

# Teenage Motherhood Myths: The Academic and Social Perception and the Realities of Teenage Mothers Getting back to School after having a Child.

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## Introduction

A complex aspect of modern society, teenage motherhood is a global phenomena that affects both industrialized and developing nations (Treffer, 2017). (Lucker, 2017). Teenage parenthood is still a barrier to education for girls and young women in developing nations ( Eloudou, 2018).

Theron and Dunn (2016) contend that adolescent pregnancy is particularly disruptive to the educational process of girls and, as a result, many teen mothers leave school and never return. Kaufman (2019) asserts that both teenage pregnancy and parenting are the leading reasons girls give for dropping out of school. When a girl in her teenage years becomes a mother as a result of becoming pregnant, this is known as teenage motherhood (Brady et al., 2017). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 5.5 million of the 16 million girls who become pregnant each year do so in sub-Saharan Africa (Global Giving, 2012; Were, 2017).

In developing nations, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest numbers of teenage mothers (Were, 2019), and in Kenya, approximately 13000 girls leave school each year due to teenage motherhood (Lowen, 2017). The United States of America (USA) leads in the rates of teenage mothers, while Japan and South Korea are the least affected (UNDP, 2017). Education is regarded as a fundamental human right all across the world. Everyone has the right to education, according to

Article 26 of the (Human Rights Declaration), and education should be free at least at the elementary and fundamental schooling stages. Investments in education can promote economic growth, boost productivity, contribute to national and social development, and reduce social inequality because education is the cornerstone of economic, social, and political development in any country (World Bank, 2011).

Educational economists have long held the belief that increased educational attainment would result in faster economic growth, greater wealth and income distribution, greater equality of opportunity, access to skilled labor, a decline in population growth, longer life expectancy, better health outcomes, lower crime rates, and greater political stability (Schultz, 1998). The majority of children that are not in school around the world are girls, and they have difficulties acquiring an education. In 2006, there were 75 million primary school-aged children who were not enrolled in school; by 2015, that number had increased to 101 million, and the majority of these children (88%) are from Africa and Asia (UNICEF, 2019).

However, there are still significant disparities in several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with only 16% of girls participating in secondary school in Ethiopia compared to 28% of boys (Murphy and Carr, 2007). Meena (2001) claims that the governments of Sub-Saharan countries are not

doing much to close the gaps in secondary education access for girls, who are also denied access to education when they become pregnant or teen moms. According to Govender and Steven (2004), education is the engine of any healthy economy and a prerequisite for both social and economic development; as a result, it creates opportunities and gives societies access to a more educated and skilled labor force, which is essential for promoting development.

Uganda is fifth in Africa for exclusion due to pregnancy (Onyango et al, 2015). The education policy in Uganda favors inclusive education and education for all students, regardless of their sex, religion, gender, or other affiliations. Since each country's economic and social progress depends on its labor population, inclusive education should take priority in order to meet both national development goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Motherhood is socially construed as a source of shame, dishonor, and punishment via expulsion, according to Bhana and Mcambi (2013). In the absence of a formal re-entry policy, Okwany and Kamusiime (2016) emphasize that it is standard practice to expel any pregnant students from classes. Suspension and expulsion continue to be frequent notwithstanding the goodwill statements and circulars from the Ministry of Education to schools. According to Nyariro (2018), there is a gender gap in the education of girls due to a multitude of cultural and socioeconomic variables. Teenage pregnancies nevertheless contribute to the disparities that numerous educational measures attempt to eliminate.

Teenage pregnancy and motherhood are socially construed as shameful behaviors that are penalized by expulsion, according to Bhana and Mcambi (2013). In the absence of a formal re-entry policy, Okwany and Kamusiime (2016) emphasize that it is standard practice to expel any pregnant students from classes. Suspension and expulsion continue to be frequent notwithstanding the good will statements and circulars from the Ministry of Education to schools. According to Birungi et al. (2015), one of the countries South of the Sahara with a draft National School Health Policy that allows for re-entry is Uganda. Suspension, expulsion, and re-entry at different schools are the reported procedures.

The East Central area has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in the nation (31.6%), followed by the Eastern region (30.1%), Karamoja (29.7%), and West Nile (26.4%). The major city in the subregion, Lira, is located about 36 kilometers to the southwest of Aduku subcounty. According to Bantebya et al. (2013), prolonged poverty and societal norms surrounding child marriage have a significant negative impact on Aduku's ability to educate girls. According to Mumbango (2015), adolescent pregnancy and childbearing are a severe social issue that endangers the health advancements of society by threatening the spread of HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, neglect, abortions, newborn and maternal mortality, as well as the education of girls.

### Statement of the problem

Teenage pregnancy is a widespread issue that affects both developed and developing nations and prevents girls and young women from pursuing an education. Due to the disruption that adolescent pregnancy causes to a girl's ability to learn, many teenage mothers drop out of school and never return. As a result of education raising girls' self-esteem and elevating their standing in their homes and communities, girls who stay in school longer are less likely to become pregnant. The adolescent fertility/birth rate in Uganda, which is estimated at 134 per 1000 women aged 15 to 19, is among the highest in the Eastern Africa region (UBOS, 2011). Teenage motherhood rates are particularly high in the East Central, Eastern, and Karamoja regions, according to the National strategy to end child marriage and teenage pregnancies, a child is meant to be a key step towards the attainment of basic education for teenage mothers. However, Despite the government's broader aim to improve the education of the girl child, re-entry policy has not always been an easy matter due to the moral stigma associated with teenage motherhood. It is intended to be a crucial step towards the attainment of basic education for young moms. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how teenage motherhood affected the academic performance of returning young mothers to school.

The main purpose of the study explore the academic and social experiences of teenage mothers getting back to school after having a child.

### Findings

The study's findings about how the community

views teen mothers who have gone back to school revealed that because their needs are specific and long-term, only one program can adequately address them. As a result, teen mothers were linked to other support programs during the implementation of policy because of this. The study's findings revealed that because teen mothers experience so many problems, no one program can solve the issues they face when they return to school. One of the responses emphasized this, noting that;

*“It is very hard for the program to be sufficient to solve the needs of the mothers who return to school, this is because this program has a lot of weaknesses in it that are not addressed in the policy”*

The findings of the study as well revealed that stigma was one of the factors that deter teenage mothers from re-joining school. The study findings revealed that the community holds very stigma concerning the mothers who return to school, they look at them as greatly deviant individuals who should not be allowed to associate with the rest of the pupils in the community. One of the respondents of the study noted that;

*“The teen mothers who have returned to school should be allowed to study with the rest of the pupils in school, this is because these teen mothers should be having different thoughts, ideas and opinions about everything in the community so putting them back with the mainstream pupils distracts the attention and performance of other learners.”*

The findings of the study as well revealed that the environment at school for girls who return to school after childbirth was quite unfriendly. The respondents revealed that the girls who return are usually faced with a challenge of a very unpleasant environment to support learning among teen mothers who return to school. One of the respondents of the study revealed that;

*“Teen mothers who return to school must be availed with a very present environment that*

#### **Teenage motherhood and academic experiences.**

The findings of the study regarding the psychosocial impact of teenage motherhood on academic performance of teenage mothers returnees revealed that teen mothers who re-entered

*supports breastfeeding as well as properly looking after the needs of the mothers and the babies at all the time”*

Further still the participants highlighted that insufficient knowledge about sex education lowers one's self esteem on discussing issues about sexuality which puts them at a risk of getting pregnant since they cannot determine a particular decision on whether or not to use protection. It was noted from the findings of the study that limited self-esteem among the teens limits them from expressing themselves regarding sex and sexuality as they cannot raise their voices on issues like condom use or when to and not to have sex this therefore leaves the teens victims of teenage pregnancy. One of the respondents said that;

*“Most of the teens in this community lack self-esteem that can help them express themselves regarding the different issues about sex and sexuality in the community, most of the youth are completely unaware of the various birth control methods that they can use in overcoming teenage pregnancy”*

The findings show that the majority of respondents mentioned that sex education knowledge influences contraceptive knowledge and use. It was noted that teenagers with knowledge about sex education are well informed about the various contraceptives such as condoms, pills, injections and other natural methods of family planning which they use and never when still teens. Regarding this one of the respondents noted that;

*“I know of various birth control methods that I use and they help me get rid of unwanted pregnancies for example at times I usually use emergency pills that I swallow every time I feel like having sex and at other times I use condoms and these also greatly help me to overcome teenage pregnancy”*

This therefore implies that most teenage mothers are aware of various birth control methods that they can use which concurs with what the community thinks about teenage mothers that they are aware of birth control methods.

school face a challenge of stigmatization or biased perception. They were unfavorably judged relative to their fellow pupils. The participant teen mothers in this study narrated that people regarded them as misfits, problematic, and young prostitutes or adults among fellow learners. A typical example of

this negative image that teen mothers are attracted to is summed by one of the respondents who revealed that;

*“When I came back to school, I was told that you are a mother and you have a baby, such comments forced me out of school for two weeks, till my father and the priest talked to me and advised me to ignore whatever comments my fellow pupils were saying they made me feel out of place”*

The study findings regarding the psychosocial impact of teenage motherhood on the academic performance of teenage mother returnees also revealed that teachers had held stereotypic views as they regarded the teen mothers who re-entered school as deviants. It was reported that some of the teachers went as far as passing negative comments on teen mothers who fail to meet their expectations in class. One teen mother narrated that one teacher told her that;

*“Unless it is something to do with motherhood you would have done my work which is for your good or else you should give up on studying and then go back home and look after your child”*

Furthermore, it was revealed that the teen mothers tended to be passive in class for fear that should they make a mistake or get a question wrong, they might be laughed at by fellow pupils. Most of the pupils always wanted to hear what a teen mother would say and mock her for giving a wrong answer. At times some boys made it a habit to laugh at teen mothers to the effect that teen mothers remained silent learners. One teen mother recounted that;

*“I always keep quiet in class because some boys whether you get it right or wrong will still mock you, complimenting you as a queen, mother of all” further said that “her fellow pupils often laugh at her in the sense that a mother is an adult person who is not supposed to fail to give a correct answer in class. It was also revealed that even when the class was not swept, the blame went to the teen mothers who they (fellow pupils) mockingly said were mothers of all and as such were often used as their scapegoats.”*

In this study, it was also reported that the teen mothers' education progress was seriously hampered by the additional responsibilities that

they performed, especially at home. A participant narrated her ordeal in this regard, stating that;

*“I am always in high anxiety as I have a load of work waiting for me at home and in class...I have to perform in class and I have a duty of taking care of my child, my husband, and the house, I don't rest and if I don't do my homework in school, then am in trouble the following day in our class because am literally tired after doing my house chores at home.”*

The teen mothers expressed their actions of withdrawing from socialization as a result of unhappiness over the hurtful comments made by teachers and fellow learners. In the communities, the isolation of teen mothers is also driven by the strong beliefs and perceptions that people form about such girls when they mingle with their daughters who are still young and going to school. The participant's teen mother narrated that;

*“I find it very hard to catch up at school since one time I was told to stop visiting my friend as I was going to influence her with bad manners, but for me, it was a mistake and I did not know anything, so I find it very hard to discuss any issues with any of my classmates because their parents stop me from sharing with my friends about what we study when we are at school.”*

This therefore implied that teen mothers who return to school find it extremely hard to fully blend in with the rest of the learners since the mothers never want their children to associate with the teen mothers as they think they will teach them bad manners.

### **Copying Strategies**

The findings of the study regarding the strategies to reduce the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood revealed that the government should organize a separate program for returned teenage mothers so that they study separately from mainstream children, this is because the returnees usually have totally different issues as compared to the other pupils, so it is better for the government to organize a separate learning and studying programme for them so they study with their peers with who they share the same experiences. This was stressed by one of the respondents who revealed that;

*“If the Government is serious, these teen mothers would have a programme of their own, counseling should start from the time they are known to be pregnant up to the time they are*

*ready to come back to school. They do not concentrate in school because they have a lot to think about, but if they have a special programme and prepared for that they can be acting as normal as any other student”*

Additionally, the findings of the study show that the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood can be overcome through changing the mindset of the people in the community. It was revealed from the findings of the study that changing mindsets and social norms and promoting change in mindsets and social norms is central to triggering a sustainable reduction in the incidence of child marriage. Perceptions about gender and the role of women in the family and society practice around marriage and puberty, and wide acceptance that marriage should be performed after puberty all contribute to child marriage. The theory of social norms explains how the decisions of individuals for example parents, and girls are influenced by the collectivity's opinion. Changing collective norms and perspectives will influence parents' and girls' decisions to marry their children at an early age. This was stressed by one of the study participants who revealed that;

*“There is a need to change the thinking of people in the community, this is because people in the community think that teenage pregnancy is still fashionable and embraced, so such a mindset needs to be changed by sensitizing them about the dangers of such a practice”.*

The findings of the study regarding the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood indicated that transforming harmful cultural practices is one strategy for reducing the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood. The findings of the study revealed that child marriage is deeply embedded in cultural traditions, which can be difficult to change. However, as the campaign against female genital cutting demonstrates, community mobilization can be effective in initiating behavior change and discouraging harmful practices. Many Indigenous communities already are taking action to end child marriage. It is believed that when such harmful traditional practices are done away with the girls will no longer be married off at a tender age. One of the local leaders put it that;

*“Punitive measures should be put in place to ensure that such cultural practices embracing*

*teenage pregnancy s are done away with in the community.”*

The study findings still put it that increasing access to girls' education also highly helps in the reduction of the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood in that increasing access to education for girls is crucial to delaying marriage. Girls with eight or more years of schooling are less likely to marry early than girls with zero to three years of education. But primary education is not enough. Women are more likely to control their own destinies and effect change in their communities when they have higher levels of education. All levels of education must be made more accessible to girls so that more girls will be enrolled and retained. Parents and community leaders also need to be sensitized to support girls in school. Married girls, too, need to be encouraged to continue their education as a way of helping them do away with unwanted pregnancies. It is therefore true to assert that keeping the girl child in school helps to delay and totally do away with cases of teenage pregnancy s in the community because when such a daughter is learned it hikes the amount of dowry that can be paid to marry such a daughter. This therefore scares away all those who would have married her cheaply. One of the service providers asserted:

*“The government should promote girl child education by providing them with all the necessities like sanitary towels, meals and school fees as a way of keeping them in school.”*

The respondents of the study put it that improving economic opportunities for young girls can also help in reducing the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood. Child marriage is inextricably linked to poverty, and families' economic status strongly indicates whether their daughters will be married early. Child brides have less access to schooling and paid work. Cut off from educational and economic opportunities, girls who marry young are more likely to be poor and remain poor. Eliminating child marriage could contribute to broad efforts to reduce long-term poverty. In the short term, targeted incentives for postponing marriage into adulthood and providing economic opportunities for unmarried girls after they finish school can help delay marriage. These livelihood opportunities include skills training, microcredit or savings clubs, and jobs and job placement services. Policy-makers and program planners should also

consider ways to make it easier for families to afford education fees and send girls to school. Expanding opportunities for girls and young women can help change social norms that view marriage as their only option, particularly in cultures where bride price and dowry are common. Therefore providing economic opportunities for young women can help in doing away with teenage pregnancy as a way of improving the standards of living of the girl child.

The study respondents agreed that the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood can be curbed through the empowerment of adolescents. Girls are often seen as a 'property' to be destined only to work in the household and not worth investing in. There is a need to work with both boys and girls on empowering through education, life skills, and vocational training. Providing spaces for life skills development, enhancing self-esteem and empowerment will contribute in making girls and boys agents of their own change. Inclusiveness is critical as the most marginalized population often do not participate in Adolescent empowerment efforts. Therefore for the effectiveness of the empowerment process of the adolescents, the beneficiaries themselves should be involved right from the grass root as the saying goes "Nothing is for us without us" so they should be involved as a way of doing away with teenage pregnancy.

Furthermore, the respondents of the study agreed that the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood can be curbed by supporting the needs of child brides. Prevention is the primary focus of child marriage interventions, but policy-makers and program planners must not overlook the millions of girls who have already married early and who bear children while still having children themselves. To guard against the increased health risks, programs focused on child marriage should support child brides and their families by promoting earlier and more frequent use of family planning, HIV/AIDS and maternal health services. Adolescent girls face a greater risk of sexual and reproductive health problems than adult women, but they are less likely to seek health services, often because of their low status in the marital home and community. Married girls also need educational and economic opportunities to help break the cycle of inequality, illiteracy, illness and poverty that perpetuates child marriage. Educated women have more opportunities to improve their own well-being and

that of their families than women without an education. The findings of the study revealed that the education of girls and mothers leads to sustained increases in educational attainment from one generation to the next. Also, improving women's access to paid work is critical to the survival and security of poor households and an important way to lift these households out of poverty which can help do away with teenage pregnancy as parents stop looking at marrying off their daughters as the only way of earning a living.

## Discussions

### The Social Myths and Perception

The findings show that the majority of respondents mentioned that sex education knowledge influences contraceptive knowledge and use. It was noted that teenagers with knowledge about sex education are well informed about the various contraceptives such as condoms, pills, injections, and other natural methods of family planning which they use and never when still teens. However, teenagers who are not informed about contraceptive knowledge and use have higher chances of conceiving. This therefore is in agreement with Clement (2012) who asserted that sex education does influence contraceptive knowledge and behavior, however, sexually active teenagers who have had formal instruction report knowing how to use more methods than do adolescents who have had no instruction.

The findings of the study as well revealed that stigma was one the factors that deter teenage mothers from re-joining school. The study findings revealed that the community holds very stigma concerning the mothers who return to school, they look at them as greatly deviant individuals who should not be allowed to associate with the rest if the pupils in the community. This is in correlation with Mudau et al (2017) stress that teenage motherhood far reached effects on school attendance and academic performance due to multiple responsibilities that suffocate concentration on schooling. Singh and Hamid (2016) noted that teen mothers' reflections on feeling of pride and regret were nursed by positive personal feelings, and cultural and institutional expectations. The study pointed out the need for institutional support and change in societal attitudes. This helped in reducing stigma related to teenage pregnancy and enhanced re-entry.

The findings of the study also revealed that the environment at school for girls who return to school after childbirth was quite unfriendly. The respondents revealed that the girls who return are usually faced with the challenge of a very unpleasant environment to support learning among teen mothers who return to school. This is in correlation with Mwanza (2010), it revealed that stigma was one of the factors that deter teenage mothers from re-joining school. The study pointed out that in most cases, the environment at school for girls who return to school after childbirth was quite unfriendly. Both teachers and fellow pupils stigmatize or tease them, regarding them as 'adults' or mothers. For this reason, many girls did not return to school after delivery because of the stigma attached to the experience of becoming pregnant and being teenage mothers.

### **The Psychosocial Experiences.**

The study established that the challenges that teen mothers face include the change of status as perceived by their fellow learners and teachers in the school environment. The pupils perceived them as adults or mothers among girls who should not be befriended for fear of becoming like them. Although teen mothers regarded themselves as equals to the rest of the pupils, their fellow pupils called them all sorts of names and descriptions that were meant to embarrass them. They had also this cultural conviction that associates motherhood with adulthood. This finding is in line with a study that was conducted in Tanzania by Lema (2017), who found that a girl was regarded an adult after giving birth and was expected to assume adult responsibilities. This finding is also in line with a study done by Atumbe et al (2010) that the change of status meant that a teen mother had assumed adult responsibilities and was supposed to leave home and be independent.

It is in this view that many faced challenges of stigmatization, social isolation, public ridicule and embarrassment that gave them subsequent thought and hard-hitting time of being in school. This is also in line with the results from a qualitative study in central Uganda where it is widely believed that unmarried pregnant/teen mothers should not stay in the same class as their fellow learners because their status is disruptive to the learning environment. It was also echoed in Tanzania where UNESCO (2010) found out that teen girls may be still expelled as soon as their pregnant status is revealed

because their presence in the classroom is often regarded as disruptive and setting a bad example. Thus, teen mothers face considerable challenges in school, not least because of the difficulty in attending class, as well as overcoming the stigma of being a teen mother at school. It was also established that some of the words that were used by fellow learners in class and teachers were offensive to the teen mothers.

The change of status is also imposed by cultural connotations, where people believe that when a person has a baby, she automatically assumes the status of an adult person and she also assumes adult responsibilities. This was also established in Uganda in a study done by Atumbe (et al; 2010), that teen mothers are supposed to leave the parents' home and begin their new roles as mothers. Thus, the school environment makes these teen mothers have challenges in coping with school because it leaves them with double responsibilities. These challenges leave them with less time to study and as such it becomes difficult to concentrate in school, and when you do not concentrate on school you drop out. Chetty and Chigonam (2017), further add that cultural issues also make girls' attendance, status, and situation a complex decision for girls' parents. This cultural connotation, it leaves them open to ridicule in school environment because they have deviated from the norms their fellow learners believe in.

### **Copying Strategies.**

The findings also indicated that transforming harmful cultural norms, increasing access to girls' education, improving economic opportunities for young girls and safeguarding rights, empowering adolescents, supporting the needs of child brides and changing mindsets, social norms, and promoting change in mind as the strategies for curbing the increasing rate of teenage pregnancy. Relating to the literature reviewed, (ICRW, 2008) argued that transforming harmful cultural norms, child marriage is deeply embedded in cultural traditions, which can be difficult to change. However, as the campaign against female genital cutting demonstrates, community mobilization can be effective in initiating behavior change and discouraging harmful practices. Many Indigenous communities already are taking action to end child marriage. A program scan conducted by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) found these community-based

interventions are working to reduce teenage pregnancy with multifaceted programs that educate families and community members on the dangers of child marriage, provide girls with education and life skills, and offer legal services, among other activities. According to the researcher's point of view indeed if traditional backward cultures of marrying off girls at a tender age are abolished teenage pregnancy s can be done away with in the community.

It was indicated the study findings also revealed that increasing access to girl's education is a strategy for reducing the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood this is in line with the views of Mikhail, et al (2017) who commented that increasing access to girls' education whereby research suggests programs that provide or increase access to education for girls are crucial to delaying marriage. Girls with eight or more years of schooling are less likely to marry early than girls with zero to three years of education. But primary education is not enough. Women are more likely to control their own destinies and effect change in their communities when they have higher levels of education. All levels of education must be made more accessible to girls so that more girls will be enrolled and retained. Parents and community leaders also need to be sensitized to support girls in school. Married girls, too, need to be encouraged to continue their education as a way of helping them do away with unwanted pregnancies. It is therefore true to assert that keeping the girl child in school helps to delay and totally do away with cases of teenage pregnancy s in the community. According to the researcher's point of view when girls' education is promoted, it means that they will stay in school for a long period of time, this can help to delay their time of conceiving thereby helping to delay teenage pregnancy s among the girls.

Additionally, the findings in chapter four revealed that the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood can be improved through improving economic opportunities for young girls can also help in reducing the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood this is in line with the views of Wulf, (2014) who indicated that providing economic opportunities for young women, child marriage is inextricably linked to poverty, and families' economic status strongly indicates whether their daughters will be married early. Child brides have less access to schooling and paid work. Cut off

from educational and economic opportunities, girls who marry young are more likely to be poor and remain poor. Eliminating child marriage could contribute to broad efforts to reduce long-term poverty. In the short term, targeted incentives for postponing marriage into adulthood and providing economic opportunities for unmarried girls after they finish school can help delay marriage. According to the researcher therefore when economic opportunities for young girls are improved the girls become contended with what they have other than yearning for material items from other people which would be given to them in exchange for sex which in the end can lead to teenage pregnancy s after pregnancy. So through improving economic opportunities for young girls teenage pregnancy s can be curbed.

Study outcomes further indicated that safeguarding rights of the girls can greatly also help in the reduction of psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood this directly correlates with the ideas of Kurz, et al, (2017) who stipulated that Safeguarding rights which include creating safe social spaces, keeping official birth and marriage records, and enforcing other rights of girls. An example of this is the Turning Child Brides into Scholars 'program for girls in Kenya. The program transforms the Masai tribe's practice of booking daughters for marriage into a program that books, 'these girls for school instead. To date, 350 girls are enrolled and more than 500 additional infants and girls have been booked, waiting until they are old enough to attend school. According to the researcher therefore strict punitive laws need to be put in place as a way of punishing the perpetrators of teenage pregnancy among girls. This can also help in curbing teenage pregnancy.

Further still study discoveries showed that the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood can be curbed through empowerment of the adolescents on how they should conduct themselves in the community. This is in line with Jain, et al. (2007) who commented that there is a need to work with both boys and girls on empowering through education, life skills, and vocational training. Providing spaces for life skills development, enhancing self-esteem and empowerment will contribute in making girls and boys agents of their own change. Inclusiveness is critical as the most marginalized population often do not participate in Adolescent empowerment efforts. Therefore, for



the effectiveness of the empowerment process of the adolescents, the beneficiaries themselves should be involved right from the grass root as the saying goes "Nothing is for us without us" so they should be involved as a way of doing away with teenage pregnancy. From the researcher's point of view when girls are empowered it means that they can take part in the different economic activities that can greatly change their life instead of looking at marriage as the only option before them.

Additionally, the findings indicated that the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood can be curbed by supporting the needs of child brides whereby those who are already married are supported financially and psychologically. It can help reduce the problems associated with teenage pregnancy. This is in agreement with Cochran et al (2003), who commented that efforts should be made to support the needs of child brides, prevention is the primary focus of child marriage interventions, but policy-makers and program planners must not overlook the millions of girls who have already married early and who bear children while still children themselves. To guard against the increased health risks, programs focused on child marriage should support child brides and their families by promoting earlier and more frequent use of family planning, HIV/AIDS and maternal health services. Adolescent girls face a greater risk of sexual and reproductive health problems than adult women, but they are less likely to seek health services, often because of their low status in the marital home and community. Married girls also need educational and economic opportunities to help break the cycle of inequality, illiteracy, illness, and poverty that perpetuates child marriage. According to the researcher therefore when the needs of child brides are supported this can help them live a good life and minimize the health risks that could come their way if they are not supported in any way.

It was revealed that the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood can be curbed by changing the mindset of the people in the community. When such mindsets are changed people can stop believing in teenage pregnancy. This is correlation with Linacre, (2005) who argues that changing mindsets and social norms, and promoting change in mind set and social norms is central to triggering a sustainable reduction in the incidence of child marriage. Perceptions about gender and the role of

women in the family and society practice around marriage and puberty, and wide acceptance that marriage should be performed after puberty all contribute to child marriage. The theory of social norms explains how the decisions of individuals for example parents, and girls are influenced by the collectivity's opinion. Changing collective norms and perspectives will influence parents' and girls' decisions to marry their children at an early age. The researcher also believes that when such mindsets are changed the girls can be given the chance to stay in school without any hindrance or obstruction thus helping to curb teenage pregnancy.

### Summary of Findings

The findings revealed the perception of the community towards teenage mothers who have returned to school and these were; teen mothers' needs are unique and long-term one program cannot address their issues, stigma was one the factors that deter teenage mothers from re-joining school, the environment at school for girls who return to school after childbirth was quite unfriendly, insufficient knowledge about sex education lowers one's self-esteem and sex education knowledge influence contraceptive knowledge and use.

The findings of the study also revealed the psychosocial impact of teenage motherhood on the academic performance of teenage mothers returnees and these included; teen mothers who re-entered school and faced a challenge of stigmatization or biased perception, teachers had held stereotypic views as they regarded the teen mothers who re-entered school as deviants, teen mothers tended to be passive in class for fear that should they make a mistake or get a question wrong, teen mothers' education progress was seriously hampered by the additional responsibilities that they performed and teen mothers expressed their actions of withdrawing from socialization as a result of unhappiness over the hurtful comments made by teachers and fellow learners.

The government organizing a separate program for the returned teenage mothers, changing the mindset of the people in the community, transforming harmful cultural practices as one strategy for reducing the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood, increasing access to girls' education, improving economic opportunities for young girls

can also help in reducing the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood, empowerment of adolescents and supporting needs of child brides were identified as the strategies to reduce the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood.

### Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed the community greatly stigmatizes the teen mothers who return to school as they are looked at as socially deviant individuals who should not associate with the rest of the pupils. Concerning the psychosocial impact of teenage motherhood on academic performance of teenage mother returnees the findings revealed that the teen mother returnees face a challenge of stigmatization or biased perception from fellow learners, teachers and the entire community and this greatly affects their academic performance in class. The findings also indicated that increasing the empowerment of adolescents as a strategy can be used in reduce the psychosocial effects of teenage motherhood.

### Recommendations

The Ministry of Education should ensure that they adopt a holistic approach that does not dwell on changing teen mothers' behaviors, but to change the attitudes in society so that girls are encouraged to stay in school.

The Ministry of Education must reflect on and urge changes to the Re-entry Policy so that it can be transformed into law to protect a girl child from early pregnancy or marriage.

The Government through its education system should introduce a tracking system of teen mothers and introduce professional counseling in schools to curb the scourge.

The Ugandan curriculum should break the silence on sexuality and include it in the curriculum with an emphasis on human rights and responsibility. The role of government, teachers, peers, parents, and the community at large play an important role in the education of teen mothers either positively or negatively, and the system should go by the family system to bring about learning of teen mothers to overcome the challenges they encounter in their endeavors.

Teenage mothers should be exempted from paying their fees so that the money can be used in caring for their young children also by doing so their self-

esteem will be boosted because there is someone who cares for them

Government and institutions of learning should ensure that they provide adequate support for teenage mothers for example boarding facilities for both the teenage mother and the care giver to reduce absentees of teenage mothers from school. This would go a long way in ensuring stability and a sense of peace for the teenage mother

Schools should develop effective measures to enhance the transition of teenage mothers from one class to another. Specifically, teenage mothers should be provided with home tuition towards the latter end of pregnancy and in the first few weeks of motherhood, and return to school as soon as possible to benefit from the broader curriculum a school provides.

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