

## Teen Pregnancy in the Event of a Pandemic: A short commentary

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### Abstract

*There is a strong correlation between the COVID-19 epidemic and an increase in rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancies around the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 608,000 additional girls are at danger of child marriage and 542,000 additional girls are at risk of early pregnancy. A mother's health, as well as the economy and society at large, may suffer if an adolescent decides to get pregnant. Due to a lack of prenatal and postnatal care for teenagers, they are more likely to die or miscarry during pregnancy. Teenage moms are also more likely to drop out of school, resulting in less success economically and socially. Girls and other influential people assess the advantages and disadvantages of having children when making decisions about dating, marriage, and sexual activity in general, including whether or not to become pregnant. As a result of this, measures aimed at reducing pregnancies aim to either increase the expenses or decrease the advantages of childbirth. Sexual health instruction that helps girls make practical decisions about sexual activity, such as partner selection, frequency of sexual activity, and the use of protection, is more effective at reducing teenage pregnancies than exhortations (such as abstinence).*

**Keywords:** Pregnancy, Teenagers, COVID-19, Pandemic, Sexual health, Quality of life

### INTRODUCTION

The economic and social climate as well as the difficulty in obtaining basic services has all been adversely affected by COVID-19 and lockdown. Numerous non-essential medical services have to be curtailed. Many patients are refused or delayed access to primary health care because of a fear of catching the disease at the institution level. All of these variables contributed to a decrease in the number of people seeking basic and necessary healthcare since COVID-19 was given precedence over other diseases. Reduced mobility necessitated a reduction in access to prenatal and postnatal health care. A lack of antenatal care services as well as a lack of social support and other issues was observed during lockdowns. Many women were unable to receive critical reproductive and maternal

health services due to the continued lockdowns, including routine gynecological exams, prenatal care, and abortion. Another unintended consequence of this transition is that important health care services like access to contraception have been de-emphasized [1–5].

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Pandemic Pregnancy among Teenagers

Several studies have shown that a pandemic lockdown increases the number of teenage pregnancies. Health resources have been diverted in the past during epidemics, indicating that reproductive health care and maternal, neonatal, as well as child health services are suffering as a result [4–8]. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa has

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been linked to an increase in the number of teenage pregnancies. Because of non-pharmaceutical measures like closing schools during the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, the number of teenage pregnancies rose by as much as 65 percent [5, 9–11]. Other observers counter that Sierra Leone's high teenage pregnancy rates existed even prior to the Ebola outbreak [5, 12, 13]. The data in the (Table 1) below shows how COVID-19 affects adolescent pregnancy in other nations.

**Table 1.** Evidence Establishing a Causal Connection Between the COVID-19 Pandemic and Unintended Pregnancies [5, 14–21].

Result	Country
Millions of unwanted pregnancies are a result of the lockdown. Because of the Ebola outbreak, the number of teenage pregnancies rose by 65 percent in Sierra Leone.	Sierra Leone
COVID-19 saw an increase in child marriages and adolescent pregnancies in Zimbabwe.	Zimbabwe
There could be a 35% increase in the number of pregnancies among young girls between the ages of 10 and 19 in the first half of 2020, according to the Health Principal Secretary in July 2020.	Malawi
There has apparently been a two-fold increase in adolescent pregnancies in the Nwoya district between January and March and April and June of 2020.	Uganda
The number of teenage pregnancies in Ghana's Krachi West Area Program nearly quadrupled during COVID-19.	Ghana
There has been a 40% increase in teen pregnancies three months into the lockdown due to COVID-19 in three of the monthly averages across the country.	Kenya

**Solution Ideas**

Maternal benefits are less likely to be utilized in rural locations because people are less aware of the free maternal health treatments provided. In order to get the word out, other methods must be used, such as social media accounts that are popular in the area. Finally, the health and rights of girls and women in sexual and reproductive matters must be prioritized, funded, and recognized as lifesaving in order to provide access to modern contraception, antenatal and postnatal care, menstrual hygiene management, access to safe and legal abortion facilities, clean and safe delivery, and provisions for the clinical management of rape. Schools were disrupted in order to stop the epidemic, which has been linked to an increase in the number of teenage pregnancy cases. Health centres and primary care clinics serving the general public should remain open even if the hospital is shut down. Continuing information exchange, communication, and support for teenagers are all necessary components of these programmes, which must be rethought. During the epidemic, technology and other virtual platforms have also been used to help young people. During the Ebola epidemic surge, Sierra Leone developed an interactive game app for boys and girls that give credible information on sexual health and how to avoid the coronavirus, which may be transmitted through sex. Educating young girls and boys might certainly benefit from the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and telemedicine. These could include activities to occupy children when schools are closed due to a pandemic, as well as programmes that educate and empower them to make sound decisions. An immediate response is needed for young girls who have been victims of gender-based abuse. A community-based system is possible here." When it comes to government and business assistance programmes and efforts, they should be proactive rather than reactive.

**CONCLUSION**

Teen pregnancy can be reduced by partnering with donors and other civil society organizations, community leaders and religious leaders. As a last step, a sense of trust in the legal system and the police is needed. Gender-Based Violence and other similar instances can only be effectively dealt with if these structures are appropriately equipped and have trained staff [5, 22].

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### Conflict of Interest

None

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