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Unwanted Pregnancies Among Teenagers in Malaysia: A Growing Concern

Written by: Siti Hajar Md.Jani, Dr.Jamali Wagiman

Introduction

Unwanted pregnancies among teenagers have been a global public health issue for many years. In Malaysia, this problem has gained significant attention in recent times. With its diverse population and rapidly changing social landscape, the country is facing an increasing rate of unwanted pregnancies among adolescents. This article explores the factors contributing to this issue and the measures being taken to address it.

Teenage pregnancies in Malaysia have increased at an alarming rate in recent years. According to data from the Ministry of Health Malaysia, the rate of teenage pregnancies increased by 42% between 2010 and 2020. In 2010, there were approximately 15,000 reported cases of teenage pregnancies, while in 2020, this number rose to over 21,000. These statistics are alarming and demand immediate attention from policymakers, healthcare professionals, and communities.

Factors Contributing to Unwanted Pregnancies Among Malaysian Teenagers

The rate of teen pregnancies in Malaysia is rising because of a number of causes, including first, lack of comprehensive sex education. One of the primary factors is the inadequate sex education in schools. Malaysian schools often provide limited information about sexual and reproductive health, leaving teenagers ill-equipped to make informed decisions about their sexual activities. Despite learning about the reproductive system as early as standard six in primary school, they overlook the value of legal sex for health.

The second factor is stigma surrounding contraception. There is still a significant stigma surrounding the use of contraception in Malaysia, particularly among teenagers. Many adolescents may avoid seeking contraceptives due to fear of judgment from healthcare providers or family members. In fact, Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia started introducing condoms among teenagers in 2018 to avoid unwanted pregnancies, but many people were against this program.

In addition, peer pressure and social media influence are significant contributors to unintended pregnancies. Adolescents are increasingly influenced by peers and social

media, which may lead to risky sexual behaviors. The portrayal of relationships and sexuality on social media can create unrealistic expectations and contribute to unplanned pregnancies. Furthermore, economic factors also lead to this problem. Some teenagers may face economic hardship or lack of access to education and employment opportunities, which can push them towards early marriages or sexual activities, increasing their vulnerability to unwanted pregnancies.

Finally, a lack of access to reproductive health treatments contributed to the rise of this issue. Limited access to reproductive health services, especially in rural areas, can deter teenagers from seeking contraception or medical advice when needed.

Efforts to Address the Issue

Recognizing the gravity of the issue, Malaysia has taken several steps to address unwanted pregnancies among teenagers:-

- a) Comprehensive Sex Education:** The Malaysian government has initiated efforts to improve sex education in schools, aiming to provide adolescents with accurate information about sexual health and contraception.

- b) Awareness Campaigns:** Various organizations and NGOs have launched awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding contraception and promoting responsible sexual behavior among teenagers.

- c) Youth-Friendly Health Services:** Efforts have been made to establish youth-friendly reproductive health clinics that offer confidential services and information tailored to the needs of teenagers.

- d) Parental Involvement:** Encouraging open communication between parents and teenagers about sexual health has been promoted to provide a supportive environment for discussing contraception and responsible behavior.

- e) Community Outreach:** Community-based initiatives, including peer education programs, have been implemented to reach out to teenagers and provide them with information and resources.

What should we do if unprotected sexual intercourse happens or a girl is raped to avoid an unwanted pregnancy?

The subsequent passage should be approached without bias. Educators, counselors, caregivers, parents, and healthcare professionals should possess the knowledge of available options for addressing this issue. In cases involving unprotected sexual intercourse, it is imperative to prevent potential pregnancies. The advisable course of action is the utilization of emergency contraception methods, which can be obtained without the need for a doctor's prescription from any registered pharmacy in Malaysia. Three different preparations are accessible under the brand names Ella, Escapelle, and Postinor. These medications must be taken within three days of the incident. If more than 72 hours have passed, it is advisable to seek medical attention for the individual involved.

Conclusion

Teenage pregnancies are on the rise in Malaysia, which is a serious issue that necessitates a diverse solution. While improvements in sex education and awareness campaigns have been made to address the issue, much work still needs to be done. For Malaysian teenagers to be able to make informed decisions about their

sexual and reproductive health, it is critical for parents, educators, healthcare providers, and legislators to work together to provide a supportive environment. Malaysia can only expect to reverse this alarming trend and guarantee a better future for its young population by concerted measures.

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