

## EXPLORING THE POSTPARTUM EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-TIME TEENAGE MOTHERS IN BARANGAY SALVACION

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### ABSTRACT

Teenage pregnancy continues to be a critical public health issue in the Philippines, which ranks second in Southeast Asia in adolescent birth rates, with approximately 200,000 cases annually. First-time teenage mothers often face unique postpartum challenges stemming from physiological, emotional, and social immaturity. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of first-time teenage mothers in Barangay Salvacion, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, during the postpartum period. This research employed a qualitative phenomenological design to capture the nuanced experiences of teenage mothers aged 12–19 years during their six-month postpartum period. Eleven participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's six-step method. Five major themes emerged: (1) Emotional Landscape of Teenage Motherhood, characterized by mood fluctuations, identity loss, and social disconnection; (2) Physical and Psychological Impact, including postpartum fatigue, sleep deprivation, and body image issues; (3) Adjustments to New Roles and Responsibilities, highlighting sudden lifestyle changes and inexperience in childcare; (4) Social and Financial Challenges, featuring economic struggles and societal stigma; and (5) Coping Strategies and Sources of Strength, which included family support, spiritual grounding, and acts of self-care. The findings emphasize the multifaceted difficulties teenage mothers face in the postpartum period, shaped by personal, cultural, and socio-economic factors. Despite these challenges, resilience is evident through adaptive coping strategies and supportive family networks. The study advocates for adolescent-sensitive postpartum care, enhanced reproductive health education, and community-based interventions to improve outcomes for young mothers and their infants.

*Keywords:* Postpartum experiences, first-time teenage mothers, phenomenological study, emotional challenges, physical and psychological impact

### INTRODUCTION

The process of having and raising children was unlike any other. From the demanding process of becoming pregnant to the happiness and challenges women faced when they took on the role of mother, the entire experience seemed unlike anything else. Since being a mother involved so much more than just going through the prenatal phase, parenthood ended up being a lifetime process that some women could never imagine engaging in. Unfortunately, some women became pregnant without the physical and emotional readiness or capability. Teenage pregnancy remained a worldwide phenomenon, but for the Philippines, it was a national concern. With nearly 200,000 births from adolescent mothers every year, according to Bunag et al. (2023), the Philippines ranked number two (2) in Southeast Asia with the highest rate of teenage pregnancy.

Teenagers aren't quite ready to become mothers yet, as they are still growing physically, emotionally, and mentally. According to Reyes and Camacho (2023), Nurses play an important role in assisting teenage moms during the early stages of parenting by addressing emotional stressors such as fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem. At this stage in life, they're just beginning to discover who they are, build their dreams, and navigate relationships, school, and

responsibilities. Becoming a mother requires a level of stability, patience, and strength that even many adults find challenging. For a teenager, the weight of caring for a child can be overwhelming.

The postpartum experience is unique, with some women finding it easier or harder. The postnatal period was marked by change, uncertainty, and reorganization, influenced by individual factors such as perspectives, heuristics, social and economic situations, readiness, and psychological state. But for teenage mothers, due to their body structures not being fully developed physiologically, being psychologically unprepared, and career instability, the challenges they faced were nearly doubled.

First-time mothers faced stress during the early postpartum period as they navigated their new role and coped with both physiological and psychological difficulties. Law et al. (2018) stated that the first three weeks after giving birth were a period where first-time mothers experienced stress and depression symptoms peaked, and their maternal self-efficacy was at its lowest. Stress levels and subsequent reductions were adversely correlated with maternal self-efficacy. Protecting the mother's health through postpartum care was crucial to preventing unwanted consequences. Even modest self-care practices can mitigate emotional fatigue and enhance psychological resilience. Anbi et al. (2024) emphasize that emotional availability and responsiveness in caregivers are enhanced when adolescent mothers attend to their own needs.

In addition to maternity care providers, the local government, and the community, this study was particularly significant for teenage women identified as primigravida. It provided insight into the various elements that affect young, first-time moms' experiences and access to postnatal care. Nove et al. (2023) highlight financial vulnerability among adolescent mothers and the need for holistic financial support interventions such as cash grants, childcare services, and education-to-employment programs. Comprehending these elements might help individuals make well-informed decisions regarding their postpartum health. The study provided valuable information for healthcare professionals that may enhance how care is delivered, making it more responsive to the needs of adolescent moms.

While the community may play a significant role in fostering a more supportive and welcoming environment for young moms, Municipal health departments can also utilize these findings to improve services and programs to enhance maternal and child health. In addition to enhancing healthcare, the study encouraged healthier lifestyle choices. It underscored the value of a safe, socially connected environment where adolescent moms feel empowered and understood. Finally, this study might serve as a good starting point for future investigations into how to better support young moms at this crucial juncture in their lives.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study addressed the postpartum experiences of first-time teenage mothers, focusing on a five-month qualitative investigation during the second semester of the 2024-2025 school year. It also developed informational, educational, and communication materials to improve maternal education and health outcomes. To accomplish this, the subsequent questions were examined:

1. What were the challenges you experienced during postpartum?
2. How did you cope during your postpartum?

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach. It used semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to understand the postpartum experiences of first-time teenage mothers. This research study took place at the Municipality of Bayombong – the Capital of the Province of Nueva Vizcaya - specifically at Barangay Salvacion, within the boundaries of Don Tomas Maddela Poblacion (District II) and Don Mariano Perez (District III). The aforementioned barangay's population was determined by the 2020 Census, which had 4,014 officially registered residents. The census number of people in Barangay Salvacion represented 5.93% of the total population of the Municipality of Bayombong, making Barangay Salvacion a densely populated barangay in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya.

This study also used purposive sampling and snowball sampling, which involved both selected and random participants who fit into the categories that helped the researchers understand the problem and answer the research questions. The participants of this research study constituted 11 first-time teenage mothers residing in Barangay Salvacion, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. Inclusion criteria included first-time teenage mothers with an age range of 12 – 18 years old; at their six (6) months postpartum period; and had given birth via expected spontaneous delivery, for a participant to be qualified as a data source for this research study. Exclusion criteria were as follows: teenage mothers who gave birth to twins or had multiple births; had experienced complications during pregnancy or childbirth; adolescent mothers who gave birth via cesarean delivery; and teenage mothers with disabilities (PWD).

The primary research instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview focused on the postpartum experiences of first-time teenage mothers. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that explored participants' experiences with challenges, coping mechanisms, and postpartum experiences as first-time teenage mothers. Written consent was obtained from the participants and their guardian/s, and a face-to-face interview commenced immediately upon the respondents' availability. The interview session ran for more or less than 1 hour using the semi-structured instrument of open-ended questions (from the guide questions that the researchers had prepared) for at least 1-2 days a week in the span of more or less than 1 month, starting in February to March (once approved for outside data gathering). The researchers also asked permission to use recorders, videos, and photos for documentation and data analysis. Thematic analysis was used to accelerate the research process. This method utilized a methodical approach to detect recurring themes and patterns in the dataset, which were then examined within the framework of their underlying significance, as discussed by Clarke and Braun (2006).

The findings were disseminated through the creation and distribution of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials tailored to postpartum care for adolescent mothers. These materials could be distributed at community events, to Marian nursing students, and to barangay health centers. The IEC materials developed served as a tool for disseminating information and knowledge about postpartum practices for first-time teenage mothers. Thus, the materials aimed to offer practical value in addressing the issues identified in the survey, providing lasting dividends to the participants and the community. While these results could benefit the individuals themselves, they also helped inform community programs targeting adolescent mothers that policymakers and local health authorities could develop and implement. These programs included counseling, access to health services, and educational sessions to address identified omissions in care. This new study further laid the groundwork for future research. It inspired additional studies of the experiences of adolescent mothers, which could lead to an equitable, participatory maternal healthcare system.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Section 1: Challenges Encountered by First-Time Teenage Mothers

Becoming a mother during adolescence brings a host of complex, often overwhelming challenges. Unlike adult mothers, who may benefit from maturity, financial stability, and broader social support, teenage mothers often navigate this life-altering transition with limited resources and experience. The participants in this study articulated a shared sense of hardship across several dimensions of their lives. Four key themes emerged from the data: (i) Mental and Emotional Struggles, (ii) Physical Discomfort and Body Image Issues, (iii) Financial Hardships, and (iv) Social Judgment and Pressure. These themes collectively illuminate the psychological, physical, economic, and social burdens carried by first-time teenage mothers as they navigate the early postpartum period.

#### Theme 1: Mental and Emotional Struggles

"Mental and Emotional Struggles" refers to the psychological burden young mothers carry as they attempt to fulfill maternal responsibilities while developing their own emotional maturity. These struggles manifest as intense feelings of fear, helplessness, mood instability, and uncertainty about their capability as a mother. The postpartum period for first-time teenage mothers is emotionally taxing. For many participants, the abrupt transition into motherhood brought waves of overwhelming emotions of fear, sadness, self-doubt, and guilt. These mothers reported moments of sudden crying, irritability, and emotional exhaustion, which were often triggered by the relentless demands of caring for a newborn without sufficient emotional tools or support systems.

*"Minsan masaya ako kasi nandiyon 'yung baby ko, pero maya-maya iiyak na lang ako. Hindi ko rin alam kung bakit." (P1)*

*"Pag umiiyak 'yung baby tapos hindi ko alam ang gagawin, parang gusto ko na lang umiyak. Parang ang hirap-hirap." (P6)*

*"Umiiyak ako kahit tulog si baby. Pakiramdam ko hindi ako sapat na ina." (P1)*

*"Akala ko tapos na 'yung hirap pag nanganak, pero doon pala nag-start 'yung tunay na puyat at pag-aalala." (P6)*

*"May mga gabi na napapatulala na lang ako habang natutulog si baby iniisip ko kung kaya ko pa." (P11)*

Sleep deprivation, hormonal shifts, and social isolation worsened these internal struggles. As some participants admitted, they doubted their capacity to raise a child, often fearing that their inexperience could lead to irreversible mistakes.

*"Parang hindi ko na alam kung tama pa ang ginagawa ko. Gusto ko lang siyang alagaan ng tama, pero kulang pa ako sa alam." (P9)*

The implications of this theme underscore the importance of providing early, age-appropriate emotional support systems for teenage mothers as they simultaneously navigate two major life transitions: adolescence and parenthood. According to Anbi et al. (2024), adolescents are still undergoing critical neurological development, particularly in areas of the brain responsible for emotional regulation and decision-making, which may limit their capacity to cope with stress effectively. Reyes and Camacho (2023) also emphasized that a lack of

emotional support and guidance during the postpartum period can interfere with a mother's ability to assume parenting roles confidently. With that, nurses play a crucial role in supporting and assisting these teenage mothers during the initial phases of motherhood, serving as an advocate and educator for them, especially when dealing with emotional strains such as fear, anxiety, feelings of helplessness and/or hopelessness, mood fluctuations, and low self-esteem.

Nurses may address these concerns through therapeutic communication, such as offering self-silence, providing general leads, and offering health education in postpartum care for both the mother and the baby. By doing so, not only will these teenage mothers be empowered, but they will also increase their sense of self and confidence as they adapt to their new role. Therefore, structured emotional support, whether through family, healthcare providers, or community-based interventions, is essential to help teenage mothers develop stability and confidence in their new maternal identity.

## **Theme 2: Physical Discomfort and Body Image Issues**

Physical discomfort refers to the tangible pain and bodily limitations experienced after childbirth, such as perineal pain, breast tenderness, and fatigue, which hinder mobility and caregiving ability. At the same time, body image issues reflect the psychological toll brought by sudden physical changes that clash with societal beauty standards, leaving many adolescent mothers feeling insecure and ashamed. The physical consequences of childbirth were described as both painful and demoralizing. Participants frequently discussed post-delivery discomfort, fatigue, and the challenges of caring for infants while recovering from childbirth. Pain from stitches, breast soreness, and general body weakness were common.

*"Nahihirapan pa akong umupo ng maayos dahil sa tahi. Pero kahit masakit, kailangang alagaan agad ang baby." (P8)*

*"Walang tulog, walang pahinga. Kahit masakit katawan ko, kailangan kong bumangon." (P2)*

In addition to physical pain, a majority of participants revealed distress over how their bodies had changed. The appearance of stretch marks, sagging skin, and weight gain significantly affected their self-esteem, making them feel unattractive and less confident in their roles as women.

*"Ang laki ng pinagbago ng katawan ko. Dati flat ang tiyan ko, ngayon may stretch marks na. Nahihiya na akong tumingin sa salamin." (P11)*

*"Dati nagso-shorts ako ngayon takot ako magbihis dahil sa stretch marks hanggang kilikili." (P3)*

*"Nung lumaki at nangitim 'yung dibdib ko habang nagpapadede, nahiya ako pati sa partner ko." (P10)*

For young mothers still navigating identity and self-perception, these dual burdens can severely impact self-esteem and maternal confidence. Mizrahi et al. (2022) found that dissatisfaction with one's postpartum body among adolescent mothers is associated with reduced social participation and emotional withdrawal. Similarly, Lantz et al. (2023) emphasized how poor body image negatively influences parenting self-efficacy. The implication of this theme is the need for adolescent-sensitive postpartum care that validates the normalcy of physical changes and provides both physical recovery support and body-positive education to help young mothers adapt confidently to their new identities.

### Theme 3: Financial Hardships

Financial hardships are the economic struggles teenage mothers face in providing for their children's basic needs. These difficulties are often compounded by interrupted education, lack of job opportunities, and dependence on family or partners, which can diminish their sense of independence and self-worth. More than just the inability to afford baby essentials, these hardships reflect systemic barriers that limit adolescent mothers' access to resources and social mobility. The emotional burden of financial insecurity also affects their well-being, often forcing them to choose between necessities such as food, healthcare, and education. The burden of providing for a newborn without a stable income created a persistent source of anxiety for participants. Many were financially reliant on their parents or partners, and some resorted to desperate measures such as rationing milk or delaying healthcare visits.

*"Ang gatas, lampin, sabon, gamot lahat mahal. Minsan wala kaming pambili ng gatas kaya tubig na lang muna." (P10)*

*"Umaasa lang kami sa magulang ko. Wala pa kaming sariling pera." (P3)*

*"Tig-P500 ang check-up, tapos gamot pa. Minsan tinatantiya ko kung bibili kami ng gatas o gamot." (P3)*

*"Madalas tubig muna 'yung bote kasi wala kaming pambili ng formula." (P8)*

*"Nagtitinda ako online habang natutulog si baby para lang may pambili ng diaper." (P10)*

*"Nakakahiya sa magulang na umaasa pa rin ako, pero wala pa akong trabaho." (P5)*

The World Health Organization (2020) reports that adolescent mothers are disproportionately impacted by economic exclusion due to early school dropout and lack of vocational skills. Nove et al. (2023) further explain that this financial vulnerability spans multiple dimensions, including food insecurity, unstable housing, and limited access to maternal health services. The implication of this theme is the need for holistic financial support interventions that address both immediate material needs and long-term economic empowerment. This includes cash grants, free childcare services, and education-to-employment programs tailored specifically for adolescent mothers.

To support maternal role development among adolescent mothers, nurses may help them identify financial interventions. These interventions should go beyond material aid, affirming teenage mothers' role as capable caregivers through economic empowerment and decision-making opportunities; provide integrated services that promote caregiving and autonomy; and foster social connectedness by linking adolescent mothers to peer support groups and mentoring programs.

### Theme 4: Social Judgment and Pressure

Social Judgment and Pressure reflect the societal stigma experienced by adolescent mothers, often rooted in cultural norms that label early motherhood as a moral failure. This stigma manifests in verbal attacks, exclusion, and judgmental attitudes from peers, relatives, and the wider community. These experiences create internalized shame and erode the mother's self-worth, often leading to isolation, avoidance of public spaces, and reluctance to seek needed

support. From a theoretical perspective, Roy's Adaptation Model can be applied here, as it emphasizes the individual's ability to respond and adapt to environmental stimuli. When the environment is judgmental and rejecting, adolescent mothers may develop ineffective coping responses that hinder their social and emotional adjustment. Smith et al. (2020) identify social stigma as a deterrent to accessing maternal and child health services, while Del Rosario et al. (2024) argue that persistent stigma reinforces cycles of inequality and disengagement. Stigma surrounding teenage pregnancy emerged as a powerful psychological burden. Participants shared experiences of being talked about, criticized, or dismissed by peers, neighbors, and even family members. The public nature of these judgments led to embarrassment and social withdrawal.

*"May mga nagsasabi ng 'Sayang ka,' o 'Bata ka pa tapos may anak ka na.' masakit marinig." (P5)*

*"Hindi na rin ako lumalabas masyado. Nahihiya ako kasi parang lahat sila may sinasabi." (P2)*

*"Sinasabi nila bata pa ako na hindi ko alam ginagawa ko. Nakakapanlumo." (P6)*

*"Pag naglalakad ako may mapapatingin sabay bulong. Doon ako natutong hindi na lumabas." (P2)*

*"Na-unfriend ako ng ilang kaklase kasi 'iba' na raw ako." (P9)*

The implication of this theme is the necessity of inclusive and judgment-free environments where young mothers feel safe to engage. Community-based interventions, school reintegration programs, and public education campaigns can promote acceptance, reduce harmful stereotypes, and help adolescent mothers regain their sense of identity and purpose.

To facilitate maternal role development in the face of social stigma, nurses may provide or emphasize the necessity for support interventions to these first-time teenage mothers. It may include empowering adolescent motherhood through public education campaigns, creating peer-led support groups, training healthcare and education providers in nonjudgmental, strengths-based approaches, and promoting visibility and inclusion of young mothers in community, school, and policy spaces.

## **Section 2: Coping mechanisms and sources of strength**

In contrast to the challenges explored in the first section, the narratives of first-time teenage mothers in this study also revealed significant coping strategies and sources of strength that helped them adjust to their new roles. These coping mechanisms were crucial in helping them manage the pressures of early motherhood. Four key themes emerged from the data: (i) Support from Family and Partners, (ii) Personal Acts of Self-Care, (iii) Faith and Spirituality, and (iv) Peer Communication and Shared Experiences. These themes reflect the internal and external strategies adolescent mothers employ to survive, adapt, and grow during the postpartum period.

### **Theme 1: Support from Family and Partners**

Social stigma against adolescent motherhood is a significant barrier to maternal identity formation, emotional resilience, and caregiving confidence. According to Ramona Mercer's Maternal Role Attainment (MRA) Theory, social judgment can hinder the adolescent's progression through critical stages of becoming a mother. This includes undermining the

anticipation and formal stages, disrupting emotional bonding and confidence, isolating as a coping strategy, and creating role conflict and identity disruption. Despite the challenges, family, especially mothers and partners, played a vital role in helping the participants adapt to motherhood. Emotional reassurance, direct caregiving support, and shared responsibility served as buffers against anxiety and burnout.

*"Ang nanay ko ang nagturo kung paano paliguan ang baby, paano magpadede. Kung wala siya, baka hindi ko kayanin." (P2)*

*"Yung partner ko kahit pagod sa trabaho, sinisikap niyang tumulong. Kahit papaano, hindi ko mag-isa lahat." (P10)*

*"Si Mama ang nagturo lahat. Kung wala siya, baka nawala na ako sa sarili ko." (P1)*

*"Kahit pagod si Mama, sinisigurado niyang makaligo ako nang matagal kahit minsan isang linggo." (P2)*

*"Partner ko ang nag-aalalay pag umiiyak si baby sa madaling-araw; nagpapalit siya ng lampin kahit antok na antok." (P10)*

This theme highlights the significant impact of family and partner involvement on adolescent mothers' adjustment to motherhood. Support from loved ones meets both emotional and practical needs, giving young mothers space to rest, learn, and build confidence in their parenting. From the lens of Mercer's Maternal Role Attainment Theory, nurturing support systems help adolescent mothers progress more smoothly in developing their maternal identity. Such interactions contribute positively to their self-concept as capable caregivers. Reyes and Camacho (2023) further support this view, stating that adolescent mothers with strong support networks show improved mental health and a greater commitment to responsible parenting.

Social support is crucial for successful maternal role attainment, and isolation can lead to loss of access to positive reinforcement, delaying or derailing the progression to the personal stage. To facilitate maternal role development in the face of social stigma, support interventions should include normalizing adolescent motherhood through public education campaigns, creating peer-led support groups, training healthcare and education providers in nonjudgmental, strengths-based approaches, and promoting visibility and inclusion of young mothers in community, school, and policy spaces.

## **Theme 2: Personal Acts of Self-Care**

"Personal Acts of Self-Care" refers to the individualized strategies young mothers use to maintain a sense of balance, well-being, and personal identity amidst the overwhelming responsibilities of early motherhood. These activities serve as brief but meaningful forms of emotional regulation and stress relief, enabling adolescent mothers to reconnect with themselves. In the context of Mercer's Maternal Role Attainment Theory, these self-care moments help preserve the adolescent's pre-maternal identity, which is crucial for healthy maternal role development. Several participants described small yet meaningful rituals they adopted to care for themselves amidst the demands of motherhood. These moments of solitude or expression allowed them to decompress and retain a sense of identity beyond their maternal role.

*"Pag tulog si baby, sinisigurado kong makapag-kape man lang ako o makinig ng music. Kahit saglit lang." (P8)*

*"Minsan nagsusulat ako ng nararamdaman ko sa notebook. Parang dun ko nalalabas lahat ng pagod at lungkot." (P5)*

*"Kapag tulog si baby, nanonood ako kahit kalahating episode ng K-drama. Parang nababawas ang bigat." (P1)*

*"Nag-mobile games ako para mailabas stress at maalala ko na 'teenager' pa rin ako kahit papaano." (P4)*

*"Minsan lumalabas ako kasama friends para kumain kahit isang oras lang." (P3)*

As Reyes and Camacho (2023) point out, even modest self-care practices can mitigate emotional fatigue and enhance psychological resilience. Anbi et al. (2024) further emphasize that when adolescent mothers learn to attend to their own needs, they become more emotionally available and responsive caregivers. The implication of this theme is that maternal support programs must promote and normalize self-care for teenage mothers, not as indulgent, but as a practical and necessary strategy for sustaining their well-being and parenting capacity.

Self-care activities provide emotional space for young moms to process stress and reflect on their maternal journey, allowing them to reset emotionally and approach caring with greater sensitivity and intentionality. They also improve role performance and bonding, allowing women to be more attentive and present with their children instead of operating on weariness or burnout. Taking the effort to care for oneself promotes a sense of control and agency, which boosts maternal confidence. These micro-decisions reaffirm the mother's ability to meet both her own needs and those of her child, fostering a greater sense of competence and empowerment.

### **Theme 3: Faith and Spirituality**

Faith provides inner strength and helps adolescent mothers deal with emotional upheaval, self-doubt, and anxiety. Spiritual practices help teenagers see themselves as capable individuals, strengthened by a higher power. Faith helps adolescent mothers find meaning in their challenges, leading to growth and resilience. Religious communities and spiritual practices provide social support, thereby reducing feelings of isolation. Faith-based bonds give a sense of belonging and shared experiences. Regular spiritual practice promotes purpose and mental clarity, which, in turn, improve psychological well-being and alleviate the cognitive burden of motherhood. This emphasis on purpose enables adolescent women to integrate their maternal role into their emerging personality. Spirituality functioned as a powerful coping mechanism, offering participants hope, strength, and a sense of control in uncertain times. Prayer, in particular, was a widely shared practice.

*"Lagi akong nagdadasal. Doon ako humihingi ng lakas lalo na pag hindi ko na kaya." (P4)*

*"Sinasabi ko kay Lord, tulungan Niya ako. Kasi alam ko, hindi ko ito kakayanin mag-isa." (P6)*

*"Kapag wala na akong makausap, lumuluhod na lang ako at umiiyak kay Lord." (P6)*

*"Dasal at rosaryo gabing-gabi doon ko nilalabas takot at pagod." (P11)*

Nurses are professionally and ethically positioned to holistically assess and address the faith and spiritual needs of teenage first-time mothers by actively listening, respecting their

diverse belief systems, and facilitating connections to appropriate spiritual resources, thereby fostering their resilience and comprehensive well-being during this transformative period. This implies that faith should be recognized as a legitimate, culturally relevant form of psychological support, and that health and community programs should consider incorporating spiritual support services when working with adolescent mothers.

#### **Theme 4: Peer Communication and Shared Experiences**

"Peer Communication and Shared Experiences" refers to the emotional and informational benefits that adolescent mothers derive from connections with peers who are undergoing similar experiences. It aligns with Roy's Adaptation Model, particularly in the interdependence mode, which emphasizes the role of supportive relationships in promoting adaptive responses. When adolescent mothers can relate to others facing similar circumstances, they build emotional resilience and parenting confidence. These interactions foster a sense of shared identity, reduce feelings of alienation, and offer practical parenting insights. Peer conversations validate their struggles and create a space where they feel heard and understood. Engaging with fellow young mothers created a sense of belonging and emotional release. These interactions provided a safe space for mutual understanding and shared wisdom.

*"May kaibigan din akong may baby. Pag nagkwe-kwentuhan kami, parang gumagaan ang pakiramdam ko." (P7)*

*"Sa ibang nanay ko lang naramdaman na normal pala 'yung pinagdadaan ko." (P5)*

*"Nag-chat group kami ng mga first-time mom; doon kami nagtatanungan kung ano normal." (P7)*

Engaging with fellow young mothers created a sense of belonging and emotional release. The participants reflected on the relief they felt in knowing they were not alone. These interactions provided a safe space for mutual understanding and shared wisdom. Nove et al. (2023) affirm that adolescent peer networks improve access to health knowledge and enhance emotional well-being, especially in communities with limited formal support. The implication of this theme is the value of structured peer-support groups and digital communities that provide adolescent mothers with safe, judgment-free spaces to share, learn, and grow together as they navigate the early stages of motherhood.

Peer interactions are key resources for emotional resilience, providing a space where young mothers can express their emotions safely, reflect on their challenges, and receive reciprocal validation. This encourages individuals to develop adaptive coping mechanisms by demonstrating that their experiences are shared by others, thereby minimizing emotional isolation. Hence, nurses play a pivotal role in creating and facilitating opportunities for peer communication and shared experiences among teenage first-time mothers. This vital role reduces feelings of isolation, cultivates strong social support networks, and ultimately enhances their coping strategies and overall confidence as they navigate the complexities of new motherhood. By fostering a safe environment for young mothers to connect, share practical wisdom, and validate each other's experiences, nurses empower them with a crucial sense of community and the practical tools needed to thrive in their new roles. This social connectedness not only increases emotional well-being but also alleviates the psychological stress associated with feeling like an outcast in society or in traditional parenting circles.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

In this study, the experiences that were highlighted were mental and psychological challenges, physical and body image issues, financial hardships, and social and judgmental pressure. These were some of the key concepts that the respondents elaborated on. These challenges were managed through conversations with close support people, financial aid from parents and other relatives, and personal reflection through prayer and faith.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of social support and on the need not to overlook emotional well-being. Nevertheless, it should be addressed as an important factor in postpartum health and recovery. Psychological support, like providing comfort and offering help, already impacts the experiences of mothers in how they experience postpartum recovery. Methods like prayer also provide a sense of comfort and a medium for personal reflection, especially in difficult situations. Postpartum health and recovery encompasses not just physical health but also emotional and mental comfort. Often unseen as a necessary part of recovery, it should be recognized as the other half of safe, healthy, and fast recovery during the postpartum period.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings that underscore the complex postpartum experiences of first-time adolescent mothers in Barangay Salvacion, it is strongly recommended that a comprehensive and integrated support program be developed and implemented. This initiative must transcend fragmented services by adopting a socio-ecological approach that acknowledges the interwoven physical, psychological, social, and economic challenges confronting this vulnerable demographic.

First, health practitioners should incorporate comprehensive, evidence-based health education programs to combat the stigma faced by teenage mothers. These programs should address socio-emotional and psychological impacts, challenge misconceptions, and promote empathy, nonjudgmental support, and a healthcare environment without discrimination being the center of stigma and poor psychosocial and psychological support. Second, psychosocial and psychological support helps teenage mothers understand that their journey does not start and end within themselves alone as first-time mothers. These efforts promote economic empowerment and anti-stigma initiatives, fostering inclusive communities. Third, adolescent mothers face significant physical and psychological challenges after childbirth. Health practitioners, family members, and support networks should prioritize targeted interventions to address these challenges. Comprehensive psychological support is needed to combat feelings of alienation, self-consciousness, and anxiety related to maternal competence.

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