Young Mothers’ Experiences of Relationship Abuse

Julia Brooke. School of Human and Health Sciences. julia.brooke@hud.ac.uk

Background

- Three quarters of 13-17 year olds have experienced some form of abuse from a partner¹.
- The United Kingdom has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe².
- Young mothers have been found to be at particular risk of experiencing relationship abuse and may face additional barriers when seeking the support they need due to their age and status within society.
- The effects of relationship abuse on young mothers and their children are extensive and enduring.
- Relationship abuse has traditionally been considered an adult issue and there is very little research that has specifically focused on young mothers.
- Therefore, little is known about the needs of young mothers in abusive relationships.

The aim of the research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of young mothers who have experienced relationship abuse and gain an understanding of how abuse impacts upon their pregnancy and mothering.

Methodology

- Feminist research is grounded in women’s experiences, emphasises how gender and inequalities affect women’s lives and aims to gives voice to those who have traditionally been silenced by inequalities, therefore, it is considered an ideal framework for researching abuse ³.
- Through the use of narrative interviews, once during pregnancy and once when the baby has been born, this research will enable mothers under eighteen who have experienced relationship abuse to tell their stories.
- Data analysis will be aided by the Listening Guide⁴ enabling the different voices within the narratives to be revealed.
- Young women have been consulted on the design of the study.


The study will contribute to a better understanding of the experiences and support needs of young mothers living with relationship abuse and will have implications for developing improved professional and agency responses to them and their children.


The study is funded by the Patrick Stewart/Refuge Scholarship for the study of children and domestic violence.

Supervisors: Dr S Peckover and Dr R Deery