



## Prevailing Gender Norms on the Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy Cases

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### ABSTRACT

This research discovered the prevailing gender norms of teenage mothers and the impact of these norms on the high incidence of teenage pregnancy. This also looked into the development of guidance service intervention to address the teenage pregnancy phenomenon. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Bowen's Family Systems Theory were used to explain how cultural influences affect the views of adolescent girls about gender and pregnancy in adolescence as a dysfunction. Making use of a questionnaire and an interview guide, the study presented rich descriptions of the gender norms. Based on the findings, the majority of the teenage girls belong to the 16-19 age brackets who are out-of-school, with mothers staying at home without any source of livelihood, which makes them part of families with a minimum level of income. The participants' prevailing gender norms still adhere to the conservative view of being a woman where familial roles are focused on and gender power relations are deemed unequal. These experiences may have had a significant impact on why they became young mothers at an early age. Acceptance of these customary standards in their community is their unconscious way of coping, hence making them more susceptible to being victims of the teenage pregnancy phenomenon.

**Keywords:** teenage pregnancy, gender norms, gender roles, power relations



## INTRODUCTION

Adolescent pregnancy is one of the most prevalent dilemmas in societies around the globe. This is because of the early age at which adolescents engage in sexual activity, resulting in unplanned pregnancy. According to the National Demographic and Health Survey (2017) from the Department of Health (DOH), the incidence of teenage or adolescent pregnancies remains at a considerable rate. Overall, some nine percent of women from the age of 15 to 19 have already started childbearing (WHO, 2014). It has been viewed as a detriment to individuals' status in the community, their potential contribution to society, and family orientation.

As per the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) Executive Director's statement, teenage pregnancy is a development issue that is deeply rooted in poverty, power imbalances between adolescent girls and their male partners, lack of education, gender inequality, and the failure of systems and institutions to protect their rights. Watson (2014) pointed out that poverty limits access to education and to new ideas. Children from poor households typically spend less time in school than their better-off peers and often only have access to poor-quality schooling. Parents' decision-making about school investment is also gendered. Research in Uganda and Nepal found that parents were more likely to pay for private education, which was perceived as better quality, for boys than for girls. Since they are less likely to be literate and able to read posters or newspaper articles calling for changes in gender norms and particular practices, parents and kids in poor families are also less likely to have been exposed to ideas of gender equality through education. Hence, conventional ideas suggest that putting girls under the power of any male figure in their lives makes them vulnerable to teenage pregnancy. These norms may play a large role in determining teenagers' engagement to sexual activity.

In the Philippines, teenage pregnancy cases rose by 70 percent in the past 10 years. This was revealed by the National Youth Commission (NYC)

and based on the study conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the country was ranked first in terms of teenage pregnancy in Southeast Asia. The national scope of the problem is alarming. Several factors contributing to the continuously increasing teenage pregnancy rates are evidently observed, and some are unconsciously imprinted through the socialization process. With the strong influence of culture on the beliefs of people, these factors will take time to change.

Gender norms in the Philippines are found in many different places; for instance, school systems, dating, marriage, and especially families. Various factors define men and women differently in terms of their gender roles. When Filipinos are born, they are automatically expected to assume a specific role. Sex at birth defines what roles they have to play in society. Gender differences play a key part in what they are supposed to do as an individual of that sex and what they are not supposed to do. Each gender has a set of norms to follow.

As observed in schools and communities, the number of teenagers who have begun childbearing and have given birth to their first child is booming. The alarming state of today's youth necessitates a thorough investigation of the doubling of teen pregnancy rates.

The Bicol Region's Regional Development Plan 2017-2022 outlined a guide in formulating policies and implementing development programs and projects for the next six years (NEDA, 2017). Included in its chapters is the target to reduce the total fertility rate and the number of live births of young mothers aged 15–19 years old. To address the rising incidence of teenage pregnancy, strategies to increase the age at first birth or maternal age should be anchored on the promotion of age-appropriate and comprehensive sexuality education among adolescents. These strategies include the integration of reproductive health education into curricular and extra-curricular modalities in schools, communities, and workplaces. To reach out to different groups of young people, responsi-



ble sexuality education should be spread through social media and other online networks. Local governments are engaging in various strategies to address reproductive health issues. The Department of Education, with secondary schools in the different provinces in the region, integrates human sexuality education and reproductive health into the curriculum as one of the measures to disseminate knowledge and awareness to the students. However, for some reasons, change is still indifferent.

The Provincial Health Office (PHO) of Sorsogon confirmed that there is an increase in teenage pregnancy in the province through the monitoring of health personnel of various Rural Health Units (RHU). Social media, peer pressure, the environment, and family are some of the reasons for the stated increase. Despite the actions taken by a number of provincial government organizations, this worrying problem is still unresolved.

Social and cultural influences should never be left unseen as one of the influences of teen pregnancy growth, specifically gender and perspective of the adolescent girls towards men's and women's roles. There is a great possibility that these constructs about how men and women should behave could be one of the factors that mark the biggest influence that led adolescents to engaging in early sex hence, resulting to early pregnancy.

Almost all cultures tend to see gender as a natural phenomenon, stemming from the biological differences between men and women. How gender is shaped depends on a variety of factors. It is molded by culture, social relations, and the natural environment. Definitions of masculine and feminine often vary from one race and culture to another. Men and women have thus evolved different gender norms in various parts of the world depending on values, norms, customs, and laws.

Looking into the context of gender, this study examined the prevailing gender norms and their effect on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy cases in the identified barangays of one municipality in Sorsogon province. Specifically, this focused on the profile of the participants; their gender norms in terms of gender roles, power relations, marriage, and education; the perceived impacts of these gender norms

on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy; and the interventions to be done to address the prevalence of teenage pregnancy cases.

## METHODOLOGY

This study made use of qualitative descriptive research. A qualitative inquiry was used in order to understand the pregnant teens' words and behavior, particularly their experiences of coping with the impact of gender norms. Adolescent girls' gender norms were initially determined using a questionnaire and survey containing open-ended questions. The data collected were subsequently verified through participant interviews, making use of purposive sampling for interview selection. This design's ability to present a thorough understanding of the phenomenon is one of its defining characteristics. Sampa (2012) pointed out that a qualitative case study can be used to analyze a phenomenon, settings, programs, social groups, communities, and individuals.

Purposive sampling method was used, which determined a total of twelve (12) adolescent girls who were or had been pregnant during their teens, ages thirteen (13) to nineteen (19) in the identified barangays of one of the municipalities of Sorsogon province, with the highest recorded incidence of teen pregnancy. The participants' participation in the interview process was on a voluntary basis.

The researcher employed research instruments that warrant the extraction of information within the parameters of the study. A set of questionnaires was designed to elicit the prevailing gender norms of adolescent girls, particularly on gender roles, power relations, marriage, and education, and the impact of these gender norms on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy. An unstructured interview guide was utilized to validate the prior questionnaire responses and generate the coping mechanisms of pregnant teens to the impact of gender norms. The validation process was designed to ensure the reliability and delivery of the instruments' contents. Ensuring the protection of the collected personal information of the participants, the data privacy notice and consent were integrated in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 or RA 10173.

The questionnaire consists of the profile of the participants in terms of age, educational attainment, occupation of parents, and monthly family income. The questionnaire aims mainly to elicit the prevailing gender norms experienced by adolescent girls. The interview guide is composed of questions that aim to deeply grasp the key topics of the study. Its framework is based on the objectives of the study, focusing on the perceived impacts of these norms on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy, and coping strategies with the impact of gender norms.

Data collection was executed through questionnaire administration and participant interviews. The questionnaire was administered in the locale of the study where there was the highest recorded rate of teenage pregnancy, as per data collected from the Provincial Health Office. Follow-up interviews were conducted for data validation and more rounded responses. The developed and validated interview guide was focused on the perceived impacts of gender norms on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy cases and adolescent girls' coping strategies. The interview was conducted with the willing participants selected purposively, using open-ended questions to exhaust thorough responses throughout the interview process.

Age	freq.	%
13 – 15 years old	2	16.66%
16 – 19 years old	10	83.33%

Table 1.1: Age

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The key findings were obtained from the interviews of twelve (12) teenage mothers, whose ages ranged from 13 to 19, all of whom had been pregnant for the past year. Participants were from one identified municipality in Sorsogon that had the greatest number of recorded teenage pregnancy cases.

## Profile of the Participants

Teenage pregnancy is increasing at a considerable rate. The interplay between socio-economic phenomena and the height of teenage pregnancy plays an important role in understanding its causes. These girls were confronted with several challenges linked to their profile.

Table 1.1 reveals that the majority of the participants belong to the late adolescence stage of development. All of the participants are at this stage of vulnerability. The adolescence stage, with rapidly developing physical and cognitive capacities, becomes one of the most important stages of development. They are especially concerned about something that interests them, namely sex, because of their developing capacity for hypothetical thought. They are especially vulnerable to the influencing factors around them. Being a teenager is a time for the exploration of the curious mind. They are inquisitive about sex. Thus, they will feed their curiosity and experiment. One participant shared, "*Nakahimo ako mali sa pamilya ko. Aram ko na bataunon pa ako pero diri ko aram. Nian pinagsisihan ko na.*" (I did something not good to my family. I know that I'm still a kid. Now I regret what happened.)

Salvador, Sauce, Alvarez & Rosario (2016) stated in their study that teenagers feel disturbed, especially with what they see and hear in the surroundings in which they are growing. Many are distracted by their uniqueness, potential, and direction. As supported by the theory of Erickson's psychological stage, the fifth stage is where the identity of a person's life is established. At this stage, the process of exploration and the eagerness to know a lot of things are distinguished (Bishop, 2013). In addition, teenagers are easily influenced by people and situations around them as they are still in the process of developing their ability to process and interpret vague and abstract concepts, making them vulnerable to experimenting on things they don't understand, i.e., sex, with the influence of their peers and/or partners.

Table 1.2. indicates that teenage girls who have dropped out of school are less likely to continue their further education. This implies that these teenage mothers' lack of access to education or low ed-



Educational Attainment	freq.	%
Grade 7	2	16.66%
Grade 8	1	8.33%
Grade 9	1	8.33%
Grade 10	3	25%
Grade 12	2	16.66%
Grade 12 (Graduate)	1	8.33%
First Year College	2	16.66%

**Table 1.2:** Educational Attainment

educational attainment plays an important role in causing teenage pregnancy.

As supported by the study of Domenico and Jones (2007), plagued by poor school performance and low self-esteem, they have no realistic expectations about education or occupations; thus, pregnancy is viewed as an alternative path to economic independence and adult status. Usually, adolescents who become teen mothers are already experiencing academic difficulties in school, have low educational expectations, are not confident they will graduate from high school, or are attempting to escape abusive homes. Pursuing higher education or a career is not reasonably within their reach, and they may experience feelings of hopelessness or helplessness regarding their future.

Table 1.3. implies that the majority of their parents have low occupational status or unemployment. This therefore has a direct effect on teenage girls' well-being. This may also mean that, in most cases, they lack a female role model in the family in terms of being independent. This is supported by Van der Hor (2014), who discovered that a lack of positive female role models in the home is one of the factors contributing to teenage pregnancies. Pregnant teenagers are disproportionately made up of young people from low socioeconomic status. Experts argue, however, that the alarming state of the country's econo-

Mother's Occupation	freq.	%
Helper	3	25%
Fish Vendor	1	8.33%
Barangay Nutritionist	1	8.33%
Barangay Health Worker	1	8.33%
None	6	50%
Father's Occupation		
Construction Worker	1	8.33%
Fisherman	4	33.33%
Fish Vendor	1	8.33%
Terminal Staff	1	8.33%
Municipal Staff	1	8.33%
Laborer	1	8.33%
None	3	25%

**Table 1.3:** Occupation of Parents

my should be seen more as a symptom than a cause of teenage pregnancy.

The adolescents' having parents who rely on their husbands may pose a view about dependency on the male figure/husband. Further, parents who do not have a stable job will result in the low economic status of the family and will eventually play an important role in causing teenage pregnancy.

Table 1.4. indicates that the majority of the participants' families are living in dire economic conditions. Teenage pregnancy has a strong association with poverty and is common in low-income families. Verified by Akella and Jordan (2014), the study stated that children coming from an environment of poverty may be affected by a multitude of social factors. One of the social factors includes teen pregnancy. The likelihood of the family's teen pregnancy cycle continuing is also a possibility. Domenico and Jones (2007) pointed out that many poverty-stricken adolescents accepted their pregnancy and viewed it as a means of improving their lives. Teenage pregnancies were more likely to occur in adolescents who were exposed to disadvantageous circumstances, such as living in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods or in troubled or single-parent families.



### Prevailing Gender Norms of Adolescent Girls

Norms are attributed to strongly held beliefs about the characteristics ascribed to certain groups of people, in this case, gender. People are deeply immersed in the gender ideologies of their community and the construction of how men and women should think and behave by the time they start to learn how to socialize. These ideologies and norms are often culturally bound and, thus, can hardly be detached from reality. They seem to be unchangeable,

Monthly Family Income (Php)	freq.	%
1,000 – 5,000	11	91.66%
6,000 – 10,000	1	8.33%

Table 1.4: Monthly Family Income

but progressively through time, deviations occur. This presents what gender norms prevail in 21st century adolescent girls.

Table 2.1 depicts what gender norms prevail in terms of gender roles. The role that girls are expected to do the household chores and are always encouraged to learn how to cook has the highest mean value of 4.42. The task given to girls to teach their siblings how to read and write has a weighted mean of 4.25, followed by their task to take charge of their siblings, which has a weighted mean of 4.17. Talking about the roles pertaining to being in a relationship, the role that girls are expected to take extra care of their partners has a weighted mean of 4.08. When the honor of the family is concerned, girls are constantly under pressure to think about the family name. Thus, girls have to appear and behave according to what is accepted and expected of them, especially in public. This norm has a weighted mean of 3.92. One participant shared, “*Ang asawa ko po nagtatrabaho sa construction. Ako bilin dini sa balay nag-aalaga san bata namo.*” (My husband is a construction worker. I stay here at home to take care of our child).

The roles agreed upon by the participants are those that still show the conventional roles linked to being a woman. However, some roles that are usually viewed as part of conventional beliefs that girls should do the laundry, girls should stay at home, and

girls/women being viewed as child-bearers only have mean ratings of 3.83, 3.50, and 3.08 respectively. This means that teen girls are little by little becoming open to the possibilities of change from limiting roles.

Marcus and Harper (2014) found that women were expected to uphold family honor, serve their families, and show respect for their husbands and in-laws. These were values associated with femininity. These values translate into commonly accepted roles and standards of behavior. The idea of what the perfect girl should be restricts girls' freedom outside the home, which can result in them defying some social norms and ultimately contributing to early pregnancy.

Table 2.2 shows the distribution of power between men and women. The usual belief that the mother always serves the needs of the husband, may it be by serving him food, preparing his clothes before going to work, etc., has the highest mean value of 4.00. With a 3.75 out of 5 point consensus, the participants agreed that girls are constantly under pressure to engage in sexual activity and that they constantly feel obligated to satisfy the needs and desires of the boys. One of the participants shared, “*Siya ang nag-agda. Nahadok ako kay basi mabados ako pero sabi niya diri man daw.*” (He asked me to have sex with him. I was scared that I might get pregnant, but he said that I wouldn't.) This demonstrates the lack of power or control young women have in making the decision to engage in sexual activity. Sexual decision-making is not the girls' agency.

There are some norms associated with power relations that are changing as well. The weighted mean for girls being prohibited from initiating displays of affection toward boys they like is 3.58. In terms of decision-making in the family, the belief that women should always abide by the husband's decisions has a 3.42 mean rating and a 3.33 for female submissiveness. Lastly, with a mean of 2.92, mothers are not allowed to work. This change of perception reveals that their families are attaining shared responsibility and equality by acknowledging the decisions of each side and coming up with a collective decision at the end. Youth today are also open in expressing their interest and love to the opposite sex. Lastly, with

their dire economic situation, women and mothers are not restricted to only working at home, taking care of the children, and doing house chores. Some are forced to work to help their husbands provide for the needs of the family.

Carr (2017) asserted in her innovative research based on qualitative interviews with young women that unequal power relations between girls and boys and men and women lead to high rates of pregnancies in adolescence and early marriages in

Timor-Leste. Girls constantly feel as though they must satisfy the needs and desires of boys because of their unequal power relationships, especially when it comes to sex. Evidenced by the response of a participant who said, "*Minsan habo ko man. Kaya lang nauurit siya kaya natugot nalang ako.*" (Sometimes, I don't feel like doing it but he feels upset, so I just agree to do it). Hence, teenage pregnancy is directly related to and based on discriminatory gender norms and negative gender stereotypes.

Gender Roles	WM	Description
• Girls are expected to do the household chores.	4.42	Agree
• Girls are always encouraged to learn how to cook for their partners in the future.	4.42	Agree
• Girls are tasked with teaching their siblings how to read and write.	4.25	Agree
• Girls are always given the task of taking charge of their siblings.	4.17	Agree
• Girls are expected to take extra care of their partners in relationships.	4.08	Agree
• Girls are constantly under pressure to think about the family name and honor in their daily lives (the clothes they wear to the way they behave in public).	3.92	Agree
• Girls are expected to do the laundry.	3.83	Undecided
• Girls should stay at home while boys have the freedom to go out as they wish.	3.50	Undecided
• Girls or women are only viewed as child-bearers.	3.08	Undecided

Table 2.1: Gender Roles

Table 2.3 presents the norms of the participants on marriage. The stereotypical belief of our society's culture holds that mothers are the caretakers and fathers are the providers. This takes the highest mean rating of 4.08, together with the practice that the mother stays at home to take care of the house and children while the father works for the family's sustenance. One teen mom said, "*Pirmi man na an babayi ang nabibilin sa balay para mag-asikaso.*" (It is normal for women to stay and be in-charge of everything at home.) She then added, "*Pag wara sira*

*papa ako pirmi an bilin para mag-asikaso sin balay.*" (If my parents are not home, I am usually the one in-charge of the house.)

The 3.92 mean represents the typical expectation that the groom and his family will cover the cost of the wedding. This demonstrates the continued dependence of women on men in marriage, particularly in the area of economics and the deeply ingrained cultural ideal of men as the family's breadwinner. The reasons for adolescent girls' choosing to be married in connection with their status in life, to

pull themselves out of poverty, has a weighted mean of 3.17, and the conservative view that a woman is only viewed or expected to be sent away for marriage has a weighted mean of 3.12. These beliefs are, in one way or another, changing and are not very prevalent any more. The participants disagreed with not having a say in the choice of a marriage partner, with a mean rating of 2.58. Most of the participants have freedom in choosing a marriage partner or someone with whom they want to be in a relationship with.

Women and wives were expected to fulfill their expressive roles by offering their husbands and children emotional support and encouragement, while men were expected to marry and maintain the

role of the primary breadwinner (Jardine and Dallalfar, 2012). As a result, traditional family beliefs and practices about marriage norms and expectations continue to be significant risk factors for teenage pregnancy.

Table 2.4 presents the norms on education. Most of them believe that girls are not encouraged and supported to pursue higher education, with a mean rating of 3.83, not prioritized to finish their studies, and forced to work to earn for the family, as one participant said, "*Sa nakikita ko na kalagayan sin pamilya ko na napapagalan, nagtrabaho nalang ako.*" (With the tough situation that my family is in, I just chose to work.) This was further explained by accounts of Subrahmanyam (2016), who stated that gender of-

Power Relations	WM	Description
• The mother always serves the needs of the husband. (i.e., preparing his work clothes, serving him food, etc.).	4.00	Agree
• Girls should always have to comply with the boys' needs and desires.	3.75	Agree
• Girls are compelled to participate in sexual relationships under pressure.	3.75	Agree
• Girls are not allowed to initiate manifestations of affection for boys whom they like.	3.58	Undecided
• In a home setting, the mother shall always abide by the father's decisions.	3.42	Undecided
• Mothers should always submit to their husbands.	3.33	Undecided
• Mothers are not allowed to work.	2.92	Undecided

**Table 2.2:** Power Relations

ten influences whether or not children attend or remain in school. This reveals the lack of access to education for these young mothers. Low educational achievement makes them susceptible to social influences, which leads to early motherhood.

In terms of the norms on the courses that girls should take in college, the majority of them perceive that they have the freedom to choose what courses they should take in college, although there are still suggestions conforming to the belief that women should take up courses in line with the arts and humanities. This has a mean value of 3.33. The belief that women are for marriage, so they are not given the chance to pursue their studies declined with the

2.42 mean rating. This entails that they are only viewed as wives.

Teenagers who become mothers typically struggle academically in school. Many teenage mothers believed that postsecondary education was out of their reach, and they had little knowledge of their options for a future life and a career. Teenage girls chose to become pregnant because it seemed to be their only option because they could see no future for themselves and had no positive role models to look up to. Furthermore, adolescents with no formal education, a lower level of education, or who are not enrolled in school are more likely to become



<b>Marriage</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fathers are always viewed as the providers, and mothers as the caretakers.</li></ul>	4.08	Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>An ideal family has a mother who stays at home to take care of the house and the children while the father works for the family's sustenance.</li></ul>	4.08	Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Wedding expenses shall be covered by the groom or the groom's family.</li></ul>	3.92	Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Girls choose to be married to pull themselves out of poverty.</li></ul>	3.17	Undecided
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A woman is expected to be sent away for marriage.</li></ul>	3.12	Undecided
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Girls do not have a say in the choice of a marriage partner.</li></ul>	2.58	Disagree

**Table 2.3:** Marriage

pregnant (Gomes, Speizer, Gomes, Oliveira, & Moura, 2008; Omar et al., 2010).

Table 3.0 presents the perceived impact of gender norms on the prevalence of teenage pregnancy. First in the rank with a frequency of 10, are not being prioritized to pursue higher education. Others chose to work to somehow help with the dire economic condition of their family. As one participant stated, "*Sa nakikita ko na kalagayan sin pamilya ko na napapagalan, nagtrabaho nalang ako.*" (With the tough situation that my family is in, I just chose to work.) Education serves as the biggest factor in the increase of teenage pregnancy cases. Lack of it may cause more of the phenomenon. The second most prevalent idea, with a frequency of 9, is that of submissiveness and the lack of sexual decision-making

authority held by women over men. When it comes to making sexually intimate decisions, men have a disproportionate amount of influence over women.

Vulnerable girls and more assertive boys clearly have different levels of power because the girls feel more pressure to conform to the boys' demands and initiatives. Thus, teenage girls' high possibility of getting pregnant.

A study by Bonell et.al. (2005) found that young women who live in poverty, deprived conditions or come from less privileged upbringings are more likely to become pregnant while teenagers. Marcus and Harper (2014) stated that the interplay between gender and teenage pregnancy should be explored. Gender ideologies and their associated norms can set the boundaries of what girls and boys and adult wom-

<b>Education</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>Description</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Girls are not encouraged and supported to pursue higher education.</li></ul>	3.83	Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Girls are not being prioritized to finish their studies.</li></ul>	3.83	Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Girls are forced to work to earn money for the family.</li></ul>	3.83	Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Girls taking courses such as engineering, medicine, and architecture are not much practiced.</li></ul>	3.33	Undecided
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Girls are not given the chance to pursue their studies because of the belief that women are for marriage.</li></ul>	2.42	Disagree

**Table 2.4:** Education



en and men think as well as what they do; they can make inequalities of power and resources seem natural or God-given and thus unchangeable. How power is distributed in society is also directly influenced by values and norms about who can speak up or make decisions, typically to the detriment of young people in general and girls in particular.

### CONCLUSION

The prevailing gender norms of adolescent girls are still tied to the conservative view of a woman, which is being submissive, doing familial and domestic work, having unequal power relations between teenage girls and boys, and having less opportunity and support to finish education. These prevailing gender norms experienced by teenage mothers may have a significant impact on why they become young mothers at an early age. Having no opportunity in acquiring higher education, and lack of

power of females over males particularly in complying to engage in sexual relationship, may have caused these adolescent girls to be vulnerable to the risk of getting pregnant. Coping with the perceived impacts of prevailing gender norms they experienced, these teenage girls tend to just accept the structured customary standards of the community, hence making them more susceptible to being a victim of the teenage pregnancy phenomenon. Extensive guidance service intervention is needed to address the increasing rate of teenage pregnancy cases.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

School-based and community-based human sexuality education should be implemented as early as possible as one of the programs of secondary and tertiary schools, as well as communities, to prevent the detrimental effects of teenage pregnancy. As part of the collaboration efforts between teachers and the

Impacts of Gender Norms	freq.	Rank
• Girls are not the priority for pursuing higher education. Such a concept escalates teenage pregnancy.	10	1
• The concept of submissiveness and the lack of power of females over males, particularly in exercising sexual decision-making, contribute to the occurrence of teenage pregnancy	9	2
• The concept of an ideal family/married life where female roles are focused on familial and domestic concerns caused young girls to engage in romantic relationships, resulting in teenage pregnancy	8	3
• Associating household chores as the prime responsibility of girls increases the risk of teenage pregnancy.	6	4

Table 3.0: Perceived Impacts of Prevailing Gender Norms on the Prevalence of Teenage Pregnancy

Guidance Office and the Gender and Development Office, a strategic plan has to be in place to give awareness to students on gender issues and women's empowerment. Responsible Parenthood may be seen as an avenue by Local Government Units (LGUs) to provide sufficient knowledge to parents about practices for being responsible parents. Trained professionals under Rural Health Units may initiate seminars on human sexuality and reproductive health in communities targeting out-of-school youth. The role

of parents should be emphasized through conducting focus group discussions about child-rearing with the aid of the Department of Social Welfare and Development to explore, understand, and improve their child-rearing practices. Future researchers should further delve into the cultural impacts of the Philippine communities on teenage pregnancy. A comparative study may be conducted between teenage mothers in rural and urban areas.



### Teenage Pregnancy Intervention Strategy Overview

Parents and other community members are well aware of teen pregnancy being a problem in most of the communities in the province and in most parts of the country. On the available figures of the Provincial Health Office (PHO) of Sorsogon for the year 2017, the Sorsogon Province has 2,101 recorded cases of pregnant teens with ages ranging from 10-19 years old.

With the nationwide pervasiveness of teenage pregnancy, this research proposed possible interventions involving multi-sector approaches to effectively address the issue. This enlisted 2 school offices—the Guidance Office and Gender and Development Office (GADO)—and 2 local government offices—Rural Health Offices (RHUs), and Municipal Social Welfare and Development Offices (MSWDOs)—to aid families, schools, and communities of teenage girls, especially teenage mothers, in dealing with the rising phenomenon of teenage pregnancy.

The strategies' expected outputs are identified:

1. Intensified Guidance Services in collaboration with concerned offices and agencies such as Rural Health Units (RHUs), Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO), and Gender and Development Office (GADO) of communities with a high incidence of teen pregnancy.

2. Empowered and educated teens, parents, and other community members on central themes concerning teenage pregnancy to properly respond and prevent its growing cases.

Reduced teen pregnancy rates in schools, communities, and the country in general.

The strategic interventions outlined school level and community level action plans that may directly or indirectly lead to limiting the teen pregnancy cases in schools and communities. The following are the possible interventions to be implemented in schools and communities:

*Transforming Gender Norms among Adolescents.* This intervention is geared towards the empowerment of youth and adolescents, through systematic thought reasoning and behavior change, to challenge the accepted gender norms in their community. What we do as children greatly influences our adult lives. This includes the cultural and gender norms we internalize and the behaviors we observe and adopt. This intervention aims to create a shift in

gender norms among teenagers ages 10–14 and minimize the gaps between boys and girls in the division of household chores, access to education, freedom to play, and overall autonomy. This focuses on areas where practices like early marriage and pregnancy, which perpetuate gender inequality, are highly prevalent.

*Community-based Human Sexuality and Responsible Parenthood Education.* This aims to provide extensive education and awareness on human sexuality to teenagers, and responsible parenthood to parents of communities with a high number of pregnant teens. It is important to consider the socio-cultural context of human sexuality beliefs and responsible parenthood practices in every community to assure an effective education program in association with existing networks of government and non-government organizations. Teenage sexual and reproductive health services are not widely available to young Filipinos, especially if they are underage and unmarried. Teenagers who become pregnant often do so as a result of unplanned sex, peer pressure, a lack of knowledge about safe sex, the dissolution of the family unit, the absence of strong female role models in the home, and the lack of institutions that are easily accessible to adolescents.

Table 2.4 presents the norms on education. Most of them believe that girls are not encouraged and supported to pursue higher education, with a mean rating of 3.83, not prioritized to finish their studies, and forced to work to earn for the family, as one participant said, "*Sa nakikita ko na kalagayan sin pamilya ko na napa-pagalan, nagtrabaho nalang ako.*" (With the tough situation that my family is in, I just chose to work.) This was further explained by accounts of Subrahmanyam (2016), who stated that gender often influences whether or not children attend or remain in school. This reveals the lack of access to education for these young mothers. Low educational achievement makes them susceptible to social influences, which leads to early motherhood.

In terms of the norms on the courses that girls should take in college, the majority of them perceive that they have the freedom to choose what courses they should take in college, although there are still suggestions conforming to the belief that women should take up courses in line with the arts and humanities. This has a mean value of 3.33. The belief that women are for marriage, so they are not given the



chance to pursue their studies declined with the 2.42 mean rating. This entails that they are only viewed as wives.

Teenagers who become mothers typically struggle academically in school. Many teenage mothers believed that postsecondary education was out of their reach, and they had little knowledge of their options for a future life and a career. Teenage girls chose to become pregnant because it seemed to be their only option because they could see no future for themselves and had no positive role models to look up to. Furthermore, adolescents with no formal education, a lower level of education, or who are not enrolled in school are more likely to become pregnant (Gomes, Speizer, Gomes, Oliveira, & Moura, 2008; Omar et al., 2010).

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