

## **Influence of Parental Socio-Cultural Status on Prevention of Teenage Pregnancies in Narok-North Sub-County, Narok County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Teenage pregnancy is detrimental to the wellbeing of teenage girls because of its negative impact on health, social and educational outcomes. Parents may encounter challenges that prevent them from helping their daughters in preventing pregnancies. Therefore, the study aimed to investigate influence of parental socio-cultural status on prevention of teenage pregnancies. The study was guided by the Social Network Theory. Descriptive Cross-Sectional Survey Design and Mixed Method approach directed the study. The target population of the research was 59,996 families in Narok-North Sub- County. Snowball sampling was applied to obtain a sample size of 165 families from the target population. Simple random sampling was applied to get 10 Key Informants. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Internal consistency was calculated to test the reliability of the questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Validity was confirmed with the help of experts from the department and in training of Research Assistants. Data was examined by use of SPSS version 26.0. The Pearson Correlation test revealed that parental socio-cultural status has moderate and positive influence on prevention of teenage pregnancy (at P value <.05 Mean  $r = .54$ ). Majority (82.6%) of respondents endorsed that cultural norms encourage early marriages. Majority (42.9%) of respondents endorsed that teenagers get into sexual relationships in order to meet basic needs. This aligns with the assumption of the Social Network Theory's application to this study, that the family unit's outcome in terms of teenage pregnancies is influenced by the cultural norms that surround the respondents. The Study therefore recommends that the Ministry of Interior and National Administration to strengthen policy aimed at curbing cultural practices that predispose teenage girls to pregnancies.

**Key words:** *Teenage Pregnancies, Parental Socio-Cultural Status*

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### **1.0 Introduction**

Teenage pregnancy is harmful to the wellbeing of the teenage girl because of its negative effect on health, social and educational outcomes. The WHO guidelines on preventing early pregnancy and poor

reproductive outcomes among adolescents in developing countries, as reviewed by Chandra et al. (2013), revealed that due to socio-cultural factors such as early marriages, illiteracy and poverty, 103 out of

1000 pregnancies are ascribed to girls aged between 15 to 19 years, much higher than the mean global pregnancy rate in girls of the same age bracket which stands at 49 pregnancies for every 1000 pregnancies.

Recent findings by the United Nations Population Fund, a subsidiary of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), indicates that almost 378,400 teenage girls in Kenya between ages 10 to 19 years fell pregnant between the month of July 2016 and June 2017. Furthermore, 28,932 teenage girls between ages 10 to 14 years fell pregnant, while those between 15 to 19 years were 349,465 in number. This is as a result of socio-cultural predisposing factors such as poverty and cultural norms.

Trends and determinants of adolescent pregnancy from Kenya Demographic Health Surveys as reviewed by Mutea et al. (2022), indicated that between 2003 and 2014, Homa Bay County posted 33% teenage pregnancies, West Pokot County 29% Tana River County and Nyamira County both stand at 28%. Topping the list was Narok County at 40 percent. Moreover, Manguro et al. (2021) in his research on obstacles to contraceptives among teenagers in Narok County, found that the cultural practices of female genital mutilation and early marriage in Narok County were the main predisposing factors exposing teenagers to pregnancies.

Ideally, parents are supposed to help prevent teenage pregnancies because they are perceived to be the primary caregivers. However, incidences of teenage pregnancies are still high. The role of the parent in curbing teenage pregnancies within a socio-cultural context that encourages early marriages has

not been highlighted. Therefore, the study sought to investigate the influence of parental socio-cultural status on the prevention of teenage pregnancies.

### ***Social Network Theory***

Borgatti et al. (2018) in their book titled 'Social Networks' elaborate on the Social Network Theory. They describe networks as relationships among individuals that build up the system. Relations between individuals can be of different kinds and each level influences the subsequent connection in the network with none being independent of the influence of the other individuals in the network.

According to the Social Network theory, and in relation to this study, the social relations of a parent are considered from a socio-cultural backdrop. The parent's social status that is measured by income level will influence the availability of all that the child needs through their income and social networks. The parent also belongs to a tribe that has ties to cultural values, norms and beliefs. The parent's interaction with these cultural norms may influence their reaction towards avoidance of early pregnancy. Holding on to cultural norms encourage support to early marriages and subsequent teenage pregnancies.

The theory was applicable to this study because it postulates the role of social networks which involve socialization of girls by parents who affiliate themselves with certain cultural norms.

### ***Justification of the study***

Pregnancy causes the affected teenage girls to drop out of school due to stigma and isolation by their peers (Ruzibiza, 2021). It

has also been found that teenage girls are not psychologically prepared for childbearing (Dare et al., 2016). Moreover, they are neither financially stable nor physically mature to bear children and this exposes them to future health problems (Darroch et al., 2016). As the primary caregivers, parents

need to be able to assist their teenage daughters avoid pregnancies till they attain the legal childbearing age. The study therefore intends to research on the impediments that invalidate parental efforts in the prevention of teenage pregnancies in Narok-North Sub-County.

## **2.0 Materials and Methods**

### ***Research Design***

This research applied descriptive cross-sectional survey design and correlational design to investigate impediments to parental prevention of teenage pregnancies. Descriptive cross sectional survey design and Mixed Method are the most appropriate for the study because they measure factors at a specific point in time for a defined population, and bring out the significance of the relationship between the respective variables. Mixed method approach was adopted because the study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data.

### ***Inclusion criteria***

To partake in the research, participants were required to either be a parent or a caregiver to a teenage girl that got pregnant; be a teenage girl that fell pregnant; be inhabitants of Narok-North Sub-County for a duration of not less than two years; be available in the research location at the time of the research; be agreeable to contribute in the research, and

provide informed consent after information on the study is shared.

### ***Exclusion criteria***

The study omitted all parents who did not have teenage daughters, all girls who had not fallen pregnant, those who had not been inhabitants in the Sub-County for a period of not less than two years, those who were not available in the research location at the time of the study, and those who were not agreeable to contribute to the research after all information had been shared.

### ***Sample Size and Sampling Procedure***

Snowball sampling was utilized in the respective wards in Narok North Sub-County; namely, Olupsimoru, Olokurto, Narok Town, Nkareta Olorpopil and Melili to arrive at 165 households at saturation (Morse, 2015). The household heads in the 165 homes were the main respondents of the study. The distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Respondents per ward*

<b>Narok-North Sub-County Wards Randomly selected</b>	<b>Main respondents from Snowballing</b>
Melili	44
Olokurto	32
Narok Town	28
Olupsimoru	38
NkaretaOlorpopil	23
<b>Total wards: 5</b>	<b>Total respondents: 165</b>

This method was utilized because data on girls that fell pregnant is highly confidential and difficult to access. This sampling method involved primary data sources nominating other potential primary data sources to be used in the research. Before collection of data, the study sought for approval from NACOSTI and the Study Location’s County Commissioner. The respondents also gave their informed consent.

***Sample size and sampling procedure for key informants***

Simple random sampling was employed to get 10 key informants from the available 72 girls who had fallen pregnant from among the households arrived at after snowballing. Mason (2010) states that 10 key informants are sufficient to gather insightful data. The girls were selected as the key informants because they had unique live experiences (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE], 2011). Selecting key informants with personal experiences in the situation being investigated is very important as it gives more insight that aids the research (Hunt et al., 2022).

***Data Analysis and Presentation***

Data was examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. Examination of quantitative data entailed compiling descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages to explain attributes of the research participants in the study. The data was later organized into frequency distribution tables and examination was performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The findings were displayed in tables and charts indicating frequencies and percentages after analysis was completed. Pearson Correlation was applied to evaluate the linear relationship between parental socio-cultural status and the prevention of teenage pregnancies.

The qualitative responses given to the open-ended questions in the research tools were analyzed by transcribing the information and identifying the common themes. All the answers were transcribed so that the information could be analyzed for common themes. These were coded, keyed into tables and scrutinized.

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

The research question responded to was: how does parental socio-cultural status influence prevention of teenage pregnancies in Narok-North Sub-County? In order to respond to

this research question, parents were asked in the questionnaire to score how strongly they agreed to the statements. The results of analysis are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Influence of Socio-Cultural Status on Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy*

Statement	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Agree or Strongly Agree	N
Most pregnant teenagers come from poor homes	61 (39.6%)	29 (18.8%)	64 (41.5%)	154
Teenage girls get into sexual activities in order to meet basic needs	39 (25.0%)	50 (32.0%)	67 (42.9%)	156
Cultural norms are obstacles that prevents you from educating your daughters on sexual health	28 (18.4%)	35 (23.0%)	89 (58.5%)	152
Cultural norms may encourage early marriages	2 (1.2%)	25 (16.0%)	129 (82.6%)	156
Traditionally initiated teenage daughters should be left to make their own decision	117 (74.0%)	20 (12.6%)	21 (13.2%)	158

***Pregnant teenagers come from poor homes***

Table 2 indicates that 64 (41.5%) parents agreed or strongly agreed that most pregnant teenagers come from poor homes, 29 (18.8%) parents neither agreed nor disagreed while 61 (39.6%) parents disagreed. This finding may reveal that girls affected by teenage pregnancies usually do so while trying to seek financial benefits from male partners in exchange for sex. In line with the findings, Krugu et al. (2017) in a qualitative review of determinants associated with early pregnancy among teenagers with pregnancy experience in Ghana, found that teenagers' motivations for getting into sexual relationships are

mainly ‘beyond love’ and seem to focus on financial gain. This conclusion is similar to findings from a study done in Nigeria by Dare et al. (2016) on psychosocial effects of pregnancy on teenage mothers in Angwan Rukuba community in Nigeria, where the study discovered that the major influence accountable for teenage pregnancy was poverty.

The findings by Krugu et al. (2017) shows that parents had different views on whether most pregnant teenagers come from poor homes or not. The differences were further illustrated by parents in their comments which included:

*In my community, teenage pregnancy has befallen girls of the rich and poor parents. So all families are affected (Parent 55)*

*Some of the girls have everything but still got pregnant (Parent 97)*

From the excerpts above, it implies that teenage pregnancies are not limited to girls coming from a specific socio-economic background. This may be attributed to the fact that teenage girls get into intimate relationships for different reasons regardless of socio-economic background.

*Girls from poor families are lured to have sex because they need money from sponsors and boyfriends (Parent 19)*

The above statement implies that girls from destitute families supplement meager family income by getting favors from boyfriends who may eventually get them pregnant.

***Teenage girls get into sexual activities in order to meet their basic needs***

As regards the construct ‘teenage girls get into sexual activities in order to meet basic needs’, Table 2 shows that 67 (42.9%) parents agreed or strongly agreed that teenage girls get into sexual activities in order to meet their basic needs, whereas 50 (32.0%) parents neither agreed nor disagreed; and 39 (25.0%) parents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The finding may imply that girls are lacking in basic necessities, which places them in a desperate situation, compelling them to trade sex for the essentials. This predisposes them to early pregnancies.

Consistent findings by Izugbara (2015) revealed that poor households were mostly affected by early pregnancies as compared to wealthy households. This confirms findings of research by McCleary et al. (2013) on gendered social norms, sexual exploitation and teenage pregnancy in rural parts of Tanzania, which revealed that teenage pregnancies are triggered by poverty that pushes teenage girls into having sex in order to obtain money to meet basic needs.

The findings by Izugbara (2015) and McCleary et al. (2013) concur with the key informants’ interview finding which revealed that teenage girls engage in sex to reciprocate their boyfriends for the material and financial support. Two teenage daughters in an interview remarked that;

*My parents do not have enough money to buy me everything like pads. So my boyfriend asks for sex before buying them. (Teenage daughter 3)*

*Sometimes I have to depend on my boyfriend to give me things like airtime and pocket money. It makes it difficult to refuse sex after that. (Teenage daughter 8)*

The excerpts above imply that the only way for the teenagers to meet their needs that cannot be met by their meager family income is by getting boyfriends who insist on sex in exchange of favors.

This is evidenced by the demographic information on income that reveals majority (54%) of parents earned between KES 5,001 to KES 10,000, way below the minimum

wage of KES 15,201.65 according to the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU, 2022). The insufficient household income that is unable to meet all household needs may explain why teenage girls resort to exchanging sex for favors, a situation that may result in teenage pregnancies.

***Cultural norms are obstacles that prevent parents from educating teenage daughters on sexual health***

Table 2 indicates that majority, 89 (58.5%) parents agreed or strongly agreed that cultural norms are obstacles that prevent parents from educating teenage daughters on sex health, whereas 35 (23.0%) parents neither agreed nor disagreed; and 28 (18.4%) parents disagreed or strongly disagreed. This finding suggests that cultural norms have a strong influence in parenting and make parents value culture above the education of their teenage daughters. This may leave girls unaware of techniques that should be applied in prevention of early pregnancies.

Inconsistent observations were found by Modise (2019) who researched on parent sex education norms in rural parts of South Africa. He discovered that parents were more at ease participating in sex education with their teenage children rather than the younger children. These findings are contrasted by Baku et al. (2017) who researched on socio-cultural factors influencing parent-teenager conversations on sex education in Ghana. The findings of their study revealed that parents faulted cultural norms for keeping them from discussing sex topics with teenagers. This inconsistency may be attributed to a difference in cultural values between the two regions.

The findings that a majority of parents find themselves tied to a large societal system that depends on cultural norms in socialization are in line with the projection by Social Network Theory as explained by Vicsek et al. (2016). The inclination of the parent to the societal system is so strong that it affects parent-to-child relationship. This happens when parents find it hard to defy the social systems, thus failing to educate their daughters on sex health.

Further, analysis of the comments by parents pointed out that sex education lessons by parents to their children is a taboo. Some of the comments made by these parents included:

*Our culture says that sex education is immoral and it would not be okay to discuss such issues with children. (Parent 73)*

*Talking about sex with my girls is a taboo and not an acceptable issue to talk about with teenagers; it may give them ideas. (Parent 26)*

The statements above may imply that to parents, sex education is misplaced in the family set up because of cultural constraints. It makes the parents very uncomfortable to bring up the topic. This leaves girls unsupported in strategies of early pregnancy prevention; thus predisposing them to the same.

***Cultural Norms and Early Marriages***

Table 2 shows that majority 129 (82.6%) of parents agreed that Cultural norms may encourage early marriages, while 25(16.0%)

parents neither agreed nor disagreed; and 2 (1.2%) parents disagreed. This finding implies that cultural norms that often instill a negative influence in a parent's and society's perception towards prevention of teenage pregnancy is still widely accepted and practiced.

According to Social Network Theory's application to the study, the vulnerability of the girl in getting pregnant is dependent on how the family handles the cultural norms that surround them. Once the parents subscribe to the cultural norms that encourage early marriage, the child is immediately put at risk of becoming a bride to any member of the community who may show interest in marrying her. Moturi (2016) revealed that most marriages have pregnancy as an inevitable and expected result; thus making teenagers automatically exposed to pregnancies because of marriage.

A study done by Archambault (2011) on ethnographic empathy and the social context of rights had similar findings that revealed early marriage practices in Ethiopia are motivated by established beliefs and cultural norms that are not easily discouraged through logical arguments. Consistent findings were arrived at by Svanemyr (2019) who researched on teenage pregnancy and social norms in Zambia. The study found out that cultural norms dictating sexual behavior and contraceptive use add to place teenage girls in a vulnerable state with respect to early pregnancy.

The conclusions by Archambault (2011) and Svanemyr(2019) reveal that besides teenage children being married off, cultural restrictions on use of contraceptives add to

the risk of teenage pregnancy. This adds the probability of higher incidences of teenage pregnancies because the teenage girls who are already at risk of pregnancy from marriage will further be restricted from use of contraceptives that would have prevented pregnancy until the attainment of legal childbearing age.

### ***Traditionally initiated teenage daughters should be left to make their own decisions***

Table 2 shows that majority, 117(74.0%) parents disagreed or strongly disagreed to the construct "traditionally initiated teenage daughters should be left to make their own decisions", whereas 20 (12.6%) parents neither agreed nor disagreed; and 21 (13.2%) parents agreed or strongly agreed that traditionally initiated teenage daughters should be independent. This finding may indicate that there is a shift in the cultural norms and parents are beginning to feel responsible for their teenage daughters and intend to keep guiding them.

A different conclusion was arrived at by Stark (2016) who investigated commercial sex, early marriage, and parent to adolescent child relations in a slum in Tanzanian. He noted that in the traditional context, puberty marked the beginning of adulthood. At puberty, a Tanzanian child is perceived as an autonomous adult: the teenage sons are expected to look for employment after primary school, and teenage daughters are expected to either secure employment or find men to sustain them. TeLindert, et al. (2021) in their research on perceptions of factors leading to teenage pregnancy in Lindi Region, Tanzania, found out that teenage pregnancy in this region of Tanzania is high.



The researchers further noted that high teenage pregnancies in this region results from lack of individual agency (peer pressure, low decision-making strength, and sexual coercion)

This inconsistent findings may be attributed to strong legal and policy framework that has been put in place against early marriages in Kenya. Content analysis of comments by parents indicated that parents were against any form of independence of their teenage daughters. Such comments included:

*It is illegal, the government does not allow it and one can be arrested for allowing early marriage, also, the girl still depends on me to provide for her basic needs. (Parent 63)*

The statement above implies that the parent recognizes the legal age limit as a hindrance to teenage pregnancy. Additionally, since the teenage daughter is still dependent on her, early marriage would be unacceptable

**Table 3**

*Influence of Parental Socio-Cultural Status on Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy*

		Pregnant teenagers	Engage in Sexual Activities to meet basic Needs	Cultural Norms are obstacles to Sexual Health	Cultural Norms Encourages Early Marriages	Trad. Initiated Teenagers to be left to Make own Decisions
Socio – Cultural Status Vs Prevention of teenage Pregnancy	Pearson Correlation	.49	.40	.51	.60	.70
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.568	.250
	N	154	156	152	156	158

*Mean r = .54*

Table 3 shows that parental socio – cultural status has moderate and positive influence on prevention of teenage pregnancy (Mean r = .54). This is because when P-value  $\leq \alpha$  (.05), the differences between the means are

statistically significant. Generally, there is enough statistical evidence ( $P \leq .05$ ) that parental socio-cultural status moderately and positively influences prevention of teenage pregnancy (Mean r = .54).

**4.0 Conclusion**

Parental socio – cultural status has moderate and positive influence on prevention of teenage pregnancy (at P value  $<.05$  Mean r = .54). This is in line with the assumption of the Social Network Theory’s

application to this study, that the family unit’s outcome in terms of teenage pregnancies is influenced by the cultural norms that surround the respondents. The study has revealed that because of cultural

norms on parent-child relations, respondents are restricted from discussions on certain topics; hence, preventing them from taking their teenage children through sex education. The study also concludes that most pregnant teenagers come from poor homes; a view held by a majority (41.5%) of respondents.

## 5.0 Recommendation

The study recommends that the Ministry of Interior and National Administration strengthens policy aimed at curbing cultural

Teenagers mainly get into sexual relationships in order to meet basic needs as indicated by a majority (42.9%) of respondents. This exposes teenagers to pregnancies. Further, a majority of the respondents (82.6%) agree that cultural norms encourage early marriages.

practices that predispose teenage girls to pregnancies.

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