

Home delivery, Inadequate Prenatal and Postnatal care practices among adolescent mothers in Luuka district, Uganda

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Short Abstract

Adolescent motherhood remains a global public health concern due to the negative outcomes associated with it. In this study, we explored the factors associated with home delivery, inadequate prenatal and postnatal care practices among adolescent mothers in one of the districts with the highest rates of adolescent motherhood in Uganda. A total of 248 adolescent mothers aged (10-19), in their second/third trimester or in postpartum with babies aged 0-3 months were interviewed. Analyses were done using descriptive statistics, logistic regression, and the complementary log log models. Findings showed that 11% of the adolescent mothers delivered from home. 53% had an inadequate number of antenatal care visits, reported their first ANC visit after the first trimester. Further, 62% and 25% of the adolescent mothers respectively, neither went to the health facility for their health nor their babies to be checked after delivery. Home delivery was significantly associated with long-distance to the nearby health facility and mothers' perceptions on pre and postnatal care practices. A high proportion of adolescents delivered from home had inadequate prenatal and postnatal care practices. There is a need for mass media campaigns addressing the importance of ANC and strong policies of keeping girls in school.

Extended Abstract

Background: Adolescent motherhood remains a worrisome public health threat to the mother, unborn and born infants given the risks associated with pregnancy related complications and death [1]. Teenage pregnancy and child births are among the highest causes of death in Low Income Countries [2]. Globally, Uganda is one of the countries in the world with the youngest population with over 47% age below 15 [3.]. This is due to high fertility levels as women on average have 5.4 children in their lifetime compared to a global total fertility rate of 2.4[1-3]. The high fertility burden is reflected in population growth rate of over 3%, and a maternal mortality rate of 435 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births that has not changed much since 2000/01 [1,]. The country's fertility levels in part could be attributed to low use of contraception, unmet need, and the burden of unplanned pregnancies most of which are among the teenage girls as 25% of young girls are reported to have a child or already began child bearing. Further the country is grappling with child marriages which have been increasing from the 15% in the 2011 to 25% in 2016

Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) [1, 4, 5]. Adolescents have 50% increased risk of having stillbirths or their babies dying in the first weeks of life. Most of these unplanned adolescent pregnancies, account for the bulk of 44% unwanted/mistimed pregnancies in the country [5]. The main objective of the study was to explore the factors associated with home delivery, inadequate prenatal and postnatal care practices among adolescent mothers in Uganda using Luuka as the case study.

Methods: In March 2021, using a baseline formative research design, we interviewed a total of 248 adolescent mothers aged (10-19) and 20 In depth Interviews who reported to be in their second/third trimester or postpartum with their babies aged 0-3 months at the time of the study. We used descriptive statistics, logistic regression, and the complementary log log models analyses were done to examine the associated factors.

Results: Findings showed that 11% of the adolescent mothers delivered from home, 53% not only had inadequate number of antenatal care visits but also had their first ANC visit beyond the first trimester. Further, 62% and 25% of the adolescent mothers respectively, neither went to the health facility for their health nor their babies to be checked after delivery. Home delivery was significantly associated with long distance to the nearby health facility and high level of perceptions on pre and postnatal care practices. Low level of education was the main driver of inadequate prenatal care practices. Still, early school drop-out, adolescent mothers as the main decision makers for their health, home delivery, late initiation of antenatal care, and long distance to the nearby health facility were also significantly associated with inadequate postnatal care among adolescent mothers.

Conclusion: Results indicated a high proportion of adolescents delivering from home, having inadequate prenatal and postnatal care practices. This partly could be attributed to the effects of COVID-19 period, as many were home due to unplanned pregnancies with no resources. We recommend construction of health centre IV facilities within a radius of not more than 5km. Mass media campaigns addressing the importance of antenatal care among pregnant mothers as well as strong policies of keeping girls in school will also be key in reducing the number of teenage mothers as well as improving their health.

Keywords: Adolescents, Home delivery, Prenatal care, Postnatal care, Uganda