

Perceptions of Health, Healthy Decision-Making and Healthy Living: A Focus Group Study of Young Mother's in Jamaica

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Objectives

- Discuss the perceptions of young mothers living in Jamaica related to lifestyle and decision-making, what supports and resources are available and the challenges related to stress and time limitations associated with pregnancy, breastfeeding and parenting
- Use research findings to develop interventions to enhance health



Aaaaahhhhhh, Jamaica



Jamaica



Source:
Habitat for Humanity International

Background

- Survey done on 16,000 youth throughout 19 Caribbean countries concluded that 20% of youth report fair or poor health (Blum, Halcon, Beuhring, Pate, Campbell-Forrester, & Venema, 2003)
- Impact on young mothers:
 - Health risks associated with lifestyle and decision-making
 - Availability of supports and resources
 - Challenges related to stress and time limitations associated with pregnancy, breastfeeding and parenting
- Teen perceptions about health, healthy decision-making and healthy lifestyles may guide development of interventions designed to promote health

Background

- Adolescent health, including sexual health and pregnancy, are topics of concern for healthcare providers, family members, communities and teens around the world
- In a population based study done in Jamaica, of the total participants aged 15-19, one-third of females and half of the males reported sexual activity with the last year
(Ishida, Stupp & McDonald, 2011)



The Literature Says...

- Risks of sexual activity are extraordinary: unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STI), possible subsequent impact on future fertility
 - Jamaica National Family Planning Board (JNFB) reports as of 2008, 72 births per 1,000 women; previously, in 2002, there were 79 per 1,000
 - Approximately 82% of these pregnancies were unplanned (JNFB, 2008)



The Literature Says...

- Reported use of contraception
 - 79% of females between the ages of 15-24 report using some form of contraception at first sexual intercourse; only 49% of females reported using a condom at last intercourse (Serbanescue, Ruiz & Suchdev, 2010; JNFB, 2008)



The Literature Says...

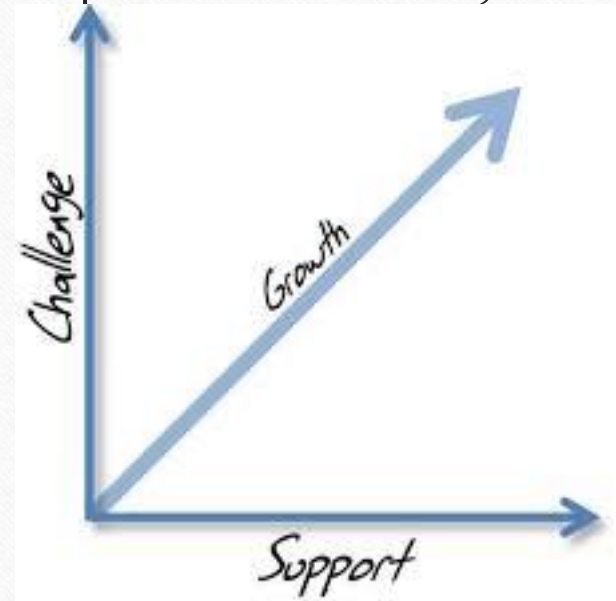
- Young women are aware of the importance of psychological or mental health
 - High distress amongst teenage mothers attributed to: challenges of teenage parenting in the presence of chronic stress, cumulative disadvantage and limited social support (Smithbattle & Freed, 2016)
- Nutrition is fundamental
 - While healthy eating is important to adolescents, food choices are often unhealthy (Wise & Arcamone, 2011)

The Literature Says...

- In a US study on teen's perspective of pregnancy, girls often focused on changing relationships, including classmates, teachers, friends and father of the baby (Rentschler, 2003)
- Adolescent mothers perceived needs and goals include: support, knowledge, happiness, independence and a career
 - Strategies thought to help achieve these included: support groups, life skills education, formal education and jobs (Stiles, 2005)

Theoretical Framework

- Sanford's Challenge and Support Theory frames this study, as it examines the role of supports and challenges in teen mothers' perceptions of health, decision-making, and healthy living (Sanford, 1966)
- Premise being individuals, when provided with a balance of supports and challenges, will grow and flourish based on healthy decision-making and, as applied in this study, in safer health and sexual practices



Methods

- Following approval from the institutional review board (IRB) and agency management personnel, this research was conducted in conjunction with a service learning trip to Kingston, Jamaica
- Descriptive, qualitative focus group design
- Site: A residential home for young mothers, designed to provide care, support, shelter, education and surveillance; max of 20 women are housed at the home who are pregnant or parenting until their child is 1 year of age
- Two focus groups: all young mothers either pregnant or parenting
- Focus groups lasted approximately 60 minutes

Methods

- N=13
- Ages 12-17, with infants aged 2 weeks to 9 months
- All native Jamaican, and black in race
- Incentive was \$10 (US) and a snack
- Of note, Jamaican culture demonstrates a high level of social and community stigma for young women who sustain a pregnancy in their teen years, in addition for censure of parents of young mothers; little attention is focused on males



Instrument

- Focus group interview guide was adapted from a previous study of youth sexual health (Herrman, Kelley & Haigh, 2017)
- Guide used supports and challenges framework to determine young mother's thoughts on health, healthy decision-making, and healthy living
- Included 8 global and 2-3 probing questions, to allow for detail and enhanced discussion
- Piloted with teens prior to implementation
- Audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim

Analysis

- Template analysis used the focus group interview guide to determine supports and challenges in each of the study constructs: health, health decision-making, and healthy lifestyles (Rubin & Rubin, 2005)
- Manual content analysis completed
- Thematic analysis reinforced constructs and revealed exemplar quotes affirming themes

Results-Personal Meanings of Health

- Health, and maintaining health extremely important
 - On the flip side, being unhealthy is a sign of “weakness”
- Setting and working on goals identified as an aspect of health
- Pregnancy created additional aspects for consideration
 - Need for increased water intake, healthier eating habits, use of supplements, exercise and resting were all critical in achieving health



Theme-Personal Meanings of Health

- “If your body’s healthy, it will be able to fight bacteria and diseases that make you sick.”
- Unhealthy people are those who are “weaker,” “lose a lot of weight,” and “their odor smells.”
- “If you are unhealthy....your immune system is weak”
- Goals, “tell you what to do. Every morning, you can think about what you can do” to accomplish them
- Mothers deemed that “do more exercises” and “rest more” were critical in achieving health

Results-Considerations in Health Decision-Making

- Onset of motherhood brought unique health decisions to consider in regard to personal health and the health of their baby, such as breastfeeding
 - All participants chose to breastfeed
- Gathering information important
 - Use of internet, peers and teachers
- Challenges to make healthy decisions
 - Temptation of unhealthy food, or fear of bullying upon return to school



Results-Considerations in Health Decision-Making

- Friends identified as both support and challenge
 - Give advice and support for a healthier lifestyle
 - Peer pressure to use drugs, alcohol or have sex



Theme-Considerations in Health Decision-Making

- “Some people don’t want to do it (breastfeeding), but you have to do it because it is the best thing for my baby.”
- Breastfeeding, “prevents the baby from getting infections” and it, “helps heal the woman.”
- Choose to eat, “junk food, because they taste better.”
- “In high school, no one knows where your from, or if you have a baby or not.”
- In order to prevent bullying, one mother said, “you tell them you went overseas.”
- “They smoke (marijuana), they have sex”

Results-Thoughts on Healthy Lifestyles

- Important to get adequate exercise, drink plenty of water and eat right
- Proper personal hygiene
 - Including post partum care, washing hands frequently, keeping clothes clean and living in a neat environment
- Adequate sleep
- Bullying affects healthy living by creating stress, low self-esteem, weight loss and headaches
- Management of stress



Theme-Thoughts on Healthy Lifestyles

- Food groups include, “legumes, vegetables, carbohydrates, fats and oils, food from animals and staples”
- You need to, “make sure that the food that your put into your tummy is clean and the equipment that you’re sharing is clean and also the environment.”
- Important to, “bathe twice a day,” and, “lotion after you bathe.”
- “Having a baby, I’m not going to get eight hours.” (of sleep)
- “Do yoga. Yoga helps you meditate”
- “When I have stress, I rest with the baby” or “feed the baby”

Discussion

- This study provided valuable information regarding the perceptions of health of young mothers in Jamaica
- Also allowed the researchers the opportunity to identify supports and challenges to health issues meaningful to the young mother participants with the anticipated forethought of designing lesson plans or interventions specific to health improvement
- Of particular importance to the mothers was the lack of social support they had throughout their pregnancy and post partum period
- It has been reported that some young women are encouraged by their family or parents to engage in relationships with men who can provide financial support to the family (Wood, Hutchinson, Kahwa, Hewitt & Waldron, 2011)

Discussion

- Influence of peers and their opinions regarding pregnancy are also a concern to the young Jamaican mothers
- Fear of bullying prevalent and privacy is paramount to reduce the incidence of bullying and social stigma/disapproval
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle a top priority for these mothers, not only for themselves but also their baby



Limitations and Recommendations

- Limitations
 - Small sample size
 - Young women reticent to participate early in the service-learning experience
 - Groups designed to ascertain baseline level of information and authentic perceptions without contamination of team's perspectives
- Recommendations
 - Further research may explore other areas and regions to determine cohort-specific health-related perceptions
 - May allow for tailoring of curricula and interventions, which may better attend to the unique needs of the population

Conclusions

- Study revealed important insights into the thoughts and behaviors of young mothers in Jamaica
- Teen women in Jamaica who become pregnant experience marginalization and duress associated with isolation, financial stressors and bullying
- It has been reported that some young women are encouraged by their family or parents to engage in relationships with men who can provide financial support to the family (Wood, Hutchinson, Kahwa, Hewitt & Waldron, 2011)

Conclusions

- The nurse has an integral role to provide education, counseling and resources to enhance the supports and reduce the challenges young mothers confront in their personal quests to attain and maintain health
- Nurse advocacy needed to influence the gender issues associated with subjugating young women, with little stigma associated with fathering a pregnancy, to address bullying via empathy-building strategies, and providing interventions and resources to foster parenting skills



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