



UPHILL BATTLE: A CASE STUDY ON THE ACADEMIC STRUGGLES OF TEENAGE STUDENT-FATHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to understand the academic struggles and situations of the teenage student-fathers. This study was seen through mainly on the Grounded Theory Design as developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) which states that, the time of diagnosis was often the most difficult, seeing teenage fathers in pain and dealing with the uncertainty that accompanies the condition were ongoing sources of stress and fathers were often reluctant to express the range of feelings they experienced due, in part, to their perceived need to be strong for others. The study participants were teenage student-fathers in the selected public high schools in Kapalong district. Four student-fathers participated in an in-depth interview. They were selected using the purposive sampling method. Some challenges emerged, namely: overwhelming responsibilities, facing difficulty in time management, losing freedom, poor study habits, difficulty in grasping lessons, difficulty in answering modules, conflicting responsibilities, facing difficulty in going to school, and having poor academic performance. The results also implied that teenage student-fathers will be provided with relevant information and awareness on their individual responsibilities. Also, parents and guardians must take control of their children's life to pave way to secure their future. Moreover, teenage student-fathers must be provided with various parenthood programs and create innovative programs intended to their needs. It should also be combined with discipline and significant behaviour that aids in overcoming challenges and facing the consequences of their individual actions.

KEYWORDS: Case Study, Academic Struggles, Teenage Student-Fathers, Public Schools,, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Concerns about youthful fertility are not new. In popular discourse young parents are often portrayed as being irresponsible, ignorant and as a threat to the social order. Mothers tend to be viewed as vulnerable, lone and morally suspect, while young fathers are frequently considered to be absent, no use, criminal and socially excluded. This phenomenon requires attention since this would affect the academic performance of the teenage fathers in school (Duncan, 2017).

Moreover, in Thailand, teenage fathers face a range of life consequences compared with their peers who do not have children, including decreased educational achievements and increased likelihood of early marriage or cohabitation. While the costs of teenage motherhood have been extensively studied and documented, there has been relatively little research into the economic and educational consequences faced by teenage fathers. Having a child is a life-changing event that entails dramatic reallocation of time and financial expenses. The negative effects of teenage fatherhood may also limit the future social, educational and economic opportunities of their child (Fagan, 2017).

Meanwhile, In South Africa, in recent years, there has been increased concern concerning the associations of fathers including guardians 'contributions to their children's psychosocial and academic outcomes. There are also studies that have documented the unique contribution of fathers' activities and behaviors, since mothers and fathers differ in terms of parenting styles and parental

involvement. Thus, increased focus on fathers' roles raises new questions about the influences of different categories of fathers in children's developmental outcomes, particularly with regard to changing family dynamics such as divorce, remarriage, and unmarried childbearing. Despite distinct categories of fathers in a variety of family dynamics, prior there are often dichotomize father types into biological fathers versus fathers' influence on children's academic outcomes, instead relying on mothers' involvement to model the effect of both parents (Reeves et.al., 2016).

On the other hand, while teen fatherhood falls outside the scope of traditional norms, values, and expectations, it has become a serious social-health problem in the community nowadays and since teen fathers are neglected by educational, social research and interventions. With the emergence of the concept of teen parenthood, it becomes complex in a society which is rooted in culture that depict teen fathers falling outside the scope of traditional norms, values, and expectations. Furthermore, society constructs teen mothers and fathers as irresponsible, ignorant and a threat to the social order (Duncan, 2007). Teen mothers tend to be viewed as vulnerable, lone and morally suspect, while teen fathers are frequently considered to be absent, no use, criminal and social misfits (Johansson & Hammaren, 2017). Furthermore, Kiernan (2015) stated that fatherhood is unacceptable until a later developmental stage of adulthood, when a person has achieved stability through a long-term relationship and career. Teenage parents represent a particularly vulnerable



group within the educational system presenting difficulties in continuing formal education and in accessing relevant training opportunities. They found that teenage fathers' experiences are a neglected area of research, and where they do appear they are cast as risk factors themselves. The neglect of young fathers may stem from the now displaced view that fathers were irrelevant to the child's psychosocial development.

In the Philippine setting, teenage father's parenthood is a serious problem. It is also demonstrates that boys exposed to risk factors have an increased probability of fathering a child during their teenage years. Consequently, little is known about teen fatherhood which is likely to be underreported because unlike teen mothers; they can deny paternity making them less in numbers. Nevertheless, boys exposed to a number of risk factors have an increased probability of fathering a child during their teenage years. The risk factors associated with teen fatherhood are similar to those associated with teen motherhood. Yet the lives of teen fathers are complicated and filled with a multitude of harsh realities, and their challenges are multi-factorial (Hadley, 2017).

Moreover, in the Division of Davao del Norte, particularly in the Municipality of Kapalong, it was found out that the number of students who became father in an young age is increasing. Hence, students are really struggling in their everyday life since many of them cannot cope with their problems as a father and a student as well which results to their low performance in school. In this matter, students' progress particularly to their studies and learning was affected because of their situation. Furthermore, it was found out also that becoming a father at such a young age in the municipality of Kapalong had its obvious hardships and struggles not only to their *finances, employment, family support*, and particularly to their academic achievement.

The researcher, however, has not come across a study that specifically discussed about the academic struggles of teenage student-fathers. Furthermore, this study would provide relevant concepts that would create in the academic community that would assess the teenage students-fathers in handling and coping their academic performance. Thus, there is an immediate need to conduct this study relating to the academic struggles of teenage student-fathers to widen their ideas about the learning environment, and, the community as a whole. In addition, this phenomenological study would be of great help to the teenage student-fathers to acquire quality education and knowledge despite of their struggles in acquiring education.

It is then a matter of urgency for the teachers to find ways to let the students be more engaged in the teaching learning process and to find more strategies that can boost the students' interest in involving themselves in going to school and learning the subject matter. This research also aims to help teenage student-fathers

specifically on their education. This also aims to create awareness to the teenagers, parents, teachers, and school administration and community to deeply understand their situations. That way, the students may develop their interest in learning effectively and in order the people in the school community understand their struggles and situations.

Research Questions

1. What are the academic struggles of teenage student-fathers?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of teenage student-fathers in their academic struggles?
3. What are the insights that teenage student-fathers that can be shared to others?

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored to the study consisted of a Grounded Theory Design as developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) which states that the time of diagnosis was often the most difficult, seeing teenage fathers in pain and dealing with the uncertainty that accompanies the condition were ongoing sources of stress. However, fathers were often reluctant to express the range of feelings they experienced due, in part, to their perceived need to be strong for others. Instead, they sought to adopt a positive and optimistic stance, routinely perceiving positive aspects of their child's condition in addition to the many challenges.

This study is also supported by the idea of Coltrane (1996) which he mentioned that chronic condition emerged as a catalyst that prophesied fathers to greater involvement and a deeper commitment to their identity as a father. In addition, disappointments from their family of origin, notably a lack of closeness that most fathers experienced in their relationship with qualities of the couple relationship, and a flexible masculine identity emerged as influences that shaped their identity and role as a father.

In addition, Blankenhorn (1995) who stated that fathers perceived themselves in a holistic manner that is, having a variety of identities. In addition to the traditional roles of playmate, provider, and protector, fathers perceived themselves to be a caregiver. This holistic identity required differential use of self. Fathers' identity as a parent was very meaningful; indeed, it appeared to be their most salient identity. Specialized roles for women and men were viewed as the best way to achieve these goals. Instrumental activities were assigned to the father, whose perceived task oriented abilities as breadwinner and protector became part of the cultural blueprint.

It is therefore conceptualized that this case study will focus to describe the academic struggles of teenage students-fathers in their pedagogical approach in learning. This study would also describe how the teachers faced their difficulties with regards to the conduct of their classes.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1

Essential Themes and Thematic Statements on the Experiences of Each Case

Essential Themes	Supporting Statements
Overwhelming Responsibilities	Feeling so much burden of responsibilities at my young age working, caring my child at the same time studying my lessons. Facing difficulty in studying. Feeling of being not ready to be a father. Waking up early to fix everything before going to school.
Loosing Freedom	I cannot decide on my own. I always worry of my child everywhere I go. I cannot go with my friends I am bullied being a student-father. I have to consult my parents every decision I make.
Poor Academic Performance	I cannot manage my time caring my child and studying. I have less time in studying my lessons. I am always late in going to school. I cannot focus on the discussion of the teacher. I always feel asleep in school. I am struggling in coping the lessons.

Table 2

Essential Themes and Thematic Statements on Coping Mechanism of Each Case

Essential Themes	Supporting Statement
Support System	My friends are supporting and giving me an advice. I get some supports from the people around me. My teacher also gave encouragement. I have classmates who understand my situation.
Following Parent's Advice	I always follow the advice of my parents. I listen to the words of my parents. My parents gave me words of encouragement. I follow what they say
Being Focused	I looked on the positive side I kept on thriving for my ambition. I made my child as my inspiration. I became focused in my life.

Table 3

Essential Themes and Thematic Statements on the Insights of Each Case

Essential Themes	Supporting Statements
Learning from Experience	You should not involve myself in teenage relationship You should not rush myself in a relationship. You must avoid myself to an intimate relationship with my girlfriend. You must focus in your studies.
Facing Responsibilities	I cannot do what I want anymore. I have a lot of responsibilities already I faced bigger responsibilities in life
Face Problems Squarely	I have faced many problems because of my decision. I have faced the consequences of my wrong deeds. I am struggling to continue my studies. I have faced so many problems even in my young age.



DISCUSSION

This part, the researchers present the discussion, conclusion and result and for the future researcher for them to have a practice based from themes developed during data analysis. The objective of this case study was understood and discovered the experiences of the single student-fathers through in-depth interview.

The Experiences of Single Student-Fathers Overwhelming Responsibilities

Between excelling at work, juggling domestic duties and managing relationships, life can get extremely stressful. Whether you are struggling with projects at work or a single mother balancing home and work, there is no denying that responsibilities and expectations are weighing you down, leaving you stressed. Meanwhile, Henslin (2016) mentioned that our typical response to ever-growing workloads is to work harder and put in longer hours, rather than to step back and examine what makes us do this and find a new way of operating. The cognitive impact of feeling perpetually overwhelmed can range from mental slowness, forgetfulness, confusion, difficulty concentrating or thinking logically, to a racing mind or an impaired ability to problem solve. In addition, Kegan and Lehey (2015) stated that if feeling overwhelmed is an ongoing struggle, it is likely that you have assumptions that are keeping you stuck in unproductive behaviors. They refer to these as big assumptions it something falls through the cracks, while we may all feel overwhelmed from time to time in our demanding work and personal lives, employing positive strategies can help mitigate the frequency and extent to which we feel this way.

Losing Freedom

One of human basic needs is freedom that play central role in social process. Human development means to expand human choices, which it required to freedom concept. Human development is the most important factor of welfare improvement where the freedom is an essential instrument to achieve it. Moreover, Domina (2015) posited that freedom is one of the most important things in my life because without it we would be unable to do many things. There would still be slaves and there would be no democracy. Freedom is very important to us because we don't want to live in a country where we can't read certain books or one where a woman will get arrested if we doesn't where a veil. We want to live in a country with freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of protest. It is important to have freedom of speech because without it people would have to say what the government wants them to. Furthermore, Jeynes (2017) said that having freedom helps students learn from their mistakes and allows them to show growth in their maturity and responsibility. With a balance of freedoms and responsibilities, you have the opportunity to develop respect between yourself and your students. This freedom protects students from unfair treatment by instructors based on the student's opinions and beliefs. It recognizes that student opinions are valuable and should be

able to be expressed without fear of retribution by the leader of the class. At the same time, the freedom to learn obligates students to follow class assignments and master course content, even if they disagree with it.

Poor Academic Performance

Poor academic performance is one of the greatest concerns of parents over their children. And If this is not looked into, such child will have to face the effect of poor performance which includes gloomy future, youth that are unemployable, etc. Moreover, teachers are not also pleased when their students don't perform well academically. There is a saying which goes, does the success of a teacher depends on the success of his/her students. Therefore, it is important that parents, teachers, and students should spot the cause(s) of poor academic performance before they take any action to solve the problem. Fraser (2014) stated that there is a direct link between poverty and academic performance. According to a research, children living below the poverty threshold are times as likely as non-poor children to experience learning disabilities and developmental delays. It is the work of the teachers and parents to know how to manage the health of their children so as not to impact their academic performance.

The Coping Mechanisms of Single Student-Fathers Support System

Having a strong support system has many positive benefits, such as higher levels of well-being, better coping skills, and a longer and healthier life. It is also shown that social support can reduce depression and anxiety. A strong support system can often help reduce stress. Meanwhile, Ferrell (2017) stated that support system is that you have a network of people that can provide you with practical or emotional support. These support systems will help you improve your overall health and have been shown to reduce stress and anxiety. Having a support system means that you have people to rely on when you need them the most. It means that there are people you can lean on whenever you are in a tough situation. Likewise, Garasky (2016) posited that support systems are critical for anyone to have. Many people think that it is easier to do things alone and that their own health is something only they should be worrying about. This is not the case at all. While it is important to do some things on your own, having a support system that is there for you have the right people surrounding you. You want the right people to be there to help and cheer for you going through life

Following Parents' Advice

Some parents will tolerate bad behaviour for an easy life, whilst others see nothing wrong with the way their child acts. Parental advice can help you to learn how to encourage good behaviour and techniques for dealing with bad behaviour at school and at home, in order to improve your child's behaviour. In this sense, Eamon (2015) expressed that a man who ruled American once said that the greatest teacher he ever had was his mother. There are many reasons why you should always listen to your parents. Parents know us better than anyone. No



one has a better opportunity to know what you need than your parents. Parents have the potential to provide better advice than anyone else, unlike teachers or coaches who see you for a few minutes or hours. Golafshani (2016) also stated that obedience to parents is important. If we listen to our parents and do what they ask, they will not nag us so much. Under our parents' guidance, we learn many things, including literacy skills and counting. Even if our parents do not home school us, as we get older they still continue to guide our education. One example of how they do this is by encouraging us to do our homework when we get home from school.

Being Focused

Focus is so important because it is the gateway to all thinking, perception, memory, learning, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making. Without good focus, all aspects of your ability to think will suffer. Moreover, according to Everett (2016) stated that focus is important. It is a powerful tool. When we have a report, presentation or something important to do, we usually focus complete attention on it until it gets done. We've done this hundreds of times and think nothing of it. The best way to stay focused is to give yourself clear goals. Know what you have to do and get it done. Make it a part of your every day routine to create a to do list. This simple task will focus your attention and help you to avoid distractions. According to Hetcher (2018) that it has become quite unpopular to believe in the reformatory capability of being focused in a world that is governed by fast-pacing success mode. The current scenario of the competitive world forces the principle of multiplicity in our day-to-day existence. Being focused in life doesn't mean that we are incapable of being multi-talented. It simply means that we have clear goals and ambitions in life and our work along with our energy is dedicated to attaining those demarcated goals and objectives. It becomes our mantra of success along with it being the principle ethics of our life.

The Insights of Single Student-Fathers Learning from Experience

Experiential education teaches students to examine their actions and their thought processes, and even their emotional responses. This internal reflection prepares students for the workplace and helps them make major life choices, improve their personal relationships, and address their emotional needs. On the other hand, Flanagan and Murray (2016) stated that a good learning experience focuses on being authentic, interactive, and collaborative to enhance engagement and improve knowledge retention. Besides, it adds value to the learner, encourages social learning, promotes learner self-assessment, and is inquiry-based. A good learning experience strengthens learning and development and, ultimately, helps improve employee performance and productivity. In addition, Highes (2017) mentioned that with the continuous change in learning setup, students are becoming more versatile in adapting new knowledge and information. Through the compelling variety of methods, systems, ways, and ideas, a wide array of learning are shared without shoving the conventional ones aside. Since

learners vary in acquiring the concepts of the course, situations, or frameworks, it was expected that they also vary on the learning experience.

Facing Responsibilities

We often find ourselves overwhelmed with a task which we joyfully accepted and seemed hopeful to finish within the given deadline. But often it happens that we fail in accomplishing the particular task. What happens after is that we go on seeking reasons and excuses to detach ourselves from the moral responsibilities of getting the job done. Meanwhile, Hochschild (2016) posited that this is basic human nature, we tend to avoid conflict, even if it means sacrificing morality in the form of blaming unrelated causes for our failure. Let us delve deeper into the facts that will help us transition into better human beings by morally guiding ourselves and learning about the moral implications of our irresponsibility. According to Smith (2017) that when a person accepts that the outcome of a particular action has happened by his/her volition or negligence and conforms accordingly to either fix it or accept it and accept the consequences that follow. A person with the trait of responsibility does not look for potential blame takers and stands alone. Such a person knows what his actions are capable of doing to his/her own life.

Face Problems Squarely

Absolutely everybody suffers a personal setback once in a while, from not getting what you expected to struggle with relationships to the little daily frustrations that occasionally combine to present a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. All of these are external factors that you probably can't control as well as you'd like, but your emotional and mental reaction to them is something internal. Levey posited that most people think that they will lead a problem-free life in future. They don't realize the fact that problems exist as long as people exist. Most people think that they alone have problems, not others. They must understand the fact that others may have much bigger challenges than them. Most people avoid or postpone problems. This is not a proper way to deal with problems, as in most of the cases postponing the problems may complicate life further. Life is all about problems and prospects. But the truth is that when you encounter more problems, you tend to develop a sharper mechanism to move out of it. Furthermore, Steve (2017) stated that we are all learning. No one gets it right every time. A more compassionate attitude toward ourselves only helps us to stay in the game. The dynamic process of life trying, succeeding, failing, and trying again is the only way to develop lasting confidence in ourselves. We learn through experience that we can both succeed and recover from failure. We also learn to be humble and so to develop a view of ourselves as limited creatures that will always need the help and support of others. No matter how mature or successful we become, the child within always will need mentors and friends who will see us through.



CONCLUSION

Based upon the results of the study, I enumerated several remarks. First, with the personal and academic struggles of single student -fathers, we always look at them as irresponsible individuals who do not have direction in life. We used to discriminate them because of what had happened in their lives but then we do not know their experiences and struggles even their stories. It is not joy and happiness that they are experiencing everyday but pain and they are fighting their own individual battle in life. We may not understand them, but those experiences taught them how to live the life they have now. Their experiences taught them how to become better men who wanted to be the best father of their own child. Second, the coping mechanisms of single student-fathers are brought by the happiness their child can give. They are also cling to the support of their parents, friends and the people around them. The moment that they become student-father, they really needed not only the financial and moral support of the people around them but the most important is the support and love of their parents. It is the assurance that they are loved and will be loved by their parents that helps them stand strong. Upon probing to the stories of these single student-fathers, advices coming from them came out. Their insights were essential that teenagers must not engage in pre marital sex instead they should not get into a relationship at an early age and they must not watch pornographic scenes. Single student-fathers also aspire to have a good future for their child. The results of this study help everyone to sympathize the struggles of the student-fathers and for them to be understood and never be looked as delinquent individual in the society. They are also victims of the societal cancer that proliferate across youngsters. The society must help hand in hand on the stop this. To the Department of Social Welfare and Development that they must strengthen their intervention program and information drive campaign about pre -marital and even teenage pregnancy and responsible parenthood. To the Department of Education that they must take a more effective guidance advocacy programs that would cater the needs of the students and hone the students holistically. To the parents that they must be the source of love, guidance and support to their children especially when their son become student-fathers. To the teachers who do not understand instead criticize them, this study will enlighten their mind that these students are fighting their own unique battle in life.

Implications for Further Research

In general, the raise of number of teenage student-fathers in different schools is a proof that most of school children now faced the challenges in life in terms on education and their family problem. This study shows the real experiences of teenage student-fathers. In addition, how they cope with the challenges they faced and what are their insights to be shared to others.

Department of Education should give or establish programs in every school. It is also necessary to supply counselling programs and other related avenues to help them aware on the consequences of their actions, enhance and develop their knowledge in

parenting and engage with the present educational system. On the other hand, it is indeed to have quality programs and interventions for them to be able have focus and concentration of their studies.

Furthermore, schools and Deped should be able to implement effective orientations for the parents and guardians of the learners. It is a way of exposure to give or to share more knowledge and ideas on how they guide their children.

Teachers should attend seminars for them to know the proper guidance and orientations and know how to handle and manage teenage student-fathers. Teachers also needed to give full support, attention and implement potent measures in guidance.

Further, these data would be important in addressing the uprising case of teenage student-fathers themselves, parents, and/or guardians and teachers in making things different for the new generation. Further research should study what education curriculum and guidance orientation should be added in order to address this case and what parent should do to make their children more aware about the world and the consequences of being a teenage student-fathers.

Related Literature

The adolescent male has been ignored in previous reviews and discussions of adolescent pregnancy since teenage pregnancy and childbearing has traditionally been viewed as a female issue. This state of affairs is part of a larger phenomenon, namely the relative prior neglect of males in pregnancy, birth, and childrearing in general, among all age groups. The thesis of this chapter is that a full understanding of the implications and consequences of teenage pregnancy and childbearing requires knowledge of the role of the male. To achieve this aim, we will examine the male partners of teenage mothers in their role as parents and explore the determinants of assuming this role, and the consequences for the male, his partner and offspring.

Many of the reasons for our prior neglect of adolescent fathers have derived from our general lack of concern with the male role in infancy and childhood. A variety of factors contributed to this situation—theoretical models of infant development that have placed a primary emphasis on the mother-infant relationship, unfounded notions about the “biological preparedness” of mothers in contrast to fathers, and adherence to traditional models of father involvement and sex role allocation, even in the face of considerable secular change (Alexander et.al., 2016).

Social-structural and social prejudicial factors specific to adolescent fathers also contribute to this neglect. Adolescent fathers are often unmarried during the time of conception and birth, and are generally excluded from participating in the birth and early care of their infants. This is generally the result of the powerful social prejudice that surrounds pregnancy and child birth among unmarried teenagers (Berthoud, 2018).

When it comes to family life, everyone strives to figure out how the relationship between parents and children can become



ideal. Positive parenting techniques work well for raising children with discipline and good moral values, and are every parents' dream. However, it is not an easy feat. And it is important to know that the parent child relationship is a two-way street, in other words, it is actually a partnership between a parent and their child (Cundy, 2019).

Moreover, Nylund (2019) stated that when parents start to understand the balance of where to place boundaries, where to encourage, and where to discourage, then their children will not get spoiled. In this way they become good parents. When people do not know how to be a good parent, distance between the two develops. With proper understanding, youth can also strengthen their relationship with their parents. What matters most to children is what their parents do, not what age their parents are. When parents raise their children in nurturing, warm, sensitive, responsive and flexible ways, children grow and develop well.

Furthermore, all parents navigate challenges as their children grow and develop. Many of these challenges are the same for teenage parents and older parents. But if you're a teenage parent, you might have to navigate some special challenges, like trying to finish school while looking after a baby. You might also feel judged for being a teenage parent or overwhelmed by the responsibility of raising a child at a young age (Ferguson et.al., 2017).

With the right support from family, friends and community services, you can navigate these challenges and help your children thrive by working on your relationship with your baby or young child working on healthy relationships with other people in your life asking for and accepting practical and financial help trying to finish your education looking after yourself.

Although in the vast majority of cases fatherhood during adolescence is unplanned and unexpected, many young men achieve fatherhood status during the adolescent years. It is our assumption that the adolescent male in his role as father has an impact on himself, his partner, and his offspring. Moreover, the determinants of sexual activity and contraceptive use which were reviewed in the other chapters may provide little insight into another phase of the problem, namely, adolescent fatherhood. Although the research is limited and flawed, it is important to review these issues in order to give better guidance to prevention and intervention policy and programs (Lewis, 2018).

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