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## TEEN PREGNANCY. FACTORS. OPTIONS. CONSEQUENCES

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**Abstract:** *Teen age pregnancy and motherhood was something normal along human history, but in the present society there are widely recognized the girls' need and right to continue their education, to achieve financial independence. Adolescence is a period when maturation is not complete yet and young people often give proof of ignorance on sexual activity or intimate responsibility. Pregnancy in adolescence is primarily a social "plague", which can have serious medical consequences. In our country, there are about 27.000 births to teenagers every year, plus about 700 births to girls aged up to 15. Other approximately 14.000 teenagers who become pregnant choose to discontinue it and 40% of girls are today 14 years old will become pregnant at least once before reaching 20, according to a study of the organization "Save the Children" in "Child's abuse and neglect"(2000). Giving birth to teenager in Romania ranks us as second in Europe after Great Britain and on the third place to abortion after GB and France, shows the failure of sexual health education in Romania and the earlier sexualization of young generation. We believe the study is important because teenage pregnancy is social problem due to the implications deriving from the mother's status; psychologically immature, without professional skills, pregnant teens face multiple risks*

**Keywords:** *teen pregnancy, abortion, consequences*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the age of sexual debut. It lies after puberty, between 14-20 years, including the time of beginning of sexual life. Sexuality is an attractive, mysterious field, often prohibited by parents, society, school or other educational factors. As the media have developed, the broad field of sexuality has become more lax. Internet and television remain, despite the measures taken by the NAC, the main means of information and promotion of sexuality.

Adolescence is the period of dreams, career preparation, and the design of future life. A

pregnancy appeared in this context is often an accident.

Teenage pregnancy indicates either the absence of knowledge about contraception, or their contraceptive education is poor.

Before 1989 the Romanian school totally ignored education for sexual health. The reform totally of Romanian education must take into account the international regulations. According to UNESCO, XXI century education is "education for life", which includes sexual education. However, the National Commission of Curriculum does not see in the graduate more than its cognitive and social dimension because there is nothing

specified about the sexual education component” (Neamtu, 2005).

Adolescent pregnancy is a natural consequence of sexual activity unprotected through contraception; teen pregnancy is socially and economically a social problem because of the implications deriving from the mother’s status: psychologically immature, having no consistent skills nor the ability to ensure a steady income, so unable to raise and educate her own child, the pregnant teenager faces multiple medical risks and complications at birth or affecting the child’s constitution and health.

## **2. DETERMINANT FACTORS OF TEENAGE PREGNANCY**

The determinants of pregnancy in adolescence are early sexual relations in conjunction with a poor sexual education. The research led by Udry (1984) apud Adams - Berzonsky, shows that there is a highly significant correlation between early age of mothers at first sexual intercourse and their daughters’. These tend to begin their sexual life before 14, with the risks connected to educational gaps.

**2.1. Family’s influence.** Studies by Jaccard, Dittus and Gordon (1996) claimed that closeness to the mother is related to delaying daughter's sexual intercourse and the use of contraceptive methods by sexually active adolescents of both genders. Most cases show that active surveillance, monitoring of children by parents is related to sexual behaviour of adolescents in that it would lower the risk of pregnancy. Rogers (1999) reported that intrusive maternal control was associated with early age for the first sexual intercourse.

Associations between parent-child communication and adolescent pregnancy risk were investigated in more than 30 studies, and associations between parent-adolescent communication and adolescent sexual behaviour are moderated by the moral values of parents.

Studies of Lammars et al., 2000, Benson and Galbraith, 2001 cited in Adams - Berzonsky, demonstrate that family structure

has great importance for teen pregnancy. Thus, girls raised by single parents are at risk of pregnancy due to more permissive sexual attitudes, as parents do not monitor them constantly and even arrange their dates. Also, traumatic experiences, especially those involving sexual abuse, are associated with a higher risk of occurrence of pregnancy through the early debut of sexual intercourse.

**2.2. Congener’s influence.** Regarding congeners’ influences, studies show that teenagers will befriend with those with similar attitudes, beliefs and desires (Bauman 1994). So young people are affected by the influence and pressure of congeners but they are not as large and negative as anticipated.

However researchers have established a link between the risk of early start of sexual life and of early pregnancy in the case of pre-teenagers living with adolescents who are sexually active or with pregnant sister (East, 1996). Benda and DiBlaso (1991) found that when relationships with parents are strong, congeners’ negative effects are reduced.

**2.3. Community’s influence.** As concerning the community where girls grow, research revealed that high unemployment in the district is a consistent predictor of the likelihood of teenage parenthood (Guard, 1994). Also, in most analyzes, the religiosity has a preventive influence on teen pregnancy.

Ethnicity is also an important factor in the prediction of teen pregnancies. Some cultures support a more tolerant attitude towards the phenomenon of pregnancy at a very early age. This is the case of Hispanics, black populations especially in rural areas and Gypsies. Early birth in these communities can be linked with low expectations from some ethnic groups.

## **3. OPTIONS ABOUT TEEN PREGNANCY**

Sexual intercourse without adequate contraception leads to pregnancy. In the situation of an unwanted pregnancy, adolescents have three options: abortion, child placed for adoption or keeping it.



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**3.1. Abortion** can be chosen by some teenage girls because they want to keep secret the fact that they are sexually active. They often mention lack of economic resources and concerns about how the newborn baby would affect future plans for teens as concerning education. Hardships or instability in the relationship could also be reasons to resort to abortion.

Stevans (1992) found that religious affiliation has no effect on the decision to solve teenage pregnancy in one way or another. Much more important is the role of teenagers' mother who the higher their educational level is, the more they influence teens to resort to abortion.

**3.2. Adoption.** In the decision for giving the baby for adoption or keeping the child, Warren and Johnson (1989) found that white women are more likely to send their children for adoption than Hispanics or Afro-Americans. The greatest decrease in giving to adoption in the last decade was registered with the white girls, who are starting to behave like other races.

Miller (1995) demonstrated through his research that teenagers who have a good education and professional goals are more likely to postpone sexual activity, to use contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies and to place children for adoption than girls with lower targets in terms of education.

Women who have personal experience with adoption (eg know someone adopted or were adopted themselves) or living in foster care are more likely to choose adoption (Cushman, 1993).

We can summarize that young women who make an adoption plan are mostly white, come from an advantageous environment, want to

attend college and to make a career and have positive attitudes regarding adoption.

#### 4. CONSEQUENCES OF CHILDBIRTH IN ADOLESCENCE

They have an impact on the young teenage girls, the fathers, the children and society in general.

##### 4.1. Consequences for teenage mothers.

Girls who become teenage mothers remain single over a double period in the age range 14-30 than those that have a child after 20 and only 19% of them marry the father of their child (Sanders, 1997). In the case of adolescents who got married, the probability that the relationship ends with a divorce is higher than for those who give birth after 20, according to the study. As single mothers, teenagers have a higher probability to abandon school. This actually results in fewer employment opportunities and thus lower income.

##### 4.2. Consequences for the fathers.

Adolescent fathers earn 25% less than those who decide to become parents later (Willis, 1997) and seem to engage in more delinquent behaviours than older fathers.

**4.3. Consequences on children born to teen mothers** are primarily medical; they are often premature, with a probability of 1.5 times for low birth weight, under 2.5 kg (Perozek, 1997). As they grow, they are prone to disorders such as dyslexia and hyperactivity.

Birth to a teenager has negative effects on the quality of care and feeding of the child because of the mother's material difficulties

and lack of experience. Children born to adolescents are taken to the doctor 2 times more rarely than those born to more mature mothers (Perozec, 1997). Teenage mothers spend 20% longer in hospital than women who have children later.

According to studies conducted by Moore and Greene in 1997, babies born to teenage mothers scored lower on cognitive tests in mathematics, reading and comprehension than children of non adolescent mothers. According to the study, they have only 30% chance of becoming good students, maybe due to reduced cognitive stimulation at early ages and their poor feeding.

Also, babies born to teenage mothers are at increased risk of school dropout, to flee from home or juvenile delinquency, being 2.7 times more likely to spend part of their lives in prison (Mayard, 1996).

**4.4. Consequences on society.** A birth has a great financial impact on society. Maynard (1997) estimated that in the mid 90s, the Americans paid about \$ 21 billion annual cost of the assisted teen mothers. In Romania, the state pays 2000 lei per month per child in placement centres.

## 5. CONCLUZIONI

Researchers who studied adolescent pregnancy often considered variables as sexual intercourse and contraceptive use as indicators of teen pregnancy risk. These behaviours are affected by wider contextual influences, individual and familial ones.

Family influences on adolescent pregnancy risk include the characteristics of parent-adolescent relationship, the family structure and other contextual features.

Congeners can either encourage or discourage risky sexual behaviour, their influence depending on the girls' relations with the nuclear family.

Community characteristics such as low socio-economic status and low employment opportunities correlated with an increased number of adolescent pregnancies, whereas increased religiosity lead to fewer teen

Family and contextual factors influence the manner in which girls make a decision on the course of gestation. The decision to abort is positively correlated with family income and the educational level, as well as the mother's influence. Race, family's socio-economic status, future educational and career aspirations of the adolescence are among the most prominent variables in the decision to give the baby for adoption.

Consequences for teen mothers include longer periods of loneliness, educational sacrifice, low employment opportunities, smaller income than those of non-adolescent mothers.

Early motherhood tends to interrupt the long period of education and training required in developed societies. Children born to teenage mothers will face cognitive, social and economic disadvantages. Teen motherhood also requires a significant financial burden on the extended family and society over the forms of public assistance.

A teenage mother's child is a potential social assisted person, either directly or indirectly, from neglect or mistreatment by the mother, who is not mature enough to understand and to satisfy the baby's needs. The Romanian State spends about 2000 lei per month with child in its care.

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