

The Academic Struggles of Teenage Fathers: the Untold Stories of Student-Fathers

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INTRODUCTION

The population of teenage fathers is increasing. In most cases, teenage fathers' academic struggles and difficulties were not documented. Teenage father's experiences and circumstances were just opened topics to the public, even a talk in the neighbors, a usual hearsay in town or they were just set aside by people (Tan, 2009).

In Philippines, the National Statistics Office (NSO) reported that there were 9.9 percent or 173,282 teenage mothers who gave birth in 2007 in which 2.1 percent or 36,203 of them were reported to have teenage partners (Diohang, Gado, Morales & Apog, 2014).

In Davao region, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) Region 11 reported that the youth in the Davao region account for 20.4 percent of the population on the 2007 Census. Males in the Davao region were more likely to have sexual intercourse compared to females (Clerigo, 2016).

In spite of the increasing number of teenage fathers, researchers do not focus on their situation. As Scott et al. (2012) stated that in United States the researches and policies were focused on teenage mothers compared to teenage fathers. This is supported by Tan (2009) as he stated that researches about teenage father in the Philippines was considered as a small piece of information and it was not given value although it is important in the formation of family and society. Furthermore, Diohang et al. (2014); Scott et

al. (2012) supported the statement of Tan (2009) by pointing out that there were very few who are interested in the growing population of teenage father. There were very few people who were giving importance in teenage fathers' education and in pursuing their career.

This qualitative multiple case study research was conducted in Davao del Norte. The participants were five teenage fathers who were currently studying. It employed qualitative analysis using the multiple case study approach. Interview guide was used for the in-depth interview.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The research revealed that the **teenage fathers' academic struggles** include:

- a. overwhelming responsibilities;
- b. loss of freedom;
- c. stigmatization;
- d. poor academic performance;
- e. financial constraints; and
- f. relationship woes.

Furthermore, teenage fathers shared that their **coping mechanisms on their academic struggles** include:

- a. support system;
- b. more focused existence; and
- c. inspiration from a kid.

Finally, the teenage fathers expressed their **insights on the path of fatherhood**:

- a. Teenage fathers suggest to face problems squarely; and
- b. They wanted to say, learn from our experience, regret, facing responsibility and the perks of being a father.

CONCLUSION:

Often, teenage fathers were considered as irresponsible individuals who do not have direction in life. Also, they are discriminated against without knowing their stories. Instead of happiness, they feel pain as they are fighting their own individual battles in life. Others may not understand them, but their experiences taught them how to live their life. *Their experiences taught them how to become better men who wanted to be the best father of their own child.*

It is important to remember that teenage fathers' experiences are subject for corrections and chances, as everybody is. Like everyone else, they are also trying to have a good life. Based on this study, they are striving for a better future with their own family. Life was tough for them as they faced the challenges as fathers but they did not stop hoping for the sun to shine after the storm for in the absence of darkness there is light.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To the **Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)**, develop a *self-recovery program*. This program will help teenage fathers regain their confidence in an inevitable stigmatization of the people around him. Also, the DSWD must *strengthen awareness programs* to spread awareness on teenage fatherhood and teenage parenting to teenagers, especially the teenage males.
2. To the **Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) & Local Government Units (LGUs)**, develop *livelihood programs* for teenage fathers which will help the latter to support their family and their education.
3. To the **Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher**

Education (CHED) & LGUs, provide *privilege scholarship grants*, this grant may help them continue their study even in college.

4. To the **Department of Health (DOH) & DepEd**, develop *age appropriate sex education* which will focus on valuing and respecting oneself.
5. To the **DOH**, provide *access to reproductive health* programs. This will help them gain knowledge about reproductive health especially if they are cohabiting with the mother of his child.
6. To **DepEd**, further develop the *guidance program* that would cater the needs of teenage fathers. To this end, there must be a registered guidance counselor in every school.
7. To the **parents**, be the source of love and support to their children especially when their sons become teenage parents. Parents must *regulate teenagers to different risk behavior that lead to sexual behavior*. Parents must also *regulate their children in accessing pornographic material*. They must block and filter pornographic materials by setting up filters and parental control programs.
8. To **researchers**, further study the struggles of teenage fathers.
9. To **teenage fathers** who are just around and struggling in their education, face all the challenges and look forward to what you will become in the future. Be a better man and become the best father of your own children. Be the best example of the most disciplined man they can look up to.

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Disclaimer:

This Research Bulletin is an abridged version of the full manuscript of Ms. Daray and supplements their research presentation during the Research O'clock last June 24, 2019 under the topic, "Perspectives on Child Protection". To request a copy of their manuscript, send an email to ps.prd@deped.gov.ph.