

Research Article

The Maternal Role Performance among Indonesian Pregnant Adolescents

Erika^{1*} Nongnut Boonyoung² Sopen Chunuan³

¹Doctoral Student, Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla, Thailand.

²Associate Professor, Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla, Thailand.

³Assistant Professor, Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla, Thailand.

*Corresponding author: rika_hardiz@yahoo.com

Abstract

Adolescent pregnancy has become a common problem in the world and Indonesia. Pregnant adolescents eliminate their ambition by taking responsibility as a mother. This study aimed to describe the maternal role performance in Indonesian pregnant adolescents during pregnancy. This was a descriptive qualitative study using in-depth interviews for data collection. The participants comprised 12 pregnant adolescents selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis was undertaken with the content analysis approach.

Six themes of pregnant adolescents in performing maternal roles during pregnancy were found including: 1) taking care to stay healthy and safe during pregnancy, 2) maintaining a good relationship with husband and unborn baby, 3) seeking coping strategies to deal with psychosocial problems, 4) empowering husband to earn more money for maternal and unborn baby health, 5) seeking support to improve maternal and unborn baby health, and 6) creating happiness for herself.

The findings are useful for nurse midwives or other health care providers to gain more knowledge to create appropriate strategies to improve pregnant adolescents' abilities to perform their roles during pregnancy.

Keywords: descriptive qualitative; maternal role; pregnant adolescents.

Introduction

Nowadays, the number of pregnant adolescents is quite high. Globally, about 16 million pregnant adolescents (aged 15 to 19 years) gave birth each year, and 2 million pregnant adolescents were under the age of 15.¹ It was noted that one in five girls had given birth by the age of 18 years, and ninety-five percent of these births occurred in low and middle-income countries.² Between 21 countries with complete statistics, the adolescent pregnancy had the highest prevalence in the United States (57 pregnancies per 1,000 females), and the lowest in Switzerland.^{3,4} In Indonesia, 47% of Indonesia's female

population marry and become pregnant in adolescent age.⁵ The rate of pregnancy aged 17-24 years was 48 per 1,000 females and 20.4% of those were in Jakarta, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Jatabek).^{5,6}

There are many reasons why teens marry as age 12 or 13 and have their first baby at age 15 in Indonesia.⁷ In the Sanggalangi sub-district of Indonesia, early marriage is believed to tighten familial bonds in their culture, and parents push their daughter to marry at an early age to maintain their family social status in society.⁸ According to Islam, marriage is one of the things that is recommended to the couple to perfect their faith and implement

Islamic Shari'a.⁹

Pregnant adolescents are considered high-risk clients. They have a high incidence of pregnancy problems because of their immature reproductive system.^{2,3} Pregnancy in adolescence age can induce hypertension, iron-deficiency anemia, low birth weight, and childbirth complication.^{1,7,10,11} Pregnancy at an early age also has a negative impact on families and the community. For instance, many pregnant adolescents have to stop their education, and have fewer skills and less opportunity to find a job.¹ Adolescent pregnancy also induces anxiety and stress due to the un-preparedness to become a mother and undertake the many of the important roles during pregnancy.^{3,11}

Maternal role in this study is pregnant adolescent's ability in nature role involves cognitive, affective and practice skills for her and baby's need. The acceptance of adolescent as a pregnant mother is not as adulthood, so they have differences in preparation for being a mother.¹² Pregnant adolescent should be able to maintain their health and their baby's health and prepare for childbirth when she was too young. Being pregnant at an early age affects the ability of the mother to perform her maternal role optimally.¹³ Age affects physical and psychosocial readiness. If they do not have adequate preparation in physical, mental and social aspects, pregnant adolescents may not have the ability for take care of themselves and their baby.

Objective

The study aimed to describe the maternal role performance of first-time pregnant adolescents during pregnancy.

Methods

Design and Setting

To gain detailed insight into the experiences of pregnant adolescents in performing their roles, a

qualitative descriptive approach underpinned by a naturalistic probe was adopted. This study performed content analysis using a descriptive qualitative approach to obtain participants assumed rich in information for developing themes.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

This study was carried out in three community health centers in Riau Province including: Karya Wanita, Rumbai and Berseri. Two settings were in Pekanbaru and another was in Pangkalan Kerinci district.

Participants

The participants were twelve pregnant adolescents at the first-time pregnancy aged 15-19 years. Of fifteen of pregnant adolescents who were initially invited to participate in the study, twelve agreed to be interviewed and three declined.

Ethical Considerations

An approval letter was obtain from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand. Data collection began after the researcher had informed the participants about the purpose, significance, and process of the research. The participants were entitled to participate or pull out this research. Finally, those who agreed to participate in the research were enrolled. Informed consent was taken from the participants.

Data collection

After getting permissin from the Research Ethics commitee of the Faculty of Nursing, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand, the researcher visited the study setting to get permission from the head of each community health center for collecting data. Data collection by inteviwe, audio recording and field notes was undertaken in March 2016 and took 50-60 minutes for each participant. Before the interview, participants filled in the informed consent form. In-depth interview was conducted based on a topic guide and used to enable a detailed exploration

of pregnant adolescent's views and experiences using a flexible and responsive approach. The sample of the questions were "Could you explain what is mother role during pregnancy?", "As a new young mother, can you explain what are your roles as a prospective mother during pregnancy?" The interview results were transcribed within two weeks of being conducted by the researcher.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted based on qualitative analysis techniques to develop analytical themes. Qualitative content analysis approach was used to analyzed the transcribed data. Qualitative content analysis approach is a method to process the interview data.¹⁷ Most of the data analysis was done manually by the researcher. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Field notes and also journal articles related to this study were read and compared with the script by the researcher to increase the understanding of the participants situations from their viewpoint. The transcribed text was read thoroughly many times by the researcher to gain the meaning of the words, sentences and paragraphs. Similar meanings of these word, phrases, and statements were grouped and identified as a new theme which appeared during the in-depth interview.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data was checked for credibility and confirmability.¹⁷ Credibility was emphasized by confirming the interview results to the participants after the interview session. The confirmability of the data was evaluated by checking the raw data, field notes, and also checked by the advisor after translating into English version. The data were analyzed carefully and thoroughly, structured, categorized systematically, and interpreted by experience, frame of mind, and researcher's

perception without bias or particular tendency.

Results

All 12 pregnant adolescents were in the second trimester of pregnancy and aged 18 to 19 years. Three of them were aged 18 and nine were 19. Among these, the majority were Muslim. Six participants had graduated from junior high school and the rest from senior high school. All the participants were married. Nine lived with their parents, while the rest lived with their husband, only one was self employeed and the rest were housewives.

Six themes were revealed from the analysis as presented in the following.

Taking care to stay healthy and safe during pregnancy

Taking care to stay healthy and safe during pregnancy refers to the healthy activities of pregnant adolescents to perform their roles to eat a healthy diet, consume vitamins, visit the antenatal clinic regularly, have good sleep and rest, and maintain cleanliness to keep healthy and safe. Most of the participants had responsibility to their pregnancy. They looked calm during the in-depth interview. They took care of their pregnancy until the baby was born. Some of them told that they had to keep healthy to get a healthy baby. One of the participants explained.

"Even though I am still young, I have to take care myself.... I also have responsibility to take care of my baby inside" P1

Some of them tried to change their habits to be healthy. They followed mother's and health care provider's suggestions for eating healthy food. People around pushed them to eat a lot of nutritious food such as chicken, fish, fruits and vegetables.

"I ate fish and egg in my meals, almost every meal. My mom said that I have to eat that food a lot if I want my baby to

be healthy... So I ate that food more than others" P5

Eleven participants went to a community health center or a private clinic to check their pregnancy regularly since the first time. One of participants narrated.

"I checked my pregnancy regularly. I checked it almost every month. Mother suggested that I check it once a month..." P3

Most of the participants consumed vitamins and iron tablets everyday. Some participants explained as below.

"At every visit to the clinic I got 30 vitamins for free...I take vitamins every day..." P2

"When I checked my pregnancy for the first time, the midwife gave me the vitamins...I took some of them..." P1

Generally, the participants performed some roles as a pregnant women to preserve their health during pregnancy. They followed the suggestions from the health care provider and also their mother as well as attempted to implement what they could to improve health by themselves.

Maintaining a good relationship with husband and unborn baby

Maintaining a good relationships with husband and unborn baby refers to the ability of pregnant adolescents to perform roles by implementing some activities to show their ability in keeping good communication and paying attention to their husband and their unborn baby. Half of the participants said that they attempted to do their best for their husband. They maintained good relationship within the couple during pregnancy. The husbands gave support to their wife. For instance; he checked that his wife took meals and vitamins, and took a rest, and he also accompany his wife in doing exercise in the morning. One of the participants narrated:

"I had good communication with my husband. He always sent a short message to me just to ask me whether I had already taken lunch or not..." P1

The participants also communicated with the baby by touching and talking with the unborn baby during her activities.

"...Sometimes I talk to my unborn baby during my busy time. When I am cooking I talk to her. If she moves in my stomach I touch her. I always talk to my unborn baby when I do an activity..." P2

Most of the participants had a good relationship with their unborn baby and their husband. They could build a good relationship in order to get a better pregnancy.

Seeking coping strategies to deal with psychosocial problems.

Seeking coping strategies to deal with psychosocial problems refers to pregnant adolescent's role to find some activities to pass uncomfortable day and solve problems in order to be able to have a healthy pregnancy. Pregnancy is a difficult condition and a new experience for the adolescent. During this pregnancy, they tend to become upset when they get some uncomfortable experience, for instance when they have nausea, vomiting or pain then automatically they become stressed and anxious.

In this study, some of the participants played their roles by keeping calm and accepted their condition and also abided by the rules of a parent or a doctor to manage discomfort by relaxing and sharing together with family and also consulting health care provider. A participant explained:

"...I am very stressed at first, but after I ask the midwife about my problem, I become more relaxed and tried to reduce my anxiety..." P8

“...when I felt very emotional, then I just relax and be quite, I dont do anything until my emotion is stable again...I just call my mother when i feel sad or worried. I feel comfort if I express my feeling to my mother...”P6

The diversity of ways and feelings of a pregnant adolescent is a reflection that indeed they need assistance from a health care provider and also their mother as the person closest to them.

Empowering husband to earn more money for maternal and unborn baby health

Empowering husband to earn more money for maternal and unborn baby health refers to pregnant adolescent's role to encourage her husband to get money to take care of her needs during pregnancy and be able to prepare the labor cost. Some of the participants were living with their parents and encouraged their husband to get job outside. Some of the participants lived with husband and helped the husband to get money as a self-employee. They tried to be responsible to each other since they were married.

“...I stayed only with my husbandWe rented a house here. I asked my husband to open a motorcycle repair shop here since we were married, because he had experience at that job as an assistant to his brother before ...” P1

“...I lived with my husband since being married.at fisrt he did not have a job, then I encouraged him to sell the VCD (Video Compact Disc)At last he knew his responsibility to prepare our unborn baby by doing some side job...” P2

In Indonesia, men have to work hard to earn money and wives stay at home doing housework such as washing, cooking and babysitting, but sometimes the husband needs support from his wife

to encourage him to get a job or doing something to get money to meet their needs during pregnancy and also for preparing for the presence of the baby.

Seeking support to improve maternal and unborn baby health

Seeking support to improve maternal and unborn baby health refers to activities of the pregnant adolescent to find or get some support to look up her pregnancy. They tried to find support from husband, mother or someone that she believed.

Most of the participants got support from family, such as husband and parents. Support is one of the important aspect to improve health. According to participants:

“....I communicated to my husband to accompany me at every visite to the community health center...” P2

“...I asked my husband to accompany me when I have an appointment with my doctor or midwife. I feel comforted when he is beside me during the consultation. I felt confident....I asked my mother to visit me at the weekend, I needed her support during my pregnancy...”P4

A few pregnant adolescents told that they were more dependent with their mother. They needed support from mother and people around to make them feel confident. Some adolescents said that they asked support from their husband, mother and also mother-in law. Sometimes they called them just to get support and share their experience related to the pregnancy.

Creating happiness for herself

Creating happiness for herself refers to ability of pregnant adolescent to create something to make her happy and good for her and unborn baby. Some pregnant adolescents said that they were happy if they could go to a mall with their husband at the weekend. Some of them said that they would

be happy if they could eat their favourite food while watching TV at home. They said that they felt happy and accepted the unborn baby, then they generated a lot of attention to their pregnancy. Two of the participants narrated:

“...I spent my times by going to the mall with my husband at the week end, I liked to do that and it made me happy...”P1

“...I make my self happy with this pregnancy... I watch interesting program on TV when I stay at home, sometimes I go to the mall and meet my close friends at the week end and eat something that I like there...”P2

“ I did some activities to make me feel comfortable all day, such as watching television in the morning after I take breakfast, and then helping my mother to prepare food for lunch. I do it with my pleasure and happiness...” P5

Some participants create happiness for themselves during pregnancy. They do many activities that they are interested in and they enjoy and are happy at that time.

Discussion

The six roles of pregnant adolescents were extracted based on their experience through the pregnancy. In this study, most participants performed their roles during pregnancy as well as they could. Previous study reported that some pregnant adolescents were concerned about performing roles to be a mother and they focus on maintaining, observing and taking care of their own health and their baby's health.¹⁸ They checked their pregnancy at the antenatal care clinic and consulted about nutritious food or diet and vitamins to increase their health and their baby's health.^{2,19} The participants in this study followed the health care provider's

suggestions to check pregnancy regularly, take multivitamins, eat nutritious food, and exercise to improve their health. They told that all the activities they did in order to make themselves and their baby better and avoid the anemia problem during pregnancy.

The twelve Indonesian pregnant adolescents in this study followed their mother's advice regarding the behaviors, diet and activities undertaken during pregnancy. For pregnant women, some parents are still the dominant factor determining matters relating to whether or not they should do something; for example, pregnant adolescents refrained from eating certain foods because they were dangerous for them and did not do many activities to avoid miscarriage. On the other hand, some parents give them the freedom to indulge in improving health during pregnancy; for instance, encouraging the pregnant adolescent to do antenatal care or eat any kinds of healthy food. Indonesian culture requires that every pregnant women should have ability to take care her pregnancy until the baby is born by doing some activities that are good for her health. She also has responsibility to take care of herself.

Eleven pregnant adolescents had a good relationship with husband and family. They performed their roles and were able to communicate every situation as it happened during pregnancy. They also had the ability to build a good relationship with their unborn baby. Childbearing needs an established relationship with family, social school groups, work place and the community.²⁰ A prospective mother should keep creating a good relationship with baby by talking and touching, and others approaches, developing a secure bond between mother and her baby, as it is the period to give her baby the best start in life. A baby needs more than love and a baby needs to be able to take part in a nonverbal emotional exchange with his/her mother.²⁰

Regarding the psychological problems experienced by the participants, they expressed that pregnancy was a stressful condition and a struggle. A study showed that in a first-time pregnancy the mother has to cope with and adapt to the bio-psychosocial changes that might result in anxiety, so that she needs social support to release her anxiety.²¹ As a new couple, pregnant adolescents are sometimes not able to cope with these changes: tiredness, stress and lack of confidence, and focus on the parental relationship.²² They are considered to be a sensitive group from a pregnancy health viewpoint. In this study, most of participants could explain their psychosocial problem, such as stress and anxiety by consulting and discussing with their mother, husband or health care provider. Some of them were also able to release some uncomfortable feeling during pregnancy by doing positive activity such as watching television, take a rest and excercise to release their stress. They understood that every role during pregnancy was important to become a mother and this increased their stress level. However, they had to perform their roles as a prospective mother. So they were able to seek strategies to release the stress related to problems during pregnancy.

All the pregnant adolescents were married with a hard working husband. Most of them stayed with parents, and only three of them stayed with their husband. However, all the participants were housewives except one, who was working outside the house every day. They needed to maintain their pregnancy well, so they encouraged their husband to work to get money to prepare for their needs during pregnancy. A study stated that income showed a strong, graded association with food choice, whereas the association between education, occupation and food purchasing behavior was diminished or became non-significant when household income was included in the analyses.²³ A few pregnant adolescents were

in a low social economic condition.²

The participants needed support to improve pregnancy health, therefore, they found support from husbands and family during pregnancy. The husband is a provider of support for the pregnant adolescent. This family support may improve the ability of the pregnant adolescent in performing her roles as a prospective mother for the baby. The high support from family made them happy. A previous study from Thailand found that first-time pregnant Thai women with higher levels of social support tended to have lower levels of anxiety.²² Another study stated that pregnant women should enhance their ability to maintain relationships by companionship, attention, and support for each other, and this also helps to increase their energy to keep healthy.²⁰

Pregnancy is a new experience for pregnant adolescents. When they acknowledge that they are pregnant for the first time, they have a turbulent mind fluctuating between joy and anxiety. Finally, they are able to perform roles as a good wife and are excited to inform the good news to their husband and family, so they feel happy. A previous study explained that becoming a mother is taking a role for herself and relationship with family and the social system.²⁰ This condition also helps them to cope with situations involving childbearing, childbirth and childrearing. Pregnant women realize their child and the presence of child is known indirectly by its mass and movement.²⁰

In addition, the study found a variety of role experiences performed by pregnant adolescents during pregnancy. It showed that pregnant adolescents have the ability to perform their role as a responsible mother.

Conclusion

Pregnancy is a distinctive condition for adolescents. They have to fulfil their development tasks as well as attend to the needs of their

babies. This study highlighted the experiences of pregnant adolescents in the ability to perform their roles. Twelve pregnant adolescents in this study showed that they were able to perform roles during pregnancy. They could maintain their pregnancy's health by doing many activities such as taking nutritious food and vitamins, having a good rest and sleep everyday, doing exercises, and also checking their pregnancy at the health center regularly. They tried to be responsible to their pregnancy in order to get a healthy baby. They performed some roles for being a good impending mother for her baby and also for herself. In conclusion, most of the respondents could perform their roles during pregnancy. Even though it was their first pregnancy, they succeeded in performing their roles as a young

mother.

Recommendations and Implications

These findings may be useful to provide proper nursing care in Indonesia to improve the quality of maternal health during pregnancy, particularly knowledge about how pregnant adolescents could improve their ability to perform some roles during pregnancy, so they can go through their pregnancy without major problem and give birth to a healthy baby. The study results are expected to be used as basic knowledge to solve some problems of pregnant adolescents. These findings also have beneficial implications for practice and research. Midwives and nurses can develop strategies to increase the ability of pregnant adolescents to perform their roles during pregnancy.

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