

# Methods of Overcoming the Problem of Pregnancy among Unmarried Adolescents

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## Abstract

The issue of pregnancy among unmarried adolescent in Malaysia has become increasingly prevalent of late. This matter needs urgent attention otherwise this problem will have a negative impact on society's well-being, the family institution and adolescent morality. There are various methods which may be applied to overcome this problem. However, this working paper focuses on the role of the adolescents themselves to overcome the problem of unmarried pregnancy. This study is designed as a survey research. 50 respondents have been selected by using convenience sampling. The research location selected are two Malaysian shelters, namely, Raudhatus Sakinah (RS) and Welfare Organisation Darul Islah Selangor (PERKID). Research data is descriptively analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and displayed in the form of percentage, frequency and mean. Research outcome shows that there are several methods which adolescents may do to overcome the problem of unmarried pregnancy. Among the ways which may be used are to be involved in useful activities, obey their parents, be protective of the family reputation, internalize and practice Islamic teachings as well as to constantly keep the company of sensible or righteous people.

**Keywords:** pregnancy, unmarried adolescents, spiritual, oneself

## 1. Introduction

Pregnancy among unmarried adolescents is one of the social issues which is frequently associated with adolescents and needs to be effectively dealt with to ensure that the Malaysian society will not face the problem of moral decline among its young generation who are expected to shape the future of the nation. Adolescents are usually associated with the age range from 12 to 21 years for females and 13 to 22 for males. At this stage of life, they frequently behave as adults and do not feel that they are much younger than their elders (Villi & Dona, 2007). From the Islamic perspective, adolescents are regarded as of puberty age termed as *baligh*. Adolescence is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood.

Adolescents of today are forced to face various challenges in life parallel to rapid technological development and a world without borders. This may cause adolescents to face difficulty in adapting to changes and get entangled with moral deprivation. Some of the conflicts faced by adolescents at times involve immorality. Among these immoral phenomena are illicit sexual relations which contribute to pregnancy among unmarried adolescents. This phenomenon is more or less a result of today's modernization and urbanization process whereby adolescents crave unfettered freedom and dislike restrictions. Freedom which is not based on moral values does not only contribute to pregnancy among unmarried adolescents but also many other social problems (Azrina, 2007).

Many other studies conducted show that pregnancy among unmarried adolescents is the consequence of various factors such as free mixing of the sexes, fornication, environment, family problems, the media (pornography) and peer groups (Khadijah et al., 2012; Ali & Sardar, 2010; Mohd & Adriana, 2010; Brandt et al., 1978; Moore, 2001; Weisz & Earls, 1995; Sarnon et al., 2012; Dev et al., 2010; Zain et al., 2015). From the Islamic perspective, pregnancy among unmarried adolescents is the consequence of human indecency from indulgence in carnal desires without feelings of guilt. Even though fornication is driven by many contributory factors, among which are the abundance of easily and cheaply available pornographic materials, increasingly widespread hedonism, unrestricted mixing of the sexes and the lack of religious upbringing by the parents towards their children, there

is a need for internal self-control and discipline to prevent fornication and pregnancy among unmarried adolescents (Maszlee, 1999).

The many factors and wide open opportunities which catalyze the social ill of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents need to be curbed. Various ways may be tried by the family institution, society at large and the country's leaders to deal with this issue. Among these methods is the spiritual approach such as establishing prayers, fasting, practice of *zikr* (remembrance of Allah), keeping *qiyamullail* (night vigil) and increasing *muhasabah* (self-reflection) to better understand the purpose of human existence in this world (Salasiah & Noor, Shakirah (2014). Further, there is also an approach involving physical methods such as Human Development Camp, Identity Building Course, Seminar on Personal Motivation and so on (Mohammad, 2012). A study by Hassan Langgulung (1980) finds that parents must play the important role of shaping the adolescent character to become righteous individuals. A study by Che Zainon Yusuf (1995) finds that the social ill of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents may be prevented through raising awareness and providing proper sex education to children reaching adolescence.

Many researchers in the West found in their studies that proper sex education for adolescents is needed to overcome the problem of unintended pregnancy among adolescents. Sex education includes promoting the use of condoms from the beginning, delaying the age of first sexual experience, acquiring contraceptive information and so on. (Sowmini, 2013; Zhou et al., 2013; Kozhimannil et al., 2015; Okigbo & Speizer, 2015). This finding differs from that by Che Zainon (1995) who proposed that the purpose of sex education is to ensure that adolescents appreciate the ethics of healthy socialization based on Islamic principles along with prevention of wild and promiscuous behavior such as free mixing, free sex, watching pornography, licentious culture which causes society great harm.

## 2. Research Objectives

- 1) To identify the background of respondents.
- 2) To determine the internal factors of adolescents themselves which cause unmarried pregnancy.
- 3) To analyze method of overcoming the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative in approach and designed as a survey research. Questionnaires are used as data collection tool. Research respondents comprise of 50 unwed pregnant adolescents in the protection of the PERKID and Raudhatus Sakinah shelters which house 23 and 27 respondents respectively. Selection of respondents is by convenience sampling. Data collected is analysed using statistical test to obtain alpha cronbach value. By this method, the alpha cronbach value for each research variable is tested. Overall, the alpha cronbach value obtained for each construct is between the index range of 0.794 to 0.925 (Table 1). The reliability value of each item are found to be good and acceptable (Pettersen et al., 2004; Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

Table 1. Alpha cronbach ( $\alpha$ ) value of research variables

No.	Variable	Alpha Cronbach value ( $\alpha$ )
1.	Cause of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents	0.925
2.	Solution to problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents	0.895
3.	Spiritual Approach	0.794

Research finds that the alpha cronbach value for the research items as a whole is 0.972. As the alpha cronbach value for all variables are above 0.6, this research instrument is acceptable for its consistency and reliability (Salasiah et al., 2014). Analysed data from questionnaires are displayed in the form of percentage, frequency and mean.

## 4. Research Findings and Discussion

From the respondents' background, research finds that the youngest respondents are 14 years old (4%, 2 persons). The oldest respondent is aged 25 years old (2%, one person). Most of the respondents who are in the shelters are aged from 21-24 years (38%, 19 persons), followed by ages 18-20 years (32%, 16 persons), and 15-17 years (24%, 12 persons).

Table 2. Frequency of respondents' age

No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1.	14 years	2	4.0
2.	15-17 years	12	24.0
3.	18-20 years	16	32.0
4.	21-24 years	19	38.0
5.	25 years	1	2.0
	Total	50	100.0

Source: Questionnaire: UKM 2010.

Research outcome shows that in terms of education, most of research respondents hold a diploma (18 persons, 36%) followed by Lower Secondary Evaluation (14 persons, 28%) and 8 persons (16%) hold a first degree.

Table 3. Respondents' level of education

No.	Respondents' Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Lower (Secondary Evaluation)	14	28.0
2.	Certificate	3	6.0
3.	Diploma	18	36.0
4.	Bachelor Degree	8	16.0
5.	Master Degree	2	4.0
6.	Others	5	10.0
	Total	50	100.0

Source: Questionnaire: UKM 2010.

In addition, this research is also for the purpose of determining the internal factors within the adolescents themselves which cause them to be involved in activities leading to unmarried pregnancy. Research results show that item 'Weak faith made me disregard religious rules and prohibitions' has the highest mean value (mean=2.90) followed by item "I felt the urge to experiment something new without considering the consequences" (mean=2.60), "I did not fearful of Allah's punishment while committing the sin of fornication" (mean=2.30), "I could not restrain my desire when invited to have sexual relations" (mean=2.20), "I release stress through sex" (mean=2.00), and "I like doing sex" (min=1.90) (Salasiah et al., 2012).

Briefly, research respondents who are pregnant adolescents from illicit intercourse admit their fault for their own pregnancy. The urge to experiment something new, inability to retrain their desires and liking sexual relations caused this problem in their lives. All the factors stemmed from unbridled desires. This is the exact situation is described by al-Ghazali (2000) as *al-nafs al-ammarah* whereby the soul does not try to fight his bad desires and instead submits to carnality and satan's incitement. In terms of faith, research respondents admit that their weak faith, disregard for rules on permissibility and prohibitions as well as absence of fear for Allah's punishment drove them to commit *zina* (fornication) leading to pregnancy. They had forgotten Islamic teachings which remind Muslims not to go near *zina* (fornication) as it is an evil and harmful act. (al-Quran, Surah al-Isra' 17:32).

Research finding which explained that the cause of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents lay within the adolescents themselves is consistent with the views of Western humanistic psychologists, Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), and Carl Rogers (1902-1987). Although both of them did not deny the influence of environment in shaping personality and behavior but they emphasized the aspect of inner self. This humanistic approach emphasized the basic goodness in humans and their inclination to develop to a higher level of functionality. In their view, consciousness, self-motivation to change and enhance creativity is the center of personality. This explains that good inner values in a person produce good behavior and, vice versa, bad inner values trigger bad behavior.

Lack of religious knowledge and weak adherence to religious teachings are among the factors which cause research respondents to succumb to temptations of fornication resulting in unmarried pregnancy. Ahmad Kilani et al. (2004) viewed religion and spirituality as important in helping adolescents to avoid getting entangled in

immoral activities. Adolescents who lack religious education and upbringing are ignorant and act as they please thinking that what they do is right with no one to prevent them from behaving beyond limits.

This view is in line with the view of Mohd. Nahrawi (1995) who proposed that focus should be on a solution based on religious consciousness to curb this social vice, particularly among adolescents. This view is borne from the finding of *Badan Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar (BADAR)*, a body which aims to promote commanding the good and prohibiting evil, in a study on delinquents given counseling. It found that weak adherence to religion is the second highest cause after free mixing of the sexes which dragged the delinquents to commit all kinds of debauchery.

Table 4. Self-factors for pregnancy among unmarried adolescents

No.	Self-Factors	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
1	I have the urge to experiment something new without considering the consequences.	9 (18%)	10 (20%)	22 (44%)	9 (18%)	2.60
2	I could not restrain my desire when invited to have sexual relations.	14 (28%)	16 (32%)	15 (30%)	5 (10%)	2.20
3	Weak adherence to faith made me disregard religious rules and prohibitions.	5 (10%)	12 (24%)	21 (42%)	12 (24%)	2.90
4	I did not fearful of Allah's punishment while committing the sin of <i>zina</i> (fornication).	13 (26%)	16 (32%)	14 (28%)	7 (14%)	2.30
5	I release stress through sex.	18 (36%)	21 (42%)	6 (12%)	5 (10%)	2.00
6	I like doing sex.	22 (44%)	16 (32%)	9 (18%)	3 (6%)	1.90

Source: Questionnaire: UKM 2010.

This research is also for the purpose of analyzing the methods which may be used to overcome the problem pregnancy among unmarried adolescents. This research finds that among the ways of overcoming the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents is through self-effort. Mean analysis finds that the item "In my view, I need to be involved in useful activities" has the highest mean value (mean= 3.60), followed by the item "In my view, I need to be loyal to my parents and protect the good name of my family" (mean= 3.50). For the next items, "In my view, I need to practice Islamic teachings to prevent the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents", "In my view, I need to deepen my religious knowledge to prevent the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents" and "In my view, I need to always keep the company of righteous people", each has the same mean value of 3.40. The item "In my view, marriage is the best way to prevent the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents" has the lowest mean value of 3.30.

This research finding shows that the majority of respondents (64%, 32 person) are strongly agree that they need to be involved in useful activities to prevent being trapped in the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents. This indirectly explains that involvement in non-beneficial activities is one of the factors leading to pregnancy among unmarried adolescents.

This research also finds that 60% (30 persons) of respondents strongly agree that they need to be loyal to their parents and to protect the good name of the family to prevent the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents. Indifference to parental advice and lack of concern for the family's good name are among the factors which lead adolescents to do as they please without thinking of the consequences of their actions.

Further, this study also finds that to solve this problem, adolescents need to deepen and practice religious knowledge besides choosing good or righteous people as friends and getting married to avoid being trapped in pre-marital sexual activity or fornication. This matter is asserted in Islamic teachings which encourage marriage to avoid vice, particularly fornication. Encouraging marriage fulfills Islamic teachings as the Messenger (pbuh) asserted that "marriage is my Sunnah, whoever hates my Sunnah is indeed not from me (not one of my followers)" (Hadith narrated by Ibnu Majah). In addition, research findings which encourage adolescents to choose righteous friends to avoid being involved in vice causing unintended pregnancy, is in line with Islamic teachings as the Messenger pbuh instructed his community to choose righteous friends, "A person is likely to

follow the faith of his friends, so look whom you befriend” (Hadith riwayat Abu Daud).

Table 5. Self-methods of overcoming the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents

No.	Self-methods	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean
1	In my view, I need to practice Islamic teachings to prevent the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents.	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	24 (48%)	24 (48%)	3.40
2	In my view, I need to deepen my religious knowledge to prevent the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents.	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	23 (46%)	24 (48%)	3.40
3	In my view, I need to be loyal to my parents and protect the good name of my family.	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	17 (34%)	30 (60%)	3.50
4	In my view, I need to constantly keep the company of righteous people.	0 (0%)	6 (12%)	16 (32%)	28 (56%)	3.40
5	In my view, I need to involve myself in useful activities.	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	16 (32%)	32 (64%)	3.60
6	In my view, marriage is the best way to prevent the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents.	6 (12%)	3 (6%)	11 (22%)	30 (60%)	3.30

Source: Questionnaire: UKM 2010.

Research findings also encourage adolescents to study and practice religious knowledge, particularly practice of moral behavior to overcome the problem of pregnancy among unmarried adolescents. This is in line with the view of Che Zainon Yusuf (1995) who states that character internalization by adolescents will make them understand the reality of Islam. This awareness or realization may serve as a strong defense in avoiding this social ill which leads to moral decline. Furthermore, a study by Khaizir Ismail and Khairil Anwar (2011) proves that moral decay such as pregnancy among unmarried adolescents is caused by society, particularly adolescents, lacking in immunity against external or foreign influence. They consider that which comes from the West as a trend or modernization which should be emulated. Islamic life philosophy taken directly from the Qur'an and al-Hadith or ideas from renowned scholars such as Ibnu Miskawayh are almost absolutely ignored as a result of attraction to Western ideas, whereas understanding and implementation of religious life by the young generation is essential as a defense to resist temptations or challenges arising from the globalization process.

Research findings explain that the method of resolving problems by research respondents fulfill Islamic teachings whereby respondents realize the importance of studying and practicing religious knowledge in life, of keeping company only with righteous friends, of protecting the family's good name and reputation, of marriage, if they can afford the means to do so, otherwise to be involved in useful activities and not to mix with friends who like to waste time and get involved in immoral activities which harm their future.

## 5. Conclusion

There are various ways to curb pregnancy among unmarried adolescents. However, any action taken to overcome this problem needs the cooperation of many parties, including the family, society, the state and the adolescents themselves. Thus, this study is conducted to examine the ways of overcoming this social ill from continuing to grow into a chronic social problem. On the part of the adolescents themselves, they can involve themselves in useful activities, obey their parents, protect the good name of the family, deepen their religious knowledge and practice Islamic teachings besides choosing the company of righteous friends always.

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