



## Long term social consequences of adolescent pregnancy

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Pregnancy among girls <19 years old are mainly unplanned pregnancies (UP), in many cases also mistimed and unwanted and the prevalence is estimated five times higher than in women over 20 years old. Adolescent pregnancy contributes to high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality, unsafe abortion, and low birth weight of the offspring compared to adult young women. Although adolescent pregnancy rates have declined in many settings it is still a significant health and social problem in developed and developing countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that in developing regions 23 million adolescents girls have an unmet need for modern contraception and 50% of pregnancies among adolescents girls are unintended (<http://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>). Education is the main approach to prevent UP; however, the provision of contraception, mainly long-acting reversible contraceptive methods is also an important tool (Secura et al. *N Engl J Med* 2014;371:1316–23).

The present article discussed socioeconomic outcomes of adult age among women and men after childbirth at adolescent age in Brazil (Gigante et al. *BJOG* 2019;126:360–7). There are no doubts about the

association between low childhood socioeconomic position and adolescent maternity (Taylor *J Fam Issues* 2009;30:484–510; Fall CH et al. *Lancet Glob Health* 2015;3:e366–77). On one hand, low socioeconomic status induces adverse effects on pregnancy and childbirth and, on the other hand, pregnancy at adolescent age and low socioeconomic position are synergist to adverse outcomes both on maternal and child health and a major contributor of intergenerational cycles of ill-health and poverty ([http://www.who.int/maternal\\_child\\_adolescent/topics/adolescence/framework-accelerated-action/en/](http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/adolescence/framework-accelerated-action/en/)).

The authors found that adolescent parenthood has a negative impact on education and household income among women later in life; however, the negative impact was not observed on the education of men who became parents as adolescents. It is also important to take into account that the WHO estimated that 5 to 33% of adolescents and young adult women who abandon school do so because of early pregnancy or marriage. However, it is important to note that pregnancy at in adolescence is not the only variable that determines life conditions many years later because there

are confounders and unmeasured variables which can change life in the future, mainly social and familial support. These confounders and others include factors that make adolescents prone to early sexual debut and pregnancy (including early marriage, coerced sex and violence including within marriage or a partnership) were not assessed by the authors. However, lower education attained after childbirth certainly influences skills and opportunities for employment and perpetuates poverty which has an impact on national economic cost. Furthermore, the impact of adolescent pregnancy could influence the final number of children these women may have. The authors found a direct interaction between adolescent parenthood and number of children in the future and this variable can be a mechanism of future human capital later in life. In conclusion, great efforts must be made to avoid child-bearing in adolescence and to reduce school dropout.

### Disclosure of interests

None declared. Completed disclosure of interests form available to view online as supporting information ■.