

TRAVAILS OF STUDENT TEENAGE-MOTHERS: A CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

About 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 and some one (1) million girls under 15 give birth every year, most in low and middle-income countries (World Health Organization, 2014). One in ten young Filipino women aged 15-19 has begun childbearing: eight (8) percent are already mothers, and another 2 percent are pregnant with their first child. Reports said that 24.5% in high school level aged 15-24 had a live birth (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013). In a secondary school in Davao del Norte, there were recorded three (3) student teenage mothers aged 14 to 15 in School Year (SY) 2017-2018. This study aims to answer these three research questions: 1) What are the experiences of student teenage mothers? 2) How do these teenage mothers, being students at the same time, cope with the challenges of motherhood? 3) What are the insights of student teenage mothers towards life to the peers, teachers, and academe as a whole?

The study employed qualitative-case study design to investigate the experiences of student teenage-mothers. In-depth interview (IDI) is the primary method used in this research to reveal a target range of behavior of the audience and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The following themes emerged from the qualitative analysis:

Experiences of student teenage- mothers

1. **Fear of pregnancy stage.** All participants were afraid and sad about their situation, especially

their future as students and the heavy responsibility of being a mother.

2. **Peer influence.** Participants said that because of peers and friends they were engaged to early motherhood.
3. **Financial challenges.** One of the common problems of the participants is when their children are sick, considering they do not have a job yet and suffer financially.

Coping challenges of student teenage mothers

1. **Acceptance of the family and friends.** Most participants confirmed that after they gave birth, their families had accepted their situations.
2. **Dependence on parental guidance.** Participants frankly said that they relied on their parents. They are the primary supporters and providers of their needs.
3. **Youth inspiration.** Participants considered themselves as inspiration to young women for them not to follow their big mistakes.
4. **Optimistic on education for economic stability.** All participants believed that the only way to address their financial challenges is to have an education.

Insights of student teenage mothers

1. **Life-changing lesson.** All the four participants answered that they will not make the same mistakes again. For them, their lives have totally changed since they became parents.

2. **Regrets.** Three out of four participants openly shared their utmost regrets in engaging in early relationships.
3. **Determination for future endeavors.** Participants are certain that through education their lives would change and improve for the better. They said that they will pursue their studies whatever challenges await ahead.
4. **Learning from mistakes.** Three participants shared that they learned from their own mistakes.
5. **Positive perspective in life.** All participants optimistically responded with their positive outlook in life for their brighter future.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Student teenage mothers suffered emotionally, psychologically, and financially, considering they were young to carry the burden of parenthood and do not yet have the financial stability. They were aiming to finish education as they believed it is the only key to alleviate their difficult situation. All participants were determined to have a good future as family centered individuals.

Student teenage-mothers hoped that people around them would accept their situation as teen parents. They tried to restore their confidence, dignity and aim for a good future for their children.

The following are the recommendations of this research:

Family. Parents must educate and protect their young children especially the girls who are vulnerable to any abuses within the family members and even outside influences. Parents must know their children's friends to ensure the safety of their well-being. They must also be aware of the lifestyle of millennial girls.

Schools. Schools must adhere to the intensification of guidance programs on teenage pregnancy. Education information concerning early **motherhood must be** inculcated to young learners beginning Grade 6 and a follow-up information drive during secondary level. With these activities the young girls will always be reminded of the harmful effects of early motherhood.

Department of Education (DepEd). DepEd must allocate a budget for the Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM) teacher item, a particular teacher item that would focus only on working students, early parents, or students in any similar situations that hinder them from attending classes daily. If the ADM teacher is hired as Teacher I in a particular school, nobody will replace his/her position, so the school will hire another ADM teacher to fill the vacant position left. Since the ADM teacher received a lower salary compared to the Teacher I position, it appears that the assigned ADM teacher is always temporary in nature. The constant replacement of ADM teachers affects the ADM students and the school. Thus, the efficiency of the ADM teacher will not be established if there is constant rehiring and replacement. The agency must also provide registered guidance counselor items to all schools to intensify the guidance programs. Most of designated guidance teachers in small schools have teaching loads, consequently the assigned guidance teacher could not strengthen the guidance programs because he/she is handling classes at the same time. Whereas if his/her concentration is on the implementation of guidance services and activities, the emerging problems inside the school could be lessened

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Disclaimer:

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