



---

**INFLUENCE OF HEADTEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT OF  
PARENTS ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN PUBLIC PRIMARY  
SCHOOLS IN KITUI CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KITUI  
COUNTY, KENYA**

**<sup>1</sup>Muli Daniel Kisinga & <sup>2</sup>Dr. Mary Mugwe Chui**

**<sup>1</sup>Master Student, Mount Kenya University, Kenya**

**<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Mount Kenya University, Kenya**

**\*Email of the Corresponding Author: [danielkisinga19@gmail.com](mailto:danielkisinga19@gmail.com)**

**Publication Date: November, 2024**

---

**Purpose of the Study:** To examine the influence of head teachers' involvement of parents on teenage pregnancy in public primary schools in Kitui Central Sub-county, Kitui County, Kenya.

**Methodology:** The study employed a mixed-method approach with concurrent triangulation, targeting 1,182 respondents, with a sample of 284 determined via Yamane's formula. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

**Findings:** The study found that many public primary schools in Kitui Central Sub-county have had most of their pupils fall victims of teenage pregnancy for the last five years (2019-2023). To mitigate these challenges, public primary schools have adopted strategies of involving parents to help mitigate the same challenges. Parents' involvement includes serving as role models, providing sanitary products for girls, and delivering life skills education to their children. However, the level of participation varies across different public primary schools.

**Recommendations:** Head teachers, with support from the Ministry of Education, should foster open communication and develop programs to educate parents on preventing teenage pregnancy and its impacts.

**Keywords:** *Teenage pregnancy, head teachers' involvement of parents, public primary schools.*

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

Teenage pregnancy refers to pregnancy in human females under the age of 20. Finer and Zolna (2011) posit that teenage pregnancy can occur after puberty begins, even before the first menstrual period, but usually takes place after the onset of menstruation. Among

female pupils in public primary schools, teenage pregnancy has become prevalent, with global statistics estimating the rate at 67.9%. In the United States, for example, approximately one million teenagers become pregnant each year, mostly among older teenagers, those aged 18 or 19 (Henshaw, 2012). About 51% of teenage pregnancies result in live births, 35% end in induced abortion, and 14% result in miscarriage or stillbirth. In Venezuela, L'Engle, Brown, and Kenneavy (2012) assert that teenage pregnancy poses a significant challenge in public schools, with teenage motherhood rates remaining stubbornly high. They report that in Venezuela, teenagers account for nearly one in four births.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2018) also indicates that Venezuela has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates globally; in fact, there is a birth from a teenage girl every three minutes. However, the influence of parental involvement on reducing teenage pregnancy has not been fully explored. Parental involvement is considered essential to school success and improvement by reducing cases of teenage pregnancy. When parents are involved, it improves communication, public understanding, and allows for incorporating community perspectives, experiences, and expertise, which can inform reform proposals, strategies, or processes to reduce teenage pregnancy in primary schools. Mtsweni (2013) suggests that parents share responsibility for promoting values and discipline, helping establish strong behavioral standards for their children. Consistent with this, Castello, Gotzens, Badia, and Genavard (2010) conducted a study in Spain showing that parents play a role in maintaining discipline and reducing teenage pregnancy. Castello et al. (2010) assert that, beyond school management and teaching responsibilities, parents are also responsible for learners' moral development, ensuring they grow into law-abiding citizens. Within the school community, parents are expected to enforce institutional rules and address behaviors, like teenage pregnancy, that directly impact the moral sphere. Similarly, Kraft and Shaun (2011) report that in the United States, teenage pregnancy among students is common, partly due to insufficient parental involvement. They argue that when students with behavioral issues see their parents collaborating with educators to manage these challenges, they experience more consistency and feel supported.

This suggests that parent relationships benefit students, who feel more secure, perform better, and exhibit better behavior when parents and caregivers participate in school activities. Parents can significantly impact their children's behavior by ensuring they arrive at school on time, follow behavioral expectations, dress appropriately, bring required

materials, and complete assignments punctually. Additionally, for teachers to maintain discipline in schools, parental support is essential.

To corroborate these assertions, Ojedapo (2011) carried out a study in the Netherlands which established that improved instruction, better learning, and enhanced school effectiveness or organizational efficiency are the most commonly cited reasons for implementing collaborative school practices such as parental involvement. According to Ojedapo (2011), this is achieved because moving the school closer to the stakeholders and listening to the sentiments of concerned parties create a synergy and interdependence or connectedness that promote a learning organization towards better decisions concerning rising cases of teenage pregnancy among students. This is indicative of the fact that allowing parents to take part in decision-making yields salutary results and reduced cases of teenage pregnancy. In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, parents play an important part in school management and reducing teenage pregnancy.

A study carried out in Botswana by Garagae (2006) established that primary school management makes full use of the strengths available to it through partnerships with parents and other supporting agencies. Such relationships are all used to enhance the quality of the school since parents help maintain high expectations. According to Garagae (2006), for the smooth running of the school and for good behaviour among students to be realized, primary schools need to enlist parents as partners. Parents must be helped to feel that they are important parents in their children's education (Garagae, 2006). For this purpose, home-school links should be established through a variety of means such as frequent activities that involve parents in educational matters.

On their part, parents such as parents need to regard the establishment of home-school collaboration as a responsibility. In Kenya and Kitui Central Sub-county in particular, the scenario is similar. For example, a study conducted in Nyandarua and Laikipia Districts by Kiumi, Bosire, and Sang (2009) established that level of teenage pregnancy depends on whether the headteacher, as the chief executive of the school, enlists the support of teachers and parents in discipline management. The study hypothesized that an inclusive discipline management approach is more likely to increase teachers and parental input on discipline management. However, much still needs to be done since Kiumi et al (2009) as did other empirical studies have not interrogated the extent to which specific roles undertaken by parents help reduce cases of teenage pregnancy in public primary schools, thus, the study.

### **Statement of The Problem**

Parents play an important in mitigating cases of teenage pregnancy among school-going children. However, in Kitui Central Sub-county the situation is quite different with many primary schools having reported cases of increased teenage pregnancy. As noted in the background, a report by the Ministry of Health (2015) shows that 23.1% of young women ages 10-14 years in Kitui Central Sub-county have already begun child-bearing; 20.1% are mothers and an additional 9.3% are pregnant with their first child. In the same token, Miriti and Mutua (2019) also indicate that, in Kitui Central Sub-county, cases of teenage pregnancy in primary schools at 27.9% among pupils. Efforts to mitigate these challenges have not yielded much remarkable progress. However, the problem still persisted and yet many empirical studies have not exhaustively interrogated the extent to which involvement of parents influences reduction of teenage pregnancy in public primary schools, hence the need for the study.

### **Objectives of The Study**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To assess the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in in public primary schools in Kitui Central Sub-county.
- ii. To determine the influence of headteachers' involvement of parents on teenage pregnancy in public primary schools in Kitui Central Sub-county.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study was guided by the School Management Theory as postulated by Kuo (2009), which examines how managers and supervisors relate to their organizations by understanding its goals, implementing effective methods to accomplish them, and motivating employees to achieve high performance standards. While some school managers worldwide may have succeeded without a foundational knowledge of management theory, those who integrate theory into their daily practices tend to manage more effectively, achieving both learner enrollment and organizational objectives. Therefore, this theory is relevant to the study as it underscores the need for school managers to recognize their critical role and adopt strategies to reduce teenage pregnancy, thereby enhancing girls' enrollment and promoting excellence among all students in primary schools. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), as posited by Ajzen (1991), also guides this study. TPB is a social-cognitive model that predicts various human behaviors

by focusing on attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived behavioral control, which collectively influence behavioral intentions and, consequently, actions. According to Ajzen, behavioral intention—guided by attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—is the best predictor of actual behavior. In the context of this study, TPB is especially relevant to sexuality education as it addresses the beliefs and values that shape young people’s decisions about sexual behavior. It highlights how risky behaviors, like unprotected sex, significantly contribute to teenage pregnancy, thus emphasizing the importance of instilling positive attitudes and norms in reducing these behaviors among teenagers.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted mixed methodology and thus, applied concurrent triangulation design. Target population was 1182 respondents which comprised 25 headteachers, 457 teachers, 200 parents’ representatives and 500 prefects from which a sample of 284 respondents was determined using Yamane’s Formula. Stratified sampling was applied to create four strata based on the number of zones in Kitui Central Sub-county. From each zone, 3 headteachers, 3 parents’ representatives and 50 teachers were sampled using purposive sampling. However, from each sampled primary school, 6 prefects were selected using simple random sampling. This procedure realized a sample of 12 headteachers, 200 teachers, 12 parents’ representatives and 72 prefects. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers while data were collected using interviews with headteachers and focus group discussions from prefects. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented thematically in narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25) and presented using tables.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section presents the findings of the study based on the objectives. It also outlines the methods of presentation of the study findings and discussions.

### **Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy in Public Primary Schools**

The study sought to assess the prevalence of cases of teenage pregnancy in public primary schools. The findings are presented in Table 2;

**Table 1: Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy in Public Primary Schools (2019-2023)**

Academic Year	Number of Cases of Teenage Pregnancy
2019	18
2020	21
2021	26
2022	25
2023	30

**Source: Field Data (2024)**

Table 1 shows that a number of public primary schools in Kitui Central Sub-county have registered an increasing trend in the number of cases of teenage pregnancy from the year 2019 to 2023. This corroborates the findings of the Ministry of Health (2015) in its report which showed that 23.1% of young women ages 10-14 years in Kitui Central Sub-county have already begun child-bearing; 20.1% are mothers and an additional 9.3% are pregnant with their first child. Miriti and Mutua (2019) also indicate that, in Kitui Central Sub-county, cases of teenage pregnancy in primary schools at 27.9% among pupils. These findings point to the fact that teenage pregnancy has become a serious and common problem in many primary schools and has compromised participation rates of students in academic activities. Many learners become pregnant and have to suspend their academic activities for a while. Though, there is an opportunity for re-admission, their focus and concentration towards academic activities is impacted negatively due to divided attention of being a parent and a student at the same time.

### **Thematic Analysis**

The researcher also interviewed the headteachers and undertook focus group discussions with prefects who also admitted that cases of teenage pregnancy in their primary schools have become a commonplace. Headteacher, H1, noted;

*In my school, I have had so many cases of girls getting pregnant either in form three or form four such that they have to suspend their school attendance to focus on child bearing. Though I always admit them back after delivery, their focus in school activities is often low since they have to take care of their young ones. This has often compromised their academic performance. In some cases, teenage mothers rarely come back to finish their primary education.*

These views were corroborated by the parents' representatives and prefects who noted that they have had to attend classes with their colleagues who are teenage mothers. During the FGD, prefects reported;

*In many occasions, we have had our peers who have fallen victims of teenage pregnancy. Some of them have come back to finish their primary education while others do not come back.*

From these verbatims, it is evident that teenage pregnancy has become prevalent among students in public primary schools. These mixed findings are indicative of the fact that teenage pregnancy has become a serious problem in primary schools.

### **Headteachers’ Involvement of Parents and Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy in Public Primary Schools**

The study sought to determine how headteachers’ involvement of parents influences reduction of teenage pregnancy in public primary schools. Results are shown in Table 2;

**Table 2: Teachers’ Views on the Influence of Headteachers’ Involvement of Parents and Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy in Public Primary Schools**

Test Items	Ratings				
	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
In public primary schools, involving parents in role modeling and career guidance to girls has ensured that few girls become victims of teenage pregnancy	59.3	14.8	5.6	11.1	9.3
In public primary schools, involving parents in provision of learning materials has reduced cases of teenage pregnancy	42.6	13.0	5.6	22.2	16.7
Public primary schools have often involved parents in providing girls with sanitary towels as a way of reducing cases of teenage pregnancy	40.7	9.3	7.4	29.6	13.0
Public primary schools involve parents to create awareness on the importance of girlchild education which has lowered incidences of teenage pregnancy	68.5	14.8	3.7	9.3	3.7
Parents play a key role in retaining girls in public primary schools and reducing cases of teenage pregnancy	77.8	14.8	1.9	3.7	1.9

**Source: Field Data (2024)**

The study highlighted that parental involvement in public primary schools significantly impacts the reduction of teenage pregnancy rates. Specifically, 106 teachers (59.3%) strongly agreed that involving parents in role modeling and career guidance for girls helps prevent teenage pregnancies, with another 26 teachers (14.8%) agreeing, while only 10 teachers (5.6%) were undecided, 20 (11.1%) disagreed, and 17 (9.3%) strongly disagreed.



Similarly, 76 teachers (42.6%) strongly agreed that involving parents in providing learning materials reduces teenage pregnancy cases, while 23 (13.0%) agreed. However, 10 teachers (5.6%) were undecided, and a combined 70 teachers (38.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, 73 teachers (40.7%) strongly agreed that providing girls with sanitary towels in partnership with parents helps reduce teenage pregnancy, and 17 (9.3%) agreed. Still, 13 (7.4%) were undecided, while 53 (29.6%) disagreed, and 23 (13.0%) strongly disagreed.

A further majority of teachers, 123 (68.5%), strongly agreed that creating awareness among parents about the importance of girls' education lowers teenage pregnancy rates, with 26 teachers (14.8%) agreeing. Only 7 teachers (3.7%) were undecided, and 24 teachers (13.0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. An overwhelming 139 teachers (77.8%) strongly agreed that parents play a critical role in retaining girls in school and reducing teenage pregnancy, while 26 teachers (14.8%) agreed. A small fraction, 3 (1.9%) were undecided, and a combined 10 (5.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. These findings support John and Smith (2022), who found that parental involvement in school encourages schools to emphasize comprehensive sexual education, fostering values that delay early sexual activity and helping students make informed choices.

The study underscores that, despite sometimes limited involvement, parental participation remains crucial in reducing teenage pregnancy. Schools with strong parental engagement report lower incidences of teenage pregnancy (Williams, Brown, and Patel, 2021). Collaborative efforts between schools and parents reinforce messages about responsible behavior, while parent-teacher associations (PTAs) advocate for reproductive health awareness and counseling. Parents' involvement in school activities enables them to support comprehensive sex education and work with teachers to monitor students' behavior, creating a proactive approach to preventing teenage pregnancies.

### **Inferential Analysis**

To verify the influence of head teachers' involvement of parents on reduction of teenage pregnancy in public primary schools, data were collected on how often (Very Often = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1) head teachers of the 10 sampled public primary schools involve parents in school management and the number of cases of teenage pregnancy in public primary schools. Results are shown in Table 3:



**Table 3: Frequency of Parental Involvement in School Management and the Number of Cases of Teenage Pregnancy in Public Primary Schools**

Frequency of Parental Involvement in School Management	Number of Cases of Teenage Pregnancy
2	13
1	14
1	10
1	12
1	18
3	14
2	18
3	6
3	7
5	9

**Source: Field Data (2024)**

Table 3 shows that public primary schools which often involve parents in the management of school academic programs register lower number of cases of teenage pregnancy compared to those that do not. This further indicates that frequent involvement of parents in primary school education can significantly reduce cases of teenage pregnancy. By fostering open communication, providing guidance, and setting clear expectations, parents help children make informed choices. This involvement encourages positive peer interactions, boosts self-esteem, promotes understanding of reproductive health and ultimately curbing risky behaviors. These results were further subjected to Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Analysis. Results are shown in Table 4;

**Table 4: Relationship Between Headteachers’ Involvement of Parents in School Management and Teenage Pregnancy in Public Primary Schools**

		Headteachers’ Involvement of Parents	Cases of Teenage Pregnancy
Headteachers’ Involvement of Parents in School Management	Pearson Correlation	1	.615*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.029
	N	10	10
Cases of Teenage Pregnancy	Pearson Correlation	.615*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	
	N	10	10

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test Analysis which generated a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.615$  with corresponding significant level (p-value) of 0.029 which was less than the predetermined level of significance, 0.05, that is, p-value =

0.029<0.05. This indicates that there is a significant influence of headteachers' involvement of parents on reduction of teenage pregnancy in public primary schools. This further implies that, when headteachers collaborate with parents through open communication, education on reproductive health, and early intervention programmes, it creates a supportive environment that promotes awareness and responsible behavior among students. This partnership strengthens the school's capacity to address issues affecting pupils' well-being, empowering both parents and learners to make informed decisions and prevent early pregnancies. This combined effort fosters a more holistic educational experience.

### **Thematic Analysis**

On their part, the headteachers and parents' representatives also responded in favour of the view that, in public primary schools, involving parents in role modeling and career guidance to girls has ensured that few girls become victims of teenage pregnancy. Headteacher, H2, noted;

*In my school, I have often engaged parents and advised them to act as good role models to their children by manifesting desirable behaviour patterns. This is because many pupils often emulate the kinds of behaviour which they see their parents manifest. This approach has enabled us to reduce cases of misbehaviour including teenage pregnancy.*

Parents' representatives also expressed similar views by stating that parents play a key role in the academic and behavioural lives of their children. When probed further, parents' representative, PR1, noted;

*I have always ensured that I conduct myself in a manner that often motivates my child to be disciplined and remain focused on her academic activities and avoid any form of undesirable behaviour.*

During focus group discussions, the prefects also stated that their parents have often manifested behaviour patterns which have often motivated them to be disciplined. They affirmed;

*On many occasions, our parents have been good role models and has enabled most of us to act responsibly and avoid any form of behaviour which may occasion teenage pregnancy.*

The study found that parental involvement in providing sanitary towels and promoting awareness about girls' education plays a significant role in reducing teenage pregnancy. These findings align with research by John and Smith (2022) and Williams et al. (2021),

which show that schools with strong parental engagement often emphasize comprehensive sexual education, leading to lower rates of teenage pregnancy. Overall, while not uniformly practiced across all schools, the study emphasizes that involving parents in discussions about reproductive health, values, and expectations enables children to make more informed choices, effectively reducing teenage pregnancies in schools.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The study found that many public primary schools in Kitui Central Sub-county have had most of their pupils fall victims of teenage pregnancy for the last five years (2019-2023). To mitigate these challenges, public primary schools have adopted strategies of involving parents to help mitigate the same challenges. Parents' involvement includes serving as role models, providing sanitary products for girls, and delivering life skills education to their children. However, the level of participation varies across different public primary schools.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study underscores the critical role of parental involvement in reducing teenage pregnancy in public primary schools. By engaging parents in providing essential resources like sanitary towels, fostering awareness on the importance of girls' education, and supporting comprehensive sexual education, schools create a safer and more informed environment for students. Findings indicate that when parents actively participate in school management and discussions around reproductive health, children are more likely to make responsible choices, thereby lowering incidences of teenage pregnancy. While parental involvement is not universally adopted across all schools, its impact on promoting responsible behavior and supporting girls' education is evident, highlighting its importance in school policies aimed at addressing teenage pregnancy.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study recommends that head teachers should facilitate regular and open communication between head teachers, parents, and students. Head teachers can organize frequent parent-teacher meetings to discuss issues related to teenage pregnancy, sexual health, and responsible behavior. Head teachers and the Ministry of Education should support head teachers in developing educational programs aimed at educating parents about the factors contributing to teenage pregnancy, its impact on learners' academic and social development, and the role parents play in preventing it.

### **REFERENCES**

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. 50 (2): 179–211
- Castello, A., Gotzens, C. Badia, M. & Genavard, C. (2010). Belief and attitudes regarding classroom management. Autonomous university of Barcelona, Spain: *European Journal of Education and Psychology*, vol, 3. No 1, 2010, pp147-128.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Finer, L. & Zolna, R. (2011). Unintended pregnancy in the United States: incidence and disparities, *Contraception*, 84(5), 478-485.
- Garagae, K. (2006). *Negligence or confusion: the role of parents in teachers-parents partnership in discipline their children*. Gaborone university of Botswana.
- Henshaw, S. (2012). *U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions, 2008: National Trends by Age, Race and Ethnicity*. New York: Guttmacher Institute.
- John, A., & Smith, B. (2022). Parental involvement and its impact on comprehensive sexual education in schools. *Journal of Educational Research*, 45(3), 123-139.
- Jones, C., & Carter, D. (2023). Parent-teacher associations and their role in promoting reproductive health awareness in public schools. *Health Education Quarterly*, 39(2), 250-265.
- Kiumi, J., Bosire, J., Sang, A. (2009). Relationship between principal management approaches and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Nyandarua and Laikipia District Kenya. *Global Journal of Education Research* vol,8, No 182:29-38.
- Kraft, M. & Shaun, D. (2011). *The effectiveness of teachers' family communication on students' engagement* evidence from a Randomed field experiment, Harvard school of education
- Kuo, L. (2009). Principles of Management Theories and Practices. *International Journal of Management Theory & Practices*. Vol. (3), 234-255
- L'Engle, K., Brown, D. & Kenneavy, K. (2012). The mass media are an important context for adolescent sexual behaviour. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38(3): 186-192.
- Ministry of Education (2015). *Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Kitui County*. Nairobi: Government Printer
- Miriti, J. M. & Mutua, M. N. (2019). Teenage Pregnancies and Girls Education Capabilities in Nzambani Ward Kitui County in Kenya: School and Community Perspective. *International journal of gender studies*, 4(5): 59-84
- Ojedapo, D. (2011). Indiscipline in secondary schools: A cry to all stakeholders in education. *Journal of Education and Research*, vol.1 (5)

United Nations Population Fund (2018). *Study on adolescent mothers*, presented during annual UN conference meeting Geneva.

Williams, K., Brown, T., & Patel, S. (2021). Parental engagement and its effects on teenage pregnancy rates in secondary schools. *Social Issues in Education*, 38(4), 562-578