

Broken But Not Shattered: A Case Study on the Experiences of Single Student-Fathers

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Abstract

The case study aimed to discover the unique characteristics, common and distinct practices, and elemental considerations of the single student-fathers in Tagum City. In this study, three (3) participants aged 12-19 were chosen to participate in in-depth interviews, who were the single student-fathers who became father while in school, who were able to experience the central phenomenon of the study. Thematic analysis was used in analyzing the data. From the unique characteristics of each case, the result revealed three major themes such as overwhelming responsibilities, losing freedom, and poor academic performance. On the common and distinct practices, three major themes were extracted such as support system, following parent's advice, and being focused. Three themes were extracted from the elemental considerations in single student-fathers such as learning from experience, facing responsibilities, and facing problem squarely. With the result of this study, it implies that single student-fathers could discover and put into considerations the attributes and behaviour of a father which will enable them to produce quality fatherhood. Moreover, this study is deemed significant to single student-fathers and other single student-fathers in a certain locality.

Key Words: Single Student-Fathers, Teenage Fathers, Qualitative Research, Case Study, Thematic Analysis, Tagum City.

Introduction

Parents of dependent children now make up almost one in four students pursuing postsecondary education, as parents seek postsecondary credentials to increase their incomes and improve the status of their families. However, student parents, especially single parents, face significant challenges to success in postsecondary programs. Barriers to success in postsecondary programs for student parents can be identified in data from the 2008 National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey, administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Indicators show that basic literacy skills of student parents lag behind those of students without children. Upon arriving at postsecondary institutions, student parents are more likely than non-parents to have SAT Verbal scores of less than 400 or equivalent ACT scores and to have taken fewer than four years of high school classes. Once enrolled, student parents are also more likely to take remedial classes than are students without children. These comparisons are true for both single and married student parents, but are even more dramatic for single parents (Smith, 2017).

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Furthermore, Steve (2017) stated that although student parents face many challenges, student parents can and do succeed in completing postsecondary credentials at all levels. Access to academic counselling, financial aid, public assistance, and child care can help student parents obtain postsecondary credentials that place their families on a path to economic self-sufficiency. Single parent student mothers and fathers are in a unique position while pursuing degrees in institutions of higher education and they face multiple challenges in attempts to pursue higher education. Access to graduate or post-graduate education may present insurmountable obstacles to parents who must fill both parenting roles, work full-time to provide for dependents while maintaining benefits to ensure their family's survival.

According to Centre for Marriage and Families (2016), children growing up without their own married parents are linked with higher rates of stress, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem during the teenage years, problems that can significantly reduce their ability to focus on classroom work and to achieve in school. Billy et al (1994) comment that adolescent females and males between the ages of 15 and 19 years, who are reared in homes without fathers, are significantly more likely to engage in premarital sex than adolescent females reared in homes with both a mother and a father. As a result, most of these children either fail in schoolwork or are likely to be expelled from school for such habits. Single-parents have little time to follow up their children's academic progress

Being a teenage parent is one of the most crucial role in parenting. However, what matters most to children is what their parents do, not what age their parents are. When parents raise their children in nurturing, warm, sensitive, responsive and flexible ways, children grow and develop well. All parents navigate challenges as their children grow and develop. Many of these challenges are the same for teenage parents and older parents. But if you're a teenage parent, you might have to navigate some special challenges, like trying to finish school while looking after a baby. You might also feel judged for being a teenage parent or overwhelmed by the responsibility of raising a child at a young age (Eamon, 2015).

Literature Review

It has been demonstrated via research on parenting that there are considerable disparities between genders with regard to parental duties and the division of labor in the home, including child care on a daily basis. The societal constructs of mothering and fathering, which have inherently carried out different tasks associated with them and influence the day-to-day care of children and child-rearing, are among the gender roles associated with parenting (Castillo 2010; Chesley 2011; Coles 2002, 2009; Coltart and Henwood 2012; Doucet 2004; Johansson and Klinth 2008; Hofner 2009; Miller 2011; Nelson 2006; Respler-Herman et al 2011; Riina and Feinberg 2012; Schindler and Coley 2006).

Parenting is typically thought of and recognized to take place in heterosexual, two-parent families. Significant research has been done on the gendered roles incorporated within child-rearing in the setting of two parent, heterosexual couples because of the typical arrangement, which includes a mother and father who are both residing in the home and responsible for this function of parent (Chesley 2011; Doucet 2004; Dufur et al. 2010; Wall and Arnold 2007). In the past, mothers have been more responsible for supplying daily needs, routines, care, and nurturing, while fathers have historically handled more of the financial, fun, and disciplinary parts of parenting (Dufur et al. 2010). These duties will be described in more detail below in respect to dual parent families, as well as how these are typically separated.

Furthermore, gender relations, social hierarchy positioning, and one's role all affect how one acts out their masculinity. The hypothesis contends that while there are several and various masculinities, one is more socially valuable and predominate based on particular traits. Although the characteristics of this hegemonic or dominating masculinity evolve with time, they continue to have a significant impact on males in society. According to research, the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity in America today include economic security, achievement in education and the workforce, authority and domination, and heterosexuality (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Every parent has long struggled to find work-life balance, which has been linked to various feelings of guilt, stress, anxiety, and time pressure (Dyk 2005; Wall and Arnold 2007). In certain dual low-income households, both parents typically change their work hours so that one can be at home while the other is at work and vice versa. This helps to reduce the costs of child care while also reducing some of the direct stress (Doucet 2004). As with low-income and working class families, middle class families also deal with managing child care and rigorous schedules, feeling guilty for not spending enough time with their children, and worry about these decisions (Greenhaus 1985).

Some middle-class families also practice what is known as "split shift shared parenting," in which parents plan their lives so that one parent is at home while the other is at work, much like dual-income households (Harris and Giuffre 2010). This is undoubtedly a challenge for many parents. On the one hand, when one parent is at home, there is a parental influence and direct interaction with the child(ren), and they are not in day care, but on the other hand, the family is frequently split up, and it has been demonstrated that parental engagement with children in these circumstances is actually reduced (Coltart and Henwood 2012; Dyk 2005). It has been hypothesized that mothers may experience additional stress and hardship in dual parent families.

Methodology

Design

This research is qualitative research employing case study. This method is chosen primarily because through it, the researcher will be able to gather data directly from each of the (3) single student -fathers. These data will include clear descriptions of their experiences as single student-fathers. Qualitative methodologies are most useful when researches are to strive to collect data based on human perceptions and understanding (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research focuses on working to identify the quality and themes of responses or data rather than quantify the numerical data (Creswell, 2013). It involves the use of qualitative data such as interviews, documents and participants' observation data to understand and explain social phenomena (Qualitative Research Consultants Association, 2015). The desire to understand an event or perception drives the need for qualitative methodologies to make something better (Stake, 2010). Moreover, Creswell (2013) defined case study as an in-depth exploration of bounded system such as activity, process, event, institution, social groups, or individual based on extensive data collection. Furthermore, Yin (2003), stressed that the need for case study is based from the desire to understand complex social phenomenon. It permits the researcher to maintain real life events. Case Studies combine a selection of statistics series techniques such as interview, questionnaires, observation, archive, and records (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 p.200) The researcher purposefully selected single student-fathers as sample to share their realities. The sample is

purposefully constructed up in a serial way of the use of the criteria including single student-fathers who are prospective information lush for the design (Vohra, 2016). In this research study, qualitative case study design is the most appropriate in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a complex social phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2013). It focused on how a group of single parent-fathers adapt on the challenges and struggles they have faced. The Researcher gathered the untold viewpoints and perspectives of some single parent-fathers by using the in-depth interview which focused on three research questions and interview guide regarding the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of single student -fathers. The interview helped determine the views of single student-fathers about their experiences and struggles as student-fathers..

Participants

In this study, the Researcher applied purposive sampling as supported by Polkinghorne (2005) Purposive sampling is a technique to get the rich information from respondents and where the Researcher selected the participants based on their willingness to explain their experiences to the researcher. Case studies are among the most difficult types of qualitative research to classify Creswell (2007) recommended no more than 4 to 5 participants in a case study. In this study, the Researcher chose the single student-fathers of one of the selected schools in Davao del Norte Division. Since the focus of study was the single student-fathers, the criteria in selecting the personnel are the following: First, the participants are single student-fathers. Second, the student-fathers are enrolled in a public school in the Division of Davao del Norte Third, these single student-fathers must have a child or children without a wife. The Researcher followed the recommended number of informants of Creswell hence, the informants of the study were for the three (3) single student-fathers in the Division of Davao del Norte. Furthermore, the three informants were given pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality in the conduct of the study. The first informant is The Against All Odds. He is the one who is very responsible in caring and working for his child despite his young age. He always ensures that every time he goes to school, everything is okay and sees to it there is someone who takes care of child. The second informant is the Fighter. This pseudonym is suited to this him since he always faces problems even if he is too young for a responsibility. He doesn't care about what other people say about his status, instead he fights for the sake of his child. The third informant is The Caring. This informant is given this pseudonym because he sees to it that his child is okay and in good hands before going to school. He always take care of his child and sees to it that his child is in good health always.

Data Sources

Qualitative researchers typically used different forms of data gathering procedures such as interviews, observations and documents (Creswell, 2007.) The data for this study were taken from the participant's experiences and observations, which are obtained through in-depth Interview (IDI). Aside from writing responses of the participants, voice recorders were used to make sure that responses will not be misinterpreted. The written and recorded responses were analyzed carefully. Moreover, the Researcher formulated the guide questions. The guide questions were aligned to the statement of the problem to attain the purpose of the study. The experiences, personal beliefs and views of the participants were included during the interview. The setting is in the public schools in Division of Davao del Norte. The single student-fathers interviewed were currently a student in the said division.

Results

Table 1 Essential Themes and Thematic Statements on the Experiences of Each Case	
Essential Themes	Supporting Statements
Overwhelming Responsibilities	feeling so much burden of responsibilities at my young age working, caring for my child at the same time studying my lessons. Facing difficulty in studying. Feeling of being not ready to be a father. Waking up early to fix everything before going to school.
Losing Freedom	I cannot decide on my own. I always worry my child, everywhere I go. I cannot go with my friends I am bullied being a student-father. I have to consult my parents for every decision I make.
Poor Academic Performance	I cannot manage my time caring my child and studying. I have less time in studying my lessons. I am always late in going to school. I cannot focus on the discussion of the teacher. I always fall asleep in school. I am struggling in coping the lessons.

Table 2 Essential Themes and Thematic Statements on Coping Mechanism of Each Case	
Essential Themes	Supporting Statement
Support System	My friends are supporting and giving me advice. I get some support from the people around me. My teacher also gave encouragement. I have classmates who understand my situation.

(Continued)

Table 2 Essential Themes and Thematic Statements on Coping Mechanism of Each Case—cont'd

Following Parent's Advice	I always follow the advice of my parents. I listen to the words of my parents. My parents gave me words of encouragement. I follow what they say
Being Focused	I looked on the positive side I kept on thriving for my ambition. I made my child as my inspiration. I became focused in my life.

Table 3 Essential Themes and Thematic Statements on the Insights of Each Case

Essential Themes	Supporting Statements
Learning from Experience	You should not involve yourself in teenage relationship You should not rush myself in a relationship. You must avoid myself to an intimate relationship with my girlfriend. You must focus in your studies.
Facing Responsibilities	I cannot do what I want anymore. I have a lot of responsibilities already I faced bigger responsibilities in life
Face Problems Squarely	I have faced many problems because of my decision. I have faced the consequences of my wrong deeds. I am struggling to continue my studies. I have faced so many problems even in my young age.

Conclusion

Based upon the results of the study, the Researcher enumerated several remarks. **First**, with the personal and academic struggles of single student-fathers, we always look at them as irresponsible individuals who

do not have direction in life. We used to discriminate them because of what had happened in their lives but then we do not know their experiences and struggles even their stories. It is not joy and happiness that they are experiencing everyday but pain and they are fighting their own individual battles in life. We may not understand them, but those experiences taught them how to live the life they have now. Their experiences taught them how to become better men who wanted to be the best father of their own child. **Second**, the coping mechanisms of single student-fathers are brought by the happiness their child can give. They also cling to the support of their parents, friends and the people around them. The moment that they became student-father, they really needed not only the financial and moral support of the people around them but the most important is the support and love of their parents. It is the assurance that they are loved and will be loved by their parents that helps them stand strong.

Upon probing in to the stories of these single student-fathers, advices came out. Their insights were essential that teenagers must not engage in pre-marital sex, in fact they should not get into a relationship at an early age and they must not watch pornographic scenes. Single student-fathers also aspire to give a good future to their child.

The results of this study help everyone to sympathize the struggles of the student-fathers and for them to be understood and never be looked as delinquent individual in the society. They are also victims of the societal cancer that proliferate across youngsters. The society must help them to stop this.

- To the Department of Social Welfare and Development that they must strengthen their intervention program and information drive campaign about pre-marital and even teenage pregnancy and responsible parenthood.
- To the Department of Education that they must take a more effective guidance advocacy programs that would cater to the needs of the students and hone the students holistically.
- To the parents that they must be the source of love, guidance and support to their children especially when their son become student-fathers.
- To the teachers who do not understand instead criticize them, this study will enlighten their mind that these students are fighting their own unique battle in life.

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