

Lived Experiences of Teen-aged Maguindanaon Student Mothers in South Central Mindanao, Philippines

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Abstract

It is a general belief that family is the smallest unit of society. Marriage has a set of standards and qualifications coupled with duties and responsibilities. In Southern Philippines, marriage among Maguindanaons has a unique doctrine and qualification that is completely different from the cultural practices and standards among Filipino majority. The unique established standard and prerequisites among Filipinos would have hindered teenage success in education. The study conducted by Mollborn(2007) revealed that people predominantly believed early marriage decreases the teenage desire for education. This finding was confirmed in this similar study.

The study primarily wanted to explore and described the experiences of student teenage mothers in Southern Philippines particularly in the predominantly occupied Bangsamoro. This study was only limited to their experiences, aspirations, and realizations.

There were 12 participants who happened to be minor Maguindanaon mothers and returned back to school for education. Interviews and focused group discussions (FGDs) including audit-trail were conducted using purposive sampling to ensure consistency in the responses.

The findings revealed that they went back to school the least is to finish high school although they find hard time and difficulty in the time management, financial and attention as a student mother and as a student.

Moreover, the participants hoped to have some poverty alleviation driven programs and similar mechanisms offered to them by the local and national government.

Key Words: *Lived Experiences, Maguindanaon student mother, maguindanaon, South Central Mindanao*

I. INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy has been drastically increased by 60% since 2000 (PSA). This statistical percentage has been shown alarming. The increasing

number of premature and unplanned pregnancy raises high concern about playing the role of mother at an early adolescence stage of teenage mother-life.

Predetermined pregnancy among young individuals can compromise their education. Statistics showed that beginning 1996, student mothers who returned to school have been surfacing in various secondary schools nationwide. The teenage situation confronts unwanted status if not multiple dilemmas both her role as a mother or a student, emotional pressure as a teenager or a student or a traditional mother who looks forward to the welfare of her child or studies. The situation would face her with different experiences and challenges of motherhood as she gets involved in socio-cultural activities both a mother and a student.

In the Philippine setting, student mothers are almost a common experience and Filipino adopts to the culture of becoming a hero of rearing the child absence of a "padre de Familia". Living together as husband and wife without the benefit of marriage has been legalized. Precisely, the situation has been aggravated.

The teenage Maguindanaon student mother is a unique study among other studies of a similar situation because Maguindanao culture dictates and strict in its policy that woman cannot bear solely her child absence of legal marriage even at an early puberty stage.

This distinct situation among culturally Maguindanaon made the researcher-initiated to come up with an in-depth study on the lived-experiences, challenges and their coping mechanisms faced by the participants in doing simultaneously the multi-faceted roles as husband, mother and a student.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was primarily a qualitative study aims at determining the lived experiences of teenage Maguindanaon students, the challenges they encounter and coping mechanisms. There were 12 participants whom they were selected roster of participants of the same situation. However, the participants were selected on the basis of the criteria

on the evaluation tool anchored from the initial interview identifying who were student mothers from the selected secondary schools in Central Mindanao and willing to disclose with confidentiality of their experiences, their challenges, and coping mechanisms on the basis of a balanced situation.

Practically, participants were selected from enumerations of participants-to-be but only those who had experienced the most difficult situations. They were identified using purposive sampling technique. To assure them of keeping the information generated with the utmost security of confidentiality, the interview and focus-group-discussions were conducted in the most secure and private places where openness, trust, and revelation can be done.

The information generation did not culminate right from the interview and focus-group-discussion. The researcher had conducted an audit-trail study to validate the information generated during the interview and FGDs through house visitation and another interview of selected participants from among those who were interviewed concerning the impact of sharing, the revelations they made, and the later adjustment and emotional instability before they were interviewed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher had only identified the extremely uncommon points revealed by the participants. Narrow and shallow revelations of the participants which the researcher thinks it is a common experience had been excluded from the results presented.

Lived Experiences and Challenges: Parent, Wife and a Student

Majority of the participants had enunciated they are not emotionally prepared for the status they had now. They, indeed, repented. Student at the same a wife is difficult because I am almost at the point of sacrificing the other or leaving the family. "Masakit makita na hindi ko maibigay ang buong oras sa sarili ko at bilang nanay. Minsan naisip kong sumuko o i-sakripisyo ang isa" Zhang(2011) has cited that experiences and challenges of motherhood in diverse culture cause them to abandon one role for the sake of others. This was affirmed by Temblador (1990) emphasizing that student's and mother's time has been double. This indicates that time has been a major indicative being a student and a mother.

Student mothers have oftentimes humiliated and discriminated by peers in the school. They really want to involve in the school activities and play like an ordinary student but groups dishonor them reasons that they (student-mother) are already at age. "Halos makakita kami ng kaaway dahil tinutuya kami at matanda na daw kami kaya di kami bagay sa kanila" De Villiers(1991) as confirmed by Creatsas in 1993 revealed that peer pressure and school environment

have, in fact, have commonly affect teenage mother emotions. This would mean that student mothers if they go back to school must have been oriented on the possible problems they would encounter so that they could be ready of it.

Another situation that we almost do is hiding our real we. We let the proper time for our peers to discover who really are we. "Minsan nagkukunwari kaming walang mga obligasyon kase alam namin na magiging mahirap ang mga sitwasyon kung sakali. Minsan tinatanggi namin ng todo. Araw-araw, kada pasok namin ay halos puno ang mga isip namin ng kasinungalingan kase baka makahanap kami ng kaaway." Springer et.al (2009) found out that student mothers were oftentimes felt prejudices, avoidance and discriminatory and deprived of equal footing to others. The institution should have and must have interventions to counter all these and to increase motivations to student mothers to come back to school for all socio-economic opportunity.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher finds it imperative that anticipation of an untoward situation between and among students, the DepEd as an institution must initiate action plan and advocacy to ensure that teenage student mothers should receive a special treatment to avoid teasing and bullying. Furthermore, special counseling services and other mechanisms shall be offered such as profiling of students with special concern shall be treated distinctively.

V. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings, the researcher concludes that teenage student motherhood must be carefully seen not just like a normal and ordinary situation that occurs in our environment. This requires deeper attention and concerns. The Department of Education(DepEd) must consider and carefully look at the situation of student motherhood and should anticipate a bigger problem in the future. Therefore, there should be special programs which should be culturally sensitive that would encourage numerous teenage mothers around the country who were reluctant to coming back to school due to fear of teasing by peers, addressing emotional maturity programs and awareness among the general studentry.

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