



On Pregnancy Journey and Early Parenting: Young Indigenous Mothers in Context

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Abstract:

The objective of this study was to explore and understand the experiences of young Indigenous mothers during their pregnancy and early parenting. Using qualitative descriptive phenomenology, the study was conducted among 14 purposefully chosen Indigenous young mothers aged 14-17 years old and caring for at least one child who is two years of age. There were seven participants for the focus group discussion and seven for the in-depth interview. The descriptive phenomenological method developed by Colaizzi was used in the research study to analyze data. The study's findings

showed that the challenges experienced by the participants were used to process the data. The three main themes of the study are as follows: The Winding River of Motherhood, Prayer as a Universal Solvent, and Navigating Life's Waters. The means of coping with the challenges the participants experienced were Faith's Resilient Beacon, and Pillars of Unwavering Support. Finally, the insights they shared with their fellow Indigenous mothers and society in general were the themes: The Art of Making Wise Choices, The Scholar's Beacon, and Echoes of the Looking Glass. It entails that the families, government, and other concerned agencies aggressively promote and offer educational opportunities, livelihood programs, and healthcare services for young Indigenous mothers as a powerful advocacy to positively impact their life paths.

Keywords: *Teenage Pregnancy, Indigenous Mothers, Health, Descriptive-Phenomenology, Philippines.*

Introduction

Early childbearing and early parenting have been acknowledged and embraced as a natural progression of roles in many indigenous cultures rather than reaffirming young parenthood as a problem (Ware, 2018). Indigenous populations across the globe are frequently faced with different challenges, such as historical trauma, cultural detachment, limited access to healthcare services, and inequalities in socioeconomic status (Mejia et. al., 2021). Despite the challenges

they face, many indigenous peoples continue to have children at an early age. Pregnancy and parenthood are intricate phenomena influenced by historical, cultural, and health-related issues that young Indigenous mothers navigate within their respective communities (United Nations, 2018). An in-depth understanding is necessary of the multidimensional and complex subject of young Indigenous mothers and their experiences during pregnancy and early parenting. In addition to illuminating the intersectionality of these challenges, exploring the experiences of



young Indigenous mothers in the context of pregnancy and early parenting can help create supportive networks that are both culturally sensitive and efficient.

In sub-Saharan Africa, more than one in four young women gave birth before the age of 18. The contributing factors such as religion, early marriage, and low educational status among adolescents are closely associated with higher rates of adolescent pregnancy (Maharaj, 2022). Moreover, according to the World Health Organization (2023), the institution of child marriage places girls in a precarious position, as those wed at a very young age often have limited agency in decisions related to the timing of childbirth. There is growing attention being paid to improving access to high-quality maternal care for pregnant and parenting adolescents.

The Philippines, especially in remote indigenous communities continue to uphold traditional maternal and childcare beliefs (Leabres et al., 2019). There are still some women who adhere to outdated practices, despite efforts by health professionals to promote safe pregnancy (Jose et al., 2019). In the Province of South Cotabato, the indigenous peoples (IPs) of the T'boli and Ubo tribes make up 55 percent of the population. The municipality of Lake Sebu ranks third with 193 pregnancy cases and records showed that the young mothers are all under the age of 19 with an 11-year-old girl being the youngest to be pregnant during the period. Moreover, Flores (2021) stated that young marriages and early pregnancies are common in the claimed tribe's tradition, which may put young girls' lives in danger of early pregnancies that further complicate delivery.

The research gap in this study lies in the exploration of the specific experiences of young Indigenous mothers. While studies on adolescent pregnancy, in general, may already exist, there is not much literature that explores the particular circumstances, difficulties, and cultural differences that this vulnerable population within the Indigenous society faces. This study seeks to address this gap by presenting an in-depth discussion of their experiences during pregnancy and early

parenting, with the ultimate goal of highlighting the significance and worth of their journey.

Materials and Methods

A descriptive-phenomenological research design was used in this study to obtain an in-depth understanding of the pregnancy and parenting experiences of young Indigenous mothers. The research was conducted in a discrete Indigenous community in the Municipality of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. The researcher chose the participants based on the objectives of the study. The participants of the study were young Indigenous mothers aged 13-17 years old and caring for at least one child two years of age, willing to share pregnancy and parenting experiences, and able to articulate in express narratives either in their Filipino or vernacular language and were currently residing in the Municipality of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

The study was conducted through face-to-face in-depth interviews (IDIs) with seven (7) participants, while the other seven (7) participants underwent a focus group discussion (FGD). The participants were chosen based on inclusion criteria that assured the researcher that the selected individuals were capable of providing information about their actual experiences. The researcher ensured that sensitive details, including names and other important information, were kept confidential to preserve their anonymity. Individuals who were not young Indigenous mothers or were above 18 years old and not living in the Municipality of Lake Sebu, South, regardless of their Indigenous category, were not included in this study.

The descriptive phenomenological method developed by Colaizzi was used in the research study to analyze data. Colaizzi's method, as cited by Meyers (2019), consists of seven steps that are designed to thoroughly examine and give a detailed account of the occurrence being studied, verified by the people who experienced it. The methodology is based on in-depth first-person experiences of the event obtained via in-person interviews, participant journal entry collection, and member check interviews.

Research protocols were observed by the researcher to ensure the quality and reliability of the study and research findings. The researcher sought approval from the program chair and the participants to conduct the study. Consent and assent letters were provided for the participants to express their willingness to take part in the study. When approved, the researcher scheduled the FGD and interviews with the participants. Interview questions were presented on a shared screen to assist the interviewee in answering the questions. All interviews were digitally recorded for later verbatim transcription. Before the recording, permission, and consent were sought for Data Privacy Act compliance. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the anonymity of the participants during the document analysis. The data gathered remained confidential and anonymous. Nobody, other than the researcher knew their answers to the interview. The collected data were discarded after they had served their purpose.

Results

The themes in this study were the expressive parts of the participant's experience that portrayed the understanding as a whole. The careful evaluation of the themes that emerged from the participant stories helped understand the young mother's experiences in caring for their children. Each emergent theme was defined and discussed from the coded transcript of the participants' interviews and supported by vast findings from the related literature and studies. Significantly, seven (3) emergent themes were grounded into (9) cluster themes.

Emergent Theme 1. The Winding River of Motherhood

One way to conceptualize the journey of becoming a young indigenous mother is as a winding river. The river's varied bends, rapids, and serene sections represent the range of challenges and experiences that young indigenous mothers face in transitioning to motherhood. Reflecting the tides of life, the river meanders through landscapes of growth as an individual, cultural expectation, and societal

dynamics, creating the journey of transformation that is becoming a mother. This metaphor highlights how the path to parenthood is dynamic and uncertain. The river's curves and turns symbolize the flexibility and fortitude needed for navigating challenges, with each turn signifying a different experience or obstacle. The idea is that the difficulties of being a young indigenous mother help to shape a sense of self-identity, strength, and cultural connectedness, in the same way that a river shapes the ground it flows through.

People are programmed to fear the unfamiliar. That is why uncertainty whether at the macro or the micro level can feel nerve-wracking, draining, and even crippling. People fail an important reality because of that instinct. Possibility and uncertainty are just two sides of the same coin (Furr, 2022). In addition, Liu (2021) discussed the function of fear under the framework of regret theory and concluded that the presence of an unknown result may improve, delay, or even reverse people's preferences in a choice dilemma, as anticipated by the developed regret theory. Teen mothers who become pregnant young may experience a variety of circumstances that have negative effects. Tensions among teen mothers included anxiety, fear, loneliness, and feelings of regret, shame, and sadness. These conflicts between identities, a lack of social support, role inefficiencies, health issues, and duties are the root causes of these tensions (Tirgani et al, 2019).

Cluster Theme 1. Premature Voyage

Early marriage and childbirth are represented metaphorically as setting out on an early journey, with the participants expressing regrets and feelings of not being ready for the challenge that lies ahead. This metaphor emphasizes the idea that the participants are in unfamiliar territory and are dealing with challenges and doubts brought on by taking on major life-altering obligations at a young age.

The following are the statements of the participants for the clustered theme expressed in this portion of the manuscript:

"I found out that it is difficult to get married early, and sometimes I regret why this happened. I gave birth early, then you will know the hardships when you got pregnant and gave birth. On some days you can eat and then tomorrow you will just eat a banana so that you can eat for the day." - Participant 4, IDI Transcript 4, Lines 3-6

"In my mind ma'am you know, what I felt is that it is unfair on my part. Some kids go to school and here I am nursing my baby at a young age. I pity myself, Ma'am." - Participant 7, IDI Transcript 7, Lines 10-12

"It was my first time getting pregnant at 16. When I found out that I was pregnant of course I got scared because I did not know anything and because I am still a child. I have not tried having a baby. For the first time, I only felt scared thinking if I could do it or not." - Participant 3, Transcript 1, Lines 22-25

Teens who are pregnant or already parenting must deal with the difficulties of negotiating the developmental requirements of adolescence as well as the demands of childbirth and becoming a parent. The conditions in which people live, work, and play, known as social determinants of health, are increasingly acknowledged as having a significant impact on adolescents' general health, particularly on their greater risk of pregnancy and the consequences that are related to their mental health (Tebb & Brindis, 2022).

Cluster Theme 2. Bearing the Unseen Weight of Invisible Anchors

"Bearing the Unseen Weight of Invisible Anchors" offers an agonizing depiction of the difficulties young mothers encounter while navigating the complexity of early parenthood through its metaphorical theme. Their experiences are portrayed in this metaphorical environment as a trip filled with emotional intensity, financial limits, and isolation. The "invisible anchors" stand in for the lack of conventional support systems like stable familial and financial circumstances, while the "unseen weight" represents the intangible hardships that young mothers bear. This emphasizes the psychological cost of feeling alone in the difficulties of early parenthood without the

emotional support and direction that come from familial roots.

The following utterances present the hardships of the participants as "Bearing the Unseen Weight of Invisible Anchors":

"No one helps me, I am all alone because my parents are far from me. Also, the parents of my partner are not around. No one helps me take care of my baby." - Participant 3, IDI Transcript 3, Lines 39 - 41

"It is difficult ma'am. My partner has no job because he is just 18 years old and I am fifteen. Both of us have no work ma'am, we are just getting support from my partner's mother." - Participant 7, Transcript 1, Lines 81 - 83

"At a young age, I could not think of ways to feed my baby and what diaper to use, I did not know where to get resources because I am still young, I am just fifteen. The feelings were intense to the point where I cannot explain things and I was blamed for everything that happened." - Participant 5, IDI Transcript 5. Lines 11 - 15

A study conducted in Malawi on socioeconomic inequality in teenage pregnancy and childbearing presents that pre-existing wealth distribution affects the socioeconomic status of young girls on their pregnancy and childbearing journey. According to the study, wealth inequality contributed more to unwanted pregnancy inequality and accounted for nearly 27% of the variation. Over the period, the country's wealth and income disparity worsened, which hurt the country's poor. It's possible that as a result, the girls from low-income homes turned to early marriage and sexual activity as a coping mechanism. Because of this, the disparity in wealth distribution worsened the disparity in teenage pregnancies and childbearing (Chirwa et al, 2019).

Cluster Theme 3. Nurturing the Sapling of Cultural Legacy

"Nurturing the Sapling of Cultural Legacy" is a metaphorical theme that captures participant expressions of love, care, and purposeful adherence to tribe traditions in parenting their child. This metaphor compares the child to a

sapling and the participant's activities to the process of providing care that helps the sapling become strong and firmly established in the tribe's cultural soil. Deliberately tending to the baby's needs right away, asking for advice, speaking in the baby's mother tongue, and abiding by tribal customs are all examples of intentionally nurturing, shaping, and safeguarding the cultural seedling.

This metaphor highlights the importance of cultural traditions as vital components that support a child's whole development rather than just decorative add-ons. Language is not only a means for communication; it is also a vital element that supports and stabilizes a child's identity concerning their culture. This implies that cultural traditions function as a child's first set of guidelines, influencing their growth and offering a framework for comprehending the outside environment. A sustained dedication to cultural conservation suggests that the parent sees the child carrying on and contributing to the tribe's customs in the future.

The following are the statements of the participants concerning the clustered theme:

"I show my care and love, for example, if my baby is crying, I take care of him right away because he is hungry, I feed him immediately, and I ask for help in the bath when changing the baby's diaper; I give attention to my child and listened to my mother. I follow what the elders say about the taboos of the children of the traditions and beliefs of the first time that are still being followed up to this day - Participant 1. IDI Transcript 1, Lines 50-54

"I ask for help from my parents because I have no idea when it comes to taking care of my child. When raising the child, I talk to him using our language, then what is customary. We follow the traditions and practices of our tribe and I want the child to take it while he is still small until he grows up. I want my child to be guided in going to school with good manners and respect". - Participant 2. IDI Transcript 2, Lines 51-57

"I ask help from my parents on how to take care of my child, what is the right or the wrong way because I do not know. In raising my child, I use

our language and include our traditional tribal practices because I want my child to learn it until he grows old." - Participant 7, IDI Transcript 7, Lines 53-57.

The dynamic process of parenting is impacted by sociocultural variables. It has a significant role in both the development of children and the psychopathology of children. It appears that parenting styles have a similar influence on children regardless of country, and parenting style and child outcome are not mediated by culture, despite theorized cultural distinctions between the West and India. In Western countries as well as in India, authoritative parenting was linked to better outcomes than authoritarian and neglectful/uninvolved parenting (Sahithya et al, 2019).

Cluster Theme 4. Broken Wings of Acceptance

"Broken Wings of Acceptance" portrays the participants' mental pain and the weight of societal judgment they endured in the face of discrimination and rejection from their own families and their communities through a symbolic subject. The metaphor compares the participants to injured birds who are unable to fly due to discrimination and societal expectations which makes the individuals excluded and like outsiders in their respective communities.

This suggests that the participants have been forced to question their worth due to the weight of societal rejection, which has caused them to consider taking drastic measures. This highlights how urgent it is to address the psychological and emotional effects of biases. Most participants experienced social isolation because of guilt, shame, and lack of self-esteem. Some mentioned that they prefer staying at home because they cannot tolerate the harsh comments they hear in the community. While others develop low self-esteem because they experience discrimination at home or from friends and family. Thus, it depicts that they were not given the room for self-improvement despite having a child, or even a second chance in life to prove that they can still make it in life. The participants are labeled directly as "*disgrasyada*" (unfortunate single

mother), “malandi” (flirt), and “wala ng pag-asa” (there is no hope).

The following are the statement of the participants in this cluster theme:

“Yes, discrimination is number one, especially when it comes from your parents and relatives. I was told that I was not worthy as a child, everything that they spent on me was wasted, and the things that they did to me were put to waste. It is the number one thing that hurt me. I cannot explain the pain and hurts that sometimes I think that I should be gone.” - Participant 5, IDI Transcript 5, Lines 26-30

“When they found out that I was pregnant, I did not leave our house, I just stayed in my room crying. In instances where I have to go out, for example, if my sister asks me to do something, people tell me “Ay ga, you do not look well, you look like you are pregnant. That’s what happens if flirting is your priority.” - Participant 3, IDI Transcript 3, Lines 20-23

The recent study of Wittenberg et al (2022) on stigma as a source of stress for adolescent mothers, alludes that stigma is a persistent cultural attitude that causes us to ignore potential positive outcomes for this vulnerable demographic and adds to negative consequences for these moms and babies. Stress from stigma is a documented contributor to harmful consequences on both mothers' and babies' health and development.

Emergent 2. Prayer as a Universal Solvent

Teenage mothers are stigmatized for having children since they are young, typically impoverished, single, and diverse, and they are seen as a burden on society. These illnesses carry a lot of stigma. The general public has voiced their disapproval of adolescent moms, believing that they are too young to have children. It has also been noted that there is a widespread misconception that girls are always at fault. Some of the participants, however, thought that the infants had given them new hope and a sense of optimism (Arshadh & Muda, 2020)

Durrani and Nielsen (2019) conducted a study in the Philippines and part of their data analysis resulted in young mothers claiming that rumors

about them being promiscuous and disrespecting their parents circulated among their friends and neighbors. Because of their chatting, the young moms' expressed feelings of guilt were made worse. They frequently encountered rumors that they were promiscuous around them.

For healthcare professionals, stigma and prejudice toward teen parents appear to be a serious social issue. It worsens the difficulties faced by new moms by impeding the provision and adoption of adequate care. Examining young women's journeys to becoming teenage moms reveals that young mothers are conscious of their stigmatizing identity, which has an impact on how they show themselves (Jones et al., 2019). In the same line, Smithbattle (2020) discussed the stigma and stereotypes of teenage mothers and emphasized the importance of healthcare professionals in breaking the stigma. In addition to breaking the rules for parenting at a young age, teen moms are stigmatized for belonging to underprivileged racial or socioeconomic groups. Teen pregnancy prevention campaigns, media programs, sex education initiatives, experts, and members of the public all contribute to the stigmatization of young moms. Resources for eliminating stigma are offered, along with information on how teen mothers came to be a stigmatized group and updates on research on that subject. Because stigma is prevalent and can have negative impacts, healthcare professionals are recommended to lessen discrimination by making sure that health facilities are secure and welcoming, and that youth who are pregnant or parenting are treated with respect and dignity.

Cluster 1. Faith’s Resilient Beacon

"Faith's Resilient Beacon" depicts the participants' faith in God and their reliance on prayer as a guiding force in the face of hardship. The metaphor compares faith to a strong beacon that shines through challenges and is a source of hope and strength. In the study at hand, most participants highlighted the importance of prayer and reverence for God. According to them, it gave them guidance and comfort on the demands of nurturing the baby, economic

constraints, delays in education, and the like. This conveys a strong belief in the divine plan, supports optimism and fortitude in the face of difficulty, and emphasizes that obstacles are a necessary component of the bigger picture.

The following are the statements of the participants on the value of prayer and faith in God:

“For me what I did was pray because that is the solution to all the problems in life because I know that every problem has a solution and God has a purpose.” - Participant 1, FGD Transcript 1, Lines 433-436

“I just carry on because I know God is guiding us. He is our foundation, my foundation, and I need Him in my life because I got pregnant at a young age.” - Participant 2, IDI Transcript 2, Lines 92-94

To be in a relationship to abstract others is understood as a view of life and faith or 'God,' according to Katie Eriksson a nursing theorist who also mentions these others as concrete and abstract. Eriksson assumes that each human being has some sort of faith or belief that is greater than herself and that gives certainty, hope, and confidence. Faith/belief means intuitive knowing, while knowledge is tested certainty, whereas living in faith is living in hope (Bergbom et al, 2021)

Cluster 2. Pillars of Unwavering Support

In "Pillars of Unwavering Support," a metaphorical landscape, the participant narratives depict a strong support structure that strengthens them as they navigate early motherhood, much like sturdy pillars. The mother emerges as another pillar, providing strength and encouragement, while the supportive husband represents one, marked by consistency and deference. The families of both partners are additional pillars that provide the young couple with a shared foundation and financial support. This metaphor illustrates how crucial these support networks are in giving the participants security, motivation, and a strong foundation—which helps them weather the ups and downs of early parenthood and promotes resilient growth.

The words of encouragement from families, partners, and friends help them redeem their lost selves and inspire them to do the best they can in taking care of the baby, the household, and continuing school. This is because words have power over people. Words can be used as a powerful reinforcement to guide and inspire teenage mothers to continue their aspirations in life despite having children at a young age.

The following are significant statements of the participants on how getting support from their families and partners brings them hope and light:

“My husband encourages and supports me even though this happened to us but he told me not to lose hope because now there is nothing we can do.” - Participant 7, IDI Transcript 7, Lines 77-79

“It is my mother who helped me to stand up from my mistakes and downfall in the beginning. She is the one who encouraged me that everything will be okay as long as I continue my life and it is not too late.” - Participant 5, Transcript 1, Lines 410-412

“With friends, of course, if you're in trouble, they are there to help and comfort you. If you're in a struggle, they are there to lift you when you're down”. - Participant 5, IDI Transcript 5, Lines 106-108

A teenage mother refers to a young woman who abruptly assumes parenting without the assistance of her family. They are unable to confront reality and hesitate to tell their parents the truth. However, in the end, it will always be the parents who will be there during the worst times in life. The most frequently studied form of support is unquestionably the role of family. After giving birth, the majority of adolescent moms stay with their mothers for up to five years; the mother serves as the main provider of child-care support. It is believed that family structure is more significant (Ballon & Tamora, 2023)

Emergent Theme 3. Navigating Life's Waters

The shared experience of indigenous young moms serves as a compass for those navigating the turbulent waters of adolescence in

"Navigating Life's Waters," a symbolic seascape. These mothers' warning stories and advice are compared to navigational indicators that alert people to the dangers of straying into unknown areas. The metaphor suggests that young people should make prudent decisions, much as sailors must carefully navigate their ships to avoid dangerous waters. The sea is used as a metaphor for life's trip, and the young women from the indigenous community serve as knowledgeable guides, telling the young people to think carefully before making decisions, value education over transient pleasures, and put off making commitments that might limit their freedom.

This subject emphasizes the value of common insights as a useful compass for charting a path toward a more rewarding and responsible future. It also highlights the knowledge and planning that are essential in navigating the complexity of youth. This emergent theme is clustered into three cluster themes that describe their action and practices in coping. These cluster themes are The Art of Making Wise Choices, The Scholar's Beacon, and Echoes of the Looking Glass.

Cluster Theme 1. The Art of Making Wise Choices

The theme of "The Art of Making Wise Choices" presents decision-making as a complex work of art, with each option acting as a brushstroke on the personal experience canvas. By drawing a comparison between decision-making and the painstaking process of an artist selecting a painting, the metaphor highlights the deliberate, imaginative, and transformative aspects of decision-making. Making wise decisions turns them into beautifully blended paints that create a story that transcends complexities and obstacles. This theme emphasizes the idea that people, especially young mothers experiencing problems, have the agency to build their journey with wisdom, much the way an artist chooses colors to create depth and beauty. It emphasizes the importance of every choice as a brushstroke, adding to the changing artwork of their life, where the artistry is in overcoming obstacles, welcoming change, and using the deliberate brushstrokes of wise choices to create a strong and meaningful story.

Love, the most universal human emotion, is the culmination of several stages (phases), each of which is controlled by brain substrates that have been well-conserved and integrated over evolutionary time. We have postulated that the initial phase of romantic love, which is typically characterized by the activation of brain regions that control fear and anxiety responses, results in changes in the levels of key neurotransmitters including monoamine and serotonin. The structures that control the attachment system and involve the neuropeptides oxytocin and vasopressin as well as neurotrophies mostly support the second stage of love. This would account for why love's favorable impacts can be so highly advantageous for both mental and physical health (Marazziti et al., 2021). Consequently, the "feel good" effect of love on teenagers must have been the factor in engaging in premarital, unprotected sex.

The following are the statements of the participants on their view on love and relationship-partum:

"Do not waste your time in the wrong place. Just like us, we were very happy then and that is why it resulted in pregnancy because all we think is to have a good time." - Participant 4, Transcript 1, Lines 535 – 537

"Do not get married yet because the situation will be very difficult if you have a husband and children. You cannot do the things that you are doing right now if you will get married right away. You are not free anymore." - Participant 3, IDI Transcript 3, Lines 91-93

"Do not think of having a boyfriend yet because it is not good. Once you fall in love, it will be difficult to go out." - Participant 2, IDI Transcript 2, Lines 112-113

The notion of "romantic love," or the conviction that only love can give life purpose, is another factor linked to teenage pregnancy. Women typically adopt a submissive attitude and idealize some of the stereotyped attitudes and roles associated with men and women within this conceptualization of love. This kind of love is prevalent during adolescence, which can lead to strong emotional responses and the idealization

of pair relationships, which can lead to dangerous sexual practices. Moreover, self-esteem is lower in unplanned pregnancies than it is in planned pregnancies for women. Teenagers who are pregnant also tend to believe more love myths, particularly those in which female partners are idealized and play the dominant role. Last but not least, compared to other women and sexually active women, pregnant women had less sexual assertiveness. These results underline the significance of providing teenagers with proper sexual and mental health education to prevent undesired and/or unexpected births as well as other negative effects of risky sexual conduct. As a result, it is crucial for health education—and particularly sexual health education—to consider how to help young people develop their sexual confidence and self-awareness (Moyano et al, 2021). The conclusion of this study materialized the source of reflection of the participants on love and relationships.

Cluster Theme 2. The Scholar's Beacon

In the metaphorical realm of "The Scholar's Beacon," the shared sentiments of the participants reverberate like lighthouses illuminating a path through the difficulties of parenting. The light of education shines forth like a bright beacon, able to drive out the darkness of sorrow. The metaphor emphasizes how education can change lives by showing it as the key to opening doors to a better future. Education helps young mothers manage the challenging journey of parenthood, just like a lighthouse helps sailors through harsh seas. The participants' declared desire to go back to school represents the scholar's beacon—it cuts through barriers and provides a path toward improvement for both the individual and the family. This subject points out that despite the challenges of becoming a mother at a young age, pursuing an education continues to be a strong path toward success and fulfillment in the future. It may help parents reach new heights and give their children a brighter future. This cluster theme highlights the statements of the participants on the importance of education and how it can change one's life. The following are the relevant utterances of the participants:

"Whatever happened ma'am, education is still the key to a brighter future. We should not surrender; we should continue our education because it will lift us and our children someday." - Participant 5, IDI Transcript 5, Lines 150 – 152

"My plan supposedly ma'am is to go back to school so I can graduate. Even in ALS, if I can pass the program, God-willing, I can proceed to college and I can help my child in the end." - Participant 7, IDI Transcript 7, Lines 97-99

"The advice I can give to them is that having a child is not a hindrance to reaching for your dreams. For example, "If you want to study, go study because pregnancy is not a hindrance to succeed."- Participant 2, Transcript 1, Lines 587-590

Ali et al (2022) concluded that young women with lower educational levels are less aware of the negative effects of early parenthood, are financially dependent on their husbands, have lower levels of empowerment within the family and society, and have little to no say in decision-making, which effectively limits their ability to delay childbearing to later ages. This explains the importance of education for young girls. Education will help them have the cognitive ability needed for rational decision-making. This is where the reflections of the participants are derived.

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that although pregnancy interrupts young moms' education, they still need to be aware of the opportunities available to them. Those who return to school after having children are sometimes more likely to succeed in their chosen careers (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019).

Cluster 3. Echoes of the Looking Glass

In "Echoes of the Looking Glass," life is shown as a reflective surface and people are like mirrors reflecting the echoes of their experiences. The topic delves into the notion that all decisions, difficulties, and life events are reflections of themselves in the mirror, reflecting the complexities of life's path. Life is like a looking glass; it reflects both the good and the bad, forming a mosaic of images that help to define a

person's personality. The metaphor suggests that life's reflections provide insights into one's strengths, faults, and the transformational power of self-awareness, much as a mirror reflects the truth.

On the contrary, some participants are still struggling to balance the roles of being a partner, a mother, a friend, and a daughter. They highlighted that because of too much responsibility, they no longer have time to groom themselves and dedicate time to fun and leisure. It has caused them anxiety and insecurities in their everyday lives.

The following are the statements of the participants:

"I felt ashamed because when I was pregnant, I felt that I wouldn't be able to accept it in the community because of my growing belly, I was fat, and then I carried a child. Way back before I just carried lotions and powders, then lipsticks. But now you cannot even wash or comb your hair, because you have a child to take care of". - Participant 6, FGD Transcript 6, Lines 250-253

"Physically, if you have a child, you will look old and you will not know how to groom yourself because all of your time will be dedicated to your baby. If socially speaking, you cannot go out anymore because of course you already have a child." - Participant 7, IDI Transcript 7, Lines 70-72

Aphisamacharayothin (2019) concluded that there is a need for young women, adolescent mothers, and families to build their work skills and give appropriate relevant knowledge transfer to them is crucial since they have a right to development for a good quality of life. To ensure the well-being of young women, teen mothers, and families, emphasis must be placed on promoting the skills needed for a career. This is crucial since it is typically necessary to work hard while simultaneously caring for children and earning money, in addition to managing the stress from connected issues.

In addition, the results demonstrate how giving vulnerable girls and young women access to alternative learning opportunities, along with the

development of their vocation and entrepreneurship skills, can improve their well-being, employability, and capacity to support themselves in the long term (Mnubi, 2020). Hence, providing education and livelihood programs to teenage mothers can help them develop their sense of self and self-esteem.

In a different perspective, the majority of adolescent mothers identified growing responsibility as one of their biggest concerns, citing several tasks, a lack of time and energy, and limitations on their ability to spend for their interests. Teenagers had a lot more obligations and a lot more labor to do after having a child. As a result, they become physically and mentally exhausted and need assistance and care from others. Most teenagers struggled to keep up with the task. Teenage mothers have trouble managing their time and plans since having children. They therefore did not have the chance to take everything into account. Many adolescents who experience many maternal obligations feel constrained, imprisoned, and unable to satisfy their wants (Mangeli et al, 2019).

Discussion

This study on pregnancy journey and early parenting in the context of young Indigenous mothers was a qualitative type of research. It primarily seeks to answer the questions of what are the experiences of young Indigenous mothers on pregnancy and parenting; how participants cope with the challenges of pregnancy and parenting; and what insights can participants share with their peers and community. The data was arranged into cluster themes. Themes were checked to make sure that there was no duplication in meanings. The broad emerging themes were then created by combining the cluster themes. From the nine cluster themes, three new themes appeared. The participants' challenges were attempted to be grouped by these topics.

The Winding River of Motherhood, Prayer as a Universal Solvent, and Navigating Life's Waters are the three themes that were formulated. The

perspectives of the participants in their journey were also captured by these three themes.

According to the findings, teenage mothers are observant and aware of what is happening in their pregnancy journey. Most of the participants can still remember their feelings of not knowing what to do, their constant anxieties about what to do next, and the discrimination they get from people around them. The findings also show the reflections and aspirations of the participants and how they overcame the challenges through faith and support from family members.

In the process of analyzing the data gathered it highlighted the resilience of the participants. Having to experience adult - problems at a very young age is never easy. It requires a lot of both physical and mental processes just to keep themselves going. It is the inner strength of these young mothers to face life that keeps them and their children in the light of normalcy and survival.

“*Edu-vocation*” is a concept formed by the researcher after internalizing the responses of the participants. The concept “*Edu-vocation*”, a combination of words of education and vocation was developed in the duration of this study. The idea behind this concept is that mother’s ought to dedicate themselves to their academic and professional objectives alongside accepting their role as caregivers for their children. It underscores the desire of mothers to manage a balance between the obligations of parenthood and their personal development, stressing the significance of education and career advancement in ensuring a brighter future for their children as well as themselves.

The researchers saw the eagerness of the participants to continue school without having to experience hate and discrimination. It is like giving them a chance in life. Education programs that specifically help young Indigenous mothers like livelihood programs and other alternative learning services can greatly impact their way of life.

This study can be an inspiration in the healthcare profession especially those in the Community Health setting to focus on the physical and

emotional support of young mothers in the community. Community healthcare professionals, especially assigned in far-flung areas, play a vital role in changing the way the world sees a teenage mother.

Conclusion

This study on pregnancy and early parenting in the context of young Indigenous mothers was a qualitative type of research. It primarily seeks to answer the questions of what the experiences of young Indigenous mothers on parenting are; how participants cope with the challenges of pregnancy and parenting; and what insights can participants share with peers and community. The idea behind this study is that mother’s ought to dedicate themselves to their academic and professional objectives alongside accepting their role as caregivers for their children. It underscores the desire of mothers to manage a balance between the obligations of parenthood and their personal development, stressing the significance of education and career advancement in ensuring a brighter future for their children for their as themselves. This study can be inspiration in the nursing profession especially those in the community health setting to focus on the physical and emotional support of young mothers in the community. Community health nurses, especially assigned in far-flung areas, play a vital role in changing the world sees a teenage mother.

Conflict of Interests

No conflict of interest.

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