

Roles and Responsibilities of Teenage Mothers: A Basis for Intervention Measures

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Abstract – *Experiencing pregnancy regardless of age has never been that easy. Some of the hardships are attached with it. Then what more about the young women who are currently experiencing it? Some parents may accept them, but some will hate or reject them. In this situation, some teen parents or mothers feel a sense of shame. In order to cope with the undesired conditions, some individuals develop their own coping mechanisms. These mechanisms are the means to solve personal and interpersonal problems that minimize the individual's stress. The data was gathered through a case study from the fifteen cases of teen mothers residing at Poblacion, Lingayen, Pangasinan.*

Keywords – *Coping Mechanism, Parenting Style, Teen mothers, Teen pregnancy*

INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is one of the most common problems in the society nowadays. The vulnerability is heightened among the teenagers who are belong to the minorities or living in poverty (Gismundo et al, 2015). According to the data of the National Demographic and Health (2013), the increasing growth rate of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines is quite alarming that among the Filipino women that ages 13 to 19, there is at least 1 out of 10 that has begun childbearing.

Majority of the cases of teenage pregnancy were unplanned, and as a result, the teenagers are facing tasks with the high demands of being like an adult parent. Raising a child consumes a lot of time. It also involves a great deal of financial, emotional, and practical planning (Yardley, 2008). It is important that a parent is able to financially support a child and need to be assured that they can give proper health and health care for them (Julie Boehlke, 2015).

Most teen mothers find that caring for a child makes it difficult for them to continue their schooling. More than half of the teen mothers graduated only from secondary school, and there is just 2 percent have graduated from college but that is when they are in 30's already. In some schools, especially in Catholic schools, girls who had become pregnant are expelled because it goes against their moral teaching. Many teen mothers are having a feeling of guilt and inadequacy in both role as a student and a mother (Thompson, 2004). Unfinished schooling is one of the major factors that make it difficult for young mothers to look for a well-paying job (Meghan Slocum, 2017).

Being a teenager and a mother at the same time is a huge challenge to take care a child. Their knowledge on child rearing is also limited compared to adult mothers (Emery et al, 2008, Sieger and Renk 2007). Being young doesn't equal bad parent, as good parenting is not based on the age as well. Being good on parenting slowly becomes difficult in the past years. Every mother of all ages has its own parenting styles and there isn't a one perfect way to be a mother or to raise a child. But the most cases teenage pregnancy is associated with discrimination and stigmatization. The community's social judgment affects the emotional capacity and coping capacity of the teen mothers. It could also make the teen mothers to feel isolated or lessen their self-esteem. In result, they often experience shame for their situation.

When a teenager becomes pregnant, stereotyping also occurs on the people around them. According to Abe & Zane (1990 cited in DOE 2008), stigma remains as one of the biggest challenges that hinders teenagers on accessing the necessary information and resources. It also leads to social exclusion, low self-esteem, and poor academic performance which affect their possible employment in the future.

In order for them to manage their situation, some teenage mothers just ignore things that don't matter but some are still not strong enough to handle their situation and ended up as depressed and anxious. Some of teen mothers still continue their studies for the sake of their child. A supportive social environment helps the teen mothers to do well in their lives especially in schooling. The importance of having a

support during the teenage motherhood plays a huge role in the lives of the teen mothers and improves their way of parenting on their child (McAuley & Bunting 2004, and Kaufman et al, 2001).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to provide informative study about how teenage mothers perform their roles and responsibilities as a parent and they meet the essence of being a mother. To identify their coping mechanisms on managing their current situation as a teen mother and other related problems.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive research design to identify the roles and responsibilities of the respondents as well as their coping mechanisms in handling their problems as teenage mother, together with the parenting style they are using in rearing their child. A modified questionnaire was given to the respondents and a follow-up one-on-one interview as the primary and secondary tools in gathering the needed data that will be analyzed.

Population and Sampling

In this study, the researchers used purposive sampling in which the researchers chose only 15 teen mothers aged between 13 to 19 and rearing a child at least who is at least one year old and above, resident of Barangay Poblacion, Lingayen, Pangasinan wherein the case of teenage pregnancy mostly happened according to the Rural Health Unit of Lingayen, Pangasinan.

Data Gathering Instruments

The primary tool that was used in data-gathering was in the form of a questionnaire and a follow-up one-on-one interview to the teen mothers. The questionnaire contains different sets of questions and was divided into three parts. The first part includes the socio-economic profile of the respondents. The second part deals with the roles, responsibilities, problems encountered, coping mechanisms, and the advantages/disadvantages of being a teenage mother. The last part was designed to collect statistical

information that aims to identify their parenting style in raising their child and other coping strategies they used in their everyday lives.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to this study, the primary data were obtained from the Rural Health Unit of Lingayen, Pangasinan. The data shows the barangay that has a highest population of teenage pregnancy. The list of names of teenage mothers was obtained from Barangay Hall of Poblacion, Lingayen, Pangasinan. Prior to data-gathering, the researchers prepared an informed consent letter to be given to the respondents of the study. The data-gathering procedure was done in form of questionnaire and one-on-one interview. The interviews were informal and open ended, carried out in a conversational style which focuses to answer the second part of the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The age of 18 and 19 years old ties with the number of respondents and this comprise a total of 80% of the total population. The least of the respondents belong to the age 17 years old with a rate of 20%. Most of the respondents live with their partner as rated 86.67% while the remaining 13.33 respondents are not living with their partner.

Most of the respondents reached but did not finish their schooling in secondary level with a percentage of 40%. Majority of the respondents' partners are employed with a percentage of 86.67%. In terms of monthly income, the bracket of Php5,001.00 – Php10,000.00 has the highest percentage of 46.67% while the lowest bracket was Php15,001.00 – Php20,000.00 with a rate of 6.67%. Most of the respondents' support comes from their partner comprising 86.67% while the remaining 6.67% are relying on their parents.

Table 1. Socio-Economic Profiles of the Respondents

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percentage
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Age	17 years old	3	20
	18 years old	6	40
	19 years old	6	40
	Total	15	100
Civil Status	Single	2	13.33
	Live-in/Cohabiting	13	86.67
	Total	15	100
Educational Attainment	Elementary Graduate	4	26.7
	High School Undergraduate	6	40
	High School Graduate	5	33.33
	Total	15	100
Employment Status of Spouse	Employed	13	86.7
	Unemployed	2	13.33
	Total	15	100
Monthly Income of Family	No monthly income	2	13.33
	₱1,000.00 - ₱5,000.00	3	20
	₱5,001.00 - ₱10,000.00	7	46.67
	₱10,001.00 - ₱15,000.00	2	13.33
	₱15,000.00 - ₱20,000.00	1	6.67
	Total	15	100
Support System	Parents	2	13.33
	Partner	13	86.67
	Total	15	100

Below are the responses of the teen mothers describing their responsibilities as teen parent and spouse/partner. All of the 15 respondents said that taking care of their child is their primary responsibility. Some of them added they have a responsibility to send her child to proper schooling and raise well to be a good child; manage house chores and budget money; and Provide basic needs and take him for proper check-ups.

On to the responsible as a partner, two of the respondents don't have any answer because they are no longer living with their partner. One of the respondents felt emotional when she was asked because they were just suddenly left behind by her partner without any permission. Now, she stated she doesn't have any communication with him and no longer receive any support. The rest of the respondents states that is their responsibility to take good care of their partner.

The following are the stated problems encountered by the respondents as being a mother and spouse/partner: Thirteen out of the fifteen respondents answered that they are stigmatized and judged by the people around them. One of the respondents that she was often called as "Malandi". Eight of the respondents

stated that they are experiencing financial problems. A problem like lack of sleep is also stated, the absence of the father figure to the child. One of the respondents says that the misunderstanding with her partner that sometimes leading to physical harm. One of the respondents stated that she was being forced to have sex when her partner is drunk.

The selected responses by the respondents on how they overcome problems are the following: talking with their parents, going out with friends to be entertained or to express problems, crying out to lessen the burden, being silent and don't want to talk to anyone, doing household chores, or diverting problems into a productive action, eating, singing, sleeping, and smoking.

The respondents were asked on the advantages and disadvantages of being a teenage mother. The following are their response about the advantages of being a teenage mother: Four of the respondents replied that being a teenage mother has no advantages, became mature in taking responsibilities, it serves as an excuse on doing household chores because she needs to be focused on taking her child, having a baby is the source of happiness.

The common responses to the disadvantages of being a teenage mother are the following: Not able to finish or serves as hindrance to finish schooling, regrettable that got pregnant early, it's hard to take care a child because of lack of knowledge, stigmatization of other people, and difficulty to find a job due not finishing high school and being still a minor.

Table 2. Distribution According to Parenting Style

Parenting Style	Average Weighted Mean	Descriptive Meaning
Authoritative	2.36	Often
Authoritarian	2.76	Often
Permissive	2.28	Rarely
Uninvolved	1.75	Never

Most of the respondents are using the style of Authoritarian Parenting. It means that most of their ways on taking care of their child is by using threats, spanking, and using criticism to improve their child's behavior.

Table 3. Distribution According to Coping Mechanism

Mechanism	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Meaning
Adaptive	2.67	Often
Maladaptive	2.02	Rarely

It reveals that the respondents are more using Adaptive Coping mechanism than the Maladaptive Coping Mechanism. Ignoring people who are judging them is the most common adaptive coping mechanism that the respondents are using.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Most of the respondents are belong to the late teenage years. The common parenting style used by the teen parents is Authoritarian. The common problems experienced by the respondents are discrimination from neighbors, partners' engagement on vices and unstable income. Teen parents are using healthy mechanisms to cope their problems and situation. Majority of the teen respondents are aware on their responsibility as teen parents and as a partner.

Information dissemination about the responsibilities of a mother and the right way to take care of their child is recommended. teenage mothers should attend seminars or programs on how they can learn about appropriate parenting skills and other

relevant knowledge that will help them and their children, and to enroll in ALS (Alternative Learning System) or other informal education to continue their schooling, this will help them become more equipped in giving better future for their child/children and to their family as a whole. A further study about the cases on teenage mothers parenting skills, the do's and don'ts in raising their child/children and how they react in their social environment. Every head of the family should have the knowledge on how to support their family well, what to provide and when to become more responsive and supportive.

In the part of the social environment, it is highly recommended that the community where the teenage mother belongs will undergo on seminars about the life experiences of teenage mothers, the reason behind their motherhood so that they will understand all aspects of being a teenage mother. With this, it expects less to no stigmatization/stereotyping on teenage mothers. The Local Government Unit with the Municipal Social Welfare Development Office should have more programs for teenagers to help them enhance their awareness and knowledge about sex to lessen or avoid the cases of unwanted pregnancy.

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