

PSYCHOSOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PREGNANT AND NULLIPAROUS ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

A case control study was carried out with 19 pregnant and 20 nulliparous fifteen- and sixteen-year-old black teenage women patients at an adolescent clinic. Both groups were measured on twenty-one variables, which included personal and family history information as well as scores on twelve scales of adolescent psychosocial adjustment. A stepwise discriminant analysis was carried out comparing both groups. The first analysis using only psychosocial adjustment variables did not significantly discriminate between the two groups. The second analysis used family history and psychosocial adjustment variables and had a multiple correlation of .65, with $p = .008$. The discriminant function generated was able to correctly classify 89.5% of the pregnant group and 80% of the nulliparous group. The pregnant group had lower maternal educational level, later sex education, more brothers, better family adjustment, but poorer vocational adjustment. The study suggests that distinct characteristics do exist for the pregnant adolescent in the population studied, but that such characteristics do not indicate family or psychological disturbance in pregnant adolescents. Further, the importance of the meaning of adolescent pregnancy within different cultural and socioeconomic contexts is discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The Problem of Adolescent Pregnancy

Adolescent pregnancy is a major public health problem. Over one million teenage women become pregnant each year. While pregnancy rates for women nationally have decreased in recent years, the rates for adolescent females have remained stable. These statistics are of concern to health professionals since previous research has indicated

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