

Investigating the Knowledge and Attitude of Teenage Pregnancy among Learners in the Eastern Cape

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ABSTRACT Teenage pregnancy is one of the social problems in South Africa and is of great significance, as it affects the education of young girls. Previous studies indicate that pregnant teenagers are more likely to be at risk of complications of pregnancy than older women. The aim of this study was to investigate the knowledge and attitudes toward teenage pregnancy among high school learners. A sample of 181 learners was taken from three selected schools in Eastern Cape. The learners were recruited and served as study participants. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire, which was designed to measure the knowledge and attitudes toward teenage pregnancy. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The results showed an 11.7 percent prevalence of teenage pregnancy among the learners. The learners sampled from the three selected schools were found to have positive knowledge and attitudes regarding teenage pregnancy. The results of the study may inform teenage pregnancy prevention and intervention strategies aimed at high school learners.

INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy in humans refers to pregnancy of females of age less than 20 years, as at the time of end of pregnancy (Wikipedia 2015). Teenagers faces the same pregnancy issues as with older women but there is a serious medical concern for teenagers, as they face risk of low birth weight, anemia, preeclampsia and premature labor. There are several suggestions that indicate peer pressure as a factor in encouraging both girls and boys to have sex, and increased sexual activity among adolescents' manifests into increased teenage pregnancies and an increase in sexually transmitted diseases (Allen 2003).

There is a sharp contrast between teenage pregnancy in developed countries and that of developing countries. Developed countries see teenage pregnancy to be just a social issue and the teenage parent often stay unmarried. In developing countries teenage parents are often married and most families and society may welcome the idea of the pregnancy, however this is accompanied by high degree of poverty, which

results in poor feeding during pregnancy and subsequently, serious medical complications (Wikipedia 2015).

“Worldwide, adolescents have more than 14 million births each year, and more than ninety percent (90%) of these occur in developing countries. The proportion of teenage women who are mothers or are currently pregnant is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa (20-40%). The proportions are lower in other regions, that is, six to twenty-one percent in Asia, with Bangladesh being an outlier at thirty-five percent, and thirteen to twenty-five percent in Latin America. As a result of high levels of early childbearing in developing countries, pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death among women aged 15 to 19 years” (Reynolds et al. 2006).

Life as a teenager in South Africa is often accompanied by sexual experimentation due to social freedom accorded to teenagers of both genders. In most part of the country individuals usually marry at a later part of their lives and pre-marital sex is viewed with light eyes (Jewkes et al. 2001). Being pregnant or having a child before marriage is somehow socially and cultur-