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Early Parenthood Experiences in Davao City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of young mothers in early parenthood. This qualitative study was conducted using the phenomenological method. The seven participants were purposively selected to be interviewed. The data analysis results reveal interesting themes regarding the mothers' experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights during early parenthood. Themes for experiences such as dilemma in providing proper care, feelings of apprehension and shame, failed expectations, society's judgment, satisfying feeling of achieving motherhood, and lack of time for self are revealed in experiences. Mothers in early parenthood experienced challenges such as being financially incapable, mentally and emotionally unprepared, and unprivileged to finish school. Finding strength from family and God, using personal strategies, and getting support and motivation from the husband are the coping strategies of mothers when dealing with challenges. The mothers' insights include being prepared for the consequences, parents knowing what is best for us, being a mother is a big shoe to fill, and weighing things wisely. The gathered data from the participants will provide invaluable insights and knowledge that can contribute to the field of social work by strengthening prevention efforts. In addition, by understanding young parents' unique experiences and needs, social workers can develop effective programs and services to help address their challenges. Finally, the younger generation may get a significant takeaway from the study about the experiences and consequences of early parenthood.

INTRODUCTION

The rising early childhood pregnancy has been a significant issue across many countries. The rampant increase of this specific problem has sparked the attention of some social welfare institutes and units. Every year, an estimated 21 million girls aged 15–19 in some developing countries become pregnant, and approximately 12 million give birth. Every year, there is an estimated 21 million girls aged 15–19 years in developing regions are impregnated and around 12 million of them give birth (World Health Organization, 2023). The root of early pregnancy has come from several factors. It may be because of illiteracy about sexual education, poverty, lack of parental guidance, early independence, etc. In the United States, social determinants of health, such as low education and low income levels of a teen's family, may contribute to high teen birth rates. Teens in specific settings

are at higher risk of teen pregnancy and birth than other groups. For example, young women living in foster care are more than twice as likely to become pregnant than young women not in foster care (CDC, 2019).

Due to the global emergency caused by COVID-19, many families struggled. Establishments were forced to close; thus, job opportunities were low. In the Philippines, 7.3 million Filipinos lost their jobs, and schools were closed. There were concerns such as young girls being vulnerable to early pregnancy since they were out of their usual protective physical setting of the school environment (Daquioag, 2020). According to the Commission on Population and Development (2021), teenage pregnancies could lead to the creation of 133,000 families led by minors by the end of 2021. The situation worsened, considering the never-ending cycle of intergenerational poverty

due to higher school dropouts and the unemployment rate because of adolescent pregnancy (Ordinario, 2021).

Furthermore, illiteracy is another factor contributing to teenage pregnancy. Lack of sexual education among students amounts to a low level of understanding. Among the cities and regions in the country, Davao City ranked the highest in adolescent pregnancy, followed by Davao de Oro and Davao Del Norte. This is because of the presence of indigenous people who have cultural beliefs, particularly in early parenthood (Llemit, 2021). Efforts must include providing adequate services suited to young people and institutionalizing a massive and effective education campaign about sexual and reproductive health rights in both schools and communities (Morata, 2021). Therefore, early parenthood has social and economic challenges, and young mothers face the consequences most of the time. Social stigma within the communities, health consequences, less likely to complete high school and college, tend to earn less, and more likely to experience poverty due to early childbearing (Gbogbo, 2021).

Hence, due to the problems mentioned above and the urgency to have them explored and solved, the researchers were prompted to conduct this study by learning the life experiences of these mothers and how they cope with the challenges as early parents. The present study aimed to know the experiences of early parenthood. To achieve this critical objective, participants were interviewed to better understand adolescent mothers' challenges and coping strategies during pregnancy and early parenthood. The findings of this study may help other first-time and young mothers by providing them with information on understanding their experiences better. Their challenges during pregnancy and early motherhood were better understood as well. Further, the researchers delved into the young mothers' coping strategies in addressing their challenges with motherhood. Lastly, their insights were accounted for to know their realizations as young mothers.

The study results would benefit international organizations and institutes by using the findings to raise awareness about the challenges of early parenthood. Social work institutes would acquire a better understanding to educate adolescents about the underlying consequences of early pregnancy and

parenting. Teenagers and young adults may also get significant takeaways from the experiences of young mothers on early pregnancy and motherhood. Further, future researchers may benefit from this study by gathering relevant topics based on their interests.

To solidify discussions in this research, the researchers anchored the discussions on theories. First is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory, which explains that different environmental systems influence human development. Thus, in the context of this paper, early pregnancy could have been influenced by different factors (Evans, 2023). Another is the Social Bond Theory (Wickert, 2019) which emphasizes that building a strong and healthy relationship with family, friends, and peers is important to prevent a human from engaging in deviant behavior. Furthermore, the Social Disorganization Theory (Bond, 2015) explains how disorganized communities influence adolescent engagement in early sexual activity. This theory points out that a person's physical and social environments can influence behavioral changes. Hence, in ethnically diverse communities, housing insecurity caused by high poverty has potentially influenced an increased teenage pregnancy rate because of lower access to education and reproductive health services.

METHODS

The researchers aimed to gain deeper insights into the experiences of these mothers during the early transition to parenthood. Hence, the present study is qualitative, using phenomenology to answer the research questions. According to Tenny (2022), qualitative research aims to understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants that seeks to explain how, why, or what they were thinking and experiencing at a certain time. Since the study focused on early parenthood, the researchers used phenomenology to collect accounts of people by describing their experiences and aiming for an in-depth exploration.

Using purposive sampling, the researchers selected seven participants. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), purposive sampling is used to select participants who are most likely appropriate and possess certain qualities, such as knowledge or experiences, that fit into the study. Hence, in identifying the participants, the inclusion criteria

were the following: 17 years old or younger when they got pregnant, a first-time mother, a child aged five years old or below at the time of the interview, living with a spouse, and living in Davao City.

The present study was done through online in-depth interviews to gather data. The researchers interviewed the participants one-on-one to maintain confidentiality among other participants in this study. The interview questions were created to gather information about the study's objectives. The interview questions were mainly open-ended, encouraging participants to speak freely and facilitate a long-term conversation. As one of the sources of information for this study, the participants' behavior was also observed.

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Caulfield (2023), thematic analysis can be used to identify thematic patterns through in-depth interviews. As a result, the subjects, themes, and ideas can be identified. Hence, thematic analysis was appropriate to learn about the participant's experiences, views, and ideas, which allowed the researchers to generate new insights and better understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Young Mothers' Experiences in Early Parenthood

Dilemma in Providing Proper Care. The participants needed help in providing appropriate care to their children. At first, they had no idea what to do since it was their first time becoming a mother. Fear and confusion were present among them since they did not have enough knowledge to take care of their child. The struggle was real on their part, especially in raising a child.

Being a mother at a very young age was challenging for women. Some were shocked and could hardly believe the situation that they were in. Being young yet a novice, facing motherhood was quite difficult for them. Most often, these young mothers struggle to cope with the increased duties following the birth of their babies and taking care of their children (Pueyo, 2022).

A woman encounters intense vulnerability and faces tremendous struggles when journeying to motherhood. This phenomenon is worsened for young mothers, and research has shown that teenage mothers go through a heightened burden of obligations when transitioning to motherhood.

Teenagers often become mothers without practical knowledge, abilities, and resources to deal with early parenthood, which augments stress to their already disturbed developmental condition (Erfina et al., 2019). Gselamu et al. (2019) mentioned that young mothers go through psychosocial impediments, such as a high level of stress before and after birth delivery, arising from unwanted childbearing and unreadiness for parenthood.

Feelings of Apprehension and Shame. The unwanted pregnancy of the participants caused them to experience setbacks and negative stigma from their families. When their family members, especially their parents, knew they were pregnant, they were shocked and enraged. The participants were scolded by their parents, who were disappointed with their actions. These young mothers felt nervous and scared because they were still students full of dreams and aspirations. They were worried that their family would not accept their situation.

When teenage mothers disclosed their pregnancy, it resulted in anger and humiliation among their family members. Some were scolded and even rejected by their parents. This phenomenon created a negative effect on their relationship with their family. The home atmosphere became strained and uncomfortable among these young mothers (Govender et al., 2020).

Teenage mothers encounter numerous trials and difficulties along their parenthood journey. These include untoward treatment from their family members, especially from their parents, who were disappointed by their children being pregnant. Some of them were no longer welcome as a member of the family. Pregnancy at a young age made some women feel isolated and disregarded by their parents (Pueyo, 2022).

Failed Expectations. Early parenthood caused the participants to experience disappointments from their families. Since they were still studying, their family's expectations were high; they were expected to finish their studies and help their family. Nonetheless, due to their situation, they failed in those expectations.

According to Ntshayintshayi et al. (2022), pregnant teenagers felt that they disappointed their families and society. Pregnant teenagers and their families, school, and community recognize the

consequences of early childbearing as a social deficiency. Conventionally, parents encounter mixed reactions to their children's pregnancies, and their cultures and values influence their emotions (Sriyasak et al., 2018).

These young mothers usually experience rejection from their parents and are humiliated at school. Parents may feel disappointment and shame when their adolescent daughter is pregnant. Some even use provocative words. Due to early pregnancy, pregnant adolescents encounter stigmatization, rejection, social exclusion, and mockery from their families, peers, and community (Ntshayintshayi et al., 2022).

Societal Judgment. Being a young mother took much work for the participants. Aside from the dilemmas they encountered within their family, they also experienced harsh societal judgment. Knowing they were pregnant, rumors and gossip spread throughout their community, containing negative statements and speculations against them. Society was saying negative things about them, especially during their early pregnancy.

The negative perception, also known as stigmatization towards teenage mothers, is a factor of social unacceptability; shame or humiliation is linked with anything considered socially undesirable. The pessimistic impression of society towards teenage mothers is real and existent. The prejudice towards young mothers commonly results in unfriendly social stigma. These concerns are the problems that adolescent mothers encounter as they strive to reconnect their roles as students and mothers. With the struggling obligations of motherhood and society's negative judgment, these young mothers are usually traumatized by the people, which causes emotional wounds (Adangabe et al., 2021).

These young mothers had to face a hostile environment where they felt separated, humiliated, and stigmatized. Without emotional reinforcement, teenage mothers may encounter anxiety and rage, while others may encounter depression due to society's shame culture (Adangabe et al., 2021). Jones et al. (2019) reported that young mothers frequently experienced discrimination from society through dislike, negative criticism, and deliberative encounters. They were less recognized and more likely to be isolated, with lowered self-esteem.

Satisfying Feeling of Achieving Motherhood. Despite the participants' negative encounters as young parents, they still felt the satisfaction of being a mother. It was a rewarding experience on their part to have a child for the first time. They were happy and grateful that they could see their child at a young age, which gave them strength and inspiration to continue life's journey.

Amidst the myriad of negative feelings described by several studies related to the motherhood journey, research also showed that most teenage mothers revealed optimistic feelings concerning their transition (Erfina et al., 2019).

Adolescent mothers recognized the transition as a life transformation to adulthood. They acknowledge the motherhood transition as a sense of maturity. Young mothers were generally blissful to have their babies and felt their lives had transformed for the better since they became mothers. Being a parent gave them a chance to improve. They described becoming more responsible and selfless as they learned and developed into becoming hands-on mothers (Erfina et al., 2019).

Lack of Time for Self. Being a parent comes with great responsibility. The participants observed significant changes in their lives when they became a parent; one of these is the lack of time for themselves. Being a young mother hinders them from going to places without being time-conscious. Compared before, when they were still single, they could go anywhere with friends and peers freely, but when they became mothers, they were more time-conscious and time-disciplined.

Teenage mothers were challenged with a non-active social life, solitude, school dropouts, changing roles as nurturers and providers, and many more. They learned to prioritize their child instead of themselves. Their priorities were no longer for themselves but for their children's needs (Govender et al., 2020).

Indeed, early motherhood is an assiduous journey. Adolescent mothers go through difficulties like managing time with their baby and their school tasks, meeting their rudimentary needs, and having restricted resources, wanting time for themselves to go along with their peers, and the time for their home responsibilities (Pueyo, 2022).

Young Mothers' Challenges on Early Parenthood

Financially Incapable. The foremost challenge teenage mothers face as a parent is financial incapability. These young mothers experienced a lack of financial resources to provide for the basic needs of their babies. Since they do not have high-earning jobs, the same as their spouses, they need help to meet their child's daily needs. Especially when their babies are sick, they do not have enough money to buy medicine. They end up borrowing from the store or even asking for help from their parents.

It is strenuous for these young mothers to have a stable job since they were still minors at the time of their pregnancy and still needed to finish their tertiary studies. The participants were primarily economically dependent on their husbands, and yet their husbands did not have permanent or high-paying employment to sustain their needs. That is why they ended up borrowing from the store or even asking for monetary assistance from their parents, relatives, and in-laws to satisfy their babies' needs (Govender et al., 2020).

Financial incapability is one of the struggles encountered by teenage mothers. Being a mother at a young age has intensified their financial dilemmas (Govender et al., 2020). As the adolescent mothers were not productively employed, it is apparent that they would not have a permanent source of income, enabling them to experience monetary constraints (Boateng et al., 2023).

Mentally and Emotionally Unprepared. Aside from financial distress, teenage mothers were mentally and emotionally unprepared to manage their parental responsibilities. Most participants were challenged by the stress of worrying about sustaining their babies' basic needs. It was exhausting on their part to handle both the emotional and physical stress of being a young mother. Sometimes, the participants were deprived of sleep and tired of caring for their children, which would give them the idea to give up.

Considering their status as minor parents, it was difficult on their part to handle severe mental and emotional problems. The scarcity of financial resources, plus the tiring responsibilities they faced as a mother, added to their burdens. Moreover, their mothers-in-law's negative comments and untoward

treatment of them contributed to their emotional dilemma.

Being too young to face serious life responsibilities is challenging for teenage mothers. As discussed in the study of Dutta et al. (2022), physical, social, psychological, and mental readiness is imperative for a woman journeying to motherhood, which must be improved in young females. Early motherhood becomes unmanageable as this transition continues with adolescence's development transformations. Consequent realization of social roles of adulthood, physical modifications of puberty, essential cognitive development, and changes linked to childbearing and motherhood make the life of young mothers truly complicated.

Ntshayintshayi et al. (2022) argued that most women with unplanned pregnancies tend to react retroactively to the news of their childbearing. Teenagers had to make sense of their journey, and some expressed extensive emotions of remorse, regret, and guilt for having a sexual relationship well after finding out about their pregnancy. There is a significant correlation between early pregnancy and long-term mental health effects (Xavier et al., 2018). The augmented dilemma and social dangers of early childbearing predispose pregnant adolescents to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

Extreme Tiredness. One factor that challenges most participants during early pregnancy is extreme tiredness. Most experienced sleep deprivation, physical or mental conditions, medications, and poor lifestyle. These inevitably existed, especially when mothers were expected to sacrifice themselves for their babies during their early days.

According to Murray (2021), the challenge a mother should face during labor and delivery significantly impacts their body. Aside from this, they must take care of their newborn child, which adds to their stress and lack of sleep. Hence, it is unsurprising that the majority number of women undergo a series of extreme fatigue and exhaustion during the postpartum period. Some mothers, fortunately, have not experienced any of these, unlike any other women.

Everyone would surely agree that pregnancy is a tiring experience. Most women have undergone extreme fatigue and exhaustion to the point that they almost forgot to care for themselves. While

this may be true, mothers should listen to a message from their bodies to rest for some time. They should practice healthier living, such as eating healthy food and exercising while caring for their babies (Knisley, 2020).

Unprivileged to Finish School. Studying while raising a child is a challenging task to fulfill. At the onset of the participants' pregnancy, they stopped going to school because of shame and negative feedback from people. It was challenging for these young mothers to continue their studies since they were ashamed of their situation and did not have sufficient finances and time to sustain it.

It is strenuous for them to focus on their studies while caring for their babies. The demanding tasks of motherhood made them set aside their life aspirations. The goal to finish their studies was replaced by the compelling responsibility they have right now as mothers (Gatbonton, 2021).

Teenage parenthood is an imperative factor for females dropping out of school. The social, cultural, and economic concerns commonly compel these young mothers to make strenuous decisions. It is challenging for young mothers to return to school after childbirth because they struggle to equitably handle studies and parenting duties (Adangabe et al., 2021). These challenges include difficulty studying, inability to sustain schooling, and consequent absenteeism. The tasks of motherhood can stratify the focus of tertiary students (Gatbonton, 2021).

Being pregnant and a young mother at school constitute risks to educational success. This phenomenon often stops schooling and hinders the lead from schooling to employment, negatively affecting teenage women. The challenge for pregnant youth and adolescent mothers is to handle and meet the demands of schooling, parenting, and pregnancy (Adangabe, 2020). The insufficient support from families and friends to motivate young mothers to stay in school and their immaturity can make it arduous for them to pursue their studies, as they need more motivation from those close and dear to them. The lack of necessary encouragement may hinder these mothers from completing their studies, given that they need more support mechanisms (Adangabe, 2020).

Young Mothers' Coping Strategies

Finding Strength from Family and God. Amidst difficulties, most participants seek refuge from family and God. The strength they can get from their sources would greatly help them overcome their struggles. True enough, finding solace in prayer, meditation, and family support can provide a framework for making sense of challenges.

Having pillars of strength from God and family is a personal and individual experience. As stated by Dawson (2022), praying with the whole family is one of the most rewarding experiences that everyone can have. Especially during difficult times, participating in spiritual practices can help each member navigate with resilience and guidance from above. Aside from prayers, listening to Christian songs can also help ease the burdens inside. True enough, participants expressed how these practices helped them a lot get over their mental and emotional troubles.

In every situation, finding strength from God and family can create a strong foundation of resiliency. As parents, they are the epitome of what a strong person should be. This character must have the ability to be strong and bold, especially during difficulties (Rust, 2022). However, everyone should remember that finding strength from God and family is not an overnight event but an ongoing process. With the constant support of these pillars of strength, people can surely find inner strength and resilience from within.

Using Personal Strategies. Most participants found themselves seeking to have personal strategies to cope with their problems. Their challenges have pushed them to go above and beyond to find solutions they once thought they could not see. Along with their strategies are the lessons that have taught them what more to life.

One of the participants' ways to achieve a goal is to have a personal strategic plan. Having this would help someone to identify what is more important to live and can help define what it means to succeed (Miller, 2023). Indeed, a person's usual action amidst difficulty is to look for solutions, but often there could be none. As frustration pushes people hard, they create strategies that help them ease their problems somehow.

A personal strategic plan is a living document that is changeable over time. Some people realize

that some life changes happen in the blink of an eye, while other habits take much time to internalize them. However, not all strategic plans work for everyone, so looking for what is best for you is important. The best way to achieve it is to regularly update it to stay on track (Vernon, 2021).

Getting Support and Motivation from the Husband. During the early days of pregnancy and even after the day of labor, husbands must stay with their wives. Most participants found solace in their husbands' presence during their suffering. Apart from their partners, having their whole family beside them was also comforting.

Everyone wants someone who will encourage them to go beyond the limit. These inspirational words go double if they come from the people that they cherish the most. Choosing the right words to say to someone is important, especially during trying times. Doing this could be the best experience a person can have that will surely be appreciated (Salter, 2022). For the participants, the assuring words of their husbands gave them the strength to continue with their motherhood struggles as well.

Encouragement and support are the essential ingredients to have a long-lasting relationship. Mcconchie (2019) states that couples should set goals together and help them pursue their passions. Everything is not for the partners alone but also for their children. Thus, working together as a team is important to create a more fulfilling and harmonious life.

Young Mothers' Insights on Parenthood

Readiness for the Consequences. The participants realized that every action always has an outcome. Being a parent at an early age is not a walk in the park; it needs many sacrifices and patience. As mothers who gave their all for their children, they believe it is challenging to become a mother. There will always be many struggles to win over, but this should always be faced with boldness.

According to Bundrant (2023), people must pursue personal transformation and growth to be prepared for the changes they seek. Some examples of this are quitting a long-term habit and trying to live alone, away from the comfort zone. However, there are things in life where no matter how prepared a person is, it will go beyond what is expected. From the perspective of a mother who got

pregnant at an early age, it is important to embrace the consequences of every wrong action.

In every decision, there should be an underlying responsibility for it. It is one of the core elements a person must have to address a specific problem. Men, by default, play a crucial part in their every situation. They are the drivers of their lives, and the solutions lie within their hands. Further, being accountable means that a person should not blame others for the mistake; instead, they should acknowledge the problem and implement an action plan to address the conflict. In this way, the burden may lessen, and a person can learn from those challenges (May 2021).

Parents Know What's Best. Every parent's life experience and wisdom can be a guiding light for their children's development. They know what is best and worst for their loved ones; thus, they have gone to the extra lengths to provide their children with the best quality of life. Given this, participants greatly acknowledge the role of parents in their lives. As mothers, they have realized how hard it is; being one requires a lot of adjustments and sacrifices for their child.

Capriola (2019) posits that parents provide the best guidance for their children. Their unique insights into the needs and desires of their child are based on the experiences and instincts they have kept throughout the ages. These unique perspectives among parents became one of the reasons they are in the best suit to guide their children to become someone responsible enough as adults. Hence, most of the time, parents know what is best; and it is a must to listen to them.

There is nothing in this world that treasure their children like a gem than what a parent does. They are one of the most important educators throughout a child's development. Research shows that values, behavior, and beliefs always start at home. Thus, children's visions towards the world lie significantly on what they learn within the corner of their homes than what they learn at schools (Strauss, 2023).

Being a Mother is a Big Shoe to Fill. Based on the data, the participants agreed that being a mother requires a demanding role with a lifelong commitment that involves dedication, sacrifice, and flexibility. Also, as a rule of thumb, a mother must be bold enough to face such situations that challenge their ability to be still.

One of the most complex and demanding responsibilities is being a mother. Being one is not only concerned with her child's physical well-being but also with their emotional, intellectual, and social development. Mothering is even more complex as mothers must spend quality and quantity of time with their children and lovingly fulfill their individual needs (Crockett, 2020). Nonetheless, being a mother is a rewarding experience as it allows them to play a significant role in shaping their child's life.

Research shows that a mother has joy in her heart. Motherhood is indeed one of the hardest jobs one could have. Nevertheless, no matter how hard this might be, it cannot be denied that it is also a rewarding and fulfilling experience, especially as mothers are the pillars of their child's development (Brower, 2021).

Weigh Things Wisely. Participants agreed that weighing things carefully in every decision-making is vital. It means that a person needs to consider and evaluate the pros and cons of a decision before making a final choice. Otherwise, everything will be regretful.

Herrity (2023) argues that the ability of a person to make decisions is one of the ways to think objectively and weigh things right. Aside from this, someone's aptitude to make an instant decision can strengthen trust. This aspect is also present in business, where employees' trust can affect the company's culture and environment. However, through the lens of young mothers, making the right decisions is crucial, as this is where the future of both the parent and the child lies.

Aside from interpersonal skills, one of the most important critical skills a man should have been decision-making. This trait is crucial as this always happens every day and on all levels. Also, this helps a person test their critical skills in certain situations. However, it must be considered a crucial part of assessing the other courses of action before casting the final one (Forgeard, 2022).

The basis of this study lies in using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2023), which explains that the different types of environmental systems influence human development. To exemplify, the microsystem level represents the immediate environment surrounding an individual. In this level of the ecological model, daily interactions with family members, peers,

teachers, and the like are important in shaping an individual's behavior, beliefs, and values. Consequently, if a person lacks parental involvement, guidance, and support, they are most likely to engage in risky behaviors and be vulnerable to negative influences. Hence, this can be anchored on the participants' experiences in which they encountered feelings of apprehension and shame due to their situation. Thus, their issue can be rooted in a lack of parent-child communication about sexual education, leading to early pregnancy.

Another factor that explains adolescents' sexual engagement that results in early pregnancy is the influence of the macrosystem, which focuses on how cultural elements and socioeconomic conditions will greatly affect an individual's development. For instance, if a person lives in a community with limited access to quality education, this can lead to lower levels of knowledge about reproductive health, contraception, and healthy relationships. As a result, a lack of knowledge may increase teenagers' risk of unintended pregnancies. Furthermore, the participants imparted that they experienced dilemmas in providing proper care for their children, which could also be a result of differences in education levels and access to information wherein first-time mothers from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds might have limited access to comprehensive prenatal and parenting education, which can result in knowledge gaps and uncertainties when it comes to providing proper care for their children.

In addition, the Social Bond Theory of Travis Herschi (2023) explains that individuals who have strong bonds with their families or have strong attachments to school and work will reduce the probability of engaging in deviant activities. This is because a strong support system can help provide individuals with the guidance and protection they need to avoid a deviant lifestyle. Hence, this theory connects with the challenges of the participants, wherein they faced tremendous obligations as a mother and encountered severe problems when it came to parenting because they were mentally and emotionally unprepared. Thus, their behavior in engaging in premarital sex that resulted in early pregnancy could be a reason that they lacked parental guidance and supervision when journeying to teenage life. Fortunately, some of the participants

stated that amidst difficulties, finding strength from family and God immensely helped them overcome their struggles. Thus, the advantage of having a strong relationship, especially with the family, helps them conquer their challenges during early parenthood.

Furthermore, the Social Disorganization Theory by Shaw and McKay (2022) focuses on how a person's tendency to engage in deviant activities correlates with his or her geographical location. For example, a person who lives in a society that encourages alcoholism and violent behavior will tend to do the same. Hence, the participants conveyed that they should not have allowed themselves to be influenced by the trend among Filipino teens engaging in premarital sex to avoid the consequences of their actions. Thus, they have realized that they should have weighed things carefully in every decision and considered and evaluated the pros and cons of their actions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, providing appropriate care for their children is one of the experiences of mothers during early parenthood. While dealing with this, they encounter challenges such as financial incapability, emotional and physical stress, and the urge to stop going to school because of shame and negative feedback from people. By these, the researchers can establish that being a mother at a very young age carries a heightened burden of stress and obligations when transitioning to parenthood.

As a result, the participants used different coping strategies for their challenges, such as finding strength from family and God, using personal strategies, and getting support and motivation from their husbands. The strength they get from their sources would greatly help them overcome their struggles. Further, the participants learned that every action always has an outcome. Thus, being a mother at a very young age requires a demanding role with a lifelong commitment that involves dedication, sacrifice, and flexibility. They realized that they should have listened to their parents. Thus, they learned how important their parents' advice was when they were still young.

Therefore, the study's findings will apprise the social work field by providing a deeper understanding of the unique experiences that young

parents face. As a result, social workers can gain invaluable insights into the emotional, social, and educational needs of young parents, wherein the knowledge will guide the social workers to develop effective strategies and implement interventions such as parenting skills, counseling services, educational support, and other necessary resources to ensure comprehensive support to teenage parents in addressing the specific challenges they faced. By providing these, social workers can empower teenage parents by supporting their transition to parenthood while contributing to their welfare, including their families, and helping them overcome challenges while promoting their overall well-being. Moreover, social workers can utilize the findings of this study by identifying the factors contributing to early pregnancy. Hence, their expertise in raising awareness and educational activities will illuminate the consequences and risks. Advocating for policies and programs, including access to education, employment opportunities, and social services, will support vulnerable youth and strengthen prevention efforts.

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