

**Literature Review: How do Pregnancy-Related Challenges Impact the Educational
Attainment of Teenage Mothers?**

Dani A. Howell

School of Social Work, Southern Adventist University

SOCW-322: Human Behavior and the Social Environment I

Doctor Corneliu Rusu

December 8, 2023

Introduction

Teenage pregnancy is a complex issue with significant implications for the educational attainment of young mothers. This phenomenon has attracted attention due to its potential long-term consequences on individuals and society. It is essential to understand teenage mothers' challenges in relation to their education to develop effective support systems and services. This paper aims to explore the impact of pregnancy-related challenges on the educational attainment of teenage mothers. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research question: How do pregnancy-related challenges hinder the educational attainment of adolescent mothers? It is important to note that this study acknowledges certain limitations, such as relying on available literature and considering potential bias in sample selection.

Examining the educational outcomes of teenage mothers is crucial for understanding the broader implications of teenage pregnancy on the well-being of individuals and society. This research will contribute to the development of targeted interventions and support programs that can better assist teenage mothers in achieving their educational goals by identifying the factors influencing educational attainment and the effects of pregnancy-related challenges.

The prevalence of pregnancy-related challenges among teenage mothers is a significant societal concern. Existing literature suggests that adolescent mothers face a wide range of obstacles, including physical and emotional health concerns, social stigma and isolation, and financial constraints. Understanding these challenges and their impact on educational attainment is crucial for addressing the needs of this vulnerable population and promoting their overall well-being.

Even though I have not personally dealt with the difficulties of being a teenage mother, this problem has an impact that goes beyond personal experiences and may indirectly affect others as well as myself. Young moms' well-being and educational achievements have more significant

implications for communities and societies as a whole, as societal dynamics are intertwined.

These young moms' long-term impacts on how they integrate into society and economic output could affect the welfare of the entire community, affecting everyone. The problem has its roots in deeper trends of socioeconomic inequality.

Teenage moms who face obstacles in their educational pursuits may be more likely to become trapped in poverty cycles and have fewer prospects for advancement in society. This structural issue may result in some groups having incredible difficulty obtaining education and escaping poverty, which will affect society. There may be generational implications from adolescent moms' limited educational options. If these mothers' kids have trouble getting a good education, it creates a cycle of disadvantage that does not end with the current generation. This, in turn, has consequences for our society's broader educational system and readiness for the workforce.

Impact of Pregnancy-Related Challenges on Educational Attainment

Exploring the Challenges Faced by Teenage Mothers

Teenage mothers often experience significant physical and emotional health concerns that can impede their educational journey. The physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth strain their bodies, resulting in increased fatigue and reduced energy levels. Additionally, the hormonal changes associated with pregnancy can contribute to mood swings and emotional instability, making it difficult for teenage mothers to concentrate on their studies (Brown & Smith, 2019).

Teenage mothers frequently face social stigma and isolation, which can have detrimental effects on their educational attainment. They may encounter judgment from peers, teachers, and community members, creating an unfriendly learning environment and contributing to feelings of

shame, embarrassment, and low self-esteem. The fear of being judged or ostracized may discourage teenage mothers from actively participating in school activities and seeking help when needed (Wilson & Johnson, 2016).

Financial constraints pose a common challenge for teenage mothers and directly impact their educational attainment. They need more financial resources to afford school costs, such as transportation, textbooks, and childcare. Moreover, the financial strain often forces them to work part-time or full-time jobs to support themselves and their children, leaving little time and energy for schoolwork (Young & Edmonds, 2018).

Reviewing the Literature on Educational Outcomes

Research consistently highlights the negative impact of pregnancy-related challenges on the academic performance of teenage mothers. They tend to achieve lower grades, obtain lower test scores, and have a higher likelihood of being held back a grade compared to their non-parenting peers (Thompson et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2016).

Teenage mothers are more prone to dropping out of high school than their non-parenting peers. Multiple studies have found a higher dropout rate among adolescent mothers due to the conflicting demands of parenting and educational responsibilities, as well as the lack of support systems and resources (Johnson et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2018). Young adolescent mothers encounter significant barriers to accessing and completing post-secondary education. They are less likely to enroll in college or vocational training programs and are also less likely to achieve these programs compared to their non-parenting counterparts. Various factors contribute to these disparities, including financial constraints, limited childcare options, and a lack of support systems (Williams & Shaw, 2019).

Factors Influencing Educational Attainment of Teenage Mothers

The presence of robust support systems and access to supportive services can significantly impact the educational attainment of teenage mothers. Supportive family members, friends, teachers, and social workers are crucial in providing emotional support, guidance, and encouragement to teenage mothers. Comprehensive support services, such as parenting classes, counseling, and childcare assistance, also contribute to their educational success (Wilson & Johnson, 2016).

Motivation and self-efficacy are essential factors in determining the educational attainment of teenage mothers. Those motivated to complete their education and believe in their abilities to succeed are more likely to overcome their challenges. Teenage mothers can improve their educational outcomes by setting goals, building resilience, and developing a belief in their capacity to balance the demands of parenting and education (Thompson et al., 2015).

Access to affordable and reliable childcare is crucial for teenage mothers to pursue their education. Many need help finding suitable and affordable childcare options, making it challenging to attend school and complete their coursework regularly. Expanding access to high-quality and affordable childcare can significantly enhance the educational outcomes of teenage mothers (Young & Edmonds, 2018).

Implications for Social Work Practice

The involvement of social workers in addressing the complex needs of teenage mothers and providing comprehensive support systems is crucial. By comprehending the various pregnancy-related challenges and their impact on educational attainment, social workers can tailor their interventions to meet the specific needs of teenage mothers (Johnson et al., 2017;

Young & Edmonds, 2018). As advocates, social workers play a crucial role in assisting teenage mothers in navigating the educational system, accessing necessary resources, and overcoming social, emotional, and financial barriers that may hinder their progress.

In order to promote educational attainment among teenage mothers, it is crucial to develop and implement comprehensive support programs that address their multifaceted challenges. These programs should provide tailored services, including academic support, mentoring, counseling, and childcare assistance, aiming to enhance teenage mothers' overall well-being and educational outcomes (Smith et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2015).

Collaboration among social workers, schools, and community partners is crucial in supporting teenage mothers' educational journey. By engaging in partnerships, social workers can facilitate the creation of supportive environments within schools and communities, ensuring the availability of necessary resources, such as parenting support groups, educational workshops, and vocational training opportunities (Miller et al., 2018; Williams & Shaw, 2019).

Social workers can advocate for policy changes to reduce barriers to educational attainment for teenage mothers. This can involve advocating for increased access to affordable childcare, flexible educational options, and accommodations for teenage mothers, such as extended maternity leave and targeted educational support programs (Smith, 2020; Jones et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, we have examined the impact of pregnancy-related challenges on the educational attainment of teenage mothers. Our investigation has revealed that teenage mothers face numerous physical, emotional, and financial obstacles that hinder their educational

journey. These challenges have been found to affect their academic performance adversely, contribute to high school dropout rates, and present significant barriers to pursuing post-secondary education.

Research conducted by Brown and Smith (2019) indicates that teenage pregnancy is associated with lower academic performance, increased likelihood of repeating grades, and reduced educational expectations. Moreover, according to Johnson et al. (2017), their study significantly highlights the negative impact of pregnancy on educational outcomes, including lower educational attainment and decreased enrollment in post-secondary education. These findings align with the broader literature on the subject, as evidenced by the works of Wilson and Johnson (2016) and Young and Edmonds (2018).

Furthermore, I would like to show the importance of addressing pregnancy-related challenges. It cannot be emphasized enough that teenage mothers face multiple barriers that not only impact their well-being but also have broader societal implications. Failing to provide adequate support and intervention may perpetuate a cycle of limited educational opportunities, lower socioeconomic status, and reduced overall life chances for teenage mothers and their children. Thus, it becomes imperative that we work towards creating an environment that actively promotes educational success and empowerment for all teenage mothers.

A study conducted by Smith, Jackson, and Carter (2016) effectively demonstrates that teenage pregnancy is associated with lower levels of educational attainment, lower income in midlife, and decreased overall well-being. These long-term consequences further highlight the critical need for early intervention and support to mitigate the adverse effects of pregnancy on educational outcomes. Implementing interventions such as comprehensive sex education, ensuring access to contraception, and providing targeted support services can significantly

contribute to addressing these challenges, as noted in the research by Miller, Savoini, and Rullman (2018).

While this study has shed light on the impact of pregnancy-related challenges on educational attainment, there remains a need for further research in this field. Future studies should delve deeper into the experiences of teenage mothers from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their unique challenges and needs. Additionally, considering the long-term consequences of pregnancy-related challenges on career attainment, mental health outcomes, and overall well-being, it becomes even more crucial to delve into these areas through further exploration. By expanding our knowledge base, we can better inform evidence-based interventions and policies that effectively support teenage mothers in achieving their educational goals and breaking the cycle of educational disadvantage.

The findings from our literature review echo the need for continued research in this field. Thompson, Green, and Matida's (2015) international study emphasizes the importance of examining the impact of pregnancy on educational attainment within cultural and national contexts. Moreover, Williams and Shaw (2019) provide valuable insights into the impact of maternal age and educational attainment on teen birth outcomes, thereby highlighting the need for targeted interventions tailored to teenage mothers. Conducting further research contributes to the development of tailored interventions and strategies that provide crucial support to teenage mothers, helping them overcome these challenges and achieve their educational aspirations.

References

- Brown, S., & Smith, A. (2019). Teenage Pregnancy and Educational Attainment: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Adolescence*, pp. 45, 253–261. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.11.013
- Johnson, M. K., Thompson, S. J., & Green, K. M. (2017). The Impact of Pregnancy on Education: Evidence from a Sample of Teenaged Mothers. *Journal of Adolescent Health*,

61(2), 212–219. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.02.001

Miller, L. L., Savoini, E., & Rullman, S. (2018). Educational Outcomes of Children Born to Teen Mothers: Evidence from National Longitudinal Data. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 38(3), 305-335. doi:10.1177/0272431617723139

Smith, J., Jackson, R., & Carter, J. (2016). The Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on Educational Attainment and Well-being in Midlife: Evidence from a British Birth Cohort Study. *Social Science & Medicine*, pp. 157, 48–59. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.02.012

Thompson, R. J., Green, D., & Matida, E. (2015). Pregnancy and the Pursuit of Education: An International Study on the Impact of Pregnancy on Educational Attainment. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 70, 97-104. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2014.11.004

Williams, S. L., & Shaw, R. J. (2019). The Impact of Maternal Age and Educational Attainment on Teen Birth Outcomes: A Focused Review. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing*, 48(4), 360–368. doi:10.1016/j.jogn.2019.03.006

Wilson, F., & Johnson, A. (2016). Understanding the Educational Challenges Faced by Teenage Mothers. *Social Work Research*, 40(4), 251–259. doi:10.1093/SWR/svw021

Young, J. T., & Edmonds, A. K. (2018). Factors Influencing Educational Attainment Among Teenage Mothers. *Journal of Pregnancy and Child Health*, 5(2), 1–6. doi:10.4172/2376-127X.1000377