

Incidence and Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers in Senior High Schools in the Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality of Ghana

Roberta Quaye, Lucy Effeh Attom*

Social Studies Education Department, Social Sciences Education Department, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Abstract

This study examined the causes of teenage pregnancy and challenges facing teenage mothers in Senior High Schools in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipal. The qualitative research approach was adopted using the case study design. Fifteen teenage mothers were purposively sampled from three Senior High Schools in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipal for the study. An interview guide was used for the data collection. The findings from the study indicated that peer pressure, poverty and the influence of the mass media were the major causes of teenage pregnancy in the Ledzokuku Krowor District. The study further revealed that most of the teenage mothers had knowledge about sex education before they became pregnant so they knew the consequences of sex at the time they became pregnant. The study also established that teachers, friends and parents were all in a state of shock, disappointment and anger when they discovered that the young girls were pregnant. The teenage mothers were also shocked when they discovered that they were pregnant. The study also revealed that child birth had delayed the school going ages of most of the teenage mothers and had also affected their academic performance negatively. The study indicated that one of the major challenges that the teenage mothers faced was their inability to balance their motherly role with academic work due to the fact that they do not get enough support from their family members. Most of the participants noted that their partners abandoned them after discovering that they were pregnant. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education implement the Re-Entry of teenage mothers Policy in full in all schools in the municipality and Ghana in general. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection should collaborate with the Department of Social Welfare to offer counselling to teenage mothers and their parents and finally, stiff punishment should be given to men who sexually defile or rape and impregnate underage girls.

Keywords

Adolescent Pregnancy, Ghana, Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality, Senior High Schools, Teenage Mothers

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1. Introduction

One major contemporary social problem confronting most countries in the world is teenage pregnancy. It is a socio-psychological problem found in both developed and developing societies. In Texas, United States of America 62 out of every 1000 births, were by teenage girls [1]. This problem has been a source of worry to policy makers, social workers and other human service providers due to its negative repercussions on the girl-child. Teenage motherhood among school girls is reaching crisis proportions in some

African schools. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academies conducted a research in South Africa and the findings show that by the age of 18, more than 30 percent of teens have given birth at least once [2]. It is evident that teenage motherhood is becoming more and more a barrier to girls' education. Wolpe, Quinlan, and Martinez state that there are some schools that does not allow pregnant girls and young mothers to attend classes [3]. In some cases where teen mothers continue schooling, they are often described and assumed as incapable students [3]. This has been a problem to many gender activists in many Africa

* Corresponding author

E-mail address: lucyattom@yahoo.com (L. E. Attom)

countries and the world at large since the problem has direct effects on the economic development of every country.

In many developing countries, teenage motherhood has been one of the major hindrances to the educational success of girls. It is also noted that rather than pregnancy causing girls to drop out of school, other factors such as the lack of social and economic opportunities for girls and women in general may result in unsatisfactory school experiences, poor academic performance and an acquiescence in or endorsement for early motherhood [4]. Teenage motherhood usually put girls at disadvantage position as compared to their male counterpart in terms of educational opportunities and social life in general. Domestic demands coupled with the gender inequities of the education system also affect girl's access and progress in education,

In Ghana, the unfortunate situation is that teenage motherhood has become an impediment to girl-child education since the situation keeps on increasing year after year. If care is not taken, teenage girls in the country will not be able to enjoy the successes attached to education since the situation deny them equal access to education. At the end of every academic year, when students take their Basic Education Certification Examination (BECE), we often hear on the news about some pregnant girls turning up to write their papers. Statistics differ in different regions of Ghana; for example, in the Eastern region alone, 33 females failed to sit their examination as a result of pregnancy in 2009. In the Brong-Ahafo Region, statistics released by the Regional Health Directorate from January to June, 2013, revealed that about 6,319 girls between the ages of 10 and 19 visited the antenatal clinic [5]. Ayibani further states that statistics from the Regional Education Directorate of Brong Ahafo revealed 77 girls were pregnant during the Basic Examination Certificate Education Examination (BECE) in 2010, 111 girls in 2011, and 170 girls in 2012. Statistics from the Techiman Municipal Girl-Child Unit revealed 28 pregnancies at the primary and 75 at Junior High School (JHS) levels have been recorded during 2012/2013 academic year [5]. The average age of these girls is 12. Teenage pregnancy and motherhood have become an educational and social predicament due to the number of teenagers, mostly school going girls becoming pregnant.

Report from the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection in 2015 indicated that Greater Accra recorded the highest teenage pregnancy prevalence rate in the whole country in the year 2014 of which Ledzokuku Krowor which is one of the districts under the region was included. The high percentage of unintended pregnancies and motherhood for teenagers in Ghana remains a serious challenge to Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Education, and various stakeholders. Although gender disparity in education has

been documented in the developing world, the plight of young mothers has not been adequately addressed as a crucial educational concern. It is against this background that this study sought to examine the challenges facing teenage mothers in senior high schools in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipal Assembly in the Greater Accra region of Ghana.

The problem which precipitated this study is that, many teenage girls, who become mothers in their secondary school years, seem to have many challenges confronting them. The greatest challenge seems to be striking a balance between caring for the baby and paying attention to their academic work. It appears that there are no support systems available in schools to help teenage mothers deal with the reconciliation of the two roles (motherhood and being a learner).

Despite the recent policies towards girl-child education both in Ghana and the world at large such as Campaign for Girl Child Education, Operation Girl child Education, Re-entry policy for teenage mothers and many more which are all meant to encourage females education and to prevent teenage mothers from mockery, teasing and marginalization by educators and other learners, teenage mothers still experience challenges in schools. In Ghana, different research reports have indicated the negative effects of teenage motherhood on the girl child education. Teenage motherhood normally truncates adolescents preparing for higher education. In this era when issues relating to the wellbeing of children and the youth are receiving high priority from governments, principally those who are signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, teenage motherhood has become one of the issues affecting a considerable number of the school going teenage girls. This is considered detrimental to the growth and development of girl-child in Ghana. In spite of all the efforts from the government and stakeholders, teenage motherhood statistics are compelling, hence the need of conducting this study to ascertain the challenges facing teenage mothers in Senior High Schools in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipal Assembly in the Greater Accra region of Ghana.

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study: (1) What are the causes of teenage motherhood among senior high school girls in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality?, (2) What are the challenges faced by teenage mothers at senior high school in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality?, (3) How does teenage motherhood affect the educational attainment of senior high school girls in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality?, and (4) What support systems are available to teenage mothers in senior high schools in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality? The study was conducted in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality. Specifically, the scope covered causes of teenage motherhood, challenges

facing teenage mothers in Senior High Schools in the Municipality and the effects of teenage motherhood on education of the girl child in Senior High Schools in the Municipality.

2. Literature and Theoretical Perspective

This section examines the theory and literature relevant to the study. This research hinges on the Social Ecology Theory. The theory emphasises that the individual is embedded in and influenced by numerous systems or groups. The major concepts the theory concentrates on are the multiple domain intervention integration (home, school, community, and political settings); cultural change (transformation of norms, values, and policies); individual's perception of support or neglect; and opportunities for safer behaviours. The Social Ecology Theory drives the related literature reviewed with respect to empirical studies on the topic. Specifically, literature was reviewed on the concept of teenage motherhood, importance of girl-child education, causes of teenage motherhood, challenges faced by teenage mother and the effects of teenage motherhood on the educational attainment of the girl-child. The meaning of the term "teenage or adolescent motherhood" may differ from one individual to the other depending on the point of view one looks at it. Some authors define it based on age limit while others define it based on completion of school [6].

According to Save a Child Report, teenage motherhood is formally defined as birth in a young woman, who has not reached her twentieth birthday when the birth occurs, regardless of whether the woman is married or is legally an adult [7]. Johns, Moncloa, and Grong state that, teenage motherhood is when a teenaged or under aged girl (in the teenage years of 13 – 19) becomes a parent [8]. The United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF) alludes that teenage motherhood is when a woman aged between 15 and 19 has a baby [9]. According to their statistics, in sub-Sahara Africa, 67% of women of child bearing age are aged between 15 to 19 years. According to Fox, teenage motherhood can be loosely defined as a girl giving birth before reaching the legal age of adulthood [10]. Sams concur with Fox by stating that teenage motherhood is birth by an under aged girl and the term applies to those under the age of threshold of legal adulthood [11]. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 10% of all world births are delivered by 15 to 19-year-old adolescent girls [12]. All these point to the fact that any girl who gives birth before attending age twenty is considered to be within the teen ages and therefore classified as a teen mother.

In this study a teenage mother refers to a woman aged

between 13 and 19, who has a baby regardless of the marital status. The term teenage mother will be used synonymously and interchangeably with adolescent mother as preferred terms by other authors in the related studies. Many studies done both in Ghana and abroad have found numerous contributory factors to the teenage motherhood. Some of the factors include: poverty, home environments, peer pressure, customs and traditions, the influence of the mass media and lack of sex education. Economic factors are major risk of teenage motherhood. Every adolescent has the rights and need for shelter, food, clothes, education, healthcare and spiritual values from the family or home [13]. The lack of provision of these basic needs give the adolescent the chance to seek for them outside the home. A study conducted by Keller, Hilton and Twumasi-Ankrah opined that in rural communities, family financial exigencies and social custom induce girls to stay out of school and enter into early sexual relationships which lead them into getting pregnant at early stages of their lives thereby making them continue to be in the cycle of poverty [14]. Singh and Daroch singled out poverty as both the causes and consequences of teen pregnancy and child bearing [15]. This presupposes that tackling teenage pregnancy would have trickling down effects on poverty and vice-versa.

The environment or community in which teenagers live has a great influence leading to teenage pregnancy and motherhood. Maynard believes that teenage motherhood is a delinquent behaviour resulting from stress, dislike, malice, boredom and unhappiness experienced by a teenage girl within her home environment [16]. Other predisposing factors include alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, social and health problems among adolescents and sexual abuses resulting to unwanted sex and pregnancy [17]. Additionally, teenagers encountering family breakdown, home conflicts, peer influence among others are very much at risk of teenage pregnancy. Teenagers may be influenced or pressed to take boyfriends or girlfriends which usually lead to the desire to practice unprotected sex and resulting in unwanted pregnancies [18]. These attest to the tenets of the Social Ecology theory.

Peer pressure forms part of the debate on teenage pregnancy and mothering. Macleod states that peer pressure is one of the major contributing factors to teenage pregnancy [19]. This is so because most teenagers are closer to the peers more than adult and therefore would like to pick the advice of their friends which normally leads them into teenage pregnancy. "The mass media may possibly function as a super-peer in terms of pressuring teenagers into having sex earlier than expected" [20, p. 226]. Televisions, films, videos, magazines, advertisements and novels, today, are full of sex and love issues. The media depict the thrilling side of sex in

such a way that teenagers perceive sex as something in fashion. Numerous teenagers, particularly girls, depend on magazines as an essential source of information about sex, birth control and health related issues [21]. This makes them to ignore the consequences of sex such as unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Lack of sex education is also cited as a contributing factor leading to pregnancy. In many countries particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, many teenagers are not aware of their growing bodies and what is required of them to stay safe. They may not know what to do when their peers and older boys and men pressurize them to have sex [22]. According to Kunio and Sono, lack of adequate information on sex is one of the reasons for the increasing number of unwanted pregnancies among teenage girls [23]. On the other hand, this lack of awareness can also be explained in the context of African culture which tends not to encourage debate on matters related to sex and sexuality between parents and their children. According to Maluleke, African culture assigns such responsibility of addressing sex and sexual matters to initiation schools [24, p. 8]. This indicates that initiation rite marking entrance or acceptance into a group or society can be used to educate adolescents. Curiosity to experiment with sex was another reason cited as having resulted in pregnancy. A study by Erulker and Matheka revealed that two of the participating young-mother learners engaged in sex out of curiosity and they never thought they would be pregnant on the first encounter [22].

The consequences of teenage pregnancies are enormous and inimical to the health and wellbeing of teenage population as well as development in general. Educationally, it results in school dropout. Adolescent pregnancy certainly truncates adolescents preparing for higher education. A study conducted by Natalie-Rico found that dropping out of school is a negative effect of teenage pregnancy [25]. Teenage pregnancy is commonly associated with school non-attendance and dropout. Day noted that, the consequence of teenage pregnancy extends to the children [26]. According to Day, teenage mothers face hardships, which extends beyond birth and have higher risks which usually plagued by intellectual language and socio-emotional delays, resulting to poor performance in their education, child development and school readiness [26]. Terry-Humen et al., noted there are problems in cognition, language communication and interpersonal skills among children of teenage mothers compared to those of older mothers [27]. Studies by Hoffman and Haveman et al., show that less than 2% of young teen mothers of less than 18 years attain college degree before attaining 30 years of age and about 50% of them repeat a grade with lower performance on standardized tests [28, 29]. This shows that teenage mothers have limited opportunities

in furthering their education to the highest level.

In a conference organized in Nairobi, it was revealed that up to 42 million children who do not attend schools in Africa, almost 60 per cent are girls and this is owing to teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood [30]. In the same way, Hosie, noted that the minority of teenage girls who conceive under the age of 16 and whose pregnancy lead to an interruption of education including formal elimination by school authorities, had a restricted scope of opportunities obtainable to them with regard to their continued education [4]. This can lead to several challenges to the teenage mother.

Teenage motherhood often presents numerous challenges in the life of young mothers and their children, such as disruption of schooling, socio-economic disadvantage, inadequate mothering, neglect and abuse, relationship difficulties and other demographic concerns. Chigona and Chetty stated that "one of the challenges that teenage mothers face is balancing the two responsibilities" (that of being a learner and being a parent at the same time) [31, p. 7]. This is evident when teenage mothers are unable to do or finish their homework or prepare for the next day's test or task. Teenage mothers have a problem in striking a balance between schooling and motherhood which eventually affect their academic performance at school [32]. According to Nystrom and Ohrling, caring for new-borns is a challenging responsibility faced by many young and adolescent mothers [33]. As young-mothers, they are expected to care for their babies as would an adult mother. This eventually affects their academic performance and sometimes leads to school dropout [34].

According to Oyaro, stigmatization and discrimination are some of the challenges that these young-mother learners encounter as they struggle to balance their roles as mothers as well as learners [35]. Oyaro further states that, the demanding roles of motherhood and the social ridicule these young-mothers who are learners get from the society often make them traumatized. The ridicule may be from teachers, parents, fellow classmates and the society [35]. This negative treatment leaves the young-mothers in school with emotional scars and most importantly a blink future to face. This normally compels girl to leave school the moment they get to know that they are pregnant. Once school girls discover that they are pregnant, they fear what will become of their lives and schooling. Parekh and De la Ray, argue that teenage mothers react with fear and denial once they realize they are pregnant [36]. They see pregnancy as a disruption in their lives and they may fail to continue with schooling [37]. Parents also react towards the news of their daughters being pregnant with anger. Stigma and discrimination against pregnant and adolescent mothers are common things in the society. A study by Chigona and Chetty (2008) in South

Africa shows that teenage mothers, who return to school after the birth of their children, experience intimidation and marginalization and lack of support from educators [38]. According to the study, teenage mothers did not receive support from their educators, for example when a learner has missed lessons due to infant related problems; teachers are not willing to go through the lesson [38].

In all these, it is believed that the global decline in child mortality has been traced to increases in mothers' schooling, even after controlling for household income [39]. This shows that mother's education is critical for investments in the human capital of the next generation. Therefore, the Social Ecology Theory comes to play when tentative interventions are to be rolled in dealing with the surge of teenage motherhood. This is because the major thrust of the theory focuses on multiple domain intervention integration (home, school, community, and political settings); cultural change (transformation of norms, values, and policies); individual's perception of support or neglect; and opportunities for safer behaviours [40].

3. Methodology

The qualitative research approach was employed to explore the experiences of teenage mothers in the Senior High Schools in the Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality. A qualitative research approach was used because the researchers wanted to grasp the teenage mothers' first hand experiences, so the optimum way was personal involvement from within their natural setting [41]. Qualitative approach support probing questions. Through qualitative approach the researchers produced findings beyond the immediate boundaries of the study [42]. A case study was conducted as a basis for identifying and understanding the experiences of these teenage mothers in the Senior High Schools in the Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality. According to Thomas, case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods [43]. Case studies provide an understanding of why the instance happened as it did, and what might become important to look at more intensively in future.

The population for the study constituted all the teenage mothers who have gone back to school in all the three (3) Senior High Schools in the Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality during 2017/2018 academic year. These included Nungua Senior High School, Teshie Senior High School and O'reilly Senior High School. Five teenage mothers were purposively sampled from each school and interviewed for the study. In all there were fifteen teenage mothers involved in the study.

In selecting the sample size for the study, the purposive

sampling procedure was employed. Purposive sampling ensures deliberate selection of particular settings and persons which provide information relevant to the goals of the study [44]. Samples were obtained through initial introduction to the teenage mothers by the heads of the three institutions. A total of fifteen (15) teenage mothers were sampled and purposively selected from the three Senior High Schools in the Ledzokuku Krowor Municipal Assembly. Babbie, argues that samples in purposive sampling are selected based on some predetermined criteria, which usually include knowledge of the population, its elements, as well as goals of research [45]. The researchers opted for interview as the most appropriate approach for the required data. The selected teenage mothers were interviewed individually and in private room-settings. The interview was appropriate for this study, not only due to its flexibility in collecting data, but more importantly because of the type and nature of the information needed to answer the research questions.

The researchers developed an interview guide which comprised open-ended questions, and this was regarded as a standard instrument. The interview guide was divided into four sections as follows: Section A: Biographical information; Section B: Causes of teenage pregnancy or motherhood in the Senior High Schools in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality. Section C: Effects of teenage motherhood on the educational attainment of the teenage mothers, Section D: Challenges facing teenage mothers in Senior High School in Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality.

Trustworthiness was attained by asking the interviewees to listen to the tape recorder after data collection to verify what they said during the interview process. In addition, the researchers also allowed the interviewees to read interview transcript to check whether what had been written reflected what they said, and also comment and give some clarifications. Brown and Dowling (in Bertram) as well as Neuman opine that one must compare the results of the study with those of other studies [46, 47]. The findings of the study were reported as revealed by the respondents and the reviewed document. The researchers also compared the results with those of other research works.

In order to analyze the data gathered easily; the researchers coded data by using the process content analysis. The information emanating from the interviewers was categorized into themes pertaining to the teenage mothers' experiences in Senior High Schools. The "highlighting" approach was used. According to van Manen, to uncover the thematic aspects of the data, it is appropriate to use highlights [48]. In this approach, the transcribed text was read several times to identify the statements that appeared to be revealing about the phenomenon and were highlighted.

Themes identified by highlighting material in the interview transcripts spoke of the school going teenage mother's experiences. Each of the highlighted phrases were then selected to ascertain the meaning put forward in the highlighted material. Related themes were identified during the process, described to establish how they were interrelated. Rewriting continued until the themes and the relationship between the themes were identified as accurately as possible. The themes were supported with excerpts of the data.

Ethically, confidentiality prevailed between the researchers and respondents [46]. Participants were given freedom to withdraw if they were not comfortable with answering any questions. Before conducting the interview, the participants were informed about the nature of the interview, what type of questions to expect based on the purpose of the study, as well as the essence of the use of a tape recorder during the interview process. The participants were also informed that data collected from the interview were for academic purpose and would be kept confidential. Pseudonyms were employed for the analysis of the data to protect the confidentiality of the teenage mothers.

4. Findings and Discussions

This section is divided into two parts. The first section focused on the background information of the respondents, while the second section concentrated on the findings and discussions of the three objectives formulated for the study, and the themes that emerged from the data collection.

4.1. Background Information of the Teenage Mothers

The background information of the teenage mothers involved in the study in Senior High Schools in the Ledzokuku Krowor Municipal Assembly included age, class, and family background. Equal number of five teenage girls were selected from Nungua, Teshie and O'relly Senior High Schools in the municipality for the study. The background data of the respondents are presented in Tables 1-4.

Table 1. Age of the respondents.

Age of the Students	Frequency	Percentage
15-19	9	60
20-24	4	26.7
25-29	2	13.3
Total	15	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 1 shows that 9 (60%) of the respondents were between the ages of 15-19 years whilst 4 (26.7%) of the respondents were between the ages of 20-24 years. Only 2 (13.3%) of the respondents were between the ages of 25-29 years. This

means that the ages, at which these girls got pregnant, were not matured enough to carry pregnancy since majority of them were between the ages of 15-19 and that may be the reason why they experienced a lot of challenges.

Table 2. Classes of the respondents.

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
SHS 1	5	33.3
SHS 2	8	53.3
SHS 3	2	13.3
Total	15	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 2 shows that 5 (33.3%) of the mothers were in SHS 1 whilst 8 (53.3%) were in SHS 2. Only 2 (13.3%) were in SHS 3. This means that majority of the girls who were involved in the study were in SHS 2.

Table 3. Family background of the respondents.

Family Background	Frequency	Percentage
Single Parent Home	6	40
Intact Home	9	60
Total	15	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 3 shows the family background of the respondents. The result shows that 6 (40%) of the respondents were from single parents' homes whilst 9 (60%) of the respondents were from intact homes. From the table, most of the respondents were from homes where both mother and father are living together. This means that these families were in the capacity to have monitored their young daughters to ensure that they were on track however, these girls got pregnant. This indicates that teenage pregnancy is not an issue for only single parent homes but intact homes as well.

Table 4. Type of single parent home of the respondents.

Type of Single Home	Frequency	Percentage
Divorce	3	50.0
Separated	1	16.6
Widowed	2	33.3
Never Married	0	00.0
Total	6	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 4 shows that 3 (50%) of the respondents from single parent homes were from divorce homes whilst 2 (33.3%) were having parents who were widowed. Only 1 (16.6) was from a home the parents had separated. This means that most of the girls who got pregnant from single parent homes might have experienced some challenges because of the divorce of the parents since majority of them are from divorce homes. Divorce can also be a major cause of teenage pregnancy as indicated by literature.

4.2. Causes of Teenage Motherhood Among Senior High School Girls

4.2.1. The incidence That Led to the Pregnancy

When the teenage mothers were asked what happened before, they got pregnant, majority of them stated that they were deceived by their friends. Some were compelled by their friends to take boyfriends while others did so because their friends were having boyfriends. Other teenage mothers also said that they were forced to take boyfriends due to financial constraints. They complained that their parents were financially handicap so they could not buy them their basic school needs such as pens, books, shoes, computers, calculators, etc. and therefore they had to take boyfriends who provided them with their needs. Their friendship with these boyfriends resulted in sexual encounter and eventually they got pregnant. The following are some of the views expressed by the teenage mothers:

Vero: My best friend introduced me to one boy. I found him attractive and so we became friends. We had sexual intercourse for some time and I became pregnant.

Adwoa: We went for a programme and my friend introduced me to a boy and we had sexual intercourse that night and I got pregnant. It was just only one-night sex.

Abena: Financial issue led me in getting my boyfriend. Once we went out and he asked me to allow him to have sexual intercourse with me and it was once and I got pregnant.

These statements from the teenage mothers raise several questions about the knowledge these adolescents had before their sexual encounters. They seem to have the notion that a person will engage in sexual intercourse for many times before pregnancy. It could also be deduced from these views that they were exposed to their friends who influenced them negatively. This confirms the belief that adolescents want to be closer to friends as part of their social and emotional development. The finding is in line with the study conducted by Chelisa which revealed that peer pressure plays a large role in teenage pregnancy and mothering [49]. Chelisa further indicates that some parents complained that their daughters were influenced by their peers to take boyfriends so that they can be within their social circle and fit into the group. This gives credence that peer pressure is a major cause of teenage pregnancy and needs special attention from all stakeholders. Other participants also indicated that lack of parental control and irresponsible parenting compelled them to consider boyfriends for support and they became pregnant because these boyfriends lured them into sexual intercourse.

Sharing her experience, Afia said:

I will say it is lack of parental care or control because my

parents were not taken care of me. They were not buying books, cloths and providing my basic needs as a child."

Afua: My father didn't care about us. My mother was the one taking care of us and felt sick so no one was taking care of us that pushed me to get a boyfriend who later got me pregnant.

These submissions from the teenage mothers involved in the study suggest that some parents have abandoned their role of providing basic needs of their children and make them vulnerable in the society. The finding confirms what Helen et al., reported that lack of provision of basic needs give adolescent the chance to seek for them outside their homes. This implies that they need food, cloth, books and other basic needs by any means and they may be induced in the process of getting these needs [13]. Keller, Hilton and Twumasi-Ankrah also noted that family financial exigencies and social custom induce girls to stay out of school and enter into early sexual relationships which lead them into getting pregnant at early stages of their lives making them continue to be in the cycle of poverty [14]. Financial problem or poverty can also lead teenagers into pregnancy.

4.2.2. The Influence of the Media on Teenagers in Engaging in Early Sex

When the teenage mothers were asked what influenced them to engage in sexual intercourse which eventually led to teenage pregnancy and motherhood, almost all of them said mass media was contributory factor. Most of them mentioned some radio and television programmes are full of sex scenes which normally push teenagers to engage in early sex. Some stated that some television station show pornographic movies which push teenagers to engage in such practices. The following are some direct quotes from the teenage mothers:

Akosua The media influenced me to get involved in early sex. Some TV programmes are full of pornographic materials and when people watch, it can lead them to get into early sex.

Ama: I was influenced by the media. The media easily influence people to engage in early sex because some programmes such as "Ekumaa Mamazimbi sex show" can induce anybody who watches that programme. It can influence that person to try sexual intercourse.

Adwoa: Yes, some media houses show sex movies on the television.

These comments from the teenage mothers interviewed were reported in similar way in the works of Strasburger, Wilson and Jordan, when they stated that "the mass media may possibly function as a super-peer in terms of pressuring teenagers into having sex earlier than expected" [20]. According to the researchers, the media depict the thrilling side of sex in such a way that teenagers perceive sex as something in fashion. This implies that serious doses of

television may stress teenagers' feeling that everyone is doing sex apart from them. This implies most teenagers depend on television, radio, newspapers and magazines as an essential source of information about sex, birth control and health related issues so when the media portray sex as an attractive venture it will influence them negatively. Most teenagers ignore the consequences of sex such as unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

4.2.3. Sex Education

The teenage mothers were asked whether they had any education on sex before they became pregnant. Majority of them stated that they heard the information on the consequences of early sex from their parents. Others also said that they heard it from their teachers and through school programmes. The following are some of the views expressed by the teenage mothers interviewed:

Akosua: I heard about sex education from my mother and through girl child education at school.

Abena: My grandmother talked to me about sexual intercourse when I had my first menstruation.

Ama: I was educated on the consequences of having early sexual intercourse. My teachers in my school in my school educated me on that.

Afia: I heard it from the television. I learnt a lot about sex on the television.

This finding gives an indication to the fact that various agent and agencies which are responsible for educating teenagers on the consequences of early sex such as the family, school and the media are doing their best in letting teenagers become aware of the negative effect of having early sexual intercourse. Despite this, it seems the content offered is not enough since some teenagers still do not know that it is not the number of sexual intercourses that will make a woman pregnant but the time within her menstrual cycle. This presupposes that education on sex is inadequate and the content and scope needs to be intensified. This is in contradiction to the findings of Erulker and Matheka, when they stated lack of sex education as a contributing factor leading to pregnancy [22]. They stated that in many countries particularly in Sub Saharan Africa, many teenagers are not aware of their growing bodies and what is required of them to stay safe. They may not know what to do when their peers and older boys and men pressurize them to have sex.

4.3. Effects of Teenage Motherhood on the Senior High School Girls

4.3.1. Emotional Effects

When the teenage mothers were asked to share their experiences on how they received the news about their

pregnancy at first, majority of the mothers said that they were shock, disappointed, worried and disturbed when they got to know that they were pregnant. Most of them were afraid because they felt they had disappointed their parents, teachers, friends and other family members who trusted them. These are some of the views of the teenage mothers who were interviewed:

Amanda: I was very scared so I told my boyfriend. He said we should abort the baby and that he will give me some medicine but I was afraid because one girl died in our community because of abortion.

Mansa: I nearly killed myself because my father threatened not to take care of me again so I decided to abort the baby at first but I changed my mind.

Ama: I felt very sad when I got to know that I am pregnant. Even though I had completed JHS I was looking forward to go to SHS.

From these views, it could be deduced that most of the teenage mothers were in the state of confusion when they first discovered that they were pregnant and some even planned to abort the babies. These submissions portray how naïve these teenage mothers were concerning their sexuality. Engaging in sexual intercourse without family planning often results in pregnancy so they should have expected to be pregnant considering the fact that they did not protect themselves. The spill over effects were borne by their children because they were emotionally disturbed and some of them even wanted to cause abortion. This finding support Day's assertion that the consequence extends to the children [26]. According to Day, the emotional stress that pregnant teenagers go through extends beyond birth and have higher risks creating intellectual, language and socio-emotional delays which hinder child development and school readiness [26].

4.3.2. Effect of Teenage Motherhood on Dropout of School

Most of the teenage mothers interviewed stated that when they got pregnant, they had completed JHS and were waiting to enter the Senior High School while few of them said that they were in JHS three at that time so they had to go to school with the pregnancy until they gave birth and eventually entered the SHS. Only one mother said she was in SHS so she had to stay at home and deliver before going back to school. Some of the teenage mothers shared their experiences and stated:

Abena: I did not drop out of school because at that time I had just completed JHS when the pregnancy occurred so I had to give birth and take care of my baby for some time before entering the SHS.

Maafia: I did not drop out of school, I wrote the B. E. C. E with the pregnancy”.

Adwoa: I dropped out of school for 8 months because of my pregnancy and stayed home for three month after delivery before I went back to school.

These submissions seem to suggest that students completing Junior High School are highly vulnerable to teenage pregnancy and their education may be delayed or terminated. This finding is in line with the findings of Natalie-Rico, when he stated that “the consequences of teenage pregnancies are enormous, educationally, it results in school dropout” [25, p. 10]. Adolescent pregnancy certainly truncates adolescents preparing for higher education. Teenage pregnancy is commonly associated with school non-attendance and dropout. Pregnancy and its complications often predispose youths to temporally or permanently leave school.

4.3.3. Reaction of Teachers, Parents and Peers Towards Teenage Mothers

When the teenage mothers were asked how their teachers, parents and peers received the news of their pregnancy, all the teenage mothers interviewed stated that they were surprised, worried, disappointed shocked and some were annoyed. Most of them stated that they were seen as good girls so teachers, parents and peers were not expecting them to be in that condition at that tender ages. These were some of the comments made by teenage mothers:

Afia: My parents, teachers and my pastor were very disappointed when they got to know that I was pregnant. My father was mad at me and he sacked me from the house. I went to stay with my grandmother for some time.

Abena: My teachers were very disappointed and my friends were so shocked and disappointed too.

Mary: My mother lost trust in me and my teachers were annoyed.

This finding indicate that the teenage mothers did not find it easy with the people around them when they discovered that they were pregnant. They were not expecting such news about them. This implies when it comes to sexuality issues every child should be protected because he or she can easily fall victims to unsuspected males and females around them.

4.3.4. Effects of Teenage Motherhood on Educational Ambition and Academic Performance

When the teenage mothers were asked how their motherhood affected their educational ambition and academic performance, majority of them said that their motherhood has really delayed their education and negatively affected their

academic performance. Most of them got pregnant just after JHS so they had to stay in the house for some years and take care of their babies before entering the senior high school. This was evidence in the ages of the teenage mothers as one of them was as old as 28 years and was in SHS 2. One of the mothers had to stay home for 5 years after JHS before going to SHS. Most of them also indicated that their academic performance has reduced drastically after becoming mothers. Some of them said they struggle to study since their responsibilities have increased due to child birth. This has affected their academic performance. The following are some of the comment of the teenage mothers:

Akosua: My pregnancy and child birth have really affected me. In my case i got pregnant in JHS and aborted the baby, I got pregnant again after JHS and the child died. I then got pregnant again and delivered. This has delayed my educational ambition greatly. My academic performance is very bad now; I do not have much time to study.

Abena: Hmm, being a mother at this time has made me stressed up. It has diverted my ambition of being a nurse, am now thinking of something else. My academic performance is now poor because I do not concentrate on my studies as i use to do.

Adwoa: I can say it has delayed me in terms of my educational ambition because I had to stay home for 5 years after given birth before going to SHS.

These finding give credence to the fact that teenage pregnancy affects academic performance of students and delay their educational progress. The experiences of the teenage mothers confirm the studies in sub-Sahara Africa which came out that less than 2% of young teen mothers of less than 18 years attain college degree before attaining 30 years of age and about 50% of them repeat a grade with lower performance on standardized tests [28, 29]. This shows that teenage mothers have limited opportunities in furthering their education to the highest level.

4.4. Challenges Facing Teenage Mothers in Senior High School

The participants were asked to talk about the challenges they face as teenage mothers and students. They were of the opinion that it was not easy for them to combine these two major roles; they miss classes and their teachers are not willing to reteach or offer remedial lessons.

4.4.1. Combining Motherly Role with Academic Work

The teenage mothers were asked how they play their role as mothers and as students at the same time. Most of them indicated that it is very difficult combing motherly role with

student life at the same time. Some stated that they had to bath and feed their babies before going to school which often cause them to be late at school. Some stated that they work to cater for themselves and their children. They further indicated that they pay their own school fees which are not an easy task for them at all. These are some of the views expressed by the teenage mothers:

Ama: It has been very difficult combining the two roles that is being a mother and a student. In the morning I have to bath my child and take care of him before preparing for school.

Mercy: Combining motherhood and academic work is very difficult. There are times that I am not able to do my homework because I have to take care of my baby.

Adwoa: Sometimes, I work during the weekend and vacation to cater for myself and my child.

These views expressed by the teenage mothers indicate that they have assumed adult role even though they are expected to be supported by their parents and other family members. Challenges associated with combining child care and education were revealed in similar study conducted by Chigona and Chetty in South Africa. Their study came out that one of the challenges that teenage mothers face is balancing the two responsibilities that of being a learner and being a parent at the same time [31]. This is evident when teenage mothers are unable to do or finish their homework or prepare for the next day's test or task. Teenage mothers have a problem in striking a balance between schooling and motherhood which eventually affect their academic performance at school [32]. This means that being a teenage mother and students needs extra strength to be able to balance the two appropriately.

4.4.2. Missing Classes due to Caring for Baby

The teenage mothers revealed that they have been missing classes. Most of the teenage mothers said they sometime miss classes in order to send their children to the hospital. In such instance they are confronted with role conflict and they had to choose one role at the expense of the other. Only few of the mothers said they do not miss classes because their parents and other relatives support them in caring for their babies. The following are the views expressed by the teenage mothers:

Amanda: Sometime I have to stay at home because my baby is sick. It mostly occurs when my mother is not at home.

Adwoa: When the child is sick and my mother sent her to the hospital but she calls me to come around and be with the child.

It was revealed by the teenage mothers that they are

confronted with serious challenges when their children fall sick. They indicated that when the child falls sick it affects their ability to concentrate on school work and their wellbeing in general.

4.4.3. Teachers Inability to Support Teenage Mothers in Senior High Schools

Teenage mothers who participated in the study were asked whether teachers give them extra tuition when they miss classes. They indicated that when they miss classes they do not receive any extra tuition from their teachers because teachers do not have time for such things. The following are the views expressed by the teenage mothers:

Ama: I do not receive extra tuition from my teachers when I miss classes because they cannot revise the things they have taught because of me.

Afia: Yes, I sometime miss classes but do not get extra tuition. I collect note books from my friends and write.

These views expressed by teenage mothers indicate that they do not know that they have the rights to tell their teachers that they do not understand some of the topics taught. The views expressed expose the lapses of their teachers in the performance of their responsibilities. As professional teachers, they have been trained to identify students with peculiar problems or special needs and to offer remedial teaching for them. The finding is in line with the findings by Chigona and Chetty research which indicated that teenage mothers, who return to school after the birth of their children, experience intimidation and marginalization and lack of support from educators [38]. According to the study, teenage mothers did not receive support from their educators, for example when a learner missed lessons due to infant related problems; teachers are not willing to go through the lesson with them [38]. This means being a teenage mother and at the same time a student is a great challenge. Such students have to go extra mile ahead of their colleagues when learning and prepare for any challenge that come their way.

4.5. Support Systems Available to Teenage Mothers in Senior High Schools

The researchers wanted to know who supports the teenage mothers in taking care of their babies and the kind of support they get from these people. The result indicated that most of the teenage mothers were taking care of their babies themselves with little support from their parents and other family members. They get support from these family members in the form of finance and sometimes in taking care of their babies. Out of the 15 mothers interviewed, only two said the fathers of their babies support them in taking care of their babies. This means that most of the fathers of these

children abandon their sex partners after impregnating them. The following are some of the comments from the teenage mothers:

Abena: My sisters offer me help sometimes in caring for my baby. They sometimes give me food, clothes and other stuffs.

Adwoa: My mother takes care of my child when I am not around. She also gives me financial support sometimes.

Ama: The father of my child supports me as well as my parents. The father of my child gives me money sometimes and my parents also provide food and other things.

These views indicate that though the teenage mothers receive support from parents and other relatives, the support is not enough to take them out of the hardship they go through as teenage mothers and students at the same time. This calls for multiple domain intervention integration from the home, school, community, and political settings that will support adolescent and teenage mothers. Also, enhanced transformation of norms, values, and policies will go a long way to support them [40]. Doing all these, will give support and encourage adolescents to realize that, there are opportunities for safer sexual behaviours.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Peer pressure, poverty and the influence of the mass media are the major causes of teenage pregnancy in the Ledzokuku Krowor Municipality. Most of the teenage mothers in Ledzokuku Krowor had some knowledge about sex education before they became pregnant so they knew the consequences of sex at the time they became pregnant.

Teachers, friends as well as parents are in a state of shock, disappointment and anger when they discover that young girls are pregnant. Child births affect the academic performance of teenage mother negatively and delay the education of most female teenage mothers.

Based on the findings, it is therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education (MOE) should implore on head teachers to implement the Re-Entry of teenage mothers Policy in full in all schools in the district and Ghana in general. Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and Non-governmental organization interested in girl child education should create awareness and sensitize teachers, parents and the public in general on the re-entry of teenage mothers in school policy.

Also, school counsellors should offer counselling to teenage mothers and their parents to enable them adjust to demands associated with their situation. By so doing, parents will support their daughters during the challenging stages of

parenthood and take care of their grandchildren.

Furthermore, teachers should be trained by Ghana Education Service in the field of Special Needs Education (SNE) so that they can understand the special educational needs for this vulnerable group of learners. This way, they will be able to understand and guide them appropriately and accord them the assistance they need to make the girls comfortable with school work.

Stiff penalties should be given to men who sexually defile or rape and impregnate underage girls. They should also be forced to provide financial support and other maintenance costs for upbringing of the child.

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