

**Teen Mothers in Australia and Sri Lanka**

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April 25, 2023

## **Teen Mothers in Australia and Sri Lanka**

### **PICO format:**

Experiences and context of teenage pregnancy in African Australian refugee women (qualitative study) compared to teenage pregnancy in Sri Lankan women (quantitative study)

**Population:** African Australian teenage mothers who are refugees; pregnant teenagers and male partners in Badulla District, Sri Lanka

**Intervention/phenomenon:** Experiences and context of teenage pregnancy

**Comparison:** African Australian refugee women (qualitative study) vs. Sri Lankan women (quantitative study)

**Outcome:** Understanding the experiences and context of teenage pregnancy in different populations

### **Introduction**

Teenage pregnancy is a challenging issue with major social and health consequences for the mother and her unborn child. It is a widespread issue that affects several countries, including Australia and Sri Lanka. Early motherhood can be difficult for teenage mothers' physical, emotional, and economic well-being, and their children are likelier to have poor health and developmental outcomes. To create successful methods and interventions to avoid or lessen its negative effects, it is essential to comprehend the experiences and context of teenage pregnancy (Polit & Beck, 2020). This essay examines two qualitative studies and one quantitative study that examine the circumstances and experiences of teenage pregnancies in Sri Lankan and African

Australian populations, respectively. The qualitative study's goal was to understand better the lived experiences of young African Australian immigrant women who became mothers at a young age in Greater Melbourne, Australia. By examining the characteristics of pregnant teenagers and their partners, whether pregnancies were planned and how they were received, and factors associated with unplanned teenage pregnancy, the quantitative study sought to describe the sociocultural context of teen pregnancy in Badulla District, Sri Lanka. This study intends to provide insights into the particular barriers and facilitators of teenage pregnancy in various contexts and demographics and to inform evidence-based policies and strategies to address this issue by combining the findings of these studies.

## **Methods**

### **Qualitative Study**

To better comprehend their experiences, researchers in Greater Melbourne, Australia, looked at young African-born refugee women who had experienced adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood. Sixteen individuals found through neighborhood associations and social media sites were interviewed in-depth for the study. Each participant, aged 16 to 22, had given birth to a child before turning 20 (Ngum et al., 2015).

Intersectionality theory, which acknowledges that many social identities, such as race, gender, and class, intersect to affect people's experiences of privilege and oppression, served as the foundation for the research methodology and analysis. The study also used phenomenology, a research methodology emphasizing the value of comprehending people's irrational experiences and interpretations (Ngum et al., 2015). Last but not least, the study used a cultural competency

framework to encourage knowledge of cultural differences and ease communication and understanding across cultures.

In data analysis, themes and patterns are found through ongoing comparison. The research team combed the data several times to find the major themes and patterns before classifying them into more general groups. The study's results shed light on the intricate and interconnected social, cultural, and economic factors that influence teenage pregnancies among young African Australian women (Ngum et al., 2015). The human research ethics committee at Victoria University approved this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the participants, and measures were made to protect their confidentiality and privacy.

### **Quantitative Study**

Characterizing the conditions surrounding and features of teen pregnancy in the Badulla District of Sri Lanka was the study's aim concerning teen pregnancy in that country. Four hundred and fifty pregnant women under 20 and 150 of their male partners participated in the study's community health register-based sample survey (Neelamani Rajapaksa-Hewageegana et al., 2014). The participants were picked through a rigorous random selection procedure.

Bivariate statistics were always utilized in describing the features and environment of teen pregnancy. Demographics, past reproductive behavior, and social and economic variables were among these components (Neelamani Rajapaksa-Hewageegana et al., 2014). Multivariate logistic regression was used to examine the correlates of unplanned pregnancies. Particular emphasis was placed on the impact of gender norms and attitudes.

With 14% of all pregnancies happening among women under 20, the study's findings emphasize the high frequency of teenage pregnancy in the Badulla District. The survey also discovered that teenage pregnancies were more common among rural women, married or

cohabiting couples, and women with lower levels of education. The study showed that gender norms and attitudes significantly influenced teen pregnancies, particularly male partners' opinions of contraception and family planning (Neelamani Rajapaksa-Hewageegana et al., 2014). The Faculty of Medicine Ethics Review Committee of the University of Colombo in Sri Lanka cleared this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the participants, and measures were made to protect their confidentiality and privacy.

## **Results**

### **Qualitative Study**

A study of African Australian adolescent mothers in Greater Melbourne, Australia, discovered that while parenthood provided wonderful experiences for young mothers, they faced several challenges that impacted their lives. Adjusting to the added commitments of having a kid and balancing the competing demands of education, profession, and childcare in a new settling region were some of the key problems they faced. Despite their hardships, the young mothers stated their mothers, siblings, and close friends assisted them. They rarely received aid from the baby's father or the greater community. Despite the perceived personal benefits of motherhood, the young mothers claimed that they were stigmatized and disapproved of by their broader ethnic communities, leaving them with shame and embarrassment (Ngum et al., 2015). These findings imply that social support is critical for young mothers' health and that the social stigma associated with adolescent pregnancy in African-Australian communities must be addressed.

### **Quantitative Study**

According to a study on adolescent pregnancy in Sri Lanka, most pregnant teenagers and male partners stated that their current pregnancy was planned and welcomed. Most pregnant

teenagers reported living in secure and supportive home contexts, with a significant percentage expressing feeling 'very well supported.' However, some pregnant teenagers appeared vulnerable, reporting unplanned and unhappy pregnancies similarly related to undesirable first intercourse. Furthermore, pregnant teenagers and male partners have inadequate reproductive and contraceptive information (Neelamani Rajapaksa-Hewageegana et al., 2014). These findings underline the need to educate young people about reproductive health and contraception to prevent unwanted births and increase the well-being of adolescent moms and their families.

The findings of both pieces of research suggest that adolescent pregnancy is hard and calls for a range of solutions. Young mothers' well-being depends on several factors, including social support and reduced stigma attached to teenage pregnancies (Neelamani Rajapaksa-Hewageegana et al., 2014). Contrarily, raising youths' awareness of reproduction and contraception is crucial for preventing unwanted births and promoting better health outcomes for adolescent moms and their families (Polit & Beck, 2020). These findings can serve as a blueprint for developing targeted policies and activities to help communities worldwide avoid teenage pregnancies.

### **Discussion**

The results of the two research showed overlaps and discrepancies in the experiences and environments of teenage pregnancy between the two populations. Although the young African Australian refugees had strong support from their close family, they lacked it from the larger community and the baby's father, which caused them to feel ashamed and embarrassed. However, the teenage mothers from Sri Lanka and their male partners claimed to feel delighted

and supported about the pregnancy. Young individuals reported unwanted and unpleasant pregnancies due to insufficient reproductive and contraception information.

The qualitative study's analysis was informed by phenomenology, intersectionality theory, and the framework for cultural competency. It helped practitioners better comprehend the complicated problems and difficulties that young African Australian refugee women confront. The population-based survey that was utilized in the quantitative study gave researchers a more thorough grasp of the circumstances and correlates surrounding teenage pregnancies in Sri Lanka.

For those who establish policies and offer services, the findings have repercussions. Both pieces of research emphasized the significance of fostering the role of young mothers' immediate family members after early motherhood, such as mothers, sisters, grandmothers, and aunts. Supporting these family members can ease the pressure on new mothers and enhance their capacity to balance competing obligations like employment, school, and baby care (Polit & Beck, 2020). The research also emphasized the need for enhanced contraceptive information and services, notably for the Sri Lankan population, where a lack of understanding was linked to unintended and unhappy pregnancies.

Finally, the two studies offer insightful information about the circumstances and experiences of teen pregnancy in various populations. Despite some similarities and variances, the studies stress the significance of helping new moms and their close relatives and expanding access to reproductive and contraceptive knowledge and services. Such programs impact society, new mothers, and their children's health and well-being.

## **Conclusion**

The two studies, taken together, demonstrate the nuanced circumstances and experiences of teen pregnancy in various populations. While the results of the two studies indicated that teenage mothers had difficulty juggling their new responsibilities and the demands of their education, employment, and childcare, the studies also revealed differences in the social support that these mothers received and in the attitudes of their communities toward teenage pregnancy. The studies strongly emphasize improving young people's awareness of reproductive and contraceptive options and the necessity of supporting young moms, including the role of their families. Overall, the findings have significant ramifications for service providers and governments in creating interventions mindful of young mothers' particular needs and experiences in various cultural contexts.

## References

- Neelamani Rajapaksa-Hewageegana, Salway, S., Piercy, H., & Sarath Samarage. (2014). A quantitative exploration of the sociocultural context of teenage pregnancy in Sri Lanka. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-014-0394-y>
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