

## Levels and Determinants of Experiencing Violence during Pregnancy among Adolescent Women - The Case of Southern Africa

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**Abstract :** The health of mother and child remain at risk among pregnant adolescents. Nevertheless, these are placed in even greater jeopardy when an expectant adolescent experiences violence. This paper sought to explore the levels and determinants of expecting adolescents in five Southern African countries. The study used the most recent (2010/2015) nationally representative demographic health survey (DHS) data from Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The highest levels of violence during pregnancy occurred amongst adolescent females living in Zimbabwe at 11.4%, followed by Zambia (8.3%) and Namibia (7.7%). Lowest levels were seen in Mozambique at 3.6%. Additionally, the determinants of experiencing violence during pregnancy included educational attainment, marital status, wealth and place of residence. Expectant adolescents that had a higher likelihood of experiencing violence were married and lived predominantly in rural settings. Higher risk was also associated with lower acquisition of education and poverty. These results show a very similar pattern to the risk factors associated with early pregnancy in the region. The predictors point to issues of possible lowered empowerment amongst younger women in their relationships and the structural challenges faced by this fledgling group. Nevertheless, addressing these dynamics could go a long way in not only decreasing the likelihood of unwanted motherhood at this early stage of the life course, but indeed even ensuring the prevention of violence during wanted early pregnancy. This would lead to improved levels of maternal and child health despite younger maternal age and aid in achieving a number of sustainable development goals.

**Keywords :** adolescents, determinants, Southern Africa, violence during pregnancy

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