



Lived Experiences of Adolescent Mothers in their Transition to Motherhood in a Rural Barangay

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ABSTRACT: This descriptive phenomenological type of study employed Giorgi's Phenomenology with transcribed semi-structured face-to-face interviews to provide detailed examinations of personal lived experiences among the selected adolescent mothers in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City. Ten informants were selected using the criterion-based purposive sampling method specifying those who are mothers aged between 10 to 19 years old, have given birth to one live baby, are residents of Barangay Rizal, and are living with their parents who underwent struggles in transitioning to motherhood only. The emergent themes from the study revolved around three key aspects: physical problems, insufficient support, and mental and emotional distress. The journey into motherhood, while transformative for any woman, presents a unique set of challenges and complexities for adolescent mothers. Their experiences were vividly expressed in their narratives, showcasing a range of emotions including fear, uncertainty, and the simultaneous joy of motherhood. As they grapple with their new responsibilities, they also face the ongoing challenge of identity formation as adolescents. Throughout their journeys, there is a prevalent theme of profound personal development. This study serves as a very useful and trustworthy input for the creation and execution of specific programs and treatments that address specific challenges faced by adolescent mothers as they transition to motherhood.

KEYWORDS: Descriptive Phenomenology, Giorgi's Phenomenology, Lived Experiences, Adolescent Mothers, Transition to Motherhood, Surigao, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is one of the most difficult jobs there is. It's a new chapter in every woman's life. It gives them a new strength they didn't realize one has until they had children (Lasheen, I., 2019). Also, it is an exciting time for every woman and the society at large and also seen as a significant part of any woman's identity but that is often not the case for the adolescent mother. Adolescent motherhood can be a time of mixed feelings as it occurs at a critical time of their lives (Ayanore, M., Enuameh, Y., Gbogbo, S., & Schweppe, C., 2018). Maternal role attainment is a process that demands the acquisition of necessary abilities, the learning of appropriate behavior, and the establishment of maternal identity. The preparation for accepting the maternal role has a significant impact on maternal adjustment and the transition to adulthood. However, one of the major concerns in many countries is the growing number of adolescent mothers.

According to Plan International (2022), Adolescent pregnancy can have both social and economic consequences for girls, their families, and communities. Unmarried pregnant adolescents may face stigma or rejection from their parents and peers, as well as violence threats. Girls who become pregnant before reaching the age of 18 are also more likely to face violence in a marriage or partnership. Transitioning to motherhood demands physical, psychological, social, and cognitive preparation; however, adolescent mothers are not prepared to become mothers. For those, who must balance the maternal role and the developmental tasks of adolescence, motherhood becomes difficult and complicated. They must adjust to adult social roles, puberty-related physical changes, significant brain development, and infant care. Most adolescent mothers are not in good socio-economic standing, making the transition to motherhood difficult for them.

Early pregnancy is one of the pressing issues Filipino youths are facing today. The Philippines has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates among the ASEAN member states despite the decrease in total live births of teenage mothers (aged 10-19) in 2016 (203,085) to 183,000 in 2019. According to the Commission on Population and Development (2019), the Philippines has recorded a 7% increase in births among girls aged 15 and below in 2019. Filipino minors who gave birth in 2019 increased to 62,510



from 62,341 in 2018. In 2019, 2,411 very young adolescents aged 10 to 14 gave birth, or almost seven every day. One in three births among minors occurred in the three regions of Calabarzon with 8,008, National Capital Region with 7,546, and Central Luzon with 7,523 births. Outside Luzon, the highest number of minors who gave birth were in Northern Mindanao with 4,747 cases, Davao Region with 4,551, and Central Visayas with 4,541.

In the fiscal year 2019-2020, Surigao del Norte, as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority, witnessed a concerning surge in teenage pregnancies, with a staggering 750 recorded live births from adolescent mothers. This alarming trend sheds light on the broader societal issues that plague Surigao City, which is ironically dubbed a "dark place" after sunset. The researchers delved into the city's landscape, unveiling the lack of recreational facilities tailored to meet the needs of adolescents, hindering the development of their skills and intellectual capacities. The absence of suitable outlets for teenagers has prompted a shift in their focus towards alternative hobbies.

Concurrently, the rise of substandard boarding houses in Surigao City has emerged as a lucrative business, contributing to the increasing challenges faced by adolescents. Many of these establishments lack stringent house rules, permitting unrestricted access to visitors and fostering an environment where mixed-gender tenancy is prevalent. This lax atmosphere within boarding houses may play a role in exacerbating the already pressing issue of teenage pregnancies in the region. As the city grapples with this multifaceted problem, addressing the root causes, such as the lack of recreational facilities and the proliferation of unregulated boarding houses, becomes imperative in curbing the concerning rise in teenage pregnancies.

In Barangay Rizal, the researchers observed that there is a growing number of adolescent mothers. According to the Brgy. Rizal Health Center, 1 case of teenage pregnancy was recorded in 2020, 8 cases in 2021, 9 cases in 2022, and in 2023 there is currently 1 case as of February.

The study explored the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in their transition to motherhood in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City. The findings would be used to propose possible maternal care and health education programs for the rural health unity of the said barangay

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNING

This study described the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in their transition to motherhood in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City. This is anchored on the theory of Kimberle Crenshaw's intersectionality theory (1989) which acknowledges the many intersections in a woman's life, such as age, age at childbirth (year), age of child (month), educational attainment, marital status, occupation, socio-economic status, and religion. The above dimensions are central to the identities of the adolescent mothers who participated in this study. Thus, intersectionality theory extends beyond age and occupation to include other social categories such as religion, educational attainment, and a variety of other factors that play a role in and/or influence an individual's life situation. The study further suspends any priori assumption to primarily forestall biases. However, a section on review of related literature and studies is included not to support biases but rather to concretize and justify the data analysis outcomes.

Moreover, Intersectionality theory employs a multi-axes approach, taking into account multiple complexities and dimensions, as well as the many identities that a woman may possess. Each aspect of a person's identity has an impact on their decision-making. While intersectionality has been criticized for being too open, we believe that as a framework it captures the nuances and differences that are central to an individual life, including those of the adolescent mothers in our study.

In addition, the Transformative Learning Theory designed by Jack Mezirow (1991) is another springboard for this study. The lived experiences of adolescent mothers in their transition to motherhood offer a window into their transformative learning process. It fully understands how transformative learning takes place in the context of adolescent mothers' transition to motherhood. It can illuminate the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral alterations that occur as these mothers carefully assess their experiences and question social norms and standards. This can involve examining the purpose of support networks, resource availability, individual resiliency, and chances for deep reflection. Understanding these aspects can help interventions and assistance programs that help adolescent mothers in having transformative learning experiences. Apart from that, by highlighting the transformative potential of their lived experiences, the research can help to empower adolescent mothers in their journey. It may benefit them in identifying their strengths, battling social stigmas, and establishing a sense of agency in creating their own motherly stories. This empowerment can lead to improved well-being, self-confidence, and the capacity to speak out for oneself and their children.



Culture, marriage, and childbearing continue to be important to Filipina women. Marriage and childbearing almost always define a woman's place in her family and community. The connections of marriage and the obligations of motherhood frequently act as foundations that establish a woman's position and value, affecting not just how they are viewed by their family members but also how they are incorporated into the larger societal structure. Using either age or occupation as relevant aspects would not provide a complete picture of the individual's experiences and would not fully answer questions about the woman's existence. These elements provide only a limited glimpse into an individual's experiences and existence. Filipina women, especially those who are adolescent mothers, possess complex life stories that extend beyond these visible measurements. To fully grasp the multifaceted position and experiences of adolescent mothers in this study, we must delve into a comprehensive set of factors. This includes considering their age at childbirth (measured in years) and the age of their children (in months). Furthermore, aspects such as their educational attainment, marital status, socio-economic status, and religious beliefs all play a vital role in shaping their experiences and the challenges they encounter. However, it doesn't end there. To gain a truly holistic understanding, one must also explore the unique life journeys of these women, as these experiences are deeply intertwined with their cultural identities, relationships, and aspirations. Only through this multidimensional lens can we unravel the complicated pattern of culture, marriage, and childbearing in the lives of Filipina women and, in particular, the adolescent mothers participating in this study.

Multiple philosophical perspectives were considered to describe adolescent mothers' experiences during pregnancy and childbirth. Existentialism encourages contemplation of the autonomy and responsibility of the individual in establishing the meaning and purpose of this transformative stage. It raises questions about how the young mother juggles with her evolving identity and the significance she imparts to this new chapter in her life, living in the two worlds of adolescence and motherhood. Additionally, the ethics of care place a strong emphasis on the value of fostering connections between people. It emphasizes the moral duty of society and individuals to support and care for adolescent mothers throughout their pregnancies and deliveries. Meanwhile, utilitarianism considers the happiness and well-being of the adolescent mother and their child. In order to increase overall satisfaction, it considers the long-term effects of various decisions and policies. These philosophical stances provide helpful frameworks for understanding and resolving the complex nature of adolescent motherhood, informing strategies for assistance, decisions about public policy, and moral issues at this crucial life stage.

The philosophy of love between adolescents resulting in childbirth encompasses a profound exploration of human connection, responsibility, and the transformative power of this experience. This promotes consideration of the profoundly emotional and existential aspects of this experience. It challenges us to think about the moral, ethical, and personal growth implications and to appreciate the possibility for transformational growth and development that can result from such a big life experience. Humanism underscores the potential for personal growth, self-realization, and the development of one's full potential. It celebrates the capacity for positive transformation that can arise from the challenges of early parenthood. Social contract theory examines the societal obligations and responsibilities towards adolescent parents, emphasizing the importance of providing resources, support, and opportunities to ensure the well-being of both them and their children. Ethics of virtue highlights the character traits and virtues essential in this situation, such as patience, compassion, responsibility, and resilience. It encourages the cultivation of these qualities to navigate the complexities of love, parenthood, and the responsibilities that come with them.

The researchers used Giorgi's Phenomenology in analyzing the data. This phenomenology aimed to describe a person's lived experiences in an attempt to enrich lived experiences by drawing out their meaning. In addition, it uncovers the meaning of a phenomenon as experienced by a human through the identification of essential themes. Central to Giorgi's phenomenological psychology is the lived experience of the individual as it is recalled to consciousness. In phenomenology, each distinct feature of the life world comprises the meaning of one element which is only understandable in relation to the situation as a whole. It is therefore important to point out that most human experiences depend on the meaning individuals attach to a situation. As emphasized by Giorgi, the aim of the data collection process was to elicit as complete a description as possible of the experience that an informant has lived through. The interviews not only yielded detailed information about the informants' experiences but allowed for spontaneous responses to reveal the natural feelings, behavior, and attitudes of the informants. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and code-named.

In the research conduct process, the researcher himself had face-to-face actual interviews with the informants at their most convenient time so as to receive first-hand information and insights to shed light on the inquiry. The researcher took on the challenging work of removing his total subjectivity being a person with interest in the topic of the study but instead tried to



experience what the informants were really going through so as to conclude a more holistic and realistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Subsequently, the philosophical assumption that being determined was epistemological in nature.

Moreover, the values demonstrated by the researcher and the informants were both essential in translating the meaning of various descriptions both with regard to the inquirer's viewpoint and also that of the informants. The values may influence how the researcher and the informants perceived things in comprehending the eccentricities and uniqueness of the experiences of adolescent mothers in their transition to motherhood in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City.

Lastly, in terms of the methodological assumption, as this study fundamentally investigated the lived experiences of the informants, the researcher limits the data from general to very specific points in order to tailor-fit the data to the objectives established.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study explored the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in their transition to motherhood in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City.

Specifically, this study described:

1. The lived experiences of adolescent mothers in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City as they transition to motherhood.
2. The essence and meanings can be derived from the Informants' lived experiences.
3. The themes formulated from these lived experiences.

METHODS

This study used the Descriptive phenomenological type of study employing Giorgi's Phenomenology. A Descriptive Phenomenological approach aims to explore and understand the essence of lived experiences from the perspective of the individuals involved. It seeks to uncover the underlying meanings and structures inherent in those experiences, emphasizing a detailed and thorough examination. This methodology strives to provide an in-depth description of the phenomena under investigation, offering valuable insights into the subjective aspects of human perception and consciousness. It is explicitly idiographic in its commitment to study the specific experience of each case before moving on to more general claims. It is a particularly useful methodology for studying complex, ambiguous, and emotionally charged topics. Furthermore, the use of a phenomenological design is appropriate to accomplish research goals because it allows adolescent mothers in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City to express themselves and their lived experiences as they see fit, free of distortion and/or prosecution.

Using the purposive and criterion sampling, the Informants of the study were the selected adolescent mothers of each sitio in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City in 2023 who have intimately grappled with the challenges of transitioning to motherhood during their youth. These young women have faced the complex intersection of navigating their own development while assuming the responsibilities of parenting. Their experiences offer invaluable insights into the unique hurdles, strengths, and resilience that shape their journey toward becoming mothers at an early age. The experiences are the most recent in their lives. Data Saturation was attained in the 10th informant. Data saturation describes a stage of the research when no new material is found in the data analysis, the procedure is repeated, alerting the researcher that it is time to stop collecting data. Saturation means that a researcher can reasonably be assured that further data gathering would yield similar results and serve to confirm emerging themes (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017).

The study enlisted ten informants who met all the **inclusion-exclusion** criteria that include:

- a) An adolescent mother who is aged between 10 and 19 years old
- b) An adolescent mother who has given birth to one live baby
- c) An adolescent mother who is a resident of Barangay Rizal
- d) An adolescent mother who is still living with their parents

If an individual lacks one quality mentioned in the requirements for inclusion criteria, they may not take part in this study and hence be excluded. The entire coverage of the criteria is employed to guarantee adequate data saturation.

The research environment was in the vibrant community of Barangay Rizal, specifically Sitio Tumanday, Sitio Lumaban, Sitio Kinabutan, Sitio Bioborjan, Sitio Bacud, and Sitio Balibayon. Located within the City of Island Adventures, Surigao City, this area is abundant in water and agricultural resources due to its semi-urbanized yet not entirely rural provincial characteristics. Surigao



City, the capital of Surigao del Norte Province, plays a significant role within the Caraga Region on the beautiful Mindanao Island in the Philippines.

In-person phenomenological interviews were the primary data collection for each informant. It was done in a place mutually chosen by both the researchers and Informants. During the interview, follow-up questions were used in relation to the prepared questions to further elaborate answers and give additional details, without revealing what the researchers are looking for. Each member of the research group had a role in the interview process, such as taking down notes, recording, via mobile recorder, and the actual interview part about the informant's experiences in their transition to motherhood at an early age. Insights were transcribed by the researchers.

Moreover, the interview was done conversationally, with open-ended questions that encouraged the interviewee to share their experiences without hesitation and reserve. The researchers utilized an *Interview Guide*, equipped with questions that guide the interview to focus on the phenomenon of interest. To document procedural and observational conditions, occurrences, recommendations for modifications, and the researcher's responses to those recommendations, field and methodological notes were used. The interview focused on the lived experiences, challenges, success stories, and fulfillment in gathering information and confirming findings of the essence of the experience. The researcher-made interview guide underwent the process of content validity by three (3) professional experts in the qualitative method of inquiry to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the collected data.

The role of the researchers was the highly compassionate and ethical approach in gathering and describing the data in a manner that respects the cultural, social, and personal complexities of these young mothers' lives. Researchers undertaking a study on the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in Barangay Rizal began their journey with compassion and empathy. They were aware of the need for a sensitive and accepting setting where young mothers could tell their stories without fear of rejection. A deeper examination of their experiences is made possible by trust and open communication. In this research, the data collection techniques are specifically designed for Barangay Rizal's particular setting. Researchers take into account the cultural and age-appropriate features when using procedures including interviews. The methods selected follow regional traditions and customs, ensuring that information is gathered in a way that is acceptable to the community. Furthermore, it is crucial to respect adolescent mothers' right to privacy and consent. Researchers got the informants' agreement after fully explaining the study's objectives and assuring them that their identities would be kept private. This ethical approach creates a safe space for young mothers to share their stories with the assurance of privacy. The researchers strictly observed research ethics wherein confidentiality, privacy rights, and safety of the Informants and the researchers' ethical practices were strongly observed. The researchers primarily adhered to specific provisions applicable under the Data Privacy Act of 2012 to protect the study Informants and the researchers. The questionnaires of the study integrated Data Privacy consent and waivers for the security assurance for both researchers and the Informants. The researcher also respected the involved persons' feelings and opinions hence ensuring ethical conduct and handling of the information and data concerning the informants. (Ederio et. al., 2023). Lastly, the study ensured trustworthiness based on Lincoln and Guba (1994) observing the following principles which are credibility, transferability, confirmability, dependability, and authenticity.

The selected adolescent mothers signed a consent form prepared by the researchers. This ensured that the information collected in the study was completely confidential. The privacy of all informants was protected to the maximum allowable by the law. If the informants chose to withdraw from the study, all interview responses from the informant were shredded immediately. The informants also chose not to take part in the study.

Additionally, adolescent mothers in Barangay Rizal were influenced by a unique blend of cultural, social, and economic factors. Researchers approached data collection with cultural sensitivity, acknowledging the impact of traditions, family dynamics, and community norms on these young women's experiences. This perspective ensured a comprehensive understanding of their lives. Researchers aimed to unveil not only the challenges faced by adolescent mothers but also their remarkable resilience. Through open-ended questions and a non-judgmental approach, they encouraged these young mothers to share their stories of overcoming obstacles, finding support, and discovering their inner strength. This balanced approach allows for a holistic depiction of their experiences. Once data were collected, researchers dedicated themselves to the rigorous analysis and description of the information gathered. This phase involved identifying common themes, drawing meaningful conclusions, and highlighting the nuances of the adolescent mothers' experiences. Researchers strived to present a comprehensive picture of the challenges, joys, and personal growth that these young mothers experience.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Included in this chapter is the detailed phenomenological analysis of interviews with the selected adolescent mothers in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City who underwent the struggles in transitioning to motherhood. We learned from these informants' experiences that preparing for motherhood includes physical, psychological, social, and cognitive preparation. Our informants, on the other hand, are not prepared to be mothers. Motherhood becomes challenging and complicated for them who must balance the maternal function with the developmental requirements of adolescence.

The ten informants completed the face-to-face interviews with us, the researchers. They were adolescent mothers who gave birth to one live baby, residents of Barangay Rizal, Surigao City, and are living with their parents. Responses to research questions were diverse because of the informant's varying levels of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and perspectives. These differences can influence how they describe and respond to research questions. From the coding of the ten interview transcriptions, common themes emerged regarding the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in their transition to motherhood in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City.

From the Grand Tour Question, "Describe your experiences as adolescent mothers in your transition to motherhood?" Six interview questions were constructed from it, which are: (1.) Describe your experiences as an adolescent mother in your transition to motherhood; (1.1) Tell me about your experiences in motherhood; (1.2) How do you manage it; (1.3) What are the challenges you encountered as an adolescent mother?; (1.4) How do you support your child's needs?; (1.5) What life experiences do you find meaningful? ;(1.6) Is there anything you would like to add?

The Step By Step Process Of Analysis (Giorgi's Phenomenology)

The results are presented in a step-by-step process. The findings and outcomes are discussed as salient points with emphasis on the themes presented. These all started with **STEP ONE, the interview transcript**. We asked the Informants the grand tour question. While the Informants were narrating their experiences, we observed their expressions and nonverbal actions while recording and writing verbatim statements with a recorder to ensure the accuracy of the gathered data. We did not omit any statement or word from the transcripts of the interview and considered each phrase equally relevant. This is known as **horizontalization** or viewing each statement as having equal value. We treated all the data equally and that no quote or excerpt was more important than any other but by listed every quote relevant to the experience/phenomenon under investigation (Statistical Solutions, 2022).

In the **SECOND STEP, the determination of parts**, we bracketed the responses given by the informants.

After the determination of parts, we did the **transformation of meaning units into psychologically sensitive expressions**. We listened to the recordings multiple times to delve deeper into them to extract their meaning. Through this, we recalled the informants' observed nonverbal and paralinguistic levels of communication, such as intonations, emphases, pauses, and others.

This was followed by the **determination of structure**, where we went over every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, and significant nonverbal communication in the transcript in order to elicit the informant's meaning after the verbatim responses during the interview had been transcribed. We also bracketed the assumptions and had to stay as true to the data as possible.

Next is the **categorization**, we grouped the meaning units to recapitulate more abstract principles. Lastly, we **formulated themes** that summarized all of the extracted data as a whole. The themes describe the entire dataset.

The table below shows an overview of the informants' descriptive profiles.

Table 1. Demographic Distribution of the Informants according to their profile

Code	Age	Residence	Socio-economic Class
I ₁	17	Sitio Balibayon	Lower
I ₂	17	Sitio Balibayon	Lower
I ₃	18	Sitio Lumaban	Lower
I ₄	18	Sitio Balibayon	Lower
I ₅	18	Sitio Tumanday	Upper Lower
I ₆	18	Sitio Bioborjan	Upper Lower
I ₇	16	Sitio Bakud	Upper Lower
I ₈	18	Sitio Kinabutan	Upper Lower
I ₉	19	Sitio Bioborjan	Lower
I ₁₀	16	Sitio Bakud	Lower



Out of all the informants we interviewed, the eldest was 19 and the youngest was 16. One informant each resides in Sitio Lumaban, Sitio Tumanday, and Sitio Kinabutan; two informants each live in Sitios Bioborjan and Bakud; and the three of them reside in Sitio Balibayon. We used the *Kuppuswamy Socio-economic Status Scale* to determine the social class of each informant, based on their education, occupation, and monthly family income. We found that more than half of the adolescent mothers belonged to the lower class, while the others were in the upper lower class.

We carefully examined what each informant told us, transforming their words into emotionally meaningful expressions. Dedicated to this task, we, the researchers, took on the challenge of understanding the stories of adolescent mothers living in Brgy. Rizal. Within our approach, we worked systematically to uncover and redefine the real meaning behind the statements these young moms shared with us. Through this methodical approach, we sought to capture more than just the surface meaning of what the informants were saying. Our goal was to delve into the intricate emotional and psychological layers that formed the foundation of their stories. This transformative process wasn't just about revealing the depth of their experiences; it also allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of how their lived realities intertwined with their psychological states. By crystallizing meaning in this manner, sought to offer a more empathetic and comprehensive portrayal of the adolescent mothers' perspectives, ultimately contributing to a richer comprehension of their unique challenges and aspirations.

Furthermore, we subjected the same statements to the Determination of Structure and Categorization of Meaning—a crucial phase in our research process. The responses shared by the informants, particularly the adolescent mothers in Brgy. Rizal underwent a thorough analytical exploration. As we delved into a thorough examination, we carefully arranged these statements into meaningful themes that captured their essential core. Each theme then unfolded into sub-themes, offering a layered and comprehensive insight into the experiences of the informants. We engaged in a process that not only breaks down the raw data into manageable parts but also reveals the complex connections that weave the fabric of their stories. By categorizing the statements in this way, our goal is to create a structured and insightful framework. This framework not only captures the diverse dimensions of the informants' perspectives but also establishes the groundwork for a more profound analysis of their lived experiences and psychological states. This structured approach ultimately empowers a nuanced exploration of the intricate tapestry of experiences that adolescent mothers navigate, shedding light on the complexities that may otherwise remain obscured.

We learned from these informants' experiences that preparing for motherhood includes physical, psychological, social, and cognitive preparation. Our informants, on the other hand, are not prepared to be mothers. Motherhood becomes challenging and complicated for them who must balance the maternal function with the developmental requirements of adolescence.

FORMULATION OF THEMES:

“THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERS IN THEIR TRANSITION TO MOTHERHOOD”

THEME 1: PHYSICAL AND HEALTH PROBLEMS

Being a teenage mother can indeed have physical consequences and challenges due to the unique circumstances of pregnancy and childbirth at a young age. These problems could be related to pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum, and breastfeeding. According to the statements we gathered from the informants, some of them had experienced hyperemesis gravidarum, eating disorders, and lack of sleep. While some had endured a difficult birth, non-elective cesarean birth, and the physical consequences of hard labor. These shifts, though entirely natural, can be overwhelming, ushering in a range of complex emotions. The adolescent body, still in the throes of development, encounters an abrupt acceleration due to pregnancy-induced hormonal surges. This rapid transformation gives rise to a host of discomforts, including fatigue, morning sickness, and heightened sensitivities in various body parts. Yet, beyond the initial stages of pregnancy, the body continues to undergo remarkable adaptations. Moreover, the demands of infant care—constant lifting, carrying, and nurturing—exert an additional strain on these young bodies. This physical strain, coupled with the necessity of maintaining adequate nutrition for both mother and child, often presents a formidable challenge. In the quest to nourish their growing infants, adolescent mothers must grapple with their own need for sustenance, leading to a delicate balancing act. The physical intricacies of adolescent motherhood are a testament to the resilience and strength of these young women, who navigate this transformative period with courage and determination.

Furthermore, the sharing of the informants summarized the essence of this theme in terms of its importance and relevance to the lived experiences of the selected adolescent mothers. Moving from the general physical challenges faced by adolescent mothers, it's crucial to delve into the essence starting with the health problems they may encounter during pregnancy.



Sub-theme 1: Health problems related to pregnancy

During pregnancy, many women experience changes in their taste preferences and heightened sense of smell, which in turn tends to trigger nausea. These aversions can vary from woman to woman and even from pregnancy to pregnancy. The increased sensitivity to smells can also influence food preferences. In addition, pregnancy is often hailed as a time of radiant anticipation and brings with it a myriad of transformative experiences. Among these, the subtle yet profound alterations in taste and smell stand as a testament to the intricate dance between biology and motherhood. It's as if the body, in its wisdom, prepares itself for the nourishment of another life by subtly shifting its sensory landscape. For many women, the once-familiar flavors and scents undergo a metamorphosis, leaving them with unexpected aversions and newfound cravings. The heightened sensitivity of the olfactory senses, while undoubtedly a marvel of nature's design, can also become an unexpected nemesis. This was specifically cited by:

I₇ 6-9 ... Ang sa kalisod kay adtun pag lihi kay kaluja kay pirmo ako nag suka maka simhot ra ako ng baho ng manok magsuka na ako maluja na ako... kutob adtun pag anak nako di ko ganahan ng manok. ("It's difficult during the time I started my pregnancy because it's tiring and I'm always vomiting and nauseated every time I smell chicken... Until the time I gave birth, I never wanted to eat chicken anymore")

I₈ 10-12... Mag luja ako adto sige ako mag suka.. vitamin c di nako halos mainom kay mag suka.. jaon anum maski uno na baho pati sa kan-on. ("I always get tired and feel nauseous.. I could not almost take my vitamin C supplements because I just throw it up.. I could not drink Annum milk even eat rice because of the scent and smell.")

The increased sense of smell during pregnancy is caused by changing hormone levels. One suspected culprit is human chorionic gonadotropin (Watson, S., 2021) Rising hCG levels early in pregnancy correspond to the changes in scent that our informants describe. It's also likely that they are simply more aware of scents during pregnancy, rather than more sensitive to them. Increased awareness throughout these nine months may cause them to focus more on odors that may be detrimental to their developing kid, allowing them to avoid them. It's important to note that not all pregnant women experience a heightened sense of smell, and the degree of sensitivity can vary. Some women may notice only a subtle change, while others may find odors overpowering. Informants shared that:

I₅ 9-10 ... Waya man hinoa ako mag suka suka ug mag lihi, okay raman. ("In fairness, I did not experience vomiting and being nauseous. My pregnancy was just okay")

I₁₀ 1-4 ... Waya ako kahibayo na buntis baja ako adto kay waya man gud ako mag suka suka jaon laong nila na mag lipong lipong kaw ing ana pero waya man... ("I did not know that I was pregnant those times since I did not experience vomiting and nausea; not even the feeling of getting dizzy contrary to what other people said about the normal feelings and sicknesses a pregnant woman normally experience")

In the midst of all these changes, people often talk about how some pregnant women become more sensitive to smells. However, it's important to understand that not every expectant mother goes through this. And for those who do, the level of sensitivity varies widely. Some might notice that their sense of smell becomes sharper, making them more aware of the different scents around them, whether it's the comforting smell of home-cooked food or the subtle fragrances of flowers. On the other hand, some women may go through pregnancy without experiencing this heightened sense of smell. Their days may pass without much notice of scents. Both of these experiences are valid and contribute to the unique journey of pregnancy. This range of sensory experiences reminds us that there isn't a one-size-fits-all story in motherhood. Every individual's journey is distinct, reflecting the rich complexity of the human experience.

Let's move on from the health issues that adolescent mothers encounter during pregnancy to the specific problems that develop during childbirth.

Sub-theme 2: Health problems related to childbirth

Childbirth is a transformative and joyous event, but it also comes with potential health risks for both the mother and the baby. An informant shared that:

I₁₀ 23-30 ...pag labor pa nako di paman sija mu kuan gani mu 1 cm pa sija inana...amo jadtog tag CS ako nila... kay may sakit man ako sa heart ... sige ako kuan na untana normal delivery ra kay amo may laong nila na mas gana



pero unsaon ko man di kaya sako lawas... basta ang importante ma okay ako bata pag gawas... (“When I was in labor, I was put under Cesarean section since I was only 1-cm dilated and I had a heart problem. I always hoped that I would only undergo a normal delivery since many would say that it’s better but I had no choice since my body could not handle it. The important thing is that my baby would be fine upon delivery”)

The transition into motherhood is often depicted as a journey filled with anticipation, affection, and tender moments. However, for adolescent mothers, this narrative can shift unexpectedly when confronted with the need for a cesarean section. This juncture introduces a distinct set of emotions, blending apprehension, inner strength, and a deep sense of responsibility. The physical and emotional challenges of childbirth, combined with the young age of these mothers, can lead to situations where a cesarean section is deemed the safest and most practical course of action. While this choice is made with great care, it can evoke a complex mix of emotions - relief at the prospect of a safer delivery, along with a feeling of vulnerability and perhaps a touch of disappointment for not experiencing the expected natural birth. It serves as a reminder that the path to motherhood often takes unforeseen turns, demanding adaptability and a resilience that knows no bounds. In making this decision, adolescent mothers demonstrate a remarkable level of bravery and maturity, navigating a road that calls for both physical endurance and emotional strength. Through this experience, they emerge as strong individuals, their journey into motherhood a testament to the inner fortitude that enables them to embrace whatever path they must follow.

As we navigate through the health concerns adolescent mothers encounter during childbirth, let’s shift our focus towards the challenges they may face in the postpartum period, particularly in relation to breastfeeding and its associated health issues.

Sub-theme 3: Health problems related to postpartum and breastfeeding

The postpartum period is a critical phase for new mothers as they navigate physical and emotional changes while caring for their newborns. Along with the joys of motherhood, this period can also bring about certain health challenges. Additionally, breastfeeding, a natural and beneficial practice, can sometimes present difficulties for both mother and baby. This was specifically cited by:

I₂ 9-11 ... Waya man ako nag breastfeed kay kuan man, tag mixed man nako sija mura ya gani sija ni angay, mag basa ija tae, amo tag pa dede rakan sa bibiron.” In addition “I₉ 40-45 di paman nako gunitan kay mura raman mabali pag gunit nako tung una mura siya, pag patotoy nako mura mabali amo to mag lisod anay ako magpa totoy sako bata. Mao tu naniid anay ako labon gamay pa sija lisod kayo niya taas baya ako kamot maglisud jud ako. (“I did not breastfeed after noticing that my baby experienced irregular digestion and bowel and so we resorted to bottled milk feeding”. In addition, one informant said “I could not hold my baby after birth yet because my baby seemed to be very fragile and would get hurt every time I try to breastfeed. I had difficulty breastfeeding and so I just observed and practiced first.”)

Breastfeeding, recognized as a natural and essential practice, may seem deceptively simple. However, delving into this nurturing act reveals a reality that is far from straightforward. Both for the mother and the baby, it can present a series of challenges, calling for patience, determination, and a profound level of empathy. As mothers engage in this age-old ritual of nourishment and bonding, they may grapple with physical discomfort, striving to find a comfortable latch or just being scared. Their perseverance and commitment, to seeking guidance and support, stand as a testament to their resilience. On the other side of this nurturing exchange, infants may encounter difficulties with latching, leading to moments of frustration and a longing for sustenance that can be elusive. Yet, within these hurdles, lies a deep-seated beauty. It serves as a reminder that the journey of nurturing and sustaining life, though filled with challenges, uncovers inner strength, endurance, and an unwavering dedication to the well-being of a cherished child. Through these struggles, both mother and baby emerge not only nourished but also strengthened by the bonds forged in the crucible of breastfeeding's trials.

Adolescent mothers often face unique challenges when it comes to lack of sleep during the postpartum period. The combination of the demanding responsibilities of caring for a newborn and the typical sleep patterns of adolescents can lead to significant sleep deprivation for them. Newborns typically require frequent nighttime feedings, which can disrupt sleep for teenage mothers who are already dealing with hormonal changes and the physical demands of recovery. These nighttime feedings can significantly impact the quality and duration of sleep for teenage mothers. Also, it can bring about emotional stress and anxiety, which can contribute to sleep disturbances. Worrying about the baby's well-being, and the pressures of parenting can make it harder for teenage mothers to relax and fall asleep. Informants have shared that:



I₂ 1-2 ... Kuan kakapoy, tapos pag anak na, amo ra gihapon kay taga duyom kay kuan mag bilar. ("It was tiring and then even after giving childbirth, it's still exhausting since I slept late every night since then")

I₃ 1-4 ...Kalisud hahahah kay bata paman, parang na bag-o, about sa body, sa kuan sa mindset nimo. Sauna tung dayaga pa ako way pay tag bati sa lawas, kuman na mama na kay arang na. ("It was difficult...hahaha... since we were only young. I felt differently about my body and mindset. Before when I was still a maiden, I did not feel any sick feeling, but now that I'm already a mother, I started feeling a lot of ailments.")

I₇ 13- 15 ... Usahay makalagot pag mag manya sija in ana kay ma baog ako ma utod ako tuyog... gi antosan ko ra gajud. ("Sometimes I get angry every time my child loses her mood and will have tantrums since I could not sleep too at night. I just endured it.")

I₁₀ 64-69 ... way tuyog bilar permi kay ang baby lagi mag mata man gajud duyom tapos kapoy pa ako lawas kay mag laba pa... di amo adto na time tung nasakit ngane ako. Nagbughat... dugay ako nahuwasan 1 month ako nahuwasan. ("I was sleepless including my baby since my baby was always awake at night. I feel tired especially that I do laundry also at daytime. Therefore, I overdid and strained my body and got sick for a month.")

It's a silent struggle that is seldom seen, as these mothers navigate their responsibilities with a determined spirit. The lack of rest, a crucial element for physical and emotional well-being, becomes a formidable challenge. Yet, amidst the exhaustion, one finds a remarkable display of resilience. These adolescent mothers, facing sleepless nights with fortitude, exemplify a strength that is both admirable and awe-inspiring. Their journey into motherhood, though marked by its own set of hurdles, is a testament to their unwavering commitment to the well-being of their child. As we close the first theme with its last sub-theme, health problems related to postpartum and breastfeeding, let's discuss another, which is the insufficient support received by adolescent mothers.

THEME 2: INSUFFICIENT SUPPORT

After the pivotal event of becoming pregnant at a young age, adolescent mothers often find themselves confronted with a stark lack of support from their immediate social circles. Friends may not be as supportive as they were before the pregnancy. This can lead to a sense of isolation for the young mother, who may find it difficult to relate to her peers' experiences. Family dynamics can also be fraught with complexities. Some family members may hold traditional expectations or harbor their own feelings of disappointment or shame, which can hinder their support from the adolescent mother. The absence of a reliable network during such a critical time in a young mother's life can exacerbate the inherent difficulties of early parenthood, potentially leading to feelings of isolation, inadequacy, and emotional distress.

Moreover, the involvement or commitment of the child's father may vary widely, with some adolescent mothers encountering minimal participation or even outright absence. This lack of consistent emotional and financial support from the father can significantly exacerbate the young mother's challenges. It places a substantial burden on her shoulders, both in terms of the practical demands of childcare and the emotional weight of feeling unsupported in this pivotal stage of her life. The additional stress of shouldering these responsibilities alone can lead to a myriad of negative consequences, from heightened anxiety and fatigue to a sense of helplessness. In this context, the insufficient support from friends, family, and the child's father not only intensifies the struggles faced by adolescent mothers but also underscores the pressing need for a more empathetic and comprehensive support system for these courageous young women.

Adolescent mothers at a young age cannot support their children alone. They tend to seek support from their spouse and family in raising their child. Lack of support from the family can have a negative influence on first-time mothers. They are known to be at risk for potential mental illness or psychological distress in the postpartum period. Support does not only revolve around the financial aspect as most people perceive. Adolescent mothers also need emotional support to cope up with the role of becoming a mother at an early age. Most informants expressed that the support they receive is insufficient.

Within the broader theme of inadequate support received by adolescent mothers, a significant sub-theme emerges: *receiving insufficient support from one's spouse*.



Sub-Theme 1: Inadequate support from spouse

This sub-theme highlights a crucial aspect of the challenges faced by adolescent mothers—the lack of substantial support from their spouses. This deficit encompasses various dimensions, including emotional, financial, and practical assistance. Many adolescent mothers find themselves shouldering the weight of parenting responsibilities largely on their own, grappling with the demands of nurturing a child while still navigating their own developmental milestones. The absence of a reliable partner to share in these duties can lead to feelings of isolation and overwhelm. Additionally, the financial strain of providing for the child may fall disproportionately on the adolescent mother's shoulders, as their spouse may be unable or unwilling to contribute significantly. This sub-theme underscores the critical need for a more comprehensive understanding and commitment from spouses, ultimately enabling a more balanced and sustainable approach to parenting. It serves as a poignant reminder of the vital role that a supportive partner plays in the journey of adolescent motherhood.

The spouse or the father of the child plays an important role in raising the child. They are known to be the providers while the adolescent mothers look after the child. Raising a child in the Philippines is costly. All-in-all, you can expect to spend around PHP 1 million for your baby's first two years of life (Metrobank, 2023). According to the informants we interviewed, the financial support that the fathers provided was inadequate. Adolescent mothers often find themselves grappling with a stark absence of support, both emotionally and practically, from the fathers of their children. This deficit encompasses crucial areas such as childcare responsibilities and the physical and emotional well-being of both mother and child. The strain of single-handedly shouldering the weight of nurturing and providing for their offspring can be overwhelming. Moreover, the financial burden placed squarely on the shoulders of these young mothers is exacerbated by the father's inadequate contribution, leaving them in a precarious position. This lack of support not only hampers the adolescent mothers' ability to adequately meet their child's needs, but it also takes a toll on their own physical and mental health. The absence of a reliable and involved partner further compounds the challenges of early motherhood, underscoring the pressing need for a more comprehensive support system for these courageous young women. Informants shared that:

I₁ 23-28... *kun unoy mga kuan sako kuan sako pares, jaon mag trabaho sija, jaon saako e tipid ko tanan, e tipid nako ija kuan mga sweldo, ipa igo ko para laman ma kuan sako kuan bata. Tapos jaon man hanap ako nan mga raket para maka kwarta ako jaon ingana ba. ("Whatever my spouse could give out from his day job, I thriftily spend it carefully especially for our child. Then, I also tried searching for small sideline jobs to earn even a little for our family.")*

I₁ 40-45... *an ako ra na problema kay jaon sa kwarta, kun unsaon nako pag kuan, kun masakit sija, pag pa check up nako kun mao ni ako kuan pa check up saiija, amo ra jadto, basta jaon hamok gajud kuan. Kay di man sab mo hatag an mama sako pares, jaon mura nan waya ra saiija. ("My problem really is about money, especially if how I should save and spend especially every time my child is sick. I hardly could even buy medicine for my child every after medical check-up. I could only pay for check-up. I could not also expect from the mother of my spouse to give something for our baby and family.")*

I₂ 21-25... *Tapos sa financial kay kuan, nag lisud kami kay kinsinas raman an sweldo sako kuan tapos kuan ra sija part timer, di laung na straight ija duty amo jaon mag lisud kami. Mag kuan rakan kami, usahay man buyos rakan ako sako mama. ("In terms of the financial aspects, it is very difficult for us parents since my spouse is just a parttimer. Sometimes, we end up borrowing money from my mother.")*

Navigating the delicate balance of prioritizing the child becomes a significant challenge for the partners of adolescent mothers. Often, despite their best intentions, financial resources are allocated towards other pressing expenditures, diverting attention away from the essential needs of the child. This predicament is particularly evident when the father, who ideally should be a pillar of support, finds his hard-earned salary stretched thin across various demands. This diversion of funds not only exacerbates the financial strain on the family but also underscores a critical gap in understanding the immediate requirements of the child. As a consequence, the child's well-being may inadvertently take a backseat, potentially impacting their growth and development. This dilemma highlights the pressing need for open communication and a shared commitment to prioritize the child's needs, ensuring their welfare remains at the forefront of familial considerations. This forces the mother to resort to taking money without the knowledge of the father. As shared by the informant:



I₃ 9-13... *Tapos sa pag suporta sa mga panginahanglan sa amo anak kay ako bana kuan kun jaon mga extra money nija mag kuha ako nan kuan tapos e lain ra nako di ako mag saba saiya hahaha kay incase jaoy emergency maka palit dajon. ("In terms of needs support for our child, I sometimes hide and save extra money from the earnings of my husband without him knowing just in case we will need it for our child's emergency.")*

In one poignant account, an adolescent mother revealed that the father of her child is presently unable to provide financial or emotional support, as he is diligently pursuing his education in a distant city. Despite the apparent absence of immediate support, she expresses a remarkable understanding of the situation. She recognizes that his commitment to education is an investment in their collective future, one that holds the promise of a more stable and prosperous life for both herself and their child. This perspective showcases a mature and forward-thinking approach, underlining her resilience and determination to secure a better tomorrow. It's a testament to her strength and belief in the long-term benefits that education can bring, ultimately shaping a more promising trajectory for their fledgling family. This was specifically cited by:

I₉ 46-50... *Pero kun mag work na iya papa didto na ako mangayo, syempre lisod sab si tito pa gihapon. Kay nagskuyula paman sija...ay kanang graduating pa ba. Kun mag work na sija didto na ako mu kuha. ("...But if the father of my baby would be able to work finally, then I'll be asking from him already all the support and needs for my child. I cannot always rely on my child's uncle to support us always since the uncle is also schooling and is yet to graduate.")*

Emotional support within a spousal relationship is undeniably crucial, acting as a stabilizing force during moments of heightened stress or deep sadness. It serves as a bedrock of positivity upon which both partners can rely, fostering a sense of trust and security. Regrettably, in the experiences shared by the informants, a disheartening pattern emerges: some of their spouses fall short of providing this fundamental support. This emotional neglect manifests in various ways, from a notable absence of empathy to instances of being disregarded or having their feelings dismissed. These poignant instances underscore the importance of emotional attunement within a partnership, highlighting the profound impact it can have on the overall health and resilience of a relationship. The absence of such support can sow seeds of discord and isolation, underscoring the critical need for open communication and empathy in sustaining a thriving union. Informants shared that:

I₁₀ 33-34... *Sige kami mag away sa ako pares, dili nija ako sabton ("I always argue with my spouse because he does not understand me.")*

I₁₀ 36-39... *Buotan man iya ginikanan sa una namo pagkakuan bitaw kay nag puyo man ako sa ila ng pila ka months pero pagkadugay dugay adto jaon na ang bata...kalain mura nu yaot ila Batasan. ("My spouse's parents are kind especially during the first time we were together since we lived in their family's house for some months. However, as time goes by, I noticed that their attitudes and personalities changed especially when we had our baby already.")*

I₄ 12-17... *mas kuan pa jaon worse jaon ma sakit sija na way imo kuan way imo ka ambag ba biskan jaon iya papa kuan murag ikaw ra gani saimo kuan ba saimong huna-huna nga murag ikaw ra gani isa na nag kuan saiya biskan jaon sija, kalisud, jaon way imo masampit ba, ikaw ra gajud ("It's painful every time my child becomes sick and I could not contribute something despite the presence of the father of the child. It's just like I'm the only one fighting and working for the child despite my spouse's presence. It's really hard that you could not rely on anyone except only yourself alone.")*

Indeed, the responsibilities of parenting, particularly for adolescent mothers, constitute a formidable and often overwhelming task. The demands of nurturing and tending to a baby can be all-encompassing, requiring a tremendous amount of physical, emotional, and mental energy. The weight of this responsibility is further compounded by the fact that adolescent mothers are still in the process of their own personal development and growth. The inherent stress of child-rearing can feel particularly intense for them, as they grapple with the added challenges of their own youth and inexperience. Moreover, the sense of isolation that can accompany this journey can exacerbate the already considerable strain. Feeling alone in these trying moments can exacerbate the difficulties, intensifying the emotional toll of parenting. It underscores the profound importance of a robust support system, which can provide much-needed relief and encouragement during these challenging times. An informant shared that:



I₇ 10-13... *okay ra ako relationship sako family pero ang sa naka kabdos sako dili jadto... super stressing jadto... dili sija mubantay ako ra permi. ("My relationship with my family is just fine but my relationship with the family of my spouse is not. It's super stressful.")*

In the realm of child-rearing, emotional support takes on an even greater significance, particularly during the trying moments that inevitably arise. The weight of parenting responsibilities, especially for adolescent mothers, can lead to elevated levels of stress, resulting in heightened irritability, anxiety, and overwhelming fatigue, among other negative consequences. In these challenging junctures, a supportive partner becomes an invaluable lifeline. Their presence can serve as a beacon of comfort, alleviating feelings of helplessness that may otherwise engulf adolescent mothers. The assurance that they are not navigating this journey alone provides a sense of solidarity and empowerment, reinforcing their resilience in the face of adversity. This emotional bolstering ultimately lays a foundation of trust and mutual understanding, nurturing a more stable and harmonious environment for both young mothers and their precious children. According to the Best Starts for Kids Health Survey in 2021, parents who have enough emotional support show an increased sense of confidence to care for their children, decreased family isolation, increased recognition of the importance of self-care, and decreased self-blame when things don't go as expected. Support also reduces caregiver strain. Transitioning from the sub-theme of receiving inadequate support from one's spouse, we turn our attention to another critical aspect: the challenges of receiving inadequate support from family and friends.

Sub-Theme 2: Inadequate support from family and friends

When adolescent mothers confront the trials of parenthood following an early pregnancy, the crucial support they require is often found within their immediate circles, encompassing family and friends. The backing of these close relationships can play a pivotal role in helping young mothers navigate the complexities of raising a child while facing the unique challenges associated with adolescent parenthood. However, these young mothers are met with a mixture of judgment, misunderstanding, and even outright rejection from the ones they trust the most. Friends, who might still be navigating their own adolescent experiences, may struggle to comprehend the gravity of the situation, leading to a sense of isolation for the young mother. Family dynamics can be equally complex; some members may hold traditional expectations or harbor their own feelings of disappointment or shame. This lack of a reliable support network leaves adolescent mothers navigating the complexities of early motherhood without the crucial assistance and understanding they so desperately need. This dearth of support not only amplifies the inherent difficulties of parenting at a young age, but also underscores the pressing need for empathy, open-mindedness, and genuine care from those closest to them.

The family is a child's main source of support. It is crucial for it to benefit the child's physical, emotional, and mental health. Our family helps us get through most of our struggles and helps us find solutions to our problems. Adolescent mothers often rely on their families for financial support, because at a young age, they do not qualify for most standards in the workforce. As a result, they cannot financially support their baby on their own. However, some adolescent mothers in this study did not receive sufficient support from their families. According to the informants, it is hard to ask for monetary support for the child. Typically, they only make do with what they're given. An informant said that:

I₁ 20-23... *Tapos pag suportang nako sa mga panginahanglan sa ako anak kay kuan, kayod, pray kay God, kun unoy ija e hatag saako, dawaton, basta jaon kuan ra kun unoy kutob sa makaya nila amora. ("Then in terms of my support to the needs of my child, I work hard and pray to God that whatever He gives to me, I will accept... Whatever is there, I'll accept.")*

In addition, informants claimed that they had a difficult relationship with their family after the pregnancy announcement when an adolescent child becomes a young parent can be an emotionally fraught journey for some. The weight of guilt often bears down on these parents, as they grapple with a profound sense of responsibility, wondering if they could have done more to shield their child from this early entry into parenthood. The nagging 'what ifs' linger, casting shadows of doubt on their past decisions and actions. These parents may find themselves wading through a sea of complex emotions, from regret to self-blame, and even a tinge of helplessness. In such instances, it's not uncommon for these sentiments to permeate their interactions with their pregnant daughter, creating an atmosphere tinged with tension and unspoken remorse. The parents' own emotional turmoil becomes a palpable undercurrent, leaving them struggling to strike a balance between offering support and managing their own internal struggles. The range of emotions felt by the parents is often projected onto the pregnant daughter. Fortunately, after some time the families of the informants have grown to accept it. This was specifically cited by:



I₉ 17-20... *Amo dayun adto nga pagkagabie tag laong dayun nako kan mama. Nag hilak si mama hahaha di niya ma dawat naburosan ko. Pero kuman okay naman kami. ("When I learned that I was pregnant, I shared to my mother right away in the evening of the day I learned that I was pregnant. My mother cried because she could not accept that I was pregnant. But now, we're okay.")*

Tensions often escalate within households where adolescent daughters have become mothers, as the added responsibilities of caring for a growing child bring forth a host of new challenges. The demands of providing essentials like milk, diapers, and clothing can swiftly accumulate, exerting a considerable financial strain on the already struggling parents. This financial burden, in turn, can serve as fertile ground for disagreements and misunderstandings, as the parents grapple with finding viable solutions amidst their limited resources. These conflicts, though stemming from genuine concerns about the well-being of the young mother and her child, can inadvertently lead to a surge of negative emotions, particularly for the adolescent mother who may feel caught in the crossfire. It becomes crucial, therefore, to foster open lines of communication and mutual understanding within the family unit, acknowledging the collective effort required to navigate these trying circumstances. One informant shared that:

I₁₀ 69-73... *Jaoy time na nahutdan sija gatas na mag problema ako tapos sige ako jawjawan nila mama ug papa kay dili magpadaya ang papa sa bata tapos... sige ako jawjawan nila mama inana "magsalig rakaw sa amo" tapos ihilak rakan nako sa tago ako kasakit ("There were times that we have emptied the milk can and I got so problematic about it since I got scolded every time by my Mother and Father especially that they knew that the father of my child does not send for child support. Then, I got scolded always by my parents emphasizing how I am very reliant to them always. I just cry it out and hide out of pain.")*

The lack of support from one's spouse not only impacts practical aspects but also takes a toll on emotional and mental well-being. From the last sub-theme, we must now turn our focus to the emotional and mental distress felt by adolescent mothers.

THEME 3: EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL DISTRESS

Reflecting on the two previously discussed themes, it becomes evident that adolescent pregnancy is a complex issue filled with complications that impact the pregnant adolescent across various dimensions. These challenges extend beyond the physical implications and delve into the complex interaction of social, financial, and emotional aspects. It is essential to recognize that adolescent pregnancy and its intricate relationship with mental health bring forth a wide range of emotions and psychological stressors. Emotionally, adolescent mothers frequently grapple with feelings of fear and worry, as they confront the overwhelming responsibility of motherhood at such a young age. This anxiety is often compounded by guilt and shame, stemming from societal stigmas attached to teenage pregnancies. Additionally, a prevailing sense of depression can loom over them, resulting from the overwhelming changes in their lives.

Moreover, pregnant adolescents often find their relationships disrupted. These disruptions are not limited to their romantic relationships but also extend to family and peer dynamics. The fear of judgment from family, friends, and the community at large can be paralyzing, causing them to withdraw and become increasingly isolated. Uncertainty about their future further exacerbates their emotional turmoil, as they struggle with the challenges of completing their education and securing employment while caring for a child. Based on the statements gathered from the informants during our research, it's evident that some adolescent mothers have experienced anxiety as a prominent feature of their emotional struggles. The constant worry about the future, their child's well-being, and their ability to provide creates a continuous state of unease. The weight of judgment, whether real or perceived, compounds this anxiety.

To comprehensively examine and understand the depth of the emotional challenges faced by pregnant adolescents, subthemes have been identified. These subthemes provide a more detailed breakdown of this complex and emotionally charged theme, allowing for a more complex exploration of the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in their journey to motherhood.

Sub-Theme 1: Fear and worry

The emotional landscape of adolescent mothers is often characterized by a pervasive sense of fear and worry. The prospect of raising a child at such a young age is undeniably daunting, with a myriad of responsibilities and uncertainties looming on the horizon. The weight of this newfound responsibility can be overwhelming, as they grapple with the enormity of caring for a child while still in the midst of their own formative years. What compounds these feelings is the pervasive fear of societal judgment.



Society's expectations and norms can cast a long shadow, compelling these young mothers to conceal their pregnancies out of apprehension for how they were perceived. The fear of being stigmatized or facing harsh judgment can lead to a profound sense of isolation, further complicating an already complex situation.

In addition to the fear of societal judgment, adolescent mothers also bear the weight of worrying about the reactions of their immediate social circles. The anticipation of their family's response, which is meant to be a source of support, can be fraught with uncertainty. They may grapple with how their parents and extended family members will react to the news of their impending motherhood. Similarly, there is an underlying anxiety about how friends, who are likely navigating their own adolescent experiences, will perceive this significant life change. Even the reactions of neighbors and acquaintances can become a source of concern, further contributing to the young mother's apprehension. This pervasive worry, stemming from a genuine desire for acceptance and support, adds another layer of complexity to the already demanding journey of adolescent motherhood. This was specifically cited by:

I₉ 13-17... *Pag laong nako sa ako mama, pagka ano...3 months/2 months ako tijan. Nangurog ko basta kuyba ko kayo te mura wala pakoy kuan mura lutang pa gayud kayo as in lutang. Waya ko...waya gayud ganahi musturya adto.* ("When I told my mother about my pregnancy around 2 or 3 months of my pregnancy, I was shaking and truly nervous because I could not understand and I did not know what to do. I felt that I was floating and not so mindful.")

One informant claimed to consider aborting the fetus to hide the pregnancy from her parents. Confronted with the complexities of early pregnancies, many young women find themselves grappling with the limited options available for addressing unwanted or unviable pregnancies. In the Philippines, where abortion remains illegal without exception, these women are forced to navigate a perilous path. The legal implications hang heavily over them, as they become vulnerable to potential court proceedings and the associated justice system. Yet, driven by desperation and a fervent desire to regain control over their lives, these pregnant women are often willing to endure the harrowing risks associated with clandestine abortion procedures. The dangers are manifold, ranging from severe complications like heavy bleeding, infection, and uterine scarring to even more dire consequences like uterine perforation, damage to internal organs, and, tragically, the risk of death. Despite these alarming risks, fear and a yearning for autonomy push adolescent mothers to seek out these procedures, highlighting the urgent need for accessible, safe, and legal reproductive healthcare options in such circumstances. According to an informant:

I₉ 7-8... *nangulba ko ug nagkurog na wa nako kasabot na ilaglag ba? or uno ba ipadayun ba?* ("I was nervous and shaking that I do not understand what to do whether to abort or continue my pregnancy.")

For first-time mothers, the transition into motherhood is often accompanied by a profound sense of uncertainty and anxiety. They grapple with a myriad of worries, foremost among them being whether they will prove to be capable and nurturing mothers. The dearth of prior experience leaves them feeling ill-equipped and apprehensive about their ability to meet their child's needs effectively. This lack of familiarity with the demands of parenting heightens their anxiety, leading to a heightened level of vigilance and concern for their child's well-being. They are plagued by a persistent fear that they may inadvertently fall short in providing the appropriate care and support that their child requires. This fear is rooted in a genuine desire to offer the best possible start in life for their little one, highlighting the depth of their commitment to their child's welfare and development. An informant shared:

I₁ 16-19... *kun masakit sija, labi na jaon kun mag kuan sija jaon mag pastidjo kun unoy kuan, di nimo masabtan kun unsay ija problema kay di man maka sulti gajud nan kuan gud, di sija maka sulti kay baby paman gud sija.* ("Every time my child gets sick, it's difficult for me since I do not understand the needs and ailments of my child at first. My baby could not express or speak since he's just a baby.")

Moreover, an informant also expressed concerns about carrying their newborn in fear of mishandling them or accidentally dropping the child. The profound responsibility of caring for a newborn can be particularly daunting for adolescent mothers. Many grapple with a deep-seated fear of mishandling or accidentally harming their fragile infants. This anxiety stems from a combination of factors, including their limited experience and the overwhelming sense of protectiveness they feel towards their child. The sheer newness of motherhood compounds these concerns, leaving them acutely aware of the potential risks that come with handling a delicate, vulnerable newborn. The fear of accidentally dropping their child or not providing the right support amplifies their trepidation, and it's not uncommon for adolescent mothers to express these anxieties as they navigate the intricate task of caring for their infants.



These concerns highlight the adolescent mothers' keen awareness of the fragility of their newborns and their strong desire to offer them the utmost protection and care. They often seek guidance and reassurance from trusted sources, like healthcare professionals or experienced family members, in order to gain the confidence and skills necessary for safe and effective infant care. It's important to recognize and address these fears, offering support and practical advice to help adolescent mothers build their confidence in handling their newborns. Through gentle encouragement and access to resources, they can gradually develop the essential parenting skills needed to provide a nurturing and secure environment for their infants. As specifically cited by:

I₉36-39... *Tung una te kay waya pa ako ganahi mu gunot. Mahadlok ko basi mabali char hahaha unya kuan pa baja sija na mga bukog. Adisir nako sija tag arsa 2...2 months anay. ("At first, I did not like holding my baby yet because I was afraid that I'll hurt her since I'm not yet knowledgeable or skillful in handling a fragile infant. It was only after 2 months that I started carrying my child already.")*

The fear and worry that loom over adolescent mothers is often intertwined with a profound sense of guilt and shame. Transitioning to this closely related aspect, let's explore the complex emotions that accompany their experience.

Sub-theme 2: Guilt and Shame

Adolescent mothers often grapple with heavy feelings of guilt and shame. These emotions stem from a complex mix of personal values, societal norms, and the expectations tied to teenage pregnancies. Young mothers may feel they've fallen short of their own aspirations and societal standards, leading to self-disappointment. Additionally, they fear judgment and criticism from society, family, and friends, which further magnifies their sense of guilt and shame. Shedding light on the challenges they face in their transition to motherhood, these emotional intricacies were explicitly cited by:

I₂11-14... *Tapos kuan, ma stress kaw permi. Labon na nag skwela ako, an ako ra tag kuanan kay jaon mga tao gani man bully, jaon libakon kaw ingana. ("...then, you get to feel stressed out always. While I'm schooling still, I was cautious how the people in the school bullies me and talk bad behind my back.")*

Social pressure, family pressure, and individual beliefs are just a few of the many things that cause emotions. Adolescents feel guilty for disappointing their parents or other adults in authority or for failing to live up to cultural standards of what it means to be a "great" adolescent. They also experience shame over having extramarital affairs or failing to support their offspring. Adolescents also experience guilt or shame because they believe that they are weighing down their family or romantic partners with responsibility for taking care of a child. Hence, it's essential for adults to provide assistance and support to adolescents who are going through these emotions since they can have a big influence on their emotional and physical well-being.

The weight of guilt and shame can lead to deeper emotional struggles, and for many adolescent mothers, this can manifest in forms of depression. Let's delve into the profound impact of depression on their well-being.

Sub-theme 3: Depression

Another common emotion experienced by adolescents who become mothers early is depression. The burden of despair and hopelessness intensifies during this challenging period, primarily due to hormonal changes related to pregnancy and the increasing physical responsibilities. These biological factors, combined with emotional and psychological stress, make adolescent mothers more susceptible to depression. Feelings of inadequacy associated with teenage pregnancies and external criticisms add to a deep sense of isolation. This loneliness, coupled with the demands of motherhood, worsens depression symptoms, creating a complex emotional landscape for young mothers. These observations are made transparent in the informants' sharing, including

I₄23-29... *mi abot sab ako sa point ng depression, ni abot sab ako jaon sa point na mag suicide iban sija kay jaon lang on nato na gusto sija mawaya sija jaon ipa punit, so sako sad huna-huna maluoy man ako, so maka kuan gajud ako jaon parihas jaon lang on kaw nija na e kuan jaon imo kuan bata jaon punita jaon, mo laung ija papa na puniton jaon. ("I reached a point where I felt depressed. I also arrived at a point where I wanted to commit suicide including with me my baby to death just as how I wished my baby was aborted. But in my mind, it was pitiful and painful. My spouse also even arrived to that similar certain point of thinking even suggesting to me to abort my child.")*

I₆1-5... *Kuan nag agi gajud ako ng kalisud... kuan man gud jado secret life man sako sarili ra gajud ba... may problema ako akuhon ko ra... nuabot na sa punto na nakahilak na ako waya ako nag expect na makuan ako adto ma*



buntis gani. ("I journeyed a difficult life. It was a secret life since I'm used to keeping to myself all my pains and struggles. I cried hard when I learned that I was pregnant. I did not expect it.")

Adolescence is a time of rapid metabolic, hormonal, physiologic, and developmental changes, and when the physiologic and psychological changes that occur during pregnancy are superimposed upon normal developmental changes, a complex medical picture may emerge which can include depressive symptomatology. Treating depression in pregnant adolescents is complex due to the concerns about the use of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) in any pregnant woman, the fact that only one SSRI (fluoxetine) is FDA-approved for depression in the pediatric population, the concern over the black box warning for antidepressants in the pediatric population, and the reality that untreated depression in pregnancy has been shown to be associated with poor outcomes for both mother and baby (McClanahan, K., 2009). Therefore, it's essential for adolescents who are pregnant to get assistance from family members and healthcare providers with managing their psychological well-being during this challenging time and strengthening both their general well-being and the wellness of the child they are carrying.

The burden of depression often extends beyond internal struggles affecting the adolescent mother's relationships with family and friends, which is tackled in the next sub-theme.

Sub-theme 4: Disruption in relationships with family and loved partner

Adolescent pregnancy noticeably impacts personal relationships, causing disruptions with loved ones and romantic partners. The strain on the relationship with the partner is a common theme, often leading to tension and conflicts. Anticipating parenthood can result in misunderstandings and disagreements, affecting family dynamics as well. These disruptions, as noted by our research informants, highlight the intricate challenges faced by adolescent mothers in their relationships. This was specifically cited by:

I41-7... Waya raba jaon nag dako saako, saila jaon mama nag dako kay jaon ako saako partner. Kuan man kami, jaon complicated kami, sa side sako mama kay di man sija dawag. Since kuan weeks pa sija jaon na sija sa pudher sako ginikanan tag kuha sija saamo dili sija e hatag, amo ton na nawaya sija saako breastfeed, kuan rakan sija jaon gi bibiron nila mama. ("My child did not grow by my side. It grew with my parents since I was living with my partner. We had a complicated family relationship since my spouse was not accepted by my mother and her side. My child, during her weeks old, already stayed with my parents since they have just taken my baby from us and did not want to give the baby to us so my baby did not experience breastfeed from me. My baby was fed through a milk bottle only.")

Also, significant partners have anxiety or uncertainty about how to help the adolescent who is pregnant, which can strain or separate the relationship. Relationships can become even more strained as a result of the obligations of parenting, which can be difficult for both the adolescent and their loved ones. The informants expressed that:

I428-34... mo laung ija papa na puniton jaon. Jaoy say time na ija sabdon ako tiyan di syempre ikaw mahinakit man kaw, e fight rakan nimo na bahala kun magka uno-uno basta e buhi nimo sija kay dako sad jaon na saya sa Ginoo. Amo jaon, kuman kay buyag na kami saiija tinuod na papa, lahi na kibali ako ka tibo kuman. ("My boyfriend said to abort my pregnancy. There were times also that he intentionally hits my stomach that I felt bad and so I fought for my child. I tried fighting for my child and said that whatever happens, the most important thing is that my child is alive and okay. I did not want to commit a sin to God. Now, me and the father of my baby got separated and I'm just living with another partner who accepts me and my baby.")

I710-12... okay ra ako relationship sako family pero ang sa naka kabdos sako dili jadt... super stressing jadt. ("I'm okay with my relationship wuth my family but not with the family of the guy who impregnated me. It was supper stressful.")

I921-25... Stress jud ko sa ako bana naa siyay lain, daghay mag send sa ako. Amo nasakit ko..masakiton...grabe sige ra jud ko hilak pero waya man nuon sija na waya ako na kuanan... sige ra jud ko hilak. ("I was stressed about my spouse because he has another partner. There were many witnesses who sent to me evidences of him having an affair with other women. That's why I was so hurt. I cried a lot.")

In conclusion, adolescent mothers face a multitude of formidable challenges, encompassing both physical and emotional dimensions. The physical strain of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum recovery can be particularly taxing, often exacerbated by a lack of adequate support from spouses, family members, and friends. Simultaneously, the emotional and mental toll is substantial, with feelings of fear, worry, guilt, shame, and even depression frequently taking center stage. These struggles can have a profound impact on the relationships between couples, leading to disruptions and strains. It is crucial for society to recognize and address these challenges, providing comprehensive support systems to ensure the well-being and success of adolescent mothers and their children. By doing so, we can empower them to navigate these complex circumstances and forge a brighter, more stable future for themselves and their families.

EIDETIC FRAMEWORK

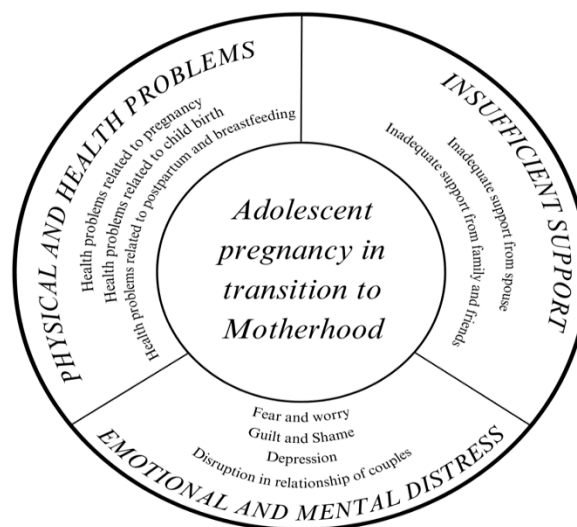


Figure 1. Eidetic Framework of the Lived Experiences of Adolescent Mothers in their Transition to Motherhood in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City

The figure shows the interconnectedness of the adolescent mothers' lived experiences which was developed after we analyzed the 3 main themes of the study namely: Physical and Health problems, Insufficient support, and Emotional and mental distress. The theme of Physical and Health Problems signifies the significant impact that health-related challenges can exert on adolescent mothers. The delineation of this theme into distinct categories—Health problems related to pregnancy, Health problems related to childbirth, and Health problems related to postpartum and breastfeeding—underscores the diverse range of physical difficulties that adolescent mothers may encounter. Extending from this, the theme of Insufficient Support, representing the critical role that social and familial support networks play in shaping the experiences of adolescent mothers. It encompasses two key sub-themes: inadequate support from spouses and inadequate support from family and friends. These connections emphasize the vital importance of external support systems in mitigating the challenges experienced by adolescent mothers, and how deficiencies in this support can exacerbate the difficulties faced by them. Finally, the theme of Emotional and Mental Distress extends further, capturing the array of psychological and emotional experiences that adolescent mothers grapple with. Fear and worry, guilt and shame, depression, and disruptions in couples' relationships are all interlinked within this theme. This intricate network of emotions illustrates that the mental well-being of adolescent mothers is inextricably linked with their physical health and the support systems they have access to.

GENERALIZATION AND IMPLICATIONS

The adolescent mothers' experiences in their transition to motherhood are indeed challenging. It is well known that becoming a mother comes with several obstacles and on top of that there are also additional challenges when you become one at an



early age. Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. It is a unique stage of human development and an important time for laying the foundations of good health. Adolescents experience rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth. This affects how they feel, think, make decisions, and interact with the world around them. The additional duty prevents them from enjoying the experiences appropriate for their age. Now they face these challenges with their developing mind and bodies which makes the transition even more difficult.

No matter their circumstance, mothers will do everything they can for the well-being of their children. Most of the informants shared that the experience they've found meaningful was having their child. It gave them a sense of purpose in the world. Seeing their baby laugh and smile, made the challenges easier to face and made their hardships worthwhile. However, this cannot guarantee that the mother can sustain her own and the child's welfare. According to the verbalization of the informants, the challenges they faced were physical problems, insufficient support, and mental and emotional distress. Health problems related to pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum were common among the informants. Most informants also shared the inadequacy of the support given by the father of their child. Lastly, given by their current situation they are subject to judgment by their neighbors and peers causing a rift in their psychological health.

Therefore, based on these and the findings, it is safe to conclude that the adolescent mothers of Brgy. Rizal experiences different challenges in their transition to motherhood. Through interviews, the researchers have assessed their problems related to their physical and mental health as well as the support they get from their family and spouse. The findings will then be submitted to the Brgy. Rizal Health Center and will be used as a foundation for possible maternal health programs that can be implemented in the area addressing the common issues between the informants. This research used Giorgi's Phenomenology in interpreting the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in their transition to motherhood in Brgy. Rizal Surigao City.

In the end, this qualitative inquiry may draw attention to several areas of importance that may have implications on how the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in their transition to motherhood are perceived:

Positive Programs and Approaches

This study serves as a very useful and trustworthy input for the creation and execution of specific programs and treatments that address specific challenges faced by adolescent mothers as they transition to motherhood. These programs might emphasize on offering comprehensive assistance, such as educational, social, emotional, and healthcare resources, to aid adolescent mothers in successfully navigating the challenges of motherhood. Furthermore, the insights gained from this research can be particularly valuable for developing maternal health programs, including counseling initiatives for both students and parents. The findings can inform strategies to provide effective support, guidance, and information, contributing to the overall well-being of adolescent mothers and their families.

Advocacy and Policy

The study's implications may include suggestions for public policy and advocacy campaigns. The findings might promote changes in legislation that would expand access to reproductive healthcare services, comprehensive sex education programs, and social security systems for adolescent mothers. Advocacy organizations could strive to mitigate stigma and discrimination, to guarantee that adolescent mothers have the same opportunity to succeed and achieve their potential.

Utilization of Research Findings and Implications to Possible Future Research

The findings of this research will be especially valuable for future researchers looking to explore adolescent motherhood with a focus on specific criteria, such as those living with their partners. It sheds insight into the particular challenges, difficulties, and necessities faced by this group of individuals. By performing additional study, diving deeper into particular areas, and improving on existing concepts and frameworks, future researchers may expand regarding this knowledge. Additionally, the research's implications may encourage future researchers to concentrate on creating and assessing programs and interventions that aid adolescent mothers as they transition into motherhood. Researchers can create evidence-based treatments that meet the particular needs and barriers found in the study by expanding on the findings. Future researchers may be able to build on this foundation and make contributions to the field, which will ultimately improve the knowledge and assistance provided to adolescent mothers.

Reflection

The journey into motherhood is a transformative experience for any woman, but we, the researchers realized that for adolescent mothers, it brings a unique set of challenges and complexities. The findings of this research shed light on broader social



problems surrounding young motherhood by exploring the lived experiences of adolescent mothers as they transition to motherhood. Studying the lived experiences of adolescent mothers in Barangay Rizal, Surigao City has deepened our empathy and understanding of their circumstances. These adolescent mothers' experiences are expressed in their narratives, which show the range of emotions they experience, including fear, uncertainty, and the simultaneous happiness of motherhood. As they adapt to their new responsibilities while continuing to struggle with their own identity formation as adolescents, their journeys frequently contain deep personal development. Also, one striking aspect that emerged from this research is the pervasive social stigma surrounding adolescent motherhood. Many adolescent mothers experience judgment, stigma, and isolation from their peers as well as from society as a whole. Nevertheless, we were motivated by their resilience and the support networks of friends, family, and support groups. These networks provide essential sustenance, providing emotional support, practical assistance, and a secure environment for sharing views and insights.

Furthermore, adolescent mothers' emotional health deserves support and care. The research showed how these adolescent mothers were more likely to have mental health issues such as postpartum depression and anxiety. The integration of mental health services into maternity and child health programs is essential for prevention, intervention, and ongoing support to improve the general well-being of adolescent mothers and their children. Therefore, it is important for legislators to understand the unique challenges that these adolescent mothers experience and to create comprehensive policies that provide access to reproductive healthcare, thorough sex education, and social safety nets. Advocacy campaigns may help in reducing stigma, raising awareness, and empowering adolescent mothers to take part in decision-making that influences their lives.

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