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# Paper Title: Lived Experiences of Teenage Mothers in Calbayog City: Basis For Intervention Program

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*Abstract*— This study examined the lived experiences of teenage mothers in Calbayog City, Samar and the support they received from different stakeholders. The researcher focused on how these young women perceive and make sense of the factors that contributed to their pregnancy and the support systems and interventions these young women identify as most meaningful based on their lived experiences. A qualitative phenomenological research design, specifically the descriptive phenomenological approach was employed involving ten participants who undergone protocol in the interview process. Data were processed and analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s six phase thematic analysis, adapted within the philosophical framework of descriptive phenomenology to ensure consistency with the overall research design. Findings revealed that in terms of the lived experience of the teenage mothers, three themes collectively present a coherent and multi-layered phenomenological portrait of the lived experiences of teenage mothers in Calbayog City. The narratives of the participants confirm that the reviewed literature consistently demonstrates: that teenage pregnancy is not a product of individual failure but of converging systematic vulnerabilities – including absent or inadequate family communication, peer normalization of early relationships, economic deprivation, and limited access to reproductive health information. In terms of the factors of their pregnancies, three themes that emerged from participants accounts of the factors contributing to their pregnancy collectively affirm that teenage pregnancy in Calbayog City is a structurally produced phenomenon, not one reducible to individual decision-making or moral failure. The convergence of absent family communication, peer normalization, reproductive health ignorance, and household poverty created an environment in which adolescent girls were left profoundly exposed to early pregnancy with little knowledge, few protective relationships, and no meaningful institutional safeguard. In terms of support system and intervention identified, three themes that emerged from participants identification of their most meaningful support systems and

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interventions collectively affirm that effective intervention for teenage mothers in Calbayog City must be simultaneously relational, institutional, and aspirational. In conclusion, the lived experiences of teenage mothers in Calbayog City are characterized by profound emotional distress, social stigma, interrupted education, and economic hardship, yet simultaneously marked by resilience and a transformative sense of maternal purpose. Teenage pregnancy among young women in Calbayog City is not attributable to a single cause but rather emerges from the convergence of individual, relational, familial, and socio-environmental factors. The support systems and interventions that teenage mothers identify as most meaningful are those grounded in dignity, non-judgment, and holistic assistance that simultaneously addresses their emotional, economic, and health needs.

***Keywords: Teenage pregnancies, Lived Experiences, Factors of Pregnancies, Support Systems, Interventions***

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy remains a major global and national concern that affects the health, education, and future opportunities of young women. Although the Philippines has seen a decline in adolescent pregnancy rates, thousands of girls continue to experience early pregnancy, leading to school dropout, poverty, and limited employment opportunities. In Eastern Visayas, particularly in Calbayog City, teenage pregnancy cases remain high, yet existing support programs lack a coordinated system that fully addresses the educational, psychosocial, and economic needs of teenage mothers. This study focused on the lived experiences of teenage mothers in Calbayog City to identify the factors contributing to early pregnancy and assess available support systems. It aimed to develop a localized intervention program that could help teenage mothers return to education through the Alternative Learning System and gain livelihood skills through TESDA and DTI programs, ultimately improving their opportunities and well-being.

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## Literature Review

The reviewed literature showed that adolescent pregnancy remained a major global issue with serious health, social, educational, and economic consequences. The World Health Organization (2024) emphasized that teenage pregnancy was more common among girls with low educational attainment and poor socioeconomic conditions. Studies by Coll, Erickson, and Notario (2022) and Sully et al. (2020) identified poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to reproductive health services as major contributing factors. Research further revealed that adolescent pregnancy increased risks of maternal and child health complications, school dropout, unemployment, and intergenerational poverty.

The literature also highlighted the importance of family support, parental guidance, and Comprehensive Sexuality Education in preventing early pregnancy. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2021), sexuality education improved adolescents' knowledge and responsible decision-making regarding reproductive health. Existing intervention programs such as the ProtecTEEN program and JPARAP demonstrated that integrated approaches combining psychosocial support, education, and livelihood assistance were more effective than awareness campaigns alone.

Despite these efforts, studies revealed continuing gaps in educational reintegration, livelihood opportunities, and localized support systems for teenage mothers. These gaps justified the need for a context-based intervention program in Calbayog City that would address the educational, psychosocial, and economic needs of teenage mothers.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of teenage mothers in Calbayog City. The approach focused on understanding participants' personal experiences and perspectives regarding teenage pregnancy. Data were gathered through in-depth, open-ended interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analysis followed the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method modified by Moustakas (1994), involving the identification of significant statements, themes, and shared

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meanings to describe the essence of the participants' experiences. The study ensured trustworthiness through member checking, peer debriefing, audit trails, reflexive journaling, and rich descriptions to establish credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

## **Procedure**

The study followed a systematic and ethically grounded procedure to ensure rigor and sensitivity in conducting phenomenological research. After obtaining approval from the Graduate School of the Northwest Samar State University, the researcher secured permissions from the City Mayor of Calbayog City, the CSWDO, and concerned barangay officials. Potential participants, identified with the help of social workers and barangay health workers, were approached through a respectful and non-intrusive process.

Informed consent (and assent for minors) was obtained after clearly explaining the study in the participants' preferred language. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted in private and safe locations using a semi-structured guide, with audio recording and field notes taken to capture experiences accurately.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method modified by Moustakas (1994), involving thematic development and synthesis of the lived experiences. Trustworthiness was ensured through member checking, peer debriefing, and strict confidentiality measures, including the use of pseudonyms and secure data handling throughout the study.

## **Data Processing**

The data from ten phenomenological interviews were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis within a descriptive phenomenological framework. The process remained grounded in epoché and reflexivity to ensure that participants' lived experiences were prioritized over researcher bias.

First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, listening to recordings, and reviewing field notes. Second, initial codes were generated inductively from participants' own words and systematically organized. Third, related codes were

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grouped to form preliminary themes, which were visually mapped and refined. Fourth, themes were reviewed and checked against the entire dataset for coherence, relevance, and accuracy, leading to merging, refining, or discarding of some themes.

Fifth, the final themes were clearly defined and named to reflect their essential meanings and significance to the research questions. Lastly, the findings were written as a detailed analytic narrative supported by verbatim excerpts, presenting the essential structure of the lived experiences of teenage mothers and aligning with the study's objectives for developing an intervention program.

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Lived Experiences on Teenage Pregnancy**

This part discusses the themes that reflected the lived experiences of teenage pregnancy among young women in Calbayog City.

**TABLE 1**  
**GROUPING OF INITIAL CODES FOR LIVED EXPERIENCES ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY**

<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Number of Participants Contributing (n=8)</b>	<b>Number of Transcript Excerpts Assigned</b>	<b>Initial Codes Grouped to Form Themes</b>
Anxiety and fear upon learning of pregnancy	5	7	<i>Theme 1: Shattered Normalcy — The Emotional and Educational Disruption of Early Pregnancy</i>
Shame and withdrawal from social activities	4	6	
Interrupted schooling and academic loss	4	5	
Peer influence and romantic relationship dynamics	6	9	<i>Theme 2: Pathways to Pregnancy — Navigating Silence, Influence, and Circumstance</i>
Limited parental communication about reproductive health	5	7	
Economic vulnerability and family poverty	4	5	
Family acceptance and emotional anchoring	6	8	<i>Theme 3: Rising Through the Storm — Support Systems and the Will to Reclaim the Future</i>
Community facilitators and social welfare support	5	7	
Personal resilience and aspirations for education	5	6	

In summary, the three themes collectively present a coherent and multi-layered phenomenological portrait of the lived experiences of teenage mothers in Calbayog City. The narratives of the participants confirm what the reviewed literature consistently demonstrates: that teenage pregnancy is not a product of individual failure but of converging systemic vulnerabilities — including absent or inadequate family communication, peer normalization of early relationships, economic deprivation, and limited access to reproductive health information (Santos, 2023; Mkhize, 2022; Dela Cruz, 2021; Coll et al., 2022). These structural conditions, operating across microsystemic and macrosystemic levels as theorized by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2022), set the conditions within which adolescent girls became disproportionately vulnerable.

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Equally significant is the third theme, which testifies to the extraordinary resilience and aspirational capacity of the participants. Despite profound disruptions to their educational trajectories and self-image, all participants articulated clear and specific goals for the future — to return to school, acquire livelihood skills, or build stable homes for their children. Their accounts powerfully echo Husserl's phenomenological assertion, as operationalized in this study's theoretical framework, that the essence of human experience must be understood from the first-person perspective: these young women are not passive recipients of misfortune, but active meaning-makers striving to reconstruct their identities and futures within the constraints imposed upon them (Creswell & Poth, 2022; Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). These findings provide a robust empirical foundation for the development of a locally grounded, holistic, and participant-informed intervention program for teenage mothers in Calbayog City.

### **Factors that Contributed to Pregnancy**

This section discusses the themes that reflected the participants' perceptions of the factors contributing to their pregnancy. Based on the phenomenological interviews with eight teenage mothers in Calbayog City, three major themes emerged: (1) romantic relationships and lack of family communication, (2) peer influence and limited reproductive health knowledge, and (3) poverty and economic hardship. These themes revealed that teenage pregnancy was not simply caused by individual decisions, but by interconnected relational, social, and economic conditions that increased the participants' vulnerability during adolescence.

**TABLE 2**  
**GROUPING OF INITIAL CODES FOR FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO**  
**TEENAGE PREGNANCY**

<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Number of Participants Contributing (n=8)</b>	<b>Number of Transcript Excerpts Assigned</b>	<b>Initial Codes Grouped to Form Themes</b>
Early romantic relationships initiated without parental knowledge	6	8	<i>Theme 1: Drawn In Without Warning — Romantic Relationships and the Silence of Families</i>
Emotional vulnerability and susceptibility to romantic manipulation	5	7	
Absence of open family communication about sexuality and relationships	5	6	
Normalization of early pregnancy among peers and community members	5	7	<i>Theme 2: When Everyone Around You Has Already Done It — Peer Norms and the Knowledge Gap</i>
Influence of friends' relationships and cohabitation as behavioral model	6	8	
Lack of access to sexuality education and reproductive health information	4	5	
Family economic hardship and instability as a context for vulnerability	6	9	<i>Theme 3: Poverty as a Pathway — Economic Deprivation and the Collapse of Protective Structures</i>
Absent or absent parental figures due to work migration or separation	5	7	
Early decision to cohabit/marry as perceived escape from poverty	4	6	

In summary, the three themes that emerged from participants' accounts of the factors contributing to their pregnancies collectively affirm that teenage pregnancy in Calbayog City is a structurally produced phenomenon, not one reducible to individual decision-making or moral failure. The convergence of absent family communication, peer normalization, reproductive health ignorance, and household poverty created an environment in which adolescent girls were left profoundly exposed to early pregnancy with little knowledge, few protective relationships, and no meaningful institutional safeguard. These findings are consistent with the broader body of research

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literature reviewed in this study: Dela Cruz (2021) and Fernandez (2022) on the role of familial silence and stigma; Santos (2023) and Mkhize (2022) on community-level normalization; and Coll et al. (2022), the World Bank (2022), and the World Health Organization (2024) on the structural dimensions of adolescent pregnancy risk. The documented absence of reproductive health education among the participants further underscores UNESCO's (2021) call for the institutionalization of comprehensive sexuality education as a non-negotiable adolescent protection mechanism.

Theoretically, these findings are best understood through the integrated lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2022) and Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). The participants' vulnerability to pregnancy was not solely a product of individual developmental instability — though that too was present, given their adolescent stage of identity formation — but was compounded by the systemic failure of their microsystems (family), mesosystems (community and peer networks), and macrosystems (poverty and policy gaps) to provide the knowledge, supervision, and structural support they needed. These converging ecological failures, layered upon the inherent developmental vulnerabilities of adolescence, constitute the explanatory landscape through which the lived experience of teenage pregnancy in Calbayog City must be understood. The findings provide a compelling evidence base for designing intervention programs that address not only individual behavior but the full ecological architecture within which adolescent vulnerability is produced and sustained.

## Support Systems and Interventions Identified

This part discusses the themes that reflected the support systems and intervention that participants identified as most meaningful.

**TABLE 3**  
**GROUPING OF INITIAL CODES FOR SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND INTERVENTIONS IDENTIFIED**

<b>Initial Codes</b>	<b>Number of Participants Contributing (n=8)</b>	<b>Number of Transcript Excerpts Assigned</b>	<b>Initial Codes Grouped to Form Themes</b>
Family acceptance and unconditional emotional support from parents/siblings	6	9	<i>Theme 1: The Family as First Refuge — Acceptance, Sacrifice, and the Anchor of Belonging</i>
Sibling sacrifice and active material assistance (e.g., breadwinning by older brothers)	5	8	
Spousal acceptance and in-law integration as foundational stability	5	8	
Social welfare and SWDO case management as meaningful institutional support	6	9	<i>Theme 2: Voices in the System — Community Professionals and Institutional Care That Listened</i>
Barangay Health Workers (BHW) and prenatal/maternal health services	6	8	
Community facilitators and government program linkage (POPCOM, JPARAP)	4	8	
Aspiration for educational reintegration (ALS, formal schooling) as self-determined goal	6	7	<i>Theme 3: Reclaiming the Future — Education, Livelihood, and the Power of Self-Determined Aspiration</i>
Livelihood and entrepreneurship support as pathway to self-sufficiency	5	9	
Personal resilience, mentorship, and the determination to break the cycle	5	8	

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In summary, the three themes that emerged from participants' identification of their most meaningful support systems and interventions collectively affirm that effective intervention for teenage mothers in Calbayog City must be simultaneously relational, institutional, and aspirational. The participants did not identify any single program or service as sufficient on its own; rather, they described a continuum of support whose potency depended on the quality of human connection embedded within it. Family acceptance grounded their emotional recovery; caring and non-judgmental community professionals opened their access to health, education, and welfare services; and the availability of educational pathways and livelihood opportunities gave concrete form to their aspirations. These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed in this study: Holness (2021) and Aguilar (2022) on the primacy of relational support; Castillo (2023) and Ramos (2023) on the indispensability of psychosocial accompaniment within institutional services; and Bernardo (2024) on the structural conditions required for educational reintegration. The ProtecTEEN program (De Layola, 2024) and the JPARAP-aligned TrucKABATAAN mobile health facilities (UNICEF Philippines, 2024) represent precisely the kind of integrated, multi-sectoral response the participants' accounts call for — though the study findings suggest that no programme, however well-designed at the national level, will achieve its full potential without local facilitators who embody the non-judgmental, person-centred engagement that participants described as transformative.

Theoretically, the three themes are best understood within the integrated framework of Husserl's Phenomenological Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory that anchors this study. Husserl's insistence on returning to lived experience as the site of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2022) is validated by the participants' consistent privileging of relational quality over programmatic provision: it was not the existence of a program but the experience of being genuinely heard, accepted, and encouraged that they identified as most meaningful. Erikson's framework (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022) illuminates why educational aspiration and professional identity featured so prominently: for adolescents still navigating identity formation, the opportunity to pursue a chosen future is not merely a practical need but a developmental imperative — the means by which they resolve the Role Confusion imposed by early motherhood. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2022) provides the structural map: meaningful interventions must engage all system levels — the microsystem of family, the mesosystem of community workers and school, and the

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macrosystem of policy and economic structure — because the vulnerability that produced early pregnancy was itself ecological in origin, and only an equally ecological response can dismantle it. These findings provide the empirical and theoretical foundation for the proposed intervention program that this study ultimately aims to generate for the benefit of teenage mothers in Calbayog City.

#### IV. DISCUSSIONS

This study explored the lived experiences of teenage mothers in Calbayog City during Calendar Year 2026 to serve as the basis for a proposed intervention program. The findings revealed that teenage pregnancy brought emotional distress, fear, stigma, interrupted education, economic hardship, and early transition into adulthood. Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience, developed maternal responsibility, and found renewed purpose through motherhood.

The study further showed that teenage pregnancy resulted from interconnected personal, familial, and socio-environmental factors. Limited reproductive health knowledge, peer influence, unhealthy romantic relationships, poor family communication, lack of parental guidance, economic difficulties, and limited access to sexuality education contributed to the participants' vulnerability.

Participants identified family support, educational reintegration, livelihood assistance, healthcare services, mental health counseling, and peer support groups as the most meaningful forms of intervention. They emphasized the importance of non-judgmental and youth-friendly programs that address their emotional, educational, economic, and health-related needs through a holistic and multi-sectoral approach.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the summary of findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The lived experiences of teenage mothers in Calbayog City were marked by emotional struggles, social stigma, interrupted education, and financial difficulties, but also demonstrated resilience and personal growth through motherhood. These findings showed that teenage pregnancy was a complex social issue requiring long-term and compassionate interventions.
- Teenage pregnancy resulted from multiple interconnected factors, including limited reproductive health education, weak family communication, peer and community influences, and socioeconomic challenges. These factors highlighted the need for comprehensive preventive and support programs.
- Teenage mothers considered support systems most effective when they provided respect, understanding, and holistic assistance. Family support, educational reintegration, livelihood opportunities, mental health services, and peer support emerged as essential components of an effective intervention program tailored to their lived experiences.

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