



Social factors and health issues related to school pregnancies in Bouake (Cote d'ivoire)

Akmele Meless Siméon^{1*}, Akmele Meless Essim Alida Lizette², AKICHI Logbochi Marie Paule³, ADOU Agnero Simon⁴

¹ Enseignant-chercheur, Maître-assistant, Université Alassane Ouattara, Bouaké, Cote d'ivoire

²⁻⁴ Doctorante, Université Alassane Ouattara, Bouaké, Cote d'ivoire

Abstract

This study analyses the determinants of school pregnancies and its effects on students. To achieve this purpose, the survey is carried out in Bouaké located in Gbêkê area at the Kennedy Girls college and at the modern college of Belleville Bouaké due to repeated pregnancies. Qualitative research through the focus group and quantitative based on questionnaire helped to collect the data, analyzed with theories, including dialectic analysis, stakeholder theory and holism. The results of the study identified and analyzed the socio-economic and psychological factors of pregnancies, and explained health risks and deschooling. The presence of pregnancies shows the need for a deconstruction of the control policy in schools.

Keywords: school pregnancy, determinant, deschooling, health risk, deconstruction, Bouaké

1. Introduction

This study is from reproductive health field. It is about the socio-economic and psychological determinants of school pregnancies, especially the health risks among actors in Bouaké city. Excepted school failures, violence in schools, the problem of pregnancies among pupils is a serious issue for the political and administrative authorities, the researchers. Both in Africa and in the world, there are so many writings on the matter. For (Bettoli 2004) ^[2], pregnancies challenge and concern the current adult society. The public authorities in France, Switzerland and Sweden do not deny the right of young people to sexuality. It is therefore for them to control the risks by making available to young people adequate means of contraception which take into account their financial means and their need for confidentiality. As early as 1975, the Government established a national network of youth clinics providing confidential information. (Dadoorian 2005) ^[5] argues that the great loneliness, the aggravated lack of affection experienced by teenage girls in their family environment, lead them to motherhood. The girl sends her love request to her baby. It will have everything that it did not have in terms of affection, protection. (Protea 2002) ^[21] shows that one of the first factors in these pregnancies would be sexual harassment by students. Some young girls use their charms to influence the academic verdicts. So they would look for ease in school in order to get good grades. The consequence of this attitude in large part is the pregnancy, which causes identified cases of school dropout. (Regaglia 2014) ^[22] was interested in conflict. The author shows that pregnancies occur in a climate of rupture or violence. It indicates the profile of the teenage girl exposed to pregnancy, who is isolated, in conflict with her parents, and sometimes rejected by her family. Suicide attempts can precede pregnancy as well as an attitude of addiction. Faced with this situation, the solution to all these worries becomes the sexual relationship that allows him to obtain tenderness. (Fay 1999)

^[9] States that the first reports made to the sly are strongly connoted by shame. The using of condoms is almost non-existent, because of the stealth and unorganized nature of the practice as well as the lack of information of teenagers about the means of protection.

In Côte d'Ivoire, despite campaigns to raise awareness through the media and posters about the phenomenon, school pregnancies are part of the students experiences. This is the justification for the assertion of (Mazou 2014) ^[18]. The author argues that young people in school do not use condoms in an immediate way because of the abrupt and circumstantial nature of their sexual intercourse. The social environment in which they live reflects the image of poverty that does not allow them to afford condoms.

While school pregnancies constitute a "scourge" found in all regions of the country, in primary and secondary schools, of the elementary terminal course according to (Gholami 2015), the municipality of Bouaké, which has several Institutions is not spared. Two reasons explain this choice:

-The existence of determinants related to pregnancies. Literature shows their resurgence in schools. (Gholami 2015) attests that, out of 177 cases of pregnancies of which 2 in the third grade, 1 in the fourth grade and 4 in CM2, identified between 2013 and 2014, the municipality of Bouaké accounts for 84 cases. Socio-economic and psychological factors explain this reality;

-Pregnancies in students cause socio-health problems. Young mothers or pregnant women drop out of school, family conflicts appear, which threatens social cohesion. Students are also exposed to sexually transmitted diseases (HIV/AIDS, gonorrhoea...). These findings stem from a series of problems that we are proposing to elucidate: "Why do pregnancies that cause social problems occur in students?" To this main issue are related to secondary issues: what are the causes of pregnancy in young girls? What are the problems caused by pregnancies? The objective of this study is to analyse the

determinants of pregnancies and the social problems they have caused. The thesis supported is: "The socio-economic and psychological factors explain the pregnancies, which have created social problems in the pupils".

Bouaké is the investigation field. This municipality has about 1500 000 inhabitants and covers 71788 km². For the study, the modern college of Belleville and the young Girls college in Kennedy have particularly attracted our attention. The choice of this study field is linked to the resurgence of pregnancies and the complaints of parents of students. The individuals involved in the study are young girls with pregnancies (50), Young Boys (15), Educators (10), parents (25). People are selected according to criteria including the size of the establishments, the number of pregnancies and dropouts registered, the availability. Through the technique of snowball (from mouth to ear), we have identified two hundred (200)

individuals. Unable to interview all these people, we decided to interview half (1/2) of the population. In total, 100 individuals are selected. The surveys lasted to November 2016 from June 2017. The focus group allowed the actors to discuss freely about the causes of pregnancies. In order to seize social problems, a questionnaire is sent directly to the respondents. For the deepening of the data, we used dialectic analysis. It helped to identify problems related to pregnancies, including deschooling, health risks. The stakeholder theory allowed to understand the family conflicts caused by pregnancies. The holism justifies the involvement of the social environment in the emergence of school pregnancies. The present work is based on two parts. We first identify and analyze the causes of pregnancies in students. Secondly, we explain the social problems due to pregnancies.

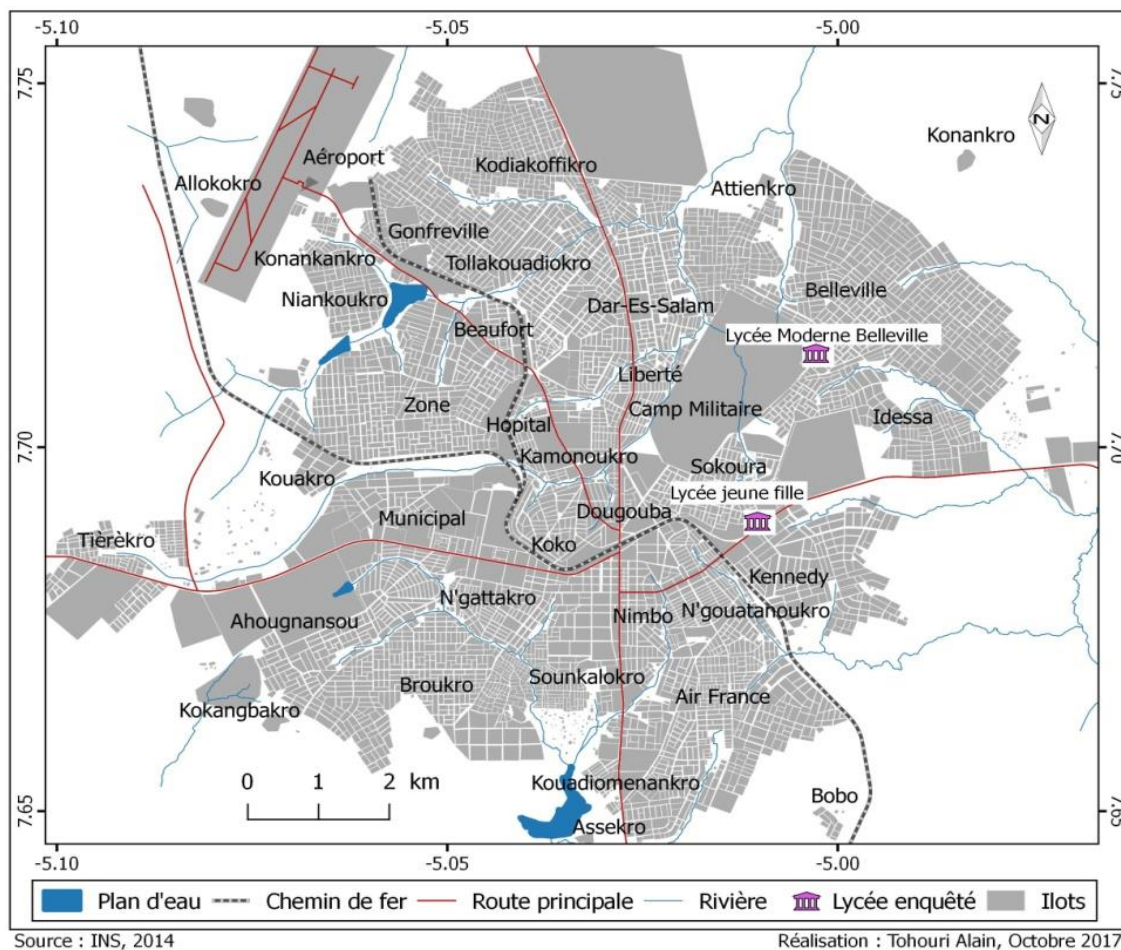


Fig 1: The Studied High Schools

2. The determinants of Pregnancy in Students

In this session, we identify the causes of student’s pregnancy. By the way, we asked some questions to the respondents in these terms: « What are the reasons for pregnancy in young girls? » Here are some of the answers obtained: I’m a teacher at the Belleville College. It is a common phenomenon that we are seeing. Each year, students become pregnant and do not finish the year. It’s really a pity for young girls with a bright future. Parents often from modest classes

bleed to ensure their schooling. Unfortunately the result is negative (A. T, 32 years). As educators, we know the financial situation of the parents. Most of them are poor. Some people are struggling to pay for schooling because they are unemployed and living in poverty. Girls who should be aware of it, fail and leave the family in desolation (K. A, 33 years). It was hard for me, because my father has been unemployed since the crisis that Côte d’Ivoire has experienced. When I ask

for money, often it does not come and since my parents do not live in Bouaké, I manage myself. I met a gentleman who helped me. Months later, I became pregnant (F. K, 16 years old).

My daughter's at the girl's college. It was difficult for me to get the money to pay for his schooling. I didn't think she was going to end up with a pregnancy. What am I going to do now? She was my only hope. I spent nothing. Not only do I have to take care of the pregnancy, but also my daughter. It's complicated (K. N, 55 years).

The above data indicate different factors related to pregnancy.

2.1 Socio-economic causes

The first reason is the unemployment of people, which negatively affects Côte d'Ivoire citizens. After independence, agriculture was the essential support of the economy. Through the coffee-cocoa binomial, the country experienced economic growth, qualified by many observers as "the Ivorian miracle". But the lower costs of these exports, combined with poor governance, created an unprecedented economic crisis in the years 1980. To curb it, the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF, World Bank) have imposed austerity measures on Côte d'Ivoire (devaluation, privatization of state-owned companies,...). These strategies have not achieved the expected results. The social consequences of these unpopular measures are dramatic, because they have resulted in collective redundancies. This situation has forced workers to be unemployed. Some have invested in the informal sector such as the manufacture of traditional soap (Kabakrou), the restoration... The literature attests to the implication of this reality in these activities. For (Malikwisha 2000) ^[16], the informal sector is a popular response to the realities of the environment, an adaptation to the realities of the economic and social environment. For the author, people have to take control of their own destiny, inventing the appropriate solutions to the problems of unemployment and poverty. (Shomba 2003) ^[23] bounds in the same direction. For the author, informal activity reveals an astonishing capacity to produce goods and services. It generates income for a large part of the population, offers employment to the unemployed and helps to fight against poverty.

Like the cities of Cote d'Ivoire, Bouaké is not spared by the phenomenon of unemployment. The socio-political crisis of 2002 to 2011 has severely affected this city. It has led to the relocation of companies (FILTISAC, SITAB, CAD/CAM...), research structures (CNRA, CRD), Closure of health centres (clinics). The main Cause of the departure of several workers, this situation has doubled the number of "unemployed", yet already disturbing in the labour market in Bouaké. According to the NSI, the official unemployment rate is 60% in March 2012 compared to 25% in June 2011 and 18% in December 2010. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry reveals that 8000 direct jobs are lost as a result of corporate restructuring measures that suffer the aftermath of the post-electoral crisis and fiscal pressure (Lia 2013) ^[14]. Parents of students who are unemployed, live in precarious conditions, as they "save a penny of candles". Activities carried out, such as the sale of food or charcoal, do not allow them to take effective care of their children. This respondent confirms that :

Since my dismissal, I returned to the village. I grow yams,

cassava on a small area. When I sell, the little I win, I tighten my belt, because I have to pay for my daughter's school. And it's not all time I have money to give it. I am grieved and this worries me a lot (a. D, 53 years).

In the Face of daily needs, what (Maslow 1943) ^[17] calls "primary needs" (food, clothing, health care, body care...) in its pyramid, and faced with the poverty of financial means, young girls adopt risky behaviours (Non-routine use of condoms, which exposes them to pregnancies).

The social environment is not spared. The information gathered from the respondents shows two types of students in the institutions. If the first, from wealthy parents lead a life of opulence (transported in vehicles, luxury clothes, pocket money), the seconds that belong to modest families are struggling to feed themselves and pay their tuition fees. Seduced by the "ways of feeling and acting" of affluent girls to borrow the expression from (Durkheim 2010), students from families with modest incomes seek to resemble them. As a result, they develop needs including those of belonging. It is for the girls to seek the affection of the persons considered in the high school as models. They want to be an integral part of their community or milieu, because they are marginalized, stigmatized because of their social position. These students need esteem and consideration. Often ridiculed, because they are "economic cancer" to borrow the terms to (Moustapha 1999), students from modest families seek to be respected. So engaging in an early sex life becomes a springboard. These ways of feeling and doing, which allow them to be fulfilled, to be fulfilled or to develop themselves (self-fulfilling needs according to (Maslow 1943) ^[17], expose them to pregnancies. This is the justification for the assertion of (Kate 2013) ^[14]. The author argues that one of the major causes of this problem is the poverty that strikes many family cells in Africa in particular. Without resources to meet the needs of their offspring, the latter sometimes engage in immoral practices in order to survive on the school benches or to stand at the same level as other girls from families with a standard of living Acceptable the quest for easy gain is also one of the causes.

2.2 Biological causes

It should be pointed out that the age of girls varies between 14 and 16 years. During this period they are experiencing physiological changes. It is a transition between adolescence and adulthood, characterized by the appearance of breasts, menstruation in students. These changes create new behaviours for young girls. (Dadoorian 2005) ^[5] Shows that at puberty, the teenage girl is plagued by strong hormonal pressures, which push her to test her reproductive ability. There is a particular interest in sexuality and a pregnancy can result. In this case, the pregnancy certifies to the teenager that her body is already ready for conception. She is no longer a little girl but a woman. On the subject, (Kay 2009) ^[13] says that young people explain their sexuality by the need to gain experience to be able to stay in the home, when marriage is acquired. The pregnancies in the students caused situations of discomfort.

3. Pregnancy-Related Constraints

The study explains the social problems caused by this reality in the school environment. To achieve this, we asked the

respondents: « What are the difficulties caused by pregnancy in young girls? ». There are here some answers obtained:

My child got pregnant. I had no money, but I did everything to pay for his tuition. She did not pity me. As I counted on her, that's what she did to me. I'm going to expel him from my house. As she decided to marry, she will go and start her home. I will not pay his school anymore (K. K, 50 years).

The situation is tragic. Some girls disappeared from school. We approached some of the parents we know, to find out more. They expressed their discontent and disappointment. They argue that they have done what is in their power to ensure a bright future for their daughters, but who have failed (B. C, 32 years).

When I got pregnant, my father got angry with me. After childbirth I wanted to go back to school but my father categorically refused. He told me that he cannot feed me, feed the child and still pay for my schooling. I think that everything is ruined for me because I will not be able to go back to school (L. T, 16 years old).

These remarks show some difficulties faced by girls

3.1 Deschooling and Family Conflicts

Thirty (35) on the fifty (50) girls interviewed, or 70% said that they had dropped out of school. There are several factors that explain this reality. It's about the look of others. Physically distorted by pregnancy, they are frequently victims of sarcasm or taunting by students. Educators and teachers also express their discontent. This confirms:

There are awareness campaigns on television, radio, newspapers, posters. We teach sexuality at school. We talk about sexually transmitted diseases (HIV/AIDS and others) to students. Contraceptive methods, the means of protection, the consequences of pregnancies are all subjects that are given to them. Despite these provisions, girls arrange to take pregnancies with all the risks involved (E. K, 42 years; G. T, 38 years old).

The three girls you see out there, they're classmates. Since the beginning of the year, I have told them that we come from poor families and that we should not follow the children of wealthy, who lead a life of luxury. I have reiterated to them that every thing in its time, that there is a god for the poor, and that it will provide for our needs. But they have not understood me. They left me to follow other people. Ah, ah, ah, here's the damage. I wonder how they are going to work out to go to school. What are they going to say to their parents? (D. H, 16 years).

Faced with the mockery of the comrades, the discontent of the educators, the psychologically affected pupils lacked reflex. They were not able to go to the administration to obtain documents necessary for the repetition of the class, which explains their evictions. The abandonment of studies is also justified by the attitude of the parents of pupils. They are people with modest incomes, even poor ones; Actors whose living conditions are precarious. They are for the vast majority unemployed since the socio-political crisis, exercising in the informal sector (catering, transport) or small-area farmers. It is difficult for them to cope with school fees. In the Face of the pregnancies of their daughters, the parents express their disappointment and renounce the schooling of the children.

Also, relations between them have deteriorated because of the

discredit they would have thrown upon the family. Indeed, in the cosmogony of parents, girls should keep their virginity until initiation (Aton'vlè) with regard to the Baoulé, a ceremony that allows the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Feeling humiliated by their daughters, some respondents decided to break the relationship with their children, including schooling, resulting in the erosion of cohesion in families. This respondent supports:

I'm someone who doesn't let me chew on it. That is why I do not accept that I am dishonored. See how I bled to get my daughter to go to school. I wanted to show the others that I'm an example. But she humiliated me. Not only did she not complete the school, but she had a pregnancy, although she had not yet undergone the initiation rite of the young girls. How will the others look at me? For her, school is over (K. K, 56 years old).

In the field, the breakdown of social cohesion does not only engender the anger of the parents. It is also related to the lack of affection. In their conception, the student who contracted the pregnancy failed his mission. It is considered unnecessary because it has not lived up to the expectations of the family. As a result, the sanction is not confined to school (refusal to pay school fees), but it now extends to other privileges. The data show that the benefits to which it is entitled are withdrawn for the benefit of the children, who have chosen to pay attention to the parents' advice. It is prohibited at meetings, in decision-making, and is no longer the subject of special attention. Frustrated and abandoned to her fate, the girl mulls over her wrath: « *All make mistakes. I shouldn't be blamed for that. God will not allow this, for I am the eldest. I pray constantly for parents to return to better feelings* (K. A, 16 years old) ».

The existence of family conflicts related to pregnancies is also attested by (Filakembo 2006). According to the author, the occurrence of early maternity in the teenage daughter disrupts the social relations within the families in Kinshasa. This situation generates conflicting relationships between the different actors in family life. These conflicts naturally break down family harmony and can even break the family or even divorce the parents. School pregnancies expose students to health problems.

3.2 Health Risks

Information gathered from health clubs and the infirmary of college shows the likelihood of students acquiring sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. The actors justify this situation by the systematic non-use of the condom. It is partly related to the student's representations. For girls and boys, condoms inhibit pleasure. It would also be a hindrance to trust between partners. As a result, using it would be a nonsense. We understand, therefore, that they do not preserve themselves during sexual intercourse, and are exposed to pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. This threat is attested by (Cherlin and Riley 1986). These authors argue that today, the renewed interest in sexual activity of adolescents (girls and boys), has been seen as a factor in the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), for more than a decade and highlighted with the development of the AIDS Epidemic (Caraël 1995). Also the pregnancies in the pupils represent a danger for this social category. The literature on

this reality in the world and in Africa is abundant. Indeed, the health consequences associated with the mother's age amplify the risks associated with the first pregnancy. There is a higher maternal mortality (Nortman 1974) ^[20], more frequent obstetric and gynecological complications for women under 20 years of age, especially those under 18 years of age (Adedoyin and Adetoro 1989) ^[1]. A higher risk of prematurity (Makinson 1985), lower birth weight (Davis 1988) ^[6], higher infant and juvenile mortality when the mother is under 20 years of age (Trussel and Pebley 1984; Hobcraft and Al 1985) ^[24, 11] are also observed. These risks are mainly related to the immaturity of the mother's body, but also to her lack of psychological maturity in relation to the care to be provided to the child (Deschamps and Valantin 1978) ^[7]. What to conclude from this study?

4. Conclusion

At the end of this study, let us say that the question of school pregnancies is a sensitive reality. As a result, it becomes a major concern for many actors (authorities, researchers). Several factors explain this phenomenon in the high schools concerned. These are socio-economic determinants, in this case unemployment, poverty and the precarious living conditions of parents of pupils. There is also a question of psychological and biological factors. These pregnancies cause them to drop out of school and expose the students to health risks. If school pregnancies persist in the community and also cause social problems, the policy of combating this reality requires critical analysis.

5. Referencec

1. Adedoyin MA, Adetoro O. Pregnancy and its outcome among teenage in Ilorin, Nigeria, East African Medical Journal. 1989; 66(7):448-452.
2. Bettoli L. La grossesse à l'adolescence: un problème de santé publique?, 2004. www.hebamme.ch/x_data/heft_pdf/2004-5-34.pdf, consulté le 12/11/2017.
3. Caraël M. Sexual Behavior, in J. Cleland and B. Ferry (eds.), Sexual Behavior and Aids in the Developing Countries, Taylor&Francis, WHO, 1995, 75-123.
4. Cherlin A, Riley NE. Adolescent Fertility : an emerging issue in Sub-Saharan Africa, Washington, World Bank, 1995.
5. Dadoorian D. *Grossesses adolescentes*, Paris, Erès, 2005.
6. Davis R. Adolescent pregnancy and infant mortality: isolating the effects of race, Adolescence. 1988; 23(92):899-908.
7. Deschamps JP, Valantin G. Pregnancy in Adolescence: Incidence and Outcome in European Countries, Journal of Biosocial Sciences Suppl. 1978 ; 5:101-116.
8. Durkheim E. Les règles de la méthode sociologique, Paris, PUF, 2017.
9. Fay C. Du culturel, de l'universel ou du Social, Paris, Karthala, 1999.
10. Filakembo C. Filles-mères et conflits familiaux dans les ménages de Kinshasa, Kinshasa, Université, 2006.
11. Hobcraft JN, Mc Donald JW, Rustein SO. Demographic determinants of infant and early child mortality, Population Studies. 1985; 39(3):363-385.
12. Kolou M. Grossesses précoces en milieu scolaire ; causes, conséquences et approches de solutions, 2013. <http://www.etudier.com/dissertations/Grossesses-Pr%C3%A9coces-En-Milieu-Scolaire-Causes/504231.html>, consulté le 25/08/2017.
13. Kouakou T. Représentations, Attitudes et Comportements sexuels des jeunes en milieu urbain : Le cas de la ville d'Abidjan, Cocody, Université, 2009.
14. Lia JS. Prétendue réduction taux de chômage : Le gros mensonge, 2013. <http://news.abidjan.net/h/447847.html>, consulté le 11/4/2017.
15. Makinson C. The Health Consequences of Teenage Fertility, Family Planning Perspectives. 1985; 17(3):132-139.
16. Malikwisha M. L'importance du secteur informel en RDC, Bulletin de l'ANSD. 2000; 1:21-40.
17. Maslow AH. A theory of human motivation, Psychologica Review. 1943; (50):370-396.
18. Mazou H. Comportement sexuel à risque des jeunes scolarisés: une analyse des déterminants sociaux du non-usage du préservatif chez les élèves du lycée Moderne II de Bouaké, European Scientific journal. 2014; 10(2):115-128.
19. Moustapha D. L'indicamétrie capacitaire», Bouaké, Cumerfi, 1999.
20. Nortman D. Parental age as a factor in pregnancy outcome and child development, Family Planning. 1974; (16):1-51.
21. Proteau L. Passions scolaires en Côte d'Ivoire, Abidjan, Karthala, 2002.
22. Regaglia L La grossesse précoce chez les jeunes filles, 2014. <http://www.amotransit.be/La-grossesse-precoce-chez-les>, consulté le 10/6/2017.
23. Shomba L. La Promotion de l'économie informelle en droit Congolais: quelle option lever entre sa réforme et sa formalisation ? Kinshasa, Université, 2003.
24. Trussell J, Pebley AR. The Potential Impact of Changes in Fertility on Infant, Child and Maternal Mortality, Studies in Family Planning. 1984; 15(6):267-280.