



BUILDING THE MISSING BRIDGE: TEENAGERS' NEED FOR PARENTAL SUPPORT IN TEENAGER PREGNANCY PREVENTION

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, characterised by high levels of curiosity that require positive guidance. Teenage pregnancy is a significant public health issue in many developing countries, including Indonesia. Teenage pregnancy can have various impacts on both the mother and the baby. Physically, adolescents are not ready to conceive or give birth, which makes them vulnerable to complications that can be fatal. This study aimed to explore the need for parental support in preventing teenage pregnancy among adolescents. A qualitative, phenomenological approach was used, involving three pregnant adolescents under the age of 18 in Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, transcribed, coded and analysed to identify patterns in the participants' experiences and perceptions. The results showed that adolescents need support from their parents in the form of emotional attention, intimacy, open communication, a harmonious home environment and guidance on reproductive health. Such support enables adolescents to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues, thereby reducing the risk of risky sexual behaviour and unwanted pregnancies. This study emphasises the importance of building “bridges” of communication and support between adolescents and parents as a strategy for preventing teenage pregnancy.

Keywords: parental support; teenage needs; teenage pregnancy prevention

How to Cite (in APA Style)

Mualifah, L., Maryati, S., & Punjastuti, B. (2026). Building the Missing Bridge: Teenagers' Need for Parental Support in Teenager Pregnancy Prevention. *Indonesian Journal of Global Health Research*, 8(2), 667–672. <https://doi.org/10.37287/ijghr.v8i2.877>.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, characterised by high levels of curiosity and requiring positive guidance (Mualifah, 2020). According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health, adolescence spans the ages of 10 to 18. During this time, primary and secondary sexual characteristics begin to develop (Sulistyorini & Asrory, 2024). It is essential for parents to understand the growth of today's adolescents. Teenage pregnancy is a significant public health issue in many developing countries, including Indonesia. The global teenage pregnancy rate declined from 64.5 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 in 2000 to 41.3 per 1,000 teenagers in 2023 (Purnami et al., 2023). Teenage pregnancies tend to be more prevalent in developing countries than in developed ones, with 90% of teenage pregnancies worldwide occurring in the former. In one district in Yogyakarta, the incidence of teenage pregnancy was 312 women under the age of 20 in 2023, and 170 in 2024.

Teenage pregnancy can have various impacts on both the mother and the baby. Physically, teenagers are not ready to conceive or give birth, which makes them prone to complications that can be fatal (Yusnia et al., 2024). Teenage mothers are at high risk during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period, and their newborns are at risk of complications such as premature birth and low birth weight (Indarti et al., 2020). Furthermore, babies born to teenagers are at high risk of stunting (Yastirin et al., 2024).

Pregnancy during adolescence can have psychological and social consequences, one of which is postpartum depression. This is caused by depression during pregnancy, which results from the psychological pressure of being unprepared for the role and responsibilities of prospective parents (Ningrum & Fadhilah, 2024).

Various factors can cause teenage pregnancy, one of which is promiscuity, such as casual sex, which occurs due to a lack of education and family support. A lack of parental attention regarding rules for teenagers makes them freer to socialise. This can cause teenagers to become more comfortable with their friends and feel free to do whatever they like (Sulistyorini & Asrory, 2024). Open communication between children and parents regarding sexuality and reproductive health is crucial, as it shapes knowledge and attitudes, and helps to prevent casual sex, which can result in teenage pregnancy (Romdiyah & Nugraheni, 2023). The role of the family, particularly that of parents, is also of great significance in addressing teenage pregnancy. A paucity of closeness between parents and children has been demonstrated to result in suboptimal communication, with children often disregarding their parents' counsel. The issue of inadequate communication between parents and children, particularly in relation to reproductive health and the challenges frequently encountered during adolescence, has been identified as a contributing factor to risky sexual behaviour, which often results in unintended pregnancies among adolescents. This phenomenon has been attributed to a number of factors, including risky premarital sexual behaviour, a lack of knowledge about reproductive health and sexuality, access to pornographic media, parental attitudes, and the behaviour of close friends (Fatchurrahmi & Sholichah, 2021).

The present study will explore the 'missing bridge' between adolescents' needs and parental support. The absence of support from both these angles has the potential to compromise strategies aimed at the prevention of teenage pregnancy, given that adolescents are afforded reduced opportunities for discussion, the posing of questions, or the procurement of valid and pertinent information. The establishment of a robust conduit of communication and assistance between adolescents and parents is of paramount importance in the endeavours to avert instances of teenage pregnancy. The present study aims to explore the needs of adolescents for parental and peer support in the prevention of teenage pregnancy.

METHOD

The research method employed a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach to explore in depth the experiences, perceptions and needs of adolescents regarding parental and peer support in preventing teenage pregnancy. The research was conducted in Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta, from August to November 2025. The participants of this study were three pregnant adolescents under the age of 18 who were willing to act as informants. The data was collected through in-depth interviews, for which a prepared instrument containing several questions was used to explore the needs of adolescents for parental support. The collection of data was facilitated by the utilisation of recording equipment.

Subsequent to the collection of all available data, it was transcribed and coded. The transcripts were subjected to coding by the authors, who recorded their respective meanings. Subsequently, categories were compiled by grouping codes with similar meanings. Subsequent to this, each category was linked to obtain a specific pattern in the form of axial coding. Following the conclusion of all stages, the results of the data obtained were presented in the form of narratives, tables and images. This research has been subjected to ethical feasibility testing by the ethical research committee team of Noor Huda Mustofa University.

RESULT

The results of interviews with three pregnant teenagers overall indicate that, in order to prevent teenage pregnancy, it is necessary for teenagers to receive support from their parents and peers.

With regard to the role of parental support, it is essential for parents to be able to comprehend their children's emotional responses, and to refrain from exerting undue influence over them. Parents have a plethora of desires and expectations for their children, yet at times, these are conveyed to offspring in a coercive manner, with demands being made for their fulfilment. This dynamic often engenders a sense of obligation within the informants to acquiesce to their parents' desires.

The establishment of intimacy between parents and children is of paramount importance within the familial unit. Effective communication between parents and children is a hallmark of a healthy relationship. The presence of harmony and intimacy within the family environment has been demonstrated to engender an increased level of openness in children towards their parents. This approach fosters an environment conducive to the articulation of emotions by children towards their parents.

A harmonious atmosphere at home between children and parents will influence how children socialise. Openness and familiarity between children and parents will make teenagers feel safe and comfortable at home. Teenagers who are close to their parents will feel comfortable communicating with them, making them feel more comfortable living at home. A comfortable home environment greatly influences how teenagers socialise outside the home

“Well, it has a big influence... it can also help maintain social relationships... so if the parents are much closer, their children will definitely be more open... so parents should often influence their children directly... We also have to know what is in the child's heart... don't force everything on the child according to the parents' wishes”

“So, we mustn't let the child's mental health suffer... because if they don't feel bored at home, they might hang out with friends who might not be good for them... we mustn't let the child get bored with the atmosphere at home...

“A friendly and comfortable atmosphere at home makes children feel more at ease, so when they go out to play, they will want to come home quickly... but if they don't feel comfortable, and their parents are always busy, it will make children want to stay outside longer..”

Parents who understand the growth and development of adolescents will pay attention to changes in their behaviour or physical appearance. Adolescence, which is a transitional period from childhood, involves many changes related to reproductive functions. Adolescents will begin to show signs of secondary sexual characteristics until they start menstruating. Parents who have good support will pay attention to their child's menstrual cycle. Parents, especially mothers, will provide guidance and monitoring to their adolescents who have started menstruating.

“If I have problems with my period, I often talk to my mum”

“She asks me every month if I've started menstruating yet, and if I have, she tells me to let her know every time....”

“My mum sometimes asks me if I've started menstruating yet, and sometimes she gives me sanitary pads too....”

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that adolescents need parental support in preventing teenage pregnancy. The parental support needed takes the form of attention between parents and children, intimacy, good communication, a comfortable home environment, and guidance on reproductive health. Discussions between adolescents and parents are also very supportive in preventing teenage pregnancy. Parents' wishes can be conveyed to their children without coercion.

Parental attention emerges as the most fundamental need. Informants revealed that attention makes them feel safe and valued, so they tend to spend more time at home. This is in line with Fazila et al. (2024) and Teda et al. (2025), who stated that emotional support in the form of affection, care, and empathy makes adolescents feel cared for and prevents them from seeking comfort outside the home, which has the potential to bring negative influences. In the context of preventing unwanted pregnancies among adolescents, parental attention serves as the first line of defence in protecting adolescents from the risks of promiscuity.

The relationship between parents and adolescents has been identified as a significant factor in the prevention of adolescent pregnancy. It was posited by the informants that individuals in warm relationships are more inclined to communicate their concerns and issues in a candid manner. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Sulistyorini & Asrory (2024), which substantiates the notion that emotional closeness facilitates parental monitoring of changes in their children's behaviour, enabling the provision of guidance as required. Conversely, disharmony or a rigid relationship has been shown to encourage adolescents to seek support outside the home, thereby increasing the risk of exposure to risky behaviour.

The most commonly emphasised need among informants is that of communication. Informants have emphasised the necessity for two-way communication that does not exhibit any signs of patronisation. Effective communication is instrumental in facilitating access to accurate information concerning relationships, socialising, and sexual health. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Adyana & Aprilea (2023) and Febriana & Mulyono (2022), who posited that warm, non-condescending, and attentive communication fosters increased openness among adolescents, concurrently reducing their propensity to seek information from unreliable sources. In the context of this study, poor communication was found to render adolescents reluctant to share their experiences, thereby increasing the likelihood of them making unsafe decisions, including engaging in risky sexual activities.

The home environment is also an important factor influencing adolescent behaviour. Informants have stated that a comfortable home fosters a sense of belonging, encouraging a more expeditious return after engaging in recreational activities with peers. Conversely, a home characterised by conflict has been observed to prompt a prolonged absence. This finding suggests that a nurturing domestic environment may serve as a form of indirect protection against risky sexual behaviour, potentially by decreasing the amount of time adolescents spend in environments where they are less likely to experience controlled interactions.

Parental attention to physical changes such as menstruation is also a form of support that adolescents desperately need. Informants frequently engage in discourse on the subject of menstruation with their mothers and are subject to regular monitoring. This finding underscores the imperative for reproductive education to be imparted by parents. Rukmasari (2024), asserts that sexual education imparted by parents is instrumental in facilitating adolescents' comprehension of bodily changes and enabling them to make informed decisions that are conducive to their well-being. These findings are consistent with those reported by Haryani (2016) and Ayuni et al. (2022), who emphasised that the provision of sexual education from an

early age can prevent risky sexual behaviour and improve adolescents' readiness to understand their reproductive functions.

The findings of this study indicate that the 'missing bridge' between adolescents and parents lies not only in a lack of education, but also in weak emotional and communication aspects within the family. The implementation of comprehensive programmes that address factors such as attention, intimacy, communication, the home environment, and reproductive education has been demonstrated to be effective in reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancy.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that adolescents require emotional, social, and educational support from their parents to prevent teenage pregnancy. The most necessary forms of support are parental attention, intimacy, open communication, a comfortable home environment, and guidance related to physical changes and reproductive education. The findings of this study serve to confirm the existence of a 'missing bridge' between adolescents and parents, namely a gap in attention, communication, and understanding of adolescent needs. The absence of such support can engender feelings of insecurity among adolescents, thereby hindering their ability to engage in discussions or access valid information regarding reproductive health. This, in turn, can lead to an elevated risk of engaging in high-risk sexual behaviour. The reconstruction of a conduit of communication and the provision of warm, open, and empathetic support can empower parents to assume the role of primary guardians of adolescents. This bridge fosters a secure and comfortable environment in which adolescents feel at ease, and consequently more willing to share their feelings and develop effective strategies to prevent teenage pregnancy.

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