# THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON THE LIFESTYLE OF TEENAGE GIRLS IN SAGAMU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OGUN STATE

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## Abstract

*Poverty affects many people all over the world. In Nigeria, in particular, it affects about 40.7% of the population especially the teenage girls. Therefore, this study investigated the effect of poverty on the lifestyle of teenage girls in Sagamu Local Government Area. Inter-sectionality theory was adopted as the framework of analysis. The study adopted the quantitative method, primarily utilising data gathered through questionnaire administered in the study. A sample of 128 respondents was used. The data gathered was analysed with descriptive mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that factors like traditional practices or cultural norms, conflict or instability, discrimination, limited access to economic opportunities or employment opportunities exacerbated poverty among teenage girls. It further revealed poverty challenged the ability of teenage girls to access basic needs like food,*

*clothing or shelter, quality education, quality healthcare services as well as promoted prostitution, unwanted pregnancy, school drop-out, early marriage and untimely death among teenage girls in Sagamu LGA. The study concluded that poverty negatively affected the lifestyle of many teenage girls, including their ability to get an education, among others in Sagamu LGA. It therefore recommended that government should provide economic assistance, improved access to education and improved healthcare services to alleviate the challenges faced by teenage girls because of poverty.*

**Keywords:** *Intersectionality, lifestyle, poverty, Sagamu, teenage girls*

## 1.0 Introduction

Children are delicate creatures that need the right guidance and care to fulfill their goals and dreams; as such, their welfare must be the top concern in all cultures. However, in the majority of developing countries, such as Nigeria, it has been found that variables like poverty, which is the inability to pay for necessities like food, clothing and shelter, among others have a negative impact on the welfare of children, particularly teenage females (Olaogun & Adekunle, 2024).

Poverty is prevalent in Nigeria, with about 40.7% of the population living in poverty (Alik-Lagrange, 2024). Though several categories of people experience poverty, but teenage girls especially experience severe disadvantages and challenges to education, healthcare and financial opportunities due to poverty (Plan International, 2024). The impact of poverty on the lives of teenage girls in the country is of crucial concern that requires urgent attention. Poverty has numerous effects on girls' access to school, healthcare, and financial opportunities, which can have lasting consequences for their health and social progress. While poverty is a national issue in Nigeria, the impact on teenage girls is particularly frustrating. Poverty and gender-based discrimination can create an unpleasant

atmosphere in Nigeria, making it difficult for females to develop their potential and achieve their goals (Enaholo & Okafor, 2022; Balogun, 2022).

Teenage girls who live in poverty face several social problems and psychological difficulties during their early years. In comparison to their wealthier peers, they may acquire an inferiority complex and a negative outlook on life due to the high likelihood of starvation, inadequate shelter and clothing, and a lack of social support. Additionally, young girls' mental, emotional and social well-being are negatively impacted by exposure to environmental stress, violence and family problems, which eventually influence their way of life (Makhalima, 2020).

Furthermore, young females' stress levels are exacerbated by the ongoing burden of economic difficulty, leading to a phenomenon known as "toxic stress". Additionally, poverty in adolescent girls' families typically leads to ongoing stress or tense relationships at home, which negatively impact adolescent girls' emotional development and increase their risk of mental health conditions like anxiety or depression. Teenage girls living in poverty may also feel guilty because of their situation, which can make them retreat from social connections and have a detrimental influence on their lifestyle (Olaogun & Adekunle, 2024).

However, as prevalent as poverty rate is in the country, there seem to be shortage of data on poverty and gender issues in Nigeria, as well as inadequate study on the specific experiences of teenage girls in Sagamu, making it difficult to design effective policies and measures. Understanding the intricate interplay of poverty, gender and other factors is crucial for tackling poverty's impact on teenage girls. However, this intersectional approach is frequently overlooked in poverty studies. Therefore, this study

examined the impact of poverty on the lifestyle of teenage girls in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State.

### 1.2 Objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of poverty on the lifestyle of teenage girls in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State. Specific objectives of the study include:

To identify the factors that contribute to the specific challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA

To examine the specific challenges faced by teenage girls due to poverty and its impact of their lifestyle in Sagamu LGA.

To offer practical solutions that could improve the well-being and opportunities of teenage girls in Sagamu LGA

### 1.3 Research Questions

What are the factors that contribute to the specific challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA?

What are the specific challenges faced by teenage girls due to poverty and its impact on their lifestyle in Sagamu LGA?

What public policies, institutional programmes, and social initiatives can effectively address the multi-dimensional problems faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA?

## 2.0 Literature Review

Poverty is a multifaceted issue encompassing material hardship, economic vulnerability, social marginalisation, precarious livelihoods, physical health issues, social exclusion, social relationships, gender, and security (Spicker, n.d.). It refers to a lack of access to basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter, hindering education, medical care, job security and participation in recreational activities due to a lack of money (Okalow, 2023). Poverty is a

socioeconomic condition characterized by financial insecurity and lack of essential living resources, influenced by factors like race, sexual identity and education (Chen, 2024). Poverty is a complex issue involving a lack of resources, limited access to services, social protection, and decision-making opportunities, often contributing to human rights violations like child labour and human trafficking (United Nations Global Compact, n.d.). Poverty is the inability to live a fundamentally basic progressive life that would guarantee a sustainable and prosperous future (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2021).

The aforementioned conceptions of poverty are similar in that they emphasise social aspects, financial instability and restricted access to basic requirements. They stress the significance of social issues such as social marginalisation, gender and race. They focus on material circumstances, social aspects, rights-based methodology, agency and empowerment, and national and international viewpoints, however, they may diverge. The Federal Ministry and Spicker concentrate on social relationships, gender, and security, but the UN definition ties poverty to human rights abuses. Deducing from the foregoing, poverty is a state or human experience that is typified by a lack of resources, insecurity, restricted access to services and health problems. These conditions are frequently exacerbated by systemic causes including political instability and socioeconomic inequality. Social exclusion, marginalisation and a sense of pessimism are frequently the results of this state of poverty.

Rodriguez (2022) submits that the severe effects of poverty on girls' education and subsequent development on the families, communities and society at large are enormous which has significant implications for their economic and social empowerment. It also highlights that lack of education contributes to increased vulnerability to exploitation, violence, early marriage

and pregnancy, trapping girls in a cycle of poverty. Poverty contributes to high birth rates by increasing the likelihood of early marriage and pregnancy, and reinforcing poverty by limiting education and economic opportunities for pregnant girls. Consequently, high teenage birth rates in Sub-Saharan Africa negatively impact girls' education, career prospects, and poverty.

Poverty has a significant impact on the frequency and severity of violence against women and girls. Women and girls living in poverty are especially vulnerable to violence as a result of socioeconomic reasons such as economic dependency, restricted access to resources and gender disparities. This creates an environment in which violence is more frequent and women and girls have fewer choices for fleeing abusive situations. Moreover, it has been argued that poverty worsens existing kinds of gender-based violence, including intimate partner abuse, sexual violence and trafficking, by increasing the susceptibility of women and girls to exploitation and reducing their access to justice and protective services (Eralp & Gokmen, 2023). Also, poverty promotes early pregnancy among teenage girls, which more often than none usually causes the teenage girls to drop out of school, thus limiting their career options and development in the society (Donkor, 2022).

**2.1 Theoretical Framework**

Intersectionality theory was adopted as the framework of analysis for this study. Intersectionality is a theory that explains how social exclusion and disadvantage can create barriers for certain groups, such as women. It focuses on the interrelationships of social variables like race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability, influencing an individual's experiences and possibilities (The Scottish Government, 2022). Originating from Black feminist activism, it was developed in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw and has been contributed to by researchers like Patricia Hill Collins and Audre Lorde (Atewologun, 2018; The Scottish Government, 2022; Samie, 2024).

Intersectionality theory asserts that individuals possess multiple identities, such as race, class, gender and sexual orientation, which intertwine and shape their experiences, and that different forms of oppression are interdependent (Arnoud, Chotgues, Marques & Habigzang, 2023). The theory suggests that social categories like race and gender are socially constructed and shaped by power structures, acknowledging that experiences are subjective and marginalised by intersecting identities (Kardashevskaya, 2022). Also, intersectionality recognises that the ways in which identities and oppressions intersect may vary depending on the social, cultural and political context, and that the experiences of different individuals can therefore be quite diverse (Jackson, Mohr & Kindahl, 2021).

Scholars argue that intersectionality focuses on individual experiences and identities rather than structural and systemic factors perpetuating inequality. Critics argue that this approach can weaken social movements and lead to identity politics, emphasising differences over commonalities. Intersectionality's complexity in research and policy-making makes it challenging to design effective policies and programs that address the needs of different disadvantaged groups (La Barbera, Cassain&Caravantes, 2023). Critics argue that intersectionality oversimplifies oppression and overlooks practical solutions, suggesting it may not effectively address forms like racism and sexism, leading to ineffective policies and actions (The Scottish Government, 2022). Intersectionality, a concept acknowledging diversity, can sometimes be divide into groups with similar experiences of oppressionby simplifying identities and overlooking the complexity of individual experiences and resilience (Collins, da Silva, Ergun, Furseth, Bond &Martínez-Palacios, 2021).

However, in spite of criticism and in application to this study, intersectionality theory is crucial in understanding the impact of poverty on

teenage girls in Sagamu local government area. It highlights how poverty intersects with gender, race, religion and ethnicity, creating unique challenges. This knowledge can aid in policy recommendations and solutions to address issues like racism, sexism and classism, promoting holistic approaches to addressing inequality.

## 3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and also adopted quantitative method. Data was gathered through the instrumentation of a self-structured questionnaire on the impact of poverty on teenage girls' lifestyle in Sagamu Local Government Area. To ascertain the questionnaire's content and face validity, two experts were given the draft for further evaluation and revision. This was done to see if the language, presentation, clarity and applicability of the instrument were adequate. To assess the instrument's dependability, twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to participants who were not in the study area. The dependability coefficient of the instrument was found to be 0.82. Convenience sampling technique was utilised. One hundred and fifty (150) copies of the said questionnaires were administered on the residents of Sagamu, with a response rate of 85.3% (128 respondents). The collected data was analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Descriptive statistics were used because they make data visualisation simple. It enables the meaningful and intelligible presentation of data, which in turn enables a more straightforward understanding of the relevant data set.

**4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Research Question 1:** What are the factors that contribute to the specific challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA?

**Table 1:** Factors that contribute to the specific challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA

| S/N | Issue Raised | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Traditional practices or cultural norms in my community have made it difficult for me to achieve my goals | 128 | 2.41 | 1.251 | Disagree |
| 2 | Conflict or instability in my community has made it more difficult for me to access the resources I need. | 128 | 3.41 | 0.967 | Agreed |
| 3 | I feel respected and valued by my community. | 128 | 3.47 | 0.972 | Agreed |
| 4 | I have faced discrimination or disadvantage based on my gender. | 128 | 3.13 | 1.249 | Agreed |
| 5 | I have struggled to afford basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter | 128 | 3.44 | 1.350 | Agreed |
| 6 | I have limited access to economic opportunities or employment opportunities. | 128 | 3.13 | 1.274 | Agreed |
| | **Grand Total** | | 3.17 | | |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents the responses of the respondents on factors that contribute to the specific challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA. The first item in the table has the mean of 2.41 which implies that the respondents disagreed that traditional practices or cultural norms in their community made it difficult for them to achieve their goals. The second item in the table has the mean of 3.41 which implies that the respondents agreed thatconflict or instability in their community has made it more difficult for them to access the resources they need. The third item in the table has the mean of 3.47 which implies that the respondents agreed that they feel respected and valued by their communities. The fourth item in the table has the mean of 3.13 which implies that the respondents agreed that they have faced discrimination or disadvantage based on their gender. The fifth item in the table has the mean of 3.44 which implies that the respondents agreed that they have struggled to afford basic necessities like food, clothing, and shelter. The sixth item in the table has the mean of 3.13 which implies that the respondents agreed that they have limited access to economic opportunities or employment opportunities. The grand mean of the table is 3.17 which implies that the respondents agreed that several factors contribute to the specific challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA.

**Research Question 2:** What are the specific challenges faced by teenage girls due to poverty and its impact of their lifestyle in Sagamu LGA?

**Table 2:** Challenges faced by teenage girls due to poverty and its impact of their lifestyle in Sagamu LGA

| S/N | Issue Raised | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Poverty affected my ability to meet my basic needs, such as food, clothing, or shelter | 128 | 3.75 | 1.065 | Agreed |
| 8 | I have access to quality education, such as primary, secondary school and or tertiary institution | 128 | 3.88 | .860 | Agreed |
| 9 | I have difficulties in accessing quality healthcare services due to poverty. | 128 | 3.37 | 1.274 | Agreed |
| 10 | Poverty promotes wayward characters like prostitution among the teenage girls. | 128 | 3.34 | 1.220 | Agreed |
| 11 | Poverty contributes to early marriage and teenage pregnancy in my community. | 128 | 4.06 | .937 | Agreed |
| 12 | Poverty increases school drop-out and untimely death among the teenage girls | 128 | 3.44 | 1.092 | Agreed |
| | Grand Total | | 3.64 | | |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents the responses of the respondents on the challenges faced by teenage girls due to poverty and its impact on their lifestyle in Sagamu LGA. The first item in the table has the mean of 3.75 which implies that the respondents agreed that poverty affected their ability to meet basic needs, such as food, clothing, or shelter. The second item in the table has the mean of 3.88 which implies that the respondents agreed that they have access to quality education, such as primary, secondary school and or tertiary institution. The third item in the table has the mean of 3.37 which implies that the respondents agreed that they have difficulties in accessing quality healthcare services due to poverty.

The fourth item in the table has the mean of 3.34 which implies that the respondents agreed that poverty promotes wayward characters like prostitution among the teenage girls. The fifth item in the table has the mean of 4.06 which implies that the respondents agreed that poverty contributes to early marriage and teenage pregnancy in the community. The sixth item in the table has the mean of 3.44 which implies that the several respondents agreed that poverty increases school drop-out and untimely death among the teenage girls. The grand mean of the table is 3.64 which implies that the respondents agreed that there are many challenges faced by teenage girls due to poverty and this enormous negative impact on their lifestyle in Sagamu LGA.

**Research Question 3:** What are the specific challenges faced by teenage girls due to poverty and its impact of their lifestyle in Sagamu LGA?

**Table 3:** Public policies, institutional programs, and social initiatives can effectively address the multi-dimensional problems faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA

| S/N | Issue Raised | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | Government programmes that provide cash transfers or other forms of economic support would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. | 128 | 3.84 | 1.180 | Agreed |
| 14 | Improved access to education, such as scholarships or free school meals, would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. | 128 | 4.47 | .501 | Agreed |
| 15 | Improved access to healthcare services, including mental health services, would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. | 128 | 4.28 | .913 | Agreed |
| 16 | Government policies and programmes that prioritise addressing violence against women and girls would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. | 128 | 4.41 | .900 | Agreed |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | Government policies and programmes that promote job creation and vocational training for young people would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. | 128 | 4.44 | .830 | Agreed |
| | Grand Total | | 4.29 | | |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 presents the responses of the respondents on public policies, institutional programs, and social initiatives which can effectively address the multi-dimensional problems faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA. The first item in the table has the mean of 3.84 which implies that the respondents agreed that government programs that provide cash transfers or other forms of economic support would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. The second item in the table has the mean of 4.47 which implies that the respondents agreed that improved access to education, such as scholarships or free school meals, would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty.

The third item in the table has the mean of 4.28 which implies that the respondents agreed that improved access to healthcare services, including mental health services, would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. The fourth item in the table has the mean of 4.41 which implies that the respondents agreed that government policies and programs that prioritise addressing violence against women and girls would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. The fifth item in the table has the mean of 4.44 which implies that the respondents agreed that government policies and programs that promote job creation and vocational training for young people would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. The grand mean of the table is 4.29 which implies that the respondents agreed that public policies, institutional programs, and social

initiatives can effectively address the multi-dimensional problems faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA

**4.1 Discussion of Findings**

The findings of the study revealed that several factors contribute to the specific challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA. Factors such as traditional practices or cultural norms, conflict or instability, discrimination or disadvantage based on their gender and limited access to economic opportunities or employment opportunities among others promote poverty among the teenage girls in the study area. This finding complements the opinion of Makhalima (2020) who asserted that broken homes, unequal access to education and economic opportunities, customs and traditions, among others promoted poverty among the girl child in South Africa.

Furthermore, the finding revealed that challenges are faced by teenage girls due to poverty, which heavily negatively impacted their lifestyle in Sagamu LGA. It was discovered that poverty affected their ability to meet basic needs, such as food, clothing, or shelter. It also affected access to quality education, such as primary, secondary school and or tertiary institution as well as quality healthcare services. It revealed that poverty promotes wayward characters like prostitution among the teenage girls, contributes to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and as well increases school drop-out and untimely death among the teenage girls in Sagamu LGA. These findings are in agreement with earlier studies of Olaogun and Adekunle (2024), Enaholo and Okafor (2022) and Plan International (2024) who in their respective studies submitted that poverty has a negative impact on children's physical and mental health, education, and social well-being.

The study revealed that public policies, institutional programmes and social initiatives can effectively address the multi-dimensional problems faced by

teenage girls in poverty in Sagamu LGA. It identified that government programmes like cash transfers or other forms of economic support would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. It also revealed that improved access to education such as scholarships or free school meals would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. Also improved access to healthcare services, including mental health services, would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty. It also found that government policies and programmes that promote job creation and vocational training for young people would help reduce the challenges faced by teenage girls in poverty.

## 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that the complex nature of poverty among teenage girls, involving factors like gender inequality, limited economic opportunities and traditional gender roles among others, have significant negative impact on the lifestyle of teenage girls in Sagamu LGA. This is because poverty promotes wayward characters like prostitution among the teenage girls, contributes to early marriage and teenage pregnancy and as well increases school drop-out and untimely death among the teenage girls in studied area. Thus, addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach, adaptability to changing contexts, and prioritising teenage girls as key agents of change.

To salvage the situation, the study recommends that government should implement programmes that will help decrease the problems that confront teenage girls in poverty by providing economic assistance, expanding access to education and healthcare facilities, combating violence against women and girls, and encouraging job creation and vocational training. These initiatives can interrupt the cycle of poverty and inequality, resulting in a more just and equitable society. Community based interventions which will ensure girls'

voices and experiences by offering safe places, mentorship, and opportunities for skill development should be encouraged by the government.

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