

JOURNEY TO FATHERHOOD: REFLECTIONS ON EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS OF TEENAGE FATHERS

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May 2013

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study that employed a unique means of studying behavior and utilized a combination of phenomenological case study approaches and a focus group discussion. The study disclosed the factors that influenced the teenage fathers to engage in pre-marital sex and identified their experiences and needs as well as their coping mechanisms and lessons learned from such experience. Findings revealed that the respondent-teenage fathers shared common conditions such as having dysfunctional family, low family income, and are school drop-outs. Findings also showed how vast peer influence affected the teen fathers' social activities and decisions.

Most of the respondents have sacrificed much of their youthful days and devoted themselves to the responsibilities of providing the needs of their children and partners. Eight (8) out of ten (10) respondents had to sacrifice schooling after the knowledge of pregnancy, while one of them is already not attending school prior to the case and the other respondent had the opportunity to continue his schooling for the reason that he and his wife are not living together and his son stays with his mother. Those eight respondents who embraced their situations experienced difficulties such as personal, relational and lack of opportunities to land to a stable job. They were shocked of the radical changes in their lives and at the moment, they can no longer afford to hang out with their friends; instead, they devote their time and energy in searching for a living. Further, the idea of going back to school is on their least priority as their situation does not permit it anymore.

Caught unprepared, finding themselves in a shoe of being a husband and a father, the participants regret disregarding the value of education, which they believe having such will equip them to land to a better job. They realized the importance of choosing friends wisely and getting away from vices. Although they were raised from families with flawed set-up, most of them realized that they should not have disregarded their parents. Findings do not suggest for pointing fingers as to who are liable to these teens; but promote a collaborative effort among various institutions such as government, family, school and church. The Philippine government through its local government units should have a strong political will in empowering the youth and in providing them opportunities to become productive citizens and contributors for nation building. It is also a great opportunity for school administrators through the effort of the guidance and counseling office to strengthen programs for the integral formation of the student which includes development of healthy self-concept, high sense of morality and an open understanding on sexual activities and its various implications.

The church, on the other hand, should carry on with the youth's spiritual formation. All these are essential in strengthening the teens' basic foundation acquired from the family as the first agent of socialization.

Key words: Fatherhood, reflection, teenage father

INTRODUCTION

Fatherhood... almost every man aspires for it, but not everyone is given a chance. It entails a very noble, challenging and delicate task; but it comes with a great reward.

In the Philippines, paternal responsibility begins at the period of conception. However, there is no concrete and perfect formula for one to become an effective father. Most of the time, fatherhood is carried over from one's ancestry and success is being gauged based on how progenies managed their lives. This is so because effective fatherhood comes with emotional maturity, that is, winning the battle of the so called life.

Undeniably, emotional maturity goes with age. But what surfaced to be a big concern in the recent years is the rising number of teenage pregnancies with teen fathers, too. This is so because sex issues have become a top concern among teens.

Based on a survey commissioned by the National Secretariat Apostolate (NSYA) on May 2012, sex issues were found to be the number one concern of young Filipinos. This is also true with a number of studies conducted by various researchers who investigated issues on premarital sex and teenage pregnancies. But literatures and discussions about teenage pregnancies, more often than not, would always neglect the "Teen Fathers". This was affirmed by the article discussing "The Unique Needs of Young Fathers" posted in the Healthy Teen Network's website. It cited that there is a few research studies that look into the unique needs of teen fathers and few programs that address their needs due to some factors, which include access because most teen fathers are harder to reach than teen mothers. Paternity, according to the same source is harder to determine than maternity; and that teen fathers may be reluctant to become involve in research studies because they may fear attempts to collect child support or punishment for their involvement in the pregnancy.

Teen fathers are often overlooked in the big picture of teen pregnancy. The focus is always on the teenage mother and her baby, who need support and help, and seldom tackled is the impact of fatherhood on a teenage boy.

This study posits that teenage fathers also need help, advice, and encouragement to take responsibility both for their babies and for their own education and future. This conviction made the researcher decide to investigate on the Teenage Fathers' experiences, needs and the lessons as they reflect on their experiences and current situations.

Infants need love, warmth and acceptance --- all these are conveyed through parenting, that of a mother or a father. Santrock (2006) cited that fathers have the ability to act sensitively and responsively with their infants. In addition, fathers' involvement in child care produces positive results.

But what if these fathers are teenage fathers? Do they possess the capacity to be involved in child-rearing?

To better understand this special group of fathers, it is important to know who these youths are, the reasons that led them to such status, and the ways by which they have been affected by the pregnancy and by fatherhood.

Data from the National Center for Health Statistics suggests that about 17.4 per 1,000 males ages 15-19 years became teen fathers in 2002. Longitudinal studies suggest this number might be even higher. While the incidence of teen fatherhood is lower than that of teen motherhood, these young men are potential resource for their child, as well as individuals with their own unmet needs.

The usual outset of teenage fatherhood is premarital sex. Young Adult Fertility Survey (YAFS) II revealed that 18%, or 2.5 million of Filipinos aged 15- 24 have engaged in premarital sex, and 74% of this figure (approximately 1.8 million) does not use any contraceptive method to prevent pregnancy. What is more disconcerting is the fact that the great majority – that is, 1.67 million of these youth are unwilling & unprepared to become parents (Raymundo & Diaz, 1996).

Elster, (1990) explained that parenthood occurring during school-age years is probably devastating to young fathers than if it occurred after graduation. Several issues plagued the teenage fathers.

As regards schooling for instance, teen fathers are less likely to earn a high school diploma, as cited by the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition. Both teen mothers and fathers are much less likely to graduate high school than their non-parent counterparts. The failure to graduate can be due to financial pressure resulting from having a baby to take care of. Teen fathers and mothers may drop out of high school to get a job in order to earn money and take care of their child. They may also be unable to find adequate support and help with caring for the baby during school hours and feel there is no other choice than to drop out, [Mueller (2009)].

Considering employment, Stengel (2005) confirmed that teenage fathers usually have lower incomes. One reason for this is that a teenager who has got his girlfriend pregnant often compounds his first mistake with a second one: dropping out of school. The author cited Amy Williams, the executive director of the Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Project in San Francisco that "when teenage fathers leave school, they head right for a low-paying job".

Another important issue is on stereotyping. Research has found that some people believe teenage parents should get married and the mother should serve as the primary caretaker; the father should work to support his family. In the Philippines, this has become the stereotyped gender roles and teenage fathers need to meet what is expected of them.

These stereotype roles, however, prevent the teenage fathers from further enhancing their skills through training or through obtaining a diploma that will pave the way for better

employment opportunity. Since they need to become early providers, they tend to grab the first employment that they get.

Findings of the 1994 Young Adults Fertility & Sexual Study (YAFS II) reveals that a large proportion of the young people aged 15 -24 years in the Philippines reported themselves as becoming parents at an "early age" (52% among men & 67% among women). Having married "too young", these men, based on their ideal age at marriage, missed 5 years of their lives during which they could have "enjoyed being single", "planned own life", "finished studies", or "worked and pursued own career".

In addition, Kimball (2004) mentioned that teen fathers face a developmental dilemma. They need to undergo transition into parenthood while simultaneously going through adolescence and become adults. Their fatherhood is impacted by both their ethnicity and cultural norms. Teenage fatherhood grows out of both personal and social contexts which influence young men's decisions regarding being sexually active, whether to use contraception, and ponder on pregnancy outcomes. Despite common stereotypes, there is an increasing evidence that teen fathers want to be (and are) involved with their children in some ways.

The problem is, even adults face disequilibrium in the transition to parenthood, Santrock (2006). But it is also certain that teenage fathers would desire to have a strong bond with their child but this would also entail a slight disengagement from peer acquaintances.

As published in Education for adolescents UNICEF EAP Strategic Framework (2010), from a sociological perspective, the period of adolescence is viewed as a time of transition and risk. All teenagers experience growth spurts and hormonal surges that potentially contribute to erratic and impulsive behavior.

Accidents and injuries, often quite avoidable, are the major causes of death for adolescents. While certain types of risk taking are encouraged as part of active learning in the classroom, risky behaviors during adolescence, such as smoking and drug abuse have become usual fads, which can have life-long and negative consequences, including unplanned pregnancy and infection with HIV/AIDS (IAWGCP, 2008).

The stage of adolescence is also described as a period of life marked by positive energy, idealism and a belief in the possibility of changing the world. The positive energy might lead to egocentrism and the self might be the center or focus of teenagers making them anxious of what the environment perceives about them. This is also the period of hallucinating on a utopian community and the danger would be the exposure to the real world especially if one becomes a teenage father exposed to the stereotyped role of fatherhood and motherhood; the former being the provider and the latter as the home- based caregiver. This leads to a premature and rapid fulfillment of the adolescents' developmental tasks.

With the physical changes happening among adolescents, they tend to have feelings of instability. More than physical changes, their interests, and new group roles may create confusion on them. They tend to: (1) achieve new and more mature relations with age-mates or both sexes; (2) achieve a masculine or feminine social role; (3) accept one's physique and using one's body effectively, (4) desire, accept, and achieve socially responsible behavior; (5) achieve emotional independence from parents and other adults; (6) prepare for an economic career; (7) prepare for marriage and family life, and; (8) acquire a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior-developing ideology, Gines (1998)

Further, the adolescent establishes his personality along three dimensions: gender identity, occupational identity, and moral identity. Being able to play his sex role is an important task for the adolescence. Choosing and developing his field of works give directions to his efforts and activities. The value he holds determines his beliefs and commitment to the society (Gines, 1998).

Adolescence has been thought of as a period of "storm and stress", a time of heightened emotional tension resulting from the physical and gradual changes that are taking place. As they mature, they get involved in different interpersonal relations. It is but normal to have conflicts in any relationship for instance, which they need to overcome. Emotional maturity is said to have been achieved if the individual does not "explode", has temper tantrums, or sulk when disappointed. Another important indication of maturity is when the individual assesses a situation critically instead of reacting irrationally and emotionally to a situation. The individual is able to think about the circumstances, to make decisions, to act accordingly, and solve problems rather than engage in an unhealthy emotional outburst. The adolescent should be encouraged to discuss problems with the "significant others" (Gines, 1998).

During the adolescence stage, Erikson discussed that teens should be able to develop awareness of the uniqueness of „self“, knowledge of role to be followed, or they might end up dealing with inability to identify appropriate roles in life. Thus, a person confused about the most appropriate role to play in life may lack a stable identity, adopt an unacceptable role such as that of a social deviant, or have difficulty maintaining close personal relationships later in life (Feldman, 2010).

On the other hand, Freud's Psychosexual Stage of development explains that sexual feelings or interest reemerge and establishments of more mature sexual relationship occur, Feldman (2010). The onset of puberty for boys is marked by their first ejaculation, known as spermarche. This usually occurs around the age of 13. The rate at which physical change occurs during adolescence can affect the way in which people are viewed by others and the way they view themselves.

In addition, Kohlberg explained that during this stage, adolescents can reason on a higher plane, having typically reached Piaget's formal operational stage of cognitive

development. Because they are able to comprehend broad moral principles, they can understand that morality is not always black and white and that conflict can exist between two sets of socially accepted standards (Feldman, 2010).

According to Piaget as cited by Gines (1998), boys and girls during adolescence have reached the so called stage of formal operations in cognitive development. They are now capable of considering all the possible ways of solving a particular problem and can reason on the bases of hypotheses or prepositions.

All the foregoing citations are nipped in the bud once teenage fathers faced the challenging tasks of fatherhood. As discussed in the literature, several issues confront the teenage father; and this study further explored their experiences and needs in fulfilling their paternal obligations in spite of their young age.

Findings of the study will greatly contribute to the guidance counseling program as it revealed an occasion for guidance counselors to strengthen programs for the integral formation of the youth and open opportunities for the development of healthy self- concept, high sense of morality and an open understanding on sexual activities and its various implications. This was made possible in the attainment of the objectives of the study.

The study aimed to disclose the profile of teenage fathers; factors that influenced them to engage in pre-marital sex; and, identify their experiences and needs.

Moreover, the researcher endeavored to discover the different strategies used by the participants in coping with their conditions. Likewise, the aims of the study include the identification of lessons learned and reflected by the participants based on their experiences and current situation.

The data gathered from the participants provided meaningful inputs for guidance counselors, school administrators, parents, social workers, psychologists, educators, and researchers in their respective pursuits in developing programs that will help the youth in dealing with similar challenges and in achieving greater awareness and understanding about the huge responsibility which beset teenage fathers.

METHOD

This chapter shows the procedure undertaken to attain the objective of this study. This covers the type of research, the participants and sampling technique, the instrument, data gathering procedure and how data were analyzed.

This is a qualitative study that employed a unique means of studying behavior and utilized a combination of phenomenological case study approach and a focus group discussion. Phenomenology according to Merriam and Associates (2002) is a type of qualitative research with its roots on philosophy and psychology which focuses on the subjective experiences of an individual. It is not only focused on the person but it also intends to understand the essence and structure of the phenomenon. This is suited to the current undertaking as it also aimed to check not just on the persona of the participant- teenage fathers but on the existing phenomenon.

On the other hand, a case study involves an intensive description and analysis of a single individual and frequently makes use of qualitative data; collecting information about personal experiences, introspection, interviews, and observations. Through this, research data are usually collected through in-depth interview to identify and describe the aspects of each participant in detail, Shaughnessy et al. (2003). This method, therefore, allows the researcher to accomplish an intensive inquiry about the needs and experiences of teenage fathers.

Moreover, focus group discussion was also utilized to validate the participants' responses; it is also a separate data collection strategy. The aforementioned method is employed to the parents of the teenage fathers. Kruger and Casey (2000) defined a focus group as "a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perception on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. This will support the data collected from the teenage fathers with regard to the factors that led them to engage in premarital sex, their experiences and needs and the lessons reflected on their experiences and current situations.

The participants in this undertaking are self-proclaimed single teenage fathers ages 13 to 17 when they became fathers. Specifically, ten (10) teenage fathers and their parents served as the primary sources of qualitative data. From them, this study obtained informations, which unveiled their profile, factors that led them to engage in pre-marital sex, experiences, their needs and the lessons from their experiences and current situation. Due to the special considerations on the unique requirements of the participants of the study, the purposive sampling technique was also utilized in the selection of ten (10) participants. Actual selection of said participants was based on the criteria set by the researcher as presented in the table below.

Table 1
Profile of the Participants

Characteristics	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4	Case 5	Case 6	Case 7	Case 8	Case 9	Case 10
Current Age	21	17	19	17	25	19	18	20	17	19
Age when he became a father	17	16	17	16	17	15	17	17	16	17
No. of children	1	2	1	1	3	3	1	2	2	1
Living with partner	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Married	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
No. of children family	3	4	4	7	5	3	4	7	2	5
Ordinal Position	eldest	eldest	Youngest	Youngest	eldest	Middle child	Youngest	Eldest	Eldest	Youngest
Educational Attainment	4 th year HS	1 st year HS	6 th Grade	2 nd year HS	2 nd year HS	4 th year HS	2 nd year HS	5 th Grade	2 nd year HS	3 rd year HS
Type of School Attended	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public
Occupation	Part-time Lantern Maker	Tri-cycle driver	Unstable Job	Tri-cycle driver	Unstable Job	Tricycle Driver	Helper	Fisherman	Tri-wheeler driver	Porter in Public Market

Figures and information presented in Table 1 are the demographic profile of the participants. All of them studied in public school and majority in a ratio of 6:3:1 became a father at age 17, three (3) of them became a father at age 16 and the youngest age recorded is 15. Except for two participants, all of them were not able to finish basic education because they need to look for a living for their partners and child. In addition, cases number 3 and 8 stopped schooling because of financial constraint.

The data gathering for this study followed the following steps:

Case study: (1) Validation of Interview Guide, (2) Selection of Participants, (3) Obtaining Consent, (4) Establishing Rapport, and; (5) the Interview.

Focus Group Discussion: (1) Identification of issues, (2) Selection of sample group, (3) Generation and pre-testing of the focus group discussion schedule, (4) Orientation, and; (5) Conducting the focus group discussion.

The initial step was the validation of the interview guide done by three experts in the field of psychology, guidance and counseling and education. A letter was addressed to the three experts who validated the interview questions. They were provided a copy of the background and objective of the study for reference.

For the second step, participants of the study were determined based on the pre-defined criteria that qualified them as teenage father which include; 13 to 17 years of age when they became father regardless of their civil status and the conditions of their relationship with their partner.

Since the participants of this study are minors, obtaining parental consent is necessary before they can be assigned as participants. As stated in Republic Act 7610, "those eighteen years below are still children", thus, they are minors and are in need of parental consent. Also, the Philippine law has declared eighteen as the age of majority and therefore allows those 18 above to be tied through the bonds of marriage. So, those who were eighteen and above when they became teenage fathers have been excluded as participants.

After meeting all the prerequisites, the establishment of rapport followed to place the participants in a comfortable and unthreatening emotional state. The researcher and the participants agreed on the schedule of interview. The participants were interviewed in their house with a controlled environment to assure that the process is away from any distractions. Upon careful deliberation of issues raised during the interview of the teenage fathers, the problem that is suitable for focus group inquiry was identified.

The researcher identified and described the target population as carefully as possible with the goal to form a relatively homogeneous group. This was followed by the orientation and focus group discussion phase.

The data analysis in this research involved the phenomenological analysis of interview data. In the analysis phase, three experts in the fields of research verified the data categorized.

The process of phenomenological analysis of interview data are as follows:

1. Transcription. In this process, results of individual interviews were transcribed.
2. Verification of interview data. The transcribed interviews were returned to the participants for review to indicate necessary clarifications on the interview output.
3. Content analysis. Bracketing of significant statements shared by the participants was highlighted.
4. Outlining units of meaning relevant to the research question. Bracketed data were verified if they are significant to the research objectives.

5. Defining codes for categories. All desired categories are illustration concepts under which the relevant meanings were clustered.
6. Grouping the data into categories and clustering the relevant meanings. The researcher proceeded to the coding of categories.

FINDINGS

This chapter unravels the profile, the factors that influenced the participants to engage in pre-marital sex, their experiences and needs, their strategies in coping with the condition as teenage fathers, and the lessons reflected on their experiences.

CASE #1 - Tupe

Demographic Characteristics

Tupe is a 21-year old high school graduate, part-time lantern maker, and at the age of 17, he already became a father. He is now living with his in-laws and striving for a living and dreaming that in the future, he will be able to provide a better life for his family. Except for financial problem, Tupe's family maintains a healthy relationship. Their parents impose discipline and safeguard them from engaging into vices. Thus, Tupe only plays basketball during his free time, until he met his partner.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex.

Social media pave the way for the initial enticement between Tupe and his partner. He narrated that they met through text. Attracted by the industriousness and beauty of the girl, Tupe courted her until they became engaged. He was no longer attending school that time and is already working. The girl, on the other hand, still attends school. They went on dating; until one day, they were left alone in Tupe's residence.

Both of their parents got mad upon discovering that his partner is pregnant. But they have no other choice but to face it.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

Tupe narrated that he started to work harder as it was no longer just for his personal needs but for his own family. The girl finished high school first before they lived together. They did not separate from their parents but would stay from each side every now and then. Eventually, they became closer with both parties, especially when their child was born.

There were times; however, that Tupe would realize that he did all things in a hurry and that he hastily succumbed to his physical desire and emotion especially when he encounters difficult situations and setting priorities. At times, Tupe and his partner would argue because of financial issues.

It was a real transition of his teenage life. Tupe could not anymore do what he used to be busy with when he was not yet committed to family life.

Fatherhood was a real transformation for Tupe. He made a sincere effort to respond to his state.

Strategies used by the participant in coping with his condition

Sooner, Tupe lost his job but he tried to manage his being a family man. He narrated that he needs to gain strength and develop positive aspirations in this very difficult time especially in dealing with the people around them.

Tupe needs to live the Spartan way of life and he needs to employ practical budgeting techniques in order for his family to make both ends meet. Tupe's greatest armor and source of strength, according to him is his child.

Case # 2 – Jam

Demographic Characteristics

A 17-year old father of two, Jam decided to give up schooling because of the responsibilities that he needed to fulfill as a father. He needed to earn for a living also, to provide the needs of his children.

Prior to his state as a teenage father, Jam revealed that he had a good and happy life. He was attending school, hanged out with his peers and played basketball with them. At times, they drank together in their place and would go home late in their respective residencies.

He belonged to a family where he could open up and spend even leisure time. He played basketball with his father and shares his sentiments and problems especially to his mother. Things changed when he met the mother of his child.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex

The respondent bravely admitted that lust and physical attraction urged him to engage in pre-marital sex. The situation was so tempting and he failed to control his awakened urge to experience an erotic act.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

It was also through text messaging that the respondent knew about the pregnancy of his girlfriend.

However, Jam's situation did not allow him to personally take charge over his own family. His only consolation with the set-up is that, his in-laws are no longer hostile to him.

It was an instant conversion on the part of Jam; from his being a happy-go-lucky guy, he became a serious man, investing all his efforts for his own family.

Jam did not pursue his schooling anymore because of financial difficulty and he already needs to face his new task as a father.

Maintaining a relationship and facing a mature task did not become easy for Jam. He even fell into another temptation which almost broke his first relationship.

Strategies used by the participant in coping with his condition

Jam committed himself to his familial obligations. He worked hard to earn for their livelihood.

Lessons reflected on the participant's experiences and current situation

The respondent has recognized his shortcomings and his actions as a teenager. The only thing that he needs to do at present is to overcome the difficulties that confront him at present.

Case # 3 – Sayco**Demographic Characteristics**

The youngest among 4 siblings, Sayco became a father when he was 17 years old. The relationship that he had was not that pleasant. For some reasons, his partner decided to go back to her parents and raised their child with the help of her parents.

Factors that influenced the respondent to engage in pre-marital sex

The absence of his father led Sayco to focus his time in hanging out with friends. He envied other children especially when he sees them with their father. He disobeyed her mother's advice for him not engage in vices like smoking and drinking too much alcohol. Since he was almost out and had his vices, he would just rely on his friends' company. Until one day, while he was drunk, the unexpected intercourse happened.

Sayco knew that it was not right. He also knew, at the back of his mind that he should not be engaging in pre-marital sex; but he considered it as something unavoidable at that time.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

Eventually, Sayco's girlfriend got pregnant. This was disclosed by her to Sayco's parents when she is already on her third month of pregnancy. Unaware of the affair, the respondent's party was shocked of the news that they heard.

Sayco was compelled to take the responsibility over the child and that he needed to consider the welfare of his female siblings who might have possibly been victims of similar incident.

Sayco's relationship with the mother of his child was short-lived. He said that they never had any conflict in their relationship except that he cannot afford to sustain their finances.

Sayco attempted to fix his personal life. He went back to school but his vices and hobby of hanging out with his peers resulted to the interruption of his studies; until, finally, he stopped. To remedy the situation, he is currently undergoing the program of the Alternative Learning System or ALS. He came up with some realizations and plans:

Different strategies used by the participant in coping with his condition

Getting a diploma is the best strategy that Sayco believed and struggled to achieve to save him from his current state.

Part of Sayco's survival scheme is still incorporating his friends in the scene. They still served as his reliable confidantes.

Lessons reflected on the participant's experiences and current situation

"Education is important" and "no to early marriage" were Sayco's significant reflections based on what he experienced as a teenage father. His advice:

Surprisingly, another problem sprouted about Sayco's absentee father, which became also a source of another advice and request.

Case # 4 – Pol**Demographic Characteristics**

Pol is a product of a dysfunctional family; he is now 17 years old and became a father at the age of 16. He stopped attending school when he was on his 2nd year. At present, he earns a living as a tri-wheeler driver.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex

At an early age, Pol already started to be involved in a back-breaking labor as a tri-wheeler driver because he belongs to a poverty-stricken family.

His growing years was not normal, in fact, Pol was deprived of the real joy every child could have enjoyed. He did not feel any security and even affection at home so he diverted his attention to mingling with his friends.

Pol, also have met already his wife those times and would frequently bring her with him to Capitol. They were actually neighbors and his wife has already a child. They would hang out together even late at night.

They then slept together and that started it all. It was something sudden and Pol could no longer escape.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

Pol, even if earning, did not really become serious in providing his wife's needs. But one incident transformed him to be a hardworking family man.

That incident became a wake-up call for Pol. His being careless according to Pol might have been attributed to his family orientation.

When asked if he has regrets of what happened to him, Pol said that since it already happened, he must not have regrets anymore. He did not even consider any difference at all.

Although Pol admits that he is having difficulty in finding a job, he is still not totally willing to succumb to his meager status even if he admits that he cannot go back to school to get the necessary qualifications because of poverty. He also remained to be fatalistic but did not surrender on working for a living.

Different strategies used by the participant in coping with his condition

Even if he accepts his fate, Pol still endeavors to double his efforts in earning for subsistence. His own family changed his outlook in terms of surviving and living his life.

Lessons reflected on participant's experiences and current situation

His ill-fated family life (as he described it) with his father is one great lesson which Pol uses as a basis of what he wants to establish as a family man.

His previous acts also served as his basis in building a better vision for his family especially to his child. He would like to safeguard his son in possibly repeating the same.

Case # 5 – Bamboo

Demographic Characteristics

Bamboo is a 25-year old father of three children. He became a father at the age of seventeen. He has been through a lot of hardships just to provide the needs of his family. Bamboo cannot find a decent job because of lack of education. He stopped attending school after his sophomore year because of barkada (peers) and vices.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex

Two factors steered Bamboo's attention to a girl and then finally engaged in pre- marital sex:

1. His family's underprivileged status
2. Bad experience with peers

Bamboo's parents actually made an effort to send him to school but he wasted such. After such incident, Bamboo stopped schooling also. He became a helper to his mother, who sells fish in the market. Then finally, he met his wife.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

Fortunately for Bamboo, Sheryl's (his wife) parents were kind enough to accept them when they returned home.

Since then, Bamboo started to earn a living for his own family. He engaged in every occupation that he could fit in but earning was not that enough for his temporary job engagements like fishing, selling fish and becoming a helper in the market. This situation led them to suffer from extreme poverty.

Different strategies used by the participant in coping with his conditions

Confronted with his situation similar to "survival of the fittest", Bamboo did not bother to bring his children and wife to the aid of his mother and in-laws. He also endured arduous labor to earn little penny. Through this, they managed to survive.

Bamboo's only fuel to go on with his life is his children. He needs to stay strong and struggle to earn, for them to live. He did not engage into stealing anymore because he does not want to be put behind bars and see his children grow filled with resentment because they have a father who is a thief.

Lessons reflected on his experiences and current situation

Bamboo realized the value of one's sense of responsibility which he failed to possess when he was younger. If only if he was able to respond well to situations, he could not have suffered that much, and he could have the means to provide what his children need.

Bamboo is determined to change and be a good provider to his family, especially to his children. He said that once he gets into a decent job with a modest wage, he would persevere and work hard for his children's future. He also uttered pieces of advice for the youth. Bamboo repented for his wrongdoings but accepted his fate and gifts, his children.

Case # 6 - Raven**Demographic Characteristics**

Raven is a high school graduate, father of 3 children and is now 19 years old. He became a father at the age of 15. He currently earns for a living as a tricycle driver in their town. According to his mother, Raven is the favorite of the family.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex

It was because of peer influence why Raven was exposed to pornography. According to him, what they habitually watched through internet drove his curiosity more to experience sexual intercourse at a young age.

Raven did not experience any conflict inside his family. He admitted that it was him who was really so fond of going out with friends even late at night.

Raven met his wife in school, they became classmates. He courted her for two months and they got into a steady relationship for almost half a year before they engaged in pre-marital sex.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

After some time, Raven's girlfriend informed her that she is already not having her monthly period for two months. Hesitant at first, Raven had no choice but to inform his family about what happened.

It was Raven's mother who helped them settle together. They sought the assistance of their barangay officials because the girl was into another relationship prior to her pregnancy.

Things changed when Raven became a father. If he was so busy with his peers before, this time, he is already focused with his family.

Most of the time, they would have petty quarrels because of money matters. Raven narrated that his wife would like to buy some stuff at times but he knew that they cannot afford such, so he will not give in; thus, they would then argue.

The difficulty which Raven experienced in his relationship made him stronger. He vowed to protect his family.

In times of difficulty, Raven would always sought for his mother's support and comfort but he also sees to it that he is striving hard to provide for his family.

Different strategies used by the participant in coping with his conditions

Communication and waiting for the situation to ease in times of conflict are the strategies which Raven employed to handle the situation.

Raven's children became his shield when faced with difficulty and temptation to give up. They reinforce him to continue and fight for survival.

Lessons reflected on the respondent's experiences and current situation

Understanding and appreciating the essence of parenting has been well contemplated by Raven when he became a parent himself.

Marriage, especially early marriage is not a bed of roses. It has thorns. A lot of thorns, which is more than what Raven could have imagined.

Having emphasized the worth of education and prioritizing it was a dream which came late to Raven. All he could do now is to set himself as an example and would always tell the youth about this experience.

Case # 7 – Sniper

Demographic Characteristics

Sniper is the youngest among four siblings. He is now 18 years old and became a father at age seventeen. Currently, he is working as a helper in one of the supermarkets in their town. He stopped attending school after 2nd year high school. He also shared that he is a product of a broken family.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex

Like Raven, Sniper was great influenced by his peer group whose company led him to disregard his studies and enter into a relationship and eventually engage in pre-marital sex.

Sniper admitted that he maintains a good relationship with his parents but still blamed them partly with his early engagement in pre-marital sex and a becoming a teenage father.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

The discovery that his girlfriend was pregnant did not surprise Sniper. He knew it would happen.

Sniper and his parents went and had the traditional „pamamanhikan“. His in-laws just accepted what happened even if they got furious because it still became hard for them to accept that their child got pregnant at a young age. Sniper and his girlfriend started to cohabit.

Sniper started to face the responsibility of being a father. He needs to raise his own family from then on.

Different strategies used by the participant in coping with his conditions

Struggling to establish emotional maturity, both Sniper and his wife would always think of their child's future. They always envision at least a better future for the child.

More than his welfare, Sniper chose to give preference to his family even if it will rob his time for himself. He endeavors to secure their daily sustenance.

Lessons reflected on the participant's experiences and current situation

Comparing married life with being single, Sniper shared his view that it is still nice to be single if he did not become a father in his teenage years.

Sniper realized that all of the pieces of advice given to him by the elders when he was not yet a teenage father and what he would oftentimes hear about marriage are all true.

Sniper also realized the value of education, that it is the key to have a better life and must really be taken seriously by all of the youth.

He also learned that devoting too much time and being drowned to the bad influence of peers will not really save one from whatever problems or even depressions that they are experiencing. And so, he also discourages young people to engage in pre- marital sex.

Case # 8 – Nuds

Demographic Characteristics

Nuds is a 20-year old father of two and the eldest among 7 siblings. He became a father at the age of 17. He stopped attending school after finishing grade 5. Fishing is his primary source of living.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex

Peer group, family problem and vices led Nuds to where he is right now. It is in his own fraternity group where he sought pleasure and eventually, he met his wife.

At his basic education years, Nuds just allotted most of his time with his „barkada“ (peer). This became his habit until his teenage years. Not finishing his studies is one of his greatest regrets.

Nud also engaged into a lot of vices and admitted that he really took the wrong path of his early years, which up to now is not that easy for him to abscond in spite of the reminders of his mother and siblings.

Portrayals in films or movies on sex and pornography also hooked Nuds and his friends. This awakened their curiosity and influenced Nuds to engage in pre-marital sex.

The intercourse happened in the house of Nuds.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

Nuds already had second thoughts when he knew that his girlfriend was pregnant. He thought of their future especially that he has no permanent employment.

They did not immediately reveal it, especially to the father of his girlfriend because of fear. When his girlfriend's family were informed, the father still could not accept his daughter's condition. But Nuds and his girlfriend went on cohabitation.

Lack of provision became a significant drawback in maintaining a smooth relationship. The financial aspect was oftentimes the cause of their problem. This also sets Nud off to his hobby of just spending his time in the streets.

Different strategies used by the participant in coping with his conditions

Nud's relationship was cloudy. He would always engage in a fight with his partner because of the difficult situation they are into.

Nud shared that every time he is in pain because of his problematic relationship and situation, he would just divert his attention to his child who serves as his reliever. This moves him to ease. But another problem would bother him, his child's future.

He also realized the value of earning a diploma and; thus, dreamed of bringing up a child whom he will send to school.

Lessons reflected on the participant's experiences and current situation

Nuds accepted his shortcomings as a student. He realized the importance of earning a degree. He, however, had a sentiment that not finishing school was not his sole responsibility, but even that of his parents.

Case # 9 – Agu

Demographic Characteristics

The Agu pseudonym was derived from the name of his father. Agu is 17 years old and now a father of two. He was not able to finish secondary education because he did not become serious about it considering the fact that their family was not well-off. Currently, Agu is a tri-wheeler driver and is working hard to provide for the needs of his own family.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex

Agu was a happy-go-lucky teenager. Instead of attending school, he would rather skip from classes and spend his time to the mall. His parents would remind him to finish his studies but he did not obey them. When he was caught not attending his classes, he just stopped.

Agu was also greatly affected by the separation of his parents. He complained that aside from poverty, he is also into a troublesome family.

A child trying to cope, that is how Agu described his situation at that time. Luckily, he surpassed it and their family.

Agu spent most of his time with peers, too. He learned to engage in sex while still a small kid and even considered it as a usual diversion. Few years after, Agu met his wife in a fiesta carnival in their barrio in xxxx.

Agu divulged that he was in his second year when he was again influenced by his friend to engage in sex. They would watch movies and read pronographic materials. Until he directly had it with his girlfriend.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

The birth of his child was quite bewildering to Agu. It was a mixed emotion, of happiness and fear.

Agu and his girlfriend lived together. Both of them did not finish schooling. The girl was also not serious with her studies. It was just a tweaked status for them, from single to being a father and a mother, a husband and wife; life became more complex.

Agu still aims for a better future. He said, he learned his lessons. He realized the importance of earning a degree to find a stable job. He has the desire to go back to school but their time and finances would not allow him anymore; especially that he is about to welcome again another child soon.

A disobedient son that is how Agu considers himself as he looked back to his past. It was really remorseful he said. He truly regrets it.

Different strategies used by the participant in coping with his conditions

Agu changed his perspective; from an easygoing teen to a responsible provider. He is determined to combat the misery of being an indigent.

Lessons reflected on the participant's experiences and current situation

Prioritizing studies is a great lesson which Agu bravely admitted as a lesson which is not just for him. He said that everyone must not just be aware of this, the youth must make an effort to become serious in their schooling.

Having suffered from his encounters, as an undergraduate, as a teenage father, he also wants other people, especially the youth, to pay attention to what the elders say about early marriage and to prepare for a good future.

Agu also learned to emphathize with parents who before he thought were just meddling too much on every child's individual liberty. Now that he is a father himself, he accepted the importance of guidance and giving pieces of advice.

Case # 10 – Jepoy

Demographic Characteristics

Jepoy, the youngest among 5 siblings is now 19 years old. He became a father when he was 17. His highest educational attainment is 3rd year high school. He currently works as a porter.

Factors that influenced the participant to engage in pre-marital sex

Peer influence bolstered Jepoy's drawbacks as a teen. He appreciated his peer's company more than his studies. Unfortunately, he was with the wrong crowd.

His peers also encouraged Jepoy to watch pornographic materials through cellphone and online viewing.

Some of Jepoy's peers were able to finish their secondary years but the rest were just like him, they did not finish schooling and also married at a young age. Jepoy also recalled that aside from his peer's influence, he was by nature a naughty boy.

His exposure to social media also paved the way for Jepoy to meet his wife. He was actually flirting with her because she had an existing girlfriend while texting the girl.

According to Jepoy, his being drunk at that time may have added to the sudden consummation of the act.

Jepoy's girlfriend begged him not to leave her when she discovered about the pregnancy. He was hesitant but he just accepted his fate, so they cohabited; such was even considered favorable by the girl's party because it will spare her from just hanging around with peers.

Participant's experiences and needs being a teenage father

Jepoy was lucky according to him because he still gets support from his parents even if his mother would nag most of the time, telling him that it is his problem so it is him who must resolve it. He began to work then as a porter in the market where his mother also sells goods.

In spite of difficulties, Jepoy was still tempted to engage in vices but sooner, he began to give importance to his family.

Another challenging duty as a family man is how Jepoy could manage well his household and his marital relations.

Jepoy also had a hard time in finding a better employment because what is in demand would always be a diploma, vocational or four-year course. And yet, his wish of going back to school is impossible.

Different strategies used by the participant in coping with his conditions

Jepoy exerted to do multiple jobs when available; even if it would require an arduous task. He would offer his services for any labor that allows his capacity and skills.

Lessons reflected on the participant's experiences and current situation

Life's struggle similar to survival of the fittest was Jepoy's description of his experience. He, however, managed not to become extinct even if it is so hard for him to make both ends meet.

Jepoy was sad to note that due to the foregoing factors stated, all his siblings ended with the same fate. He still dreams to be saved from what he considers a sorrowful financial plight but his possible solutions of emancipating his family from poverty is still not feasible.

Learning from his experience, Jepoy gave value to discipline.

His advice after the lessons that were imbibed to his minds is for the youth to value their time and be serious in their studies.

Summary of Findings

To have a closer look at the different themes and characteristics pertaining to the experiences and needs of teenage fathers, the following tables are presented:

Table 2
Participants' Personal History

Category	Themes	Number of Responses
Family background	Dysfunctional family	6
	Neutral family relationship	4
	Low economic status	10
Educational background	High school Graduate	2
	High school drop out	6
	Elementary drop out	1
	Attending Alternative Learning System	1
	Attending public school	10
Social relationship	Affection spent most of the time with peers	10
	Living with their partner	8
	Not living with their partner	2
	Assumed paternal responsibilities	9

Table 3
Factors that Influenced the Participants to Engage in Pre-marital Sex

Category	Themes	Numbe of Responses
Social factors	Peer influence	15
	Vices	5
	Dysfunctional family	17
	Illegal drugs	1
	Dropouts	3
	Forced to live together	1
Pornographic materials	Multimedia player	1
	Internet	3
	Cellular phone	2
	Magazine	2
Self	Affection	3
	Hard-headed	8
	Physical attraction	3
Situation	Alone in the house with the girlfriend	9
	Alone in the girlfriend's house	2

Table 4
Teen Fathers' experiences on fatherhood

Category	Themes	Number of Responses
Personal	Peer influence stopped attending school after the knowledge of pregnancy	15
	Drop-out prior to the relationship	5
	Continued studies	17
	Devoted time to his family	1
	Got separated	3
	Engaging in vices	1
	Plans of abortion	
	Radical shift of life routine	
Pornographic materials	Struggling to establish emotional maturity	
	Multimedia player	1
	Internet	3
	Cellular phone	2
Self	Magazine	2
	Affection	3
	Hard-headed	8
Situation	Physical attraction	3
	Alone in the house with the girlfriend	9
	Alone in the girlfriend's house	2

DISCUSSION

Most of the participants shared common conditions such as having dysfunctional family, low family income, and school drop-outs. Findings also show how vast peer influence affected the teen fathers' social activities and decisions.

It was boldly emphasized in the 1987 Philippine Constitution that the government recognizes "the role of the youth in nation building" (Article II, Section 13); a policy that is widely used in various programs and policies as guiding principles, but the study found otherwise, as the participant-youth are in a weak position to be contributors to nation building. The recognition of the youth is founded also in Article II Section 12 of the Constitution, which "strengthens and recognizes the family as a basic social autonomous institution"; thus, the government continuously creates programs to realize this provision.

Article 68 of the Family Code states the rights and obligations between husband and wife and provides, "The husband and wife are obliged to live together, observe mutual love, respect and fidelity, and render mutual help and support". This was not witnessed by the teenage fathers from their respective family of orientation during their formative years as shown in Table 2.

The government already saw the need for a guidance counselor in every school but cases such as those of the participants seemingly were not attended to. The foundation of the teenage father can thus be considered weak, which brought to be at the mercy of peers who unfortunately are the wrong group of people, as they did not give importance to their schooling, too. Similarly, as revealed by one of the participants, they also engaged in a family life at an early age.

Curiously, an effort was made to solicit opinions from other male teenagers who were not part of the study. The researcher posed the question about the idea of embracing early the fatherhood stage. They were certain in their responses --- NO...a very big „NO“. They simply want to finish their college. They are enjoying their being single, socializing with their peers and acquaintances. The bottomline: these male teens want to have a stable career before they will enter a new phase in life, which is marriage life.

Looking now into the world of the teenage fathers, they are clearly located in a different situation. There were various factors that popped-up after having an immersion with the participants; for most of them, peers became very influential compared to their teachers and parents. They perceived their family as dysfunctional, having separated parents, receiving low supervisions and guidance, which were attested by the parents during the Focus Group Discussion. Half of the participants got into different vices, learned sexual intercourse from their peers whether through the internet by visiting adult websites or viewing the same in adult magazines.

The study also revealed that parental guidance is somehow missing. A clear responsibility of parents as stated in Art. 220 of “The Family Code of the Philippines”; which also specifically provides for the following rights and duties of parents:

- (1) To keep them in their company, to support, educate and instruct them by right precept and good example, and to provide for their upbringing in keeping with their means;
- (2) To give them love and affection, advice and counsel, companionship and understanding;
- (3) To provide them with moral and spiritual guidance, inculcate in them honesty, integrity, self-discipline, self-reliance, industry and thrift, stimulate their interest in civic affairs, and inspire in them compliance with the duties of citizenship;
- (4) To furnish them with good and wholesome educational materials, supervise their activities, recreation and association with others, protect them from bad company, and prevent them from acquiring habits detrimental to their health, studies and morals;
- (5) To represent them in all matters affecting their interests;
- (6) To demand from them respect and obedience;
- (7) To impose discipline on them as may be required under the circumstances; and
- (8) To perform such other duties as are imposed by law upon parents and guardians.

The law is clear, but there are no clear sanctions for parents who failed to fulfill such obligations. In the reflections of parents who participated in the Focus Group Discussion, they admitted that they really failed to perform most of the obligations they need to render to their children.

Meanwhile, the positive aspect in the study is the clear manifestation of the teenage fathers’ acceptance of their responsibilities as parents, which also erases the notion that young fathers are not responsible. This finding affirms another undertaking, that of Strug and Wilmore-Schaeffer as mentioned in Frewin (2007) as it revealed that, “contrary to popular mythology, many adolescent fathers care deeply about their offspring and participate actively in their care.”

Financial support is hard for them to get from their respective families; thus, there are even times that they would skip meal as they cannot get any stable job due to lack of education and opportunities. In a meal, they would share a pack of dried fish or a can of sardines or just noodles most of the time, a scenario that also strikes the heart of most of the participants who want also to give enough provisions for their own families.

Seemingly, the plight of the participants can be considered as a deprivation of their life, a right which is clearly embodied under Article 3 Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution, which states, “No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law”.

De Leon (2007), defines life as “more than mere animal existence”. Life is more than breathing; it includes the enjoyment of all the gifts given to humans by God. But such enjoyment does not only confine its scope to having someone to love like the wife and kids of the teenage fathers but at least provisions that are enough for their very existence; these include food, shelter and clothing. All of these provisions are hardly afforded by the teenage fathers.

As they continue to reflect on their situations, they really regret of disregarding the value of education which they believe having such will equip them to land to a better job. They were caught unprepared; finding themselves in a shoe of being a husband and a father instead of being in school and pursuing their dreams of becoming professionals. They realized the importance of choosing friends wisely and getting away from vices.

If the participants will only be given a chance to fix things, they will finish their education to have a better future and enjoy first the life of being single, which will allow them to have much preparation before getting into marriage.

Their choice, however, was different. They have waived every right accorded to them as children and as youth when they entered family life at an early age.

The time that they got into married life was in the early adolescence stage. This phase in their life is the period when age becomes a powerful bonding agent and they tend to spend more time with peers than their parents, a time utilized by the participants in devoting friendship especially among girls; from such peers, developed intimacy and support. In addition, Papalia (2004) asserted that the teenage years is also a time of “adolescent rebellion”; a stage that involves emotional turmoils, conflict within the family, alienation from adult society and rejection of adult’s values; a clear gap that widens as the teenagers also feel tensions between dependency on their parents and breaking away. Comparably, parents more often than not have mixed feelings, too. They want their children to be independent, yet they find it hard to let go.

The attitude then towards the above dilemma will still be based on the way the teenagers were reared, plus the external factors that surround them. This could be supported by the findings of Magno (2008), which revealed that college students from dysfunctional family would acquire a low self-esteem and are unable to easily deal constructively with difficulties. It was also proven in the same study that teachers commonly find these students as habitual absentees together with their peers.

The strength of peer influence is further explored in the study of Aquino (2001) as findings showed that a high proportion among male students considered peer pressure and partly vices as the common causes why they fail or drop in school and commonly they drop on their first or second year in school.

Both studies support the findings of the current undertaking. Also, the initial exposure of the participants to sex-related activities and images was greatly influenced by peers, an activity which eventually became habitual.

Canlas (2004) affirmed these findings. His study disclosed that from among the 200 adolescent-participants, 65% were exposed to sex comedy or adult movies and more than 50% were exposed to sexual printed materials. Moreover, the study disclosed that such exposure led to the adolescents' act of trying and imitating what they watched on television and read in print. These serve as their driving force to engage in pre-marital sex. As a result of the above findings, the existence of teenage pregnancies and teenage fathers become a widespread phenomenon.

The task of providing a healthy fatherhood is not possible when difficulties outweigh a better living condition; as teenage fathers, lacking in education and with troublesome families led to difficulty in facing early responsibilities of fatherhood.

The findings, however, do not suggest for pointing fingers as to who are liable to these teens; but promotes a collaborative effort among basic institutions such as government, family, school and church. The Philippine government through its local government units should have a strong political will in empowering the youth and in providing them an opportunity to become productive citizens and contributors for nation building.

This study also reveals the importance of healthy family relationship where the development of healthy personality starts, where the child learns respect and self-valuing. It is also, inside the family where members are supposed to experience care, sense of belongingness and unconditional positive regards that in some occasions is misinterpreted. The church, on the other hand, should carry on with the youth's spiritual formation.

All these are essential in strengthening the teens' basic foundation acquired from the family as the first agent of socialization.

Emerging Framework

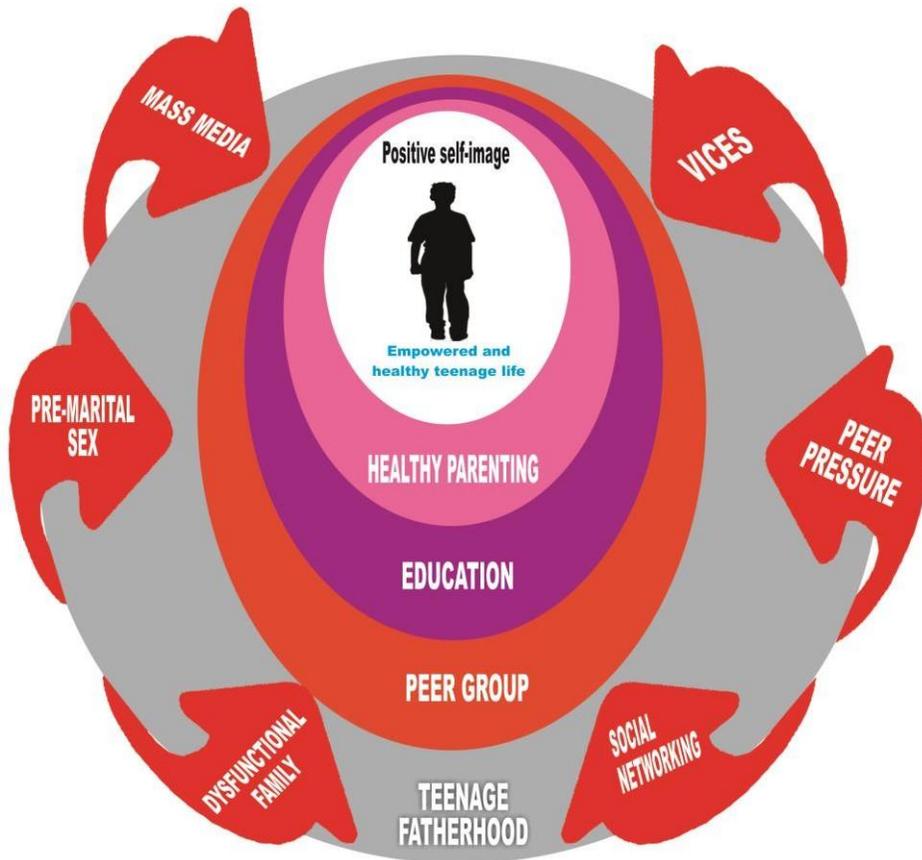


Figure1. Emerging Framework: Buffers against susceptibility and domination of negative forces that could lead to teenage fatherhood.

An empowered and healthy teenage life could be rooted through the development of a positive self-image. The attainment of such is through a good and stable foundation of every individual's formative years. Healthy parenting, education and peer group becomes salient factors in instituting a positive self-image. But if these factors are not present or negatively applied, insecurities and unstable life would rock the individual; from this scenario, the "Emerging Framework against Susceptibility on Premature Fatherhood as Reflected on Experiences and Needs of Teenage Fathers" was developed.

In the framework, the development of a positive self-image suggests that in the early stages of child's formative years, healthy parenting, education and peer group become

influential factors. Presented in colors based on the interpretation of Angela Wright (2008) on her article *Colour Affects*, each factor signifies their respective functions.

Presented in pink is healthy parenting as the color represents compassion, nurturing and love. Angela Wright emphasized that pink also relates to unconditional love and understanding, and the giving and receiving of nurturing. Certainly, this is what healthy parenting is all about.

A healthy parenting nourishes a person in terms of security while education, the second factor, leads to the laying of a better foundation of innate skills and intellectual abilities for the individual to enhance and explore more of his talents and abilities. Thus, the purple was utilized as it relates to the imagination and spirituality, (Wright, 2008); which is expounded in every school curriculum.

Healthy parenting and education build and boost the child's skills leading to a desire of improving the stance towards an upward social mobility. But man cannot survive alone. A support group is needed to improve relational affairs among people as well as social skills which are important for growth and development of the inner persona. This is the peer group's function.

The peer group is highlighted in orange as the color signifies enthusiasm for life. Wright (2008) cited that the color signifies adventure and risk-taking, competition and independence. It also mirrors to social communication, thus, it becomes both physically and mentally stimulating. This is the influence of the peers. A peer group aids in developing positive social skills.

The foregoing serve as shield that will protect a person while growing up. However, an opposite environment attracts vulnerability leading to the destruction of the shield as the penetration of outside negative elements becomes prevalent and; thus, predominate in the person's world. Presented in red, which presents several influences such as "energy, action, desire and passion" (Wright, 2008), are challenges that comes along the individual's life. In this study, these are the unsurpassed elements.

Presented in arrows that successfully intersect in the shield are forces such as dysfunctional families, peer pressure, exposure to mass media without proper guidance from parents, engaging into vices and exposure to sexual activities through social networking which led to the engagement to premarital sex pushed by curiosity, peer pressure and intimate relationship. This led to the early acceptance of the participants' responsibility on fatherhood which was under the shade of the grey color. Grey positively means psychological neutrality, as Wright (2008) mentioned. The author however, furthered that lack of confidence, dampness and depression is grey's negative aspect. These dominated the participants' life as they embraced a new status in life and had a choice which most of them regarded to be the last

resort of their actions. Such response changed not only their status but their perceptions and realizations in life.

Concept Paradigm

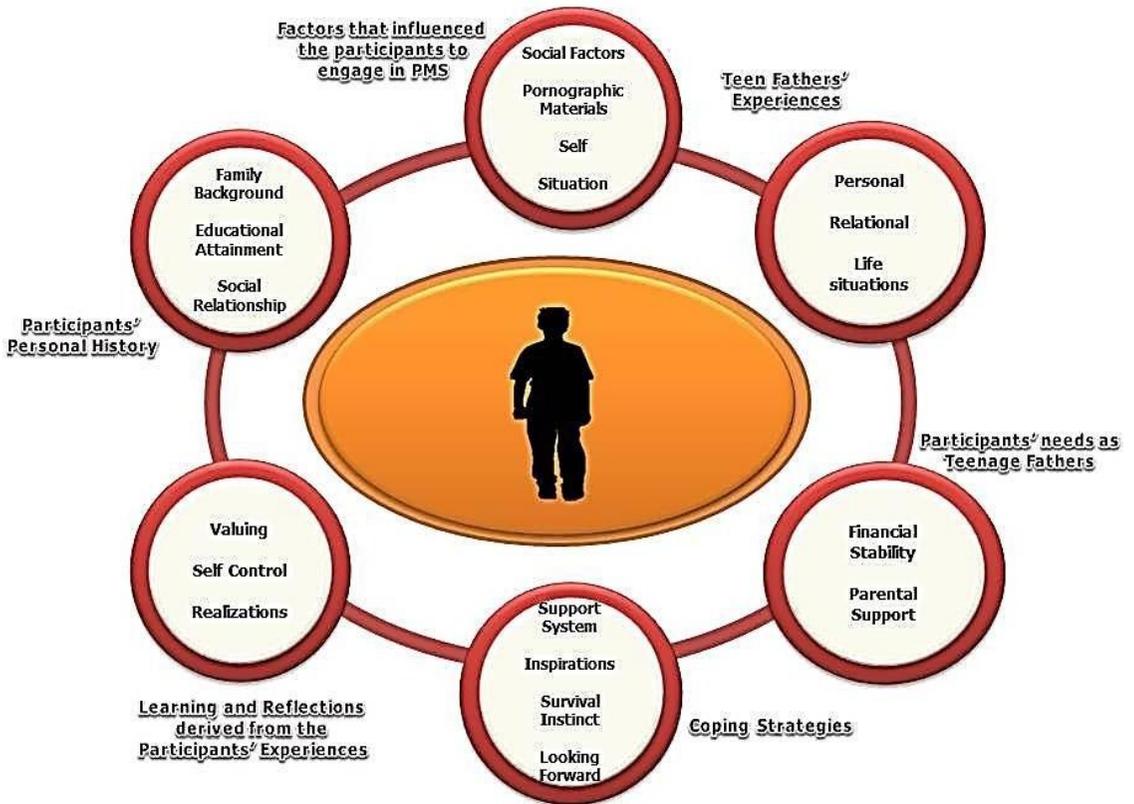


Figure 2: Journey to fatherhood as reflected on the experiences and needs of teenage fathers

Individuals begin their journey in a new world once separated from the womb of their mothers. They are first exposed to the first agent of socialization which is their family. The first environment from where they begin to develop their character and what is witnessed by them becomes influential even in their period of adolescence.

Most of the respondents came from dysfunctional families with unstable financial status that led most of the parents to focus their time on work; others engaged in vices and illicit affairs with another partner. This scenario led to the disturbance of attaining a basic

education and developed into a negative habit in terms of social relationship on the part of the teenage fathers.

In such an insecure environment, the participants sought refuge to other social factors outside of their own families. They got hooked into peers who incidentally are facing similar circumstance; eventually, they found themselves mostly hanging out with their friends... smoking and drinking. Curiosity and peer influence also led the respondents to read and watch pornographic materials. These factors also drove the respondents to engage in pre-marital sex. They partly blame themselves for lack of self- control and the inducing situation when they were left with their partners alone in a house repeatedly.

The choice the respondents had was to embrace their situation and accept the responsibility of being a father. It was a transition that resulted in a heavy task and emotional burden as the respondents are compelled to work instead of going to school, although some dropped out of school already prior to their fatherhood stage. They got into menial jobs, one was even involved into robbery and lived a difficult life as family support is also seldom extended especially in terms of finances as they all belong to poverty stricken families.

Obviously, the participants need to land to stable and financially rewarding job to sustain their everyday living. They also still sought for family support.

As part of the respondents' coping mechanism, it is already a big contribution that they live with their respective families as they cannot afford to have a domicile of their own. Still, a part of their support system, are their friends but they do not have the luxury of time to hang out with them as before. Faced with difficulty, they are still inspired to live because of their children who serve as their top priority at present. In addition, it is survival instinct that makes them continue with their lives. Looking forward, they want to see a better life especially a brighter future for their children.

Currently, the respondents learned to value child-rearing, thus, they are making efforts to provide security and affection to their children in spite of hardships in life. However, this kind of care must not make the children a spoiled brat as discipline is still important to be imbibed in them. The respondents also realized that it is necessary to employ a good parenting skill in order to raise children so that unlike them, their children will grow in an environment with mutual respect and trust for them to trek a different path --- a new path.

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