

Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on Girls' Primary and Secondary Education in Narok County

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Abstract

Teenage pregnancy remains a major barrier to girls' educational participation and attainment in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. This study examined the psychological, social, economic, and health effects of teenage pregnancy on girls' primary and secondary education in Narok County, Kenya. A mixed-method, cross-sectional research design was applied across Narok Central and Transmara East sub-counties. Data were collected from 440 schoolgirls across 24 schools, alongside key informants including head teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, parents, community leaders, and health workers. Quantitative data were analyzed using regression and correlation techniques, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. Findings revealed statistically significant relationships between teenage pregnancy and negative educational outcomes across all four effect domains. Psychological distress, stigma, economic hardship, and health complications were strongly associated with reduced attendance, poor performance, and school dropout. The study highlights the importance of integrated interventions, including counselling, mentorship, supportive school environments, and community sensitization. Strengthened cross-sector collaboration is recommended to improve retention and completion rates among affected girls.

Keywords: Teenage Pregnancy, Girls' Education, School Retention, Adolescent Health, Stigma, Kenya

Introduction

Teenage pregnancy continues to present a significant challenge to girls' education globally, particularly in developing regions where socioeconomic and cultural vulnerabilities are pronounced. Early pregnancy is associated with interrupted schooling, reduced academic achievement, and diminished long-term socioeconomic opportunity. Despite expanded access to basic education, many adolescent girls remain at risk of school discontinuation due to pregnancy-related factors.

In Kenya, adolescent pregnancy remains a persistent concern, especially in rural and marginalized counties. Narok County has recorded comparatively high teenage pregnancy prevalence alongside lower-than-average indicators for girls' retention and completion. Contributing factors include poverty, cultural practices, early marriage, stigma, and limited access to reproductive health information and adolescent-friendly services.

Although policy frameworks support school re-entry after pregnancy, implementation gaps remain. This study investigates how teenage pregnancy affects girls' participation and outcomes in primary and secondary education in Narok County and identifies existing mitigation mechanisms.

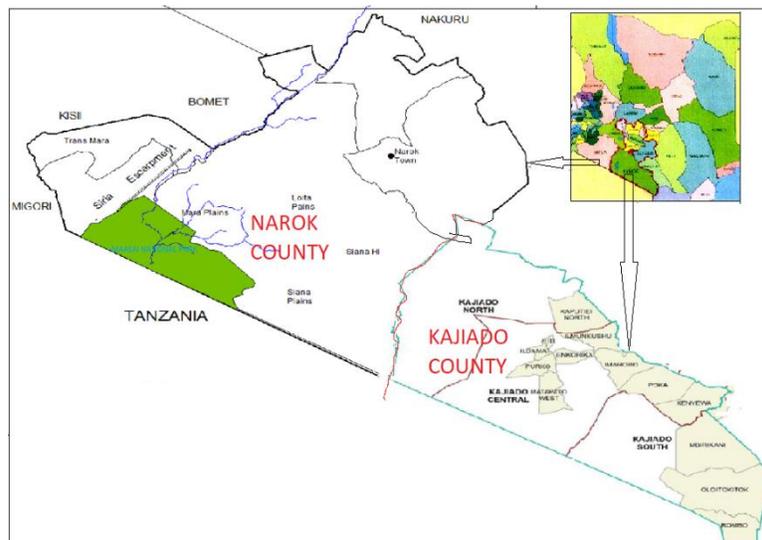


Figure 1: Study Area Map

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to:

- Examine the psychological effects of teenage pregnancy on girls' education.
- Determine the social effects of teenage pregnancy on girls' education.
- Assess the economic effects of teenage pregnancy on girls' education.
- Evaluate the health effects of teenage pregnancy on girls' education.
- Identify mitigation mechanisms supporting affected learners.

Research Questions

- To what extent do the psychological effects of teenage pregnancies affect girls' primary and secondary school education in Narok County?
- To what extent do the social effects of teenage pregnancies affect girls' primary and secondary school education in Narok County?
- To what extent do the economic effects of teenage pregnancies affect girls' primary and secondary school education in Narok County?
- How does the health of pregnant teenage girls' affect their primary and secondary school education in Narok County?
- Which are the existing mechanisms to mitigate the effects of teenage pregnancies on girls' education in Narok County?

Hypotheses

- H₁ There is a significant relationship between psychological effects of teenage pregnancy and girls' education
- H₀ There is no significant relationship between social effects of teenage pregnancy and girls' education
- H₁ There is a significant relationship between social effects of teenage pregnancy and girls' education
- H₀ There is no significant relationship between economic effects of teenage pregnancy and girls' education
- H₁ There is a significant relationship between economic effects of teenage pregnancy and girls' education
- H₀ There is no significant relationship between health effects of teenage pregnancy and girls' education
- H₁ There is a significant relationship between health effects of teenage pregnancy and girls' education

Significance of Study

This study sought to determine the effects of adolescent pregnancies on girls' education in primary and secondary school, as well as the psychological, social, health, and economic implications of these events. In order to improve girls' education, actions aimed at addressing teenage pregnancies were informed by the findings of this study. Girls' re-entry into basic education, psychosocial assistance, and policy formation were influenced by the data. The government aims to reduce adolescent pregnancy from 18% to 10% by 2025 and to eliminate it by 2030, the data and subsequent initiatives contribute towards attainment of this goal. Additionally, it will educate important stakeholders about teenage pregnancies.

The findings of this study inform the acceleration of achievement of the national, regional and global educational targets on gender parity, equity and building resilience in education.

Limitations of the Study

The study was constrained by the language and cultural features of the Narok County communities. However, by hiring translators specifically for the community leaders' concentrated group conversations, these restrictions will be lessened. The researcher explained the cultural aspects and clarified that the goal of the study was to support girls' transition into and completion of school rather than to oppose culture. The fear of negative consequences from peers, friends or parents impacted the collection of sufficient and

trustworthy data from teachers. The respondents received assurances of confidentiality and using local education and administrative officials helped improve relationships with them.

Scope (Delimitations) of the Study

The study was carried out in two sub counties of Narok County and in 24 selected primary and secondary schools. It sought to establish the psychological, social, economic and health effects of teenage pregnancies on girls' in primary and secondary education in Narok County. Existing interventions were identified for purposes of recommending more actions on preventing teenage pregnancies among girls in basic education.

Assumptions

The assumption will be that the study would generate reliable and valid data that can be used to generalize the effects of teenage pregnancies on girls' education in the whole of Narok county.

Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by Ecological Systems Theory and the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping. Ecological Systems Theory explains how individual development is shaped by interacting systems including family, school, community, and broader cultural structures. Teenage pregnancy outcomes are therefore understood as influenced by layered environmental factors rather than individual behavior alone.

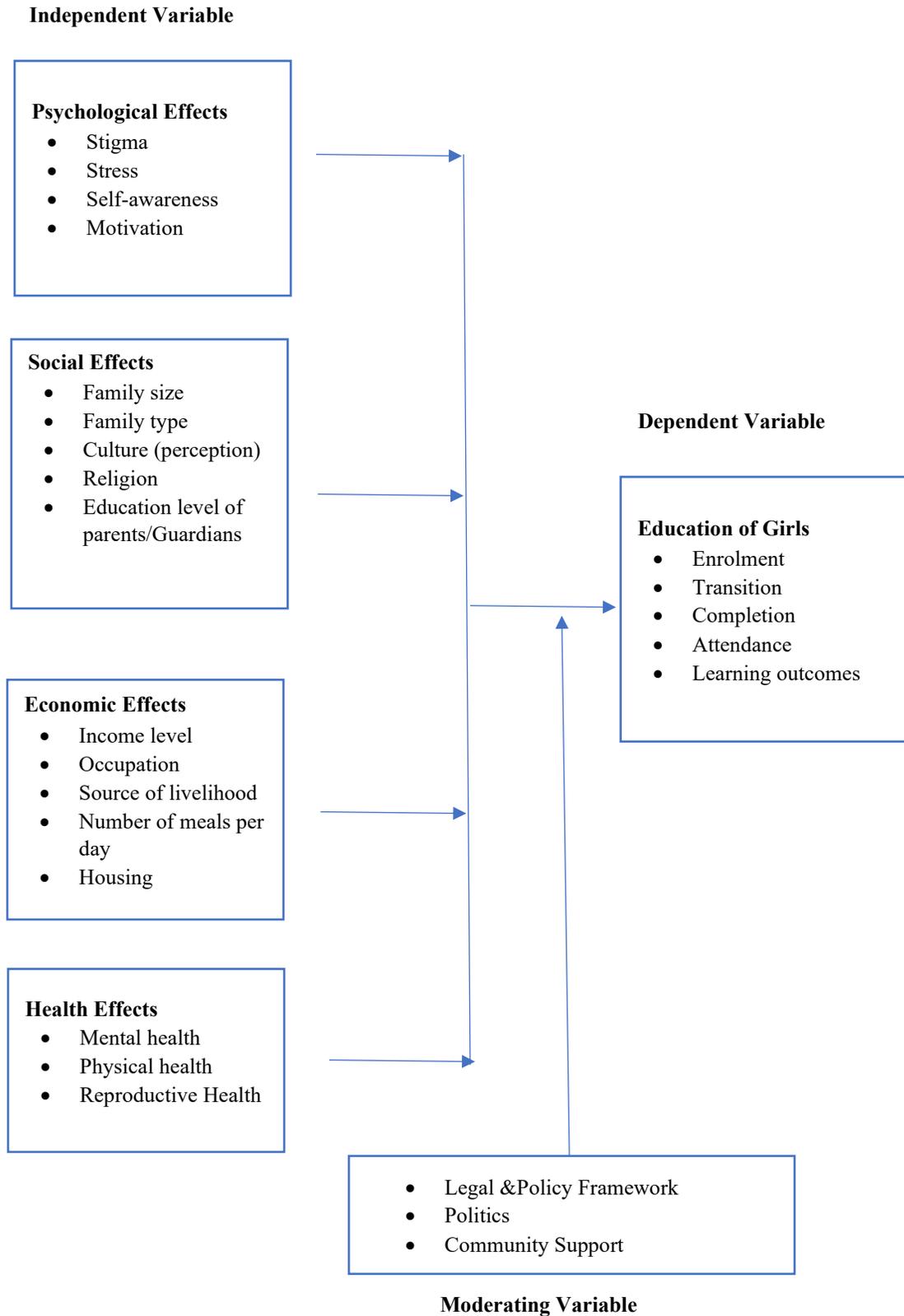


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

According to Bronfenbrenner, the chronosystem is the final environmental sub-system (1979). It includes every aspect of time, including how the environment changes over time, how cultures evolve, how big a family gets, and where a person is in relation to history (Hook, 2002). This will probably affect the pregnant girl's self-perception and the actions she takes. The Bronfenbrenner theory makes it clear that teen moms need all the assistance from their surroundings in order to cope with being pregnant.

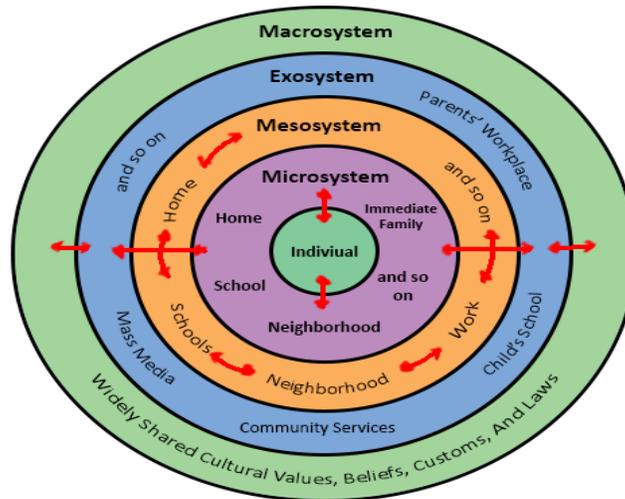


Figure 3: Environmental Subsystems

Although the theory recognizes that people are shaped by their surroundings, it falls short of offering a thorough framework for comprehending how people deal with and adjust to problems such as teenage pregnancy. It might not be sufficient to explain why some teenage mothers manage their education and financial security while others have difficulty. It is on this background that the study utilized the Transactional Theory of Coping with Stress

The Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping explains how individuals interpret stressful events and respond based on perceived resources and support systems. This framework helps explain variation in how pregnant learners cope with schooling demands and whether they persist or withdraw. Together, these frameworks support a multi-level interpretation of pregnancy-related educational disruption.

Methodology

Research Design

The study applied a mixed-method descriptive cross-sectional design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This allowed measurement of statistical relationships while also capturing lived experiences and stakeholder perspectives.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Narok Central and Transmara East sub-counties of Narok County, Kenya, areas identified with elevated teenage pregnancy prevalence and educational vulnerability indicators.

Target Population

The target population comprised girls aged 13–19 enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Key informants included school leaders, teachers, parents, community leaders, and health personnel.

Sample Size and Sampling

A sample of 440 girls was selected from 24 schools using stratified and purposive sampling. School categories were balanced between primary and secondary institutions. Key informants were purposively selected based on role and relevance.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection tools included:

- Structured questionnaires for learners
- Key informant interview guides
- Focus group discussion guides
- School and administrative records

Validity and Reliability

Instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Content validity was ensured through expert review, pilot testing, and alignment with prior literature and policy indicators.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards included informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and cultural sensitivity. Research permissions were obtained from relevant national and county authorities.

Results

Regression analysis showed statistically significant relationships between all four effect domains and education outcomes:

- Psychological effects: $F(1, 440) = 14.962, p < .001, R^2 = .033$
- Social effects: $F(1, 440) = 25.694, p < .001, R^2 = .055$
- Economic effects: $F(1, 440) = 12.906, p < .001, R^2 = .066$
- Health effects: $F(1, 440) = 74.546, p < .001, R^2 = .145$

All null hypotheses were rejected. Results indicate that psychological, social, economic, and health effects of teenage pregnancy significantly influence girls' primary and secondary education outcomes.

Demographic Data

Age of respondents

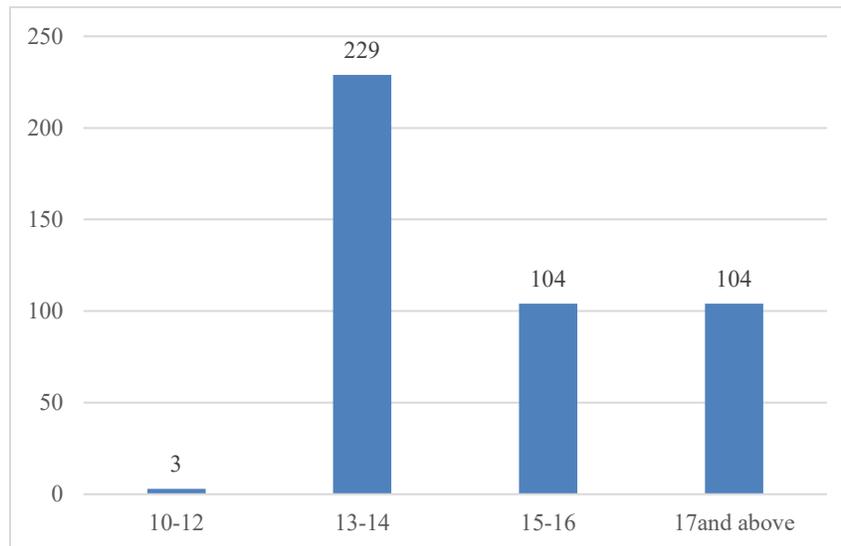


Figure 4: Age of respondents

The data presented sheds light on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in various age groups. Given the pre-adolescent character of this group, the three respondents in the age range of 10 to 12 indicate an early onset of teenage pregnancies, which is cause for concern.

The data indicates a significant rise in adolescent pregnancies throughout the early stages of adolescence, with 229 respondents in the 13–14 age range.

The data shows 104 respondents of teen girls are in the age range of 15 to 16. Despite being lower than the 13–14 age group, this number is nonetheless noteworthy because teenage girls in this mid-adolescent stage are still vulnerable to the difficulties that come with teenage pregnancies. Additionally, the data shows 104 occurrences involving girls who were 17 years of age or older, highlighting the fact that vulnerability persists into late adolescence. Comprehending the distinct age ranges that fall into this category is crucial in customizing interventions to cater to the distinct requirements of older adolescents. This could indicate the impact teen pregnancy has on girls education as they spent more years in school attributed to repeating classes due pregnancy.

The information emphasizes how girls across a range of age groups are particularly vulnerable to teenage pregnancies. Targeted interventions that take into account the unique challenges and developmental phases associated with each age group are necessary to address this issue. The higher rates in the early and mid-adolescent phases emphasize how urgent it is to put preventative and educational measures in place at these critical points in time.

Type of School

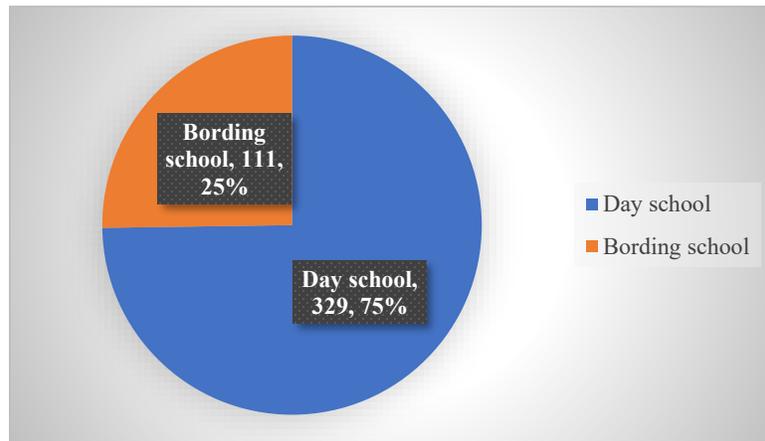


Figure 5: Type of school

This indicates that the majority of respondents, 74.8%, attend day schools, on the other hand, 25.2% of respondents attend boarding schools. The data reveals that the majority of the sample attends day schools, constituting 74.8% of the respondents. In contrast, 25.2% of the respondents attend boarding schools. The responses from a sample of 440 people on various statements about reproductive health, safe relationships, counseling services, and assistance for teenage girls are summarized in these descriptive data.

A more nuanced view of the subsequent responses regarding reproductive health, safe relationships, counseling services, and support for teenage females is made possible by the sample being divided based on the kind of school attended. The distinctive characteristics and experiences connected to day schools as opposed to boarding schools may have an impact on differences in these viewpoints.

These particulars, in essence, not only give an overview of the respondents' distribution throughout educational environments, but they also lay the groundwork for an in-depth review of the study's conclusions, taking into account the possible influence of the learning environment on the attitudes and viewpoints that the participants shared.

Number Of Pregnancy in the Past Three Academic Years in Narok Central

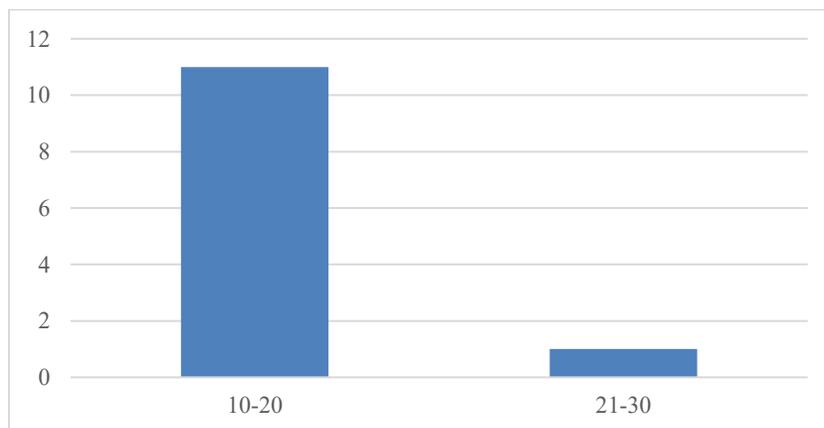


Figure 6 Number of Pregnancy in the past three academic years in Narok Central

Over the previous three academic years, there have been cases of pregnancy among students in Narok Central, according to the data. The larger percentage of instances in the 10–20 age range would indicate that a sizable fraction of pregnancies involve those within the earlier age range. Targeted interventions and support services that acknowledge the particular needs and difficulties faced by students in different age groups may be beneficial in efforts to address and prevent teenage pregnancy in educational settings. Even while access to healthcare and educational resources is frequently greater in urban locations, the prevalence of teenage pregnancy indicates that there may still be obstacles or other variables impacting students' decisions regarding their reproductive health. The prevalence of teenage pregnancy in urban areas indicates that issues with reproductive health and education persist even in places with comparatively greater access to resources. The unique dynamics and difficulties of urban living may need to be taken into account in efforts to address and prevent teenage pregnancies in places like Narok Central. In order to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies and improve overall wellbeing, it may be crucial to provide customized interventions, comprehensive sex education, and support services that cater to the unique needs of students in urban environments.

The Economic Effects of Teenage Pregnancies on Girls' Primary and Secondary School Education in Narok County

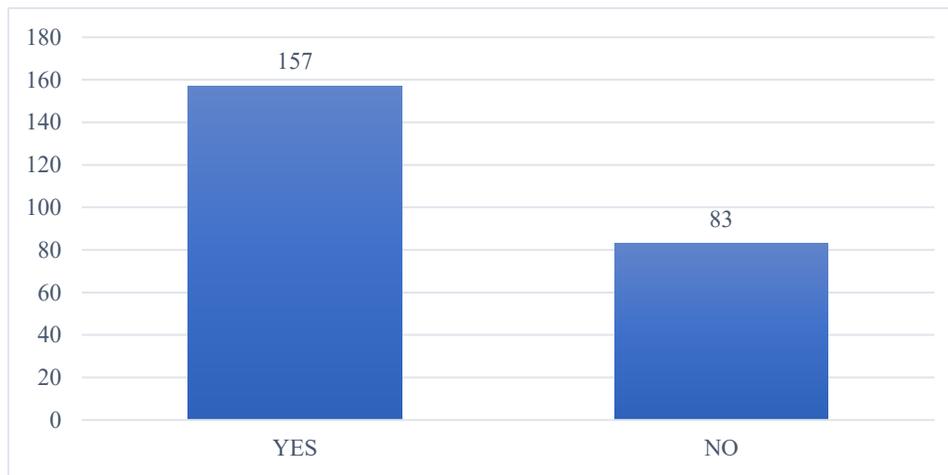


Figure 7: Difficulties in meeting basic needs

Indeed (157) of the respondents suggests that a sizable fraction of adolescent girls in the rural Trans Mara East setting experience difficulties meeting for their basic needs. However, 83 instances show that teenage girls in the same rural environment do not have trouble getting by on their basic needs. According to the findings, a significant proportion of teenage girls in Trans Mara East experience difficulties meeting their basic needs. Their inability to obtain basic resources may make them more vulnerable to teenage pregnancy. This increased susceptibility could be caused by a number of things, such as limited access to healthcare, income and education. Girls may experience more pressure to get into early marriages or relationships in situations where their fundamental needs are not being satisfied, which may raise the number of teenage pregnancies. One of the guiding and counselling teachers in a focused group discussion affirmed the information by saying:

"Most girls here come from poor backgrounds. Their parents are not able to cater for the basic need, this is one of the factors contributing to teen pregnancies in Trans Mara East. I will urge the government or well-wishes to provide sanitary pads to all learners and other essentials for the girls so that they don't seek help from men". (FGD1-G&C teacher)

The hypotheses were tested using regression analysis to establish the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables.

Table 1: Effects of teenage pregnancy on Girl's Education

Hypothesis	Regression weights	Beta Coefficient	R ²	F	P-value	Hypothesis supported
H ₁	Psychological effects on education outcomes	2.884	.033	14.962	.000	Yes
H ₂	Social effects on education outcomes	2.954	.055	25.694	.000	Yes
H ₃	Economic effects on education outcomes	4.064	.066	12.906	.000	Yes
		2.222	.145	74.546	.000	Yes

Note $p < 0.05$

The dependent variable education outcomes was regressed on independent variable psychological effects of teenage pregnancy to test H₁. The regression equation was statistically significant. $F(1, 440) = 14.962$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .033$, Adjusted $R^2 = .031$. H₂ the regression equation was also statistically significant. $F(1, 440) = 25.694$, $R^2 = .055$, Adjusted $R^2 = .053$, $p < .001$. H₃, $F(1, 440) = 12.906$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .066$ Adjusted $R^2 = .066$. H₄ $F(1, 440) = 74.546$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .145$ Adjusted $R^2 = .143$ which indicates that psychological, social, economic and health effects of teenage pregnancy significantly affect education outcomes of Girls primary and secondary education. The table shows the summary of the findings. These findings indicate that girls' primary and secondary school education outcomes are statistically significantly impacted by the psychological, social, economic, and health effects of teenage pregnancy. The results of each hypothesis' regression models imply that these influences have a role in the differences in educational outcomes. The gradually rising R^2 values for each of the hypotheses point to the possible compounding influence of several variables on educational outcomes.

Some Captions from the Participants During the Study

"We need in-service courses as guidance and counselling teachers to enhance our skills so as expose us on emerging issues on reproductive health (FGD4, Transmara East)"

"In this community, education is not taken as important as the key wealth is based on cows. Further, educated women are seen as assertive and the men in the community do not like that hence do not support education of women. Most of them are happy when their girls get pregnant as they will be given cows as a form of dowry". (FGD4, Narok Central)

"I consistently arrive at school late due to my responsibility of caring for my child in the morning. Additionally, I leave school early as the child is still in the breastfeeding stage. During the evening, I wait for my child to fall asleep before commencing my homework and other school-related tasks. As a result, when I arrive at school, I am invariably fatigued due to insufficient sleep". (FGD1, Teen mother Transmara East)

I want to highlight the profound social repercussions of teenage pregnancy, underscoring the enmity and disrespect faced by families affected by this issue. It's disheartening to witness the blame game and labelling that often accompany such situations, leading to increased family strife and instability. It's crucial to recognize that these challenges don't only impact the teenage girls directly involved but also cast a shadow on the well-being of their mothers. (FGDI- Nyumba Kumi Elders)

I've observed a troubling reality that weighs heavily on my heart. It's disheartening to witness the unmet needs of our young girls, a circumstance that renders them susceptible to exploitation. The absence of fulfilment in various aspects of their lives creates a vulnerability that certain individuals are quick to exploit.

The young mothers' mental health suffers as a result of teen pregnancy. According to the findings, these mothers frequently deal with stress, depression, and even suicide thoughts. Self-pity is exacerbated by cultural constraints and the difficulties of juggling parenting and education. The family's general well-being is impacted by the mental health effects, which go beyond the mothers.

"The fear of being judged by others is a persistent concern. I get lonely and worried about people's opinions all the time, especially my schoolmates." In terms of coping, a strong circle of support is invaluable. I found school counseling helpful, and my family has been understanding." (Part I FDG-teen mothers)

"The pregnancy was physically difficult. Medical trips forced me to miss lessons, and I was surprised by how long postpartum recuperation took. It is difficult to balance education and health. My fear for my baby's health interferes with my ability to concentrate in class. At first, I had trouble getting access to healthcare, but the school helped put me in touch with nearby clinics, and they have been

Psychological Effects

Psychological distress was strongly associated with reduced educational outcomes. Respondents reported anxiety, shame, depression, fear, and low self-esteem. Regression analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between psychological effects and educational performance ($p < .001$).

Qualitative findings indicated that stigma and emotional distress reduced concentration, attendance, and classroom participation.

Social Effects

Social stigma emerged as a major barrier to school continuation. Pregnant learners frequently experienced peer discrimination, community judgment, and inconsistent teacher support. Cultural attitudes and early marriage pressures further reduced retention. Family support varied significantly and was a key differentiator in whether girls returned to school.

Economic Effects

Economic vulnerability increased both pregnancy risk and dropout likelihood. Many respondents reported difficulty meeting basic needs. Poverty contributed to transactional relationships and limited access to essential school resources.

Economic effects showed a statistically significant association with educational outcomes ($p < .001$).

Health Effects

Health challenges included pregnancy complications, fatigue, and postpartum recovery, contributing to absenteeism and disengagement. Limited adolescent-friendly maternal health services further constrained support access. Health effects were significantly associated with reduced school participation ($p < .001$).

Discussion

Findings demonstrate that teenage pregnancy affects girls' education through interconnected psychological, social, economic, and health pathways. These effects are mutually reinforcing and consistent with multi-system theoretical models. Variation in outcomes reflects differences in support systems, coping resources, and school environments. The results align with prior regional and international studies linking adolescent pregnancy with dropout risk and long-term disadvantage.

Conclusion

Teenage pregnancy significantly undermines girls' primary and secondary educational outcomes in Narok County. The effects are multidimensional and statistically significant. Without coordinated intervention, affected learners face persistent educational exclusion.

Recommendations

- Expand school counselling and mentorship programs
- Train teachers in supportive inclusion practices
- Strengthen re-entry and retention systems
- Scale community stigma-reduction campaigns
- Improve education–health sector coordination
- Provide targeted economic support to vulnerable learners
- Strengthen life-skills and reproductive health education

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