

PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERHOOD IN SOUTHEASTERN MEXICO

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research is to identify the situations faced by adolescent women in the city of Campeche, in southeastern Mexico, in situations of pregnancy and maternity. The approach is qualitative from the perspective of adolescent mothers where we can know how they have coped with this process from the news of being pregnant and being mothers, the reaction of the partner, the family, classmates, society, among others. A semi-structured interview was used. The data were analyzed under a phenomenological qualitative approach, and categories of

analysis were created by methodological triangulation. The findings describe experiences around the family, the couple and the social challenges experienced by adolescents.

KEYWORDS: Teenage pregnancy, young women, sexual health, reproductive health.

RESUMEN: La presente investigación tiene el propósito de identificar las situaciones que enfrentan las mujeres adolescentes de la ciudad de Campeche, en el sureste de México, en situación de embarazo y maternidad. El abordaje es cualitativo desde la perspectiva de las madres adolescentes donde podemos conocer cómo han afrontado este proceso a partir de las noticias de embarazo y madres, la reacción de la pareja, la familia, los compañeros de clase, la sociedad, entre otros. Se utilizó una entrevista semiestructurada. Los datos se analizaron bajo un enfoque fenomenológico cualitativo, las categorías de análisis se crearon mediante triangulación metodológica. Los hallazgos describen las experiencias en torno a la familia, la pareja y los desafíos sociales que experimentan los adolescentes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Embarazo adolescente, mujeres jóvenes, salud sexual,

salud reproductiva.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent pregnancy is a social phenomenon that has captured the attention of researchers, educators and policymakers around the world. In Mexico, and particularly in the state of Campeche, the pregnancy rate in young people is alarmingly high. Campeche faces a significant challenge in terms of reproductive health. According to data from the National Population Council (CONAPO, 2020), the fertility rate in adolescents aged 15 to 19 in Campeche is 75.4 per 1,000 women, exceeding the national average of 66.1 per 1,000. This phenomenon is due to multiple factors, including the lack of comprehensive sex education and limited access to health services.

One of the main causes of teenage pregnancy in Campeche is the lack of information and sex education. According to a study by Martínez et al. (2021), 60% of the young people surveyed mentioned not having received adequate sex education in their schools. This lack of knowledge contributes to misinformation about contraceptive methods and sexual health.

In addition, socioeconomic factors play a crucial role. Poverty and gender inequality are realities that affect many adolescent girls in the region. According to the Ministry of Health of Campeche (2022), adolescents from rural communities are more likely to become pregnant than those from urban areas, due to the scarcity of resources and accessible health services.

Teenage pregnancy not only affects the physical health of young women, but also has social and economic repercussions. Pregnant adolescents often drop out of school, which limits their future job opportunities. According to a UNESCO report (2020), 30% of adolescent girls who become pregnant do not return to formal education, perpetuating the cycle of poverty in their families.

In addition, teenage pregnancy is associated with an increased risk of complications in childbirth. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) points out that adolescent girls are at higher risk of obstetric complications, which can lead to maternal and infant mortality.

To address this problem, it is essential to implement comprehensive sex education programs in schools. These programs should include information on contraception, reproductive health, and decision-making skills. As Pérez (2022) points out, adequate sex education can empower adolescents to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

In addition, there is a need to improve access to health services for adolescents, ensuring that they have access to contraception and medical care. Awareness-raising campaigns are also crucial to destigmatize contraceptive use and foster an open dialogue about sexuality (Climent, 2006; Alarcón, et. al., 2009; García, et. al., 2015)

In the case of an unwanted pregnancy, the answer is overwhelming, especially

in the case of women, making a contradiction clearer – at least in appearance – since they (almost half) do not talk about sexuality with anyone, but in the face of a problem of this magnitude, their first intention is to go to their relatives, but the confrontational situation that this represents is predictable; little communication, an activity carried out clandestinely, conservative parents, among others, are the factors that surround the action of communicating a premature pregnancy to parents (Márquez, Pérez, & Sibaja, 2004).

Pregnancy during adolescence is a major problem, since preventing pregnancy at this age contributes to a decrease in maternal and infant mortality. However, adolescence is seen as a transitory stage with little risk, but precisely for this reason, special attention should be paid to this stage of life, mainly with regard to reproductive health, since the future of our society will depend in part on this (Acosta & Cárdenas, 2012).

The main characteristics of young pregnant women stand out: a great diversity of accumulated social adversities, biological aspects (early sexual maturation and premature sexual activity), the region they live in (mainly rural or suburban), uses and customs, religion, and low educational level. These authors mention that, in the face of the establishment of Adolescent Pregnancy, adolescents face another very serious dilemma: to continue with the pregnancy or to suspend it. However, the reasons that drive an adolescent to continue the pregnancy until the birth of her child may be the same as those that led her to become pregnant, and of them the following stand out: marriage at an early age and the establishment of the gender role that is traditionally assigned to women, the practice of unprotected sex, peer pressure to have sex, insufficient sex education, consumption of alcoholic beverages or other drugs (Loredo, et al., 2015; Gómez & Martín, 2013).

Complications from illegal abortions fall into two fundamental categories: the first is related to wounds caused by the procedure itself; The second category is given by infections and blood loss associated with incomplete abortion. Women who have opted for abortion have a number of long-term complications. When adolescents find themselves with their child in their arms, they sometimes present depressive and anxiety symptoms, they have ambivalent feelings with the baby, which sometimes cause rejection (Langer, 2002; Landoni & Della, 2003).

METHOD

The type of study is qualitative, this is carried out by dealing directly with the main factor, in this case with young pregnant women, a data collection was carried out with the help of a semi-structured interview based on different factors and based on this, questions were formulated as the answers were obtained, these allowed to know more deeply the central study topic. an interpretative analysis was carried out by triangulation of researchers (Pérez, 2000).

Participants

The sample was made up of 24 adolescents between the ages of 17 and 19 years, who are in the fourth semester of high school and were in a gestation period of between 6 and 8 months.

Instruments

The instrument used on the sample was a semi-structured interview, where topics related to the factors involved in the topic were addressed, such as economic, social, family, school, among others; in which, based on the answers given by the adolescents, other questions were formulated and so on, obtaining 19 questions with a duration of approximately two hours of interview with the young women.

All participants and their legal guardians read and signed a personal data protection document and an informed consent.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Definition.	Parents do not wait for the news that their children will become pregnant at a young age, but they still provide them with the necessary support during the process.	
Subcategory	Definition.	Example
Dads will be grandparents	The crucial moment in which the adolescent plans how to tell their parents that they are pregnant, experiencing emotions such as: fear, anguish, sadness and joy, as well as thoughts about their reaction.	“I didn’t even tell her but she found out from a friend, I mean, first I told my friends but I was already about two months old and I was thinking about having an abortion, so I don’t know, my friend says that she told her that because it was so that she wouldn’t do something stupid and things like that... I was very angry because she found out from someone else and not from me and she told me that how could I have more trust in my friends than in her and all that”
Mom, dad, do you support me?	The role played by parents when they know that they will be grandparents, they are somewhat confused, they tend to support more economically, despite the fact that the responsibility is their children’s.	“He worked only on Saturdays and we don’t have enough for the expenses we have, his parents are the ones who give him money than the ultrasound, medication and so on.”

Table 1. Category: “My parents’ reaction generates uncertainty for me”

Definition.	At which time both parties found out about the pregnancy.	
Subcategory	Definition.	Example
I see it and I don't believe it, I'M GOING TO BE A MOM!	The reactions and emotions, such as joy, despair, fear, nervousness, among others, that adolescents experience when the pregnancy test was positive and they realize that they will be mothers.	"I got nervous, because how was my mom going to get pregnant, and why do I receive a pension for my studies, I was more scared because of that because they can take it away from me"
Am I going to be a dad?	The groom's reaction when he found out that the pregnancy test came out positive.	"And it came out positive and I told him and what are we going to do and the first thing he told me was that if I was going to abort it, at that moment I said yes, then I said no and then I said yes and then I told him I don't know what to do and that's it, He was not very excited, on the contrary, he was very afraid, "you are of legal age, I can file a complaint if you do not want to have it."
Mom in the Making	The responsibilities of adolescents, regarding this new "challenge" of being a mother, is something new and for such, they had to make many decisions that are part of this process, so maturation is part of them	"I think that if it helped me a little to mature not everything but more because I think because I carry the belly and I don't think he has matured in everything"
If I could do it, you too	Empathy they feel when they learn about the experience of others and thus help them to cope with their fears	"You allowed him to beat you, I would never have allowed that and I don't really know how, I don't know I say no, I can't, I'm not like that..."
I called it honey	Within the relationship not everything is rosy, since some are victims of abuse by the boyfriend but when they find themselves in love they do not realize until after the violence received.	"He did mistreat me, in fact with the pregnancy he hit my belly, he slapped me and things like that, and my mom found out, it was when he forbade me to walk with him, even so I decided to continue with him and it was that a month later I got pregnant"

Table 2. Category: "My boyfriend and I think and feel differently"

Definition	Despite all the consequences of life, adolescents manage their process of being a mother well, without ceasing to dream of their goals and objectives that they have set for themselves.	
Subcategory	Definition.	Example
I'm happy and I'm fine, I don't care about others	Even after the news, the people she considered important in her life were those who left them alone along the way, however, this did not discourage them from continuing the process of being a mother.	"They questioned me that you are very young and that you are studying, many people criticized me the same about my family, but they are people who have never supported me and I don't care what they say"
Do not give up	Pregnancy has not been an obstacle for adolescents and even less a reason to surrender to their dreams	"I'm going to continue studying, and not because, I don't want to be told one day apart from that you got pregnant, no, I don't want to be someone else there who got pregnant and stayed in the attempt to finish studying never"
And my dreams?	When you are a young adolescent, you think about many things you want to achieve in the future, you set certain goals, such as having fun, finishing school, continuing to study, working, etc., when at an unexpected moment comes a responsibility as great as that of being parents, it depends a lot on them how they face it or carry it.	"Limit things to go out... but limiting myself with things that I thought very soon I didn't, I feel that I can still achieve it and I do not like no, now for you more so that they don't say that because of you your mother didn't get ahead or because of you or things like that no"
I can be a mother and a father at the same time	Adolescents after the news of the pregnancy, face several situations, one of them is that the partner leaves them without the necessary support and they dissociate themselves from the responsibility of being a father, and as a result of this they assume that role.	"It's been about 3 months since I know anything about him why he had problems with my parents so they hate each other and my parents don't want me to get close to him and in fact they told me no, we're going to take care of the baby but on the condition that you don't approach the baby's father again"
Rain of emotions	Adolescents do not matter at what point of pregnancy they are, they feel an indescribable emotion for wanting to meet that being they carry inside their womb.	"I feel that it is going to be very beautiful, I already want to see it know what it is like, more than anything and that I do not feel that I am going to feel very happy and at the same time very sad, very strange, I am going to be very nervous because I am not going to know what to do"
Coping with my fear	In this new role of being mothers for adolescents entails new fears that they did not believe, and that they know they will experience, most of them lead to the way of parenting and education that they will be given.	"My biggest fear apart from that it is going to come out of me and I am afraid because it is already approaching and I get very nervous is not knowing how to raise him, not knowing how to teach him, that I am not yet fully mature... I'm afraid to learn because I don't have the support of my parents and that's what scares me."

Alone but not forgotten	The girls get what they need for their pregnancy process on their own together with the support that their family gives them to get ahead.	"I was the one who got the insurance, I saw that he had it by the school and I looked for him and there I did the check-ups, he has only paid for two ultrasounds and he is very ... she questions you, what for, that it is not necessary and that makes me angry, so I try to get things by myself"
My teammates understand me	Moral support from her classmates has been important in this process.	"They have always supported me in what fits and takes care of me and it moves and this and that... they give me little things, they are on the lookout if they see that I grab my belly they all ask me if it is moving, and so girls wait I was just touching myself, everyone accepted them well as far as it goes"

Table 3. Category 3 "I can do it!, my dreams are bigger than my fears"

DISCUSSION

A very important aspect in young people is the development of decision-making, the will and responsibility they have with respect to their sexual and reproductive health. As Langer, Zimmerman, Warheit, and Duncan state, as well as Gage (in Vargas et al., 2007), in adolescence they face the responsibility of making decisions that have important consequences for their health and that of their partners. These decisions are usually made within the framework of a social network and are aimed at maintaining meaningful relationships with members of the reference group.

In the sexual sphere, adolescents must decide whether or not to have a romantic relationship, to have sexual relations or not, to use or not to use methods of protection, to get pregnant or not; in short, to take control of his life. Each of these decisions brings with it others of increasing complexity and importance for the development of the tasks of adolescence. Therefore, as De Santiago (2021) mentions, considering this possibility of voluntarist thinking and practice among adolescents is essential for the construction of sex education programs, which not only seek to provide scientific information" to boys and girls, but also enable the exercise of their decision-making capacity, and therefore of their sexuality, not as something dark and guilty, but free and with satisfaction. Nowadays, sexuality is something most common among adolescents, therefore it is almost impossible to tell them not to do it, rather it is to tell them to do it, but in a safe and responsible way.

Within the research, different variables can be seen that are influenced within the process of being an adolescent mother. The main and relevant factor is the family, since being teenagers they encounter fear and what their parents will say. At first adolescents are afraid to express this news, because of how they will react, however after the news in fact some parents were surprised, others were angry and others simply avoided, as mentioned by Rangel, et al., (2004) the appearance of pregnancy in the family of an adolescent forces the restructuring of the functions of its members, since new needs are created around

this binomial, requiring the mobilization of the system to find again the state of family homeostasis that, initially, can be rejected, creating surprise and frustration. In other studies (Vázquez, et.al., 2005) when the adolescent informs the family of her pregnancy, she is usually reprimanded by her parents or other relatives, who blame her for feeling disappointed by her action. In this way, she is emotionally and, sometimes, physically attacked. At times she can also be assaulted by her partner. It is very difficult for adolescents to go through this process of acceptance and hear those words that hurt the most, however many of them look for a source to move forward and not be influenced, Although as time goes by the news on many occasions the parents are the ones who take responsibility for a large part of their grandchild despite the fact that this should be the adolescents, this is a very common occurrence in Campeche, where parents take care of the grandchildren. Loredo et al., (2015) believe that it is necessary to point out and consider that the negative effects for new parents will depend on family customs and the social environment. In many places, Teenage Pregnancy is seen as a mistake that has severe social criticism. Therefore, the situation of risk of the young pregnant woman is latent and permanent; Its magnitude will basically depend on whether the two families and society understand that this new condition can present clear oscillations, where the starting point is a rejection or reprimand, then its acceptance and protection and, finally, in some cases there may be sporadic reproaches. However, as I mentioned, Campeche is a place where parents give acceptance and support, even if it is difficult for them.

The young adolescent can also present emotional alterations during pregnancy, since she must assume a multiplicity of adult roles, especially motherhood, for which she is not psychologically mature since she continues to be a child cognitively, affectively and economically, this being even more acute in the case of early adolescence. This is how the adolescent mother at a psychological level can present emotional problems such as depression, maternal failure syndrome, feeling of loss of youth and even suicide (Noguera & Alvarado, 2012). However, we find that after that moment of the news the decision is in the hands of the adolescents, many may make the easiest decision and decide to have an abortion even after knowing all the risks and consequences that this could have on them, however many more accept the responsibility and decide to have the baby thinking positively about the fact of being able to get out of any problem and despite the responsibility that this demands they have adopted as an experience for them. For such is the effort that they make in this type of situation, continuing their lives without ceasing to dream of their goals and objectives only modifying it to their resources and possibility, and although many people left them alone on the road as their partner or a family member, they have always had that feeling of moving forward and not giving up, Perhaps the best influence is the support of friends and parents who make them see the learning of this situation, and despite being in a sea of emotions they have learned to cope with their fears. From all that has been observed, it is admirable the degree of will and responsibility involved in this type of decision

and above all that they make them thinking about it in detail and not impulsively, so that their safety and health is their priority.

On many occasions those who dissociate themselves from all responsibility are adolescent boys, since for them it is easier to say it is not mine or simply to say abort it, instead of accepting that responsibility and “giving up many things”, and this is a very disappointing issue for adolescent mothers since they often expect the support of their partner, and more because of the selfishness with which they think of them alone. The fact that young women decide to go ahead with the pregnancy even with many of these barriers often shows how they are determined to be mothers and fight for that little boy or girl they carry in their womb. This process is valuable for many young girls since sometimes they tend to suffer physical or psychological violence from their partner and do not realize until they notice the damage it does to her and their baby and until they notice this they decide to move away, although many others even with the damage are still there. As Loredó, et. al., (2015) it is essential to consider that the consequences of Adolescent Pregnancy affect both members of the couple, although it is probably the woman who suffers the most. Of these, they highlight the strong emotional charge as a result of their physical change and the influence, usually negative, of the environment where they live.

Teenage Pregnancy has other consequences in addition to hormonal changes, the emotional nature of the adolescent comes into play. Their emotional formation process is altered, their self-confidence is violated by not knowing if they will be able to overcome the stage they are living and this, among other things, can affect their physical, psychological and social health (Quesada, et. al., 2010; Sechel & Contreras, 2014; Loredó et al., 2015). That is why it is very important to teach young women in general to love themselves and their body above all things, knowing each other among a group of people who are going through the same situation helps them to reflect that they are not the only ones who are going through that situation and that they can move forward with self-love, will and responsibility as evidenced in another study carried out in other areas of the State of Campeche (Estrada, Pérez, Mis & Estrella, 2017).

CONCLUSION

As has been found in this research and many others, many adolescent girls have become pregnant from a very early age and the question is why there are still so many teenage pregnancies if conferences or workshops about sexuality to get to know their body and the usefulness of many contraceptive methods abound and are very constant. As a result of this question and others, it is considered that there are many factors, but for this research it is important to teach responsibility and will both at home and at school. Through the phenomenological study carried out, it was obtained that many girls are already aware of their sexuality and responsible for it and with those who share it, however, it is found

that sometimes they leave in the hands and responsibility of the man the fact of using or not using a contraceptive method, so the pregnancy takes them by surprise for one reason or another, the method used did not work and at that precise moment when it was used, They find out about the pregnancy The responsibility is of the young women to think about having it or not and depending on the situation they are experiencing this type of strong decisions are the ones they face when anticipating their actions, the young women are responsible for making the decision they want because they are aware of the virtues and/or consequences of their actions. In Campeche it is observed a lot the fact that parents give them in large amounts of support and in this way they do not make them make their own decisions and become responsible for everything, but nevertheless the act of perseverance to get ahead to become independent shows the maturity in which they want to get ahead. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of responsibility and will as a method of teaching adolescents.

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