



## Original article

# Contributing factors of teenage pregnancy among African-American females living in economically disadvantaged communities



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## ABSTRACT

**Aim:** To identify contributing factors that increased the risk of pregnancy among African-American adolescent females living in economically disadvantaged communities and to evaluate the current pregnancy prevention programs addressing these factors in order to provide suggestions for the development of tailored pregnancy prevention programs for this target population.

**Background:** Pregnancy rates among adolescents in the United States have declined over the past several years. Despite this trend, the pregnancy rate for African-American adolescent females is disproportionately higher than the adolescent pregnancy rates for other ethnicities. Limited attempts have been made to compile and synthesize the factors that increase risk of pregnancy in this population or to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs for African-American females that incorporate these risk factors.

**Method:** An integrative literature review was conducted to identify the major contributing factors of pregnancy among African American adolescents living in economically disadvantaged areas.

**Results:** Of the identified contributing risk factors for early pregnancy among African-American adolescent females, the five most supported risk factors were: parental influence, peer influence, social messages, substance use including alcohol, and pregnancy desire. Twelve pregnancy prevention programs were identified that addressed one or more of the five contributing factors to pregnancy. Parental influence and social messages were the most addressed factors among these programs.

**Conclusions:** This review found five contributing factors related to teenage pregnancy; however, current intervention programs are not well addressed substance use as a component of alcohol use. Thus, development of a tailored pregnancy prevention program incorporating those factors will help decrease the high pregnancy rate among this target population.

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## 1. Introduction

Pregnancy rates among adolescents in the United States have declined over the past several years, but despite this downward trend, the pregnancy rate of adolescents in the United States remains higher than any other Western country (Basch, 2011). Adolescents, as defined by the World Health Organization, are young people between the ages of 10 and 19 years old (Adolescent Health, 2016). Within this group, African-American females have consistently had higher pregnancy rates than all but one other ethnic group. The birth rate for African-American adolescents ages 15–19 in 2013 was 35 births per 1000, representing an 11% decline from 2013 (The National Story, 2016). Even with this decline, it remains true that 45% of African-American adolescent females will become pregnant before the age of twenty, and among this 45%, 38% will drop out of school because of their pregnancy (National Day,

2015). Pregnancy during the adolescent years not only causes problems for the parent, but creates issues for the child as well. Children born to teenage mothers are more likely to have poor academic performance and drop out of high school, have more health issues, be incarcerated during their teenage years, become a teenage mother themselves, and face unemployment as a young adult (About Teen Pregnancy, 2014). Many of these social issues could be avoided if these children were born to mothers who were ready and able to provide for their needs.

The general public is also affected economically by teenage pregnancy. In 2013, taxpayers spent an extra \$9.4 billion, with average costs of \$1682 per year for each child born to a teen mother (Counting It Up: Key Data, 2013). Included in these costs are: “increased health care and foster care costs, increased incarceration rates among the children of teen parents, and lost tax revenue from teen mothers who earn less money because they have less education” (About Teen Pregnancy, 2014). Most significantly, \$2.1 billion was spent on extra health care costs, \$3.1 billion was spent on child welfare, and \$2 billion was spent on incarceration (Counting It Up: Key Data, 2013). With the decline in

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the overall teenage pregnancy rate from 1991 to 2010, taxpayers have saved an estimated \$12 billion, proving the need and importance of a continued decline in teenage pregnancy rates, not only for the mother and her child, but for the taxpayers as well ([Counting It Up: Key Data, 2013](#)).

Previous studies have identified several factors contributing to teenage pregnancy among African-American females living in economically disadvantaged communities. These include parental involvement, peer influences, lack of knowledge and information about sex, and substance use including alcohol use ([Afable-Munsuz, Speizer, Magnus, & Kendall, 2006](#); [East, Khoo, & Reyes, 2006](#); [Hoskins & Simons, 2015](#); [Killebrew, Smith, Nevels, Weiss, & Gontkovsky, 2014](#); [Secor-Turner, Sieving, & Garwick, 2011](#); [Stueve & O'Donnell, 2005](#); [Talashek, Alba, & Patel, 2006](#) and [Teitelman, Bohinski, & Boente, 2009](#)). Of those, parental involvement and peer influences are commonly identified factors increasing risk for teenage pregnancy in many studies. However, each study reported different findings so it is difficult to know which factors are strongly correlated to pregnancy among this target population. Previous studies have reported inconsistent findings, and limited attempts have been made to compile and synthesize factors related to pregnancy among African-American females. Therefore, a knowledge gap exists in regards to which factors contribute most to pregnancy and how to use these factors to create a pregnancy prevention program that is effective with this target population.

Preventing teen pregnancy is one of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) major priorities, considered to be an obtainable goal in public health, and of significant importance to the health and well-being for adolescent females in the United States ([About Teen Pregnancy, 2014](#)). There are existing evidence-based pregnancy prevention programs geared towards teenagers that seek to "address specific protective factors on the basis of knowledge, skills, beliefs, or attitudes related to teen pregnancy" ([About Teen Pregnancy, 2014](#)). However, even with these existing programs, the pregnancy rates among African-American females living in economically disadvantaged communities continue to remain higher than most other ethnic groups. Thus, there remains a need for optimizing the effectiveness of pregnancy prevention programs for this particular population.

The purpose of this integrative literature review is to identify contributing factors that increase the risk of adolescent pregnancy among African-American girls living in economically disadvantaged communities and to evaluate the current pregnancy prevention programs addressing these factors in order to provide suggestions for the development of tailored pregnancy prevention programs for this target population. The following research questions were addressed in this literature review:

1. What are the factors that contribute to pregnancy among African-American adolescent females living in economically disadvantaged communities?
2. How are current pregnancy prevention programs addressing the identified factors for African-American adolescent females?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Design

An integrative literature review was conducted to identify the major contributing factors of pregnancy among African-American adolescents living in economically disadvantaged areas. According to [Burns, Grove, and Gray \(2013\)](#), a review of relevant research is done to create an understanding of what is known about a particular phenomenon and to recognize the knowledge gap that exists. With this information about contributing factors of pregnancy, current pregnancy prevention programs geared towards adolescent African-American females were evaluated based on how they are incorporating and addressing the identified contributing factors into their program.

### 2.2. Literature search strategies

For this literature review, a computerized search of literature was completed using CINAHL Complete, ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Source, PsychInfo, and PubMed databases. Multiple key words were used in different combinations when searching for articles ([Fig. 1](#)). These included: pregnant, pregnancy, pregnancy in adolescence, adolescent, adolescence, African-Americans, blacks, risk factors, contributing factors, low income, urban, and poverty.

### 2.3. Analytic strategy and data synthesis

Articles reviewed included the keywords previously listed and were relevant to the identification of factors related to pregnancy and sexual behaviors. Additional inclusive criteria required research articles to be peer-reviewed, published within the last ten years, and written in the English language. A title review was conducted, and articles that did not have a title that pertained to the topic were excluded. Duplicate articles were also excluded ([Fig. 1](#)).

To address the first research question, data reduction divided the selected articles into subcategories to help facilitate analysis. In this phase, studies were divided by their contributing factor to pregnancy among African-American adolescents. Throughout the search process, a total of 1178 articles were found and the 9 articles that addressed factors of teenage pregnancy were selected. The main findings reported in each article were highlighted to create a list of factors as an initial sorting process. Through this analysis, the researchers were able to group similar factors to make a final list which determined the contributing factors that increase risk of pregnancy among African-American adolescents.

For the second research question, intervention programs that were reviewed were geared towards African-American adolescent females, pregnancy prevention, and included the identified contributing factors. Other inclusive criteria required that the intervention programs were evidence based. Programs that were not geared towards this target population (age, gender, and race) and programs that focused on HIV/STI education and prevention were excluded from this review. Thirty-five programs were identified and the twelve programs that met the inclusion criteria were selected and displayed in [Table 1](#). The program name, target population, goal, contributing factor(s) addressed, and missing factor(s) are displayed. Each of the twelve programs was reviewed to determine what contributing factors they addressed, and what factors were missing from the program.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Factors contributing pregnancy among African-American adolescent females

Five contributing factors for pregnancy among African-American adolescent females living in economically disadvantaged communities were identified in this literature review: parental influence, peer influence, social messages, substance use including alcohol, and pregnancy desire.

#### 3.1.1. Parental influence

Parents are at the forefront of their child's life so they have a great ability to positively or negatively influence their child's sexual health and education. According to [The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy \(2016\)](#), adolescents confirm that their parents influence their decisions regarding relationships and sex. An absentee parent or lack of parental support during adolescence can have a profound effect on sexual behavior. Two other studies confirmed that authoritative and protective parenting is strongly associated with a decline in adolescents' engagement in risky sexual behavior and a reduced pregnancy rate ([East et al., 2006](#); [Hoskins & Simons, 2015](#)). This type of parenting creates an awareness of their daughter's activities, resulting in

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