

Unintended Pregnancy in Pekalongan: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: According to data from the Good Mention Institute, as cited in the Stability Report 2022, the issue of unintended pregnancies in Indonesia rose by 40 percent, approaching the global figure of 60 percent (Kompas, 2022). Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that out of 200 million pregnancies per year, 75 million, or 30%, are unintended, with 95% of these unintended pregnancies occurring among adolescents. **Methods.** This research employs a phenomenological design with a qualitative approach, involving 10 informants who consist of 2 main informants, 4 supporting informants, and 4 triangulation informants, selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with the informants. **Results.** Based on data from the Pekalongan District Health Office, the highest increase in cases of unintended pregnancy was reported at the Wonokerto I Community Health Center. From 2021 to 2022, there was an increase of 12 cases of unintended pregnancy at this center. Research findings indicate that a significant portion of these cases stems from parents who employ ineffective and lenient parenting styles. Additionally, the study revealed that the phenomenon of unintended pregnancy within the community surrounding the health center reflects significant weaknesses in communication between parents and children. The communication that occurs between parents and children is not intensive, leading to a lack of assertive control by parents, which is primarily limited to occasional reprimands when rules are violated. This reflects ineffectiveness in supervision and discipline, as evidenced by children's habitual lying to their parents and frequent rule violations, such as returning home later than the agreed-upon time. **Conclusion :** The phenomenon of unintended pregnancy is influenced by weaknesses in communication and discipline among parents, which increase the risk of risky behavior in children. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge and consistency in parenting styles contributes to the rising cases of unintended pregnancy.

Keywords: Qualitative, Unintended Pregnancy

INTRODUCTION

Unintended pregnancy refers to a situation in which an individual or couple does not plan for pregnancy or does not wish to have a child at a particular time. According to the family planning program terminology dictionary, an unintended pregnancy is defined as a pregnancy experienced by a woman who does not actually desire to be pregnant or who has ceased wanting to be pregnant (Amari, 2023). Unintended pregnancy presents a significant social and global health challenge. The incidence of unintended pregnancies in Indonesia is difficult to determine and has not been

thoroughly researched, either in terms of the underlying causes or the measures taken to terminate such pregnancies. Unintended pregnancies may result from unfavourable environmental conditions, social contexts, and a lack of knowledge related to reproductive health, which can lead adolescents to engage in misguided dating practices (Putra, 2021). Additionally, the occurrence of unintended pregnancies is closely associated with various factors, including the sociodemographic conditions of families, cultural norms, and societal beliefs.

A study on unintended pregnancy in Zambia indicates that the proportion of women of reproductive age experiencing unintended pregnancies decreased from 50.4% (95% CI: 47.1, 53.8) in 2001 to 45.2% (95% CI: 40.5, 49.9) in 2018. The decline in the prevalence of unintended pregnancies is more pronounced among women aged 25–29 and 30–34 years. Increasing age is associated with a higher risk of experiencing unintended pregnancies. Conversely, women living in rural areas (aOR = 0.76; 95% CI: 0.58, 1.00) and those with higher education levels (aOR = 0.46; 95% CI: 0.26, 0.80) are less likely to experience unintended pregnancies. Women desiring larger families (aOR = 0.45; 95% CI: 0.24, 0.85) and those who watch television (aOR = 0.75; 95% CI: 0.59, 0.94) also have a lower likelihood of experiencing unintended pregnancies (Sikaluzwe et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, unintended pregnancy is viewed negatively within families and communities (Amari, 2023). This issue has become stigmatized, as women experiencing out-of-wedlock pregnancies are often perceived as engaging in "bad" behavior (Amari, 2023). Adolescents in Indonesia who face unintended pregnancies may not receive the necessary support from their families or partners regarding their condition, which can contribute to inadequate parenting approaches for the child to be born. Unintended pregnancies can lead to significant psychological, emotional, and physical impacts on individuals or couples. Additionally, teenage pregnancies, where individuals are unprepared or do not desire children, can adversely affect the newborn, leading to Low Birth Weight (LBW), stunting, complications, intrapartum issues, premature delivery, and birth defects.

WHO (World Health Organization) data indicates that there are 200 million pregnancies annually, of which 75 million, or 30%, are unintended pregnancies. Notably, 95% of unintended pregnancies occur among adolescents, particularly in developing countries, including Indonesia. According to data from the National Population and Family Planning Board in 2020, the rate of unintended pregnancies in Indonesia was reported to be 17.5% (Pramesti Utami, 2022, halopedeka.com, accessed on October 28, 2023).

The prevalence of sexual activity among adolescents shows that approximately 25% report having engaged in sexual intercourse by the age of 15. In Boston, 49% of high school girls reported having had sexual relations. Factors influencing early sexual activity include early pubertal development, a history of sexual abuse, poverty, lack of parental attention or supervision, absence of educational goals, substance abuse, and poor academic performance (Goldstein, 2011).

A study conducted in nine major cities found an incidence of 37,000 unintended pregnancies, of which 27% involved unmarried couples, and 12.5% of these couples were Junior Highschool and Senior Highschool (Mayun et al., 2017). The rate of unintended pregnancies among adolescents in Indonesia, specifically for those aged 15-19, reaches 48 per 1,000 pregnancies.

According to data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, there are 65,000 marriage application cases recorded in 2021, and 55,000 applications in 2022. The increase in marriage applications for individuals under the legal age is largely attributed to the occurrence of unintended pregnancies (MoWECP, 2023; ppid.kemenpppa.go.id, accessed on February 16, 2024). Based on the 2018 Basic Health Research, Central Java Province recorded that among individuals aged 10 to 19, there were 424 adolescents who had experienced pregnancy, with 263 currently pregnant (The Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2018). The Semarang Religious Court in Central Java reported a total of 11,392 marriage dispensation cases in 2022, with the majority of these cases arising from pregnancies outside of marriage (Indonesian House of Representatives, 2022; dpr.go.id, accessed on January 12, 2024).

According to data from the Pekalongan District Health Office, the most significant increase in cases of Unintended Pregnancy occurred at the Wonokerto I Public Health Center, with an increase of 12 unintended pregnancies from 2021 to 2022.

Unintended pregnancies can pose significant public health issues for maternal and child health due to the associated risks and implications. Experiencing an unintended pregnancy can lead to delays in seeking antenatal care, increasing the risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth (Sikaluzwe et al., 2024). In 2012, 11 to 14 percent of maternal mortality in Indonesia (359 per 100,000 live births) was attributed to unsafe abortions. This translates to approximately 43 to 55 women dying per 100,000 live births due to unsafe abortions, which were performed as a result of unintended pregnancies (PKBI, 2015). Unintended pregnancies have consequences for mothers, children, and community life, affecting both the mental and physical health of mothers and children (Febriana & Sari, 2021).

METHOD

The focus of this research is to define the scope of the qualitative study and guide the selection of relevant data, as opposed to irrelevant information (Moleong, 2010). The limitations in this qualitative research are primarily based on the level of importance or urgency of the issues being studied. This research focuses on a Qualitative Study of Unintended Pregnancy among teenagers in the Wonokerto I Public Health Center (Puskesmas) environment, using purposive sampling as the sampling technique. Purposive sampling refers to selecting samples based on known characteristics or traits of the population (Agus Riyanto, 2022).

Key informants in this research are individuals who serve as the primary focus or target of the study. The key informants are individuals who can provide answers to the researcher's questions, both verbally and in writing, to understand the parental approaches to unintended pregnancies in the Wonokerto I Puskesmas area. In this study, the key informants are the parents of two teenagers, aged 15–19, who experienced unintended pregnancies in the Puskesmas Wonokerto I. In addition, supporting informants are individuals who provide supplementary information to the key informants. These supporting informants are selected from the peers of teenagers experiencing unintended pregnancies, school counsellors, and local community leaders.

RESULTS

Unintended pregnancy refers to a pregnancy that occurs when a woman did not intend to conceive at that time, and it often describes situations where a woman feels unprepared to become a parent. Women facing unintended pregnancies are confronted with two choices: to either continue the pregnancy or to terminate it, which carries the risk of health complications due to the often-unsafe methods of abortion.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an unsafe abortion is defined as a procedure for ending an unintended pregnancy carried out by individuals lacking the necessary skills or performed in an environment that does not meet minimal medical standards, or both. Abortion is one of the seven leading causes of maternal mortality worldwide, and nearly half of unintended pregnancies end in safe abortions (Dini et al., 2016).

The results of the study at the Wonokerto I Public Health Center revealed 12 cases of unintended pregnancies among adolescents. Unintended pregnancy refers to pregnancies that are not desired or occur earlier than desired, happening when there are no intended children at that time. Such pregnancies often occur among teenage girls and their partners when family planning

methods are not used or are used incorrectly. Additionally, unintended pregnancies can result from coerced sexual relationships, which are often associated with a higher risk of unsafe abortions (Ayamolowo et al., 2024).

Based on the research findings, it was determined that the phenomenon of unintended pregnancy within the environment of the Public Health Center indicates a significant weakness in communication between parents and children. The communication that occurs between parents and children is not intensive, leading to a lack of firmness in the control parents exert over their children, which is often limited to occasional reprimands when rules are broken. This reflects ineffectiveness in supervision and discipline, as evidenced by children frequently lying to their parents and regularly violating agreed-upon rules, such as coming home late. This study demonstrates that the control and discipline implemented in supervising children are inconsistent, which has the potential to influence children's behaviour and social development (Smith, 2023; Johnson & Miller, 2022).

Moreover, the results from in-depth interviews revealed that the discipline patterns in enforcing rules within the family are also weak. The deficiencies in the discipline applied by parents are reflected in the children's attitudes, which tend to be resistant to the advice given, as well as the parents' inclination to allow their children's behaviour to go unaddressed. This was evidenced by one of the excerpts from an in-depth interview with a parent of a teenager who experienced an unintended pregnancy, as follows:

“... the curfew here is indeed at 9 PM, but it's common to hang out with friends and sometimes stay over at a friend's house...”

This response was positively confirmed by the teenagers, who stated that they had never faced strict enforcement of the curfew. The desire for affection, a comfortable outlet for sharing their feelings, and a strong sense of curiosity led the teenagers experiencing unintended pregnancies to engage in intimate relationships with the opposite sex. This weak discipline contributes to a lack of control over the children's social interactions, potentially negatively impacting their health and well-being. These findings suggest that, in the absence of supervision and clear boundaries, children may be more vulnerable to undesirable behaviours, including involvement in risky activities such as unintended pregnancies. The consequences of this lack of control and discipline highlight the urgent need for more effective interventions to support parents in implementing more consistent and assertive parenting strategies (Brown & Lee, 2021; Taylor et al., 2022).

Based on the research findings from all the informants, it was observed that both primary informants tended to interact more frequently with their children after the children experienced unintended pregnancies. Prior to the incidents, parental communication with the children was not very intensive, especially as the children often spent more time outside with their friends while the parents were busy working. This aligns with the research conducted by Wanufika et al. (2017), which indicated that a lack of communication between families and teenagers tends to be marked by an increase in the teenagers' freedom, as they begin to shift their communication from family to peers. Furthermore, this is consistent with Anggraini's (2022) research, which emphasized that effective communication between parents and teenagers is crucial in helping adolescents navigate the changes they experience. Effective interpersonal communication between parents and children is characterized by continuous dialogue supported by openness and mutual trust. From the research findings and existing literature, it can be concluded that parental control is linked to parents' efforts to discipline their children. While parents establish rules, if children frequently violate these rules and only face reprimands without any follow-up actions, they may feel detached from these rules and believe they have the freedom to act however they wish when engaging in activities outside the home with their peers.

The research findings indicate that the parenting style experienced by teenagers with unintended pregnancies involves not only maternal care but also significant contributions from their grandmothers. In-depth interviews revealed that most of the teenagers spent a considerable amount of time at home with their grandmothers. This situation arises from economic conditions that require mothers to contribute to the family income. Additionally, the fathers' infrequent presence at home due to their work as fishermen further illustrates the family dynamics that influence child-rearing practices. A study by Roberts and Smith (2022) highlights that fathers' involvement in child-rearing, even if limited physically, can still positively impact their children's moral support and influence.

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that teenagers who experience unintended pregnancies often come from families with a relatively permissive parenting style. The teenagers reported a lack of support from their immediate family regarding guidance and reprimands, primarily because their parents were often away from home due to work as fishermen.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of unintended pregnancies within the Public Health Center (Puskesmas) environment is significantly influenced by weaknesses in communication and a lack of discipline between parents and children. Insufficient communication, coupled with inconsistent supervision and discipline from parents, tends to facilitate rule-breaking behavior among children.

The parenting patterns of parents with teenagers experiencing unintended pregnancies at Wonokerto Public Health Center exhibit significant deficiencies in knowledge, discipline, and control, which negatively affect their approach to parenting. Parents' understanding of communication and rules is inadequate, with more frequent interactions occurring only after the child has experienced an unintended pregnancy, indicating ineffective communication beforehand. Discipline is often limited to verbal reprimands without consistent follow-up, and control over children's activities lacks appropriate consequences. These weaknesses contribute to the increased risk of unintended pregnancies, highlighting the need for more effective parenting interventions to reduce risky behaviours among teenagers.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this research. All information was obtained from in-depth interviews with informants who have agreed to and signed the informed consent.

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