Universitas: Journal of Global Research and Innovation
Excellence. Quality. Reliability. Service | Contributing to the body of Knowledge

Reflections of Teenage Mothers: A Phenomenological Study

Ramy D. Demotica
Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology, Iloilo, Philippines
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23208767

ABSTRACT

Teenage motherhood presents complex emotional, social, educational, health, and economic challenges, yet the personal voices of young mothers are often overlooked. This study explored the lived experiences and reflections of teenage mothers aged 13–19 in Barangay Calumpang, Molo, Iloilo City, focusing on their experiences during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood, the challenges and emotional experiences they encountered, and the meanings they derived from their experiences. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed. Nine teenage mothers were purposively selected and interviewed using semi-structured, open-ended questions. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method, involving familiarization with the data, extraction of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clustering of themes, development of an exhaustive description, participant validation, and finalization of the findings. The findings revealed that pregnancy was commonly experienced as an unexpected and frightening life transition characterized by shock, fear, isolation, regret, social judgment, disrupted education, and difficulties accessing healthcare. Childbirth was associated with fear, economic hardship, inadequate support, emotional distress, and feelings of being unprepared for motherhood. During early motherhood, participants experienced disrupted schooling, isolation, financial difficulties, family rejection, and social stigma. Despite these hardships, the participants demonstrated resilience, personal growth, strengthened relationships, acceptance, and a deep sense of love and responsibility toward their children. The findings emphasize the need for holistic and compassionate interventions that integrate emotional support, accessible healthcare, educational opportunities, family guidance, and community-based support systems for teenage mothers.

Keywords: *adolescent pregnancy, teenage motherhood, lived experiences, phenomenology, Colaizzi's method, resilience, social stigma, educational disruption, support systems*.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a significant developmental period characterized by substantial physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes. It is also a stage in which young people may become vulnerable to circumstances that can substantially alter their life trajectories. One such circumstance is teenage pregnancy, which introduces the responsibilities of pregnancy and motherhood while an individual is still undergoing adolescent development.

Teenage pregnancy has both health and social dimensions. Adolescent mothers may encounter health-related risks, while their children may also experience adverse outcomes. Beyond physical health, teenage pregnancy may affect education, relationships, economic security, emotional well-being, and future opportunities. Thus, the issue extends beyond pregnancy itself and encompasses the experiences of childbirth and the subsequent transition into motherhood.

The experiences of teenage mothers have been examined in relation to educational disruption, poverty, stigma, psychological difficulties, and health concerns. Previous studies have documented the challenges associated with adolescent pregnancy, including its effects on young mothers' emotional well-being, education, social relationships, and economic circumstances (Salvador et al., 2016; Libo-on et al., 2021; Gatbonton, 2021; Mizero et al., 2024). However, quantitative statistics and general descriptions of teenage pregnancy cannot fully explain how young mothers personally experience and interpret pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood.

The local context further highlights the importance of examining these experiences. In Iloilo City, teenage pregnancy cases increased from 427 in 2021 to 476 in 2022 and 527 in 2023. Within the Molo District, Barangay Calumpang recorded the highest incidence among the district's barangays, with teenage births increasing from 13 in 2021 to 25 in 2023. These circumstances provided an important context for understanding the experiences of teenage mothers in the community.

Beyond these statistics are personal experiences involving fear, regret, social judgment, family relationships, educational aspirations, economic difficulties, healthcare access, coping, and hopes for the future. Understanding these experiences requires listening directly to the voices of teenage mothers and examining the meanings they attach to their experiences.

The present study therefore focused on teenage mothers in Barangay Calumpang, Molo, Iloilo City. It sought to understand their lived experiences during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood, identify the challenges and emotional experiences they encountered, and explore how they reflected on their experiences as young mothers. By focusing on their

personal narratives, the study contributes a deeper understanding of teenage motherhood within a specific local and community context.

The study was guided by a qualitative phenomenological approach, which enabled the researcher to examine the participants' perceptions, emotions, meanings, struggles, and reflections. The findings are intended to provide insights that may assist policymakers, educators, healthcare providers, social workers, families, and community stakeholders in developing more responsive programs, policies, and activities for teenage mothers

Research Problem

Teenage pregnancy continues to present significant challenges to young women, particularly in relation to emotional well-being, education, family relationships, economic security, healthcare access, and social acceptance. Although existing studies have documented the prevalence and consequences of teenage pregnancy, there remains a need to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the teenage mothers themselves.

The problem addressed by this study was the limited understanding of the personal experiences, emotions, challenges, and reflections of teenage mothers in Barangay Calumpang, Molo, Iloilo City. The increasing incidence of teenage pregnancy in the locality provided a practical reason for examining the experiences of those directly affected.
The study was conducted to explore the experiences of teenage mothers during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood and to understand how they interpreted and reflected upon these experiences. Specifically, the study sought to address the following questions:

1. What are the real-life experiences during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood of adolescent mothers?
2. What unique challenges and emotional experiences do teenage mothers encounter?
3. How do these young mothers view and reflect on their experiences as teenage mothers?
4. How can the results of the study help improve programs, policies, and activities that are beneficial to teenage mothers?

Addressing these questions is significant because understanding the lived experiences of teenage mothers can provide a stronger basis for developing interventions that respond not only to pregnancy itself but also to the emotional, educational, social, economic, and healthcare needs that may continue throughout early motherhood.

Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on several assumptions concerning the experiences and circumstances of teenage mothers. First, it assumed that teenage mothers may experience emotional difficulties such as shock, sadness, regret, fear, loneliness, and uncertainty as they confront pregnancy and early motherhood.

Second, the study assumed that support from families, communities, and institutions may not always be sufficient to address the various challenges experienced by teenage mothers. Social stigma and judgment from family members, peers, and the wider community were also assumed to contribute to emotional pressure and difficulties in adjusting to motherhood.

Third, the study assumed that teenage mothers possess the capacity for resilience and may demonstrate determination in managing difficult circumstances. Their experiences may also influence their perspectives concerning responsibility, decision-making, education, relationships, and their future.

The study further assumed that teenage mothers require more than financial assistance. Emotional, psychological, educational, healthcare, and social support may be necessary to help them cope with motherhood and pursue their future goals. Strong family relationships and supportive communities were likewise assumed to contribute to their ability to adjust, recover, and rebuild their lives.

Finally, the study assumed that education, mentorship, and peer-support mechanisms may provide important opportunities for teenage mothers to develop confidence, acquire skills, strengthen social connections, and pursue improved opportunities for themselves and their children.

These assumptions served as starting points for understanding the phenomenon and were not treated as established findings. The actual experiences and meanings expressed by the participants were determined through the phenomenological inquiry and analysis of their narratives.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to explore the lived experiences and reflections of teenage mothers in Barangay Calumpang, Molo, Iloilo City.

Specifically, it sought to:
1. describe the real-life experiences of adolescent mothers during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood;
2. identify the unique challenges and emotional experiences encountered by teenage mothers;
3. explore how teenage mothers viewed and reflected on their experiences as teenage mothers; and
4. identify how the findings could contribute to programs, policies, and activities beneficial to teenage mothers.

These objectives directly guided the qualitative phenomenological inquiry and the organization of the findings according to the participants' experiences, challenges, reflections, and implications for support and intervention..

Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Erikson, 1968; Bandura, 1986). Bronfenbrenner's framework provided a way of understanding how teenage mothers were influenced by interconnected environments, including family, school, peers, healthcare services, and the broader community. Erikson's theory highlighted adolescence as a critical period for identity development, which may become more complex when adolescent identity formation occurs simultaneously with the demands of motherhood. Social Cognitive Theory provided insight into the influence of environment, personal beliefs, observed behavior, and self-efficacy on decision-making and coping.

Taken together, these perspectives supported an understanding of teenage motherhood as an experience shaped not only by individual circumstances but also by family, educational, social, economic, and community environments.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences and reflections of teenage mothers in Barangay Calumpang, Molo, Iloilo City. The methodological procedures were aligned with the objectives of the study, particularly the exploration of participants' experiences during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood, their challenges and emotional experiences, and the meanings they derived from these experiences. The methodology included the research design, study setting, participant selection, interview procedures, data collection and analysis, and ethical

safeguards. The procedures were designed to obtain rich, firsthand narratives while protecting the privacy, dignity, and welfare of the participants.

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences and reflections of teenage mothers. Phenomenology was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand how participants perceived, interpreted, and made meaning of their experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Van Manen, 1990). The approach enabled the researcher to move beyond observable circumstances and examine participants' emotions, perceptions, personal meanings, struggles, coping experiences, and reflections.

The phenomenological approach was particularly appropriate because the study focused on the participants' firsthand accounts rather than numerical measurement of teenage motherhood. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher was able to examine how the participants understood and gave meaning to their experiences as teenage mothers.

Research Locale or Study Setting

The study was conducted in Barangay Calumpang, Molo, Iloilo City. The area was selected because it had been identified as having a high incidence of teenage pregnancy in recent years and represented a social and economic context relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

The researcher conducted interviews in private and comfortable settings, including the participants' homes when appropriate. Conducting the interviews within a familiar environment was intended to provide participants with emotional comfort and an opportunity to share their experiences openly and honestly.

Participants or Data Sources

The participants were nine teenage mothers aged 13–19 years old who were residing in Barangay Calumpang, Molo, Iloilo City, at the time of the study. Purposive sampling was employed because phenomenological research requires the intentional selection of individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon being investigated (Patton, 2015).

The inclusion criteria required participants to be teenage mothers residing in Barangay Calumpang and willing to share their experiences. Participants below 18 years old were

required to obtain parental or guardian consent, while participants aged 18–19 provided their own informed consent.

The nine participants represented diverse personal and socioeconomic circumstances. At the time of the study, one participant was 15 years old, two were 16, three were 17, two were 18, and one was 19. Eight participants were single and one was married. Five reported incomes below ₱5,000, while four reported incomes between ₱5,000 and ₱10,000. Eight had reached high school level and one had reached college level. Seven were housewives, while the remaining participants were a part-time tutor, a security guard, and a student.

To identify potential participants, the researcher coordinated with the Molo District Health Center and the Barangay Calumpang Local Government Unit (LGU). Formal permission was sought from the appropriate local officials. The Barangay Health Midwife and barangay health workers assisted in identifying potential participants who met the study criteria.

Research Instruments or Materials

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions. The interview format allowed the researcher to maintain consistency across participants while providing sufficient flexibility to explore individual experiences in greater depth.

The questions focused on the participants' experiences during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood, including their emotions, challenges, relationships, coping experiences, and reflections. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words.

The researcher also used an audio-recording device, with the participants' consent, to ensure accurate documentation of the interviews. Field notes were likewise taken to document relevant physical cues, emotional reactions, and observations during the interviews. The interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering followed a systematic and chronological process. First, the researcher coordinated with the Barangay Captain and District Medical Officer to formally inform them about the study and request permission to conduct the research. Formal letters explaining the purpose, objectives, procedures, confidentiality measures, and participant welfare safeguards were submitted to the appropriate authorities.

After permission was obtained, coordination was undertaken with the health center and barangay health personnel to identify potential participants who met the inclusion criteria. Potential participants were first asked whether they were willing to participate before their contact information was shared with the researcher.

Once potential participants were identified, the researcher explained the purpose, procedures, potential benefits and risks, voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality measures. For participants below 18 years old, parental or guardian consent was secured. Participants aged 18–19 provided their own informed consent.

Interviews were then scheduled at a mutually convenient time and conducted in a private and comfortable setting. The researcher began each interview with introductory questions to establish rapport and help participants feel comfortable. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were then used to encourage participants to describe their experiences, emotions, challenges, coping strategies, and reflections.

With participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded. The researcher also took notes concerning relevant physical and emotional cues. Participants were not pressured to disclose information beyond what they were comfortable sharing.

After each interview, a debriefing session was conducted to allow participants to ask questions, clarify their responses, or express emotions arising from the discussion. When necessary, participants showing signs of distress or requesting psychological assistance were referred to an appropriate psychologist or facility.

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher reviewed the transcripts carefully and, when necessary, conducted follow-up discussions with participants to clarify or expand particular responses. Participant validation was subsequently incorporated into the analysis to strengthen the accuracy of the interpretation. After completion of the study, the audio recordings were securely deleted to protect participant confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The study employed Colaizzi's phenomenological method for analyzing the interview data (Colaizzi, 1978). The method was selected because it provides a systematic process for identifying and describing the essential meanings of participants' lived experiences.

The analysis proceeded through the following stages:

1. Familiarization with the data. The researcher repeatedly read the interview transcripts to become familiar with the participants' narratives and the meanings expressed in their accounts.
2. Extraction of significant statements. Statements directly relevant to the research questions and reflecting participants' emotions, challenges, experiences, and coping strategies were identified and extracted.
3. Formulation of meanings. The researcher examined the significant statements and formulated meanings while remaining close to the participants' original accounts.
4. Clustering of themes. Similar formulated meanings were grouped together to identify recurring patterns and broader themes across the participants' experiences.
5. Development of an exhaustive description. The identified themes were integrated into a comprehensive description of the phenomenon of teenage motherhood as experienced by the participants.
6. Returning to participants for validation. The researcher returned to the participants to validate whether the interpretations accurately represented their experiences. Feedback and discrepancies identified during this process were considered in refining the findings.
7. Incorporation of changes and finalization. Necessary revisions based on participant feedback were incorporated, and the final themes and descriptions were developed to remain faithful to the participants' lived experiences.

This analytical process was aligned with the phenomenological design because it emphasized the meanings and common experiences emerging from the participants' narratives rather than statistical measurement.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards were observed throughout the conduct of the study because the research involved minors and addressed sensitive experiences concerning pregnancy, childbirth, family relationships, stigma, and emotional well-being.

Before data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary permissions from the appropriate local authorities. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures, potential benefits and risks, their rights, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study without negative consequences.

For participants below 18 years old, parental or guardian consent was obtained. Participants aged 18–19 provided their own informed consent. Audio recording was conducted only with the participants' permission.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by removing personal identifiers and using pseudonyms in the presentation of the findings. Interview materials and research records were securely stored, while the audio recordings were securely deleted after completion of the study.

Because the interviews involved potentially sensitive and emotionally difficult experiences, the researcher used respectful and nonjudgmental questioning. Participants were allowed to pause, clarify, or discontinue the interview when necessary. Debriefing was provided after the interviews, and participants who demonstrated distress or requested assistance were referred to an appropriate psychologist or facility.

These measures were undertaken to protect the participants' privacy, dignity, autonomy, and emotional well-being throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are presented according to the four specific objectives of the research. The results first describe the participants' lived experiences during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood, followed by the challenges and emotional experiences they encountered. The participants' reflections and meanings derived from their experiences are then presented. Finally, the findings are synthesized to identify implications for programs, policies, and activities that may benefit teenage mothers.
The analysis of the narratives of the nine teenage mothers using Colaizzi's phenomenological method generated recurring themes concerning fear, emotional distress, social stigma, disrupted education, financial hardship, relationship difficulties, isolation, resilience, personal growth, acceptance, and love and responsibility toward their children.

Results for Objective 1

To describe the real-life experiences of adolescent mothers during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood.

The participants' experiences were organized into three major periods: pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood. Across these periods, the narratives demonstrated significant changes in their emotional state, relationships, education, financial circumstances, and daily responsibilities.

Experiences During Pregnancy

The participants commonly described pregnancy as an unexpected and life-altering experience. Feelings of shock, disbelief, fear, confusion, and uncertainty emerged in their narratives. The discovery of pregnancy immediately changed their expectations concerning education, relationships, family life, and their future.

Fear was particularly evident in relation to parental reactions, possible rejection, childbirth, and the responsibilities associated with becoming a mother at a young age. Some participants also experienced isolation as they became increasingly distant from friends and other people in their social environment.

The participants also described experiences of regret, social judgment, and rejection. Some felt that their pregnancy had interrupted their educational plans and altered the direction of their lives. Others experienced negative reactions from family members, peers, or community members.

Education and healthcare were also affected during pregnancy. Some participants discontinued or interrupted their schooling because of pregnancy-related circumstances, emotional difficulties, stigma, and anticipated or actual childcare responsibilities. Healthcare access was likewise affected by fear, shame, and financial limitations.

Experiences During Childbirth

Childbirth was characterized by fear, uncertainty, physical and emotional distress, and feelings of unpreparedness. Participants expressed concerns about the pain of childbirth, possible complications, the safety of their babies, and their own ability to cope with labor and delivery.

Financial difficulties also continued during childbirth. Some participants experienced difficulties meeting hospital-related expenses and purchasing basic necessities for their babies. Limited financial resources also affected access to follow-up healthcare.
The narratives further showed that the availability or absence of family and partner support influenced the childbirth experience. Some participants experienced childbirth with inadequate emotional or practical support, contributing to feelings of loneliness and vulnerability.

Experiences During Early Motherhood

During early motherhood, participants experienced significant changes in their daily routines and priorities. Childcare responsibilities, disrupted education, financial difficulties, isolation, and relationship challenges became recurring aspects of their experiences.

Some participants placed their education on hold because of childcare responsibilities and limited resources. Despite this, education remained an important aspiration for several participants because they viewed it as a means of improving their future and providing better opportunities for their children.

Motherhood also affected participants' social relationships. Time previously spent with friends, in school, or in leisure activities was replaced by childcare and household responsibilities. Consequently, some participants experienced isolation and a diminished sense of belonging.

Despite these difficulties, some participants were able to rebuild relationships with family members, partners, and friends. Improved communication, acceptance, understanding, and time contributed to the restoration of some strained relationships.

A significant finding was the emergence of resilience and personal growth. Participants demonstrated determination to continue caring for their children and improving their lives. Some became more responsible and mature, while others developed stronger aspirations for education, employment, and personal development.

Table 1
Summary of Major Experiences of Teenage Mothers Across Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Early Motherhood

Period	Major Experiences
Pregnancy	Shock and disbelief; fear and anxiety; isolation; regret; social judgment; educational disruption; healthcare difficulties
Childbirth	Fear of pain and complications; emotional distress; financial hardship; inadequate support; feelings of unpreparedness
Early motherhood	Disrupted education; childcare responsibilities; financial difficulties; isolation; family and relationship difficulties; resilience and personal growth

Discussion of Objective 1

The findings demonstrate that teenage motherhood is not a single event but a continuing experience that develops across pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood. The participants encountered changing forms of vulnerability as they moved from discovering their pregnancy to experiencing childbirth and eventually assuming the responsibilities of motherhood.

The findings are consistent with literature showing that adolescent pregnancy may be associated with emotional distress, educational disruption, economic difficulties, and social challenges. The experiences of fear, uncertainty, and emotional distress during childbirth are also consistent with findings reported by Mangeli et al. (2018), which identified psychological and emotional difficulties among adolescent mothers.

The findings may also be understood through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the influence of interconnected environments on individual development. The participants' experiences were influenced not only by their individual circumstances but also by their relationships with parents, partners, peers, schools, healthcare providers, and the wider community.

Similarly, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory provides a useful perspective because the participants were simultaneously experiencing adolescence and the transition into motherhood. The demands of motherhood occurred during a developmental period in which they were still forming their identities and establishing future aspirations.
Overall, the findings suggest that support for teenage mothers should extend beyond pregnancy and childbirth. Continued assistance during early motherhood is necessary because educational, economic, emotional, and social challenges often persist after delivery.

Results for Objective 2

To identify the unique challenges and emotional experiences encountered by teenage mothers.

The participants' narratives revealed several interconnected challenges. The major themes were family rejection and displacement, financial strain and food insecurity, social stigma and negative labeling, educational disruption, isolation, and emotional distress.

Family Rejection and Displacement

Some participants experienced conflict with their families after their pregnancies became known. In some cases, participants were asked to leave their homes and subsequently stayed with a partner's family or other relatives.

Although alternative living arrangements provided physical shelter, they did not necessarily resolve the emotional effects of parental rejection. Family conflict contributed to feelings of insecurity, loneliness, and emotional distress.

Financial Strain and Food Insecurity

Financial hardship was a recurring concern. Some participants struggled to provide food, clothing, diapers, healthcare, and other basic necessities for their children. Limited financial resources also affected their ability to access healthcare and maintain their own needs.

The findings indicate that financial difficulties were not experienced independently. Economic limitations were connected to education, healthcare access, childcare, and emotional well-being.

Social Stigma and Negative Labeling

Participants reported experiences of **social judgment and negative labeling**. Some were described in derogatory terms or were treated as bad influences because of their teenage pregnancy.

Such experiences contributed to feelings of shame, rejection, isolation, and reduced social belonging. The stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy therefore became an additional challenge that participants had to manage alongside the responsibilities of motherhood.

Educational Disruption

Education was another major challenge. Some participants discontinued or postponed their studies because of pregnancy, childbirth, childcare responsibilities, financial limitations, and lack of support.

Despite the disruption, education remained an important aspiration. Several participants continued to express a desire to return to school, obtain employment, and improve their future circumstances.

Isolation and Emotional Distress

Participants experienced emotional difficulties that included fear, anxiety, sadness, regret, loneliness, and uncertainty. Isolation resulted both from negative reactions from others and from the practical responsibilities of caring for a child.

The participants' social lives changed considerably because activities previously associated with adolescence were replaced by childcare and household responsibilities.

Discussion of Objective 2

The findings indicate that the challenges encountered by teenage mothers are interconnected rather than isolated. Family rejection may intensify emotional distress; financial hardship may affect healthcare and education; educational disruption may limit future opportunities; and stigma may discourage young mothers from seeking assistance.
The finding concerning financial hardship is consistent with previous research identifying economic vulnerability as an important challenge among adolescent mothers. Similarly, the experiences of isolation and social stigma are consistent with studies that have identified social exclusion and negative community attitudes as significant difficulties associated with teenage motherhood.

The findings also support the ecological perspective of Bronfenbrenner because the challenges experienced by the participants occurred across multiple levels of their environment. The family, school, healthcare system, peer group, and community all influenced the participants' experiences.

Importantly, the findings suggest that interventions focused exclusively on preventing teenage pregnancy may be insufficient. Once pregnancy has occurred, teenage mothers require interventions that address the social, educational, economic, emotional, and healthcare dimensions of their lives.

Results for Objective 3

To explore how teenage mothers viewed and reflected on their experiences as teenage mothers.

The participants' reflections revealed that their experiences gradually acquired meanings related to responsibility, decision-making, education, acceptance, personal growth, and love for their children.

Resilience and Responsible Decision-Making

Participants reflected on the importance of making careful decisions and considering the possible consequences of their actions. Their experiences became sources of learning concerning responsibility and the long-term effects of personal choices.

Education as a Pathway Forward

Education emerged as a strong theme in the participants' reflections. Several participants viewed education as an important means of improving their circumstances and creating better opportunities for themselves and their children.
Although teenage motherhood disrupted their educational plans, it did not completely eliminate their educational aspirations.

Acceptance and Self-Improvement

Participants also reflected on the importance of accepting their circumstances and moving forward. Acceptance was associated with taking responsibility, improving their situation, and developing a more positive outlook toward the future.

Love and Responsibility Toward Their Children

The participants' children became an important source of motivation. The narratives reflected feelings of love, joy, responsibility, and determination to provide better lives for their children.

Motherhood was therefore not viewed solely as a negative experience. Although participants recognized the difficulties associated with becoming mothers at a young age, some also regarded motherhood as an experience that encouraged maturity, responsibility, and personal growth.

Discussion of Objective 3

The participants' reflections demonstrate the coexistence of vulnerability and resilience. Although teenage motherhood disrupted important aspects of their adolescent lives, participants were not passive recipients of their circumstances. They demonstrated the

capacity to interpret their experiences, learn from them, establish new priorities, and develop aspirations for the future.

This finding is consistent **with Social Cognitive Theory,** particularly the importance of personal beliefs, environmental influences, and self-efficacy in shaping behavior and coping. Supportive relationships and positive experiences may strengthen young mothers' confidence in their ability to manage motherhood and pursue future goals.

The finding concerning education is particularly important. Education was not merely perceived as a previous opportunity that had been lost; it became a pathway toward rebuilding the participants' futures. This suggests that educational programs for teenage mothers should address not only access to schooling but also motivation, childcare, emotional support, and economic barriers.

The participants' love and responsibility toward their children also demonstrate that motherhood can become a source of meaning and motivation. This does not negate the hardships they experienced but illustrates that their lived experiences contained both difficult and transformative dimensions.

Results for Objective 4

To identify how the findings of the study could contribute to programs, policies, and activities beneficial to teenage mothers.

The findings identified several areas requiring attention in programs and services for teenage mothers:

1. Emotional and psychosocial support – Participants' experiences of fear, anxiety, isolation, rejection, and stigma indicate the need for accessible counseling and psychosocial services.
2. Accessible and adolescent-friendly healthcare – Experiences involving fear, shame, financial limitations, and inadequate support indicate the need for respectful, nonjudgmental prenatal, childbirth, and postnatal services.
3. Educational support and reintegration – Disrupted education and continuing educational aspirations indicate the need for flexible learning arrangements, childcare support, and mechanisms that facilitate school continuation or return.
4. Family and parental support – Experiences of rejection and displacement demonstrate the importance of programs that strengthen family communication, acceptance, parental guidance, and constructive support.

5. Livelihood and economic assistance – Financial difficulties and food insecurity indicate the need for livelihood opportunities, skills development, and appropriate social assistance.
6. Community-based support and stigma reduction – Negative labeling and social isolation indicate the importance of community education and peer-support mechanisms.
7. Integrated services – The interconnected nature of the participants' challenges indicates the need for coordination among healthcare providers, schools, families, local government units, social workers, and community organizations.

Discussion of Objective 4

The findings suggest that effective interventions for teenage mothers should be integrated, sustained, and responsive to their actual lived experiences. A program addressing only healthcare, for example, may not sufficiently address the educational, economic, emotional, and social difficulties experienced by young mothers.
The results therefore support a multi-sectoral approach involving healthcare institutions, educational institutions, families, local government units, social service providers, and community organizations. Such coordination can help ensure that teenage mothers receive continuous support from pregnancy through early motherhood.

The findings further emphasize that teenage mothers should not be approached solely as recipients of assistance. Their resilience, aspirations, and capacity for personal growth should also be recognized. Programs should therefore provide opportunities for education, livelihood, skills development, counseling, and meaningful participation in decisions affecting their lives.

General Discussion

The overall findings reveal that teenage motherhood in Barangay Calumpang is a multidimensional lived experience characterized by both vulnerability and resilience. The participants experienced fear, emotional distress, stigma, family conflict, educational disruption, financial hardship, healthcare difficulties, and social isolation. These challenges were experienced across pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood rather than being limited to the period of pregnancy.

At the same time, the participants demonstrated resilience and the capacity for personal growth. They developed greater responsibility, rebuilt some relationships, maintained aspirations for education and employment, accepted their circumstances, and found motivation through their children.

The findings collectively support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, as the participants' experiences were shaped by interconnected relationships and environments. Family, peers, schools, healthcare providers, economic circumstances, and the community all contributed to how teenage motherhood was experienced and managed.
The findings also support Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, as the participants experienced the demands of motherhood while still navigating adolescence and identity development. Becoming a mother at a young age required them to negotiate competing identities as adolescents, students, daughters, partners, and mothers.

Furthermore, the participants' resilience and efforts toward self-improvement can be understood through Social Cognitive Theory, particularly the interaction between personal beliefs, environmental conditions, and behavior. Despite difficult circumstances, supportive relationships and personal motivation enabled some participants to develop stronger determination and future aspirations.

A central contribution of the study is the recognition that teenage mothers should not be understood solely through statistics concerning pregnancy, childbirth, or demographic characteristics. Their experiences reveal a more complex reality in which hardship and hope, vulnerability and agency, and disruption and personal growth coexist.

The findings also have important practical implications. Schools may need flexible educational arrangements and reintegration mechanisms. Healthcare providers should provide adolescent-friendly and nonjudgmental services. Families should be encouraged to provide acceptance and constructive guidance. Local government units and community organizations may strengthen integrated programs addressing healthcare, education, livelihood, childcare, psychosocial support, and stigma reduction.

The study is limited by its focus on nine teenage mothers from Barangay Calumpang, Molo, Iloilo City. As a phenomenological study, its purpose was to provide an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences rather than statistical generalization to all teenage mothers. Future studies may involve participants from other communities and compare experiences across different socioeconomic, educational, and cultural contexts.

Overall, the findings indicate that programs and policies for teenage mothers should move beyond prevention-oriented approaches and include compassionate, sustained, and integrated support for young women who are already experiencing motherhood. Listening to their voices provides an important basis for developing interventions that are responsive to their actual needs, aspirations, and lived realities.

REFERENCES

Amolo, R. M., Calamohoy, D. E., Congson, J. C., Cubillan, G. J., Gingoyon, H. M., Lanticse, C., Lausa, J. M., Tajanlangit, L. B., del Socorro, C., & Gagani, F. (2024). “If I stop now what will happen later?”: The lived experiences of teenage moms as students and mothers in Cebu City during the pandemic. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 5*(2). https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.05.02.10

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.

Bah, S. (2016). Teenage motherhood and mental health: A qualitative study on the emotional challenges of adolescent mothers. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 58*(4), 402–407. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.12.016

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Harvard University Press.

Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. S. Valle & M. King (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48–71). Oxford University Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Ellis-Sloan, K., & Tamplin, A. (2018). Teenage mothers and social isolation: The role of friendship as protection against relational exclusion. *Journal of Social Policy*. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279418000199

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. W. W. Norton.

Gatbonton, R. R. G. (2021). Educational experiences of adolescent mothers while studying college in the Philippines. *IAFOR Journal of Education, 9*(1), 41–58.

Libo-on, J. T., Manzo, J. F., & Manzo, O. I. (2021). Teenage pregnancy: A mother’s perspective. https://doi.org/10.33094/7.2017.2021.82.50.55

Mangeli, M., Rayyani, M., Cheraghi, M. A., & Tirgari, B. (2018). Exploring the challenges of adolescent mothers from their life experiences in Iran. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*.

Mizero, D., Dusingize, M. I., Shimwa, A., Uwimana, A., Waka, T. Y., & Wong, R. (2024). Assessing the experiences of teenage mothers in accessing healthcare in Rwanda. *BMC Public Health, 24*, 2309. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-19097-7

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Salvador, J. T., Sauce, B. R. J., Alvarez, M. O. C., & Rosario, A. B. (2016). The phenomenon of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines. *European Scientific Journal, 12*(32), 173–188. https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n32p173

Thongmixay, S., Essink, D., Kahrs, T., Vongxay, V., Wright, P., Sychareun, V., & Broerse, J. E. W. (2023). Isolation: The experience of adolescent motherhood in Laos. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*.

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. State University of New York Press.