Factors Affecting Moral Upbringing Programs in Curbing Early Pregnancies in AIC, Katulani Region – Kitui County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The increasing cases of early pregnancies has become a matter of concern to the society. It is affecting the education of the young teens and has shattered dreams of many teenage girls. It has led to school dropouts, family and society misfits and early marriages. Various intervening strategies have been carried out to curb early pregnancies but have not given considerable, concrete results. This has been involvement made by the church, state and non-governmental organizations. AIC has established moral upbringing programs among her girls to teach them morals but the problem still persists. The research sought to find out factors affecting moral upbringing programs in curbing early pregnancies in AIC. The study is based on the premise that morality is the main drive in building children's lives for without morals the family and society would be disrupted and finally collapse. The article is justified by the importance of the church to regain her moral authority in instilling morals in the children and the society as a whole. Descriptive survey design was used for the research. Purposive sampling and simple random methods were engaged in choosing a sample size of the required number of respondents. The key findings showed that most teachers were not well trained, no set way to ensure proper attendance of the teenage girls, there was no proper use of learner centered method of teaching/learning. Lack of open discussion sessions with teenage girls on sex, lack of enough time to give girls a chance to have open discussions on sexuality were some of the main causes of early pregnancies in AIC.

Key words: Teenage pregnancy, Sexual immorality, Moral upbringing programs, Teaching methods.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Around 12 million girls aged 15-19 years give birth each year globally according to WHO. Tereza et al. (2018) observes that pregnancy among adolescent girls less than 18 years of age is likely to show greatest increase over the next 20 years in Sub Saharan Africa. In Kenya, teenage pregnancies are recorded differently in every county depending on the social, economic and religious factors affecting the area.

Justification and Significance of the Study

The church and the society have been having one common goal of instilling morality in the lives of the children as they grow up. However, immoral behavior has been on rise. The study brings out an overview of how teenage pregnancy has aroused great concern to many societies in the world. Proper moral upbringing will ensure continuity and stability of the society. The church as the moral guardian of the society plays this major role.

Research Objectives

The study aimed at:

(a) Investigating the causes of early pregnancies, even after the teenage girls have gone through moral upbringing programs.

(b) Finding ways of curbing early pregnancies among girls in AIC Katulani Region, Kitui County.

Research Questions

(i) Does AIC have adequate approaches to find out the causes and prevent early pregnancies?
(ii) Are there appropriate strategies that can be laid to assist in curbing early pregnancies among girls in AIC?

Research Hypothesis

1. There are cases of early pregnancies in AIC despite the usage of various approaches in teaching moral upbringing programs.
2. It is important to lay appropriate strategies in improving moral upbringing programs for children in AIC.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although great efforts have been put by the church and society to ensure that children acquire moral values, immoral behavior is still on the rise. Sexual immorality and early pregnancy cause adverse effects to girl child. The teenage pregnancies arouse great concern because children who end up becoming victims of growing moral decay are expected to contribute to the well-being of the society. According to Enon (2018) early pregnancies occur when young girls fall pregnant between the ages of 13 and 19 and before they reach maturity. Teenage pregnancy is another name for early pregnancy. Pregnancy among school girls is a global concern with a range of implications for the social and economic well-being of nations, communities and families (Molosiwa and Mosweba, 2012). UNESCO estimates that 18% of teenage pregnancies and births occur in Kenya. According to the KDHS (2022) study, 3% of females between the ages of 15 and 19 are pregnant with their first child, while 15%of girls between those ages have already given birth. A total of 378,400 young females in Kenya, ages 10 to 19, became pregnant between July 2016 and June 2017, according to UNFPA (2016). According to District Health Information System (D.H.I.S. 2017-2019) in Katulani sub county, a total of 366 early pregnancies of teenage girls aged between 10-19 years were recorded. According to AIC -K Christian Education Department (CED) handbook Manual "The church body is divided into educational programs or agencies to facilitate teaching." Although AIC has moral upbringing programs targeting girls aged between 8-19 years, it is clear either the programs did not address early pregnancies or they were not adequately taught. This is because cases of early pregnancies are still rampant in AIC. This study focuses on finding the factors affecting moral upbringing programs in curbing early pregnancies in AIC Katulani Region, Kitui County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The research study design was descriptive. The design was found suitable because of patterns of behavior and the characteristic of the phenomenon under study (Habib er al,2014). The descriptive survey is a technique for gathering data that involves interviewing or giving questionnaires to a sample of people (Owen 2002:13). The researcher was able to gather data using this design through questionnaires or interviews with a sample of people. The study employed Kohlberg's theory (Kohlberg 1958) which shows the circumstances under which behavior changes during teenage to interpret the data. The ethical principles with the respondents were maintained. This was done by the researcher preparing a consent letter for the respondent. The information given was handled as confidential by the researcher. Their names were to remain anonymous. The data collection tools gave information which was used in establishing study findings. The target population was set to be 578. The study used both simple random and purposive sampling methods to get the sample size to 126.

Sampling technique and sample size

Simple random sampling was used in selecting star and cadette teenage girls (80). Purposive sampling selects participants on the basis of their having a significant relation to research topic (Seale 2004). Therefore pastors (14), trainers (14) and parents (14) selected purposively. The data which was collected by the researcher and

the two assistants was analyzed and presented in form of narratives. Tables and figures were used to present quantitative data.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Weaknesses in delivering moral upbringing programs

The researcher sought to confirm whether there were weaknesses in the teaching of moral upbringing programs. Again whether this has made it hard to curb early pregnancies in AIC. Below are the results that emerged from two types of respondents: Teachers and learners.

Methods of teaching used by star/cadette teachers

The researcher findings showed that most of the teenage program teachers lack theological training. The teenage girls who were involved in (FGDS:2024) revealed that the teachers who used teacher centered method as shown in figure 1 did not allow any discussions on sexuality. Kohlberg (1958) states that teacher centered method make learners lose an opportunity to develop and make moral judgements. This is an important factor which would make the teenage girls get influenced to sexual immorality. Kalekye and Mwikali (01:09:2024) together with other teachers revealed that due to time factor they use lecture method to pass knowledge to learners. Musangi and Mwende (FGD: 28:09:2024) argued that after being taught they are not given time to ask sensitive questions like how to control their emotions on sex matters and how to respond to the opposite sex on the same issue. This made the researcher conclude that the method of delivery of the content in the programs would have left the girls not well grounded to say “no” to sex and lead to teenage pregnancies. These findings are of great importance to help to address the various issues affecting the teaching programs for teens hence help to curb teenage pregnancies in AIC.

Factors affecting moral upbringing programs in curbing early pregnancies in AIC Katulani Region

Different studies have revealed that there are various reasons that lead teenage girls to get involved in sexual immorality leading to teenage pregnancies. The factors presented by respondents include ways of delivering sex education, sources of information on sex matters and poverty.

Ways of delivering sex education

Farant (1989) state that an effective teacher will always use the activity as a means to a goal and carefully choose the activities he employs so that they best support the teaching process. The research done through questionnaires revealed that 80% of girls fear to ask questions on boy/girl relationships. They indicate that they fear teachers and fear of being thought immoral. This was a clear show that they are not properly socialized so they fear to open up to the people expected to teach them sexuality. Mutheu (FGD: 28:09:2024) revealed that counselling is done when an issue comes up more so concerning sexual immorality. It is done when they are all together. (FGD: 28:09:2024) noted that when they are divided into groups, teachers choose leaders among the girls to guide others. The main issues are handled by the teacher due to the limited time set. The study established that the way sex education is delivered to the teenage girls contribute a lot to teenage pregnancy for the girls lack enough knowledge on how to handle premarital sex challenges. It is important for AIC to guide her teenage girls on how to overcome the issues causing premarital sex leading to early pregnancy.

Sources of information on sex matters

Gitome (1989:19) states that most of the youth turned to friends, or books written by Christian authors for sex education more than the pastoral workers in the church. The study showed that the highest sources of information received by the girls was from the peers and the media. This was very risky because they can easily be misled. The church is expected to be the main source of information so as to influence sexual behavior among the youth positively. In the interview with pastors, they revealed that discussions on sex is not done unless a need arises. They discourage boy/girl relationships for they can easily fall into temptation of having premarital sex. The AIC has to take up the challenge of setting ways to educate the youth on sex matters and influence them positively. This will help in curbing in teenage pregnancies.

Poverty

Mutanana and Mutara (2015) states that girls from poor families enter into early sexual relationships due to financial strains. 70% of the parents interviewed revealed that due to drug and substance abuse most parents end up not contributing to the family upkeep. Nzoki (FGD: 28:09:2024) cites that sometimes girls find themselves lacking basic needs like food, sanitary towels and even school fees. The study revealed that unless the issue of poverty is addressed by the church, the girls might easily seek help outside the church and fall in the trap of getting early pregnancies. The AIC has to educate the parents as well as the girls on ways to improving their economic status. The church needs to find ways of assisting the young teens with some basic needs like sanitary towels. The study recommends the starting of some money generating activities among the teenage girls in the church so as to train them to be self- reliant on the pressing issues.

CONCLUSION

The study researched on the factors affecting moral upbringing programs in curbing early pregnancies in AIC. Katulani Region, Kitui county-Kenya. Results got from respondents brought out weaknesses in delivering sex education, sources of information on sex matters and poverty as the major challenges making the programs ineffective. This shows that, although AIC has put in place moral upbringing programs, they do not fully address some of the factors hindering them from curbing early pregnancies. Based on the findings, it is recommended that AIC need to thoroughly revise the moral upbringing programs and put in place the required methods of teaching, the main aim should be to bring change which will make the moral upbringing programs effective in curbing early pregnancies. The study findings revealed that time allocated for these programs is inadequate hence inefficiency of the moral upbringing program. Lack of well- trained teachers and enough well written materials to handle the topic of sexuality was also found as a hindrance. This study recommends that the AIC should allocate more time especially during holidays to handle the topic of sexuality well. The teachers should be given enough training and teaching materials on how to handle sexuality issues. They should be equipped to teach girls life skills so as to be able to handle challenging issues on sexuality.

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