AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE HEALTH OF TEENAGE MOTHERS IN KAJIADO CENTRAL CONSTITUENCY, KAJIADO COUNTY.

BY

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Development Studies (MDS) from St. Paul's University.

August 2015.

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ABSTRACT

Teenage pregnancy has been cited as a major development issue in the present world. A teenager's body is not ready for a pregnancy and delivery process, thus complications are likely to come a long with it. Despite the fact that teenagers all over the world face the same challenges of health during pregnancy and childbirth, different communities have different socio-economic and cultural factors that influence the health outcomes of the teenagers.The researcher sought to assess the specific social, economic and cultural factors that influence the health of teenage mothers in Kajiado Central Constituency. The main objective of the study is an assessment of the social, economic and cultural factors that influence the health of teenage mothers in Kajiado Central Constituency in Kajiado County. The literature reviewed included research work done by WHO, UNFPA, Ministry of Health (Kenya),UNICEF and other reputable organizations and researchers. Theories that guided the researcher were two wereEcosocial Theoryby Nancy Krieger(2001) and Health Belief Model (Janz& Becker, 1984). The study was conducted through a descriptive research design method. Data was collected through administering questionnaire to teenage mothers, interviewing key informants and direct observation. A sample of 80 teenage mothers was selected, as the researcher could no ascertain the target population size and snowball sampling method was used to identify the respondents. Quantitative data collected was analysed using SPSS software and qualitative data was presented in thematic areas to give results for the research.The researcher found that teenage pregnancy mostly happens in marriage setup and caregivers/ parents arrange this marriage immediately after the rite of passage (FGM). FGM negatively affect the health of teenage mothers at the point of cut and later during delivery. Though most teenage mothers prefer to receive health care from hospitals and health centres, this does not happen because they lack the resources for transport and fees paid at the hospital. The teenage mothers have also the option of traditional birth attendants who are considered to be friendlier than the nurses at the hospital. Low education levels also affected health as they lack information on health and are not aware of the opportunities available for them. The fact that teenage mothers depend on them to access health care, this affects their health negatively. The researcher also found that teenage mothers experienced health challenges during pregnancy and delivery like prolonged labor, severe bleeding, miscarriage and high blood pressure. Professional medical help was sought for teenagers in labor after they experience complications for a number of days, this at times led to still births. Teenagers also had children with low birth weight and some experienced miscarriages. The study concluded that there are social, cultural and economic factors that have affected the health of teenage mothers negatively and recommended that the County Government develop culturally acceptable programs to alleviate the negative impact of the factors discussed above. The researcher also recommends that the traditional birth attendants services should be incorporated in the broader government national health strategy policy so that they are trained on the negative effects of FGM as pertains to delivery, and are in turn tasked to be ambassadors of change that will lead to enhanced health of teenage mothers.

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