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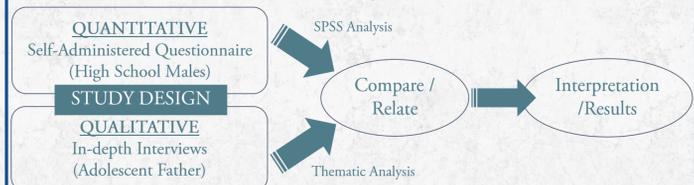
INTRODUCTION

Adolescent pregnancy continues to be a major public health concern in Jamaica with almost 80% of pregnancies in women aged 15 to 19 being unintentional (Jamaica National Family Planning Board, 2010). "9 out of every 50 births in Jamaica occur to teenagers" with the cumulative healthcare burden on Jamaica to care for adolescent mothers in 2012 being US\$12,000,000 (JM\$1,068,000,000) or approximately US\$2,000 per adolescent mother each year (CARICOM, 2014). Although there are several studies pertaining to adolescent pregnancy from the adolescent mother's perspective, there is a definite lack of research on how it affects the adolescent father. This research targeted adolescent high school males 17 to 19 years focusing on their knowledge and attitudes towards sex and the possible outcome of adolescent pregnancy. For present or soon-to-be adolescent fathers, focus was placed on exploring the effects of the pregnancy and being or becoming an adolescent father.

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METHODS

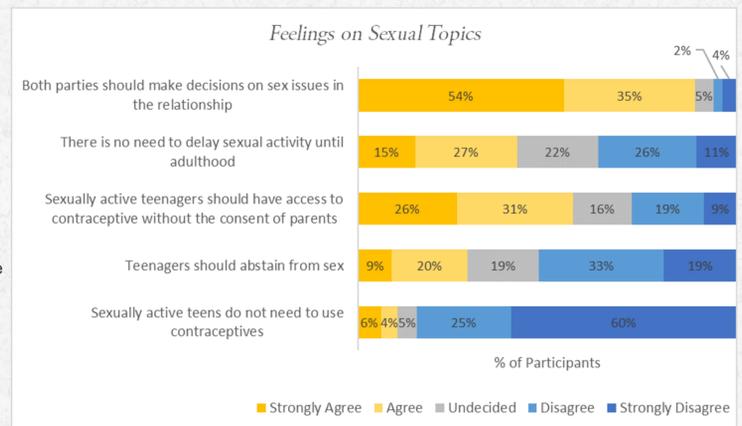
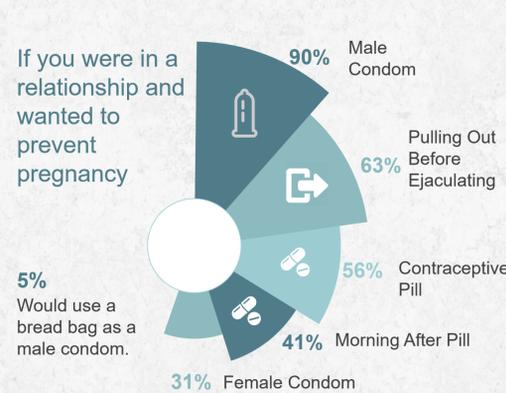
A mixed methods study was conducted, involving both quantitative and qualitative research. A cross sectional study of 2 Secondary Schools in Region I KSA utilized self-administered questionnaires with a sample of 318 adolescent males 15-19 years within grades 10-12 (forms 4-6). The qualitative arm of the study allowed data to be obtained from a smaller sample of adolescent males 17-19 years, via in-depth interviews aimed at exploring the effects of adolescent pregnancy among adolescent fathers or adolescent fathers-to-be. Recruitment of said fathers was achieved with the assistance of the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF). Parental informed consent forms were completed for males under 18 years.



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RESULTS

Conversations around sex have been had with adolescent males mainly with friends (56.3%) and parents (54%). On average, 22% said they would have sex whenever they feel ready regardless of age. Popular considerations for contraceptives to prevent pregnancy were male condoms (90%) and pulling out before ejaculating (63%). Of the respondents 4.5% wrote-in they would use a 'bread bag' as a male condom. Approximately 52.2% of respondents disagree that teenagers should abstain from sex while 10.4% believe that sexually active teens do not need to use contraceptives.



When asked 'why do you think adolescents have sex without using contraception?' 27.3% said because they were never taught about using contraception and 39.8% said because they believe there is no danger to not using contraception. Three out of every four males said being in love could influence engaging in sex while 93.3% said financial security would be important to them before having a baby.

Almost a third of males (30%) expressed ambivalence towards the possibility of getting a girl pregnant saying they would deny being the father, with only 22% saying they would "man up" and offer support. Overall 13.9% disagreed that 'adolescent pregnancy is a problem'. With regard to the statement 'The younger I have sex, the faster I become a man', a combined 18.8% were in agreement while 38.5% agreed 'It is the girl's responsibility to ensure she does not get pregnant'. Furthermore 10.6% disagreed that 'Adolescent pregnancy can act as a barrier to completing school'.

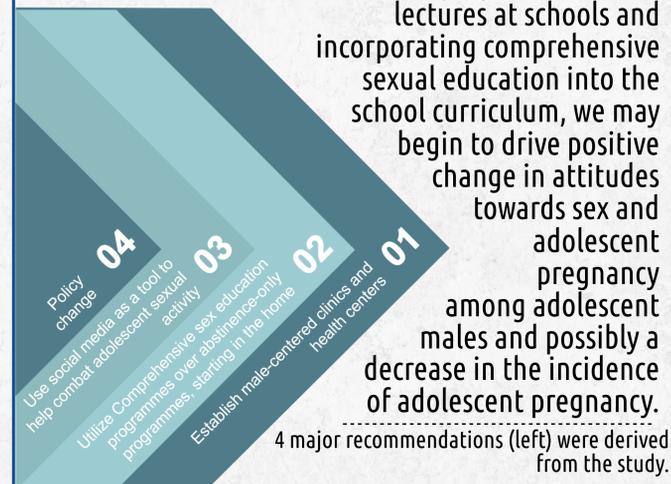
In select in-depth interviews among 6 adolescent fathers, most were not planning on becoming fathers when they did and had their first sexual experience before age 14. Interviewees all had partners (adolescent mothers) who were at the time, enrolled in the Continuing Education Programme at WCJF and were themselves either attending counselling sessions or accompanying the mothers or mothers-to-be to sessions at the centre. On the topic of becoming adolescent fathers the generalization was boys are so headstrong on becoming men because they are cultured that way. All interviewees lamented the difficulties of becoming a young father socially and financially along with the strain on supportive family members. When giving advice to other adolescent fathers or potential adolescent fathers interviewees urged fathers to "stand up as men" and "don't give up on your child" because "If you say yuh a man when you have sexual intercourse, when the youth come you ah fi be a bigger man."

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CONCLUSIONS

Most adolescent males have had talks on sex, more often with friends and classroom peers opposed to authority figures with the relevant sexual health information. Parents it seems, need to play a larger role in the sensitization of their adolescent sons to discussions on sex-related topics. The majority of adolescent males have heard of and would recommend contraceptive methods to sexually active teens. Being in love and wanting sexual experience were the prevailing choices for adolescent males when considering having sex for the first time while financial and job security were the dominant choices when considering having a baby for the first time. Adolescent pregnancy is seen as a problem and there is the perception that becoming a parent at a young age can act as a barrier to completing school and accomplishing certain life goals. Most adolescent males are not prepared for the possibility of getting a girl pregnant and even if their partner were to get pregnant they would deny (at least initially) of having contributed to the conception of the child.

There seems to be a prevailing attitude among adolescent males that they are bulletproof regarding pregnancy and adolescent fatherhood and it is for this reason that targeted sexual health and education campaigns need to focus on adolescent males in the home, school and in the communities. By utilizing innovative means of relaying information such as social media awareness campaigns, interactive lectures at schools and incorporating comprehensive sexual education into the school curriculum, we may begin to drive positive change in attitudes towards sex and adolescent pregnancy among adolescent males and possibly a decrease in the incidence of adolescent pregnancy.



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CARICOM. (2014). Integrated Strategic Framework for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy in the Caribbean. Media Centre. Retrieved from <http://caricom.org/media-center/multimedia/document-library/integrated-strategic-framework-on-the-reduction-of-adolescent-pregnancy-unf>

SPECIAL THANKS

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