

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Kids Having Kids: Perspectives of Adolescents and Young Adults of Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines on Teenage Pregnancy

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Abstract: The study focused on establishing the knowledge, attitude, and behavior of Grade 12 learners about teenage pregnancy (TP). The study was conducted among students from different high schools in Los Baños, Laguna. As a municipality, Los Baños has manifested a relatively high case of TP over the last 10 years from 2009 to 2018. A mixed method was used, which started with focus group discussions (FGD) that were geared towards survey implementation. Three FGDs were completed with a mixture of male and female participants. The survey had a total of 42 respondents. Results showed that students had high knowledge scores about TP and a mix of responses to the various attitude and behavior statements presented to them. The survey results and analysis show that knowledge scores and attitudes have a negative monotonic association. Based on the theory of reasoned action, the role of peers and the Internet are crucial to the attitude and behavior of the youth regarding teenage pregnancy. Institutional support is needed at the municipal and national levels to address the burgeoning concern on TP. A concerted effort of the family, the school, the community, the local government, and the youth community will also be needed to come up with cohesive and appropriate interventions that genuinely address this phenomenon.

Keywords: teenage pregnancy, Internet, Los Baños, referent individual, comprehensive sexuality education

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, teenage pregnancy had already been a big concern in the Philippines, declaring it a national social emergency in June 2021 (Cunanan, 2021). House Bill 4742 (2017) and Senate Bill 1482 (2017) described teenage pregnancy (TP) as girls ages 15–19 who are pregnant for the first time or are already mothers. However, the 2018 Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data recorded live births among Filipino adolescents as young as 10 years old. This makes the TP phenomenon very alarming. TP cases continued to increase in the country and were highest across Asia, as cited by

the 2016 United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) report (Nortajuddin, 2021). What makes it even more complicated is that in the January 2020 Policy Brief by the UNPF Philippines, only 3% is fathered by men of the same age group, implying that the rest of the cases might be due to coercion and unequal power relations between young girls and older men (Executive Order No. 141, 2021).

The study by Cook and Cameron (2015, p. 243) emphasized how teenage pregnancy can be a “marker of social and economic disadvantage” and may lead to emotional and physical health problems.

Social implications of early childbearing are linked to social disadvantage, which subsequently leads to the social exclusion of teen parents (Gibb et al., 2015). Popay (2010) reiterated that these disadvantages increase social exclusion, which may lead to health-damaging circumstances. Among the young mothers and fathers, the former suffer the most consequences, including impediments in education, health risks, developmental crises, and family constraints. SmithBattle (1992) identified the feelings of the most disadvantaged teenage mothers who tend to be desolate as they anticipate a tough future to fulfill their roles. Hoffman (2006) identified various social, academic, and economic costs for children of teen mothers, including, but not limited to, higher rates of abuse and neglect, increased rates of incarceration during adolescence or early 20s, repetition of school grades, higher dropout rates, and increased risk of poor health. In fact, in the 2020 Social Weather Stations Survey, 59% of the Filipino respondents agree that TP is the most important problem that Filipino women are facing as it can lead to maternal mortality, premature birth, stillbirth, and all other health risks, including mental and emotional risks (Cunanan, 2021).

Society loses the potential economic contributions of these teenage mothers when they fail to reach their full educational and occupational potential. Early motherhood tends to interrupt the long period of education and training required in developed societies. Mangino (2008) identified that teenage mothers drop out of school to assume their mothering role. A 2016 study conducted by the UNPF Philippines estimated a total of 33 billion pesos lost in lifetime earnings due to early childbearing of women ages 18–19 years old (Gita-Carlos, 2021). Former Laguna 3rd District Representative Sol Aragon pointed out that “teenage pregnancy perpetuates the cycle of poverty and inequality” as the majority of teen parents drop out of school, foregoing the economic opportunities that better education might provide (Porcalla & Crisostomo, 2019, par. 9).

As the country faces the burgeoning issue of TP, the signing of Executive Order No. 141 (2021) is very timely. Executive Order No. 141 makes a national priority the implementation of measures to address the root causes of the rising number of TP. The Department of Education (DepEd) is pivotal in the quest for solutions to addressing TP concerns.

The initiatives being undertaken by DepEd are worth mentioning to emphasize the whole-of-nation approach that we have to adopt as far as TP is concerned. During an event spearheaded by the Department of Social Development Services of the College of Human Ecology of the University of the Philippines Los Baños last May 4, 2022, a DepEd representative mentioned piloting the implementation of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in the school year 2020–2021 to comply with the Republic Act 10354 or the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law.

The report prepared by the Los Baños Municipal Health Office (MHO-LB) revealed that TP cases increased from 184 in 2009 to 327 cases in 2018, making TP phenomenon a growing concern of the municipality (MHO-LB, 2018). This study aims to establish the knowledge of the youth about TP and explain their attitudes and behavior towards this phenomenon. By doing so, appropriate interventions can be designed specifically at the municipal level to address TP.

Methods

The research used the mixed-method or the sequential exploratory design. The combination of qualitative and quantitative research designs was used to establish the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of the youth participants regarding TP. For the qualitative research design, three focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted among the purposively selected participants to get their group norms about TP. The criteria in choosing the participants were (a) currently enrolled in Grade 12, (b) should be studying in one of the high schools in Los Baños, and (c) should reside in a barangay that is among the top three high cases of teenage pregnancy in Los Baños. Moreover, in FGD 1, an additional criterion was used: should be a member of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) to get the insights of these youth leaders on TP issues. FGD 1 involved 12 participants from the SK. FGD 2 involved nine male participants, whereas FGD 3 had 12 female participants. An informed consent form was provided to the participants before the FGD started. The FGD revolved around four questions (see Appendix A for the questions formulated). Thematic analysis was done to capture the perspectives of the youth on TP. The FGD themes were used as the basis for the construction of

the survey questionnaire. Moreover, the FGD data were used to further explain the survey results.

For the quantitative part, a survey questionnaire was developed and administered to randomly selected students from one high school in Los Baños. This high school was chosen because (a) it is located in one of the topmost barangays with high cases of TP and (b) it has a high number of Grade 12 enrollees. In the Philippines, Grade 12 students usually fall within the age range of 18–19 years old and, by definition, are part of the TP age group. The questionnaire captured three major aspects of TP: knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. For the knowledge statements, the study adopted the pre/post tests used by MHO-LB with their initiated program called *YOUth on the Go* implemented in 2017. The attitude and behavior statements were based on the FGD results and literature reviews, particularly the 2013 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS4) (DRDF & UPPI, 2015).

The reliability of the survey instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The result of Cronbach's alpha showed reliable results with an overall alpha of 0.734 for attitude statements and 0.767 for behavior statements.

The school head and selected faculty of the identified high school were met by the research team to explain the purpose of the study and how the survey will be implemented. The school gave a complete list of Grade 12 students, and this list was used as the basis for developing the sampling design. The sample size was calculated using a 5% level of significance, a 3% margin of error, and assumed a 50% probability of success to achieve the highest possible minimum sample size. It yielded a sample size of 74 under a simple random sampling design. Using the design effect for stratified random sampling with gender as a stratification variable, the minimum sample size should be 37. For this study, a total of 42 students were included in the survey. Answers were processed using R software. Estimates of proportions and measures of associations were used in the analyses of the data.

Results

Respondents' Profile

Table 1 presents the profile of the survey respondents. Data reveals that 43% of the Grade 12 students were female, 45% were males, and 12% identified

themselves as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. The majority of these students were 18 years old (86%), and they live with their parents (82%). Most of the respondents (82%) knew a teen parent, and the majority of these teen parents happened to be their schoolmates (62%). More than half (54%) of the respondents were engaged in the school's extracurricular activities and almost one-third (28%) in community activities. More than half of them (53%) were in a relationship.

Table 1

Profile of Grade 12 Students, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines

Variable	Percentage (%)	Standard Error (%)
Gender		
Female	43	3.4
Male	45	0.05
LGBTQIA+	12	3.4
Age		
18 years old	86	3.6
19 years old	14	3.6
Relationship with teen parent* (those who knows teen parent, 71.96%)		
Schoolmate	62	6.1
Peer	50	6.3
Family (Parent/Sibling)	21	5.1
Neighbor	17	4.7
Others	3	2.2
Other Profiles		
Living with Parents	82	4.1
Living with a Relative	16	3.7
Not living with Parent/Relative	24	1.7
Attended night classes	12	3.6
Knows a teen parent	72	5
Participate in the school's extracurricular activities	54	5.5
Participate in community activities	28	4.9
In boy-girl relationship	53	5.3

*Multiple responses

Youth's Knowledge About Teenage Pregnancy

Results showed that the youth respondents were knowledgeable about TP. As shown in Table 2, the mean knowledge score is lower than the median knowledge score, which means that the majority of the students have a knowledge score above 7 (out of 10 statements). There was no respondent who received a score lower than 5, and there were respondents who received a perfect score of 10 (Table 2).

Table 2

Distribution of Grade 12 Students' Knowledge Scores in Teenage Pregnancy, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines

Variable	Knowledge Score
Minimum	5
Mean	7.72
Standard Error of the mean	0.14
Median	8
Maximum	10

Table 3 shows the knowledge questions given to the respondents and the percentage who answered each item correctly. The majority of the respondents (77%–98%) answered eight out of 10 questions correctly.

Almost all respondents obtained the correct answers in three knowledge statements on TP. They know that unplanned teenage pregnancies mean additional expenses for the families (98%), that teen parents will most likely drop out of school (95%), and that TP may lead to various health issues (91%). The knowledge that teen parents will most likely leave school was clearly articulated during the FGD, and participants even pointed out that this will usually be the teenage mother. Participant 4 (FGD 2) summarized the discussion on the effect on the mother by saying: *“lugi po lagi ang babae”* [girls will always be disadvantaged]. On the other hand, Participant 8 (FGD 2) shared the effect on the male teen parent, saying that *“Maaapektuhan po pag-aaral nya kasi magtatrabaho sya para mabuhay po nya yung bata”* [his studies will be affected since he has to work to support his child].

The knowledge test also revealed, as shown in Table 3, that more than 85% of the respondents know the following: TP may lead to the early death of the mother and child (86%), the annual TP cases in Los

Baños always exceeded 300 from 2014–2018 (88%), and the LB-MHO has initiated campaigns regarding TP for the past five years (88%). With regard to the possible early death of the mother, the FGD participants explained that this is likely because the mother is still very young and, as such, their bodies are not yet ready to give birth.

Furthermore, 77% of the respondents know that the best way to avoid TP is through abstinence and that one of the plans of the government is to add sexuality education in our elementary curriculum (Table 3).

With regard to abstinence, the FGD among the SK leaders and male participants mentioned that during past camps and seminars, this method was emphasized to prevent TP. However, both FGDs raised the issue that the message sometimes is “not consistent” [participant 11, FGD1]. As Participant 5 (FGD 2) put it, the message is: *“pwede mag-sex basta mag-iingat lang”* [you can have sex but just practice safe sex]. On the other hand, participants from FGD 2 and 3 articulated that if there is something they remember about school seminars on TP, it was how important abstinence is for TP prevention.

Surprisingly, the two knowledge statements that were not true scored quite low in the survey. When asked if TP in the Philippines pertains to the youth who get pregnant at the age of 17–21 years old, only 51% recognized that this is not true (Table 3). The other knowledge statement that scored low (21%) was whether there is already an existing Philippine law that takes care of the problem of TP. Most of these youth respondents (79%) thought that there are already existing laws to mitigate TP in the country.

Attitude of the Youth on Teenage Pregnancy

Several statements were presented to the respondents to capture their attitudes toward TP (Table 4). Of the seven statements, only the statement “I am comfortable discussing sex-related issues with my peers” had the highest level of agreement among the respondents (58%). As a case in point, during the FGD among the male participants, they referred to peer pressure as one of the factors why TP is on the rise.

Almost half of the sample (47%) agreed with the statement, “I am not comfortable discussing sex-related issues with my parents” (Table 4).

Furthermore, one of the FGDs linked family

Table 3*Percentage of Students Who Got Correct Answers in Knowledge Statements, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines*

Knowledge Statements	Correct Answer	Percentage
There is an existing Philippine law that takes care of the problem of teenage pregnancy.	False	21
In the Philippines, teen pregnancy pertains to the youth who get pregnant at the age of 17-21 years old.	False	51
The best way to avoid teen pregnancy is abstinence.	True	77
One of the plans of the Philippine government is to add sex education to the elementary curriculum.	True	77
Teen pregnancy may lead to the early death of the mother and child.	True	86
The annual teen pregnancy cases in Los Banos always exceeded 300 from 2014 to 2018.	True	88
The Municipal Health Office of Los Banos has initiated campaigns for the past five years to raise awareness of teen pregnancy.	True	88
Engaging in sex at an early age may lead to various health problems.	True	91
Majority of the youth who get pregnant drop out of school.	True	95
Unplanned pregnancies incur additional daily expenses for both families of the teen parents.	True	98

Table 4*Percentage of Respondents Who Agreed With the Attitude Statements, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines*

Attitude Questions	Percentage
I do not care what others say if I become a teen parent.	7
I do not see anything wrong with being a teen parent.	14
I do not feel obligated to marry if I get pregnant or get somebody pregnant.	16
I do not see anything wrong with premarital sex committed during teenage years.	23
I believe the internet gives me enough information for me to avoid being a teen parent.	28
I am not comfortable discussing sex-related issues with my parents.	47
I am comfortable discussing sex-related issues with my peers.	58

problems to teenage pregnancy. They said that the parents are not spending time with their children, pushing the youth to seek affection outside of the family, which leads to more intimate relationships with their partners that eventually lead to early sexual engagement and TP. They also mentioned that most of the time, the parents are out of the house, providing physical space for intimacy, which may again lead to early sexual engagement and TP.

Only a third of the respondents agreed with the attitude statement: I believe the Internet gives me enough information for me to avoid being a teen parent (28%; Table 4). Moreover, during the FGD, Participant 4 mentioned that the Internet also makes it very easy for them to access porn sites even if they are minors.

On the other hand, as shown in Table 4, the least agreement among respondents can be seen in the following four attitude statements: “I do not care what

others say if I become a teen parent” (7%), “I do not see anything wrong with being a teen parent” (14%), “I do not feel obligated to marry if I got pregnant or got somebody pregnant” (16%), and “I do not see anything wrong with premarital sex committed during teenager years” (23%).

The study also revealed that the knowledge and attitude of the respondents have a negative monotonic association (see Appendix B for the detailed results of the analysis). As the knowledge score increases, the attitude score decreases. A higher attitude score means leaning towards a more liberated attitude, and a lower attitude score leans towards a more conservative attitude. Hence, as students’ knowledge of TP decreases, they show a more liberated attitude towards TP.

Behavior of the Youth Regarding Teenage Pregnancy

Eight statements were presented to the respondents to capture their behavior towards TP (Table 5). The statement “I normally access the internet to get sex-related information” was the only one that received a high level of agreement (58%) among the survey respondents. Furthermore, some respondents agreed that they use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to plan how to be sexually intimate with their partner (12%). In both behavior statements, the power of the Internet and ICT over the youth’s sexual behavior is evident. The same behavior was also mentioned by the FGD participants.

“Mas malaya na po naming nagagawa ang lahat lalo na at dumagdag po ang gadgets, ang mga technologies” [We are more free to do everything especially now that we have gadgets and other technologies]. (Participant 5, FGD 2)

“Gawa ng makabagong teknolohiya, mas natutukso po tayo sa mga nakikita natin” [Because of new technology, we get more tempted because of what we get to watch].

(Participant 3, FGD 3)

“Yung panonood ng pornography (gamit ang gadgets), ginagawang libangan....Maeenganyo sila na gawin yun. Maghahanap sila ng partner” [Watching pornography using gadgets become

a past time...they were encouraged to do what they see/watch. They will eventually look for a partner]. (Participant 8, FGD3)

This behavior was all the more evident when some of the participants said that they do not ask for help from their parents (16%) or their school counselors (27%) when they have issues with their partners or on sexual matters. Other behavioral statements with less than 10% agreement among respondents reveal that the youth are sexually intimate at their age: “I engage in sexual activities with the opposite sex” (7%), “I do not practice safe sex with my partner” (7%), and “My first sexual encounter emanates from curiosity” (9%).

It is also alarming that the FGD participants mentioned that the youth engage in premarital sex because of the following reasons: they lack parental guidance, the presence of areas in LB that are “*masukal*” [brushy and dense areas], and because of sex libido which they described as “*nag-uumaapaw*” [overflowing], “*nasa cloud 9 ka*” [you feel you are in Cloud 9] or “*gigil na po*” [great sexual urge]. However, a more alarming FGD result was how harassment is common in intimacy among these youth. Participants mentioned male partners threatening to break up with their partners if they did not engage in sex. There were also cases of much older male partners enticing underage students to be intimate.

Only 5% agreed that they drink alcohol to loosen up. The connection between alcohol and TP was explained in the FGD. Participants mentioned that when intoxicated: “*dun nagaganap ang mga milagro*” [that is when sexual intimacy happens].

Discussion

Knowledge and Attitude: Monotonic Association

As mentioned in the results, the study established a negative monotonic association between knowledge and attitude among the surveyed respondents. The higher the knowledge scores obtained by the respondents, the lower attitude scores were obtained, leaning towards a more conservative attitude regarding TP. This has been evident as only 7% of the surveyed respondents said that they do not care about what others say if they become pregnant, and they do not practice safe sex with their partners. Only 14% said that they do not see anything wrong with being a teen

Table 5*Percentage of Respondents Who Agreed With the Behavior Statements, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines*

Behavior question	Percentage
I drink alcohol to loosen up.	5
I engage in sexual activities with the opposite sex.	7
I do not practice safe sex with my partner.	7
My first sexual encounter stemmed from curiosity.	9
I use ICT (phone, messenger, etc.) to plan how to be sexually intimate with my partner.	12
When I have issues with my partner, I do not discuss them or ask for help from my parents.	17
I have not sought the help of our school guidance counselor on sexual matters.	28
I normally access the internet to get sex-related information.	58

parent. Meanwhile, only 16% of them said that they do not feel obligated to marry if they get pregnant or get somebody pregnant.

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) by Montano and Kasprzyk (2008) highlighted the importance of attitude and subjective norms that influence behavioral intention and eventually effecting changes in the behavior among the youth. According to Montano and Kasprzyk, “attitudes refer to the beliefs and feelings about certain behaviors and the values attached to the outcome of that behavior,” while subjective norms refer to the “perceptions of social norms, including a belief about whether referent individuals approve or disapprove of a behavior and the individual’s motivation to comply with these normative beliefs” (Dippel et al., 2017, p. 3). Based on the results of the study, the attitude among some of the youth respondents may be a cause of concern. It should be noted that 23% of the respondents said that they do not see anything wrong with premarital sex committed during their teenage years. This response was validated by YAFS4 report that over the past 20 years, from 1994 to 2013, the youth seem to be less supportive of the traditional beliefs regarding virginity, premarital sex, and premarital conception among the youth (Natividad & Kabamalan, 2016). Moreover, 47% of the respondents said that they are not comfortable discussing sex with their parents, while 58% said that they are more comfortable discussing sex-related issues with their peers. As attitudes among the youth are changing and peers have been playing an important role as referent individuals in the teenage pregnancy

discourses, TRA would argue about the role of the parents in reinforcing the normative beliefs among the youth to address TP concerns, as 47% of the surveyed respondents are not comfortable discussing sex-related issues with their parents.

The Role of Parents in the TP Phenomenon

The attitude and behavior of the youth may be influenced by specific factors that they regard as important during this time of age. Based on the result of the study, the majority of the surveyed youth are more comfortable discussing sex-related issues with their peers, and they normally access the Internet to get sex-related information. The data gathered by MHO-LB in their 2018 report underscored that the majority of the respondents said that sex-related information is not being discussed within the family, and almost half of the respondents rely on their male partners or boyfriends for sex-related information, while almost a quarter of them get this information from their friends (MHO-LB, 2018). What makes this behavior problematic is that the information shared among peers might not necessarily be the kind of information that is needed to prevent TP. On the contrary, discussing sex-related issues among their peers might lead to peer pressure, where individuals of the same age group actively encourage or urge one another to act or think in the same or certain manner (Santor et al., 2000). In fact, Cordero (2018) referred to peer pressure as one of the common causes of early sexual engagement that might lead to TP.

As highlighted by TRA, the changing attitude of the youth about teenage pregnancy because of the dominant role of peers as referent individuals has greatly influenced the intention of the youth to engage in sexual activity at an early age. The need to inform the youth regarding the ramifications and complexities of the TP phenomenon is truly warranted. Referring to the 2018 LB-MHO report, some TP cases were as young as 13 years old who got pregnant for the first time. Some of them confessed to entering a relationship as young as 11 and 12 years old. Intervention, as far as providing them with the right attitude through a CSE, and strengthening the presence of referent individuals to play a key role in establishing normative beliefs may be pivotal in addressing the TP phenomenon in the country.

If the roles of the peers are very important in shaping the attitude and behavior of our youth regarding TP as validated by the FGDs and the survey, the family should also provide a safe space in providing sexuality-related information to educate their children properly. If the children get pregnant as early as 10 years old, there is definitely a remission on the part of the family that exacerbates our dilemma on TP. We all know that our culture remains very restrictive about discussing sex. If this is perpetuated, who will take the responsibility of properly educating the youth? Without the parents' active role in guiding our youth as regards sexuality matters, TP will remain a big challenge. We cannot just put all the burden of responsibility on peers and the schools, more so on the Internet, to give proper sexuality education to our youth. It is high time for a commitment on the part of the institution of the family to share the burden of responsibility so we can genuinely address the issue. Instrumentalities to support the parents should be in place to capacitate them in handling the sensitivities of the issue.

The Role of the Internet in the Rising Cases of Teenage Pregnancy

Because 58% of the surveyed respondents said that they normally access the Internet to get sex-related information, we have to revisit the significant role that the Internet is playing as far as the TP phenomenon is concerned. Based on the 2015 National Youth Assessment Study (NYAS), living amidst the information age emphasized the role of social media in terms of influencing the attitudes and beliefs of the youth (Cendeña, 2017). According to Laguna

(2016), the Internet, in general, has given the youth the opportunity to access information discreetly apart from the information they get from their peers. By depending on the Internet for such information and activities, the guiding role of parents, school counselors, or even their friends is then diminished as the youth rely only on themselves and the Internet.

Accessing information through the Internet works both ways. It can either educate and empower the youth or harm and devalue them, especially if we consider the quality of the digital media content that is uploaded on the Internet (National Youth Commission, 2015). The study of Pepito et al. (2022) highlighted the relevance of online messages on family planning/contraception. Youth's exposure to such information via the Internet and social media might lead to decreased TP cases, provided that online messages are more "context-specific and tailored to its demographic groups" (Pepito et al., 2022, p. 8). Determining the reliability of online sources is imperative to "understand who, how, and why digital media is produced" because contents are "neither value-free nor are they always truthful" (Buckingham et al., 2008, as cited in National Youth Commission, 2015, p. 49).

As the role of ICT, particularly the Internet, is getting more prevalent in providing information about sex and TP, we can only encourage the youth to use ICT responsibly through campaigns on digital literacy. We can also tap institutional support to come up with an innovation on how to secure the integrity of digital media content that will educate and empower rather than harm and devalue our youth. This remains a big challenge for all of us as we live in the Information Age. Moreover, we have never attempted to reassess the ramifications caused by the Internet in our society, specifically among the youth, as we just accepted the disjuncture it offers by default (Calara, 2020). After 30 years of evolving negative consequences, we need to finally recognize the social costs of Internet use and provide mechanisms to stem such consequences, particularly on TP.

The Role of Local Government and the Sangguniang Kabataan in Addressing TP

Teenage pregnancy as a national priority in the Philippines necessitates corresponding action on the local level as cases remain constantly high in Los Baños. Based on the FGDs and survey conducted with the youth respondents, the knowledge scores obtained

in the 10 statements used in the survey are quite high. However, with an average of 344 reported cases of TP in the last five years, the Los Baños LGU officials need to revisit their priority in terms of what needs to be promoted among the youth. The program YOUth on the Go that was initiated in 2017 aims to develop youth peer educators who will guide and educate other adolescents on matters pertaining to adolescent reproductive health and other risk-taking behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and other substance abuse (Dr. Alvin Isidoro, personal communication, March 18, 2021). As 58% of the surveyed respondents said they are more comfortable discussing sex-related issues with their peers, it will be very critical to develop youth peer educators who will guide and educate other adolescents on TP matters and other risk-taking behaviors. Sustaining YOUth on the GO might be a worthwhile endeavor as far as the municipality of Los Baños is concerned.

While providing our peer educators with the right information about sexuality and TP, there should be a way to promote peer counseling either through schools or the Sangguniang Kabataan. Budget provision in establishing such intervention is stipulated in Section 3 of Executive Order 141 (2021), encouraging SKs to develop interventions to arrest and prevent all known causes of adolescent pregnancies and support adolescent mothers through the preparation of their Local Youth Development Plan (LYDP) and the Annual Investment Program (AIP). Moreover, the negative monotonic association between knowledge scores and the attitude of the respondents should also give us a hint to push for more information awareness campaigns regarding this issue to effect some attitudinal and behavioral changes among our youth.

Institutional and Policy Support

The study by Dippel et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of developing a curriculum that will educate the youth about the implications of teenage pregnancy. DepEd started to include Reproductive Health Law and gender education in the curriculum of learners starting at the age of 10 in response to the recorded early pregnancy among 10-year-old students in the Philippines (Porcalla & Crisostomo, 2019). The CSE was rolled out and piloted in certain regions of the country in the school year 2020–2021. CSE has been implemented in selected public schools in Regions I, VII, and XI. Because the implementation

of CSE is fairly recent, its impact has yet to be seen among grade school students. DepEd believes that the adult population should recognize the prevalence and seriousness of TP matters while making sure that students will be equipped to be responsible enough as far as sexuality education is concerned.

In addition, bills seeking to create a national program of action through the creation of the National Program on the Prevention of Teenage Pregnancy (NPPTP) will provide proper technological education training for different school personnel about CSE. Institutional support at the local and national levels through programs and legislation will mainstream interventions in response to teenage pregnancy as a national social emergency. Synergy and sustainability will be needed from different government agencies to lower or even eradicate TP cases.

Limitations

Because the study was implemented during the lockdown period, there were some adjustments made that limited the scope of the study. Only one school participated in the FGD and another school for the survey implementation. More schools, including private schools, could have been engaged to represent other barangays with relatively high cases of TP. Respondents were mostly from 18–19 years of age. It would be ideal to obtain responses from lower age brackets to determine appropriate intervention among students 17 years old and below.

Conclusion

As TP has become a national social emergency, the right time has come for us to gather all our efforts to provide better and more cohesive interventions on TP matters. Different social institutions such as the family, the community, the school, the LGUs, and the youth themselves have various roles to take.

Information and awareness campaigns to present the ramifications of TP among the youth must be sustained through different programs initiated by the local government. Training of peer educators can be sustained as the youth expressed their bias in discussing sex-related issues among their peers rather than their families or guidance counselors in schools.

Strengthening the role of the Sangguniang Kabataan as stipulated in Section 3 of Executive Order No.

141 (2021) must be ensured so that appropriate interventions to arrest and prevent all known causes of TP can be included in their Local Youth Development Plan (LYDP) and the Annual Investment Program (AIP).

Equally important is for families to play an active role in establishing the relevance of normative beliefs in addressing the TP phenomenon. Although we are tapping the support of the peer educators and SKs in helping out the youth to reassess their attitudes and behavior regarding TP, the institution of the family as a nurturing referent individual should also contribute to providing safe spaces for the youth to discuss and share sex-related issues and concerns.

Recognizing the fact that we are now living in the Information Age, the role of ICT and the Internet is also crucial in addressing the TP phenomenon. Online messages regarding family planning/contraception that are context-specific and tailored to the targeted audience might help address the TP cases. Digital literacy should also be incorporated into the CSE curriculum to provide safeguards from the unintended and negative consequences of Internet use.

Lastly, institutional support at the local and national levels through budget provisions, programs, and legislation must be ensured to sustain our effort to mainstream interventions in response to TP. Synergy and sustainability should be ensured in all these dynamics so that all stakeholders will provide an equal share of responsibility and accountability to lower or even eradicate TP cases. If we truly want the youth to become part of our nation-building, it is incumbent upon us to give them the capacity to make the right decisions and provide them all the opportunity to be heard.

Declaration of Ownership

This report is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

None.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by our institution.

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APPENDIX A

FGD Interview Guide

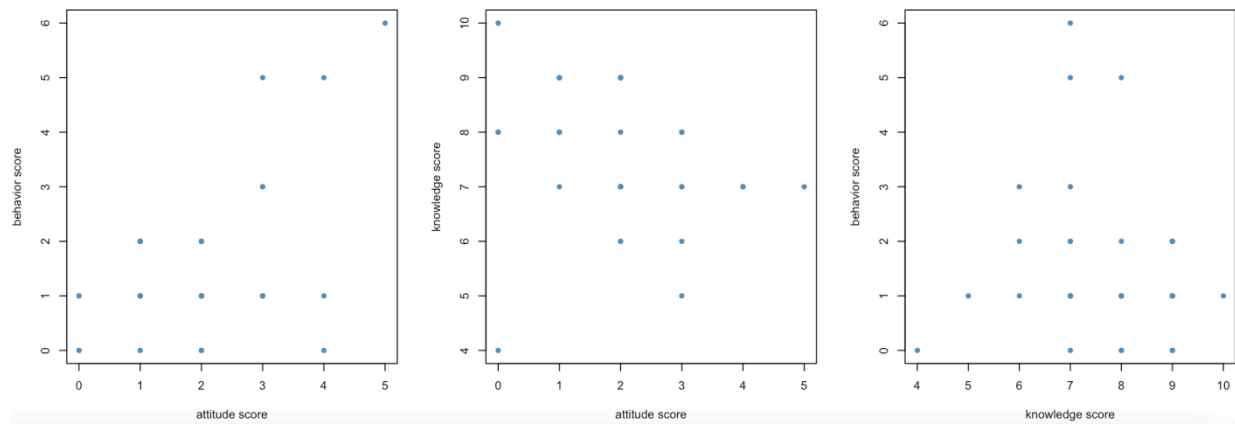
1. Bilang mga millenial, ano ang pananaw ninyo tungkol sa teenage pregnancy?
2. Ano sa tingin ninyo ang dahilan kung bakit may teenage pregnancy sa ating lugar/bayan?
 - a. May mga kaibigan ba kayo na nakakaranas ng teenage pregnancy sa ngayon?
 - b. Ano ang nakukuwento nilang dahilan bakit sila na sa ganung kalagayan ngayon?
3. Madami tayo ngayong makabagong teknolohiya sa communication (ICT) na ginagamit ng mga millenials. Ano sa tingin ninyo ang epekto o relasyon nito sa teenage pregnancy?
4. Ano sa palagay ninyo ang dapat gawin ng mga sumusunod na grupo/ahensya para maiwasan ang teenage pregnancy?
 - a. Pamilya ng mga kabataan
 - b. Eskwelahan/Educational Institution
 - k. Munisipyo or lokal na pamahalaan
5. Ano sa tingin nyo ang maitutulong ninyo or tungkulin (role) ng mga kabataan/millenial na tulad ninyo para maiwasan ang teenage pregnancy?

APPENDIX B

Results of the Association Analysis

Table 6*Measures of Association Among Knowledge, Attitude, and Behavior*

Variables	Spearman's rho	p-value
Knowledge and Attitude	-0.3774	0.0126*
Attitude and Behavior	-0.1482	0.3429
Knowledge and Behavior	0.2394	0.122

**Figure 1.** Scatter Plot of Association Among Knowledge, Attitude, and Behavior

Among knowledge, attitude, and behavior, only the knowledge and attitude of the respondents have been found to have a negative monotonic association; that is, as the knowledge score increases, the attitude score decreases. A higher attitude score means leaning towards a more liberated attitude, and a lower attitude score leans towards a more conservative attitude. Hence, as students' knowledge of teenage pregnancy decreases, they show a more liberated attitude towards teenage pregnancy.