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EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS LEARNED ON TEENAGE
PREGNANCY

AUTHORS:

CHESSA ELAINE B. OLMOGUEZ
QUEEN URICA H. PRAC

CO-AUTHOR:

MAECHILLE B. QUINONES, MS

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This qualitative research aimed to describe the experiences, challenges, and lessons learned on teenage pregnancy. The descriptive design was employed among the five (5) participants from Poblacion 8, Midsayap, North Cotabato through an in-depth one-on-one interview, upon acquiring consent from the participants.

It was found that role adjustments took place in the life of teenage mothers, as they assumed the role of being the father for the baby. They also revealed that it would have been easier if they had someone to rely on during their hardest days. Moreover, the familial support mechanisms extended by family and friends of teenage mothers did not comfort them during nights and days when the child was sick or needing something.

Based on the results, it is concluded that the different situations in the teenage lives of the participants led them to become pregnant. They encountered teenage pregnancy and motherhood as a challenging situation in terms of financial, emotional, and physical aspects. It is also concluded that their experiences in teenage pregnancy influence their parenting styles as well as their current lives.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

Teenage pregnancy is a natural consequence of sexual activity unprotected by contraception (Neamtu, 2005). It is socially and economically a social problem because of the implications deriving from the mother's status: psychologically immature, having no consistent skills, nor the ability to ensure a steady income, so unable to raise and educate her own child. During the teenage years, young people who are faced with early motherhood may experience conflict between their new position as mothers and their adolescent needs (Pungbagkadee, Parisunyakul, Kantaruksa, 2008). The experiences of early motherhood are contextual, which is influenced by culture and the society within which the teenage woman lives (Ankomah, 2013).

Globally, teenage pregnancy remains a public health concern. Worldwide, sixteen million girls give birth during adolescence annually, with an estimated three million having unsafe abortions (Hanna, 2001). Most adolescent pregnancies occur in developing countries, and teenagers living in socio-economically disadvantaged settings in developed countries are at higher risk of teenage pregnancy as compared to the broader population (World Health Organization, 2015).

Despite a mounting effort to reduce its incidence, teenage childbearing remains a pressing social concern in the United States. Premature parenthood is widely believed to seriously jeopardize the life chances of young mothers and their children, contributing to the impoverishment of this already disadvantaged segment of American society and the

expense of welfare costs associated with early parenthood (Louw & Louw, 2014). It is reported in India that adolescent pregnancy is one of the serious health threats for women aged 13-19 years old (Patra, 2016).

Teenage pregnancy in the Philippines rises 70% over ten years (Ugochi, 2012). Recent data from the Philippine Statistical Authority (PSA) in 2014 revealed that in every hour, 24 babies are delivered by teenage mothers. According to ages Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) (2014), around 14 percent of Filipino girls aged 12 to 19 are either pregnant for the first time or are already mothers – more than twice the rate recorded in 2002. Among six major economies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Philippines has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies and is the only country where the rate is increasing, per the (United Nations Population Fund, 2001).

Based on the 2018 report of the Office of the Midsayap Municipal Health Services, the number of pregnant women was increasing from 2012 to 2017. The number of pregnant women whose age below 14 increased. There was a slight decrease in 2015 and an eventual increase in the succeeding years.

On the other hand, experiences of teenage pregnancy and early motherhood among teenage mothers in Midsayap are under-examined and inadequately understood. This paper aimed to highlight the experiences and challenges of teenage mothers who are living in Midsayap, Cotabato. It discussed their experiences of teenage motherhood and has critically examined how young teenage mothers navigate early motherhood.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to document the experiences of mothers who underwent teenage pregnancy in Poblacion, Midsayap, Cotabato.

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. describe teenage mothers on circumstances around their pregnancy and motherhood;
2. identify the challenges encountered by the teenage mothers; and
3. describe the lessons learned by teenage mothers from their experiences.

Significance of the Study

The results of the study may provide rich insights into the lessons and insights of teenage mothers. Specifically, findings may be useful to the different stakeholders of the community:

Regional Health Unit (RHU). The findings of this study may serve as an instrument for the RHU to have a better understanding of the causes of the increasing number of teenage pregnancy.

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The result of this study is baseline information of the DSWD workers to understand better the basic needs and for them to have a basis in providing support systems to teenage mothers.

College of Extension and Community Development (CECD) students. The result of this study may help students understand the experiences and challenges encountered by teenage mothers, or when they have become professionals, they were can be the basis of extending support.

Future Researchers. The findings of the study could help future researchers to gain the most information about teenage pregnancy.

Scope and Limitations

This study has focused on the experiences of teenage mothers on different circumstances around them during pregnancy and motherhood. It has also tackled the challenges encountered and the lessons learned by teenage mothers. The study was delimited to solo mothers who have been pregnant at 13 to 19 years old who were residing in Poblacion 8, Midsayap, Cotabato.



CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature that focuses on questions related to teenage pregnancy. It presents an overview of the extent of the problem, its effects and outcomes, and the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study.

Teenage Pregnancy: Its Description

According to Save a Child Report (2000), teenage motherhood is formally defined as birth in a young woman who has not reached her twentieth birthday when the birth occurs, regardless of whether the woman is married or is legally an adult. Johns, Moncloa, and Grong (2000) state that teenage motherhood is when a teenage or underage girl (in the teenage years of 13 – 19) becomes a parent. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2001) alludes that teenage motherhood is when a woman aged between 15 and 19 has a baby. According to their statistics, 67% of women of childbearing age are aged between 15 to 19 years. The Health-Cares.Net (2005) explains that teenage motherhood is a birth that occurs in an adolescent—an adolescent female who has reached puberty and is 19 years old or younger.

Teenage motherhood is the phenomenon of teenage girls giving birth and is a contemporary social issue in some nations, especially in the USA, while in developing countries, teenage birth is, for the most part, not an issue, since many women are expected to be married and with children before they age twenty. Odu and Christian (2007) believe that women have tended to begin childbearing during their early twenties,

while Yutokoutreach (2007) defines teenage motherhood as an underage girl becoming a mother.

According to Fox (2008), teenage motherhood is defined as a girl giving birth before reaching the legal age of adulthood. While teenage motherhood is looked down upon by most developed countries, certain ethnic groups in the world welcome and celebrate the phenomenon because it is seen as a clear sign of fertility in the young female. Motherhood confirms that she is perfectly capable of bearing children. Sams (2008) concurs with Fox (2008) and Yutokoutreach (2007) that teenage motherhood is birth by an underage girl, and the term applies to those under the age of threshold of legal adulthood. Moreover, adulthood starts at the age of 16 in some places and 18 in others.

Luong (2008) asserts that teenage mothers are women who had their firstborn under the age of 20, while Garblah (2009) states that they are teenagers who give birth to children yearly between 15 and 19 years, and these teenagers cannot afford to support the children. As a result, their children may get involved in crime to survive due to improper upbringing. The Liberia Demographic Health Survey (2008 as cited in Garblah, 2009) indicates that at least one out of three girls aged 15 to 19 have had children, while more than one out of six girls between the same age group (15 to 19) give birth every year. The Encyclopaedia of 7 Children and Childhood in History and Society (2008) reflects that studies focusing on the causes and consequences of teenage motherhood typically include young women 15 to 19 years old. Births occurring among adolescents younger than 15 are often included only in aggregate national statistics. Thus, teenage motherhood refers to the birth of the child from a woman less than 20, whether married or not (Save a Child

Report, 2000). The World Health Organization (WHO) (2011) estimates that 10% of all world births are delivered by 15 to 19-year-old adolescent girls.

Increase of Teenage Pregnancy

The increased rate of teen pregnancy has left many wondering what is happening currently in the United States. However, what they need to search for is the cause of the increase of teen pregnancy incidence to become a severe problem. According to Dr. Alvarez (2010), society has created a culture that makes having sex okay and creating an environment where promiscuity is accepted. Many believed that social media and the internet are highly exposed and are used by everyone and can be one of the reasons for the rise of teen pregnancy.

The present generation is different from past generations. Teens are going to have sex no matter what; thus, the internet or social media is not the cause of teen pregnancy. Parents need to know how to communicate better to their teens to have safe sex and the consequences that may come from their actions (Wright, 2010).

Motherhood

Motherhood is a significantly important event in the life of a woman. Maternal role attainment is a process that requires acquired necessary abilities, the learning of appropriate behavior, and the establishment of maternal identity. Preparation to accept the maternal role has essential effects on maternal adjustment and transition to adulthood (Yutokoutreach, 2007). However, an increasing number of teenage mothers is one of the crucial concerns in many countries. According to the World Health Organization (2015),

approximately 16 million teenage girls give birth worldwide yearly, while South Korea has a minimum rate, and the maximum rate is in sub-Saharan Africa. Among 1,000 Iranian adolescent girls, 27 become mothers.

Early motherhood has significantly affected not only adolescent girls, but also their spouse, family, school, and society at large. Transition to motherhood needed physical, psychological, social, and cognitive preparedness; however, teenage mothers are not ready to become mothers (Honig, 2002). Motherhood becomes cumbersome and convoluted for teenage mothers who endure maternal role and the developmental task of adolescence simultaneously. They must adapt to adulthood social roles, physical changes of puberty, significant brain development, and taking care of an infant (Ankomah, 2013).

Challenges Encountered by Teenage Mothers

Teen mothers face many physical, psychological, social, and spiritual challenges. They need constant support and training due to their inability to plan and make a decision, lack maternal skills in encountering unknown situations and significant changes, high-risk pregnancy and birth, and mental health problems (i.e., depression, anxiety, shock, low self-efficacy, isolation). Other reasons for the necessity of continuous support to teens include multiple responsibilities, role conflict, and identity confusion, inadequate social and spiritual support, disruption of education and employment, financial problems, social stigma, and religious or cultural adverse reaction, inappropriate behavior of health care providers, and family conflicts, of accountability, emotional fluctuations, lack of knowledge and experience, the influence of peers, and high-risk behaviors in adolescents (Patra, 2016).

In developed countries, early motherhood is to be considered as one of the important public health issues and is assessed by obstetricians and gynecologists, pediatricians, child psychologists, sociologists, family physicians, and nurses. Providing high-quality services requires an understanding of the needs of teenage mothers, their challenges, and their capabilities. This goal can be achieved only through a comprehensive qualitative study in different cultures. Exploring teenage mother's experiences of motherhood can generate new insights for policymakers and health care providers, resulting in an efficient response to the challenges of teenage mothers. Thus, a study was conducted to explore the challenges of Iranian adolescent mothers during the transition to motherhood (Hamilton & Ventura, 2012).

Due to becoming pregnant during adolescence, teen mothers are very likely to drop out of school because of their low ambitions and dedication to getting an education. About 38% of female teens who have a child before the age of 18 complete their high school education by the age of 22. This means that a very high percentage of teen mothers will not even go on to graduate from high school, let alone pursue post-secondary education. In light of this, these young girls do not have full qualifications for proper jobs in the future, which leads to having a job with meager wages or even worse, unemployment. Further, this leads to poor living conditions and the inability to maintain a safe and clean environment for their newborn child. These young women often end up living on welfare and do not have adequate resources for their children. Overall, these young girls are forced to delay and postpone any plans for their future to raise their children (Honig, 2002).

Another issue associated with teen pregnancy is that the young mother is often forced to essentially give up her identity for a new one while switching into a maternal role. These young mothers go through many physical changes, from adolescent physical adjustment to adapt to the ever-changing shape of her body through the pregnancy and her postpartum figure.

Teenage pregnancy is one of the problems of youth in society, and this is a severe issue that may seriously have a significant impact on the future of a young woman. A teenage parent with little education and multiple children to take care of will find it very difficult to earn a living. Teenage parents face numerous challenges, from parenting to finances. Thus, a pregnant teenager may not have even started her career in most cases. Many teenagers will not also have had a first job (Marooney, 2018). Moreover, the financial problems of teenage mothers can extend beyond being unable to afford the daily expenses of having a child. Many teenage mothers are unable to finish their education and are, therefore, limit their lifetime earning potentials (Ogunjimi, 2018).

Teenage pregnancy may be linked to things such as lack of education and information about reproduction, peer pressure, and early engagement to sexual activity. Although some teenage pregnancies are intentional, the majority of them are unintentional, which to many adverse outcomes not only for the teenage mother, but the child, family, and peers as well. Teenage mothers generally do not have the resources to care for a child, and often, they are not able to sustain healthy habits throughout pregnancy to ensure they produce a healthy baby. Meanwhile, these young females usually do not complete their education, and they begin a perpetual cycle in which their

child may further go on to become a teenage parent as well (The Lancet's Maternal Survival and Women Deliver Series, 2006, 2007).

Teens are often forced to become reliant on their families for financial resources as well as support to help get them through raising a child. In some cases, teens are shunned by their parents and do not even receive any support from their parents who are not accepting of the pregnancy. These young girls are often forced to lose contact with friends and others in their social groups to focus on their pregnancy. Pregnant teens often do not have the proper healthy habits to go through a successful child-rearing process. These mothers thus have heightened health risks, which inhibit healthy child development. Young women can suffer from things such as anemia, as well as blood pressure, which is only possible during pregnancy. These mothers often smoke and drink because they are not properly educated on the child-rearing process (Hamilton & Ventura, 2012).

Having a child during these essential years indeed clashes with the developmental tasks that should be occurring during adolescence. These young mothers are unable to fully develop a sense of self-identity because of their new role as an expecting mother. Further, peer and social relationships are strained or even terminated since teen years are essential for developing relationships with others and discovering oneself. Due to all of these factors, teen mothers may end up developing depression after essentially being alienated from their family and friends. These symptoms of depression increase the chances of the teen mother committing suicide (World Health Organization, 2004).

Pursuing this further, teen mothers are often strained for resources and social support from the father of the child. In some cases, the teen father will remain present

throughout the process, and in others, the father will not. If the father remains present, there are often great relationships of tension and dissatisfaction because of the lack of financial resources, support, and childcare, which will be needed. There is an increase in conflict, which may lead to breakups, leaving the mother to be a single parent or even violence within the relationship. Due to the lack of financial resources, these young women often do not get prenatal check-ups or regular check-ups for their developing child; thus, they are unaware of any health concerns for their child. Many of these teen mothers are not healthy enough; hence, they have a higher risk for obstructed labor, and also these young women often undergo unsafe abortions, which lead to the death of many young females and their unborn child (Gibbs, Wendt, Peters, & Hogue, 2012).

The child of a teen mother is very likely to live in poverty because of its mother's lack of financial resources. Essentially, the birth of this child becomes the beginning of a perpetual cycle in many cases. The child is likely to endure many of the same issues his/her mother experienced in her childhood. For instance, the child is likely to grow up in poverty and deplorable conditions. They are likely to be missing a father figure, leaving them with fewer role models and increased chances of confiding in other children in the same situation. The children's academic success is also further compromised, and these children do not strive to achieve much academically.

Furthermore, these kids have social problems and are unable to make friends very easily, which leads to poor relationship development that is a crucial stage in adolescence. Poor relationship development can be linked to the child being deprived economically and educationally. The children are likely to drop out of high school and also succumb to the use of drugs and alcohol due to lack of parental involvement and

monitoring. The cycle is very likely to repeat itself over and over (Marooney, 2018). Children are often likely to be cognitively impaired and also susceptible to behavioral issues. These children are likely to be born underweight and prematurely, which is detrimental to their health and may even result in infant mortality (Weiss, 2011).

On the other hand, teenagers also face the issue of medical care. Financial problems affect not only the teenage parent but also on the baby and the family. If the parents have insurance, in many cases, the teen mother is covered, but the infant is considered her own person when born and will need to be separately covered when parents do not have insurance to cover maternity care, birth, and postpartum care (Marooney, 2018). While pregnant, teen mothers usually cannot afford the many doctor visits, vitamins, ultrasounds, and other aspects of prenatal care unless they get public assistance or are covered by their parents. When there is a problem with the baby, the lack of money becomes an even bigger issue (Ogunjimi, 2018).

Teenage mothers go through several challenges like lack of support due to other factors like lack of finances (Okeyo, 2012). Among the significant troubles, teen moms have not had a job to buy the necessities needed for caring for an infant or a young child. Even if they do, teen moms typically work a few hours because of school or quit school and earn too little money. Moreover, the cost of baby accessories adds up quickly. Diapers, wet wipes, clothes, ointments, bottles, formula, and pacifiers are just the beginning. Adding these basic expenses to a teen mother who is working or in school can quickly overwhelm a new mom (Marooney, 2018). Lastly, the biggest financial issue teen mothers face is that having a baby so young reduces their opportunities to finish school and get advanced education or job training (Ogunjimi, 2018).

The Philippines has the highest rate of teenage pregnancies in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and these figures are increasing steadily. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority show that 24 babies are delivered by teenage mothers every hour. According to Save the Children (2012), each year, 50,000 teen mothers around the world die during pregnancy or childbirth. Data also support the fact that the incidence of teenage pregnancy increases proportionately as one's socioeconomic status decreases. This can be attributed to the effects that a lower socioeconomic status has on one's living environment, education levels, and opportunities are affected. Living in a poverty-stricken environment gives an adolescent a reduced chance of having readily available family planning and health services (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998).

Pregnancy is supposed to be wonderful, but for others finding out that they have a baby on the way became a nightmare after their boyfriend disappeared from their lives and denied that they are the baby's father. Different reasons will make a father deny paternity. In most cases, fathers who deny their children are simply running away from their responsibilities. Others might not be ready to be a parent, and thus feel that the mother is trapping them with a baby and the only way out for them is if they deny paternity. Because of the time and energy that raising children requires, which interferes with the time and energy needed to study and attend classes, women who bear a child during school years often leave before they can complete their schooling (Hofferth, 2018).

However, it will be easier if she has a boyfriend or a family member who can help her in taking care of the child. The teenage parents are hoping to give their children a better future and attending to their needs through receiving a degree. Many see or

consider their families a hindrance to their education, which is wrong because they should see it as a motivator because primarily, teenage parents go back to studying because they want to provide for their child (Wilsey, 2013).

On the other hand, the hormones of pregnancy are primarily responsible for emotional changes. The physical changes produce a shift in latitude; the emotional ones bring a change in attitude (Marshall, 2011). Every expectant mother worries about whether her baby will be normal. However, even a moderate dose of worry that does not respond to reassurance is an unavoidable side effect of pregnancy worry that is so all-consuming that it interferes with functioning needs professional attention. Adverse reactions to stress can be compounded by the normal mood swings in pregnancy, such as appetite loss, bingeing on the wrong foods, and sleeplessness can take a toll on the pregnant woman – and if allowed to continue into the second and third trimesters of pregnancy, then learning to handle the stress constructively should be a priority (Eisenberg, Murkoff, & Hathaway, 2009).

The pregnant body is working harder even when one is resting than a non-pregnant body is when mountain-climbing. The manufacturing of the baby's support stem, which is the placenta, will not be completed until the end of the first semester (Eisenberg et al., n.d.). Feelings of ambivalence about the pregnancy once it's confirmed, which are common even when a pregnancy is planned, may exaggerate the wings still more. If depressions are consistent or frequent, you may be one of the 10% of pregnant women who battle mild to moderate depression during pregnancy. Some of the factors that can put a woman at risk for such depression are personal or family history of mood disorder, socioeconomic stress, lack of emotional support from the baby's father,

hospitalization or bed rest because of pregnancy complications. Also, anxiety about her health occurs, especially if she experiences pregnancy complications or illness during pregnancy, or about the baby's health (Eisenberg, 2015).

Overall, to prevent pregnancy, teenagers need adults in their lives. From an early age, parents often avoid even labeling sexual parts. Sitting in the bathtub, young children hear parents label face, tummy, arms, and toes as they are washed. However, the parents neglect ever to give a name to a child's testicles, vulva, nipples, penis, or scrotum as body parts. From an early age, children should become comfortable with the names of all their body parts and also become comfortably knowledgeable about body part similarities and differences between boys and girls (Gordon, 1983). Parents should also hold open discussions and allow their teen to ask questions. Moreover, most of all, parents should help their teens to become a well-rounded individual. Teens who have lots of interests, activities, and goals are less likely to become sexually active at an early age (Morin, 2018).

To prevent teenage pregnancy does not entail getting rid of all the risk factors; however, it involves steps to be undertaken to reduce the likelihood of teens becoming a parent while still in high school. The most important thing one can do is talking to the teen about sex and birth control. It does not matter whether the message is one of abstinence or delaying sex until the right time. The teen should have the facts about how to prevent unplanned pregnancy, and ongoing conversations about sex are imperative. (Morin, 2018).

The most common learning's of teenage parents include not engaging in premarital sex if one is not ready to start a family, not rushing, and should know the

consequences of their actions. Lastly, one should bear in mind that sex can get a woman pregnant and that getting pregnant at an early age can change one's life forever. There is nothing wrong about getting pregnant, but being a parent and raising a child is not a joke. Some teens crave for romantic partners and enjoy sexual encounters but did not even think about the consequences that they are going to face when they start to raise the child and when they give birth to the first child and eventually get pregnant again. Teenage pregnancy is not just a common problem; it is a worldwide health concern. Teenage pregnancy is a global issue and a major contributor to school drop-out among girls. Permanent expulsion was one of the solutions made for teenage pregnancy, but this has been proven ineffective and unfair to girls. Now there is a return to school policy where a student is temporarily dismissed from school due to teenage pregnancy to pursue their education further (Okeyo, 2012).

Insights and Realizations of Teenage Pregnant

After taking considerations on the transcripts about the realizations of pregnant students learned from their experiences, Hanna (2001) developed core ideas, and there are four major themes formed: regret and remorse always come to fore, early pregnancy is a momentary setback, young girls should know better about life, love, and sex, love and acceptance prevail in the end.

Regret and remorse always come to the fore: the first major theme emerged, for pregnant students promise not to do it again. Thus, having many regrets of having entered the situation, regret and remorse always come last, engaging in early romantic

relationships, too young to get pregnant, not easy to get into such a situation when not ready, and being pregnant out of wedlock.

The finding embarked on the idea of Black (2012), who indicated that there could be an awful pain associated at the end of a romantic relationship during pregnancy. Regrets and remorse will come out when sexual activities resulted in unplanned pregnancy, specifically during teenage years. Regret is both a feeling and a pattern of thinking where one dwells on or regularly replays and thinks about an event, reactions, or other actions that could have been taken. Regrets can become over painful burdens that interfere with one's present happiness. These may be different from pregnant teenagers, but feelings of regret include sadness, remorse, anger, shame, and anxiety. This can leave them feeling defeated and hopeless. The complicated sense of regret and remorse amid crisis will drain their life force where most complexities will be acknowledged and grieved. They desire closure and then the freedom to rest when what they need underneath is peace by chasing the filing cabinet and integrate them into the usual journey of one's life.

Early pregnancy as a momentary setback is the second major theme surfaced for pregnant students. They are taking rest and will go back to school after giving birth, going back to school after this pregnancy, continue to study after delivering the baby, and focus on taking care of the baby. Further, being pliant and open, after all, they move forward with no one to count on but themselves. The result is related to the viewpoint of Adams' (2013) temporary inconvenience. It is a setback that can affect the lives of the parents and the child for many years to come. However, unplanned pregnancy has temporary setbacks that can be recovered through positive thinking of the situation. In

like manner, Ehlers (2011) elucidated that teenage pregnancy is not the symbol of a broken society, as claimed by many politicians, but can be a positive force for good. Numerous researches found that many teenage mothers express positive attitudes to motherhood, describing how motherhood has made them feel stronger, more competent, more connected to family and society, and more responsible.

Moreover, Ziyane (2005) stressed that some teenagers who make great parents are hopeful that someday they can move forward through full acceptance of the situation. Many others struggle with the staggering task of raising a child at such a young age. Challenges and difficulties come in different factors such as poverty, health problems for both the mother and her baby, missed opportunities for a good education, and sadness in missing out on exciting teen activities.

Young girls should know better about life, love, and sex that it is the third major theme that occurred during the thematic analysis because pregnant students presumed that many guys are good with words and sincere. However, some guys are actually after for sex; boys should get hold to their sexual desires, and some boys are like sex-maniacs. They keep asking for it. Thus, it is recommended to always listen to the advice and admonition of the mother/parents and listen to the teacher saying about waiting for the right time. Moreover, they must prioritize studies over having boyfriends, not engage in premarital sex, learn to control emotions around their boyfriends, and not be carried by the emotions of one's partner.

The data is similar to the idea of Trivedi (2008), which indicated that love and sex are meant to be experienced mindfully so that every woman can honor herself and the whole being. The more a young woman comes to know about life, love, and sex, the

more she is aware of “self,” and the more she can participate in conscious intimacy. If one is still wondering why life, love, and sex is are essential, the answer is that it satisfies the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of human beings. Carefulness and mindfulness of enjoying the coupled liberty, life, sex, and love need precautionary measures to decision-making.

Prevail in the end, is the fourth major theme that came across during the thematic analysis for pregnant students. It highlighted that someday they would be loved and cared for, being happy because of the family accepted the situation, the family believes that the baby is a gift from God, seeing that parents love the yet-unborn baby, parents show concern about the situation, teachers show love and affection of the situation, classmates love, care and support like a second family, and young people from the church were very supported. The finding is parallel to the pronouncement of Hanna (2008), which denoted that pregnant teenagers are longing for parental and societal acceptance. It is precisely the exact words from the troubled pregnant teenagers out of wedlock. In fact, the words they speak, and the behaviors they exhibit are paradoxical, cunningly leading individuals to believe that they do not care about anything. However, the truth of the matter is, they do care. They need caring and concerned parents, teachers, and family in their lives, but also long for adults in the community who willingly make an effort to understand them and who believe in them. Also, they do want to learn, which is contrary to what many people believe.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems with the social-ecological model. According to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory, human development is continuously influenced by various interconnected and interacting environmental systems (Louw & Louw, 2014). One of these systems is a temporal dimension. In the chronosystem, the ecological contexts influence development, which changes the developing person or can influence the direction of development (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). Keeping chronosystem theory in mind, the authors could consider how specific changes and different circumstances in adolescents' lives might have led to their becoming pregnant, and how pregnancy and parenting influenced their lives from there onwards.

Keyes (2005) advocates a complete state model to promote individual wellbeing so that they might veer towards the flourishing end of the continuum. This theory was taken into account in the present study, as adolescent parents described their experiences of early adolescent pregnancy and parenting that could shed light on which experiences assisted them, and what experiences they might need assistance.

Definition of Terms

In order to understand the terms to be used in the study, the following are operationally defined:

Challenges. The problems encountered by pregnant women, which involved physical, emotional, and financial conditions.

Experiences. The circumstances around the pregnancy to motherhood of the participants.

Lessons. Something from which teenagers were involved in early pregnancy learned from any previous mistakes and failures in their life.

Teenage. Any girl between the ages of 13 and 19 years old.

Teenage childbearing. A situation whereby a girl between 13- and 19-years old gave birth to a child.

Teenage pregnancy. The pregnancy of a girl age between 13 and 19 years old when she conceived.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the research design, locale of the study, participants and sampling of the study, research instrument, data gathering procedure, and data analysis.

Research Design

A qualitative method employing a phenomenological approach was utilized in the study. It is used to describe the experiences of teenage mothers, their challenges encountered, and lessons learned as a result of teenage pregnancy. Phenomenology entails attempts by researchers to capture participants' lifeworld in a way that is not constraining or prescriptive (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004) and to understand their psychological and social perspectives (Groenewald, 2004). Furthermore, this research was exploratory in nature, as it aimed to understand the participants' experiences better when it comes to pregnancy and parenting during early adolescence.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in Poblacion 8, Midsayap, Cotabato, which is one of the 57 Barangays of the Municipality of Midsayap in the Province of Cotabato. It has a total land area of 224.6927 hectares and a total population of 7, 278 comprised of 10 *puroks*. According to the data provided by the barangay, Roman Catholicism is the dominant religion in the location above. Approximately, Poblacion 8 is 2.5 kilometers

away from the Midsayap Municipal Hall. The researchers chose Poblacion 8 because it is one of the biggest barangays in Midsayap.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this research study were teenagers with ages ranging from 13 to 19 years old. These participants were residing at Poblacion 8, Midsayap, Cotabato since they were pregnant until they gave birth. The identification of the participants was based on the assistance of DSWD workers and barangay officials and volunteers. These people had some contacts with teenage mothers and solo mothers while they were teenagers.

Sampling Technique

The sample consisted of five (5) teenage mothers. The most basic sampling techniques adopted in this study were purposive and snowball sampling. The method that was used is snowballing. This technique, as Gilbert (2003) argues, is often used to obtain a sample when there is no adequate list, which could be used as a sampling frame. It is a method for obtaining samples of numerically small groups.

Research Instrument

The researchers have used a semi-structured interview guide that was personally administered by the researchers. The interview questions were written in English, but the researchers translated them into vernacular when interviewing the participants for clear understanding. The interview focused on the challenges, and the lessons learned by

teenage mothers. Before the conduct of the interview, the interview questions were submitted to the adviser and experts for content validity.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data gathering, the researchers prepared a letter addressed to the Barangay Captain of Poblacion 8 to seek approval to conduct the study. Upon the approval, the researchers sent letters to the participants and informed consent form. Voluntary participation was highly emphasized in the letter of consent.

The data gathering procedure was done in the form of a one-on-one interview in which the researchers took written notes. All interviews were recorded digitally. The interviews were informal and open-ended and were carried out in a conversational style. One researcher asked while the other one jotted down the responses. Responses were transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants.

Ethical Considerations and Data Privacy Protocol

The identity of the participants and all of the data gathered from them were treated with confidentiality and were kept in private by the researchers. To ensure data privacy and safekeeping, the recorded responses and transcriptions of the participants were submitted to the Research Center, which will be appropriately deleted after five (5) years.

Data Analysis

After gathering the data, the researchers analyzed the data through narrative accounts. This constituted the narratives of the participants about their experiences. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Data were read for understanding several times. Coding, sorting, and organizing the data were an integral part of thematic analysis. The data were searched systematically for re-occurring words, which became code words: these code words were then grouped to form themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

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CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the framework of this study, which was from Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems with the social-ecological model that focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment, the data analysis of the life of teenage mothers residing on Poblacion 8, Midsayap, Cotabato was carefully done. The teenage mother's challenges, role adjustments, coping up mechanisms, and familial support mechanisms have been identified thoroughly.

The respondents of the study had different reasons and background before they got pregnant. Some of the respondents narrated that growing up, they had no proper guidance from their family. One respondent said that her mother died when she was still at a very young age, and another respondent said that it was her rebellion and curiosity that caused her to engage in premarital sex, which led her to teenage pregnancy. However, one thing that the respondents have in common is the pain during pregnancy and the struggles after giving birth and raising the child with not having a partner to lean on and with no stable income. Abortion had come into consideration at the mind of some of the respondents because they said that being pregnant with no partner at a young age was extremely hard mentally and financially.

All of the five respondents have expressed that they have felt the feeling of regret because having a baby at a young age changed their life and their routine. Some respondents wanted to continue their studies but could not because their time was either always on the baby or on job hunting just for both of them to survive.

By analyzing the narrated stories of the respondents, clear and common experiences, challenges, and insights of teenage mothers are thoroughly discussed below.

Narratives of the Participants

Participant 1, Inday

Inday was a shy-type kind of female. She was a mother's girl and was always obedient to what her mother asked her to do. She had an easy life before she got pregnant. Inday told the researchers that her mother died while she was still in high school. She said that when her mother died, no one cared and watched over her because she moved into her aunt's residence. She said that she did not have the experience of being in a relationship until she graduated. She always wandered with her friends, which gave her the chance to meet some men who eventually became her flings. Inday narrated that her family told her that they did not have the fund to send her off to school anymore. When her mother died, she said that her father lost his focus and so she decided to work in Kidapawan city where she met her first boyfriend.

Usahay mag laag-laag siya sa akoang gitrabahuan sa Kidapawan so siyempre saka-teenager gud kanang mga kapusukan ing-ana. Tapos sa kadugay-dugay namo nag uyab sobra na 1 year nagka suod na, nagka lagayan na ng loob. Tapos sa kadugayan murag paminaw nimo kamo na sa future sa inyong mga istorya-istorya murag kamo na gyud magka dayunay. (Sometimes my boyfriend would visit me in my workplace at Kidapawan. So as a teenager we were hooked with each other. After a while from our first anniversary, we have felt more comfortable with each other. We thought that we would end up in the future.)

Inday also added that she planned to quit her job because she was already tired, and she wanted to go home and rest for a while. After a few months of coming home, she discovered that her boyfriend was in a relationship with the same woman that she saw on

his boyfriend's phone and that the woman was pregnant. They were still in a relationship, and she talked to him about it to which his boyfriend admitted that he impregnated that woman. Inday said that she did not cry upon learning that because she was shy, and after a while, she had already accepted the reality, but after a few months, she discovered that she was also pregnant. She said she did not care because there were times that she had her regular menstruation and that there were times that she was not having her menstruation. She said she was a first-timer, and after four (4) months, she was still not having her menstruation.

By the 5th month, she got worried because she already knew that she was pregnant. She hid her pregnancy from her aunt and that she was scared of what the people might say because most of the people living in her community were her friends. She felt embarrassed.

Eventually, she decided to go with her friend to General Santos City because she wanted to escape the gossips. Inday wanted to leave because she did not want anyone to know about her situation. She told her aunt that she would go to General Santos City for work, but her family did not know that she was pregnant. Inday shared that she wanted to move out. After all, she did not want anyone to know that she was pregnant because she was scared.

After months of living in General Santos City, her aunt discovered that she was pregnant. Her family called her and convinced her to go home, but Inday did not want to go home because she was scared that her family might scold her or hurt her. However, her family was persistent in persuading her to go home, telling her that they did not mean harm to her and that they were going to help her. So she decided to go home after a

friend advised her that it would be better if she went home because her family can take care of her better and help her more. After all, if she stayed in General Santos City, her friend could not help her that much because of work.

When Inday went home, she shared that it was chaotic and that she was nervous. When her aunt went home, she did not receive any scolding; instead, her aunt told her that she should have just told them about her situation so that they could have helped her manage the problem. Inday briefly explained that it was terrifying telling them her part because she knew that it was a huge problem and because the man who impregnated her also impregnated another woman.

It came to a point where Inday's sibling suggested to get married, but she had it in mind that maybe the guy will leave her again. When her child turned one year old, Inday had noticed that it was not just the child that got big, but also the needs of the child.

Eventually, as her child was growing, she then had accepted the fact that the man who impregnated her would never come back and take responsibility for her and her child. The sibling of Inday volunteered to take care and watch over the child so that she could look for another job and stand up in life again, in order to save money and eventually send the child to school. She decided to go to Midsayap for work, and she admittedly said that since she started working her life had begun to improve a little. She could finally support her child or the needs of her child.

Inday added that she did not talk to her family much because she felt embarrassed. Everything was different from the time that she was not pregnant compared to the time when she got pregnant. Thus, everything was okay before but, when she got pregnant, she was humiliated. Inday also added that when she got pregnant, and her

family would have some catching up, she chose to stay in her room and confined herself because she was embarrassed in facing them.

Lisod gyud kaayo. Murag ulaw gyud kaayo. Naa ang kaulaw, naa ang tanan imong huna-huna kung unsaon nimo pag buhi ang bata kung mugawas na. (It is hard. It is very embarrassing. The humiliation was there, and there was this thought of how to provide for the child when I give birth.)

She said that it was difficult and that people were asking why she was in that kind of situation. There were many questions, and she was already embarrassed, so she never really went out of her aunt's house.

Maulaw gyud ko muatubang ug taokay sa akoang huna-huna nabuntisan ko wala na koy nawong ika-atubang sa mga tawo ba paminaw nimo kung tan-awon ka sa mga tao murag gamay na gyud kaayo ka kay siyempre na ing-ato ka. (I was embarrassed to face people because in my mind I thought I was pregnant and I had no courage to meet them because I felt like people are now downgrading me because of what happened to me.)

Nevertheless, after a while, Inday said that she just accepted everything and that she should not treat herself that way because, in her mind, she was not the only woman who was in that situation. Many women went in the same situation, and she said other women surpassed that situation, so she had the confidence that she could also survive that situation. Sometimes she was embarrassed, but she fought that feeling so she could face people, especially in going to church even if other people would stare at her. She did not care anymore because the reason that she was going to church was to ask help from God to help her survive the situation.

Inday has emphasized that she was worried financially regarding her baby when it comes out because that she did not have a mother or a father to rely on and she did not know where she would get funds for the baby because even the father of the baby went missing.

Samtang buntis pa ko naningkamot ko. Pamaligya diri pamaligya didto ug mga kakanin. Biskan unsa na lang gyud akong maisipan ilibot sa amoang lugar para lang gyud maka kwarta ko. (I worked hard even though I was pregnant. I was selling delicacies and anything that I could think of in my neighborhood just for me to generate some income.)

She said that fortunately, she gave birth at home, and her godmother paid for the charges. Her aunt took care of everything, including the stuff for her baby and also the baptism.

Pag gawas sa akong bata ana ko kaluoy sa akong anak walay papa pero ingon ko okay lang na nak, kaya nato ni duha. Maningkamot ko para gyud nimo. (When I gave birth, I felt sorry because my baby did not have a father, but I said that we could do this even though it was only the two of us. Then I said that I would work hard for my baby.)

Inday added that when her baby turned a month old, they moved out of her aunt's house because she was feeling shy since she already gave birth to her first child, but she was still dependent on them. She then moved into the house of her other aunt, who happened to be the sister of her mother. Her aunt then told her that she should live there until she can finally live independently. Her routines were still the same. In the morning, she put her child to sleep, and she made *kakanin* such as *puto*, *prito na kamote*, and *prito na saging* which she sold around her neighborhood. She did it to generate income for her and to buy medicine and vitamins for her baby, and all of the other things that they needed because Inday was aware that the child had her own needs and that she had her own needs as well.

Kaya na gyud nako. Kaya na gyud nako ni. Tapos lisod gyud diay kaayo na wala kay ka-partner sa imong kinabuhi kung mabuntis ka. Halimbawa ang bata kung gabii mag hilak or mag sakit or pareha anang mag ngipon mag sakit man gid ng bata ikaw lang gid tanan. Ikaw lang gyud isa walay mutabang sa imuha. Ikaw lang mubilar, muhilak imong bata ikaw lang magpa hilombiskan kapoy na kaayo ka magtulo-tulo na imong luha hala imong sip-on nag tulo-tulo na sige lang gihapon sayaw-sayaw lang gihapon ka sa imong bata. Ikaw lang gyud tanan lahi gyud nga naa kay ka-partner kay naa gyud mutabang sa imuha ba, mupuli sa

imuha. (I was coping with my situation. But it is tough not to have a partner in life when getting pregnant because at night when the baby cries or when the baby gets sick or its tooth is starting to grow you have no one but yourself. No one will help you. Late at night, when the baby cries you only have yourself to calm the baby down and make the baby stop crying even though you are tired and wanted to cry, you have no choice but to dance with the baby until she stops crying. It is different if you have a partner to share the responsibilities with because when you get tired, your partner takes over. No one will really help. It is difficult.)

From those experiences, Inday had mentally told herself that it was challenging if one does not have a partner so she could have somebody who will have to take care of everything to provide the needs of the child and herself. Inday had put great emphasis that when she was at her lowest point in life, it was extremely difficult for her because she needed to find a way how to generate some cash. She admitted that there were times wherein she would not eat, so she could provide for her child. Instead of eating, she used the money to buy milk or *Cerelac*.

Di bale nga ako wala koy mapalit nga sanina, panty, bra basta sa akoang anak lang akoang income. Pila lang ang income sa galibot gabaligya lang sa mga kakanin. (It is okay if I could not buy any clothes, underwear, or anything for myself just to provide for my baby. Selling delicacies could not generate a considerable income.)

Kinahanglan na nimo siya palitan ug sanina. Kinahanglan na nimo siya palitan ug gamit tapos sa isip nako kung magdako siya mag eskwela siya unsa akong igasto kung mag sige lang ko ug bantay sa iyaha. (You have to buy clothes and other stuffs for the baby and I was thinking when this child grows and enters school, how can I provide if all I ever do is watch over my baby.)

Inday emphasized that she was worried financially on what was going to happen when her baby comes out because she did not have a mother or a father to count on because even the father of the baby abandoned them. The participant said that regularly going to church had helped her set her mind to overcome her situation at that time. She believed that if other women survived, she would too.

On the one hand, Inday felt happy when she gave birth to her baby because she finally got to see her after nine months. On the other hand, she also worried because she was still not sure how to provide for her baby, how to raise her, and send her to school because she was still financially unstable. Aside from that, Inday was also worried because her baby would not have a father figure. Nevertheless, whenever her baby laughed, she felt happy.

Inday shared that when she was not yet pregnant, her family spoiled her. It was very different when she got pregnant because they always got mad at her. They did not include her in the family talks and not let her share a laugh with them. When they knew that Inday was pregnant, they hated her and often ignored her presence. Whenever she talked to them, they angrily answered her, and sometimes they blamed her for being careless.

If Inday were given a chance to go back to the past, she would not want to get pregnant at an early age because it was challenging. A woman will have no one to share the responsibilities and problems. A woman will face financial problems alone, and if the baby gets sick, she will still have no one to lean on for comfort. Inday would always tell her child not to marry or get pregnant at an early age because it is difficult. She told her to wait for the right time and that she should first finish her studies before getting married.

Participant 2, Marie

Marie loved to cook and was always spoiled by her parents. She often got what she wanted and would live freely because her parents showed her that they loved her.

Marie was thankful that her parents had mercy on her and forgave her despite what she had done to them. Marie shared that she had to continue her pregnancy and that she was grateful to her parents because they made her go home and took care of her. Marie admitted that she was very stubborn. When she gave birth, she did not have any money to support her child, so her parents took the burden in doing so. She was hospitalized and gave birth to a baby boy.

In the first two months after giving birth, she stayed at home, but in the third month, she decided that she needed to find a job to feed her child. Marie would always tell her mama that time will come that she would find a job and give back to them for their kindness towards her. She said that she did not care about all the scolding that they threw at her because Marie knew that they were all true.

Marie expressed that she got pregnant because of being in a relationship. It was not really because of *barkada* since she was not the type of person who liked having *barkada*. She added that it was because of cellphones. Somebody introduced her to the guy via cellphone until she and the guy met personally, and they had premarital sex that resulted in her pregnancy. She thought that the guy was kind because everybody was saying so; however, she discovered that the guy was only kind whenever he sleeps.

Diha ko na biktima sa pagka buotan. Nagpakitang gilas nga buotan siya siyempre wala pay nahitabo. Pagka naa nay nahitabo, dahan-dahan nga dili na siya magpakita sa akoo. (I was victimized by him being kind. He was showing off at first because nothing has still happened between the two of us. When something finally happened, he slowly disappeared from my life.)

She asked the guy what to do when she was turning two months pregnant. He answered her that it was okay and that he would marry her, but it never happened because the guy fled and went to Manila. Marie only knew that the guy was already in Manila

because the guy texted her to forget him. Marie could not do anything anymore aside from crying because the baby in her womb was already getting more prominent.

Marie did not have a hard time taking care of her baby. She jokingly said that her baby inherited her kindness. Her baby was not always crying because maybe the baby knew that he was fatherless.

Marie said that there was a big difference in how her parents treated her before and after she got pregnant. Before pregnancy, her family cared so much for her and treated her like a princess. When she got pregnant, everything changed. Her family would not talk to her unless she talked to them first.

Marie recalled that since she got pregnant at the age of 17 until she gave birth, everything was okay. She had already accepted the fact that she would be a single mother. She was happy because when she went home after work, there was someone who always greeted her, and that somehow lessened the problem. However, whenever she left the house for work, she cannot think of anything else except her baby.

Siyempre nag close na ming duha. Gusto nako permi ko lang siya ma-hug miss na miss ko na siya, giagwanta ko nalang bahala na kay alas singko mauli naman pud mi. Happy ko sa akoang anak, sa tinuod lang happy kaayo ko sa akoang anak. Happy gyud ko sa akoang anak bahala walay amahan. (Somehow we got close. I always wanted to hug my baby because I always missed him. I am honestly delighted with my baby even though I did not have a partner in raising him.)

At the time of the interview, Marie added that she and her child were okay and that her baby was growing healthy. She also added that she cared too much about her child.

Marie shared that people would always ask her why she involved herself to a man that she did not know. To which Marie answered that accidents happen. On the other hand, her neighbors positively told her that everything would be okay.

Marie said that somehow, there were times that she was financially smooth sailing. She already knew how to look for a job and balance her finances for the milk, clothing, and all other things.

As a teenage mother, Marie did not want her child to follow her footsteps. She did not want her baby to experience everything that she had experienced. She shared that as much as possible, she did not want her baby to experience all the hardships. Marie cannot forget the pain and struggles when she was still pregnant. She said that she would beg God not to make her baby suffer the same tribulations she went through.

Marie got pregnant at the age of 17. She narrated that it was hard because aside from the morning sickness, the fact that she did not have a husband to rely on was also giving her a hard time.

Hantod gadako akoang tiyan puro na lang problema. Usahay di ko kakaon. Naay pagkaon pero di nako gusto, di nako ganahan. Gadako akong tiyan gadako pud akoang problema kay asa ko mangita ug pang lampin, pang gatas, tanan-tanan. (As my tummy was getting bigger, so were my problems. Sometimes I would not even have the appetite to eat. There is food, but I did not like them. My tummy was getting bigger, so were my problems because I was worried about where to get the money to buy diapers, milk, and everything else.)

Nag buros ko na walay amahan. Naay amahan pero dili niya panindigan iyang kabuang sa akoa. Pero gi-solo ko na lang ang problema. Pagka sakita akoang gibat. Wala na gyud koy choice ipadayun nako kay kung ipakuha nako mas dako nga sala. (I was pregnant without a partner because he would not take responsibility for his actions. I single-handedly faced the problems. I was pained at that time, but I had no choice but to continue my pregnancy because if I were to abort it, it would be a bigger sin.)

However, every time there were misunderstandings, her parents blamed her pregnancy.

Nagpa buntis ka. Mao na, kiat ka. Wala na koy choice wala na koy ek-ek mutubag kay tinuod man. (I was always blamed for getting pregnant early, and I do not have the right to answer back because it was true.)

Another problem that worsened the situation was that her baby did not breastfeed, so she had no choice but to buy milk to feed her child.

Giagwanta ko na lang gyud ang sukmat ni mama sa akoa ug akong igsuon. (I had to endure every blame that my mother and sibling would throw at me.)

Marie narrated that from the moment that she felt her child inside her womb, she only felt pain. When she went to a hospital to give birth, Marie had mixed feelings. She shared:

Akong gibati ato, dili ko kabalo kung unsa happy ba ko or sad. Na happy ko kay naa na koy anak, naa na koy makit-an na sarili gyud nako nga dugo. Ang sadness naman asa ko magkuha ug ipakaon. Mao na akoang gibati sa pagluwal sa akoang anak. (I was not sure if I was feeling happy or sad. I was pleased because I finally had a baby that is from my flesh and blood. However, I was also sad because I did not know where and how I could feed my child. That was what I felt when I gave birth to my child.)

Mag sakit siya painumon pud nako ug tambal pero usahay mag himutok pud ko kay unsaon man ni wala man koy kauban mag alaga, syempre mag bilar man gyud. Mag sakit ang bata, mag hilanat kinahanglan ipa follow-up check up. Nag sakripisyoko nga gibantayan ko akoang anak nga may sakit. (When the baby gets sick, I will give him medicine, but sometimes I would worry because I had no one to take care of the child. When he gets sick or gets a fever, I have to take him to a hospital, I sacrificed and watched over my child.)

Marie added that she gave her best to her baby. She chose not to have friends and that she looked for a job so she can feed herself and her child without being dependent on her parents. Nevertheless, her mother and her siblings sometimes ignored her. Sometimes they called her a flirt, but she cannot do anything about it because it already

happened. Marie shared that she had to endure everything. She did not have a choice because Marie had nowhere to go. She could not give her child away because her mother would slap her. Marie said that she had to endure everything for her baby.

She would always say to the younger mothers that they should not rush into getting themselves pregnant because as long as their child is still not walking, it is still a problem.

Pagmahay, pagbasol nganong naing-ani ko. Nangutana ko sa akong kaugalingon ngano nagpa dalos-dalos man ko. Dili nako mamahay akong ginikanan kay pirme sila naga advice sa akoa. Pero narealize gyud nako nganong naing-ani ko at the age of 17. Di nako muosab. Hantod karon wala pa koy bana. Wala na gyud ko nag usab. (I had regrets on why I am in this situation. I asked myself why I rushed in a decision like this. I cannot blame my parents because they were always guiding me. But I realized everything why I got pregnant at the age of 17. I do not want to go through it again. Until now, I still do not have a husband because I did not want to go through it over.)

She already moved on and recovered from her problems. She shrugged her problem off and left everything in the hands of Jesus. Marie added that prayer helped her deal with everything. She had set her mind that she was only experiencing challenges. She resolved that whether she overcame any situation or not, she would always go to the church and ask for help from Jesus to answer all of her problems. She never came to the point that she blamed her baby for coming out healthy. Marie stated that Jesus was the only one who helped her clear her mind that she would not do anything wrong.

Participant 3, Anna

Anna was an adventurous, talented high school student. She often spent her time with her friends, and she liked to go to different places. She met her baby's father at the age of 14 and got pregnant at the age of 15. She narrated that in her teenage life, she was

a spoiled brat. She got everything that she wanted. Her mother spoiled her with everything in school and travel. Anna explained that in her teenage years, she had a group of friends. She had an easy-go-lucky life that if she wanted to take a trip, she got it without compromising her studies. However, Anna was always tempted to skip her classes with her friends; she admitted that she had many friends.

Anna somehow felt that she was a celebrity at her school. She experienced the feeling of being courted by many men. Anna admitted to drinking liquors, skipping classes, and attending disco parties, but she never tried taking drugs. She said her only fault at that time was the fact that she tried drinking liquors, which caused her to lose consciousness, and she did not know that something already happened between her and her boyfriend.

At the age of 15, Anna got pregnant. She tried to hide her pregnancy from her parents. She tried not to make it evident by going to school, yet, she could not keep her pregnancy a secret. She stopped going to school, and during that time, she also felt regret.

Katong lalaki nga akong uyab nga gipagkatiwalaan nako igo ra diay ko gitilawan daghan pud diay siya uyab ug kato nga panahon pareho mi nga batan-on. 15 ko, siya 16. Sa dihang nabuntis nako, dili na nako siya makit-an ug ang pinaka sakit nga part kay giingnan niya ko nga dili daw iyaha ug dili pud nako siya mabasol tungod sa barkadista ko. (I really trusted my boyfriend, but he just took advantage of me, and he also had another girlfriend at that time. I was 15 then, and he was 16 when I got pregnant. He suddenly disappeared, and what hurts most is that he denied that he was the father of my child. Somehow, I cannot blame him because I was an out goer who had a lot of friends.)

When her mother found that she was pregnant, Anna was thrown out of their house, and she had to deal with her pregnancy alone and encountered struggles.

Nagbuntis ko nga ako ra. Nasulayan nako kay talented man ko naging dance cheographer ko, na try nako mag tudlo nga buntis ko dako kaayo akong tiyan wala ko nag eskwela. Kabalo man ko mag make-up, nag make-up ko para lang maka ipon para sa akoang magiging baby. (I was alone when I

was pregnant. I did not finish my studies, and I tried being a dance choreographer because I was also talented, and I served as a tutor even though my tummy was already big. I also knew how to do make-ups, so I also did make-up services to raise funds for my baby.)

She said that her mother never accepted her even when she already gave birth. She felt that she was all alone.

Tinuod nay friend mutabang pero igo ra magtabang. Naay relatives pero wala lang dili gyud igo na ikaw lang alone. Pagka gabii naa kay gusto nga kaunon pero wala kay mahimo kay ikaw lang isa. Mao na ang pinakalisod, ang ikaw lang. Then makita nimo imong friend sexy kaayo pero ikaw bundat ka. (It is true that there are friends who would help but it is still not enough. There are relatives, but it still feels like I am alone. At night when I crave something to eat, I could not do anything about it because I had no one. That is the hardest part about it, the feeling of being alone. There are also times that I get to see my very sexy friends, but I, on the other hand, am fat.)

At the time that Anna was pregnant, her emotional state was full of hatred because she could not concentrate on her pregnancy. She said that all that was in her mind was her failures. She thought that she failed to give her mother what she wanted, which is for her to finish her studies. She said she felt the pain and struggle of being alone when she was pregnant.

Anna sought comfort from her family and friends, but it turned out that the people who criticized her first were her neighbors. She was getting slut-shamed in their community, and all she had done since then was cry. People said:

Oh asa naman imong uyab karon? Sauna sweet kaayo mo. Karon naa siya? Wala siya kay natilawan naman ka. Ana man na, pag matilawan na, wala na. (So where is your boyfriend now? You were were romantic with each other. Is he here now? He is not here because he had already slept with you. Once he is done with you, it is already over.)

Also, Anna admitted that she felt jealous of seeing her friends having a good time at disco parties. She also felt rejected by her family. She even attempted to kill herself by drinking poison.

Wala na akoang mama. Wala na akoang relatives. Nag try ko inom ug lason. (I had no mother and no relatives. I also tried drinking poison.)

With those experiences, she eventually gave birth to her baby. In delivering her baby, her main problem was that she did not know how to push the baby outside of her womb because she was still a minor when she gave birth.

Tungod maulaw ko tungod lagi sa akoang edad nanganak ko sa balay. Pagpanganak nako sa balay ang nag tabang sa akoa, mananabang lang. (I gave birth at home because I was embarrassed by my situation that I got pregnant at a young age. When I gave birth at our house, I was assisted by a trained hilot.)

Anna had a conclusion that maybe because she was young, that is why her baby was cord-coiled. In other words, her baby was strangled by its umbilical cord. At that time, her baby died for a few minutes and was revived.

Complete man ko ug prenatal pero lahi ra gyud. Kato nga time nga nabuntis ko more on hatred. Siguro na-absorb sa baby ang kaguol. Sige lang ko hilak kada gabii mao payat kaayo ko. Paggawas sa akoang baby murag malnourished ug kinahanglan siya i-ospital kay masakiton. (I completed the prenatal check-up, but there was still something different. I was full of hatred when I was pregnant, and I think the baby absorbed all of it. I was always crying every night; that is why, I was skinny, and my baby came out malnourished and needed to be hospitalized.)

Anna gave birth all alone and somehow felt that even God neglected her and forgot everything about her. Anna said that the hardest part about being a young parent was the fact that she was alone.

Furthermore, if the baby got sick, she had nowhere to run. She added that at that time, instead of breastfeeding her baby, she had to bottle feed because she had to leave her baby with the neighbor for her to be able to go to work. Anna stated that it was challenging, and she could not concentrate on her job because all that she thought of was her baby with her neighbor. She consoled herself by thinking about how she could provide the needs of her baby if she does not work.

Anna lived with her baby in a boarding house, and she said that it was true that friends can help, but they can only help for one or two days. Relatives were willing to help, but only after they scolded her for her early pregnancy.

The first negative comment that Anna heard was that “it was not shocking that she got pregnant because she was an out goer.” Every night Anna was hanging out with her group of friends and that because her mother spoiled her and did not take good care of her.

She never listened to what her friends were telling her because she felt rejected. People called her wasted. Even her mother told her that she was smart, at the same time, dumb.

Always naga sink in sa akong mind nga tungod sa akong ka-bright namango ko sa lalaki. Na-realize ko na lang na lisod diay pag single parent ka or single mom ka. (It would always sink into my mind that even though I was too smart, yet I got dumb for a guy. I realized that it is tough being a single parent.)

Anna attempted suicide, and her baby cried, and that was when she realized that committing suicide was wrong. She realized that it was wrong to take her own life when she saw her baby. Anna thought that it was not right to make her baby suffer too. Though she was rejected, she should not let her baby suffer from it. She shared that her experience made her strong.

To become a single mom dapat mutindog ko. Naa pa isa nga gisulti akoang mama, hila mo buntot mo. Ibig sabihin, kung ano ang naging decision mo sa life panindigan mo. So being a single mom gipanindigan nako. Gibuhi nako akong anak ug nangayo ko ug pasaylo sa Ginoo. (To become a single mom, I had to stand up for myself. My mother also told me something, and that is “you drag your own tail,” which means whatever your decisions in life, you have to stand for it. So being a single mom, I had to stand up for it. I raised my child and asked God for forgiveness.)

She said praying helped her cope with her situation. She asked for forgiveness, and God helped her, she was receiving some blessings. She went to her mother and asked for forgiveness. She admitted right there and then that it was tough being all alone as a single mom. Her mother forgave her and eventually sent her back to school.

Pagpaeskwela niya sa akoa didto na naging new na akoang life. Nagpadayun ko, nag eskwela ko ug kaluy-an sa Ginoo, akoang anak napadako nako ug tarong. Karon kaluy-an sa Ginoo, naging successful pud ko kay naka trabaho ko ug tarong. Naka tapos ko ug eskwela. (I had a new life when my mother supported me again in my studies. I continued my schooling, and with the help of Jesus, I raised my child right. Now, with the help of Jesus, I became successful because I found a good job, and because I finished my studies.)

Anna was thankful that God blessed her with knowledge, which resulted in getting a scholarship from the government.

Because of early pregnancy, Anna received criticism from people. However, she looked at the bright side and took those words as a way for her to be stronger. Instead of bringing herself down, she used those criticisms as building blocks for her to stand up and rise again in life. She took inspiration from her baby.

In terms of money, Anna said that it is tough. She used to be a choreographer and make-up artist. She went to different festivals to use her talent, and she sometimes used her intelligence as a tutor. Overall, Anna used her talent to generate income for her and her baby. Her talent was a big help for her in raising her child.

On the other hand, Anna mentioned that she did not run after the man who got her pregnant because, as a woman, she also wanted to save her pride. That is why all she did was to work hard. As 45 years old, she was grateful to God because she managed to raise her child properly. In addition, Anna mentioned that her baby got his talents from her. Now that she was already a mother, she would tell her teenage dancers or customers to

learn from her experience. She would say that she was okay with her experience because she knew how to stand alone than those teenagers who are still depending on their parents.

Anna would always say that studies should be finished first because there is always a big difference between a person who is educated from those who are not.

Lahi gyud nga i-enjoy ang pagka teenager kay karon gusto ko pa mag disco. Dapat unta kato nga panahon akoo pang gi-enjoy, gi-eskwela. So natuto ko mag trabaho nga instead diliko kabalo maglaba, mag lung-ag, nakatuon ko. (Teenage life should be enjoyed because right now I still want to groove at the disco. When I was young, I was already carrying and taking care of the baby. At that time, I should have enjoyed myself and finished my education, instead, I had to work and I learned how to wash clothes. I also have learned how to cook.)

Anna would always tell the teenagers that they should prioritize their studies first while their parents are still supporting their education. They should study. If a teenager does not have any parent, there is always an alternative given by the government like free education, so they should avail while they are still young. When the time comes that a baby comes in the life of a teenager, self-priority will be disregarded because of the baby. So, one would lose himself/herself because the baby always comes first.

As a single mom, Anna continued to share her experience to be an example to other people that it is not easy to survive that kind of situation. She said that if the number of teenage mothers would rapidly increase, the problem of poverty will never be solved.

Bisan pag spoiled ta sa atong ginikanan, dapat maka human gyud ta lahi gyud pag naay degree. Kung mga ing-ani man gud parehas sa akoo na single mom lisod mangita ug trabaho kay ang number 1 pangitaon single, pleasing personality unsaon man pag pleasing personality na yatyat naman ka kay sa sige nimo ug trinabaho di na gani ka maka panudlay, usahay dili na gani maka lipstick mao na siya ang disadvantage. What if kung maka human, unsa na lang man ng biga. (Even though our parents are spoiling us, we should still finish our education to get a degree. It is tough to look for a job as a single mom because the

number one requirement is a pleasing personality. How could a single mom have a pleasing personality if she has already worked her ass off at home? There is no time to fix the hair, and sometimes there would not even be a time to put some lipstick, and these are just some of the disadvantages. After finishing school, there would be a lot of time to flirt.)

Anna was always worried about this generation and was in full support of people doing research and spreading awareness on timely problems such as teenage pregnancy.

Lisod gyud mu-apply ug trabaho kung naa na kay anak kay dili na ka pwede sa office. Unsa na lang man imong masudlan, labandera. Unya makabuhi na ug anak? Dili. Mao nga lisod gyud kaayo. Mao nga pag abot sa panahon mag matured gyud ka kay ikaw lang man isa. Ikaw lang mag buhi, wala kay katambayayong. Ako nga nanay sa na-experience nako, kung pwede lang minuto-minuto i-monitor nako akong anak pero dili man tungod kay naa man siyay life nga iyaha. (It is tough to enter a job if there is already a baby involved because that is not accepted in office works. You would not have any other choice but a launderer. However, the question is that if it could provide for the baby. Time will come that you will become mature just because you are alone. You are responsible for raising your child, no partner, no someone to lean on. I became a mother because of my experience, if only I could monitor my child every minute, I would, but I should not because my child has its own life.)

Anna said that a single mother's role is challenging because she had two roles, to be a mother and to be a father. It was often called as *Inatay*. *Ina* for being a mother and *Itay* for being a father. Because being a mother, she should be the one to nourish and teach the child. She was the first teacher of the child. She was in-charge in bathing him and taking good care of him. Then as a father, she provided for him.

She added that fathers were supposed to be the ones to do the work, but being a single mom, she had to do both. Anna had to do all the work. As a single mom, she had to tend to her child's education and everything that her child needed. She added that the most challenging time for her was when her child was starting to ask about the identity of his father. For Anna, it was the most painful part of being a single mom.

Yung i-ask ka nga, asa diay siya? Nganong kung family day wala lagi ko papa, ako lang lagi isa? Gihatag na nimo tanan sa imong anak pero naa gyud

emptiness mangita gyud sila ug father. Mao to ang pinaka lisod nga role being a mom and a dad. Pangitaan ka kung asa ang papa unya wala kay ma-present. (When being asked about the whereabouts of his father, why every family day he was fatherless and alone. Even though you give everything to the child, there is still emptiness and a sense of longingness in them that seeks a father. That is the hardest role being a mother and a father at the same time to your child; when the child is already looking for a father figure, but you have no one to present.)

Anna said that as a mother, she honestly told her child about their situation.

Further, Anna shared that she had great lessons in her experience. She said that if only there were a time machine that could take her back to the time that she was still 13 or 14 years old, she would go back because those were the days that she enjoyed her teenage years. Nevertheless, she knows that it can never happen. She learned that it is extremely difficult to face pregnancy and motherhood at a young age.

Mangapa ka lang kay di mo alam yung role mo and natuto ka lang dahil sa experience and kailangan mo din buhayin yung baby kasi anak mo yun, wala na kay choice. Akoang lesson learned is ang number1 kung mag pili ka sa imong decision tindugi. (It is just hard and clueless at first because you do not know your role and that you have only learned because of your experience, and you still need to provide for your baby because that is your flesh and blood. So, you do not have a choice. The number one lesson that I learned is that if you are going to make a decision, you have to take a stand.)

She introspected that her experiences made her stronger. She added that her only failure in life was that she could not give her child a father. Nevertheless, despite that, she still looked at life positively because she believed that everything in life happens for a reason, and in God's plan. The participant believed that one should always praise Jesus and do good deeds in life, and that is the legacy that she wanted to leave for her child.

Participant 4, Neneng

Neneng was a sweet young lady living a very simple life in the province. She lived with her grandmother and was on good terms with her cousins and other family

relatives. She was living a simple life before she got pregnant. Occasionally she would go out with her friends or cousins. She loved to go anywhere that has a delightful activity. She was 18 years old when she got pregnant. She turned 25 years old in September 2019.

Neneng narrated that she stayed with her grandmother before and after her pregnancy. Her grandmother took good care of her and that her grandmother would always give her everything that she wanted. In addition to her story, she said that she got pregnant while living in Manila. She was already on her fourth month when her grandmother knew about her pregnancy.

Daghan pa daw siya panganduy sa akoo. Pa-eskwelahon pa daw ko. Maningkamot daw siya para makahuman ko. Pero nag lahi siya kay naa na daw koy responsibilidad na akoo. (She still had a lot of dreams for me. She wanted me to study and will work hard for me to finish my studies, but she changed because according to her I already have my responsibility.)

At that point, Neneng had regrets with her pregnancy. One of her regrets was the time that she wasted. It was supposed to be the time for her to finish her studies not only for her but also for her grandmother, who worked very hard for her and their family. Neneng wanted to give back to her grandmother, but she only ended up disappointing her grandmother.

Sa manghod na nako siya naga duol dili na sa akoo nga sauna sa akoo man siya sige ug duol. Kami pirme naga uban. Suko gyud siya sa akoo. (Before, she would always approach me, but now she only approaches my younger sibling. We are still together before, but she is mad at me now.)

Neneng said that during her first trimester until she was nearing her due date, she had to endure a lot of pain.

Ang pagpangala dili siya sayun. Unsa akong makaon mag suka ko. Naa koy gusto kaunon pero dili pwede kay wala-wala pudmi ato. Naa ko gusto kaunon pero walay muhatag, wala mangita para sa akoo. Mugawas akong mga ig-agaw didto

lang ko muingon nga palitiko ninyo didto lang ko makakaon. (Craving is not easy, I vomit everytime I eat, and even though I wanted to eat something, I still cannot buy it because back then we did not have enough money. Nobody would give me or look for that kind of food even if I wanted that food. Whenever my cousins would go out, that would be the only time for me to say that I wanted to buy that food because I am craving for that, and that is the only time that I could eat it.)

She also mentioned that she vomited a lot when she was pregnant. Whenever she slept, her back would always hurt because her womb was heavy, and her back would take all the pressure. The craving and vomiting part were the ones that gave her a hard time.

Neneng carried her baby for nine months, so she was excited when she saw her baby. She added that her relative wanted to adopt her baby and that she was still thinking things out if she would agree or not. Eventually, she decided to keep her baby. She decided to do anything and worked hard because she would raise her child even if they did not have anything and anyone at that time.

Giving birth was the only hard part for her. Financially she did not suffer that much because, with God's grace, her baby was very healthy. Her baby only had occasional fevers, but it never came to the point that she had to bring her baby to the hospital.

Mangutana gyud ang bata nganong wala siya'y papa, mao gyud ang lisod. (It is hard whenever the child asks why he does not have a father.)

Neneng also received community responses in their place. She and her relatives lived in the same compound, so unsolicited comments were always there. She received all that people had to say to her because all that mattered to her was her baby and the health of her baby.

Bahala na mo kung unsa inyong iistorya basta ako pasalamat na lang pud ko na at least makita nako akoang anak nga maayo bisag wala'y papa. Daghang istorya pero palapos na lang sa dalunggan. Di nalang gyud paminawon, dili man pud makatabang. (I do not care about what others would say because I am just

thankful that I could see my child being in a strong disposition even if he has no father. Of course, there were a lot of talks about it, but I shrug it off and not listen to it because it cannot help me.)

Neneng coped because of her family. She said that if they were not by her side during those times, she would not have survived or dealt with her situation. She mentioned that they were always there to support her financially or emotionally and that sometimes they would even help her take care of her child. Neneng strongly believed that she could not have survived or coped with her situation all alone. She was grateful that her family never left her side. She said that she did not have a hard time taking care of her baby because her family never stood there with her all the time.

Neneng told the researchers that it was not easy to be a mother because she had to play the role of being a father, a sibling, and a mother all at the same time for the baby's sake.

She also shared lessons that she had learned:

Dili gyud magpataka sa lalaki kay naibog ka niya magpagamit na dayun. Sa mga kabataan karon nga uban-uban dayun ug barkada kay may naibugan. Dili gyud magpataka ug bilangkad mag amping gyud. Dili magpa sagad-sagad kay nagka gusto ka ana nga tao. (Do not just give yourself to a man just because you like him. Do not let him use you. To all the teenagers nowadays that always go out with their friends, do not give in to having sex because you will not know where you will be after that. Always take care of yourself. Do not rush things just because you like that person.)

She had put great emphasis that a woman should take care of her well-being so that her life will not be compromised or put to waste.

Participant 5, Maria

Maria was a happy-go-lucky eldest daughter. She was referred to as an insensitive person and admitted that she had a problem with attitude. Maria never really cared about

other people's feelings. Most of the time, she always got what she wanted, however, everything changed after she got pregnant.

She got pregnant at a young age. She answered that it was more of a rebellion because she felt like she was a prisoner in her thoughts. She said that her family was a traditional conservative type of family.

Curiosity, rebellion, nag start didto tanan, and everything followed. (It all started with curiosity, then everything followed.)

She first described how her family treated her after she got pregnant like there was this awkwardness among them. Maria admittedly said that her parents got mad at her at first, but then, later on, when her parents had no choice, they finally showed warmth to her again.

Still, parents are parents at the end of the day. Dili man gyud ko ingon nga gipahawa sa amoang balay katong nakabalo sila na buntis ko but I voluntarily nga muhawa sa balay kay the guilt that I have. But after that little by little, there is that acceptance. (At the end of the day, parents will be parents. I was not caste away from home when they knew that I was pregnant, I just voluntarily left the house because of the guilt that I had. But after that, little by little, there is that acceptance.)

Maria said that even if her parents still hated her, no matter what happened, they were still her parents that accepted her. That was the time she manifested that her parents loved her.

Maria narrated that she got pregnant at the age of 17, and it came into her mind to abort her baby, but she did not do it. Until now, she never regretted giving life to her baby as she considered her baby as a blessing. She also enthusiastically narrated that as she was giving birth, she was having flashbacks, regret, excitement, anxiety, and pain. She also thought that she would be a good mother to her child. She then added that after

she gave birth and saw her baby, she felt relieved and happy. She could not believe that she managed to have a normal delivery.

Medyo dugay ko nag mature. Ana sila nga basta maging parent na ka mag mature ka na pero ako late gyud kaayo, years pa. Siguro maybe because although hands-on ko, dili man gyud ingon nga ako lang kay nabalik man ko skwela after. (It took a while before I matured. They say that when you become a parent, you will become mature but in my case, maturity took a while. I think it was only after a few years that I became mature. I think maybe it was because although I am a hands-on parent, it was not just me alone because I went back to school after I gave birth.)

Maria badgered the annoying interns at the hospital. She said that it was not fun to give birth because it was painful.

In a way, murag kaulaw siya because of how people would judge you. Siyempre, i-judge gyud ka. It is embarrassing in a way na i-judge ka sa mga tao. (It was humiliating in a way because people will judge you. Of course, they will judge you. It is embarrassing in a way that people will judge you.)

Maria added that she then felt insecure because, at first, it was really embarrassing, but later on, she did not care about it until now.

After all that, I overcome that shame being so loud and proud as a mom nag trigger akong depression. Bipolar man gud ko, I was diagnosed as a bipolar so nag trigger akong depressive episodes and all. But after that na-overcome nako siya. (After all that, I overcome that shame of being so loud and proud as a mom. I was depressed. I am bipolar. I was diagnosed as a bipolar, so I had depressive episodes and all. But after that, I overcame all of them.)

Maria said that it was just “okay” that she was a mother already. However, when she was getting mature, that was when she started to finally guide and support her son and make an effort to give time to her child because Maria said that time is essential for parents and children.

Maria briefly explained that her role as a mother was to teach her child the way she wanted to be taught when she was younger. She said that as a young parent, she did not know what to do, although her parents were just always there to support her. She did

not know what to do. Maria still asked herself if she can be a good mother to her child, and she can support her child through college. She only wanted to teach her child how to be assertive. She wanted to teach her child how to stand up for himself because guiding and supporting her child were some of her primary roles as a mother. She provided her child's needs in a way even though her parents were still assisting her financially and emotionally. She briefly expressed that she wanted to establish the psychological strength of her child and to establish the mental health of her child.

Maria said that she adjusted to many things because it did not sink to her immediately that she was finally going to be a mother and was going to be a parent. She thought, everything was still the same except having an addition to their family and in her life.

Maria described birthing as a feeling of pain and excitement. She was always saying that she could not push anymore. Her ob-gyne did not want her to do a normal delivery because she was still a minor at that time and that she might be traumatized. Nevertheless, Maria insisted that she would have normal delivery because she did not want to go through caesarean section.

Further, when people would judge her or ask her in a judgmental way about where the father of her child was or ask her how old she was, she was embarrassed even though she can answer those questions. It came into a point that she asked herself what was the point of her feeling that way if the situation was existing.

As a mom, I cannot always give him what he wants because when it comes to resources unsa lang man akong income. (As a mom, I could not always give him what he wants because when it comes to resources, my income was not that much.)

Ang difficulty ba na makaya ba siya paeskwelahon hantod makahuman siya? After siya makahuman sa college makatitaw ba siya ug life na gina-tilawan niya karon na natilawan pud nako mahatag pud ba nako na? Siyempre niabot siya sa akoang life na dili pa ko financially stable, dili pa ko mature enough to go through these things. So that is one of the difficulties, how to sustain the life that he has now, how to support him hantod sa mahuman ug dili na niya need ang support. (There is this difficulty with the thought that can I support my baby until he finishes school? After he finishes college, can he live the same life that he is living now that I also experienced, can I give him that? Of course, I was at a time in my life that I was financially unstable. I was not mature enough to go through these things. So that is one of the difficulties, how to sustain the life that he has now. How to support him until he finishes, and he will not need my support anymore.)

Maria narrated that she realized that not to be impulsive and always to think before acting. She also realized that emotions should never overrule her way of thinking. Being a risk-taker was a good thing, but it ended up harming someone and that there are always consequences for it.

Do not let your emotions overrule you. Take risks when it is worth to take the risk and do not let the impulsivity to drive you. Always think before you act and be logical enough to make decisions in life and widen your perspective in life because you might just be looking in one way that is why you ended up with some decisions that you are gonna regret at the end of your life.

Maria said to stand for the past and to not wallow on the things that cannot be undone. As she had said, the past cannot be undone, but it could be taken as a lesson in life to help one make better decisions in life. The participant then added that remembering the past did not remind her of her defeat, but it made one a stronger and wiser person in the present and the future.

Mura siya ug side mirror ba. Ang past nimo mura siya ug side mirror. Mao ang car nay side mirror especially with the motorcycle for us not to look back kay kung mu-look back ta madisgrasya ta with our present sa atoang atubangan. Side mirrors were there kay para makita nimo ang past, makita nimo ang likod and still focus on the present. So, life is like that. The lesson is, you can look back but do not take too much time in looking back because it might give danger to you and your present. (It is like a side mirror. Your past is like a side mirror. That is why cars, especially motorcycles, have side mirrors because it is made for us not

to look back. Because when we look back, we will be in an accident facing our present life. Side mirrors were there for us to see our past. You can get a glimpse of your past and still focus on the present. So, life is like that. The lesson is, you can look back but do not take too much time to look back because it might give danger to you and your present.)

The participant also advised to create a broader perspective and to listen to what the heart was saying and to consider what the other people were saying because one should not rely solely on her decision. She also added that it is always good to have an emotional support system and that one should live life as if she was going to live for a thousand years.

Discussion of Findings

Teenage pregnancy has increased rampantly. Based on the framework of this study, which was from Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems with the social-ecological model that focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. The teenage mothers' challenges, role adjustments, coping mechanisms, and familial support mechanisms have been identified. The participants of the study had different reasons and backgrounds before they got pregnant. One participant said that her mother died when she was still at a very young age, and another participant said that it was due to rebellion and curiosity that caused her to engage in premarital sex, which led to teenage pregnancy. However, one thing that the participants have in common is the pain during pregnancy and the struggles after giving birth and raising the child, without a partner to lean on and with no stable income. Abortion had come into consideration at the mind of some of the participants because they said that being pregnant with no partner at a young age was extremely hard mentally and financially.

All of the five (5) participants expressed that they have felt regret because having a baby at a young age, which changed their life and their routine. Some participants wanted to continue their studies but could not since their time was either always on the baby or on job hunting just.

According to the theory on Bronfenbrenner, the environment of the child greatly affects how the child would grow as a person. Teenage pregnancy is not a new problem, and there can be several causes for teenage pregnancy (biologic factors, the role of peers, societal influences, and contraception). However, most cases are usually because of the environment or how the child was raised.

In addition, most of the participants in this study said that their parents neglected them, while others gave them whatever they demanded. One participant, on the other hand, said that she came from a traditionally conservative family to the point that she rebelled against them and got curious about sex. The family that one was raised always has a more significant effect on how an individual grows as a person.

Moreover, without proper guidance or sex education from the parents or any family member might end up having a child seeking guidance from peers or getting extremely ignorant and curious about sex, which is damaging. It is not said that the family or parents should guard or control the child every minute. However, it is also the responsibility of the parents or the family to educate the child on specific topics such as sex because nowadays, with the help of social media, everything can be easily accessed.

If a child is neglected and not adequately educated, that child would eventually seek answers from a peer. Also, if that child makes a mistake, such as teenage pregnancy that could compromise her future, she is not the only one who would be affected, but so

is her family. Teenage pregnancy can change the life of an individual, from carrying books to carrying a child from staying up late because of studying to staying up late because of the baby. The adjustments are a never-ending process because as the child grows, so is the adjustment needed in all aspects such as financial and emotional.

The lesson that the participants wanted to share with everyone is that never to let emotions take the lead and that if one does something, she must stand with it because that is the decision and choice that she made. All of the participants have shared that teenage pregnancy was tough, and if they could go back in time and correct their mistake, they would. They have repeatedly said that women should prioritize their education over boys because education is a compelling thing that would remain in the person forever and give that someone a better life. The participants always advised to do things with a logical reason and always think things first before one acts so as not to regret anything at the end.

By analyzing the narrated stories of the participants, challenges, and insights of teenage mothers are thoroughly discussed below.

Challenges Encountered by Teenage Mothers

According to Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems with the social-ecological model, the environment of the child greatly affects how the child develops. It was stated on this theory that as a child develops, the interaction within these environments becomes more complex and that this complexity can arise as the child's physical and cognitive structure grow and mature. This theory simply emphasizes the importance of the environment in the child because it is the building block for the character of the child. This theory is used in this study because teenage pregnancy not

only involves teenage mothers, but it also somehow tackles their life before they got pregnant. The challenges are categorized into three (3), financial, emotional, and physical.

Financial

No source of income

There can be many challenges for teenage mothers, but one common challenge for them is in terms of finances. They have no source of income. According to Ogunjimi (2018), among the significant troubles teen moms have is not having a job to buy the necessities needed for caring for an infant or young child. Even if they do, teen moms typically work for a few hours because of school or quit school just to earn too little money. The prices for milk, food, clothing, and all the other necessities in life are increasing. Thus, teenage mothers who solely provide for their infant will be working twice as hard. Moreover, the financial problems of teenage mothers can extend beyond being unable to afford the daily expenses of having a child. Many teenage mothers are unable to finish their education and are, therefore limit their lifetime earning potentials (Ogunjimi, 2018).

Difficulty of getting a job

Those who keep their babies and do not find a way to finish their education will not be able to continue onto higher education, which will provide them with more job opportunities, higher salaries and greater job security (ModernMom.com, 2009). As most of the participants have not finished high school, they found it hard to get a stable job that

can provide for them and their babies. Although some have managed to get a job, their income is not sufficient for the participant and the baby.

Insufficient financial support from parents

A lack of resources such as housing, child care, and financial support are hypothesized to explain the negative effect of teenage parenthood (Mollborn, 2007). Most of the participants did not come from a well-off family. Their families only shouldered to finance their child's education and need. When the participants got pregnant, it was inevitable that the financial support coming from their parents would not sustain their daily needs.

No financial support from the father of the child

Mothers tend to be viewed as vulnerable, lone, and morally uncertain, while young fathers are frequently considered to be absent, no use, criminal, and socially excluded (Johansson & Hammaren, 2014). The participants in this study were abandoned by the men who impregnated them. Moreover, as they were abandoned, they did not receive any financial support from the father of their child. At their young age, the participants had financial struggles because they were not getting any financial support from the father of the baby, so they had to find ways just so their child would not starve.

Emotional

Being bullied

The participants were aged 15-17, which is considered to be the age for minors when they got pregnant. As the norms of society do not accept teenage pregnancy, teenage mothers often suffered from bullying. The bullying started when the participants revealed their pregnancy not just in their family but also to their community. The participants stated that it was never easy to face bullying, especially when one is pregnant at a young age.

In addition, the Magna Carta of women (R.A. 9710), the various existing laws and policies to empower and protect women, and ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women have been implemented, so studying while being pregnant is acceptable. However, as stated by Einhorn (2015), in many schools around the globe, pregnant and parenting teens are often bullied by teachers who would not excuse child-related absences or make accommodations. Pregnant girls have been barred from school activities, pressured to enroll in alternative schools, and shunned by their peers. Einhorn (2015) provided extreme examples at Louisiana charter school until 2012 that they had a policy of expelling girls who were tested positive on mandatory pregnancy tests, and a school in New Mexico that forces a girl to announce her pregnancy during a school assembly. Bullying comes in many forms and is committed by anyone that can either be a family, friend, or society. Dealing with bullying while being a teenage mother that is solely raising a child can be devastating or heart wrecking point, especially if everyone in the family or the society is doing the bullying.

Stigmatized by society

Stigma is a negative belief towards a person (Corrigan, 2002). As a teenage mother, they are often rejected, judged, or not earning trust from anyone. They have the feeling of rejection and getting judged a lot because of what they had done during their teenage years. Teenage mothers are often stigmatized by society. Although not all teenage mothers have the same experiences or reasons why they got pregnant at a young age, society will not care about it. As a teenage mother, the participants got so many negative comments about their early pregnancy. Society has stigmatized them and always has to say something negative about them, which sometimes can be emotionally damaging in the lives of teenage mothers.

Forced to move out of their home

Many of the problems inherent in adolescence are related to the lack of affection and support, and in many cases, are a reaction to authoritarian rules or limits established unilaterally by parents with little or no dialogue involved (Samano et al., 2017). Concerning stigmatism, which is defined as a set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something, some teenage mothers were forced to move out of their homes. Their family does not want to be stigmatized or be part of the negative gossips about teenage mothers. At an early age, getting pregnant without emotional support from the father of the baby nor their family can be tough to handle. Teenage mothers had to be mentally tough as they only have themselves to rely on when they get pregnant.

Belittled

Getting pregnant at an early age, abandoned by the father of the child, and not finishing high school can be the grounds for the people who like to belittle teenage mothers. The norms of this society tell everyone that a woman should first finish her education, and then get married before getting pregnant (Natividad, 2013). However, teenage mothers often do not even finish high school and are, therefore, cannot get a stable or proper job, which can often make other people belittle them.

Fear to reveal the pregnancy

If a woman gets pregnant at the age of 15-17, it is normal that they would fear to reveal their situation to their family or their community. Revealing their situation would often lead to disownment, gossips, or bullying. One participant of this study had stated that during her pregnancy, there were times that she would instead lock herself up in the house or in her room than talking to other people, even her family. She felt embarrassed about her situation and that she felt that her family or the people would be talking about her.

Postpartum depression

Postpartum can be physically challenging for a teenage mother because it begins immediately after the birth of the child. Postpartum depression is a debilitating mental disorder. The intensity of feeling inability in suffering mothers is so high that some mothers with postpartum depression comment life as the death swamp (Ghaedrahmati et

al., 2017). So, it can be physically challenging for a teenager to undergo postpartum because, at a young age, teenagers are supposed to be just having fun instead of suffering from postpartum.

Physical

The pain of giving birth

Giving birth can be extremely painful, especially if the woman is a teenager. Some teenage mothers are even advised to give birth under the cesarean section because they might not bear the pain for giving birth typically. As a teenager, the physical pain of giving birth might be too much to handle at the age of minority.

Increased workload

Being a teenage mother, and abandoned by the father of their baby means that the workload of teenage mothers is doubled. From taking care of the baby, cleaning the house, washing the dishes, doing the laundry, cooking the food, and providing for her needs and the baby's needs can be physically exhausting. Some participants of this study lost weight since they had to do everything for themselves, starting from the craving of food, giving birth, taking care of the baby 24/7, and stress. It is physically challenging for a teenage mother to do everything.

Deprivation of pre and postnatal care

Pre and postnatal care are essential because they can help prevent complications and inform women about the critical steps that they can take to protect their infant and

ensure a healthy pregnancy. However, most teenage mothers are deprived of pre and postnatal care due to poverty. It is not convenient for teenage mothers to engage themselves in pre and postnatal care because they spend most of their time taking care of their baby and looking for ways for them to earn and provide for the baby.

Lessons Learned

The reality of assuming dual roles

As this study is mainly focused on the experiences, challenges, and insights of abandoned teenage mothers, the role of being a mother and a father at the same time was tackled. According to Brazelton and Sparrow (2014), one of the toughest parts of raising kids alone is the reality of assuming dual roles. A single parent must be both a mother and a father at every turn, disciplinarian, as well as a loving comforter. Discipline is more natural to impose when it is shared.

Being a teenager and taking on both the roles of a father and a mother to a child is exceptionally challenging. The role-playing of a mom and a dad as a teenage mother is extremely difficult because providing the needs of the child, trying to discipline them, tutoring them, and being the best loving parent is too much to handle at an early age. Some teenage mothers are lucky because their family accepted them and their babies. So taking the role of a mother and a father at the same time was easy for them. However, some teenage mothers are not accepted by their family and are, therefore, having a hard time being a mother and a father to the child.

The importance of familial support

The participants of this study stated that their family forgiving them, and supporting them was a big thing because it somehow gave them maternal child nursing. Family functioning and support structure are recognized to enable better parental competence, particularly for adolescent mothers (Andrade, 2020). The feeling that even if the man who impregnated them has abandoned them already, at least they still had their family who supported them. A participant even added that sometimes her family would help her take care and watch over the baby as their way of supporting her, and that made her coping up easy because she had time to look for a job.

Developed resiliency

Often teenage mothers, like one of the participants of this study, created a barrier over herself and other people, even family members. Teenage mothers usually try to hide or isolate themselves from everyone, which results in them making their self lonely and emotionally unstable that could get worse and turn into depression.

The most common way for teenage mothers to react from stigma is avoidance. They felt that if they distance themselves and live independently without having to mingle or talk to other people would save them from hearing all the negative comments about them and their early pregnancy. On the most common basis as a woman, they admitted that they would just usually cry until they felt a little better.

Overall, young adolescents reported more anxiety, loss of self-esteem when they conceived, difficulty in accessing financial, moral and material support from parents or health workers when they sought care from health facilities (Kaye 2008). As their way of coping with this kind of situation, teenage mothers usually accept the fact that teenage

pregnancy is still not accepted by the norms, so they could not do anything aside from praying and seeking guidance and strength from God by regularly going to the church.

A closer relationship with God

One participant in this research said that teenage pregnancy is hard, but God is a big part of her coping and surviving. In the darkest of times, God will find a way for a person to see him and draw courage from his light and love. In the case of teenage pregnancy, some participants drew their strength from their faith in God.

Importance of making a rational decision

Moreover, the participants have learned that a woman should be careful in decision making, especially if it involves a boy and a relationship. Teenage girls are the most gullible. It is easy for men or teenage boys to say flowery words and then win the girl's heart. The participants of this study repeatedly said that a girl should not easily believe a guy's words or promise of love, and should just concentrate on her studies because if a girl gets pregnant at an early age, that could compromise her future.

Importance of formal education

In addition to that, education should be prioritized education over boys. The participants of this study insisted that education is a significant factor in one's life. If a girl neglects her education, it could ruin her future. Education can lead a person to a successful life, so it should be prioritized rather than boys because knowledge is a power that no one can ever take.

All five (5) participants of this study said that they do not want their child to experience the same experience that they had, or walk in the same direction that they walked because it is challenging. The participants made it clear that they would guide their children to become a better person and have a better life so that they will not experience the same hardships that they have experienced.

While money cannot buy happiness, a lack of money or mismanaged financial decisions causes stress, anxiety, and limited choices. All realities that affect the ability to be the best woman, professional, and mother, one can be (Johnson, 2018). Having a stable or proper job when one is a teenage mother is a great help. Although it might not provide all of the needs of the child, at least the teenage mother can have a source of income to rely to. A participant of this research has said that at the time of her early pregnancy, she had no stable job, so she had to work as a tutor or sometimes as an entertainer. The participant stated that having a stable job when getting pregnant is a great help, especially if the woman that is pregnant is an abandoned teenage mother.

Importance of self-care

Finding the time to exercise is hard if a woman does not have much spare time. If a woman is a single parent, chances are she would not have much time to devote to her fitness (Hall, 2018). The participants of this research said that a teenage mother feels too many physical pains ranging from the start of the pregnancy, the craving stage, giving birth, and all the physical challenges after giving birth, such as doing all the works and

taking care of the baby. So a teenage mother should not overwork herself because she should stay healthy not just for herself but, more importantly, for the baby.

Lastly, getting tired is normal. It is usual for a teenage mother to feel physical exhaustion because it is not an easy job to manage all the work and, at the same time, take care of the baby. When the rest is needed, it should be honored. A teenage mother will not function and think appropriately if the exhaustion is overwhelming.

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains the summary of findings, conclusions derived from the results, and the recommendations of the researcher to fully utilize the findings of this study.

Summary

This study was conducted mainly to respond to the following objectives. This study generally aimed to narrate and describe the experiences of the abandoned teenage mothers living in Midsayap, North Cotabato. Specifically, this study aims to describe teenage mothers on circumstances around her pregnancy and motherhood; to identify the challenges encountered by the teenage mothers; and to describe the lessons learned by the teenage mothers from their experiences.

This qualitative research used the narrative and descriptive-case study design to present and analyze the data gathered. Five teenage-mothers were identified by the researchers who reside in Midsayap, Cotabato. All five participants voluntarily consented to participate in this study. When the researchers have gathered their consent, the researchers set a date for an in-depth one-on-one interview.

The data gathered showed the following highlights: first, the stories of the abandoned teenage mothers relieved how and why teenage pregnancy is still affecting their current situation even up to this day; second, the challenges that they had significantly encountered affected their lives not just when they were teenagers but also

until now that they are still raising their child; third, the coping mechanisms of teenage pregnancy depend on how the teenage mother wants to cope. Some of the participants said that they coped through working until they were exhausted. Some have coped because of the love and support that their family had given them despite their mistake. Another participant also said that having an emotional support group helped in coping, as one can find comfort in that particular group of people. Fourth, the lessons that they had learned are to concentrate more on studies rather than on boys and to always think about the consequences of sex before engaging in it because one act of sex can affect a woman's life forever.

The different challenges that were encountered by the abandoned teenage mothers were living independently with a baby. The participants said that they had to adjust their role from being a mother to also being a father. They said that their financial challenges at first were extremely overwhelming. As a teenager, having a baby at a young age with no job was an extreme test of character. They had different kinds of jobs like selling different kinds of homemade delicacies to their neighborhood, or working as a tutor or choreographer, and joining different kinds of activities or contests in festivals just to earn money. Dealing with an infant when going home and not having a man to share the responsibilities of raising the infant was a difficult task to achieve. The participants said that it was never easy to raise an infant at a young age with no partner and no family to support them because when they are alone in the house. The baby cries or the baby gets sick or if the diapers or milk of the infant runs out, they have no one else to lean on to but themselves. They had to be practical in everything and make the budget the income wisely. The participants said that with less income, they had to put their personal needs

aside and prioritize the baby's needs. Apart from the financial challenges, there were also physical challenges like experiencing nausea in the first trimester of pregnancy, back pains, and experienced labor. The physical challenges can be overwhelming for a pregnant teenager because their body was still not ready to bear a child. A pregnant body is suffering twice exhaustion than a healthy body does, so being pregnant at a young age makes things harder for them.

Moreover, being a single mother means to assume both the roles of a father and a mother of a child. The participants of this study has stated the difficulties of assuming both roles at a young age that is why the participants are stretching the importance of being rational at things and that to prioritize education over boys.

Lesson learned

The reality of assuming dual roles

As this study is mainly focused on the experiences, challenges, and insights of abandoned teenage mothers, the role of being a mother and a father at the same time was tackled. According to Brazelton and Sparrow (2014), one of the toughest parts of raising kids alone is the reality of assuming dual roles. A single parent must be both a mother and a father at every turn, disciplinarian, as well as a loving comforter. Discipline is more natural to impose when it is shared.

Being a teenager and taking on both the roles of a father and a mother to a child is exceptionally challenging. The role-playing of a mom and a dad as a teenage mother is extremely difficult because providing the needs of the child, trying to discipline them, tutoring them, and being the best loving parent is too much to handle at an early age.

Some teenage mothers are lucky because their family accepted them and their babies. So taking the role of a mother and a father at the same time was easy for them. However, some teenage mothers are not accepted by their family and are, therefore, having a hard time being a mother and a father to the child.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the different situations in the teenage lives of the participants led them to become pregnant. They encountered teenage pregnancy and motherhood as a challenging situation in terms of the financial, emotional, and the physical aspects. It is also concluded that their experiences in teenage pregnancy influenced their parenting styles as well as their current lives.

Recommendations

Based on the data that the researchers have gathered for this study, the researchers came up with the following recommendations:

1. For future extension workers and community development workers to have a better understanding of teenage pregnancy and may use this study as a baseline in their future programs for teenage pregnancy.
2. For the Regional Health Unit (RHU), to use the study as basis for the sex education lectures in different areas, especially in remote areas in the province, so that teenage pregnancy cases might decrease in numbers.

3. For the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), to use this research as baseline information on how to approach and better understand teenage mothers, and design a program for solo mothers.
4. The schools play a significant role in a person's life because people spend most of their life in school. The school may use this research so that may understand better the different kinds of environments a teenage girl has and may use the research to design a program for teenagers to avoid early pregnancy.

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