

Relationship between Teenage Pregnancy and Self-Esteem

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Research Problem:

- Teenage pregnancy carries a social stigma that leads to a high risk of poverty, illiteracy, or lower education levels and “once it happens, such a girl will forever have a mark that hinders her progress in future” (Maliki, 2012).
- Teenage pregnancy is an issue that exists most commonly among adolescents all over the world. Numerous studies have been done outside of the United States on the effects of teenage pregnancy on one’s self-esteem, but studies done on this issue in the United States are severely lacking. Research done in recent years has found that there is in fact a correlation between teenage pregnancy and self-esteem. The studies show a low self-esteem associated with teenage pregnancy, during the pregnancy and after, ultimately affecting the young girl’s ability to achieve a higher education and puts her at risk of poverty and unemployment (Maliki, 2012).

Definition of Teen Pregnancy & Self-esteem:

- **Teen pregnancy:** pregnancy within the ages of 13-19 (Maliki, 2012)
- **Self-esteem:** an individual’s opinion of oneself, acceptance or rejection, or, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with oneself (Guillon, Crocq, & Bailey, 2007)

Research Question:

What is a young Hmong woman's perspective of how her teenage pregnancy impacted her self-esteem?

Purposes of this Study:

- To develop an e-mail qualitative interview protocol that investigates the lived experience of one Hmong woman’s teenage pregnancy and how it impacted her self-esteem.
- To identify the effects of teenage pregnancy on the young woman’s self-esteem, and to raise awareness of this
- To raise awareness of this ongoing issue, and the emotional, lasting effects of early pregnancy, and how that relates to later life choices and circumstances such as SES, education and relationships.

Participant:

Demographic Characteristics of Participant

Gender	Female
Age	21
Current Marital Status	Married
Number of Children	1
Location of Residence	Oshkosh, Wisconsin



Theoretical Framework:

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model:

The Systems Model consists of four levels: the *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, *exosystem*, and the *macrosystem*. The microsystem consists of the interactions of an individual with family members or significant others. The mesosystem consists of two or more variables, such as work and family that are affected by one another. The exosystem is characterized by the systems that do not directly affect the individual, but that indirectly affect the individual’s micro- or mesosystem. Lastly, the macrosystem explains the cultural context as a whole (Klein & White, 2002).

As applied to this study: Family support, at the microsystem level had a strong impact on the individuals self-esteem. The more family support she received, the higher her self-esteem. Furthermore, negative societal judgment of teenage pregnancy in the macrosystem would contribute to feeling of low self-esteem.

Review of the Literature:

- **Fredriksen et al. (2012)** One main theme was uncovered in this study-forming committed, trusting relationships with the young women during and after pregnancy was found to have many positive outcomes for the young women. It made them feel supported, valued, and secure, which had a positive effect on their self-esteem.
- **Maliki (2012)** Teenagers faces dropping out of school, having low self-esteem, unemployment and difficulty adjusting to the roles of being teen parent.
- **Ditsela and Van Dyk (2011)** Teens that had a previous experience of pregnancy, were able to control and have a handle over their self-esteem, because they have gone through pregnancy before
- **Gomes and Speizer, (2010)** There have been many causes and consequences that a teenage pregnancy can be affected by, but one main point from this research is the cognitive factors. Cognitive factors can have a big impact on young woman’s self-esteem, because it’s a factor that affects how they feel about themselves.
- **Corcoran and Franklin (2002)**, The authors used Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System Model to explain the correlation between the different environmental layers and how that can affect a young woman’s self-esteem when they are pregnant.

Methods:

Participant Sampling Types:

Purposive and snowball sampling was used to gather data in this study because we, as researchers, collaborated with an individual who has lived the experience and is willing to share her detailed, lived experience for the purpose of this study. The snowball sampling method was also used to collect data in this study. As one researcher was an insider who knows the participant.

Research Design:

Phenomenology was used because, according to Patton, phenomenology is the study of lived experience (2002). An email interview was used for data collection, rather than a face-to-face interviews, was deemed most appropriate when under time restrictions and for convenience (Meho, 2006).

Data Analysis Plan

A thematic analysis (Kvale, 1996) approach was used to identify major themes derived from each of the email interview responses from the participant.

Selected Findings I :

- **What kind of feelings did you experience about your pregnancy?**

Feelings of low self esteem

She experienced feelings of shame and disgust when she became pregnant

“I felt very disgusted at myself for being able to allow this to happen to me.”

Selected Findings II:

- **How involved was your family with your pregnancy?**

Cultural shaming

Within the Hmong culture, teen pregnancy will bring shame to the family.

“At first my brother and uncles were very upset with it, just the fact that in my culture I have brought shame upon my family.”

- **What types of stressors did you experience during your pregnancy?**

Holding me back

Fear of not being able to reach her educational and personal goals.

“She (her sister) told me that I still had a lot in my life that I could be doing, and with this baby it will hold me back.”

- **How was your education effected during and after your pregnancy?**

Fear of peer judgment

She feared that her peers were going to judge her, but her peers were able to accept her, which made it easier for her to continue her high school educational goals.

“I was on varsity (soccer team) and when I told my coach about it he was very open and understanding about the problem.”

- **How has your opinion of yourself changed since you became pregnant, if at all?**

All my fault

Through the support of her family and friends she was able to accept herself instead of blaming herself.

“I thought that it was all my fault that this happened to me, however with the help of my friends and finally the support of my mother and family, I was able to accept myself and my pregnancy.”

Implications:

The participant’s recommendations for practitioners working with young Hmong pregnant women included:

- Providers should have a basic understanding, that it’s common for pregnant teen girls to feel this way., especially at first. There are many different factors that can play a role in why she feels this way. It’s most important to be a support system to her.
- Finding her the support she needs, so that she knows she is not be alone and that her life is not over and she can still pursue her educational and personal goals.
- Knowing that society has a negative view of this type of situation, but enforcing the idea that not everyone will have that same view. And that there are many people out there who are willing to help and understand.
- Implementing that “it was not her fault” and that she shouldn’t blame herself just for one mistake, and her family and friend will be there to help.

Implication for future: research:

- A recommendation for future research would be that we need to interview a whole Hmong family and get the whole perspective of why and how teenage pregnancy affects the family, due to the idea of “cultural shaming.”
- The researcher also recommends that future researchers take it to the next step and look at this issue through the perspective of a community. Instead of just a Hmong family, take it to a Hmong community and try to find out why this idea of “culture shaming” is such a such a big deal when talking about a teenage pregnancy.

Conclusion:

The information from this study will be beneficial to those who are working with girls that are experiences a teen pregnancy, especially if they are within the Hmong culture.

Within the Hmong culture teenage pregnancy can cause shame within the family, but it’s important to recognize that not all families will handle this issue the same way, and not all families will shame the pregnant teen. We need to establish a healthy living space for Hmong girls in this situation, maybe by them strengthening the relationship with someone within their family that will help and support them during their pregnancy. Lastly, with positive support from friends and family, young girls in this type of situation are far more likely to bounce back into their daily life and continue their educational and personal goals.

“Even though it is not what I initially wanted, the outcome of what I went through is much better and worthwhile compare to the many struggles I encountered.”

~Our Participant

