

The Needs and Concerns of Adolescent Mothers in Singapore

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INTRODUCTION

The CARE Clinic in KK Women and Children's Hospital in Singapore is a facility that pays special attention to young mothers, under the age of 21. We asked our patients their top concerns during pregnancy to better understand them, and this was their response.



AIM

- To investigate the primary concerns from the perspectives of adolescent and single mothers attending the CARE clinic in Singapore.
- To identify potential and existing gaps in the holistic antenatal care of adolescent pregnancy

BACKGROUND

- 265 live births to Singaporean adolescent mothers in 2020
- Previous KKH study showed 43.6% poor attendance to follow-up appointments among this demographic
- Previous study shows increased risk of adverse health consequences in adolescent pregnancies.

METHOD

- 51 patients took part in an anonymous online questionnaire
- Responses to the questionnaire were in the form of binary (yes / no), rank order, and open ended answers.



RESULTS

MONEY (31.4%)

72.5% of participants had stopped schooling, majority after secondary school. Only about 27% of the non-schooling mothers and 43% of their partners held a job. Money is undoubtedly the top ranked cause for concern amongst participants.



POTENTIAL MEDICAL ISSUES (22.9%)

Many fears were brought up including pain of childbirth, morning sickness, their baby's health during the pregnancy. Some associated medical issues with early child bearing includes preterm births and anaemia.



FEELINGS OF GUILT/ SHAME (28.6%)

In a conservative society like Singapore, a lot of stigma is attached to adolescent pregnancies 28.6% of participants felt this was a top concern for them.



LACK OF CONFIDENCE OF BEING A PARENT (20%)

Many being first-time parents, and at such a young age, this worry was common amongst the participants.



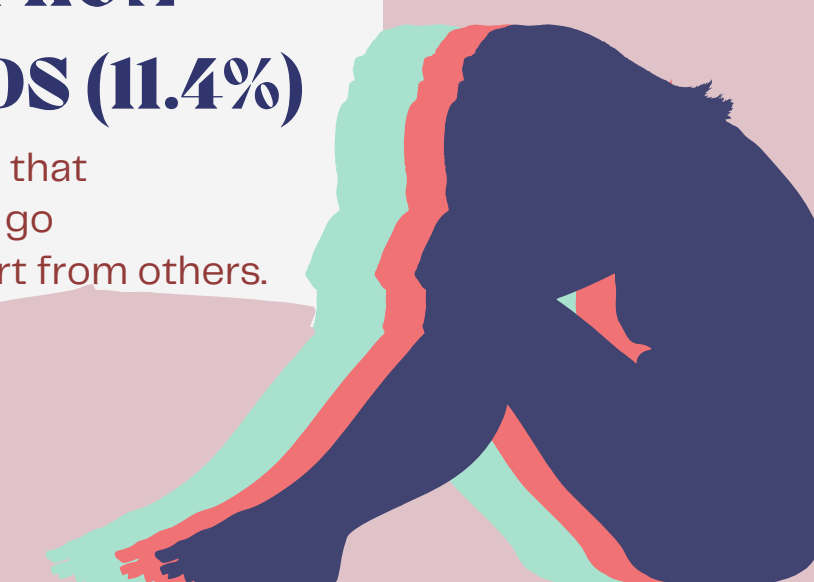
ISSUES WITH PARTNER (8.5%)

Although 84% of the participants' partner was involved, concerns included arguments, domestic violence, and lack of support from the baby's father.



LACK OF SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS (11.4%)

There was a fear among participants that their pregnancy would be difficult to go through on their own, without support from others.



MENTAL HEALTH (11.4%)

Mental health conditions associated with adolescent pregnancy include post-partum depression as well as anxiety about motherhood.

Factors that may prevent follow-up in adolescent pregnancies:

- Lack of money (62.9%)
- Fear of missing out on school/ work (42.9%)
- Judgement from others (14.3%)
- Fear of doctors and nurses (5.7%)

What patients think may benefit them further:

- Good medical care (41.2%)
- Friendly healthcare staff (37.3%)
- Keeping information private (37.3%)
- postpartum advice (33.3%)
- Financial help (35.3%)
- Help with social issues (35.3%)

CONCLUSION

- Financial constraints remain the top concerns of adolescent and single pregnant patients, which is reflective of the population's socio-economic status
- Worryingly, relationship issues and domestic violence ranks high as well
- For factors contributing to loss of follow up, financial limitation once again among the top, followed by difficulties in balancing other commitments.
- This study has reiterated the importance of multidisciplinary team care to holistically tackle social and emotional struggles during adolescent pregnancy, as well as the need to fortify community and financial support for this vulnerable group of patients.

