

Rising Adolescents Pregnancy Cases: An Additional Problem in Efforts to Reduce Maternal Mortality Rates

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In the past three months, our institution have cared for 17 cases of pregnancies involving mothers under 20 years old. The youngest case involved a 14-year-old adolescent. These adolescent pregnancies are accompanied by various pregnancy pathologies, such as preterm birth, cephalopelvic disproportion, preeclampsia and eclampsia, mental disorders, and the potential for death for both the mother and the baby. In past decades, the majority of adolescent pregnancies were due to early marriage, while currently, unmarried pregnancies are on the rise. This is noteworthy, as it may be not only in Bandung and its surrounding areas but also throughout Indonesia and even globally. The increase in adolescent pregnancies results in the potential for maternal deaths, which are expected to increase in the future if this is not prevented and controlled properly.

I. Health Risks to Mothers and Babies

a. Pregnancy Complications

A WHO report on its official website states that in 2019, an estimated 21 million pregnancies occurred annually among adolescents aged 15–19 years in low- and middle-income countries, with approximately 50% of these being unintended, resulting in approximately 12 million births. Adolescent mothers (aged 10–19 years) face a higher risk of eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections than women aged 20–24 years. Babies of adolescent mothers face a higher risk of low birth weight, preterm birth, and increased risk of serious neonatal conditions, particularly abortion, preterm birth, and fetal growth restriction.¹⁻³

b. Mental Health Disorders

Adolescent mothers who become pregnant are more susceptible to postpartum depression, especially if they feel unprepared or lack support.

c. Risk of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Sexually active adolescents are more susceptible to contracting STDs such as HIV, syphilis, and herpes.

d. Maternal and Infant Mortality

Adolescent pregnancy increases the risk of serious complications that can threaten the lives of both mother and baby.

II. Social and Economic Impacts

a. Discontinued Education

Many pregnant adolescents are forced to interrupt their education, which can reduce future career opportunities and impact economic independence.

b. Poverty

Limited educational and employment opportunities often lead pregnant adolescents into poverty.

c. Marital Instability

Adolescent pregnancies often occur in immature relationships, resulting in many relationships not lasting long after the baby is born.

d. Impact on Babies

Babies born to adolescent mothers are at greater risk of experiencing health, educational, and emotional developmental difficulties due to less stable social and economic environments.

III. Prevention and Support

a. Reproductive Health Education

Effective programs to delay sexual activity and provide education about reproductive health are essential.

b. Family and Community Support

Pregnant adolescents require comprehensive guidance, support, and care from their families and communities.

Healthy Behavior Education

Education regarding healthy romantic or premarital relationships and understanding the risks of pregnancy also needs to be improved. However, the global internet, which displays adult websites that are easily accessible to children, including adolescents, poses a significant problem contributing to adolescent pregnancy. The role of supervision by parents, teachers, and religious leaders is crucial in this regard, ensuring limited access and a sound understanding of reproductive issues for their children and students.

References

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