

# Resilience in Adversity: The Lived Experience of a Teenage Mother During the Pandemic

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**Abstract**— Teenage pregnancy, also known as adolescent pregnancy, occurs in females under the age of 20 and poses significant health risks for both the mother and child. Adolescent mothers (aged 10–19) face higher chances of complications such as eclampsia, puerperal endometritis, and systemic infections, while their babies are at greater risk of low birth weight, preterm birth, and severe neonatal conditions. This issue continues to be a global concern, with increasing cases each year, particularly in the Philippines. This study explores the life experiences of a 19-year-old senior high school learner from a rural community who became pregnant during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through an in-depth interview, the study examines her struggles, challenges, and resilience in balancing motherhood and education. Emotional distress led her to seek companionship, ultimately resulting in an unplanned pregnancy. Despite this, she remained committed to her studies, demonstrating perseverance amid personal and academic difficulties. The findings highlight the need for stronger support systems, comprehensive adolescent reproductive health education, and guidance programs to empower young mothers in overcoming challenges and continuing their education. This study contributes to understanding the realities faced by teenage mothers and the importance of holistic support in their academic and personal lives.

**Keywords**— Teenage pregnancy, adolescent pregnancy, resilience, education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is slowly killing the fate of our youth and the future of our nations. Teenage pregnancy had been a worldwide issue, and has outstretched great numbers of drives and awareness to decrease its rate. The total number of this situation is increasing each year (Boateng, et al., 2018).

Globally, about 16 million lasses between the ages of 15 to 19 and some 1 million girls below the age of 15 give birth every year especially in low- and middle-income countries (Adu Bright Schandorf, 2013).

Philippines is one of the country in Asia which have similar situation. . In fact, it has emerged to be one of the major public health problems in South Asia (Raj et al., 2010). From the study conducted by the National Demographic and Health Survey in 2013, one out of every young Filipino women age 15 to 19 is already a mother or pregnant with a first child. Therefore, the government find ways to lessen these issues through partnership with the different non-government agencies in resolving this issue. . (Salvador, Sauce, Alvarez, Rosario, 2016)

Teenage Pregnancies are frequently related with social development issues such as lack of sufficient education, poverty and through the influence of social media. This often results to single parenthood at the early stage

where in the mother can't ensure the needs of their children and it will result to a conditions that render the mothers to become irresponsible. (Salvador, Sauce, Alvarez, Rosario, 2016)

Hence, it conveys a social stigma in various countries and cultures. This study would like to focus on discovering the lived experiences of being a teenage mother at the same time as a learner in Senior High School. The researchers would like to explore on how they prepare and accept their new roles as teen age mother at the same time as a learner. Through the gathered data, qualitative content analysis was used to this study.

## II. EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was supported by the epistemology of constructionism (Crotty, 2003; Faux, 2008). Constructivism is the recognition that reality is a product of human intelligence interacting in the process of knowing the reality. Therefore, reality is perceived to be subjective (David Elkind, 2020).

In data gathering and its interpretation, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism as according to Crotty (2003) was utilized in order to understand fully how life experiences of SHS teen age mom learner.

The theoretical perspective of interpretivism (Crotty, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) guided in the collection and interpretation of data. This theoretical perspective is also known as interpretivists (interpretivist approach is based on naturalistic approach of data collection such as interviews and observations) involves researchers to interpret elements of the study, thus interpretivism integrates human interest into a study. Interpretivist philosophy is based on the critique of positivism in social sciences. This philosophy emphasizes qualitative over quantitative analysis. This perspective helped the researcher in understanding the participants' personal and collective participation on her experiences as SHS teen-age mom (Angeles et.al,2020).

Maslow's Peak Experiences Theory. Maslow described peak experiences as such sudden feelings happiness and well-being, with an awareness of ultimate truth and unity of all things. Those having peak experience tell of a sense of control over the body and emotions, a greater sense of awareness and a feeling of awe and wonder at the oneness with the world. They have encountered the ultimate truth or the essence of all things. This theory helps this study to better understand the experiences of her life being in love and became a teen age mom.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### *Part 1. Participant of the Study*

This study purposively selected a learner named Inday (A Pseudonym) of Banate National High School, Grade 12 learners with two kids, living with her boyfriend. They are both of the same age. The participant got pregnant School Year 2019-2020 of their 1st child, then after giving birth of their 1st child got pregnant again in the same year.

#### *Part 2. Setting of the Study*

The setting of the study was in a close room of Banate National High School where the teacher-researcher is teaching and "Inday" was studying. The whole conversation was recorded through fieldnotes and mobile phone recorder.

#### *Part 3. Data Sources*

This study utilized a narrative inquiry research method. The researcher was used the following sources of data in relation to research questions to find answer on the questions about her study. Mobile Phone Recording, Field Observation Notes and Transcripts of Interviews. Follow-up questions were also asked to clarify some of her stories. The entire interview lasted for about forty minutes.

#### *Part 4. Procedure of the Study*

##### *Research Preliminaries*

There were four (4) choices as a participant of this study. All of them are teenage mother who are presently studying in Senior High School and got pregnant during pandemic. Inday was chosen because she has exceptional story to tell. The researcher briefly explains to Inday the purpose why the study will be conducted and let the participants sign the consent and assent forms as a sign and she agrees to participates willingly to the study.

##### *Data Analysis*

The researchers decided to choose Inday as participant on this study. Through a depth one on one interview highlighting on her experiences like her struggles and problems she faced from first pregnancy until on their second child. The researchers encoded the questions and the answers of the participants. Using Labov's model for oral narrative participant answered those questions honestly through narration about her experiences being pregnant. All her responses were encoded, transcribed, interpreted and analyzed through narrative analysis.

### IV. DISCUSSIONS

This study was conducted to explore the challenges experienced by a teenage learner who became a mom especially in times of pandemic. Inday's struggles and experiences give a more detailed view of being a mother and a learner at the same time that underwent difficulties and challenges. Understandably, this is one case study and generalizations are inappropriate. However, the story of Inday can provide specific insights on the learners of the struggles and challenges of a teenage mother.

#### *Inday, a teenage mom*

Inday (Pseudonym) was referred to a teenage learner who lives in one of the towns in the province of Iloilo. She was 16 years old, a grade 9 learner, she got pregnant after having an intimate relationship with a young male learner from Grade 10.

When we started our relationship, he would court me every day by bringing me food during recess and aside from that we would often call each other even after we've spent some time talking to each other at school.

#### *Lack of proper parental guidance*

Looking back at the start of her story, Inday came from a family whose mother was working abroad to financially support their needs. Her father was always

busy with his buy and sell business and mostly not at home. If he was at home, he usually brings a mistress with him and Inday would often run away from home and go wherever she wants. Inday prefer to be with her boyfriend than staying at home and her other siblings was also busy with their own lives. According to her no one is guiding her or reprimand her of going out with her boyfriend.

My mother has been working abroad since we were small. My siblings are too busy with their own lives, so there was no one giving me advice or reprimand me whenever I stay overnight to my boyfriend's house.

#### ***Escaping from Emotional Stress at Home***

Inday wanted to forget all the problems she had. When she was in her Grade 9 she met her boyfriend at school and they started dating in their classrooms. She found the love and attention she was longing from her boyfriend. Until they go out together and did premarital sex and got pregnant.

There was a time that he challenges me to try sex, even though I was nervous I gave up my virginity because I want to forget all the problems that I have in my life.

#### ***Mental and Emotional Struggles during Pregnancy***

While she was pregnant she was afraid to tell her parents for they might disown her or stop supporting her and eventually she could not continue her studies. Fear of taking swab test adds to her burden for she might be positive and needs to be quarantined since it was pandemic. Financial instability also stressed her for the payment of her prenatal every month and cannot even buy necessary things needed for her child after she gave birth. Her parent's reaction to her getting pregnant added burden to her because of the curses and kicking her out from the family.

Pregnancy brought so many physical and financial struggles to the participant. Likewise, Inday did not receive sufficient support from her parents due to their anger of her getting pregnant. Though she was supported by her partner it was not enough for their needs since he only receives unfix and inadequate payment from his sidelines.

"...every time I smell garlic and onions I feel like vomiting. I also felt pain on my hips but I just kept everything secret from my family."

Aside from physical struggles she also experienced financial constraints since the time her mother knew

about her pregnancy. Her mother neglected her responsibilities to provide financial help towards her daughter.

#### ***The Struggles After Giving Birth***

According to her the real hardship begins when she gave birth of her baby. She needs to get up from sleep 4 times every night and she can no longer answer her modules and cannot submit on time.

"I need to get up from sleep four times every night, around 8:00 o'clock, 10:00 o'clock, 12:00 o'clock, and 2:00 o'clock just to breastfeed my child. I cannot answer my modules anymore I'm felt so sleepy already."

#### ***The Point of Realization***

Despite the experiences and challenges, she had encountered. Inday was still pursuing to finish her studies so that she can help her family in the future. Though she greatly regrets what she did. She still hopes to finish her studies and also desires to become successful in the future.

"If I will be given a chance to turn back time, I will never allow myself to get pregnant at a very young again because I want to finish my studies."

### **V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of the research showed that the participant was at first lived a normal life of a student; she never intended to get pregnant nor expected her life to be out of track. But due to her emotional problems, she resorted to comfort herself by finding a person who would listen to her and give her an unconditional love.

The participant was not given a proper guidance by the parents. Since the mother has been an OFW for a very long time and the father had shown illicit affairs with the other women. This impacted the life of the participant to resort to premarital sex.

The participant however, never neglected her studies despite that she got pregnant during pandemic. She continued to pursue her studies by taking modular classes. The participant never gave up her hope to finish her studies despite poverty, emotional stress and even mental and physical struggles she is facing everyday as a teenage mother.

### **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

To the school administrators and teachers that serve as the second parent for the learners. They should be aware of the emotional struggles of each learner and monitor

the learners by conducting a home visitation. Likewise, conduct a symposium about sex education to give awareness to the students of the consequences of teenage pregnancy.

To the parents, this study will be their guide on how to fully educate their children to avoid premarital sex. Moreover, parents will gain insights on how to handle family problems without neglecting their responsibilities as parents.

To the future researcher, they will be able to expand this study by utilizing qualitative research and the findings can be discussed and explained further.

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ISSN: 2582-6832