it is through peer pressure and fellow school mates that other students are lured into immoral lifestyles, giving rooms for unprepared pregnancies and parenting.

Research Question 2

the influence of teenage students parenting on academic achievement of their parents in the College of Education Agbor?

Influence of Students Parenting on Academic Achievement.

Category of student responding	No of responses	TUP	TUR	GPA	Mean X	SD	Remark
3 Parenting students	20	1060	720	29.4	1.47	1.3	Not
Parenting students	3050	1080	1080	30.0	1.00	1.00	Graduating

	Non-parenting students	20	2960	720	82.2	4.11	2.0	Graduating
ur2	Non parenting student	30 50	4630	10.8 0	1257	4.19	2.1	With credits.

Source of Data:students Academic Records.

Table 2 above showed the academic records of parenting students from 200 level and 300 level. When this is compared with the academic records of non-parenting students from 200 level and 300 level, there was a gulf difference of academic achievement. While the mean(x)GPA of parenting students in 200 level was 1.00 with a standard deviation (SD) of 1.00, that of non-parenting students was 4.19 with a standard deviation of 2.1. Again, from the same table, parenting students in 300 levels had a mean (x)GPA of 1.47 with a standard deviation (SD) of 1.2 while their non-parenting counterpart had a mean(x)GPA of 4.11 with a standard deviation of 2.0. Remarks from the academic records showed that students with 1.00 and 1.47 or less than 2 may not be considered for graduation. While those with 4.11, 4.19 and above may graduate with credits and distinction.

Discussion of Findings

This study is to explore and assess the proliferation and the unpleasant students parenting on the educational attainment of the students in the College of Education, Agbor. The findings from the study revealed that the parenting students need counselling intervention to solve the problems influencing their rat-like pregnancies and parenting. These counselling interventions are grouped by the researchers into primary and secondary needs. The secondary counselling intervention needs, which bothered on poverty and peer pressure correlated with the findings of Keller et al (1999) cited in Charles (2013), that family financial exigencies induced school age girls into early sexual relationship.

While Gyan (2013) reported in his study that 94% of his female respondents agreed that poverty was what prompted early female parenting. Little wonder then, in this study, 70% of the students in the College are either self-sponsored by taking up all kinds of jobs or are assisted by boyfriends.

The primary counselling interventions bothered on the College permissive rules to guide students on proper moral behaviour in an institution mapped out for academic

exercises different from maternity institution, religious institution and the family institution. It is never in the code of conduct of any academic institution to encourage students pregnancy or parenting to the extent of arranging for a special invigilator to take question papers and scripts to a student in "labour" ward in the hospital to write. And another to a student who has just "delivered a baby in the hospital yet to be discharged, to write. These incidences were particularly experienced by the researchers in the course of this research study. It is on this, that the counseling intervention becomes primary and ranked 1st. Again, the study revealed that peer pressure influence, contributes greatly to the student's involvement in early sex. From table I, it was clear that 90% of the respondents agreed that their peer group influenced them in most of the things they do, such as smoking, drinking, clubbing and having boyfriends and girlfriends. This finding also agreed with the findings of Gyan (2013) where 74% of his respondents affirmed that peer pressure is a major cause of teenage pregnancy.

Furthermore, on academic achievement, it was evident that most "carry-over courses" for females in particular, and males, and most ungraduating students, with GPA of 1.00 and 1.47 are found among parenting student and pregnant students in the college as found out in this study. Many parenting students, on oral interview, affirmed by candid confession that it is the most difficult thing to combine reading with tender child-rearing; no matter how gifted or genius the student parent is. Again, this finding correlated with the findings of Brosh et al (2007) who reported in 2002 that only 10% of mothers between 15-17 graduated from high school, while 67% never graduated.

Counseling intervention needs: It is when a problem is identified that it is addressed by "wise saying" that such a problem is "half solved". This is the identification of the problem will equip the guidance counselor strategies to proffer solution to the problem. Therefore, having identified a problem that is inimical to the educational attainment of students in the Ministry of Education, the college Authority, student affair unit and the guidance counselor should create workable rules and regulations that will be strictly adhered to in the school to guide student in the college. Where there are laws and regulations in a society, that society does not become a jungle, or state of anarchy. This is because; laws serve as mirror to correct the system.

Teach sexuality Education to the students from the on-set of their admission to the end of their schooling in the college.

Create a small scale means of incentive or positive reinforcement to alleviate some of the students' poverty.

4. Carry the rod of discipline to check students' excesses in any form of behaviour peculiar to adolescents.

5. Create awareness on the code of conduct through orientation in the various individual schools in the college before the main orientation by the school.

Recommendations

Having carefully considered the counseling intervention needs,the following recommendations are hereby given:

1. The college should strictly forbid any student parenting among the college and the degree students.As a policy and as a rule,no student should be seen with tender babies in the classes,exam halls,and the school environment.Student should not be encouraged with “full-term pregnancies”to attend lectures or write examinations.Reasons being that sympathetic nervous system may increase the blood pressure of the expectant students mother,leading to further complications the school may not be ready for.
2. Orientation should be given to students on these issues from year one as new in-takes.This will serve as a guide,(a law)that will protect and prevent them from early parenting as students.
3. Adolescent psychology (EDU 325)in view of the issue at hand,which deals primarily on sexuality education taught to final year students in the College,is misdirected.Its relevance may not apply since the harm is already done by 3 years.This course is very appropriate for the “new in-takes”(year one).When emphasis is laid on the adolescent sexuality by the iecturers,the message is delivered,the student will sit up to academic work, **and be** more focused from the year one.

The school should encourage students by giving **rewards to the** very best academic students in any department.The reward can be in form of exemption from payment of one year school fees.This can alleviate students poverty.

Discipline should be meted out for students who flaunt the school rules being seen with babies or visible pregnancies by either rustication, suspension,extra year or made to pay fines.

The school authority can recommend to the government once a while to give scholarship,bursary,rewards to the best academic students,in order to motivate other students to be more focus academically and not parenting.

Condoms and .other pregnancy prevention measures can be recommended for students who are married or not married,to avoid student parenting.

Conclusion

The Nigeria population is growing fast geometrically,and it is still an underdeveloped,third world country.Meanwhile,emphasis in the 21st century society is the educational

growth of the individuals through school. And the growth of the individual educationally is the technological growth and development of the nation. The school system is mapped out for this intervention, it must be focused and be directed. The school system is not a maternity home, not the family institution or a religious institution. Like the school of Nursing, and other tertiary schools in the country, no full term pregnant regular student is tolerated in the school, let alone students with their tender children parading the school environment, taking lectures and writing exams thereby constituting undue stresses to lecturers, students, the kid themselves and deceiving themselves as student.

The College of Education Agbor, will want to find out all these and re-direct the objectives of the school-(academics) and proudly work to contribute to the technological growth and development of Nigeria.

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