



ASEAN SOCIAL WORK JOURNAL

Volume 10, No.1, June, Year 2022

ISSN : 2089-1075

www.aseansocialwork.com

Batang Ina: Family Communication Patterns and Teenage Pregnancies among Filipino Youth

Vilma Mae Ventanilla

Department of Social Work, College of Social Work and Community Development,
University of the Philippines-Diliman

Correspondence: vventanilla@up.edu.ph

Jean Pauline Villaruel

Department of Social Work, College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines-Diliman

Abstract

Teen pregnancy is one of the social issues that social workers encounter when helping clients, especially the youth. Through the case study conducted among six teenage mothers using a phenomenological approach, the researchers presented their experiences and stories of teenage pregnancy. The goal of this research study is to describe the patterns and relationship between family communication patterns and the chances of teenage pregnancy among young Filipino women. Furthermore, these patterns and relationships were analyzed to determine the family types of the participants using the paradigm of Family Communication Patterns Theory.

Keywords: *teenage pregnancy, Family Communication Patterns Theory, Filipino families, low conversation orientation.*

Introduction

Background of the Study and Related Literature

Teenage pregnancy is one of the most pressing issues in our society today, especially among Filipino women. In fact, the teenage pregnancy rate in the Philippines was considered to be the highest among the ASEAN member states based on the report of the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) in 2019. Despite the actions of the government to alleviate the conditions of reproductive health in the country, teenage pregnancy remains a major public health concern, causing the majority of Filipino youth at risk when engaging in relationships and sexual activities. Several determinants of teenage pregnancy such as the following: lack of access to reproductive health education; poverty; peer pressure; low use of contraceptives; lack of school fees; and lack of parental care, communication, and supervision. As a result of this phenomenon, teenagers, especially young girls, are likely to drop out of school. Their health is also at risk during and after childbirth. Most of them experience rejection by parents, families, and friends. The life that these adolescents had imagined suddenly changes, as they are bombarded by unforeseen parental obligations and responsibilities which they are unprepared for.

The problem to be addressed through this research study is the high rate of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines, specifically how family communication patterns contribute to the phenomenon mentioned above. According to Habito (2021), the Filipinos' conservative Catholic ideologies have prevailed in Filipino social policies, norms, and legislation. The influence of religious teachings is evident in imposing sex as a means of procreation within marriage, demoralizing use of contraceptives and premarital sex, and sexual double standards. In return, the Filipino youth remains vulnerable whenever they get involved in relationships and sexual activities. Sexual ignorance prevails among them and as a result, heavily impacts one of the most pressing social issues in our country today- teenage pregnancy. Our conservative views begin to be nurtured and developed in our homes, with our parents and elders as our role models. To date, the open discussions about sex education remains taboo in Filipino households. The lack of proper education about sex is then seen as one of

the factors to consider on why the Philippines has the highest rate of adolescent pregnancy in Asia (Delizo, 2021).

Through this research, teenage mothers and their relationship and communication pattern with their family are assessed to understand the connection with their early pregnancy brought about by early engagement in sexual activities. As known, family plays a big part in creating and sharing social reality among its family members. Parents are the ones responsible for processing outside information for their children to connect them to society. However, conservatism in Filipino families, rooted in religious beliefs, affects the information process which can be observed in sex discussion. Most Filipino families prohibit or avoid discussions about sex at home. This is why premarital sexual activities, as well as, the use of contraceptives are considered immoral in common Filipino belief. This, however, does not prevent the incidence of teenage pregnancies which is one of the most pressing issues of society.

Teen pregnancy is one of the social issues that social workers encounter when helping clients, especially the youth. This research explores the factors mentioned that social workers can take into consideration when working with teenage parents and their families. With the identification of the types of relationships and communication patterns developed by the family of a teenage parent, social workers can effectively work with their clients by guiding them through a good family-centered approach. Interpersonal communication, uninvolved or disconnected relationships, and parenting issues can be addressed among clients while encouraging Filipino families, especially parents and their children to openly discuss sex education.

For this study, the researchers used the Family Communication Patterns Theory developed by Koerner and Fitzpatrick. Family Communication Patterns Theory is a logical empirical paradigm in determining the family relationship and communication patterns of teen mothers and their families. The study focused on showing the relation between personal responsibility of teenagers on their sexuality and the low conversation orientation of one's family with the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Two types of family communication namely, Protective & Laissez-faire are both low on conversation orientation.

The researchers conducted a qualitative method using a phenomenological approach to describe the family relationship and communication patterns of teen mothers on their early pregnancy. Six teenage mothers agreed to participate in the interview. The participants are set to answer questions regarding their lives before and after teenage pregnancy, lessons on teenage pregnancy, journey as teenage mothers, as well as the role of their parents before, during, and after their pregnancy. The interview questions served as a guide in assessing the conformity orientation and conversation orientation of the participants and their families, which is important in determining the pattern of family communication.

Overview of Teenage Pregnancy in the Philippines

Filipino culture, traditions, and religious ideologies play vital roles in influencing sexuality and shaping the sexual norms of Filipino adolescents (Juan et. al, 2016). As the analytical study on the sexual and reproductive behaviors of the Filipino youth mentions, discussions about sex remain a taboo and a prohibited topic in the country. Open conversations about sexual activities and relations are not always welcome at Filipino homes, which often results in the fear of judgment from asking questions about the subject matter.

Despite the stigma associated with discussing sex in the Philippines, studies show that the sexual behavior of Filipinos is heightened during their phases of adolescence and often outside the bounds of marriage. Most of all, what is truly unsettling is that most young Filipinos engage in premarital sex without sufficient knowledge, family/ peer support, and protection.

“Bastos”: Filipino Perception and Attitude Toward Sex

Given the low use of contraceptives amongst young people in the Philippines as mentioned above, early engagement in sexual activities heightens the risk of teenage pregnancy. The term “sex” and discussions related to the subject have been connotated as “bastos” or profane/ vulgar something that should only be grasped by people in marriage. Birth control methods have been deemed by the majority of Filipinos as immoral acts, specifically by the church and other religious-conservative sectors. On the other hand, gender inequality is also taken into account, as men are often granted sexual freedom while women are expected to be modest and behave conservatively, with virginity perceived as a virtuous character. The traditional gender roles disable the power of women to decide on the timing and initiation of sexual intercourse, the attitude and behavioral practices when engaging in sexual activities, and the negotiation for contraceptive use (Juan et. al, 2019). Lastly, the authors mentioned that the inadequate knowledge and autonomy of young Filipina women when engaging in sexual

activities (which can lead to adolescent pregnancy) could be associated with the following: low exposure to effective family planning communications; poor levels of shared family planning, and decision-making; and frequent subordination to marital authority.

Nevertheless, teenage pregnancy affects the future of both teenage mothers and fathers. Due to their unplanned and most of the time, unexpected parental obligations, this pushes them to drop out of school, affecting their future and eventually pushing them into the depths of poverty. Consequently, the social issue of teenage pregnancy remains unresolved while the whole nation pretends that the current image of sex, as well as the state of sex education in the Philippines, is not an issue.

Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on Young Parents

Bearing a child at a young age jeopardizes the future of adolescent parents, especially teenage mothers. In the earlier part of the study, it was mentioned that the World Health Organization claims pregnancy and childbirth complications are the leading causes of death among girls aged 15-19 years globally. Pregnancy during the teenage years brings potential health problems like preeclampsia, anemia, premature delivery, and postpartum hemorrhage. Moreover, teenage pregnancy can also be a cause of contracting STDs (sexually transmitted diseases).

Teenage mothers are also at risk of experiencing violence and depression due to the “kahihyan” (shame) that they bring to the family for being impregnated at a young age. Girls who get pregnant before 18 years old are more likely to experience violence within their marriage or partnership. In return, this leads to poor mental health situations that put a *batang ina* (young mother) prone to mental disorders. Other social consequences include experiences of stigma and rejection from their peers which greatly affects their physical health as well. Teenage pregnancy and childbearing have detrimental effects on the educational needs of young parents. Having a child while still in school is a major interference for adolescents which therefore forces young mothers to drop out of school, and as a result, compromises their future education and employment opportunities.

Parent-Adolescent Sexual Communication

Parent-adolescent sexual communication has been a recognized factor as that could positively influence the sexual behavior of adolescents. According to Widman et al. (2015), parents are agents of sexual socialization for young people. Parents play a critical role in conveying sexual information; providing significant influence on the sexual attitudes, values, and beliefs; and providing open and honest communication about sexual health issues with their teens. However, open sexual communication among parents and children does not take place in other families. Factors such as embarrassment, inaccurate knowledge, or low self-efficacy may prevent some parents from having honest and supportive conversations with their teens about sexual behavior. There are also other factors that affect parent-adolescent sexual communication.

In the study conducted, parents generally communicate more frequently with their daughters than their sons. Parents are more likely to stress the negative consequences of sexual activity during discussions with daughters compared with sons. It was also noted that adolescent communication is associated with the sex of the parent. There was a more significant association with mother-led communication than father-led communication when it comes to the discussion of safer sex. The quality and timing of parent-adolescent communication also show implications on the sexual behavior of teens. Communication about sex after the sexual activity initiation of teens may limit the potential result of sexual discussions (Widman et al, 2015).

According to Lloyd (2004), effective parent-adolescent relationships and communications are essential for the sexual health and development of the youth. She also pointed out the importance of different factors such as appropriate parenting styles, positive and open communication on sexuality, as well as displaying interest and involvement, but are often overlooked by families in the developmental process of their children.

Family as Part of Filipino Values

Filipinos are inherently family-oriented. According to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) (2020), family is the source of strength and inspiration for Filipinos to surpass life challenges. More than the traditional and nuclear family structure, they also consider friends, neighbors, churchmates, pets, etc. as family. With the changes brought by time, other family structures like same-sex and single parenting are already being embraced as well. But above all else, the Filipino culture still believes that “family should always come first”.

Teen Mothers and Their Relationships with Their Families

In a study by Salvador et al. (2016) on the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines, four themes were generated in dissecting the social issue of teenage pregnancy. The role of parents and their relationships with their daughters who became teenage mothers was one of the highlighted themes discussed. In preventing teenage pregnancy, it is the responsibility of parents to observe different measures when providing the right directions to teens. Parental guidance for adolescents is reported to be a huge indicator in preventing unwanted and early pregnancy.

Another study by Gregorio (2018) about teenage mothers residing at Tondo, the poorest district in Manila explores the lived experiences of teenage mothers on a personal and community level in her attempt to understand the previously established analyses on the causes and effects of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines. The adolescent mothers in the study were never really taught by their parents about sex education, based on their experiences. Some of them learned it the moment they engaged in such acts, while others learned it through watching teledramas and romance films. One participant even disclosed that she and her friends never really talked about sex in school because they are taught to look at it as a scary and disgusting act.

Filipino parents' firm opposition to involve in premarital sexual activities seems to have emanated from prior knowledge or forecast of parents when teens fall into high-risk or dangerous sexual endeavors (Salvador et al, 2016 as cited in Raymundo et al, 2014). As a result, parents often resort to promoting abstinence while prohibiting their children to have open and proper education about sex.

Proper sex education has proven to delay sexual activity, increase safer sex activities (contraceptive use), have fewer sexual partners, and reduce the frequency of sexuality. As the study suggests, an intact family structure, parental disapproval of teen sex, parent-teen relationship satisfaction, and greater parental monitoring are associated with reduced chances of sexual activity and serve as an integral force in preventing teenage pregnancy.

On the other hand, it was expected and observed from the parents of the teenage mothers during adolescent pregnancy to have performed the same parental roles. Parents tend to coach their daughters throughout their pregnancy, and still continue their roles in guiding and serving as the support network of their children who are turning into parents. Without their significant others, parents tend to be the main provider of the mother and child's needs (Salvador et al, 2016).

Family Communication Patterns Theory

The FCP theory serves as a model of how families create a shared social reality through the process of co-orientation and interpersonal behavior. The FCP theory is concerned with the causal explanation of how people communicate based on two orientations: conformity and conversation orientation. The two orientations which are the dimensions of the family communication are dependent on one another. It is not quite satisfactory to assess family communication patterns with only one orientation as the two consistently interact with each other (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2004).

Conversation orientation of the family discusses the frequency of interactions among family members and the array of topics that can be discussed among family members. This orientation is also concerned with how families view the value of exchange and sharing of ideas. It also determines how parents use frequent communication with their children as a tool in their children's education and socialization. Families with high conversation orientation are the most likely to have open and healthy sexual communication among family members. Conservative families may fall on low conversation orientation as the array of topics that can be discussed and the amount of engagement is restricted. Thus, intimate thoughts and expressions are not encouraged among family members. Among the four family types, consensual and pluralistic families have high conversation orientation, whereas, protective and laissez-faire have low conversation orientation.

On the other hand, conformity orientation discusses the level of harmony, conflict avoidance, and interdependence among family members. This orientation deals with the level of obedience of children to parents and other adults and the equality among family members. A high level of conformity orientation in the family is associated with the traditional family structure. Decision-making is restricted to parents and children are required to abide. However, low conformity orientation families believe in the independence of family members, value personal space, and subordinate family interests to personal interests (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Among the four family types, consensual and protective families have high conversation orientation, whereas, pluralistic and laissez-faire have low conversation orientation.

Research Objectives

The overall goal of the study is to describe family communication patterns among selected teenage mothers. Specific objectives include:

1. To present the experiences and stories of teenage pregnancy among selected teenage mothers;
2. To identify the common challenges and issues faced by teenage mothers; and,
3. To determine the importance of family relationships and communication patterns in developing sexual responsibilities among teenagers.

Methodology

The purpose of the study is to describe the relationship between family relationships and communication patterns on the high incidence of teenage pregnancy among selected teenage mothers. Data collection utilized a qualitative method to describe the relationship between family communication patterns and how they are linked to the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Using the phenomenological approach for the case study, the researchers identified and analyzed the themes and patterns emerging from the experiences of teenage mothers. Furthermore, this approach helped the researchers to bring forth the perceptions of teenage mothers on their communication with their family.

Researchers collected data from the participants through interviews. The interview questions asked are used to determine the patterns and themes related to the teenage pregnancy journey of the participants and their families. The chosen participants for the study are women who have become mothers between the ages of 13 to 19 years. Participants must be Filipino women who are 18 to 23 years old during the time of the research study who gave birth during their teenage years within the last five years. They were invited to a one-on-one interview. The number of participants in the study depends in part, on the availability and willingness of the participants during the interview. For this study, 6 participants were interviewed. It is also important that their participation is voluntary and has signed the consent form.

Responses gathered from the interview were used for data analysis. The researchers used thematic content analysis to identify common themes and find common patterns across the data set. This was done through transcribing and decoding the responses. The pattern was further specified according to conformity orientation and conversation orientation of the participants and their families. Questions regarding the relationship of the interviewee with their family determined the conformity orientation of the family. On the other hand, questions regarding the degree of communication of the interviewee's family determined the conversation orientation of the family. As a result, the pattern observed in the data gathered determined the family type of the participant based on the Family Communication Patterns Theory. The responses showing a pattern of low conformity orientation and low conversation orientation indicates a laissez-faire family type. Meanwhile, responses showing a pattern of high conformity orientation and low conversation orientation indicate a protective family type. The patterns, more importantly, will be used to indicate whether there is a significant relationship between communication patterns and teenage pregnancy among Filipino young mothers.

Results and Discussion

After the data collection and analysis from the phenomenological study conducted, the researchers presented the stories of the six participants in this study about their lives, lessons on teenage pregnancy, journey as teenage mothers as well as the role of their parents before, during, and after their pregnancy. From these stories, the researchers observed five emerging themes among teenage mothers and the family they belong to. These themes were the common issues that arose from their stories during the interview. Derived from the main themes discussed above and other subcategories, the researchers identified the family types of the six participants using the Family Communication Patterns paradigm as shown in Table 2. The researchers assessed the conformity and conversation of the family of the participants in identifying their family type.

Table 1. Five Emerging Themes Among Selected Teenage Mothers and their Families Emerging Themes Among Selected Teenage Mothers and their Families

Participants	Themes				
	Parenting Styles	Family Religiosity	Parents' Stance on Dating	Communication on sex	Self-expression at Home
KP	Very strict	My family is religious but not me	Allowed	No	Expressive but only to mom
LS	Not strict	We go to church rarely (about once a year)	Allowed	No	Expressive but no opportunity to talk at home
AL	Very strict	We regularly attend Sunday masses	Not allowed	No	Expressive at home
JC	Very strict	Our faith strengthened ever since my father converted	Allowed	No	Expressive at home
GP	Not strict	My parents are not religious but I regularly attend fellowship (different religion)	Not allowed	No	I prefer to stay silent at home
RP	Strict	We don't attend Sunday masses regularly but we do everyday prayers	Not allowed	No	Expressive at home

1. Parenting Styles

As observed from the interview with the participants, most of them had parents who apply strict and authoritative parenting strategies. This can be traced back to the conservative culture of the Filipinos, where elders are perceived to be superior towards younger people, and the assumption that older people know more in life because of their age. On top of this, a study conducted by Alampay in 2018 revealed that Filipino parents use authoritarian methods of parenting more than other countries. The typical parenting style of Filipino parent emphasizes strictness, respect for authority, and obedience. To support the data further, Alampay also mentioned a survey regarding the Value of Children in the Philippines. This survey revealed that “63% of Filipino mothers prioritize their children to pay heed to their parents as compared to the 25% that testified for their children to focus on being a good person” (Alampay, 2018).

Most of the participants' self-expression at home turned out to be at a higher level as well, as contrast to what the researchers were expecting based on the related literature gathered during the previous parts of the research. Still, despite the participants' high levels of self-expression, the researchers have observed that they were reserved in letting their parents know about their romantic relationships. This reveals that particular topics at home are still not openly discussed, specifically topics relating to sexuality.

On the other hand, observations from the laissez-faire family type revealed that parents' lack of care and affection resulted in a low level of self-expression. Therefore, too much leniency could result in lack of communication among parents and children.

2. Family Religiosity

Filipinos consider Sunday as a special day for their families. They live by the bible saying that it is the Lord's “rest day” and therefore, a day to bond as a family and celebrate the Lord's blessing. Religion has been a significant part of Filipino culture. According to Morillo et al. in 2013, to some extent, religion has been a significant source of variations in views about family values of the Filipinos. Religion encourages a particular way of family living. Hearing the mass on a Sunday has become both a religious duty and a familial commitment to Filipino families.

AL's family goes to church every Sunday on a regular basis. She also recalls that their family bonding is to eat outside after the mass. On the other hand, RP and her family don't go to church on a regular basis but when they do, they do it altogether. She also sees attending Sunday masses to be part of their bond as a family. RP noted that even though they do not go to church regularly, they make sure to pray everyday to thank God for the blessings that they receive.

As per JC, their religious ideologies as a family were off to a rocky start. Her mother was a Born Again Christian while her father was a devoted Catholic. Before, she and her mother would go to a Born Again church in the morning, then accompany her father to attend the Catholic mass afterwards. However, one day her father was diagnosed to have kidney stones. He was then encouraged to join with JC and her mother for a bible study in the hope of physical healing. True enough, her father got better after the kidney stones were flushed out of his system one day while urinating. JC's father was then converted to being a Born Again Christian and their whole family treats this occurrence as a

miracle, just as how they perceived JC's painless pregnancy labor and delivery as a miracle from God. Before her mother died, they also invited a pastor to pray over her. JC believes that their faith had a tremendous impact on their family bond.

GP, on the other hand, had parents who don't attend regular Sunday masses. They were only interested in church architecture like the Antipolo church but as mentioned by GP, "hindi sila palasimba". GPs neighbors introduced church fellowships to her and her siblings. GP became closer to God and started attending Sunday services at a Born Again Christian church when she became a mother. On the contrary to GPs religious upbringing, KP's parents were very religious but she chose not to join them in church-related activities. Finally, LS and her family claim themselves as Catholic although they rarely go to church.

While the participants had different religious upbringings, conclusions from Morillo's study are still parallel to their experiences. Sunday masses are seen by some of the participants as a time to bond and get closer with their family. If not attending the mass regularly, the participants would still exert efforts to stay in touch with God and their faith by praying and fellowships. Filipinos also tend to see their mishaps as a "blessing in disguise".

3. Parents' Stance on Dating

Participants seem divided when it comes to their parents' stance on dating. KP, LS, and JC were allowed to date while AL, GP, RP are not permitted to have romantic relationships, at least when they weren't mothers yet. Unexpectedly, the research findings indicated that strict parenting styles do not always equate to prohibiting children from courtship and dating. For example, KP and JC had strict parents but they were still allowed to engage in romantic relationships. For KP's parents, as long as a man asks for permission from them personally, they would allow him to court or date KP. Parents of LS, on the other hand, allow her to have romantic relationships in exchange for the following conditions: her boyfriend must formally introduce himself at their home; LS and her boyfriend must always ask for permission if they will be going out; and LS must be home before the sun sets.

Moreover, commonalities in LS and JC's situation were also observed by the researchers. JC mentioned that while she was allowed to date, there were a lot of do's and don'ts for both (JC and her boyfriend) of them. They are not allowed to go to her room, or go to places unsupervised by her parents. She also shared that they weren't allowed to hug each other, and that they must act in a formal manner at all times. JC realized that although her parents allowed her to date back then, they would still set dating rules in an old-fashioned way.

As per AL, she was not allowed to date nor be courted during her teenage years. She wasn't even allowed to have crushes before, which, as she mentioned, discouraged her from sharing anything with her parents about boys that she likes. While for GP, her parents never really mentioned anything about dating or having boyfriends. She just remembered that they weren't allowed to make that many friends when they were younger because as per their "ate Baby", household chores are their priority.

From this situation, GP assumed that she was not allowed to bring boys to their home and introduce any love interest to her family. Finally, RP who was not allowed to date during her teenage years either, since her parents were protective of her being an only child. Despite the restrictions placed by her parents, she would still have boyfriends in high school and keep it a secret from her family.

4. Sexual Communication Inside the Household

All participants shared that open communication or education on sex is not practiced in their households. This shows that sex still seems to be a taboo among Filipino households. Despite the open conversation between parents and teenagers about dating, pre-marital sex is still excluded in the discussion. In a study conducted by Widman et al. (2015), parents are said to be agents of sexual socialization for young people as they play a critical role in educating their teen about sexual health. Through open communication on sex, teenagers will be guided to the right direction about sex and will prevent negative consequences such as teenage pregnancy. However, instead of educating young people about sex, Filipino families still choose to stick with their conservative cultural narrative that sex are for married couples only. Consequently, anger and frustration dominate the reactions among parents and older family members upon realizing their teenager's pregnancy.

It was also mentioned in another study that teenagers learn sex through their partners, peers, friends, and different media sources not through their family. This is because parents tend to promote abstinence on sexual activities rather than properly educating them through open communication which can highly prevent the prevalence of teenage pregnancy (Salvador et al, 2016).

5. Teen Mothers' Self-Expression at Home

Based on their stories, GP is the least expressive among the participants. Due to her stand in the family, being adopted and youngest child, she chose to isolate and self-pity herself. She also mentioned that there is almost no opportunity to talk and express herself to her parents because they are always out of reach and not attentive to them. The same case applies to LS. She mentioned that she is actually expressive but due to poor communication and interaction in their family, she wasn't able to express herself at their home openly. Meanwhile, the other participants shared that they are expressive in their household. However, there are instances that their parents are neither vocal or responsive, or busy with work that little communication among them takes place. It was also observed that there is a limitation in the topic that they are able to discuss with their parents. Topic such as dating is limited or restricted in the household of AL, GP, and RP as they are not allowed to be in a relationship.

According to Lloyd (2004), effective parent-adolescent relationships and communications are essential for the sexual health and development of the youth. It also pointed out the importance of appropriate parenting styles, positive and open communication towards sexuality, as well as displaying interest and involvement in the developmental process of their children. However, these factors were often overlooked by parents. Participants shared that open communication would have prevented their early pregnancy because there will be proper guidance to them especially about sex.

6. Emerging Patterns among selected Teenage mothers

The researchers used the family communication patterns paradigm in assessing the family types of the participants to show the emerging patterns of family communication on teenage pregnancy and Filipino families. Thus, the assessment showed that three of the participants belong to a protective family and two belong to the laissez-faire family. Protective and laissez-faire family types are both low in conversation orientation. This showed that lack of communication opportunity and interaction in the family are seen to be related to the incidence of teenage pregnancy among the participants due to the inadequate level of sexual education.

Table 2. Family Types of the Participants

PARTICIPANT	ORIENTATION		FAMILY TYPE
	Conformity	Conversation	
KP	HIGH	LOW	Protective
LS	LOW	LOW	Laissez-faire
AL	HIGH	HIGH	Consensual
JC	HIGH	LOW	Protective
GP	LOW	LOW	Laissez-faire
RP	HIGH	LOW	Protective

Participants who belong to a protective family are those who are expected to obey their parents but do not value open communication that much. Participants who belong to this family type are deemed to be expressive however, their parents are neither vocal nor expressive, or busy with work that little communication among them takes place. This, in return, limits the range of topics allowed within the household where open sexual communication is most likely not encouraged. This results in a lack of the necessary skills and knowledge when it comes to adolescents' sexual endeavors and activities. Participants in this family type believed that open communication might have prevented their early pregnancy as they will be guided well by their parents. Along with it, the high conformity orientation implies that the parenting style of parents is restrictive in nature. As a result, good decision making skills of the children are not well developed because they are expected to comply with the rules. High conformity can be also observed in the strong religious belief among the families of the participants. It can be observed among participants in this family type that religious belief is valued.

Members of the laissez-faire family are often seen with lifeless interactions among family members which involve only a limited number of topics. Both participants in this family type shared that their parents are "nowhere to be found" most of the time. Both shared that their mothers often go out to

play mahjong, while their fathers are always “missing-in action”. As a result, communication about different topics such as dating and sex are not practiced nor encouraged in their family. Members of laissez-faire families are commonly emotionally distant from other family members which resulted from poor family interactions. Both participants shared that they spent more time with their peers and friends rather than with their family. The implication is external relationships are more valued than internal relationships in the family. This is due to the nature that neither conformity nor communication are held in high regard in this family type. It can be observed in this family type that religion is not critical in their family interest based on the stories of both participants.

AL, belongs to a family high in both conversation and conformity orientation. This family type has a consensual tension between pressure to agree and to preserve the existing family hierarchy, at the same time, an interest in open communication and in exploring new ideas. AL has supportive yet strict parents. Even after her pregnancy, her parents are still supportive to her and her children. She also shared that her parents listen and give her advice when she talks to them. However, when it comes to dating during teenage years, AL is not allowed. These families also value and engage in problem-solving and conflict resolution in order to prevent the potential threat to the relationships within the families who confront unresolved conflict. Upon learning her pregnancy, her parents got emotional but decided to accept it and called it a blessing.

Conclusion

Based on this study, the researchers entailed that the prevalence of teenage pregnancy among Filipino households is influenced by one’s familial communication and relationship. Parenting strategies used by parents and the level of communication that parents and children use is one crucial factor when it comes to discussing sexuality. In the previous chapter, researchers found out that three out of six participants belonged to a protective family type, while another two had a laissez-faire family type. Only one participant belonged to a consensual type of family. Family types with low levels of communication, such as with discussions on sexuality and sexual education, could be related to an inadequate level of knowledge on the risks and consequences of sex among adolescents.

Family is one of the primary, yet complex system surrounding an individual, according to the Systems Theory developed by Murray Bowen in 1946. Knowledge and behavior are first developed and nurtured in the household. Considering the impact of one’s family to an individual’s life, it is highly important that young girls and boys need guidance properly by their parents as they engage in sexual endeavors. According to Carba in 2004, the Filipino home has always played a significant role in explaining the sexual behavior of adolescents. In this context, a home is where a child first experiences his or her social encounters. Therefore, the family, especially the parents, are responsible for nurturing and shaping a child’s views, actions and beliefs, including their perceptions and attitudes towards sex.

On the contrary, the typical parenting style of Filipino parents emphasize strictness, respect for authority, and obedience, rather than an open, nurturing and caring type of childrearing. Filipino parents, as the findings have also indicated, often use authoritarian methods of parenting. Dating and courtship rules are being set up in a household without further explanation as to why these rules exist at all. Filipino adolescents are expected to obey these rules without questioning.

While the participants were able to build a close relationships with their parents, the parents’ influence on their daughter’s sexual attitudes and behaviors were found to be inadequately developed. To support this conclusion, Carba mentioned that the main reason for the lack of progress on sex education and awareness among Filipinos are due to high levels of sensitivity when it comes to matters of sexuality.

Aside from sexuality topics and issues not openly discussed in a typical Filipino home, policies in the Philippines also hinder the development of sex education and awareness. According to the Likhaan Center for Women’s Health Incorporated, PhilHealth, the national health insurance program, provides little coverage for contraceptive services. Expanding access to contraceptives and its affordability among Filipinos has also found limited political support, despite the perceived interrelationship between poor reproductive health and poverty. Under the Republic Act No. 10354, also known as the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012, the government has included sex education into the public school curriculum for students ages 10 to 19 years. They also provided funding for free or subsidized contraceptives at public schools and health centers. However, minors aged 10-19 still need parental consent to be sold or given sexual health products such as contraceptives in public health facilities. Considering all these, the incidence of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines is also affected by the inability of the government to provide services, programs, and policies that cater to the health care needs of adolescents. To some extent, religion has also been a significant source of variations in viewing the family values of the Filipinos. Religion encourages a particular way of family living. From the responses of the participants, it is evident that most of them

value religion and perceive it as one of the uniting bonds of their family. The Catholic church largely influences the state of sexuality education and awareness in the country. They have been known to not support modern “artificial” contraceptives, such as condoms, pills, injectables and IUDs. The church relies on families to teach children about reproductive health. However, another problem arises as Filipino parents are avoidant of the subject matter, or unequipped to discuss sexuality with their children. On top of this, another problem arises as religious Filipino families often view teenage pregnancy as a “blessing in disguise” rather than a social issue that has to be addressed in a social, economical, political, and educational perspectives.

Findings and conclusions made in this study could add to the existing knowledge on the social issue of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines. The study challenges social workers and other professionals to shift the blame from adolescent mothers, and examine other systems and environments to which they belong. The researchers have utilized the person-in-environment perspective in examining the stories of the six teenage mothers, knowing that teenage pregnancy is not just a personal issue, but also social issue that is influenced by the familial upbringing of an individual as well as other factors including the State, religion, and socio-cultural practices of the country. Moreover, this research study will help social workers deal with teenage mothers in securing attachments and healthy relationships with their parents, since the family is their primary and most influential social support. Social workers, during their many professional roles, may find themselves bridging the gap between adolescents and parents. Family types and parenting styles mentioned in this study will help them assess and identify the needs of families in order to enhance their emotional and physical functioning, personal well-being, and relationships within the household. Experiences from the participants of this study can help improve the evaluation skills of social workers when it comes to barriers that hinder healthy relationships and open communication between adolescents and parents, specifically on topics concerning their sexuality.

Suggestion

A special emphasis particularly in the areas of Filipino parents’ perspectives on issues of sexuality and reproductive health, contraceptive use, and reasons behind their parenting styles are recommended. The researchers also recommend that a larger sample of teenage Filipino mothers be tested on their family communication patterns, to be able to generalize the results to the population in a more reliable manner. Mother-daughter relationships and interactions may also be the focus of future researchers, since Filipino mothers often take the roles of caring for their children physically and emotionally. It is safe to assume that Filipina mothers typically have a higher influence on adolescents, particularly for a daughter who expects the same gender roles as she enters into adulthood.

Future researchers may also study teenage pregnancy using the lens of teenage fathers to explore a different angle on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines. This will provide an additional perspective on why teenagers engage early in sexual endeavors. The researchers suggest that social workers who work with the youth use study and other related studies regarding family relationships in dealing with teenage pregnancy cases. Furthermore, there is a need to revisit and further examine the contributions of the state and the church in the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the Philippines.

Future research studies must focus on exploring and evaluating the roles of relevant stakeholders such as social workers, community leaders, religious leaders, etc., in providing activities, programs and services directed at the improvement of relationships and communication within families. Researchers also suggest that social workers may use the family communication patterns paradigm and several social work approaches and methods on the helping process for parents and adolescents in preventing teen pregnancy or providing family support during teen pregnancy.

Acknowledgements

This research study will not be successful and completed within the given time without the help and support of some important people in our lives. First of all, we are very grateful to our research adviser, Ma’am Sue Nazal, for the constant support and guidance all throughout the period of the study. Her knowledge and encouragement helped us to carry on with our research. We are also grateful to our family, friends, and partners who have supported us all the way through, and whose encouragement made sure that we, the researchers, will successfully complete this research study. The research study became less challenging with their support and encouragement, especially now that we are in the state of pandemic.

We are also thankful to our friends who helped us recruit participants for the study. The study is sensitive in nature which made it difficult for us, the researchers, to find participants which is why we are grateful for their efforts. We are also immensely grateful to Sir Joltz for his expertise and insights

on an earlier version of the manuscript which have furnished the final draft of the research study. Most importantly, we would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of the participants of the study. Their stories and insights have played important roles to the development and success of the study. Finally, we would like to thank God for giving us the knowledge and wisdom to conduct the study. Without him, this study would not be possible.

Authors' Brief-bio

Vilma Mae Ventanilla

Department of Social Work, College of Social Work and Community Development,
University of the Philippines-Dilima
vvventanilla@up.edu.ph

Vilma Mae "VM" Ventanilla y Villacorta was born in Metro Manila. But she grew up in the Province of Cavite where she finished her basic education. Her father left their family when she was about 13 years old and so she was raised single handedly by her mother. To get day by day, all of her siblings including VM had to work full-time and part-time jobs side by side while they were studying. She is currently taking up a bachelor degree in Social Work at University of the Philippines-Diliman and is about to graduate.

Jean Pauline Villaruel

Department of Social Work, College of Social Work and Community Development,
University of the Philippines-Diliman
jhvillaruel1@up.edu.ph

Jean Pauline Villaruel y Harina was born and raised in Lucena City, Quezon. She also finished her basic education there. She came from a big family in which she has three older brothers and two younger sisters. Her father is a foreman and contractor while her mother is a secondary school teacher at a public school in their city. She is currently taking a Bachelor's degree in Social Work at University of the Philippines-Diliman.

References

- Bowen, M. (1946). Introduction to Systems Theory in Social Work. Retrieved May 29, 2022 From <https://www.onlinemswprograms.com/social-work/theories/systems-theory-social-work/>.
- Carba, D. B. (2004). MATERNAL CHARACTERISTICS AND FIRST INTERCOURSE AMONG FILIPINO ADOLESCENT GIRLS. *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society*, 32(2), 135–160. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29792553>.
- CNN Philippines (2021). Teenage pregnancies in PH up by 7%. CNN. Retrieved November 18, 2021, from www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/2/8/Teenage-pregnancy-cases-up-in-Philippines.
- Gregorio, V. (2018). The Only Exception: Teenage Pregnancy in the Philippines. Retrieved on October 12, 2021 from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333994823_The_Only_Exception_Teen_age_Pregnancy_in_the_Philippines. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2016.v12n32p173>
- Juan, C. et. al. (2019). Trends of Sexual and Reproductive Health Behaviors among Youth in the Philippines. Retrieved on October 12, 2021 from: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FA127/FA127.pdf>.
- Koerner, A. F., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2006). Family Communication Patterns Theory: A Social Cognitive Approach. *Engaging Theories in Family Communication: Multiple Perspectives Engaging Theories in Family Communication: Multiple Perspectives*, 50–65. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452204420.n4>.
- Lloyd, S. L. (2004). Pregnant Adolescent Reflections of Parental Communication. *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, 21(4), 239–251. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3427830>.
- Mathewos, S., & Mekuria, A. (2018). Teenage Pregnancy and Its Associated Factors among School Adolescents of Arba Minch Town, Southern Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences*, 28(3), 287. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ejhs.v28i3.6>.
- National Nutrition Council. (2021). Negative Impacts of Teenage Pregnancy in the Philippines. Retrieved February 21, 2022, from <https://nnc.gov.ph/regional-offices/mindanao/region-ix-zamboanga-peninsula/493-1-negative-impacts-of-teenage-pregnancy-in-the-philippines>.
- NCCA. (2020). A Study on Filipino Values. National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Retrieved November 18, 2021, from <https://ncca.gov.ph/2021/04/21/filipino-values-primer/>.
- Philippine Statistics Authority. (2021, January 27). Registered Live Births in the Philippines, 2019. Retrieved November 23, 2021, from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/registered-live-births-philippines-2019>.

- Philippine Statistics Authority. (2021, January 27). Registered Live Births in the Philippines, 2019. Retrieved November 23, 2021, from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/registered-live-births-philippines-2019>.
- Salvador, J. T., Sauce, B. R. J., Alvarez, M. O. C., & Rosario, A. B. (2016). The Phenomenon of Teenage Pregnancy in the Philippines. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, 12(32), 173.
- Widman, L., Choukas-Bradley, S., Noar, S. M., Nesi, J., & Garrett, K. (2016). Parent-Adolescent Sexual Communication and Adolescent Safer Sex Behavior. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 170(1), 52. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.2731>
- World Health Organization. (2020). Adolescent pregnancy. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>.