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Letter to Editor: Insufficient details hamper generalization of study results on risks during pregnancy among teenagers in South West Nigeria

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Dear Editor,

This letter is in response to the journal article titled, "Risks experience during pregnancy among teenagers in South West Nigeria", published in Volume 4, No. 1 issue of International Journal of Collaborative Research on Internal Medicine & Public Health during January 2012.¹

I appreciate the authors for conducting a survey-based research on teenage mothers to determine differences in risks during pregnancy based on their age, occupation and stage of pregnancy. However, some details seem to be missing, especially in materials and methods, and results sections. The authors indicated multi-stage sampling procedure to conduct this study, however details related to sampling procedures in multiple stages were not provided. One hundred respondents from each of the selected four hospitals were used in this study. But, the details related to total number of hospitals and teenage mothers in each hospital were not present to determine the survey response rate. Moreover, the sample population of 400 as a true representation of the teenagers and/or teenage mothers in the South West Nigeria was questionable. A weighting factor needs to be considered for generalizing these results to teenagers and/or teenage mothers in the South West Nigeria and elsewhere.

The Section B of the Appendix I (survey questionnaire), which seeks to elicit information on risks and complications encountered by teenage mothers does not provide details about risks by stages of pregnancy. Many symptoms and complications during pregnancy overlap the three trimesters, thereby, clear, distinct questions of unambiguous nature related to each trimester is necessary to avoid confusion. Similarly, the coding for Likert Scale classification in Section B was not elaborated in the materials and methods section. The methodological scoring and calculation of responses in Likert Scale were absent. Further, the authors mentioned about content validity of the questionnaire, but did not provide any either references or details to support it. Moreover, though mentioned, the results related to pre-testing of the questionnaire were of utmost importance for testing reliability of the questions in this survey study. In addition, no information related to non-responses in the research study was provided. The *p* values were not reported in the tables.

The results indicated that risks during pregnancy do not depend on age and occupation. While these results were unique in this sample, previous research studies^{2, 3} in developing countries indicated that risks during pregnancy and birth outcomes depend

on age. Risks such as short stature, prolonged labor and anemia were common among teenagers under 18 years old; requiring prompt referrals during the first trimester³. Similarly, sexual behavior, contraceptive use⁴,⁵, knowledge and attitudes towards sexuality⁶ play a direct role in risks during teenagers among these teenagers, which need to be considered.

This research study highlighted a salient finding that there was no difference in risks during pregnancy based on age and occupation of teenagers, however, large epidemiological studies need to be conducted to evaluate these results in developing countries, because this research would not only minimize costs but also help public health professionals and health programs in the developing countries to divert scarce resources to teenage mothers, especially those in first and third semesters, rather than to all teenagers irrespective of their age and occupation.

Competing Interests: The author has no competing interests to declare.

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