

Contextualizing the Role of Community Theatre in Controlling the Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy

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Abstract

In seeking dependable and effective change communication platforms for the control of prevalence teenage girl pregnancy in Nigeria, this study experiment and ascertain the efficacy of reliable Community Theatre as a tool. The problem of teenage girl pregnancy, despite several interventions to control prevalence, is regarded as a negative occurrence in recent times. This phenomenon could be considered a serious cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian societies and predominantly in the rural communities where under-aged girls between thirteen (13) to nineteen (19) years become pregnant. This study focused on the prevalence of pregnancy among the teenage girls in Nigeria, taking into consideration the situation in the Nigerian rural community setting. The study experimented with Community Theatre channel after investigating the root-causes and effects of the problem in Ikot Inung community and Udiang Enem community of Akwa Ibom State. The study is primarily experimental in strategy/design, adopting descriptive approach as well. Data were gathered from primary sources through interviews, participatory observation and focus group discussions. Findings from the evaluation report reveal that the Community Theatre intervention tool under study was impactful, successful and result-oriented in controlling the prevalence of teenage girl pregnancy. The study concludes by proving the efficacy of Community Theatre in controlling the prevalence of teenage girl pregnancy in rural communities of Nigeria. With this achievement, the study recommends Community Theatre as an intervention tool for the creation of awareness in controlling the rate of teenage girl pregnancy in rural communities.

Keywords: Community Theatre, Teenage Pregnancy, rural communities, Akwa Ibom State, Literature.

Introduction

Teenage girl pregnancy has become a major contemporary global issue in recent times and has been seen and regarded as a negative phenomenon due to the various consequences that it attracts to teenage mothers, their parents, family members, the community and the entire society at large. It can be observed that children born by these teenage girls are also of paramount concern in terms of proper parenting to maturity and the attendant responsibilities.

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Teenage age pregnancy by implication is the pregnancy that occurs to a young girl between thirteen (13) to nineteen (19) years of age. Quoting from Adebola (2018):

Teenage pregnancy refers to pregnancy in an adolescent girl who is yet to complete her secondary education and is not skilled in any trade that could make her live a sustainable lifestyle. It is a conception by girls at the outset of puberty or any age when they are still under their parents' tutelage and total care, and when they cannot in any way fend for themselves yet. (351)

From Adebola's definition, no specific age is mentioned but it is worthy to note that teenage girl pregnancy is an incident affecting young girls in their formative years, without a source of livelihood, without proper education and not prepared to mother a child, and probably adequate lack of sex knowledge. From gender perspective, it can be observed naturally that the responsibility of procreation is saddled on the females – responsible for carrying the pregnancy through ante-natal to post-natal stages. The females, on delivery of children, are saddled with larger chunks of obligations in the upbringing process. However, there are conditions to be met before any worthwhile procreation process can commence. These conditions are contingent on and in consistent with religious, traditional and secular demand of a male marrying a female to become husband and wife respectively; under a common bond to raise and rear children based on mutual understanding and agreement. The marriage in this context is an adult affair and the resultant pregnancy from this union is seen as a blessing, well celebrated and traditionally regarded as a source of joy in the African setting. According to Alabi and Oni (2017):

In African context, the act of procreation, is a responsibility of grown-up young adults who have been found to be physically, economically, emotionally, spiritually and at large psychologically matured; that is why marriage act is highly contracted in our present societies. The observed situation prevalent in both developed and underdeveloped world is such that there are however, girls... occasionally become pregnant and give birth, such that girls between thirteen and nineteen years are now getting pregnant at an alarming rate. (17)

From the above assertion, there are physical, economic, emotional, spiritual and psychological conditions to be met to contract marriage before pregnancy. Unfortunately, the problem lies in resultant pregnancies from teenage girls that defy all the conditions stated above, thus becoming a problematic issue confronting both developed and developing communities in the world.

This work carefully selected two rural communities that are considered to be adversely affected by teenage girl pregnancy menace, with the aim of adopting and utilizing Community Theatre in an attempt to control this menace. The selected communities are Ikot Inung and Udiang Enem communities of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Nigeria's Experience of Teenage Girl Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy, otherwise known and called adolescent pregnancy, simply refers to a pregnancy in an adolescent (a teenage) girl who is yet to reach 20 years of age. Adolescence in this context according to World Health Organization (WHO) refers to the period between the ages of 10 - 19 years in which individual progresses from the initial appearances of secondary sexual characteristics to full sexual maturity, and during which psychological and emotional processes develop from those of a child to those of an adult. It also represents a transition from the state of socio-economic dependence to one of relative. In Isa and Gani (2012), adolescent pregnancy is defined as “gestation in women before having reached the full somatic development. The percentage of childbearing adolescent women highly varies regionally depending on cultural, religious, political, economic and other factors. Pregnancy in the very young is generally considered to be a high-risk event” (45).

Teenage pregnancy, besides being a major social problem in society, has a lot of health complications and consequences on the lives of the teenage victims. According to Chabra (1991):

Complications of pregnancy among teenagers include first and third trimester's bleeding, severe anaemia, prolonged and obstructed labour, cephalo-pelvic disproportion, and toxemia of pregnancy, still birth and high prenatal mortality and morbidity. Besides the health consequence of teenage pregnancy, the educational attainment of most, if not all teenage parents, is hampered. (30)

The most concern on the consequences of teenage pregnancy is the termination of the school process and these pregnant teens becoming 'dropouts' from schools in a contemporary world that education is very important. The truncation of the school process in the lives of these teenage victims is appalling. Citing from Alabi and Oni, Ekweme (2000) noted that about 400,000 unplanned births occur annually in Nigeria. Half of these births were to single girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years. Ekweme equally remarked that among teenage girls in Nigeria, pregnancies are a common problem. This, she maintained is because of the high rate of premarital sexual activities among teenagers especially in mixed schools. Without convincing the people in the rural communities in Nigeria with research statistics (that may unlikely make any meaning to them because of their educational level), the problem of teenage pregnancy is of serious concern to them because of the devastating effect on the parents, families and community at large.

From various statistical findings, surveys, research and reports, it has been established that teenage girl pregnancy and the rate in the Nigerian situation is alarming, resisting all efforts so far made to assuage the situation. However, researchers are still exploring ways in which this

menace can be curbed, considering the Nigerian situation and factors surrounding it. This also is the concern of this work.

Causes of Teenage Girl Pregnancy in Nigeria

The prevalence of teenage girl pregnancy in the world is not a result from a vacuum but from various factors that are either directly or indirectly causing, influencing or supporting it. To better understand these factors especially in Nigeria, it is pertinent to examine the challenging society or community norms (as well as cultural and religious norms) that are supporting teenage pregnancy along with other underlined causes. Literature has shown various socio-demographic, educational, traditional, economic, cultural and other factors responsible for teenage pregnancy in Nigeria, they include Lack of knowledge and information about sex, Peer pressure, Traditional norms and acceptance of early pregnancy, Poverty and economic hardship, Sexual abuse, Drugs, Rape and violence, Lack of political will and so on.

Notably, another contributing factor to teenage pregnancy has to do with age discrepancy in relationships between the teenage girls and the men/boys. There is also the probability of the fact that older males have the propensity of luring teenage girls into sexual intercourse based on experience which can be termed ‘sexual coercion’. Poor family relationship also causes teenage pregnancy in communities that place less value on abhorring sex within a family lineage which is regarded as a taboo in the Nigerian context. Lack of awareness programmes such as ‘Sexuality Education’, ‘Family Support Programme’, ‘Importance of Condom’, ‘How to use Prescribed Contraceptives’, ‘Church-based Teenage Programme on Sex’, ‘War against Teenage Pregnancy’, etc., are rarely being conducted or organized to enlighten these teenagers to check early and unplanned pregnancy.

The on-counter-drugs vendors and traditional herbalists have also contributed their own quota to teenage pregnancy by offering some acclaimed pregnancy prevention drugs and substances to these teenage girls – which barely prevent the pregnancy. Inadequate knowledge and utilization of contraceptive services is another factor contributing to teenage girl pregnancy. This is likely due to the general low level of education among teenage girls in some communities as earlier stated or low level of awareness about contraception.

Community Theatre

Community Theatre “is essentially based on Paulo Friere’s assertion that development should not be given but made to evolve the communal action and reflection by the entire membership of the community” (Nda 2005: 130). This practice that has become an intervention tool, gained

the attention of many development communication specialists like Augusto Boal, Ross Kid, Kees Epskamp and Oga Steve Abah. Leaning on this assertion, Ekpe and Wekpe (2023) note that theatrical products “have proven valuable tools for engaging and analyzing human concerns. . . and have been appropriately situated to reiterate viable communication messages” (130). The channel of theatre adopted in this study is community-based as the name implies, which involves community participation for the creation of awareness.



Researcher addressing the community people at the palace

Source: Researcher's field work, 2021

Community Theatre is a term describing a group of methodologies that employ song, drama and dance as modes of sensitizing, educating and empowering communities to improve their status quo. The implication in this context as the term connotes refers to a process whereby theatre is used to research, analyze and solve critical issues in the community, empowering indigenous people to enhance or make change towards positive behaviours, knowledge and attitudes regarding vital social issues challenging their lives. According to Abah (2004):

It is about the ability to understand the situation, the politics and cultural dynamics, the layers of meanings and the nature of relationship that exist in the community. Sometimes the ontological is important in so far as development is not simply a satisfaction of the physical needs. The psychological, the spiritual, the religious and the social must all be embedded in the process... the amateurs must read meanings, must notice trends and sense dangers and conflicts. (ix)

It is from the above standpoint that Community Theatre becomes a tasking and painstaking exercise that requires commitment, dedication, devotion, resilience, doggedness, open-

mindfulness, firmness and good observation in order to achieve the desired goal for the target community.

Community Theatre serves as an eye-opener to the masses, to basic truth and development in the society. According to Umoh (2021), “the most fundamental objective of Arts is giving back to the society what it has discovered” (107). Partly inspired by Antonio Gramsci’s interpretation of societal culture, the seminal humanist and theatre practitioner, Augusto Boal, developed a technique known as ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ from his work in developing Community Theatre. In collaboration with Boal’s philosophy of theatre, Paulo Freire and Bertolt Brecht also viewed the world as a subject of constant change, and that reality is not static (Nda 2005). In pursuit of public sensitization and societal change, they all advocated for a theatre that would have the capacity to reveal to man his potentials as one capable of handling his own situations and turning them around to suit him and his purpose.

Community Theatre has the necessary components to get the rural people involved in the process of finding solutions to their problems. Tar Ahura buttresses by postulating that:

... theatre must seek to understand the present structure and direct its attention against those that are oppressive... it must take its appeal direct to the rural man... it must rely on the revolutionary aesthetics... seek to understand the psychology of the oppressed man; to understand his motivation and non-motivation; appreciate his suffering and his fear. From understanding, theatre can make progress in the process of conscientizing the deprived man so that he can find a way out of his frustration and fear and feel a strong desire to assume his humanity. (Oko-Offoboche 1997:57)

It therefore means that Community Theatre draws people out into a common platform and thus enabling them to be sensitized in order to take critical decisions on issues bothering them. Community Theatre is a reflection of the communal situation in the aspect of social reality. It is a veritable tool for achieving social change in various ways. Speaking on the role of Community Theatre, Yerimah (2002) asserts that it “has become thought-provoking to the extent that it can ask the audience to reflect on issue; social and political which affect their lives” (6). It therefore follows that Community Theatre charts a course for overhauling of the society through change advocacy in various spheres. It can as well open man to social action and inspire his aspiration to revolutionize the society to a positive standpoint through change in actions and behaviours.

The Community Theatre process involves interrogating the people in the target community to find out their challenges in order to enable the improvisation of a dramatic piece where their problems are woven into an improvised play and the solutions dramatically proffered. According to Boh (2018) “this idea is anchored on the theory of ‘problem-solving’ which sees

problem-solving as dialogue... that enables people to identify their problems and suggest solutions, after a critical analysis” (104).

For Community Theatre to be effective, it must be creatively applied within the confines of the stages as enshrined in the process and strategy. The process in Community Theatre is all about participation, for arts “does not develop in a vacuum, it is given impetus, shape, and direction by social, political and economic forces in a particular society” (Ekpe and Thompson 2020:98). The target community should be treated based on its merits because of the specific nature of its sociological background. The stages in Community Theatre involve script improvisation, the cast and crew, rehearsals performance, theme, follow up and feed-back.

Theoretical Framework

The Individual: The Transtheoretical Model (TTM) also known as the Stages of Change Theory (SCT) was developed from the work of Prochaska, Diclemente and colleagues in the late 1970s and 1980s and matured in the 1990s, as an important step to better understand behavioural change, demonstrating that individuals cycle through a series of five stages when modifying health behaviour.

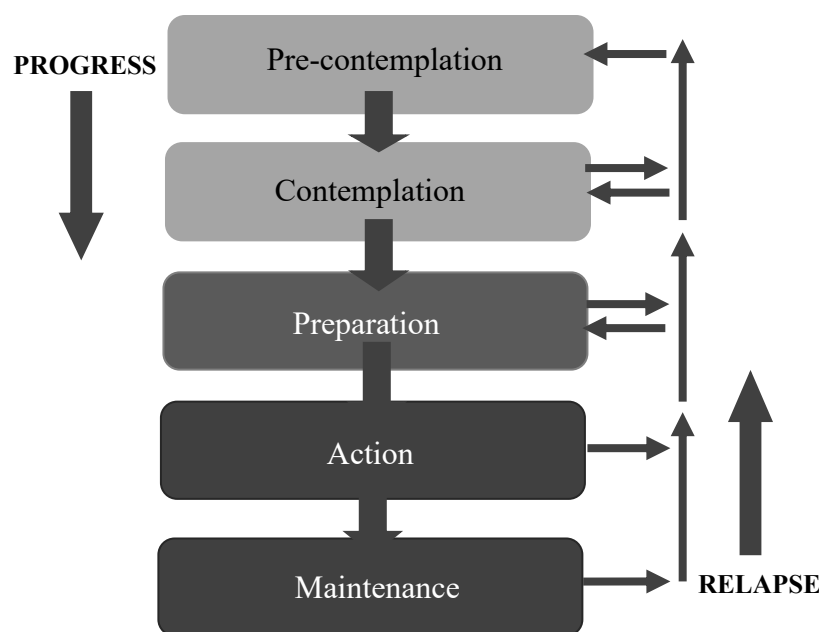


Figure: Stages of Change Model

Source: www.addictioninfo.org

This conceptualized five-stage process is related to an individual’s readiness to change. These stages are: Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action and Maintenance. In the process of these stages for behavioural change, an individual is seen moving back and forth

along the continuum repeatedly before attaining the final stage – maintenance. The programme of this theory considers the enhancement of the effectiveness and success of its intervention values in behavioural change as each stage offers an opportunity of individual's needs to be addressed and measured.

Prevalence of Teenage Girls Pregnancy in Ikot Inung and Udiang Enem Communities

The situation of teenage girl pregnancy in Ikot Inung and Udiang Enem Communities of Akwa Ibom State, is alarming. This situation was made clear and information reliable through various individuals being contacted in these communities. The interviews, Focus Group Discussion and Observation were employed and utilized for the better understanding of the problem of teenage girl pregnancy. However, the investigation of this research revealed that the two communities share everything in common relating to the problem of teenage girl pregnancy in terms of causes, effects, challenges and associated influences. In order to have more detailed and current situation of teenage girl pregnancy in these communities, the researcher contacted the following: Teenage Girls, Men, Women, Community leaders, Community Birth Attendants, Patent medicine dealers and Religious leaders. The afore-mentioned contacts all agreed and testified to the alarming rate of teenage girl pregnancy that has remained unchecked due to reasons beyond their control. They all showed the willingness to co-operate with any sensitization or intervention that can help check or reduce the problem.



Researcher with Community Leaders

Source: Researcher's field work, 2021

In order to have more detailed and current situation of teenage girl pregnancy in these communities, the researcher in addition to the interviews also engaged the following groups in the two selected communities in discussions: Teenage girls, Women, Community and Religious leaders, Community Birth Attendants and Patent Medicine Dealers. The aforementioned during the interactions all agreed and testified to the alarming rate of teenage girl pregnancy that has remained unchecked due to reasons beyond their control. They all showed the willingness to co-operate with any sensitization or intervention that can help check or reduce the problem.



Researcher with community women after Focus Group Discussion

Source: Researcher's field work, 2021

Responses from the Group Discussions revealed that teenage girl pregnancy has really affected these communities. The worst of it all is that the victims are from poor families, lacking the resources to take care of the problem and thus having the potentials of creating more problems in the future.



Researcher with Community Teenage girls

Source: Researcher's field work, 2021

The table below shows the problem statement and summary of the situation analysis in the selected communities:

TABLE 1: Problem Statement and Summary Situation of Analysis in Ikot Inung and Udiang Enem Communities

What is happening?	The rate of teenage pregnancy is getting higher in some communities in Nigeria.
Where and to whom?	Among teenage girls between 13 – 19 years of age in Ikot Inung and Udiang Enem communities.
With what effect?	Contributing to maternal mortality, abortions, health issues (obstetric fistula), education interruption, single parenting, premature birth, burden in parenting and producing way-ward children.
Who and what is influencing the situation and with what effect?	Peers, parents, community leaders, family members, community birth attendants, patent medicine dealers, religious and spiritual leaders, as well as the government, as a result the teenage girls get pregnant in their formative stage without husbands.
As a result of what causes	Lack of sex education, peer pressure, poor parenting, sex abuse, drugs, rape, bad traditional norms, greed, poverty, economic

	hardship, sex experiment, religious belief, lack of political will, idolizing prostitutes, etc.
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The statistics of the baseline data from the problem of teenage girl pregnancy from the selected communities in September, 2021 are presented in the table below:

TABLE 2: Statistics of Teenage girl Pregnancy in Selected Communities as at September 2021

Community	Total teenage girls	Sources	Births and Cases	Percentage (%)
Ikot Inung community	250	Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA)	25	10.0
		Patent Medicine Dealers	20	12.5
		Teenage Girls	20	12.5
		Women	25	10.0
		Community Leaders	15	16.7
Udiang Enem Community	300	Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA)	30	10.0
		Patent Medicine Dealers	30	10.0
		Teenage Girls	30	10.0
		Women	25	12.0
		Community Leaders	10	30.0

Discussion of Findings

To ensure the effectiveness of Community Theatre as a tool in reducing teenage pregnancy in Ikot Inung and Udiang Enem communities in Akwa Ibom State, the researcher meticulously followed the various steps and approaches as enshrined in the Community Theatre Process with the main objective of carrying out a survey in order to design and implement in controlling the prevalence of teenage girl pregnancy in Ikot Inung and Udiang Enem communities. With full understanding of the problem situation and behaviours that needed change, the research was able to create the intervention material for sensitization through community theatre

The script improvisation was a communal affair with the facilitation of the researcher and engaged facilitators in ascertaining the circumstances surrounding teenage girl pregnancy which were woven into the dramatic performance to be acted out to sensitize the target beneficiaries. This was followed with rehearsal that was communally agreed upon on fixed days and time before the pre-testing performance that preceded the performance proper, followed by interactive session.

Drafted Material for Community Theatre in Controlling Teenage Girl Pregnancy

Title: Without Teenage Girl Pregnancy, a Woman is dignified: Say No to Pre-Marital Sex

Scene I

A Village Square: Enter the teenage girls criss-crossing each other and disappearing in different directions. Enter the narrator.

Narrator: What is really happening to our community? Young girls not up to 20 years getting pregnant here and there, breeding unwanted children, disgracing their parents and desecrating the community with vagabonds. What is going on?

Scene II

A Living Room Situation: a Woman is Sitting on a Bamboo Chair Mending Dress, Enter Another Woman

2nd Woman: Ekama! So you are here sewing dress, have you heard what the town crier has just said in the village square today?

1st Woman: About what?

2nd Woman: He was shouting and complaining about the situation of our young girls who are not up to 20 years getting pregnant on daily basis and polluting the community with vagabonds.

1st Woman: How does that concern me. Can't you see that all my 4 daughter are living well and well taken care of.

2nd Woman: So, are you saying that my two daughter that were pregnant before 20 years were not living well and taken care of?

1st Woman: I didn't say so, I was talking to my own daughters who are not wayward or indulge in pre-marital sex.

2nd Woman: I keep wondering what has befallen me and my daughters.

1st Woman: You didn't need to wonder, blame yourself for not bringing them up the right way after all what you passed through in giving birth to them

2nd Woman: I have tried Ekama my sister. It is only that these children are so loose and they are always in bad companies. Imagine me without a husband taking care of 2 grandchildren with 2 girls without any help from anybody despite my hard condition.

1st Woman: My sister, that is more reason why I have opened my eyes to monitor these my daughters and try to provide for them and advise them to be contented with what I can offer them so that they would not look outside and get pregnant.

2nd Woman: You are lucky that your 4 daughters are not victims of pregnancy. Thank God.

1st Woman: I also thank myself for educating them on sexual issues and cautioning them against being lured by friends to have sex when they are not matured to get married.

Enter another Woman

3rd Woman: What is happening that the two of you remain silent when I come in? I think I overheard you talking before now.

1st Woman: We were not gossiping, it is this issue of pregnancy among teenage girls in our community that is generating fire at the moment.

3rd Woman: So do you have any solution to it? This issue has brought us shame and I thank God I don't have daughters to be afraid of.

2nd Woman: (to the 3rd woman) but one of your sons impregnated Uwa's daughter and the case is still with the council.

3rd Woman: Which case? For four information Uwa, had since withdrawn the case at the advice of the chiefs in council

1st Woman: have you compensated the family or is there any agreement to take care of the pregnancy and the unborn child?

3rd Woman: Nothing like that, my husband met with the council chiefs and they advised that Uwa withdraw the case to avoid scandal

2nd Woman: So who will take care of the baby to be born?

3rd Woman: The family of the girl will take care. Didn't they know the implication before allowing the girl to have sex with my son?

1st Woman: That's wrong. No parent can send his or her daughter to have sex with a boy that is not yet a man.

2nd Woman: Hmm! So this is what the council chiefs did to me when I reported the cases of my daughters to them?

1st Woman: You reported also?

2nd Woman: I did, and on the two occasions they advised me to withdraw the case to avoid scandalizing my daughter

1st Woman: So scandalizing your daughter and the present predicament that you are in, which one is the best?

3rd Woman: That is what money can do, you just give them some money and the case is dead

1st Woman: And they are the ones encouraging this problem in our community

2nd Woman: After, they will send the town crier to complain as if the gods are responsible

Enter the 4th Woman Dragging her daughter with Protruding Stomach

4th Woman: Ekama (crying) see what has come upon me ooo. My daughter is pregnant. Imagine my daughter in S.S.1 that I've done all I could to give her proper education. This is what she brought home.

1st Woman: (to the young girl) My daughter what happen to you?

Girl: Aunty, it is my friend that asked me to follow her to her friends place after school last 5 months and.....

4th Woman: And what?

1st Woman: Please allow her to answer me, did you have sex?

Girl: Yes; my friend said that I should remove my panties and enjoy the sex that it is sweet.

4th Woman: That it is sweet? You have seen the sweetness. Is that what I sent you to do?

1st Woman: (to the girl) Where is your friend right now?

Girl: She is in school

1st Woman: And you are back to the family?

Girl: Yes!

1st Woman: What about the boy that had sex with you?

Girl: I didn't know him, he took me to a hotel and did it

2nd Woman: Did he give you anything?

Girl: Yes, he gave me 10 thousand naira

2nd Woman: Your own is even better, my own daughter did it for free

3rd Woman: I don't blame these boys but the girls and their greedy intentions

2nd Woman: Because your boy have the money to satisfy their greedy intention and you are blaming innocent girls.

1st Woman: Who are innocent? Listen! what you don't teach them at home, they learn it outside from their friends, that is why I educate and talk to my daughters on daily basis about falling victims of teenage pregnancy

2nd Woman: (to the 4th woman) Thank God your own is one you can manage the situation. What about mine with two cases

1st Woman: Please all of you can leave my house before my daughter will come back.

(Exit)

Scene III: *At the Village Square*

Group of Teenage Girls are Discussing

Ime: Atim, we need to be careful not to get pregnant before 20 years. What I've seen in the community is a great lesson to me

Atim: Many of our mates are carrying children and suffering in their family house

Mary: That is more reason I have vowed never to have sex till when I am matured and married

Mercy: Could you imagine Love getting pregnant because of common ten thousand Naira

Ime: She has sold her pride, future and career with common 10 thousand naira

Mary: What a shame

Atim: I thank God that my parent has taught us to be contented with what they can provide

Mercy: Me, I'm cautioned not to have bad friends that will lure me to immorality

Mary: To me, I want to endure all the enticements and pleasure for now so that I will be properly married and bring honour to my family and the community

Ime: If we all have that mentality, we will restore the glory of this community by properly getting married and be celebrated without getting pregnant at teenage

Mary: My elder sister, Uwak, will be getting married next week. The traditional marriage will be held in this community before wedding in takes place in the town.

Mercy: You mean Uwak, your sister, a mate to Uwa's daughter, Ekom, that got pregnant with 10 thousand Naira

(They all Laugh)

Mary: I have invited all of you to join me in the preparation because it is going to be first of its kind in this community.

END

Scene IV

Situation in Living Room in Scene II

(Family People are Gathering with Woman around 1st Woman Ekama)

1st Woman: Please I invited all of you to let you know that my 21 years old daughter Uwak will be getting married traditionally in this community next week. I want you all to come and help me cook because it is going to be a great event in the community. Many great visitors will be coming for this event.

Great Excitement Erupt in the Room as women start jubilation.

Focus on 2nd Woman and 4th Woman Standing Together in a Moody Situation

2nd Woman: I feel like killing myself. Imagine me with two grandchildren and two daughters. Your own is better, only one.

4th Woman: With all I have spent on my daughter I can never expect a day like this community.

2nd Woman: Thank God they are many teenage girls who are pregnant in this family

Enter Another Woman (5th woman)

5th Woman: Why are you moody instead of celebrating with Ekama and the daughter? I used to warn the two of you about the ways you are leaving your daughters to join bad companies and competing on fashion and acquiring expensive things but you ignored. Pride comes before a fall. Where are you daughters today, they can only be found among the group of teenage girls that are with unwanted children in this community. What is going to happen next week in this community will be a

lesson to parents and other teenage girls so that they will start to wear their panties tight.

The two women disappear sorrowfully out of the Scene

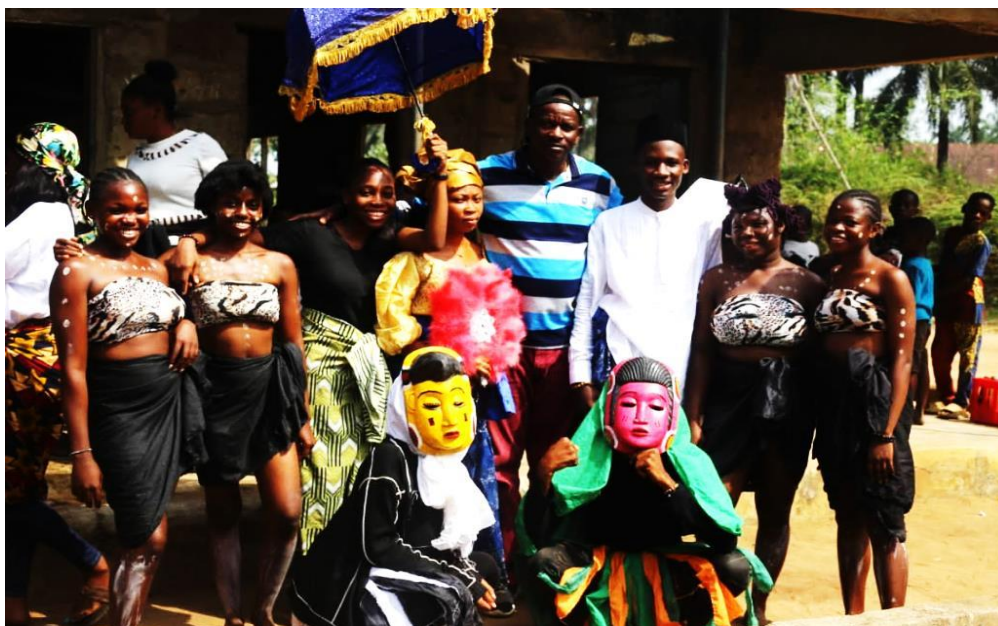
Scene V

Village Square Scene as in Scene I

Narrator: The day has finally come for our community to witness a traditional marriage that will signal the end of marriage drought and also as a lesson to our girls more especially our teenage girls that are often getting pregnant and bearing children before they get to the age of 20 years. Uwak, the daughter of Ekama, is getting married right away. The community is agog with guest and visitors for her traditional marriage everybody is expected to grace this occasion. *(Exit)*

The guests are all seated, the village square filled with traditional dancers and masquerades as expected in a typical traditional marriage Ekama is seated with all smiles as the daughter, dressed in traditional attire with the husband dancing to prostrate before her and the elders for blessings. The crowd periodically erupt in cheers as the couple dance around the village square in celebration of their marriage.

Narrator: This is possible because there was no pregnancy during her teenage. **END**



Researcher with some Community Theatre Cast/Facilitators after the performance

Source: Researcher's field work, 2021

Findings from Monitoring and Evaluation of Applied Community Theatre

To facilitate the monitoring of this intervention, the baseline evaluation approach was put in place. The data of the baseline helped in measuring the degree and quality of the control impact of the community theatre intervention tool and further helped to establish the basis of comparing the situation before and after the intervention and in order to enable the research make inferences to the effectiveness of community theatre. The indicator used in monitoring and evaluation depended on the number of teenage girls who got pregnant before and after the intervention process. The baseline data on the problem of teenage girl pregnancy as at September 2021 (see Table 2) in the communities stood as represented below in Table 3:

Community	No. of teenage girls	Sources	No. of Births
Ikot Inung Community	250	Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA)	25
		Patent Medicine Dealers	20
		Teenage Girls	20
		Women	25
		Community Leaders	15
Udiang Enem Community	300	Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA)	30
		Patent Medicine Dealers	30
		Teenage Girls	30
		Women	25
		Community Leaders	10

TABLE 3: Statistics of Teenage Girl Pregnancy as at September, 2021

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2021

The statistical data in Table 3, were arrived at from the problem analysis and initial information collected through the interviews, Group Discussions and participatory surveys in the communities. Evaluation in the context of this research entails making judgment of the impact of the community theatre intervention.



Researcher in Group Discussions with Teenage girls

Source: Researcher's field work, 2021

However, because of the peculiar nature of this research, evaluating the intervention involved data collections in comparing “Baseline and End line”. The research evaluated the impact of the intervention after a period of 9 months and above - being that pregnancy has gestation of 266 days (9 months) before delivery. Therefore, the research projected nine (9) months from the intervention implementation in September, 2021 for Evaluation in 2022. This research used the number of children born by teenage girls as indicator.

The evaluation of the impact of Community Theatre tool was based on the End-line baseline statistical data gathered as presented in Table 4 below after the Evaluation as at September, 2022 – being a 12 months from the initial baseline in September. 2021.

TABLE 4: Statistics of teenage girl pregnancy in September 2022

Community	No. of teenage girls	Sources	No. of Births
Ikot Inung community	260	Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA)	10
		Patent Medicine Dealers	8
		Teenage Girls	10
		Women	10
		Community Leaders	5
Udang Enem community	320	Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA)	12
		Patent Medicine Dealers	10
		Teenage Girls	10

	Women	12
	Community Leaders	5

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2022

The statistical data from the evaluation report after the period of one year of the intervention project implementation as presented in Table 6 showed commendable level of improvement and remarkable reduction in the rate of teenage pregnancy in the communities under study when compared to the Baseline statistical data of the situation as presented in Table 3, thus confirming the valuable impact of community theatre in controlling the prevalence of teenage girl pregnancy in rural communities.

Summary of Interactions and Feedback Responses from Participants:

Question (a): Are you aware of the growing cases of the teenage girl pregnancy in this community?

Summary of Response: Chief Emmanuel Harrison, a community leader and Mr. Dickson Etim Mbe, supported by Mrs. Rhoda Ntawara, all agreed in the course of discussion to be aware of the alarming rate of teenage girl pregnancy in the community.

Question (b): Has there being any effort by the community to discourage teenage girl pregnancy?

Summary of Response: Mrs. Glory Sunday Udo, a farmer and Mrs Namouso Uko Udousung testified that there has never been any effort against teenage girl pregnancy in the community before now except the one they have just experienced. In a similar vein, Mr. Utibe Ekut, a trader in the community confirmed that nothing has been done to teenage girl pregnancy in the community before now in the community.

Question (c): Has Community Theatre held here helped in the creation of awareness to discourage the growing cause of teenage girl pregnancy in this community?

Summary of Response: Community All the members of the group unanimously accepted and commended the impact created so far by the Community Theatre in the creation of awareness to discourage and control the rate of teenage girl pregnancy. The Secretary of the Community Council, Chief Alexander Udofia, made it clear that the Community Theatre was able to dramatize and show them the true picture of things and thus gave them proper understanding of the situation.

Question (d): Can you say the teenage girls and boys or men of the community understand the message?

Summary of Response: According to Chief Monday Ndaeyo, the (community head): "I think the people understood the message because the teenage boys and girls seemed to be discussing their experiences about the presentations, especially the community drama. Besides, there is not so much nocturnal movement by these folks and the frequent number of social frenzy gatherings has reduced." Madam Titi Udo Imoh agreed that based on the reactions from her teenage children, the message was clear enough to be understood.

Question (e): From your assessment can you say that the awareness programmes has reduced the prevalence rate of teenage girl pregnancy?

Summary of Response: "Very very well" said Mrs Glory Sunday Udo. She responded further by saying that the rate of teenage girl pregnancy in the community has been reduced within the period after the programme, because they could hardly hear of monthly babies delivered by teenage girls. Chief Lazarus James Udoudo said that the community council had limited reported cases of teenage girl pregnancy as compared to the previous years. Madam Grace Ndaeyo said that there in less cases of delivery from the Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) compared to the previous years and attributed the decrease in the rate of teenage girl pregnancy to the awareness creation of the intervention programme.

Question (f): Did you enjoy participating in the Community Theatre on teenage girl pregnancy?

Summary of Response: All the teenage girls that participated in the community theatre process were so filled with excitement of the entire process. Many expressed the realistic nature of the medium in the replication of the real pictures of the situation in the village. Monica Joseph Effiong, Sarah Udoumoh and Etido Sunny Akpok were so happy in their comments: "This community theatre is so entertaining, and we see ourselves dramatizing ourselves".

Question (g): Can you say you are now aware of the causes of teenage girl pregnancy from the play?

Summary of Response: According to Stella Emmanuel Essien, a secondary school student in the community "The play showed us everything we need to know that lead to pregnancy- from home to the outside". Other girls in the participatory theatre testified to coming to the better understanding of everything about teenage girl pregnancy through the community theatre play.

Question (h): Do you think these causes of teenage girl pregnancy are avoidable?

Summary of Response: "They are all avoidable" according to Naomi Emmanuel. "The reason is that all the causes are from us in this community and only we can avoid the causes" added Elizabeth Sandy Uko. Sisi Paul Ossom said that majority of the causes lie with them (the teenage girls) because none of them can be forced to have sex without mutual consent.

Question (i): Was the play very enlightening and captivating to you?

Summary of Response: A girl of about 14 years, Mimi, Sunday Achibong said "I love this play so much. It showed us everything we need to know about ourselves and the situation around us. Nobody can tell us that she did not understand the message in the play". Monica Effiong summarised the play thus "so sweet, touching, lovely and educative to us as teenagers, more especially using our language so that nobody has excuse.

Question (j): Can you recall some burdens that come with teenage pregnancy as mentioned in the play?

Summary of Response: Many of the teenagers were able to vividly recall some of the dramatised and mentioned burdens in the play ranging from economic hardship, bringing disgrace to the family and community, not getting married, to dying prematurely, and suffering sexual diseases, etc. According to Grace Emmanson and Dorothy Etim, "The burdens shown in the play are enough for us to start a new behaviour or we end up with them".

Question (k): As a teenager or assuming you were one, are you ready to work against anything that would get you pregnant?

Summary of Response: All the teenage girls participating in the community theatre process all identified to volunteer to take the message across to discourage other teenage girls from getting involved in habit that would lead to teenage pregnancy. Particularly Sisi Paul Ossom and Sarah Udoumoh vouched to be available at any time for similar interventions towards controlling teenage girl pregnancy.

Question (L): How often would you want us to be holding this play in your community?

Summary of Response: This question got a very positive response from every teenage girl in the community. Majority opted to having it twice in every year while others said at the end of

every year. However, Elizabeth Uko, Etido Akpok and Grace Emmanson were specific that the play should be holding during the months of June and December every year.

Summary of Findings

This study brought to focus the relevance of the choice of Community Theatre in controlling teenage girl pregnancy in rural communities. The Community Theatre employed in this study proved to be very effective and comprehensive as intervention tools in addressing societal issues from the cradle with the selected relevant theories as framework. Thus, the study also deployed the Community Theatre as tenable and reliable selected tool in the intervention process as experimented in the case of controlling teenage girl pregnancy in the Ikot Inung and Udiang Enem communities of Akwa Ibom State. The community theatre as an intervention tool had the capacity of reaching out to different audiences in the rural community in an effort to create the desired awareness on teenage girl pregnancy. More importantly, this study carefully presented analysis on the effectiveness and potency of community theatre in sensitizing and mobilizing the rural communities for behavioural change in order to control the prevalence of teenage girl pregnancy. Summarily, this study finds out that Community Theatre is very effective for controlling the prevalence of teenage girl pregnancy in rural communities.



Researcher with community women and teenage girls after the performance

Conclusion

From the findings and assessments of responses from Focus Group Discussions, it was discovered that Community Theatre as an intervention tool was very effective and impactful in

creating the desired awareness to facilitate the controlling of the prevalence of teenage girl pregnancy. The situation in the rural communities is alarming because of so many factors as the findings revealed. The negative effects of this problem are gruesomely felt in the society and thus the need for an action to be taken to reduce the menace.

This study shows that teenage girl pregnancy had posed a threat to the selected rural communities under study due to lack of sex education, lack of employment, poverty, peer pressure, etc. It is also noteworthy to mention the roles of parents and traditional norms in this problem. The study notes that teenage pregnancy has been a serious social problem in some communities in Nigeria with associated consequential implications, not only for the teenage girls who were the primary victims but their families and the larger society. Community Theatre therefore was very effective in bringing about the desired change among communities under experiment.

Recommendations

In reducing the rate of teenage girl pregnancy in rural communities of Nigeria, it is expedient that every factor attributed to teenage pregnancy needs to be considered to ensure a comprehensive and holistic intervention process in tackling it. Based on the aforementioned, this study recommends that Community Theatre should be deployed by Ministries of Information and Orientation as an authentic approach to deliver the needed awareness to effect the desired change. Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations should plan and strategize interventions on teenage pregnancy at the rural community level by giving priority to Community Theatre that have the potency to create the needed awareness as highlighted in this work. Agencies and organizations with intentions of intervening in the problem of teenage girl pregnancy in rural communities should build on the model experimented on this study and possibly experiment with other intervention tools based on the literacy level of the target communities.

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