

FROM DELIVERING A CHILD TO PURSUING EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF A TEENAGE STUDENT MOTHER

Maria Teresa C. Ragadio

President Ramon Magsaysay State University, San Marcelino, Zambales

Abstract: Teenage pregnancy is one of the most pressing issues in the country today. In Zambales, cases of teenage pregnancy is likewise a perennial challenge not only to health practitioners but more so, to the educators. This case study was conducted to qualitatively describe the experiences of one female teenager who engaged in premarital sex and eventually got pregnant but chose to go back to schooling after. The participant lives with her mom, stepdad and step siblings. She is a strong woman. Despite of engaging in pre-marital sex and teenage pregnancy, she has managed to overcome trials and challenges. Her strong conviction on the importance of education, as supported by her family, made her continue her studies while having to take care of her own son. The preliminary rehabilitation and intervention strategies conducted by the researcher are viewed effective in terms of improving the participant's biopsychosocial aspects and academic performance. After the intervention, her emotional quotient increased making her more mature, more confident and more emotionally stable. A rehabilitation and intervention strategies could be sustained until such time that the client can be fully reformed and can be able to stand of her own as a nurturing mother and as a responsible student. The family members should continue to show their strong support to her so she will be able to finish her collegiate studies. Her peers should be very sensitive of her formative experiences and should help her to improve herself both personal and professionally.

Keywords: teenage pregnancy, premarital sex, rehabilitation and intervention strategies, student mother.

1. INTRODUCTION

Commission on Population (PopCom) Executive Director Juan Antonio Perez III as cited in Geronimo (2017) said that they saw in recent years a rise in the number of teenage pregnancies in the Philippines, from 1,700 cases in 2014 to 1,986 cases in 2015. According to Beck as cited in Geronimo (2017), teenage pregnancy remains a challenge here despite the country's "already strong support for family planning."

Teenage pregnancy is one of the most pressing issues in the country today. It is one of the major factors contributing to the skyrocketing number of out-of-school youths (OSYs). Punongbayan (2014) cited that while both teenage males and females have become more likely to engage in premarital sex, the gap between the sexes has declined over the past decade. He further analysed that a whopping 78% of first instances of premarital sex were unprotected (not only against unwanted pregnancy but also sexually transmitted diseases). Surprisingly, girls were more likely to not use any form of protection during their first sexual encounters.

In Zambales, cases of teenage pregnancy is likewise a perennial challenge not only to health practitioners but more so, to the educators. Mirza as cited in Gavilan (2014) believes giving access to education is the key to ending teenage pregnancy. She emphasized that the most effective contraceptive is girls' education. When a 15-year-old girl gets married and has a child, it is most likely that a lot of opportunities are killed. However, the poverty situation in the Philippines paved the way for adolescent girls to drop out of school. In most cases, instead of studying, they resort to find ways to put food on the table and not be hungry when they go to sleep.

Thus, this case study was conducted to qualitatively describe the experiences of one female teenager who engaged in premarital sex and eventually got pregnant but chose to go back to schooling after.

Objectives of the Case Study

In general, this study aimed to describe the experiences of a teenager as a young mother and as a student.

Specifically, the study aimed to:

- a. Identify the family composition of the participant;
- b. Describe the formative experiences of the participant;
- c. Characterize the participant's behaviour and attitude before and after the intervention; and
- d. Recommend ways to further improve the personal and professional growth of the participant.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study made use of single case study research design. The study qualitatively describe the experiences of the participant as a teenage mother.

Place of the Case Study

The study was conducted at the Ramon Magsaysay Technological University (RMTU) San Marcelino Campus located in San Marcelino, Zambales. The study was conducted in June 2016. The intervention plan is still on-going.

Participant

The case study involved only one participant who was purposively chosen by the researcher. The participant's selection criteria are as follows: (a) must be enrolled under the BSHRM program; (b) must be aged 15 to 20; and (c) must be a teenage mother.

The participant selected for this study is a BS Hotel and Restaurant Management (BSHRM) second year college student of the university. Her name was withheld for ethical considerations and was referred in this case study as Myla. She is living at Purok 7, Brgy. Del Pilar, Castillejos, Zambales and is now 18 years old.

Data Collection

The study made use of a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide was validated by a licensed psychometrician of the University. The participant informed about the objective of the study, and was assured that her responses are invaluable to possible intervention programs for a teenage mother, and her name will be kept confidential.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was treated using content analysis. The data generated served as a baseline information in designing the rehabilitation and intervention strategies.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher protected the participant from harm by exploring and incorporating ethical considerations and while also carefully assessing and addressing potential risk or emotional distress as a result of participating in this study. The researcher let the participant signed an informed consent form before the client engaged in the research study. Moreover, the researcher used fictitious information to ensure that participants' identity are not revealed before, during or after the study. The researcher ensured that no harm was done by reminding the participant that she could discontinue her interviews if she experienced any distress (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2007).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Case Problem

The problem is the early pregnancy of Myla. It was such a big problem because her studies might be affected. Myla was not even ready to assume the responsibility of being a mom. The boyfriend has no job to support Myla and her baby because he is also studying. It had been an additional burden for Myla's mom. They were separated from each other. Myla's mom decided not to go back to Malaysia. She took care of Myla's son.

Family Composition

Table 1 shows the composition of the family of Myla, the participant of the case study.

Table 1: Myla's family composition

| Name | Age | Relationship to Participant | Civil Status | Highest Educational Attainment | Occupation |
|---------|-----|-----------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ricardo | 42 | Stepfather | Separated | 2 nd Year College | Owner of a car repair shop |
| Lucia | 38 | Biological mother | Never married | High School Graduate | Housewife |
| James | 15 | Stepbrother (Ricardo's son) | Single | Grade 9 | N/A |
| Mark | 10 | Stepbrother (Ricardo's son) | Single | Grade 5 | N/A |
| Luke | 10 | Stepbrother (Ricardo's son) | Single | Grade 3 | N/A |
| Jacob | 2 | Son of Myla | Single | N/A | N/A |

Myla's Formative Experiences

Early years

Myla's dad is married to another woman and has three children. He had an extra-marital affair with Lucia, Myla's mom. The mom visits them often and bring with him Myla out. Every time he visits them, he brings Myla out for a stroll.

But one day, Myla's dad started touching the sensitive parts of her body at an early age of 3. Myla, at her very early age, does not realize yet what the biological dad was doing. She thought that it is normal for a father to do such gestures. She did not tell her mom about it. She was sexually molested by her dad every time they see each other.

Later on, the relationship of her dad and mom did not last and so they separated. Myla then did not have a chance to tell about the sexual molestation of her own dad to her for several years.

Molestation for the second time

Months after the separation, Lucia had an affair anew with another man. They lived together in one house with Myla. After several months of living together, the lover of her mom stood as the breadwinner and who pampered Myla. Her mom's lover then took advantage of her. For the second time, Myla was sexually molested. She did not tell to her mom about what happened, afraid that her mom will not believe her. She thought her mom will just think that she's fabricating stories to get attention. Soon after, Lucia and her lover separated because the man cannot support the family anymore.

Rebellion starts

At the age of 7, Lucia went to China then to Malaysia for greener pasture. Myla then was taken care of her very strict aunt, uncle and her grandparents. There were rules to be followed and works to be done. Myla felt imprisoned in her own home. She did not have the freedom that she wanted. She felt unwanted by the family members she's with.

Then, Myla found the sense of belongingness from her peers and classmates. They smoked, drank alcoholic beverages and even tried marijuana. She then had a boyfriend when she was in her junior year in high school.

Teenage pregnancy happens

When she was in the senior year, she got pregnant. She graduated from high school carrying her baby in her womb. The mom of Myla got mad at her and was often panic-stricken and hysterical. The mother could not imagine her daughter having a baby at an early age.

Assessment of the Participant

Based from the interview, the following assessment of the participant was generated.

Strength. Myla is intelligent and beautiful. She also has numerous talents and skills. Myla has big dreams of her own and she's willing to finish her studies.

Weakness. The family is financially unstable. Oftentimes, Myla is late in enrolment and submission of requirements due to financial constraints. She needs attention from her mom and has to develop friendship with her. She could easily be affected by the nagging of her mom and tends to put a gap between them, tells lies and tends to cut classes.

Opportunities. In spite of her past, she can overcome her traumatic experiences because of her strong will and character.

Threats. She could easily fall in love and trust people.

Rehabilitation/ Intervention Plan

The researcher conducted several rehabilitation and intervention strategies for the client, as follows:

1. **Conduct of dialogue with the parents.** The researcher scheduled a talk with the parents and shared to them the nature of the client's case and how they can be of help in her reformation as a person.
2. **Home visitation.** The researcher did a home visit to be immersed in the way the family lives and treats each other.
3. **Regular monitoring of the client.** The researcher regularly monitored the client with regards to her absences, tardiness, behaviour in class, and her submission of her course works to her respective instructors. Immediate feedback was given every time she commits unnecessary or inappropriate actions.

After the intervention, the participant's point of view became more positive and her academic engagement to all her subjects has increased.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The participant lives with her mom, stepdad and step siblings. She is a strong woman. Despite of engaging in pre-marital sex and teenage pregnancy, she has managed to overcome trials and challenges. Her strong conviction on the importance of education, as supported by her family, made her continue her studies while having to take care of her own son. The preliminary rehabilitation and intervention strategies conducted by the researcher are viewed effective in terms of improving the participant's biopsychosocial aspects and academic performance. After the intervention, her emotional quotient increased making her more mature, more confident and more emotionally stable.

Recommendations

Based from the conclusions, the researcher strongly recommends that the rehabilitation and intervention strategies be sustained until such time that the client can be fully reformed and can be able to stand of her own as a nurturing mother and as a responsible student. The family members should continue to show their strong support to her so she will be able to finish her collegiate studies. Her peers should be very sensitive of her formative experiences and should help her to improve herself both personal and professionally.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researcher would like to thank the participant of this study for courageously sharing her story, the parent of the participant for the support in this endeavour, the Bulacan State University Graduate School professors and the researcher's fellow MA students for the encouragement and to Mr. Danilo Rogayan Jr. for the technical assistance in finishing this paper.

REFERENCES

- [1] Geronimo, J.Y. (2017, July 11). Health experts push for PH policy on teenage pregnancy. In Rappler. Retrieved November 9, 2017 from <https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/teenagepregannacy>
- [2] Punongbayan, J. (2014, February 8). Teenage pregnancies: Untangling cause and effect. In Rappler. Retrieved November 9, 2017 from <https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/issues/teenage-pregancies>