Student-Mother: The Dual Role in the New Normal Mode of Learning

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Abstract

This phenomenological study aimed to determine the lived experiences, challenges encountered, coping mechanism of senior high school student-mothers in the new normal mode of learning. The participants were identified using purposive sampling technique while Colaizzi's method of data analysis was utilized in interpreting the qualitative data. With regards to the lived experiences of student-mothers, four themes emerged: (1) source of inspiration; (2) respect; (3) school excuses; and (4) support by partner/husband, parents/relatives and others. For the challenges encountered by student-mothers during their schooling, six themes were identified: (1) conflicting demand; (2) treatment of other people; (3) time management; (4) financial problem; (5) distracted in school; and (6) social stigma. For the coping mechanism, there were two themes identified: (1) resiliency; and (2) ambition in life. In gaining understanding of student-mothers, the schools should have clear understanding of the students' situation and academic needs to help them succeed in their study. Likewise, the government agencies such as DSWD and DOH should provide assistance and programs for these student-mothers. Exploring the experiences and struggles of student-mothers will add a much-needed building block to foundation of empathic understanding of student services and other counselling.

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Introduction

Everyone is devastated during pandemic, but it is especially hard for student- mothers to study in that period. As Spilovoy, T (2021) stated that some of the difficulty of student-mothers had no enough time in doing household chores such cooking and caring of her children especially if they are sick of Covid 19. She was forced to monitor the remainder of the household members around the clock. Students-mothers experienced high rates of food and housing insecurity. Nikiforidou, Z., and Holmes, S. (2022) said that student-mothers experienced inadequacy of engagement and commitment to their studies because of time restrictions, distractions and lack of motivation and connectivity with the schools, due to the distance education.

Hence, the researcher wants to identify the experiences, challenges and coping mechanism of student-mothers in managing their dual roles as a student and a mother in this new normal mode of learning. The researcher would also like to find out, on how the student-mothers balance their roles and responsibilities as a student or as a mother at the same time, and on how they adapt and cope with the challenges encountered during their schooling. While student-mothers may want to attain their education while having child/children on their care, the researcher wants to know also if the challenges that student-mothers encountered during their schooling may not be a hindrance to continue their education. And lastly, the researcher would recommend as appropriate an intervention to help the student-mothers to graduate successfully in senior high school.

Methodology

This study used Phenomenological Research Design. Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Typically, interviews are conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation or experience. The interview(s) attempts to answer two broad questions (Moustakas, 1994): What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situation have typically influenced your experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013)? Other forms of data such as documents, observations and art may also be used. The data is then read and reread and culled for like phrases and themes that are then grouped to form clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2013). Through this process the researcher may construct the universal

meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

Findings

The first main theme emerged in the lived experiences of student-mothers is source of inspiration. There was one out of six claimed that their children were their source of inspiration. Some student-mothers said that being a mother and a student at the same time is undeniably difficult but they considered their baby as their source of inspiration in life, they were also considered their baby as their source of strength and happiness, and the main reason why they continue their study is to give a better future for them. Two out of six student-mothers attested that their classmates respected them. Their classmates showed them high regards and looked at them as their mother. One out of six student-mothers attested that they were being considered in their school requirements such as output because they have a child to focus on at home. The last main theme in the experiences of student-mothers is support by partner/husband, parents/relatives and others. Three subthemes emerged such support from by her partner/husband, parents/relatives and others. With this support system, it made their burden light and easy with regards to their study and rearing of their children. The supports that they got from the system were either financial, physical, emotional, and moral support. Two out of six student-mothers attested that their husband never neglected them of their needs. They got financial, physical and moral support from their partner/husband. Four out of six student-mothers received support from parents and relatives. Their parents and relatives played a big role in student mother's life. Their parents and relatives helped them through financial assistance, emotional and moral support. One out of six of student-mothers said that their teachers were being considerate when it comes to the requirements needed to be passed by them. Their classmates and friends also gave them a financial and moral support.

The challenges encountered by student-mothers could be best explained by six themes including conflicting demands, treatment of other people, time management, financial problem, distracted in school and social stigma. From the analysis, it can be understood that being a mother and student at the same time is no easy task. They are experiencing difficulty in terms of conflicting demands, treatment of other people, time management, financial problem, distracted in school and social stigma. The first theme in the challenges encountered by student-mothers was revealed by four out of six participants which was two conflicting demands. These were to take care of their children and to attend to their education. Both school requirements and attending the needs of their

children required time and effort. But the good thing is that during pandemic they were in a distance learning modality. Because of that there was no need for them to be present in school. They can work and attend their household chores, then. But when face to face modality would commence, there attention would be divided as they had attended in school and caring their children at home. Secondly, treatment of other people which two out of six student-mothers reported that they experienced being look down by their neighbors. Their neighbors said that they are wasting their money and time in going to school. Their neighbors added that instead that they focus their time and resources in school they should rear their children and be at home. However, in school they were treated nicely by their classmates. A student-mothers should be respected and not be laughed, with regards to time management, two out of six student-mothers reported as a challenge. It was found out that their time with their children, school and even work were divided. In these regards, they needed to divide their time to perform their roles to have a quality time in their children, school or work. Financial problem is undeniably one of the challenges faced by student-mothers. Three of six student-mothers in this study admitted that they had a difficulty with finances. Most often than not their budget is tight since they need to provide for their schooling and for their children expenses and others. But despite with this difficulty in term of money they wanted to finish their schooling. This was to ensure a chance a better future for their children. Distracted in their study in school was another challenge encountered by student-mothers. Two of six said that they could not concentrate well because they were always thinking of their children left at home. In the last of the challenge encountered of student-mothers, one out of six experience being stigmatized because they got pregnant at a very young age. People may often label them as flirt.

Despite of their situation, student-mothers adapt some strategies to cope of the things that happen to them. Four out of six said that they ignored any negative comments to them. They did not want to be affected by those negativities thrown to them by making them busy to other things in life. They were also looking for job to help them in their finances. One out of six claimed that despite of hardships that they experienced as mother and a student, they wanted to finish their schooling for the brighter future of their children.

Conclusion

This study focuses on the lived experiences, challenges encountered and coping mechanism of senior high school student-mothers in this new normal mode of learning. Based on

the findings in this research, the student-mothers experienced difficulty in terms of conflicting demands, treatment of other people, time management, financial problem, distracted in school and being stigmatize.

In spite of these difficulties, there are advantages acquired from being a student and a mother, including source of inspiration, respect showed to them by their classmates and school excuses. With the support systems such as their partner/husband, parents/relatives, classmates/friends, are also a big part to succeed in their study.

There were some strategies employed by the student-mothers such as ignoring those negative comments about their life, they look for job to help their finances and they have an ambition in life to pursue and finish their study. However, there are some limitations encountered in conducting this study. This includes the inability of the researcher to gather the desired data by not answering by student-mothers because of sensitivity and privacy issue in their part. Similarly, there were only six available participants as a student-mothers in Torralba National High School, Banga, Aklan.

The Department of Education may provide seminar-training on student-mothers about financial literacy and time management. Inter-agency collaboration may be done by the Department of Education, Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Health to help the student-mothers in finances in school and health of their children. Values-Formation Seminar may be provided by the school to be initiated by the School Guidance Designate to fully understand by teachers and classmates the situation of student-mothers. Other researchers may conduct similar study in order to see the other side of the research problem.

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