



**EFFECT OF SPIRITUAL INTERVENTION
ON STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG STUDENT MOTHERS
IN KENYAN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA:
A CASE OF BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYAⁱ**

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Abstract:

Internationally, teenage pregnancy has been recognized as a major pertinent issue. Lack of adequate family support affects the emotional well-being of the pregnant student mother as well as the unborn and/or the newborn baby. Furthermore, student motherhood hinders the chance of the student mother from completing her studies. In Kenya, teenage pregnancy thwarts achievements in the education of the girl child. The objective of this study was to establish the effect of spiritual intervention on stress management among student mothers in public secondary schools in Kimilili Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya. This study was guided by William Glasser's Psychological Reality Theory on Maladaptive Behaviour. The study employed a cross-sectional research design. The target population was 5,069 Form three and Form four girls from public secondary schools in Kimilili Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya. The study also targeted 23 school Guidance and Counselling teachers as well as 23 school Chaplains. The sample size table proposed by Krejcie & Morgan, 1970 was used to obtain 381 female

ⁱ EFFETTO DELL'INTERVENTO SPIRITUALE SULLA GESTIONE DELLO STRESS TRA LE MADRI STUDENTESSE NELLE SCUOLE SECONDARIE PUBBLICHE KENIOTE IN KENYA: UN CASO DELLA CONTEA DI BUNGOMA, KENYA

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students from girls' schools as well as mixed schools, 19 Guidance and Counselling teachers and 19 School Chaplains. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to gather qualitative and quantitative data. The instruments used to collect data were piloted with the intention of establishing their validity and reliability using a Cronbach alpha value greater than 0.7, which is an indication of higher reliability. SPSS package version 23 was used to analyse both descriptive and inferential statistics. Presentations were done in frequencies and percentage tables. Descriptive data were analyzed using means, percentages, and standard deviations. Inferential data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r). Spiritual counselling had a positive and significant effect on stress management ($r=0.836$, $p<0.000$). The study concluded that spiritual intervention has a significant effect on stress management among student mothers in public secondary schools in Kimilili sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya. Consequently, this study recommends that schools should prioritize and enhance consistent pastoral support for student mothers. Also, there is a need for comprehensive sex education from parents, guidance and counselling teachers, school and religious leaders. Further, the study recommends that future studies be conducted on specific counselling approaches that prove most effective in managing stress among student mothers. Also, there is a need to consider further studies on factors contributing to teenage pregnancies among students in the region.

Keywords: student mothers, guidance, counselling, spiritual intervention, stress management

1. Introduction

Pregnancy in the life cycle of women is associated with profound changes and challenges that affect the physical, psychological, and mental health of women (Effati *et al.*, 2017). One of the mechanisms of coping with depression, anxiety, and stress during pregnancy is paying attention to the women's beliefs and values. This may include spirituality, ideology, ethics, and cultural values (Jannati *et al.*, 2013).

The World Health Organization recommends a comprehensive care approach addressing the four dimensions of the physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs of patients (Drunkel *et al.*, 2011). Spiritual counselling is recommended as a complementary, effective, and non-invasive intervention in controlling the psychological problems of pregnant student mothers (Mirghafourv *et al.*, 2016). Research indicates that the use of religious beliefs to overcome students' pregnancy stress and anxiety is a decisive factor that can have an impact on student mothers' reproductive health and general health without spending high costs, thus preventing the stress caused by teenage pregnancy and motherhood (Sharajabad *et al.*, 2017).

Trinitapoli and Regnerus (2016) observed that teenagers who attend religious meetings or services frequently are less likely to be sexually active than those who do not, and those who attend congregations in which teenage pregnancy is discussed frequently

are more likely to be virgins. The researchers argued that religious beliefs play an influencing role in decision-making among teenagers who are either pregnant or have not yet become pregnant.

Trinitapoli and Regnerus (2016) observed that in America, for example, African Americans believe that a higher supernatural power like God and faith or belief in him has direct control of their future. They noted that African Americans believe that God is an intervener in matters of health care where God is seen as a healer, and therefore, pregnancy-related problems, which are directly health-related problems, are left in the hand of God. This eventually compromises the lives of innocent girls in the event of pregnancy (UNPF, 2017).

Worldwide, religion has impacted the cultural scene so much that it has become a major cultural manifestation in thought and action, affecting the entire public sphere (Assimeng, 2016). Christianity teaches that sex is holy and only meant for those who are married. Furthermore, there are a lot of shortcomings of engaging in sex outside marriage and/or pre-marital sex, which are bound to befall an individual should he or she fail to adhere to the precepts of the biblical teachings regarding sex. Some of these consequences include dealing or coping with the possibility of pregnancy, acquiring or sharing sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and the most underrated but possibly most impacting are the emotional issues which go along throughout the entire lifetime (Kaiser, 2017).

From the Christian point of view, God is not only down on sex but created it for a purpose which should be fulfilled in the lives of every humanity. Sex is so intense, so exciting, so memorable, such fun that it should be jealously protected and preserved and only used by one person: the husband and the wife. Sex should not be shared among so many people. It is from these that the bible generates a firm foundation to offer teachings regarding sex to young people as it gives emphasis on the principle of abstinence (Nkwabeng, 2016).

Research studies underscore the significance of religion against early teenage pregnancy by indicating that religious belief is seen to be on the prime end towards discouraging sex education (Brewster, 2018). In reviewing the adverse effects of religious beliefs on teenage pregnancy prevention, the researcher established that religious affiliation often makes teenagers to be shy to speak about and even practically acquire and use contraceptives. For instance, teenagers who are affiliated with religion often fear approaching contraceptive dispensers or purchasing contraceptives over the counter for fear of being identified (National Council of Social Services, NCSS, 2018).

Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2014) indicates that from discussions with young mothers, many feel discriminated against mainly by the religious communities. Their responses are, therefore, avoidance of these communities and running away from the places of worship and even their homes. Although there has not been documented evidence of discrimination in religious places, this finding supports previous evidence of negative treatment in health and education institutions.

Population Reference Bureau & Center for the Study on Adolescence fact sheet (2015) indicates that even Christian communities view teenage mothers negatively. Some

Evangelical churches result in having the girl step aside from ministry activities, such as the church choir, barred from leading praise and worship, among other activities, until they are counselled, and subjected to repentance for around three months.

For Muslims, in spite of the fact that the Quran placed so much reinforcement on acquiring knowledge, Muslims are still shy and not comfortable discussing sex education with their children. Their argument is that anything which leads to wrong is also wrong (Handan, 2016). According to Athar (2017), Muslims strongly believe that if children are taught about sex, they will do it. Their resistance to sex education was based on the assumption that knowledge was harmful, but it is worth noting that ignorance is much more harmful than knowledge. However, mainstream Christian churches like Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian accept the girls back and even go ahead to baptize their children. Council of Imams also supports the girls in terms of linking them to hospitals for free health care and court users' committees to follow up on their cases (Population Reference Bureau & Center for the Study on Adolescence fact sheet, 2015).

In Kenya, there is a general reluctance on the part of adults, especially fathers and religious leaders, to discuss sexual issues with their teenagers (Karagu *et al.*, 2017). The researcher observes that sex educational programs may bear much fruit in promoting interest in discussion and exchange of ideas on teenage sexuality and how the voices of teenagers can be best understood. The researcher argues that from these reviews, it is worth noting that effective counselling on teenage premarital sex should be seasoned with the family structure, economic well-being of the family, compatibility and parental ties with the teenagers as well as religiosity of the parents and the teenagers.

According to Meya (2017), religious beliefs count a lot in the individual requirement of teenagers to fulfil their sense of belonging, whether in their own social sphere or among their own age-group friends. Without religious connection, teenage girls are exposed and easily lured to indulge in risky, unprotected and unplanned sex, which ultimately leads them into early teenage pregnancy. The study seeks to establish the role of spiritual intervention in the management of stress among student mothers in public secondary schools in Kimilili sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya.

2. Statement of the Problem

Teenage pregnancy in secondary schools is a global challenge as it is a significant contributor to school dropout among girls. The researcher notes that teenage pregnancy and student mothers' condition impede achievements in their education since the shock of an unwanted pregnancy becomes emotionally traumatic for the young teenage mother-to-be. The researcher notes that there is scanty knowledge on the effects of faith-based organization spiritual intervention through the gospel teaching on moral behaviour modification. The role of sex education in the curriculum is not known due to the upsurge of teenage pregnancy and student mothers. The researcher was prompted to conduct the study in public girls' secondary school in Kimilili sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya, to fill the gap in knowledge on the problem statement.

3. Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional research design. The target population was 5,069 Form three and four female students from public secondary schools in Kimilili Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya. The study also targeted 23 school Guidance and Counselling teachers as well as 23 school chaplains. The sample size table proposed by Krejcie & Morgan, 1970 was used to arrive at 381 girls from girls' schools and mixed secondary schools, 19 Guidance and Counselling teachers and 19 school chaplains. Data collection instruments were piloted to establish their validity and reliability using Cronbach alpha value greater than 0.7 and indication of higher reliability.

4. Findings

4.1 Impact of Spiritual Intervention on Stress Management among Student Mothers

A set of statements, using a five-point Likert scale, was presented to students to gauge their perspectives on the effect of spiritual intervention on stress management among student mothers. The responses were coded such that 1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Undecided, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of student respondents across different levels of agreement, accompanied by the mean and standard deviation values.

Table 1: Impact of Spiritual Intervention on Stress Management among Student Mothers in Kenyan Public Secondary Schools, Kimilili sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
My religion provides support in raising my child	149	58	24	11	18	2.03	1.31
As a student mother, I have received counselling from my religious group.	67	130	53	43	27	2.36	1.23
My religion/church/mosque has a policy on sex education	40	52	170	50	16	2.83	1.13
Sex education speakers are included in our religious assemblies	33	40	59	167	22	3.42	1.27
Posters on teenage girls' pregnancy are displayed in our religious assemblies	154	66	18	10	11	2.14	1.06
The teachings and principles of my spiritual beliefs offer guidance on managing challenges, including those related to being a student mother	34	18	45	160	63	3.61	1.18
Spiritual guidance and support from religious leaders play a significant role in helping me manage stress related to academic and maternal responsibilities	40	49	42	163	26	3.52	1.38

As shown in Table 1 above, majority of students strongly disagreed (Mean=2.03, SD=1.31) that their religion provides support in raising my child, disagreed (Mean=2.36, SD=1.23) that as a student mother I have received counselling from my religious group, neutral

(Mean=2.83, SD=1.13) that their religion/church/mosque has a policy on sex education, agreed (Mean=3.42, SD=1.27) that sex education speakers are included in our religious assemblies, strongly disagreed (Mean=2.14, SD=1.06) that posters on teenage girls' pregnancy are displayed in our religious assemblies, agreed (Mean=3.61, SD=1.18) that the teachings and principles of my spiritual beliefs offer guidance on managing challenges, including those related to being a student mother and finally agreed (Mean=3.52, SD=1.38) that spiritual guidance and support from religious leaders play a significant role in helping me manage stress related to academic and maternal responsibilities.

4.2 Disciplinary Measures for Romantic Relationships among Religious Members

The research also aims to ascertain the disciplinary actions students face when involved in romantic relationships. Figure 1 illustrates the types of punishments they might receive or have experienced.

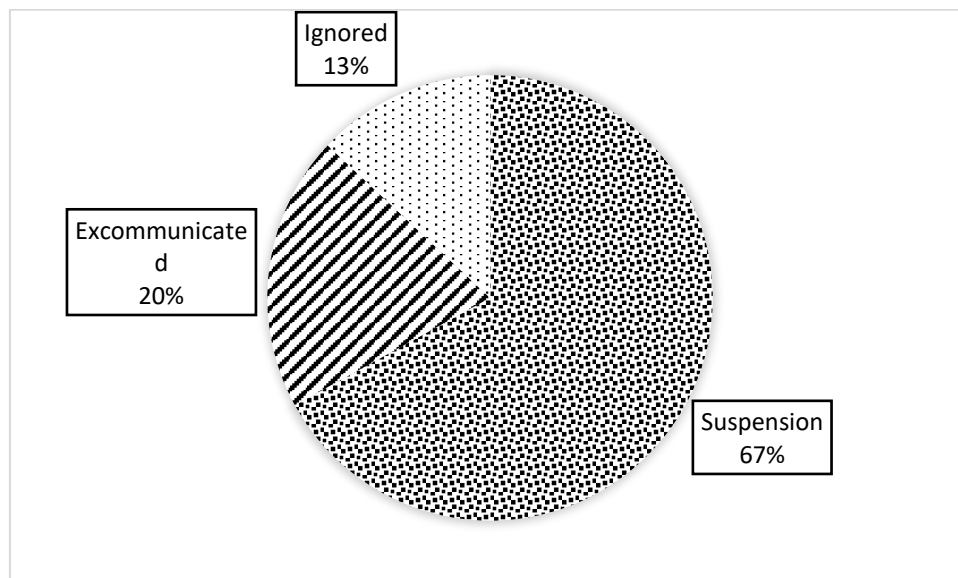


Figure 1: Punishment Imposed on Religious Members Engaging in Love Affairs

As per the results presented in Figure 1, 67% of the participants stated that they would face suspension if involved in romantic relationships, while 20% expressed the possibility of being excommunicated from their religious activities. Additionally, 13% mentioned that they anticipate being disregarded as a consequence of engaging in love affairs.

4.3 Inferential Analysis on the Effect of Spiritual Intervention on Stress Management among Student Mothers

The hypothesis was, there is no significant effect of spiritual intervention on stress management among student mothers in public secondary schools in Kimilili sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya. The research carried out a correlation analysis between the variables of the study using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The

correlation coefficient of +1 indicates that the two variables are perfectly related in a positive linear sense. Correlation coefficients range between 0.0 and 1.0. Values between 0.20 and 0.39 are considered very weak coefficients, between 0.40 and 0.59 are considered as weak, between 0.60 and 0.79 are considered as moderate, while values of between 0.80 and 1.0 are considered very strong. Table 2 below, shows the correlation test results.

Table 2: Correlation between Effect of Spiritual Intervention and Stress Management

			Stress management
Effect of Spiritual Intervention	Pearson Correlation	1	.659**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		320
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).			

Results from Table 2 above, reveal that there is a significant positive relationship between the effect of spiritual intervention and stress management ($r=0.659$, $p<0.000$). This implies that there is a very strong association between the effect of spiritual intervention and stress management which is significant. A study conducted by Apondi, Kimemia and Ryanga, (2011) on schooling challenges, coping mechanisms and support accorded to student mothers in Nyando reported that spiritual support helps student mothers to cope with parenting and school challenges.

5. Discussions

The objective of this study was to establish the effect of spiritual intervention on stress management among student mothers in Kenyan public secondary schools in Kimilili sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya. Results indicated that the majority of students strongly disagree that their religion provides support in raising their children. They also disagree that, as student mothers, they have received counselling from their religious group. Regarding sex education, there is a neutral stance on whether their religion/church/mosque has a policy on sex education, but they agree that sex education speakers are included in religious assemblies. There is a strong disagreement that posters on teenage girls' pregnancy are displayed in religious assemblies. Furthermore, they agree that spiritual guidance and support from religious leaders play a significant role in helping them manage stress related to academic and maternal responsibilities. The punishment imposed on religious members engaging in love affairs, according to 67% of the participants, is suspension. The hypothesis was that, there is no significant effect of spiritual intervention on stress management among student mothers in public secondary schools in Kimilili sub-county, Bungoma County, Kenya. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the effect of spiritual intervention and stress management ($r=0.659$, $p<0.000$); therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

6. Conclusions

Based on the findings, there is a significant positive relationship between the effectiveness of spiritual intervention and stress management among student mothers.

7. Recommendations

Student mothers should be given consistent pastoral support, spiritual talk, and biblical quotes to help them understand the meaning of every situation in life. They should be encouraged to seek spiritual support whenever they undergo stress to help cope and manage the stressful situations.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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