



RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFLUENCE OF AGE ON ADJUSTMENT OF READMITTED TEENAGE MOTHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF UGENYA SUB-COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

Teenage motherhood is a worldwide problem with 36.4 million girls giving birth before the age of 18 years in developing Countries and Kenya is no exception. The current study investigated the difference in adjustment of readmitted teenage mothers in selected secondary schools on the basis of age. Mixed method research approach was used and within it Sequential Explanatory Design was adopted. The target population consisted of 288 respondents namely 23 principals, 23 guidance and counseling teachers and 242 readmitted teenage mothers in 23 secondary schools in Ugenya sub-county. The findings of the study indicated that the older readmitted teenage mothers had higher mean score in overall adjustment than the younger ones. For example, whereas the teenage mothers in the aged group of above 19 years had a mean of 2.63 (SD=.316, SE=.056), those who were age below 15 years only had a mean adjustment of 1.72 (SD=.244, SE=.031). It was clearly shown that there was a statistically significant difference in overall adjustment scores for the three age groups [$F(2, 163) = 144.5, p < .05$]. It was therefore concluded that there was significant influence of age on adjustment, with older readmitted teenage mothers adjusting better than their younger counterparts. Findings reported indicated that most young teen mothers had a lot of difficulties in adjusting to school life on return to school. However, the older and more mature teenage mothers adjusted appropriately and easily cope with the problems after counselling. It means that the age of teen mothers influenced adjustment. However, it was reported that, the younger teenage mothers easily shared their problems with the counsellors in school but had challenges in adjusting to school. The study recommends that teacher counselors should utilize relevant Cognitive and behavioral therapy techniques to help young teenage mothers adjust appropriately at school.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Shuger (2012), the United States of America (USA) leads in the rates of teenage mothers -Approximately 750,000 drop out of school due to teenage motherhood with only 40% of teenage mothers finishing high school while less than 2% finish College by age 40. Japan and South Korea are the least affected by teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood (Lowen, 2012). In Australia teenage birth rates fell from 22.1 live births per thousand women in 1992 to just over 15.5 births per 1000 women in 2010 (Jaikumar, 2010). On the other hand, UNFPA, (2013), indicates that 7.3 million girls in developing countries under the age of 18 give birth every year. According to the Estimates of 2010, 36.4 million women in developing countries between ages 20 and 24 report having

given birth before age 18 (UNFPA, 2013) and of this a total of 17.4 million are in South Asia. Further, the UN's 2010 world population prospects estimated that 1.7 Million women and girls under the age of 24 give birth annually in Indonesia, of these half a million are teenagers (United Nations, 2011). Among the developing countries the Sub-Saharan, Africa (SSA) has the highest number of teenage mothers (Were, 2007). Porta (2010) further states that 53% of the girls in SSA were already pregnant by age 18. Another report by Save the Children and UNFPA (2009) stated that the rate of teen pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated at 143 per 1,000 girls' ages 15-19 years. In Niger for instance the report indicates that 87% of women surveyed were married and 53% had given birth to a child before age 18 (WHO, 2012). In Tanzania, the Ministry of Education reported that, 28,000 girls left school between 2004 and 2008 due to pregnancy with an average of 3600 (4 out of 10) schoolgirls dropping out of school due to pregnancies before age 20 (Maluli and Bali, 2014). In Uganda, the Demographic Health Survey (UDHS) of

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2006 revealed that 12% of girls aged 15 years were pregnant, 19% had ever given birth and 25% teenage girls had children in Uganda. The prevalence of teenage pregnancy and motherhood cannot be ignored in Kenya, when Center For the Study of Adolescence (CSA) did a survey in 2008, the students were asked how many girls they knew who had dropped out of secondary school due to pregnancy, less than a quarter of the respondents mentioned 2 girls about 19% mentioned 3 girls 12% mentioned 4 girls 9% mentioned 1 girl 6.9% mentioned 5 girls and 6.4% mentioned 10 girls (CSA, 2008). The numbers presented revealed that teenage pregnancy is prevalent with the vast majority saying they knew at least one girl who had dropped out (CSA, 2008). In the same study students were asked to rate their attitude towards adolescent mothers and readmission, to school 39.6% of the students approved or strongly approved readmission while 24% either disapproved or strongly disapproved. About 36.50% of the students were neutral on the matter. Various interventions have been undertaken to address the gender gaps in education. In Kenya, there is a policy by the Ministry of Education which allows teen mothers to be readmitted back to school (MOE, 2007). However according to the report by CSA (2008), only one percent of the readmitted girls, complete schooling and continue with higher education. On the same vein, KNBS (2014) study indicated that Nyanza was leading in teenage pregnancy and subsequently in teenage motherhood. This called for research in the area because it was a problem area that has led to adjustment issues among teen mothers who have returned back to school. It was therefore important to conduct a research on how the readmitted teenage mothers' age influences their adjustment academically, socially emotionally and psychologically to complete schooling.

Literature indicates that age has an effect on adjustment of teenage mothers. For example, Evans and Slowley (2010) study concluded that teenage mothers were struggling and experiencing complex challenges, however it also identified that others were able to overcome the challenges, they faced, with the right support and information. However, Brown (2011) adds that young mothers are more likely to depend on financial assistance compared to adult mothers. However, if the adolescent mothers came from families that supported them financially then they did not show any significant difference. On the other hand, Isararunings, Mo-Suwan, Choprapawon (2008) in Thailand also agree that a higher percentage of teenage mothers enrolled in or completed secondary or higher levels of education in comparison with adult mothers. Further, In comparison with non-teenage mothers, a greater proportion of readmitted teenage mothers had insufficient income, did not own their homes/houses were single parents and had fewer consultations with health personnel. Most readmitted teenage mothers and their infants are vulnerable to a variety of potentially serious health problems and accordingly need appropriate help and support. In contrast, Oyefara (2009) in Nigeria concurs that there was a significant direct relationship between age at first childbirth and educational attainment and that the first childbirth during adolescence had less or no chance to join school for further studies. Findings further showed there was significant inverse relationship between the age at first childbirth and marital stability. Similarly, Angeline and Mierau (2015) showed that compared to older mothers teenagers experienced substantially lower self-reported, late-life health crisis and were more likely to display depressive symptoms. This translated to adverse late-life health highlights and life cycle socio-economic conditions and

societal values. Most reviewed studies have focused on health outcomes and the economic implications of teenage childbearing. Further the studies were done in the line of health while the current study focused on education. In addition the reviewed studies focused on adult mothers who had given birth as teenagers therefore their experiences could have been overtaken by time compared to the current study which used readmitted teenage mothers in schools.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was: To investigate the adjustment of readmitted teenage mothers in secondary schools on the basis of age.

Research Methodology

Mixed method research approach was used and within it Sequential Explanatory Design was adopted. The target population consisted of 288 respondents namely 23 principals, 23 guidance and counseling teachers and 242 readmitted teenage mothers in 23 secondary schools in Ugenya sub-county. A sample size of 21 Principals, 21 Guidance and Counseling teachers and 184 readmitted teenage mothers were selected for the study using saturated, Purposive and stratified random sampling techniques respectively. Reliability of the instruments was ascertained through a pilot study of 10% of the population that did not participate in the study. In addition a reliability of Cronbach's Alpha of at least 0.7 for all sub scales in the questionnaires was reported through internal consistency. Face, Construct and Content validity was ascertained by experts from the Department of Psychology and Education Foundation. Trustworthiness of qualitative data was also ensured. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, such as ANOVA, t-test, Pearson, correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis to test hypothesis. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Life course theory by Elder Johnson and Crosnoe (2003). Life course theory focuses on chronological age, relationships, common life transition and social change that shape peoples' lives from birth to death. Many authorities have contributed to this theory. According to Hutchison (2006) if one wants to understand a person's life, one might begin with an event, history or the sequence of significant events, experiences and transitions in a person's life from birth to death. Elder and Shanahn (2007) posits that the timing and ordering of life transition to parenthood, have long term consequences for individuals throughout their life course. Social norms about the appropriate time and ordering are expected to regulate whether such consequences are positive or negative, however according to Mollborn (2010) teenage childbearing is "one off time" transition that may be associated with strong societal norms and negative sanctioning for the individuals who violate them and these sanctions range from interpersonal disapproval from others or institutional to even lack of leave from high school. Therefore the teenage parents who violate societal norms might suffer mental health consequences. An event history in a readmitted teenage mother as life is pregnancy followed by motherhood, dropping out of school and eventual readmission according to the government

policy. Losing their virginity and identity as adolescents becomes a permanent part of a teenager's life history. The life course theory also emphasizes ways in which humans are interdependent and gives special emphasis to the family as the primary arena for experiencing the world. An adolescent or teenage mother is part of a family; therefore their life is thoroughly intertwined with that of her family for example poverty and the structure. Life course theory looks at cohorts which is a group of persons who were born during the same time, period and who experience particular social changes within a given culture in the same sequence and at the same age, therefore readmitted teenage mothers qualifies to be a cohort (Uhlenberg and Mueller, 2003).

The main concepts of life course theory are a cohort, transition, trajectory, life event and turning point. Transition refers to change in roles and statuses that represent a distinct departure from prior roles and statuses. Trajectories refer to long term pattern of stability and change which usually involves multiple transitions. Life event means a significant occurrence involving a relatively abrupt change that may produce serious and long lasting effects. Finally turning point refers to life event or transition that produces a lasting shift in the course trajectory (Elder, 1998). According to Amato and Kane (2011), young women who followed Pathway involving college attendance to full-time employment with no family-formation transitions were functioning comparatively well with respect to general, health, depression, and self-esteem. In contrast young women who followed pathways involving early motherhood were functioning less well. They suggested that this was due to selection factors. The life course perspective however emphasizes the turning and sequencing of multiple transitions (Elder, 1998; Zollingers and Elder, 1998). The perspective recognizes that transitions have different meanings, predictors, and consequences depending on when they occur in the life course and where they fit into larger sequences (Huchison, 2011).

The theory informed the study in the sense that the readmitted teenage mothers are a cohort by virtue of belonging to a certain age bracket, and have similar social experiences and changes within a given culture in the same age in this case the researcher is looking at Ugenya Sub-county as the locality culture and the place where the readmitted teenage mothers spring from. They also undergo transition as stipulated by Elder (1998), that represents a distinct departure from prior roles and statuses thus they change from being teenagers and put aside adolescent roles and are forced into adulthood. They stop their prior roles and become 'mothers' because they have given birth their life course is also interrupted because they have to stop going to school at a certain stage and resume schooling again later. This implies that they go through a number of trajectories multiple transitions like change from adolescent to being a mother, dropping from school and loss of identity. In terms of life event the significant occurrence that involves abrupt change is the issue of becoming pregnant and giving birth which produces serious and long-lasting effects. Finally the turning point in life event or transition that produce a lasting shift in the life course trajectory for an adolescent mother is the total adjustment of the readmitted teenage mother psychologically, academically, emotionally, socially and economically if they pull through life. The theory informs the study by creating an understanding of teenage pregnancy as a one-time event in a teenage mother's life and the subsequent processes that follows for one to adjust.

RESULTS

The study investigated adjustment of readmitted teenage mothers in secondary schools on the basis of age. The results were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that there is difference in level of overall adjustment scores between the different age groups. The older readmitted teenage mothers had higher mean score in overall adjustment than the younger ones. For example, whereas the teenage mothers in the age group of above 19 years had a mean of 2.63 (SD=.316, SE=.056), those who were aged below 15 years only had a mean adjustment of 1.72 (SD=.244, SE=.031). To establish whether there was statistical significant difference in the overall adjustment among the readmitted teenage mothers ANOVA was computed. To achieve this null hypothesis "*There is no statistically significant difference in adjustment of readmitted teenage mothers in selected secondary schools in Ugenya-Sub-County, on the basis of age*" was generated. The results of ANOVA were as shown in Table 2.

From Table 2 it is clearly shown that there was a statistically significant difference in overall adjustment scores for the three age groups [F (2, 163) =144.5, p<.05]. The large F ratio established indicates that there was more variability between the age groups (caused by the independent variable) than there was within each age group. A significant F test meant that the null hypothesis, which assumed that the population means were equal, was rejected. Thus this meant that the null hypothesis, that "*there was no statistically significant difference in adjustment among teenage mothers in secondary school on the basis of age*", was rejected. It was therefore concluded that there was significant influence of age on adjustment, with older readmitted teenage mother adjusting better than their younger counterparts. Although it was indicated from the ANOVA test that there was significant difference in level of overall adjustment among the age groups, the test did not show which of the groups differed. Hence, Post-Hoc Test Analysis was further performed to determine the groups that differed significantly, as shown in multiple comparisons result in Table 3.

Table 3. Tukey HSD Post-hoc test results is a stepwise multiple comparison procedure used to identify sample means that are significantly different from each other. It is often used as a Post hoc test whenever a significant difference between two or more sample means has been revealed by ANOVA, as was in the present study. Turkey HSD Post-hoc test results showed that the mean overall adjustment scores were significantly different from each other. For example, the teenage mother who were aged below 15 years had significantly lower scores (M=1.716, SD=.244) in overall adjustment than their counterparts aged 15-19 years (M=2.279, SD=.250) and those aged above 19 years (M=2.627, SD=.316). Similarly, there was statistical significant difference in overall adjustment between the teenage mothers aged 15-19 years and their counterparts aged above 19 years, with those aged above 19 years having the highest overall adjustment score.

DISCUSSION

The study established that age significantly influenced adjustment of teenage mothers in secondary schools. The adjustment was in the areas of academics psychological social

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on overall adjustment of readmitted teenage mother

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Below 15 Years	60	1.7163	.24375	.03147	1.6533	1.7793
15-19 Years	74	2.2793	.25030	.02910	2.2213	2.3372
Above 19 Years	32	2.6271	.31562	.05579	2.5133	2.7409
Total	166	2.1428	.43321	.03362	2.0764	2.2092

Table 2. ANOVA: overall adjustment of readmitted teenage mothers given age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	19.798	2	9.899	144.496	.000
Within Groups	11.167	163	.069		
Total	30.965	165			

Table 3. Multiple comparisons: overall adjustment by age of the readmitted teenage mother

Dependent Variable: Overall Adjustment Turkey HSD							
(I) Age (Years)	(J) Age (Years)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Below 15	15-19	-.56297*	.04547	.000	-.6705	-.4554	
	Above 19	-.91082*	.05729	.000	-1.0463	-.7753	
15-19	Below 15	.56297*	.04547	.000	.4554	.6705	
	Above 19	-.34785*	.05538	.000	-.4788	-.2169	
Above 19	Below 15	.91082*	.05729	.000	.7753	1.0463	
	15-19	.34785*	.05538	.000	.2169	.4788	

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

and Emotional. The older readmitted teenage mothers were found to adjust better than their younger counterparts. Specifically, there was statistical significant difference in overall adjustment between the teenage mothers aged 15-19 years and their counterparts aged above 19 years, with those aged above 19 years having the highest overall adjustment scores. These findings agree with Brown (2011) who reported that young mothers are more likely to depend on financial assistance compared to adult mothers. However, if the adolescent mothers come from families that supported them financially then they did not show any significant difference. On the contrary, Isararunings, Mo-Suwan, Choprapawon (2008) reported that a higher percentage of teenage mothers enrolled in or completed secondary or higher levels of education in comparison with adult mothers. These findings further agree with Evans and Slowley (2010) that Teenage mothers who are 16-18 years struggle and experience complex challenges in the process of adjusting, if they do not get the right support. They further accentuate that if young mothers less than 18 years dropped out of education or training, it would have detrimental impact on their own future prospects as well as the life chances of their children. The findings of the study revealed that older readmitted teenage mothers were able to adjust better than young mothers; however when it came to interaction the younger readmitted teenage mothers interacted more openly and freely than the older readmitted teenage mothers. In addition the findings are in agreement with Evans and Slowley (2010) study which concluded that teenage mothers were struggling and experiencing complex challenges. However it also identified that others were able to overcome the challenges, they faced, with the right support and information. Similarly, Raju and Rahamtulla (2007) showed that adjustment of school children in primary dependent on the school variables like class medium of instruction and type of management. The current study found out that teen mothers struggle with challenges. Nevertheless majority overcome these challenges. Cognitive Adaptation theory (Taylor, 1983) describes the process of overcoming the challenges as a search

for meaning to regain mastery over the event in particular one's life more generally to restore them. Participants in the study asserted that age of teen mothers influenced adjustment of readmitted teenage mothers. In their view most young readmitted teenage mothers had a lot of difficulties in adjusting to school life on return to school. However, the older and more mature teen mothers adjusted appropriately and easily coped with the problems after counselling. This meant that the age of readmitted teenage mothers influenced adjustment. However, it was reported that, the younger readmitted teenage mothers easily shared their problems with the counsellors in school but had challenges in adjusting. For example, excerpts from Heads of Guidance & Counselling Departments (HODG&C) indicated that the older teenage mothers easily coped with the school situation:

...The form threes or form fours and the older teen mothers easily cope with the school situations. They are aware of whatever they want in school and so, they strive to adjust to school life. Unlike the younger teen mothers who find it challenging to adjust to school, they battle so many things and are really disadvantaged... (HODG&C, 8)

From the excerpt HODG&C 8, the younger readmitted teenage mothers struggled to adjust to school life as compared to the older teen mothers. This is because younger readmitted teenage mothers did not know how cope with the dual responsibility of being a mother and a student at the same time. This brought them challenges on adjustment in school as compared to others. On the other hand, the older students had shown good progress in adjustment since they could multitask by being a mother and student at the same time. Age is important because younger and older adolescents may be different in emotional maturity and the emotional support system. The young teenage mothers may have more negative self-perceptions of parenting they lack the emotional and social maturity and the identity formation that adult mothers possess. The groups are at distinctly at different developmental stages necessitating specific approaches and interventions. In

concurrence with this finding one readmitted teenage mother had this to say:

...As a form four now, I am able to adjust well to school life though it's challenge learning with younger students. We... I know why am here, to get a grade that can take me somewhere. So I have to do my best irrespective of the difficult situations.... (TM, 8)

From the excerpt, it is evident that the older readmitted teenage mothers were more resilient and well-adjusted to their situations as compared to the younger teen mothers. The older teen mothers had developed good adjustment mechanism and they seemed to know what took them back to school. However, the young teen mothers were disadvantaged as they could not cope well in school environment. Amber (2008) revealed that there were no statistically significant differences for children of teenage mothers and the children of older teenage mothers. Devito (2007) found out that older, more educated adolescent mothers were more positive in self-perceptions of parenting, suggesting that older adolescents have different needs in terms of parenting than younger adolescent mothers which affect the level of adjustment.

Conclusion

Age is important in adjustment of both younger and older readmitted teenage mothers. This is because younger and older adolescents may be different in emotional maturity and the emotional support system. The young teenage mothers have more negative self-perceptions of parenting; they lack the emotional and social maturity and the identity formation that adult mothers possess. Young and older readmitted teenage mothers are distinctly at different developmental stages necessitating specific approaches and interventions. Age significantly influenced adjustment of readmitted teenage mothers in secondary schools. This is because the older readmitted teenage mothers showed better adjustment than the younger readmitted teenage mothers. The older teenage mothers were more focused and able to handle challenges and the responsibility of motherhood as compared to the younger teenage mothers. However, academically the younger teenage mothers showed a significant adjustment. This implied that they were able to fit in with the younger people in class and concerned about what they had lost in the past

Recommendations

- i. The teacher counselors should utilize relevant Cognitive and behavioral therapy techniques to help young teenage mothers adjust appropriately at school. This is because the study reported that many teenage mothers were traumatized by the pregnancy experience and needed coping and problem solving skills to enhance their thoughts, emotions and behaviour.
- ii. The Ministry of Education should sensitize the principles on the re-entry policy. This is because the study reported that most teenage mothers did not get proper orientation with regards to returning back to school and lack of clarity on re-entry policies among school personnel or the modalities of implementing them.

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