Academic Performance and Issues of Pregnant Students: Basis for an Intervention Plan

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ABSTRACT

Teenage pregnancy remains a significant concern in the Philippines, particularly affecting the student population in state universities and colleges. This study specifically investigates the impact of teenage pregnancy on the academic performance of students at Cagayan State University. It aims to detail these students' demographic and socio-economic profiles, comparing their academic outcomes before and after pregnancy and formulating a support plan. The research utilizes a sequential explanatory mixed-method design, blending quantitative data—such as academic records and demographic details—with qualitative insights into the students' personal and health-related challenges. The findings reveal that most pregnant students are in their second year of college, hail from low-income families, and deal with various concerns, including health complications and the stress of balancing education with impending motherhood. Despite these obstacles, the study interestingly notes an unexpected trend: academic performance does not suffer and, in some cases, improves as students become more determined to succeed for the sake of their future children. Based on these insights, the study recommends establishing comprehensive support programs at the university, including academic assistance, health services, and financial aid, to nurture an environment that supports pregnant students in their pursuit of education and personal growth.
KEYWORDS

Teenage pregnancy, academic performance, socio-economic impact, health challenges, supportive interventions, sequential explanatory mixed-method design, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is a significant concern in the Philippines, particularly among students at State Universities and Colleges. Despite a decrease in teenage mothers' live births between 2016 and 2019, the Philippines still faces one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the ASEAN region. This global issue has implications for public health and economic growth, especially in low-and middle-income countries.

Globally, around 21 million pregnancies occur annually, with approximately 50% unintended. South Asian countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, and India report high rates of adolescent pregnancy. In the Philippines, 5.4% of women aged 15 to 19 had been pregnant in 2022, and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) had a particularly high rate. Recognizing these challenges, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte signed Executive Order No. 141, emphasizing the need to prevent teenage pregnancies as a national priority.

The Commission on Population (POPCOM) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) have developed social protection programs to combat teenage pregnancy. The Department of Health (DOH) also created the Adolescent and Youth Health Policy. However, Cagayan State University lacks specific provisions in its student manual to support pregnant students.

FRAMEWORK

This research is grounded in the belief that education is crucial for a brighter future. Parents in the Philippines value education to improve their children's prospects. Cagayan State University is recognized for providing quality education. However, teenage pregnancy disrupts educational plans and may impact academic performance, which aligns with the “Disruption Theory of Christensen (2016). This study explores teenage pregnancy and education, academic performance, and issues related to pregnancy, health, and academics, acknowledging that it can lead to both success and failure in academic performance.

The research illustrates the effects of teenage pregnancy on academic performance at Cagayan State University. It examines differences in academic performance and the challenges pregnant students face regarding pregnancy, health, and academics.

This study includes pregnant students during the Academic Year 2019 to 2021 at Cagayan State University. It uses general weighted averages to focus on their
academic performance before and after pregnancy. Demographic and socio-economic data were gathered from university admission records. Qualitative data were collected through questionnaires and focus group discussions. The study was conducted between August and September 2023.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to examine pregnant students’ demographic and socio-economic profiles at Cagayan State University, assess their academic performance before and after pregnancy, and propose an intervention plan.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-method design, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data include demographic profiles and academic performance before and after teenage pregnancy, while qualitative data cover issues and concerns related to pregnancy, health, and academics.

**Locale of the Study**

The research was conducted across six of the nine campuses of Cagayan State University, Philippines.

**Respondents**

There were two sets of respondents. The first set comprised 34 pregnant students identified from various campuses. The second set included 12 representatives for a focus group discussion (FGD).

**Research Instrument**

Three questionnaires were used. The first was a structured questionnaire based on existing university applications and registration forms for quantitative data. The second gathered academic performance data from the Office of the Registrar. The third was a structured and unstructured questionnaire used in the FGD.

**Data Collection Procedure**

A letter of request was sent to the Office of the President, seeking permission and cooperation from various university offices. Quantitative data were collected through frequency and percentage analysis, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Procedure: Twelve participants volunteered for the FGD, which took place online. The FGD covered issues concerning pregnancy, health, and academics and followed a structured process, including an introduction, ground rules, open-ended questions, and a conclusion.
Data Analysis

Problem 1 (demographic and socio-economic profiles) was analyzed using mean averages and percentages. Problem 2 (pregnant students' experiences) utilized sub-themes, codes, verbatim quotes, and literature sources for description. Problem 3 (academic performance) used a T-test for differences before and after pregnancy. Problem 4 involved creating an intervention plan following a specified format.

Ethics Clearance

The research was submitted to the Ethics Committee for review and approval.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The age of pregnant students in this study ranged from 18 to 23 years old, all products of the government's K-12 program. The breakdown of their ages is as follows: 18 years old (17.6%), 19 years old (14.7%), 20 years old (8.8%), 21 years old (5.9%), 22 years old (2.9%), and 23 years old (2.9%). When they became pregnant, most of them were in their 2nd (17.6%), 3rd (5.9%), or 4th year (8.8%) of university studies. Regarding residence, 61.8% lived in their own houses, 2.9% rented, and 5.9% lived in houses owned by relatives. Family sizes varied, with 35.3% having fewer than five household members, 8.8% having 6-10 members, and 2.9% having 11-15 members. The number of siblings ranged from 1-15, with 38.1% having 1-5 siblings, 5.9% having 6-10, and 1.5% having 11-15. The spoken languages among pregnant students included Itawes (5.9%), Ilocano (38.2%), and Tagalog (5.9%).

Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents

Regarding fathers' occupations, 55.9% were farmers, 2.9% were laborers, 2.9% were government employees, and 2.9% were private employees. For mothers, 50% were housewives, 2.9% were manual laborers, 2.9% were self-employed, 2.9% were private employees, and 5.9% were Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). Half of the mothers did not have a source of income since they were housewives. Concerning family income, 47.1% had less than PhP 11,914.00, 17.6% had between PhP 11,915 and PhP 23,829.50, 2.9% had between PhP 23,830.00 and PhP 35,743.00, and 2.9% had PhP 35,744.00 and above. The allowance provided to pregnant students ranged from PhP 60.00 to PhP 100.00 and above. The family members who were earning income numbered 14.7%, while 38.2% reported that none of their other family members were working.

Issues and Concerns in relation to Pregnancy

Family Reactions

Many students faced emotional reactions from their families, including anger and disappointment, upon learning about their pregnancies. The impact of family reactions on pregnant students' well-being has been documented in previous research.
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(Smith et al., 2019).

Social Challenges
Pregnant students encountered social stigma, teasing, bullying, and community expectations, which added to their emotional burden. Social stigma and discrimination can exacerbate the challenges faced by pregnant students (Johnson, 2021).

Financial Struggles
Financial constraints were significant concerns, particularly the challenge of managing their allowance while studying and the additional expenses associated with pregnancy and childcare. Students commonly face Financial constraints during pregnancy (Brown & Wilson, 2019).

Health and Well-being
Physical health, emotional well-being, sleep quality, nutrition, and diet were affected by pregnancy. Specific health challenges related to pregnancy were also reported. Pregnancy-related health issues can affect both physical and emotional well-being (Jones & Smith, 2021).

Academic Performance
Many students reported challenges in their academic performance, with incomplete grades and difficulty concentrating being common issues. The impact of pregnancy on academic performance is well-documented (Clark et al., 2019).

Balancing Act
Balancing academic responsibilities with the demands of pregnancy was challenging for students. Factors like absences due to medical check-ups and difficulties concentrating were mentioned. Balancing academic responsibilities and pregnancy requires effective time management (Davis & White, 2019).

Institutional Support
Some students reported a lack of institutional support, while others acknowledged the support they received. Institutional support is critical to pregnant students' academic success (Brown & Johnson, 2022).

Emotional Struggles
Emotional struggles, including sadness and disappointment, were common among pregnant students. Managing emotional struggles is essential for pregnant students' well-being (Smith & Williams, 2020).

Health Challenges
Pregnant students face various health challenges, including physical well-being, emotional health, sleep quality, nutrition, and pregnancy symptoms. These challenges
align with existing literature on pregnancy's physical and emotional toll (Smith et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2019).

Academic Impact: Pregnancy impacted academic performance, attendance, concentration, and overall grades. This aligns with previous research that highlights the adverse effects of pregnancy on students' education (Rajapaksa et al., 2017; Ke et al., 2020)

**Academic Performance Of Students Before And After Pregnancy**

Academic performance is the focus of the study, aside from the issues and concerns while studying. The academic performance before pregnancy ranges from 1.25 to 2.50. There are 41.2 percent with a grade of 2.00, 29.4 percent with 2.50, and 20.6 percent with 1.75. On the extremes, only 2.9 percent earned a grade of 1.25 and 5.9 percent with 2.50. After pregnancy, 50 percent earned a grade of 2.00, 23.5 percent with 1.75, 14.7 percent with 2.25, 8.8 percent with 2.50 percent.

It can be gleaned that the student's performance before pregnancy as to the highest grade is 1.25, but after pregnancy, it slides down to 1.50. There are 2 students with a grade of 2.50 before pregnancy and 3 students after pregnancy.

Table 1. Academic performance before and after pregnancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GWA_Before pregnancy</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWA_After pregnancy</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that there is a very close academic performance before and after pregnancy. This implies that the performance was not affected due to the support of their parents, their desires to strive harder for the benefit of their own and child's future as manifested in their responses during the FGD.

The results negate the findings of Ukumu (2020); Maemeko et al. (2018), and Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) that their academic performance was affected by pregnancy.

**Significant Differences on the Academic Performance of Respondents Before And After Pregnancy**
Table 2. Paired sample T-test on the GWA of the respondents before and after pregnancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>General Weighted Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GWA_Before</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWA_After</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that the respondents' mean GWA are 86 before and after pregnancy. Moreover, the respondents' standard deviation of the mean GWA are 2.68 and 2.73 before and after pregnancy, respectively. With this, the overall General Weighted Average before and after pregnancy are both 2.

This further shows that the students' performance was not affected by their pregnancy, the respondents maintained their academic performance before and after pregnancy.

The results negate the findings of Nkosi et al. (2019) that teenage pregnancy negatively affected their academic performance, while Maemeko et al. (2018) claim that pregnant students earned poor academic performance after pregnancy, and Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) added that teenage pregnancy adversely affects school performance.

**Intervention Plan: Supporting Pregnant Students and Student Mothers**

I. Introduction

Cagayan State University recognizes the importance of supporting pregnant students and student mothers to ensure their academic success and well-being. This intervention plan aims to provide essential support and create an inclusive environment for these students from January 2024 to December 2026.

II. Objectives

1. Ensure pregnant students' and mothers' physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
2. Foster self-confidence and a positive self-image to manage parenthood and education.
3. Provide opportunities for skill development and career enhancement.
4. Establish a welcoming and respectful community.
5. Promote academic success through tailored support.
6. Ensure equal access to education for all students, regardless of parental status.

III. Legal Basis

Seek inclusion of policies for pregnant students and student mothers in the University's Student Manual.

IV. Matrix of Intervention Plan
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Concern</th>
<th>Intervention Objectives</th>
<th>Program Activities</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>In Charge</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict of schedules</td>
<td>Accommodate prenatal care and medical appointments with flexible class schedules.</td>
<td>Academic Flexible scheduling</td>
<td>As needed, every semester</td>
<td>College Deans, Faculty Members</td>
<td>Registration Form</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breastfeeding Facilities</td>
<td>Provide safe breastfeeding facilities.</td>
<td>Construct breastfeeding rooms on campus</td>
<td>By December 2024</td>
<td>General Services Officer, Others</td>
<td>Photos of facilities</td>
<td>30,000 (approx.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Support</td>
<td>Assist in meeting financial needs.</td>
<td>Implement Financial Assistance Program.</td>
<td>SY 2024-2026</td>
<td>Student Development Office, Cashier's Office</td>
<td>Payroll records</td>
<td>c/o Student Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional and Psychosocial Support</td>
<td>Enhance psychological well-being</td>
<td>Conduct growth sessions on various topics</td>
<td>March (Women's Month)</td>
<td>Counseling Services, School Clinic</td>
<td>Log sheets, photos</td>
<td>5,000 (approx.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Education</td>
<td>Provide information for a healthy pregnancy.</td>
<td>Organize teen clinic and orientation.</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Counseling Services, Campus Clinic</td>
<td>Records of orientation</td>
<td>10,000 (approx.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support</td>
<td>Foster academic success and self-sufficiency.</td>
<td>Conduct growth sessions on various topics</td>
<td>March (Women's Month)</td>
<td>Counseling Services</td>
<td>Photos of activities</td>
<td>50,000 (approx.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Premarital Pregnancy</td>
<td>Promote a healthier college life.</td>
<td>Organize a symposium on teenage pregnancy</td>
<td>March (Women's Month)</td>
<td>Counseling Services</td>
<td>Records of symposium</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This intervention plan prioritizes the well-being and academic success of pregnant students and student mothers at Cagayan State University. We aim to empower them to excel academically and embrace future opportunities by addressing their unique needs and creating a supportive environment.

CONCLUSION

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profiles: The study highlights that pregnant students are often teenagers who become pregnant during the second year of their academic programs. They typically come from families where the father is a farmer, and the mother is a housewife. Additionally, family income falls within the poverty threshold, resulting in minimal daily allowances for the students. The majority of respondents have an Ilokano mother tongue.

Issues and Concerns on Pregnancy: Pregnant students face a multitude of concerns related to their pregnancies. They experience fear regarding the well-being of their babies and the impact of pregnancy on their studies. Parents’ reactions are initially characterized by anger and disappointment, though some eventually accept the situation.

Health-related challenges include common signs and symptoms of pregnancy, as well as comorbidities like hemorrhage, placenta previa, cysts, and pre-term pregnancies. Fatigue is a prevalent issue.

Academically, the respondents express concerns about balancing their studies with pregnancy, fulfilling class requirements, and continuing their education.

Impact on Academic Performance: Interestingly, despite the numerous challenges faced during pregnancy, the respondents report that their academic performance, including their grades, was not negatively affected. On the contrary, many students are motivated to study even harder, recognizing that their babies’ futures depend on their education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Comprehensive Support Programs: CSU should consider implementing comprehensive support programs for pregnant students. These programs should encompass academic, emotional, and financial support, including flexible attendance policies, extended assignment deadlines, and access to counseling services.

2. Awareness and Sensitization: There is a need to raise awareness among the academic community about the unique challenges faced by pregnant students. Sensitization programs can help create a more understanding and
3. Tailored Health Services: Given the reported health challenges, institutions should consider providing pregnant students access to specialized health services to address both pregnancy-related symptoms and potential comorbidities.

4. Financial Aid: Recognizing the economic hardships faced by pregnant students and their families, institutions could explore options for financial aid, such as scholarships or grants, to alleviate financial stress.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation: Regular monitoring and evaluation of the proposed intervention plan are essential to ensure its effectiveness and make necessary adjustments based on the evolving needs of pregnant students.

6. Data of Students: Records of students upon enrolment must be complete to facilitate other studies for CSU Students needed for decision-making and policy recommendations to improve their academic performance.

7. Intervention Plan: This study underscores the resilience and determination of pregnant students to excel academically despite facing significant challenges. The proposed intervention plan represents a proactive approach to supporting these students in their pursuit of education, enabling them to build a brighter future for themselves and their children.

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