Results of a Survey Assessing Attitudes of Healthcare Professionals and Healthcare Students Towards Teenage Parenting

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Introduction:

Many teenage parents report feeling stigmatised by healthcare professionals^(1,2). Stigma can prevent teenagers from seeking help and accessing antenatal and sexual health services. This poster demonstrates the results of a survey conducted to assess the attitudes of healthcare professionals and healthcare students to teenage parents.

Method:

A questionnaire was designed to assess attitudes in the healthcare sector towards teenage pregnancy as part of a fourth year medical school project. 508 questionnaires were returned. 9 questions are presented to explore this area.

Question 1: What is your age?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
18-20	6.9%	35
21-29	31.7%	161
30-39	24.2%	123
40-49	18.1%	92
50-59	13.0%	66
60-69	5.3%	27
Over 70	0.8%	4
answered question		508

Question 2: Are you male or female?

25% of respondents were male (n=126) and 75% were female (n=377). 5 people skipped this question.

Question 3: What is your job?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Dentist	1.4%	7
Dental student	2%	10
Doctor	43.8%	220
Healthcare assistant	1%	5
Health visitor	0.6%	3
Medical student	21.1%	106
Nurse	6.8%	34
Radiographer	14.3%	72
Social worker	1.4%	7
Radiology assistant	4.2%	21
Other	3.6%	18
answered question		502

Question 4: Do you consider teenage pregnancy to be a public health problem?

Question 5: Have you ever been affected by teenage pregnancy? This could be yourself, someone in your family or a close friend.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	18.4%	82
No	80.7%	360
Do not want to answer	0.9%	4
answered question		449

Question 6: Compared to their peers, do you think teenage mothers are...

Answer Options	Strongly agree (1)	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree (5)	Rating Average	Response Count
Less likely to finish secondary school?	101	270	41	33	1	2.02	446
Less likely to go to university?	166	233	27	15	5	1.79	446
Less likely to achieve their career goals?	101	212	89	39	4	2.18	445
More likely to bring up their child as a single parent?	77	259	84	27	0	2.14	447
More likely to bring up a child in poverty?	56	203	119	66	3	2.46	447
More likely to have a baby with health problems?	22	89	140	158	38	3.23	447
More likely to have a bad relationship with their parents?	23	82	179	146	16	3.11	446
More likely to be socially isolated?	29	188	113	108	7	2.72	445
More likely to receive benefits?	99	263	68	12	4	2.01	446
More likely to abuse alcohol or drugs?	18	79	180	155	15	3.17	445
More likely to have mental health problems?	28	131	167	103	9	2.80	445
Less likely to have a happy life?	21	81	158	157	30	3.21	447
Stigmatised?	146	213	47	34	6	1.97	446
answered question							451

Question 7: Compared to their peers, do you think teenage fathers are...

Answer Options	Strongly agree (1)	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree (5)	Rating Average	Response Count
Less likely to finish secondary school?	34	165	98	137	12	2.84	446
Less likely to go to university?	52	215	85	87	7	2.51	446
Less likely to achieve their career goals?	32	155	129	119	10	2.82	445
More likely to bring up their child as a single parent?	10	26	76	246	88	3.84	446
More likely to bring up a child in poverty?	24	170	143	95	12	2.78	444
More likely to have a baby with health problems?	18	75	145	168	38	3.30	444
More likely to have a bad relationship with their parents?	18	88	189	137	12	3.08	444
More likely to be socially isolated?	12	76	124	211	21	3.34	444
More likely to receive benefits?	46	208	118	68	5	2.50	445
More likely to abuse drugs or alcohol?	28	130	165	110	12	2.88	445
Less likely to have a happy life?	15	69	181	162	18	3.22	445
Stigmatised?	35	129	119	147	17	2.96	447
answered question							451

Question 8: How often do you interact with teenage parents as part of your role?

Question 9: In your opinion, what could be done to prevent teenage pregnancy?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Sex education from an earlier age e.g. start in primary school	57.2%	251
More sex education classes	53.5%	235
Improved access to contraception e.g. available from school nurse	76.1%	334
Media campaigns aimed at teenage girls	59.2%	260
Media campaigns aimed at teenage boys	61.7%	271
Reducing the benefits available to teenage parents	13.0%	57
Government policies such as the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy: Beyond 2010	21.9%	96
Electronic babies - dolls that behave as real babies that need feeding and nappies changing	25.5%	112
Pregnancy suits - wearable suits that imitate pregnancy	13.4%	59
Better parenting	43.1%	189
Teen mentoring schemes	46.2%	203
Show more TV shows about teenage parenting e.g. Teen Mom, Sixteen and Pregnant	12.5%	55
Teenage pregnancy does not need preventing	0.9%	4
Other (please specify)	11.6%	51
answered question		439

Other ideas included communication classes, reduced availability of pornography, giving girls careers advice, reversing social inequality, financial incentives to have long acting contraception (LARC), reducing the amount of benefits available to teenage parents, improved employment opportunities for young people and more open discussions on the topic of teenage sex.

Conclusion:

This survey shows that teenage pregnancy is considered to be a public health problem by 55% of the respondents. Furthermore, there are notable differences between attitudes to teenage mothers and fathers. 76% of respondents thought that improved access to contraception would reduce teenage pregnancy rates. Follow up studies could include interviewing healthcare staff and teenage parents in detail. The ultimate aim being to identify areas of clinical practice that could be improved.

References:
(1) Kim SC, Burke L, Sloan C, Barnett S. Attitudes toward teen mothers among nursing students and psychometric evaluation of Positivity Toward Teen Mothers scale. Nurse Educ Today. 2013;33(9):986-91.
(2) Smith-Battle LI. Reducing the stigmatization of teen mothers. MCN Am J Matern Child Nurs. 2013;38(4):235-41; 42-3.