



## **An Investigation on the Causes of Teenage Pregnancies in Zambian Schools: A Case Study in Selected Schools of Sinda District in the Eastern Province, Zambia.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study endeavors to critically investigate on the causes and effects of Teenage pregnancies in three selected schools of Sinda District in Eastern province, Zambia. It was guided by the three research objectives: Identify the basic causes of teenage pregnancies, identify effects of teenage pregnancies and discuss on the measures to be put in place by the government in order to sensitize teenagers about the effects that may arise if they engage themselves in premarital sex and the way to curb the vice.

To carry out the research effectively, the method that was used was a non-probability sampling so as to obtain information from the people of the compound. Under, this method, a purposive method was used so as to make it possible for the researcher to interview people of their particular compounds respectively. This was done by asking the teachers, victims of teenage pregnancies and parents/guardians of victims questions on what they thought were the causes and effects of teenage pregnancy in their compound and the society at large with structured interviews. The researcher engaged 35 participants for the interviews, 8 teachers from each of the three schools and 6 parents/guardians of the school going children, two from each of the three schools and were randomly selected. In addition, five victims were also included in the sample and their responses were under qualitative data.

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### **KEYWORDS**

- ✓ Victims
- ✓ Endeavours
- ✓ Sensitization
- ✓ Premarital Sex
- ✓ Purposive Method
- ✓ Teenage-Pregnancies

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Teenage pregnancy has become a very serious social problem in Zambia, pregnancy under the age of twenty has been viewed as a catastrophe for individuals, family and society. Teenage pregnancy can be defined as a teenager or underage girl, usually within the age of 13-19, becoming pregnant. The term in everyday speech usually refers to women who have not reached legal adulthood which varies across the world who become pregnant (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2008). Teenage pregnancy also refers to a bodily process which includes conception, pregnancy and giving birth by an unmarried adolescent (Davids, 1989). Quantitatively teenage pregnancy as cited by WHO (2023) refers to the fertility rate or number of births per 1 000 women between the ages 15-19. Therefore, this study endeavours to critically substantiate on the causes and effects of teenage pregnancies and the appropriate measures that could help to curb the problem among girls in the three selected schools of Sinda District in Eastern Province in Zambia.

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### **METHODOLOGY**

This section presents an overview of the methods that were used in the study. It covers the research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedures, ethical consideration, research instruments, data collection techniques and analysis.

### ***Research design***

To start with, a research design is defined as a plan for conducting the research as cited by Oso & Onen (2011). It provides the framework that specifies the type of information to be collected, its sources and collection procedure. There are two types of research design, qualitative and quantitative research design. Niglas (2004) points out that, quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined at different stages of the research process in the study of the same phenomena. Therefore, the researcher used both in the quest to have balanced responses as qualitative approach is non-numeric and more text based while quantitative is numeric.

### ***Target population***

Population of the study is the total group to be studied and generalized about (Guthrie, 2010). Target population is the total number of subjects, or area of interest to the researcher. Therefore a target group for this study were teachers and parents/guardians of the school going children girls who are victims of teenage pregnancies and the victims of teenage pregnancies as they are believed to have first-hand information. Sinda as a district where this research was carried out has a population of 149,697. However, the population of each of the three case studies is unpublished thus making it difficult to come up with a combined population but it is estimated to be around 8 to 12 thousand. For the Schools, the estimated population of the three combined schools boys inclusive is around 1200.

### ***Sample Size***

According to Kothari (2004), a sample refers to selected individuals, things or events from the population; sample size is a representative fraction of a population. The sample size for this study consisted of 30 people. In addition, 5 more victims of teenage pregnancies were engaged.

### ***Sampling Procedure***

The study used purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Simple random sampling technique was used to select and provide each individual an equal chance of inclusion in the sample. Under simple random, the sampling technique that was used is purposive sampling so as to make it possible for the researcher to interview people of their particular compounds respectively. This was done by asking them interview questions on what they thought were the causes and effects of teenage pregnancy in their compound and the society at large. In sampling 30 people, 8 teachers from each of the three schools and 6 parents/guardians of the school going children two from each of the three schools were randomly selected. In addition, the sample also included five girls who have been affected (who became pregnant) in order to get first hand feelings and reasons from them as well).

### ***Ethical Consideration***

According to Guthrie (2010) it is an attestation from a research confirming its adherence to research ethical standards of professional behaviour. For ethical reasons, permission was sort from DMI St Eugene University and from the respondents if they could be interviewed and were further made aware that they were free to withdraw at any time during the interviews and were assured that the Interviews were purely for academic purposes hence their names were not going to be disclosed as such they were advised not to indicate their names on research instruments and that the findings were to be presented in a generalized format for confidentiality purposes.

### ***Research Instruments***

In collecting data for this study; questionnaires were used. Komb & Tromp (2006) defines a questionnaire as a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. Questionnaires have advantages over some other types of surveys in that they are cheap, do not require as much effort from the questioner as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers that make it simple to compile data. Ng'andu (2013), observes that Questionnaires may be a cost effective way of obtaining data from a large audience; for example, from large numbers of population.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

To start with, data collection is the systematic approach to gathering and measuring information from a variety of sources to get a complete and accurate picture of areas of interest (Guthrie, 2010). In this research, the techniques that were used to collect data were two sets of questionnaires and an interview guide. One set of questionnaires was for teachers and the other one was for the parents/guardians. Despite having two sets of questionnaires with a slight difference on the questions that were asked to the parents/guardians from the teachers, both questionnaires were structured with questions consisting of 15 questions divided into 3 sections A, B and C. Section A consisted of five questions seeking to answer the first research question. Section B also consisted of five questions covering the second research questions whereas section C consisted of five questions also answering the third research question. In addition, a report from each of the three selected schools was collected on the number of teenage pregnancies that were recorded.

### Data Management and Analysis

All gathered data and information were kept strictly confidential and only be accessed by researchers. The data was captured into Microsoft Excel 2016 and then exported to SPSS version 23. Descriptive categorical data was analyzed in the form of frequency graphs and tables.

#### Quantitative Data

On quantitative data, the collected information from the respondent on the causes and effects of teenage pregnancies were analyzed using computer software known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and then tabulated in percentages. As Quantitative design work with figures, the researcher engaged 30 people for interviews 6 parents/guardians and 24 teachers using simple random technique, the results gathered were rated in percentages. Apart from the interviews, the researcher also used the data retrieved from each of the three schools and rated the numbers in percentages.

#### Qualitative Data

On qualitative data, the researcher gathered information through simple observation as teenage aged girls were seen physically whilst the researcher was in the field. These teenagers who are victims of teenage pregnancies narrated what contributed to engaging themselves in premarital sex. Their responses were also measured in percentages.

#### Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the methodology that were used to collect data. It presented the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, ethical consideration research instruments, data collection techniques and data management and analysis.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

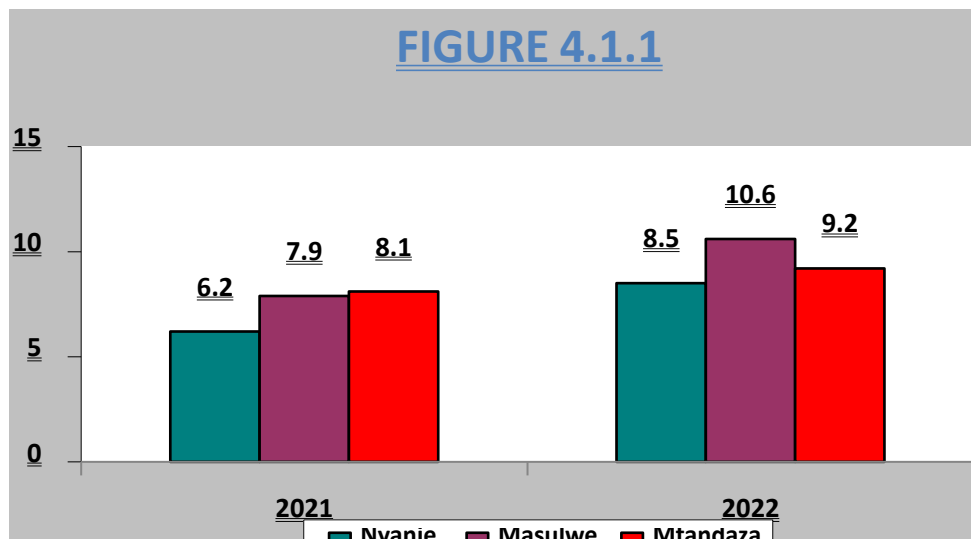
The research yielded the following data:

### 4.1.1 Cases of teenage pregnancies recorded in the three case studies.

Table 4.1.1 below shows the number of teenage pregnancies cases that were recorded in the three study cases from 2021 to 2022 as provided in each of the three schools.

School	Year		Percentage	
	2021	2022	2021	2022
Nyanje Day secondary	9/145	12/141	6.2	8.5
Masulwe Primary	9/113	11/104	7.9	10.6
Mtandaza Day secondary	7/86	8/87	8.1	9.2
<b>Total recorded</b>	<b>25/344</b>	<b>31/332</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>9.3</b>

The above data were analyzed using computer software known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and then tabulated in figure 4.1.1 in the bar chart as follows;



#### 4.1.2 Causes of teenage pregnancies.

Table 4.1.2 below shows the causes of teenage pregnancies. The information given below is from the interview that the researcher had with the respondents.

Risk factors	Number of respondent who agreed out of 30	Percentage
Lack of sex education	26	87
Peer pressure	18	60
Non-use of contraceptives	21	70
Broken homes	17	57
Substance abuse e.g. drugs and alcohol	18	60
Expulsion from school	15	50
Rape	12	40
Unrestricted interaction with the opposite sex	19	63
Social economic background	21	70
Migration from rural to urban	13	43
Total number and percentage	30	100

The above data on the causes of breast cancer were analyzed using computer software known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and then tabulated in figure 4.1.2 in the bar chart as follows:

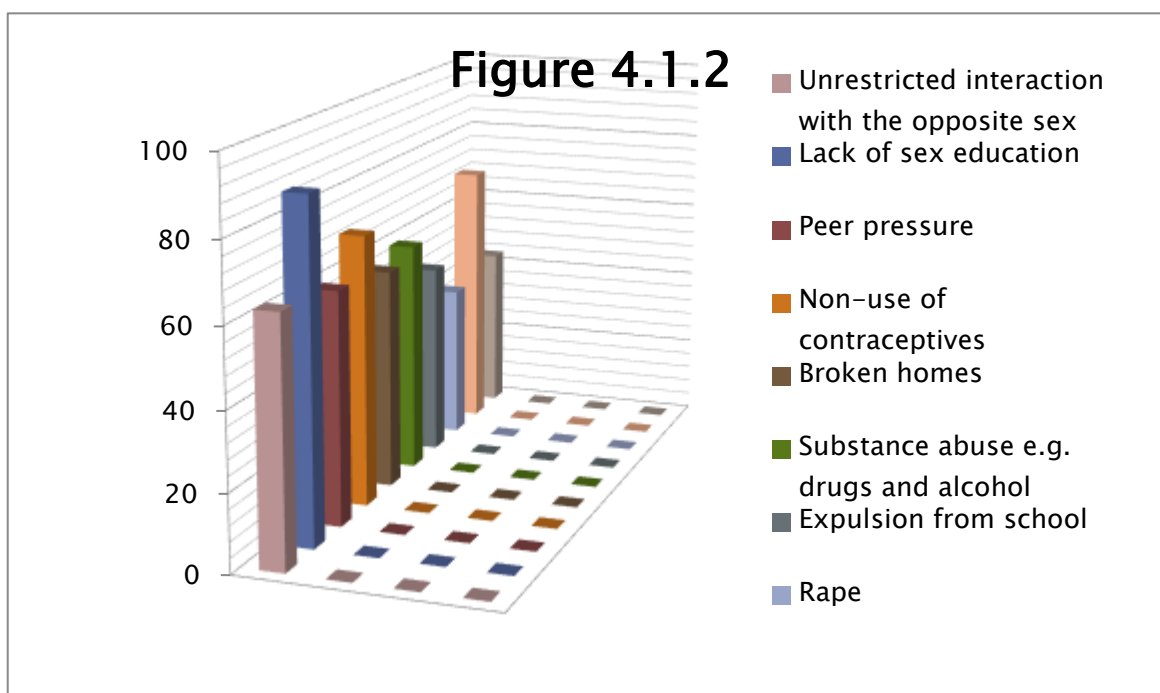


Figure 4.1.2 shows the causative factors of teenage pregnancies and their percentages.

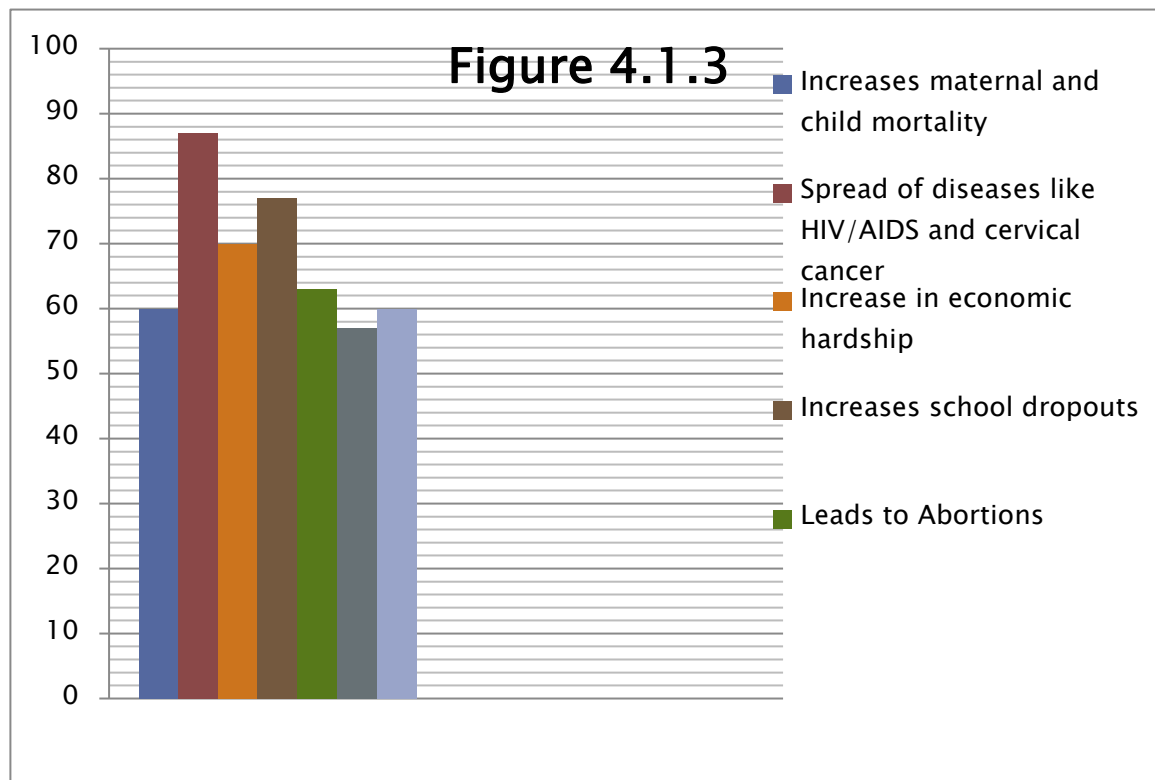
#### 4.1.3 Effects of teenage pregnancies.

Table 4.1.3 below shows the effects of teenage pregnancies. The information given below is from the interview that the researcher had with the respondents:

Effects	Number of respondent who agreed out of 30	Percentage
Increases maternal and child mortality	18	60
Spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS and cervical cancer	26	87
Increase in economic hardship	21	70
Increases school dropouts	23	77
Leads to abortions	19	63

Leads to depressions	17	57
Isolation and rejection by family and friends	18	60
Total number and percentage	30	100

The above data on the effects of teenage pregnancies were analyzed using computer software known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and then tabulated in figure 4.1.3 in the bar chart as follows:

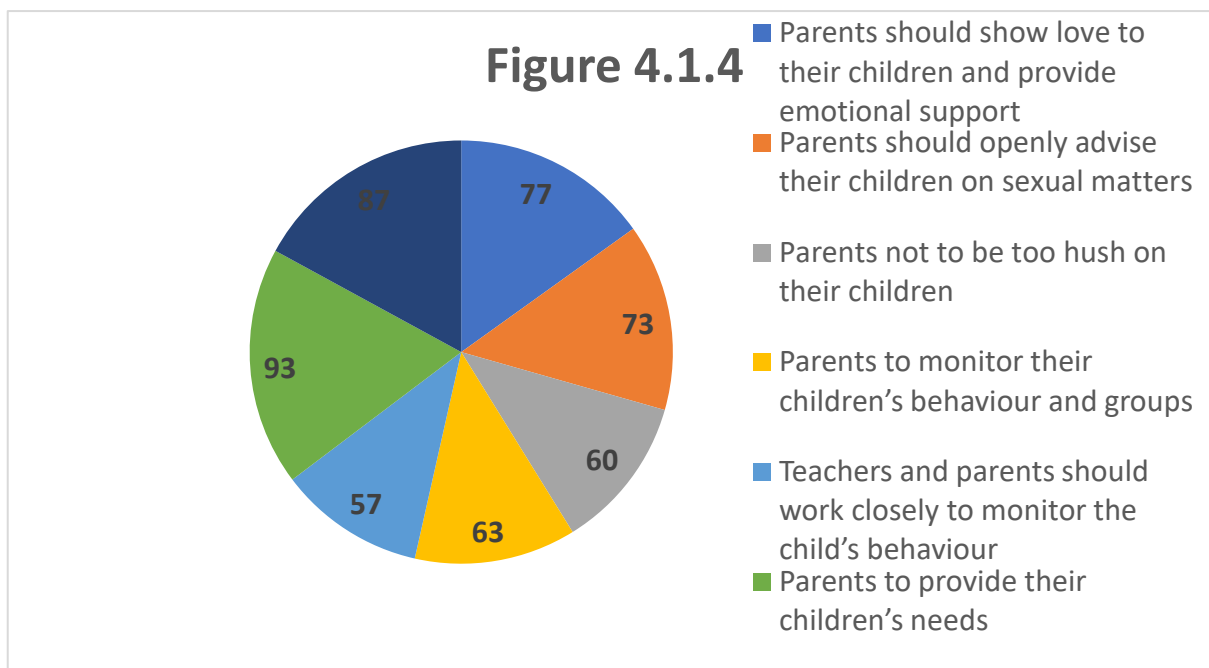


#### 4.1.4 Measures to be put in place to curb teenage pregnancies.

Table 4.1.4 below shows some of the suggested measures to be put in place in curbing the problem of teenage pregnancies. The information given below is from the interview that the researcher had with the respondents:

Measures to be put in place	Number of respondent who agreed out of 30	Percentage
Parents should show love to their children and provide emotional support	23	77
Parents should openly advise their children on sexual matters	22	73
Parents not to be too hush on their children	18	60
Parents to monitor their children's behaviour and groups	19	63
Teachers and parents should work closely	17	57
Parents to provide their children's needs	28	93
Teachers to be providing sex education	26	87
Total number and percentage	30	100

The above data on the suggested measures to be put in place in curbing the problem of teenage pregnancies were analyzed using computer software known as Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and then tabulated in figure 4.1.4 in the pie chart as follows:



## FINDINGS

From the findings of the study, cases of teenage pregnancies in three selected schools are on a rise from 7.3 percent recorded in 2021 to 9.3 percent in 2022 and the causative factors include: lack of sex education, having non-use of contraceptives, social economic background, unrestricted interaction with the opposite sex, substance abuse e.g. drugs and alcohol, Peer pressure, broken homes, expulsion from school, migration from rural to urban and rape. On the effects of teenage pregnancies, they include the following: spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS and cervical cancer, increases school dropouts, increase in economic hardship, leads to abortions, increases maternal and child mortality, isolation and rejection by family and friends and leads to depressions. The measures that are to be put in place include the following: need for parents/ guardians to provide their children needs, teachers to be providing sex education, the need by parents/ guardians to show love to their children and provide emotional support, Parents should openly advise their children on sexual matters, Parents should monitor their children's behaviour and groups, Parents should not be too hush on their children and need for teachers and parents to work close.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. Schools should embark on activities that build the capacity of students to reduce teenage pregnancies at individual level. This can be achieved through engaging school alumni and trained school student leaders (also known as prefects) as motivators and peer counselors, respectively, to empower girls and boys into avoiding early sex and prioritizing education to reduce teenage pregnancies at the social level
2. Schools should be involving parents and the community to openly advise their children and not shy away, sensitization of parents to support (especially) the girl child, counseling of both parents and learners about effects of early pregnancy and the responsibilities that come with it, community care and responsibility to keep girls in school.
3. On the part of the government, the government should embark on activities that build Capacity to reduce teenage pregnancies by training teachers through colleges and in-service education sessions on how to empower girls and about birth control methods.
4. Government should also create credit schemes and jobs for parents to help them financially support their children and vocational training in schools to keep girls interested in schooling and help them acquire practical skills from which they could earn money. This may help reduce teenage pregnancies that are caused due to financial challenges.
5. The Ministry of Education should embark on activities that build capacity to reduce teenage pregnancies at economic level. This can be achieved through advising teacher training institutions to incorporate different vocational skills in their curriculum so that qualifying teachers can train students who can then earn a living.
6. The government should construct more schools and allowing earlier afternoon dismissal to facilitate student's safe return home as physical environmental factors to help prevent early pregnancies.

7. Schools should make sure that teenage programs be tailored to the needs of individual communities and include health promotion information and advice, especially on risk taking behaviour.

8. Parents should not be too harsh on teenagers but they should be approachable so that the children can confide with them whenever there is a pressure from peers.

10. Teenagers should be taught about the consequences of engaging in sex at the early stage of their lives and parents should stand at best to meet the needs of the teenage child.

11. Teachers and parents should work closely, teachers should develop the interest of knowing their learner's parents in order to have interaction on their children. This will make the learners have interest in school and behave well knowing that they will be reported if they do not behave well. Garland (1993) highlighted that poor teacher student relations, textbooks, other learning and teaching materials and requirements cause students to leave classes.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Teenage pregnancy is a public health, social and economic problem that is associated with social exclusion which leads to school dropout among teenagers, loss of school interest, economic burden, death, operation and abortions, STIs, increase number of street kids and rejections from those responsible as well as early marriage. The causes of teenage pregnancy can be as a result of socio-economic background, lack of sex education, early marriage and gender roles, non- used of contraceptives during sexual intercourse and peer pressure. The effects of teenage pregnancies do not only affect teenagers but also the family members and the society as a whole.

The effects of those mentioned above on teenage are: incompleteness of education, financial handicap, health risk, isolation and rejection by parents, friends and community as well as lack of love, affection and care from both parents. Other effects include: low-birth weight babies and premature births, divorces resulting from early marriages, abortions, depression and suicidal ideation.

It can also be concluded that teenage pregnancy is not something that comes out of nowhere but is as a result of many factors such as peer groups, poverty, lack of financial support, lack of love and affection from parents and guardians, environmental influence, and defilement and rape, prostitution, irresponsible parents, and disobedient are all the causes of teenage pregnancy among teenagers.

Therefore, it is of good interest that the government and parents or guardians develop a learning package that can be used to teach teenagers both boys and girls on issues concerning sex and safer sex. And more especially parents have to be restrictive on the things that they let their children do. And finally, the government should develop a number of programs that will support and teach the teenagers on these issues.

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