

Adolescent Pregnant Mother's Health Seeking Practice Using Whatsapp During Covid-19 Pandemic In Indonesia: A Qualitative Analysis Of An Open-Ended Questionnaire Among Pregnant Adolescents

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Abstract

Adolescents pregnant mothers can potentially have a problem related to their immature physics and psychology. Their health-care-seeking practice is essential to ensure that adolescent pregnant mothers receive adequate care during their pregnancy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online media should be perceived as an alternative way to help adolescents seek care during pregnancy. This study aimed to explore the experiences of pregnant adolescent mothers who had practiced health-care seeking and followed online counseling using WhatsApp groups. This qualitative survey recruited 16 Indonesian pregnant mothers aged 15-19 who had followed WhatsApp online counseling. An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data, which were analyzed using thematic content analysis. There were three themes related to pregnant adolescent care-seeking practices using WhatsApp groups: experience, benefits, and advice and hope. The experience had three sub-theme: present experiences, previous experiences, and hindering factors. The benefits had sub-themes: benefits of WhatsApp counseling and benefits of Group WhatsApp. Their hopes and advices were: no advice, be polite, be consistent, be patient, and be duplicated by others. Adolescent pregnant mothers had good experiences in practicing health-care seeking using WhatsApp groups. They were more enthusiastic about following the counseling process and found beneficial information and solution regarding their problem during pregnancy. The findings show that providing WhatsApp groups for adolescent pregnant mothers could benefit them.

Keywords: adolescent pregnant mother, healthcare-seeking practice, online counseling, WhatsApp group

1. Introduction

Adolescent pregnant mothers can potentially have a problem related to their immature physic and psychology. Previous studies reported the impact of adolescents pregnancy towards mom and their babies. A study in Canada showed that teenage moms had a higher rate of depression during pregnancy (9.8%) than women 20–34 (5.8%) and 35+ (6.8%; P.001). During pregnancy, adolescents consume more alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco (P.001) [1]. Children of adolescent mothers are more likely to be early, have a low birth weight, and experience developmental delays or behavioral issues as they grow up. Postpartum depression, educational abandonment, and economic disadvantage are additional risks for mothers [2]. Pregnant and parenting teenagers are more likely to experience depressive symptoms than pregnant and postpartum adult women [3].

One way to keep them healthy is by providing adequate antenatal care. Support from family, neighbours and healthcare providers are also essential to ensure that they have positive health care-seeking practices. Their health-care-seeking practice is vital to ensure that pregnant adolescent mothers receive adequate care during their pregnancy, eventually leading to healthier and wealthier conditions.

During covid-19 pandemic, mothers are restricted from contacting people directly. A study in Saudi Arabia about antenatal care utilization during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that about one-third of the women (30%) had skipped at least one ANC appointment. The most frequent excuses given for skipping appointments in primary care and hospitals, respectively, were: fear of infection (52% and 47%), facility not functioning as expected (25 and 7.5%), and risk of infection to children (19% and 17%) [4]. Meanwhile, during the COVID-19 pandemic, pregnant women may be at risk of pregnancy-related complications [5]

An innovative way is needed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online media should be perceived as an alternative way to help adolescents seek care during pregnancy. WhatsApp is commonly used as the primary communication medium, especially in Indonesia. A study in Africa found that In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning via WhatsApp® could be an effective alternative to traditional classroom-based lessons [6]. A study in Indonesia showed that FGD using WhatsApp helped collect important, time-sensitive data in the community and improved the quality and quantity of the data collected. This process made FGDs more democratic and participatory and made it easier for facilitators and participants to talk about possible problems with data privacy[7].

Considering the benefits of WhatsApp and WhatsApp groups, providing health education and counseling using WhatsApp might benefit pregnant adolescents, particularly those with their first pregnancy who did not get enough knowledge and skill to address a problem arising during their pregnancy. However, there is no study on using WhatsApp groups to improve healthcare-seeking practices among pregnant adolescents. This study aimed to explore the experiences of pregnant adolescent mothers who had practiced health-care seeking and followed online counseling using WhatsApp groups.

2. Method

This qualitative study explored pregnant adolescents' experiences in practicing health care seeking using WhatsApp during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. In the initial process, the researcher developed a WhatsApp group: Ibu Hamil Remaja Sehat. This group consisted 106 members, who were pregnant adolescents (n=95), midwives (n=1), and nursing and midwifery students (n=10). Pregnant adolescents came from a diverse area in Central Java, Indonesia. They were pregnant and under 20 years. Midwives in this group provide regular education and counselling about pregnancy problems, including complaints during pregnancy. The nursing and midwifery students were facilitators in adding new members and giving vital information to this group. They also assisted the midwife to answer questions posted in the WhatsApp by the pregnant adolescents if the midwife were not available to answer the question due to other responsibilities.



Fig 1: WhatsApp Group

Participant and recruitment (including population, sample, inclusion, and exclusion criteria)

This qualitative survey recruited 16 Indonesian pregnant mothers aged 15-19 who had followed WhatsApp online counselling in the group “Ibu Hamil Remaja Sehat”. The inclusion criteria were: pregnant adolescents under 20 years, followed online counselling at least one complaint during pregnancy and had no illness during data collection. The exclusion criteria were: pregnant adolescents in the group who never consulted about their problems (passive member), and had an illness during data collection.

Survey instrument

An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data:

Table 1. The open-ended question in the qualitative survey

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- 1 Tell us about your experience participating in online pregnancy consultations using WhatsApp.
 - 2 Let us know what benefits you get from taking online counseling through WhatsApp.
 - 3 Please tell us what makes you enthusiastic about consulting via WhatsApp.
 - 4 Tell us how are your advice so we can deliver better counseling in the future
 - 5 Tell us the benefits of joining the WhatsApp peer group for pregnant teenage women.
 - 6 Tell us, have you ever received WhatsApp counseling like this before?

Ethical consideration and Data collection

This research received ethics approval from The Committee Ethic of University Muhammadiyah Semarang, No 684/KEPK-FKM/UNIMUS/2022.

The data collection process was held by sending open-ended questions to each participant by direct message. Then they filled in the answer in WhatsApp. The researcher did not collect data using WhatsApp groups as it has privacy and confidential issues [8]. This study was purely voluntary. It means that participants could refuse and withdraw their participation at any time. The collected data was kept on the personal laptop of the researcher with secured with password. We also published only for academic purposes with no name (anonymity).

Data analysis and interpretation

Data were analysed using thematic content analysis.

3. Results and discussion**Results****Demographic characteristics**

Table 2. Demographic profile of participant (N=16)

Variables	min	max
Age (years)	17	19
Gestation age (weeks)	16	39
Parity	1	1

Experiences of adolescent pregnant mothers' care-seeking practice using WhatsApp groups

Table 3. Themes and sub-themes identified

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Experiences	a. Present experiences b. Previous experiences c. Hindering factors
2. Benefits	a. Benefits of online counseling: Expand Knowledge, Efficient counseling, Effective, efficient, easy b. Benefits of peer WhatsApp group: expand friends, help each other, support each other, share experience and knowledge
3. Advice and hopes	a. No advice b. be polite c. be consistent d. be patient e. can be duplicated by others

Experiences

a. Present experiences

"I have a fun experience. I can consult easily and directly with the midwife via WhatsApp" (NAP, 20)

"quite helpful for me who is just pregnant so I understand better how to take care of my pregnancy and get further experience" (L, 18)

"it is very interesting and very helpful" (TNH, 19)

"in my experience, I understand more about the correct or healthy behaviour during pregnancy for teenage pregnancy. It is very helpful. I am very happy because there is an online consultation using WhatsApp, which makes it easier for me. When I have a complaint during pregnancy, just consult through a group or private chat, and the midwife is always very responsive. I get a lot of knowledge about pregnancy" (R, 19)

"I am glad everyone in the group helps each other if the midwife hasn't answered pregnant women. Those who already know the answer will answer the question from others immediately, it makes me more comfortable" (M, 18)

Friendly midwife

"The midwife is friendly even though I have never met the midwife" (NA, 19)

"I get very well responded" (UF, 20)

b. Previous experiences

Nine mothers never join in such a WhatsApp group without any further explanation. Others stated more details, like in the below statement

"I've never been in such a WhatsApp group before, and this is my first time joining a healthy teenage pregnant woman group" (NAP, 20)

"No experience joined in WhatsApp group, but sometimes take classes for pregnant women in the village" (MS, 18)

"Not yet available WhatsApp group for pregnant adolescent Mom. There is only a WhatsApp group of midwives and pregnant women who have the same estimated date of delivery" (TNH, 19)

"it's never been the first time" (RJ, 20)

"Usually I private chat with the midwife, then if the complaint does not improve, go directly to the midwife's house" (R, 19)

"Never, this is the first time joining in such group" (D, 18)

c. Hindering factors

"The biggest obstacle is if I don't have a data package for my cellular, I'll be left behind" (UF, 20)

"...It will be difficult for me when the data package runs out once a month. Regarding signal (red-internet connection) is smooth here. I don't have headphones privately. We used to share the phone with my husband. But my husband understands about online counselling, which I joined for, so he permits me to hold the cell phone" (H, 18)

Benefits

a. Benefits of online counseling

Expand Knowledge

"Makes me know what I didn't know," (MS, 18)

"I know the complaints of pregnant women," (R, 17)

"I can understand things that I didn't know. I can deepen my understanding of things that I previously knew a little bit" (MS, 18)

"I know about pregnant women, know the complaints of being pregnant" (R, 17)

"I can know which ones are good for pregnant women which are not good for pregnant women and which ones need to be avoided for pregnant women" (L, 18)

"I know more about things that I didn't know before" (TNH, 19)

“I get sharing with other mothers and get insight” (SS, 19)
“I learned a lot about pregnancy” (H, 18)
“I understand how to maintain safety during pregnancy, and add wider insight. As pregnant, I feel confident,” (H, 18)
“I get the benefits of having more experience and knowledge about pregnant women” (NAP, 20)
“I can expand my experience with pregnant women” (UF, 20)
“By participating in WhatsApp counseling groups, I get many benefits about pregnancy knowledge. So I can expand my knowledge about pregnancy. Especially at my age, which is still a teenager, I get more insight into pregnancy and related knowledge” (R, 19)
“I can know the explanation of every question from mothers in the groups” (M, 18)
“I can Increase my knowledge about pregnancy and babies’ health” (R,20)
“I get answers from everything I don't know about that,” (NA, 19)

Effective, Efficient, and Easy counseling

“I think it's beneficial because you don't need to go there (clinic) to ask questions about pregnancy, just send WhatsApp,” (SS, 19)
“I can do consultations with midwives, learning about the pregnancy earlier” (H, 18)
“I can consult at any time without having to travel to the midwife or health center” (RJ, 20)
“I feel it makes me easier to ask the midwife” (NA, 19)
“It is easier and more practical without having to go to the health center” (NAP, 20)
“It is easy. For me, it is easier to consult by texting a midwife than to consult directly by speaking in the clinic. Sometimes it's hard to explain and confused about how to deliver my complaint to the midwife in the clinic” (MS, 18)
“I can do a consultation at any time” (UF, 20)
“I can ask about pregnancy and what I don't know” (D, 18)
“It is easy and comfortable. I also can consult more widely” (RJ, 20)
“It is helpful for me because I am pregnant for the first time, so I can ask questions in the WhatsApp group” (M, 18)
“It is helpful and makes it easier for pregnant women to consult” (R,20)
“It is very helpful for me because I'm not experienced in pregnancy” (D, 18)
“the consultation is answered thoroughly and is easy to understand” (RJ, 20)
“I feel this counseling is easier, no need to leave the house, and the midwife is very responsive” (R, 19)
“It is good because it is easy, especially when there is a direct response from the midwife” (R,20)
“I can ask about pregnancy online either” (L, 19)
“I can ask about pregnancy” (D, 18)
“I can just ask via WhatsApp chat and immediately get an answer from the midwife or the experienced mother in this group” (SS, 19)

b. Benefits of peer WhatsApp group

Expand friends

“for me of course, it is more fun, more comfortable, and can add a lot of friends” (TNH, 19)
“the benefit of WhatsApp groups is that we can get to know each other from far to close” (TNH, 19)
“I get to know each other” (D, 18)

Sharing experience and knowledge

“I can know more about pregnant women. I understand that most pregnant women have similar complaints related to pregnancy. I can understand how to solve my problem related to pregnancy. I receive advice from The midwife and other mothers” (R, 17)
“I can know more. Hehe, because this is my first time getting pregnant, so I want to know more about pregnancy. From this group, it's easier to know about pregnancy” (M, 18)

"I can share" (RJ, 20)

"I can add insight" (SS, 19)

"I can find out what the complaints felt by teenage pregnant women even though it didn't happen to me," (MS, 18)

Helping and Supporting each other

"I can ask and answer questions about the pregnancy of other good teenage pregnant women in this group" (L, 19)

"I can share, know each other, and encourage each other" (R,20)

Advice and hopes

a. any advice

"No advice at the moment" (MS, 18)

"That's enough in my opinion" (UF, 20)

"Midwives must answer questions from pregnant women" (R, 17)

"So far, I still can't advise midwives because while I was in the group I felt comfortable and I haven't found anything bad in the group" (SS, 19)

"I don't think so because it has been beneficial because the midwife always answers the complaints of pregnant women" (R,20)

b. be polite

"always maintain courtesy to be comfortable when consulting" (NAP, 20)

c. be consistent

"I hope the midwife doesn't get bored of answering pregnant women's questions" and the midwife always helps pregnant women who don't know" (L, 18)

"My suggestion is that midwife WhatsApp is online, so when someone asks about their complaint, it can be resolved immediately. But I believe that midwife also have their activities" (TNH, 19)

"My advice is to keep the spirit to provide insight to teenage pregnant women" (H, 18)

"I hope the response to be faster" (RJ, 20)

"I hope midwives will maintain a WhatsApp counselling group because it is very useful for young mothers who are pregnant or breastfeeding" (R, 19)

"continue WhatsApp counselling so that it can help with teenage pregnancy" (M, 18)

d. be patient

"My advice is that midwives should stay patient" (D, 18)

e. can be duplicated by others

"I hope the village midwife can be like this (red-providing online consultation using WhatsApp group," (NA, 19)

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the experiences of pregnant adolescent mothers who had practiced health-care seeking and followed online counselling using WhatsApp groups. The result showed that pregnant adolescents expressed their experience when practicing health care seeking using WhatsApp, the benefits from joining such practice, and their advice to improve work in the future. Regarding the experience, pregnant adolescent expressed their present experiences, previous experiences, and hindering factors related to seeking healthcare using WhatsApp. Most pregnant adolescents stated they were happy and enjoyed the group. They got positive experiences, particularly when the midwife responded quickly to their

health problems. A study in Iran found that getting fast, appropriate and accurate is one of the aspects of healthcare service quality [9].

Based on previous experiences stated by participants, most of them never join peer group containing pregnant adolescents who can share and care for each other.

The only hindering factor that appeared in this study was internet connection matters. As we used the WhatsApp application, which needs data credit in the hand phone to connect to the internet, it will be a big issue. Internet problem was also because of geographical matter. Some of the participants came from remote areas. The internet connection in remote /rural area sometimes was difficult.

Because of unstable internet connection, pregnant adolescents who joined the group sometimes didn't receive the message and information in actual time. They will receive the message when the internet is stable, or the hand phone has enough credit to connect. Thus, to improve the quality of online education using WhatsApp and help pregnant women seek healthcare using online applications, the government should provide a good internet connection in a wide area of Indonesia.

By providing good internet, people can access real-time information that will help to alter numerous industries, including healthcare, education, and business [10]. Connectivity to the Internet on a global scale will enable the collection and analysis of larger and more complex data sets [10]. In terms of the benefits of seeking healthcare using WhatsApp groups, participants explained several benefits of it. Most participants stated that they could gain new knowledge about pregnancy, get new friends, and the consultation using WhatsApp was effective and efficient. As some of them came from a rural area, far from the health care provider, they felt that talking using WhatsApp was much better and more efficient: no need to travel, no need to pay some money, and no need to use their motorcycle or pay some for transportation. Everything they complain about pregnancy, they could drop questions in the WhatsApp group, and the midwife will answer in that group directly, then the pregnant adolescents gets an answer as soon as possible. It helps to reduce complaints, do early detection, and also to prevent any pregnancy complications.

This finding supports previous research. A study among mothers in Brazil showed that in a middle-income country, a moderated WhatsApp support group for mothers of toddlers was feasible and acceptable [11]. But, we have to ensure that participants can visit the healthcare service when they have persistent changes in their health problems. It means seeking healthcare using WhatsApp cannot replace seeking healthcare in healthcare providers. Pregnant adolescents should be encouraged to get adequate antenatal care in order to prevent pregnancy-related complications and the ensure the wellbeing of their unborn babies. A study in Indonesia stated that WhatsApp education could increase the frequency of antenatal visits [12].

Regarding advice and hope, the majority of pregnant adolescents have stated that they had no advice about how to improve the quality of counselling in the WhatsApp group as the counselling process in the WhatsApp group was already sufficient. However, several participants said that the midwife should be polite, consistent, and patient in counselling the member of the group. Attitude will affect the patient. Attitudes bind together perceptions, emotions, and behaviour. Despite the fact that attitudes are inferred from behaviour, they remain paramount in nursing [13]. Several adolescent pregnant women also stated that such peer groups containing pregnant adolescents should be created by other midwives (especially village midwives) to provide easy access for pregnant adolescents in seeking healthcare

Conclusions

Adolescent pregnant women had good experiences in practicing health-care seeking using WhatsApp groups. They were more enthusiastic in participating in the counselling sessions via WhatsApp. They also found that the information provided were beneficial for them which helps a lot in identifying a solution to address problems related to their

pregnancy. The findings show that providing WhatsApp groups for adolescent pregnant women could benefit them in providing an effective and efficient counselling.

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