

# Socio – Cultural Influences on Teenage Pregnancy: A Phenomenological Study

Necelle A. Villareal<sup>1</sup>, Cynthia S. Superable<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public Health Nurse, Rural Health Unit of Buug, LGU Buug

<sup>2</sup> Dean Graduate School, Graduate School, Misamis University

## ABSTRACT

Teenage pregnancy in the Philippines is a major issue, influenced by cultural norms, limited education, and poor access to healthcare. The study focuses on pregnant teenagers in a municipality in Zamboanga Sibugay, examining the socio-cultural influences on the pregnancy rate. A phenomenological research design was employed, with 7 pregnant teenagers selected through purposive sampling as participants of the study. Data was collected through interviews using a research-based interview guide and analyzed using Moustakas' approach. Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the study. Based on the interview, three themes were identified namely: external and interpersonal pressures shaping early decision making among youth; interplay of socio-cultural economic factors, family dynamics and external influences on teenage pregnancy; and interconnected socio-cultural and economic factors driving teenage pregnancy. It is concluded that addressing both external and interpersonal pressures, such as socio-cultural norms, economic barriers, and family dynamics, is crucial in supporting adolescents to make healthier decisions and reduce teenage pregnancy rates. A comprehensive, holistic approach that integrates education, socio-economic support, and family involvement is essential for effective prevention. In conclusion, addressing teenage pregnancy requires a multi-faceted approach involving schools, community organizations, policymakers, and community leaders to tackle external influences, socio-cultural norms, and economic challenges, while future research should explore the effectiveness of community-based interventions targeting these interconnected factors.

**Keywords:** adolescent health, economic barriers, phenomenological research, socio-cultural influence, teenage pregnancy

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Rationale of the Study

Teenage pregnancy rates are significantly shaped by community norms and parental attitudes, which influence adolescents' perceptions of sexuality and reproductive health. Studies show that communities promoting open discussions about sexual health and supportive parental guidance have lower teenage pregnancy rates (Hoffman, 2021). In contrast, rigid cultural norms and negative parental attitudes create stigmatizing environments that increase the likelihood of unintended pregnancies (Miller & Reddick, 2022). Approximately 12 million girls aged 15-19 give birth each year globally, with the Philippines reporting a teenage pregnancy rate of 15.7% as of 2021 (United et al. [UNFPA], 2022), and Region 9 facing a rate of 26.8% (Department of Health, 2023). In Buug, teenage pregnancy within the age of 15-19

years contributes to 23 in the year 2021. In the following year 2022 it reaches to 36. And on 2023 it peaks to 90 pregnant teenage mothers, 2024 hits at 99 teenage mothers (FHSIS 2024). Contributing factors include inadequate sexual education, poverty, early sexual debut, and peer and media influences (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2017).

Community norms play a crucial role in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to teenage pregnancy, influencing the decisions adolescents make regarding their sexual health and relationships. In communities where open discussions about sexual health are encouraged, adolescents are more likely to receive accurate information, leading to healthier sexual behaviors and lower rates of teenage pregnancies. Conversely, communities that adhere to rigid cultural norms and stigmatize discussions about sexuality often create an environment of silence, which can leave teenagers feeling unsupported and uninformed. Research indicates that when community members collectively endorse supportive attitudes toward sexual education and access to contraceptive resources, teenage pregnancy rates tend to decrease (Hoffman et al., 2021; Miller & Reddick, 2022). Additionally, the perception of teenage pregnancy as a negative social outcome can deter young people from engaging in risky behaviors, further contributing to lower rates (Kahn et al., 2022).

A study by Smith et al. (2023) found that communities that actively promote sexual health education and encourage parental involvement in discussions about sexuality are associated with reduced teenage pregnancy rates. Similarly, Finch et al. (2023) demonstrated that adolescents who reported strong community support for sexual health discussions were less likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors, reinforcing the need for supportive community norms. Another study by Chandra-Mouli et al. (2022) explored the impact of cultural beliefs on teenage pregnancy, revealing that communities with progressive attitudes toward reproductive health and access to contraception had significantly lower teenage pregnancy rates. These findings collectively underscore the importance of fostering a community environment that prioritizes open communication and education regarding sexual health to mitigate the challenges of teenage pregnancy.

Socio-cultural influences significantly affect teenage pregnancy rates by shaping adolescents' perceptions of sexuality, reproductive health, and available support systems. Cultural norms and values often dictate the attitudes and behaviors surrounding sexual activity, which can either promote or hinder open discussions about sexual health. In communities where premarital sexual activity is stigmatized, young individuals may feel pressured to hide their experiences and seek information outside trusted familial or educational settings, leading to misinformation and risky behaviors (Chandra-Mouli et al., 2021). Additionally, socio-economic factors, such as poverty and lack of access to comprehensive sexual education, exacerbate these influences, resulting in higher rates of teenage pregnancies in underprivileged communities (Miller & Reddick, 2022). Understanding these socio-cultural dynamics is essential for developing effective prevention strategies that address the underlying causes of teenage pregnancy and promote healthier choices among adolescents (Nguyen et al., 2023).

Hollis et al. (2023) found that adolescents from cultures with strong familial support and open communication about sexual health were less likely to experience unintended pregnancies. Similarly, research by Kirkland and Davis (2022) emphasized the role of peer influence, revealing that adolescents who perceived their friends as accepting of contraceptive use were more likely to engage in safe sexual practices. Additionally, Finch et al. (2021) noted that sociocultural expectations regarding gender roles often place young women at a disadvantage, limiting their ability to negotiate safe sex and access resources. These findings underscore the importance of considering socio-cultural contexts when

developing interventions aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy rates and improving adolescent health outcomes.

The study was conducted due to the identification of an empirical gap, which refers to the lack of robust evidence specifically linking community norms and parental attitudes to teenage pregnancy rates. While existing literature explores the general influences of socio-cultural factors on adolescent sexual behavior, much of it lacks direct qualitative analysis establishing causation between these variables and actual rates of teenage pregnancy. This gap arises primarily from the complexities involved in measuring the qualitative aspects of community norms and parental attitudes, which are often subjective and context-dependent. Furthermore, the diverse cultural contexts and varying definitions of "community norms" and "parental attitudes" complicate efforts to generalize findings across different populations. Consequently, there is a pressing need for empirical research employing rigorous methodologies to quantify the impact of these socio-cultural factors on teenage pregnancy rates, ultimately enhancing the understanding of this critical public health issue.

This qualitative study examined how socio-cultural factors shape teenage pregnancy rates. It seeks to understand the cultural beliefs, social practices, and familial dynamics that influence adolescents' perceptions of sexuality and reproductive health. The research explores factors affecting socio-cultural influences about sexual health and the level of community support for these discussions, highlighting their impact on teenagers' behaviors and choices. By capturing the experiences of adolescents, the study aims to provide insights that can inform community-based interventions and educational strategies to reduce teenage pregnancy rates and enhance adolescent health outcomes.

The significance of this study on socio-cultural influences on teenage pregnancy rates lies in its potential to provide a deeper understanding of how cultural norms, societal expectations, and familial influences contribute to the increasing rates of teenage pregnancies. By identifying the specific socio-cultural factors at play, the study can inform the development of targeted interventions that address the root causes of teenage pregnancy, ultimately contributing to the reduction of early pregnancies among adolescents. Furthermore, the study's findings can serve as a resource for policymakers, educators, and healthcare providers to create more culturally sensitive and effective prevention programs.

The study will benefit various stakeholders, including adolescents, parents, educators, and community leaders. Adolescents will gain awareness of the impact of cultural and societal pressures on their decisions, empowering them to make healthier life choices. Parents will benefit by gaining insights into how family dynamics and societal influences affect their children's behavior, allowing them to better support their teenagers. Educators and community leaders will also benefit from the study's findings by understanding the importance of integrating socio-cultural awareness into school curricula and community-based programs, creating a more supportive environment that encourages positive decision-making and reduces teenage pregnancy rates.

### Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored to the theories of: **Social Norms Theory**, developed by **Perkins and Berkowitz in 1986**, **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**, developed by **Icek Ajzen in 1985**, **Health Belief Model (HBM)** by **Rosenstock 1966**, and **Ecological Systems Theory**, developed by **Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979**.

One appropriate theory to understand community norms on teenage pregnancy is the **Social Norms Theory**, developed by **Perkins and Berkowitz in 1986**. This theory posits that people's behavior is

influenced by their perceptions of what others do and approve of, particularly within their social groups. Social Norms Theory asserts that individuals tend to align their actions with perceived norms, which can create a disconnect between actual behaviors and individuals' perceptions of those behaviors. By highlighting these misperceptions, the theory aims to correct them, promoting healthier behaviors based on the actual norms within the community. A community incorrectly believes that the majority of its members support early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy, this belief can contribute to higher rates of these behaviors. Conversely, addressing and reshaping these norms can lead to improved outcomes in adolescent sexual health and reduced rates of teenage pregnancy.

Relating Social Norms Theory to the study of community norms on teenage pregnancy reveals its potential to inform interventions aimed at changing perceptions and behaviors. Community members believe that most adolescents engage in risky sexual behaviors, they may be less likely to communicate openly about sexual health or provide support for contraceptive use. By utilizing Social Norms Theory, researchers and practitioners can identify and disseminate accurate information about community behaviors and attitudes, thus reframing the narrative around teenage pregnancy. This reframing can lead to increased community engagement in preventive strategies, as members become aware that the actual norms may not align with their perceptions. Additionally, initiatives that encourage open discussions about sexual health can help reshape these community norms, ultimately leading to a decrease in teenage pregnancies.

A study by **Gulden et al. (2020)** utilized Social Norms Theory to explore how adolescents' perceptions of peer behaviors regarding contraception influenced their own contraceptive use. Similarly, **Bennett et al. (2021)** applied the theory to assess how community norms around teenage sexuality and pregnancy affected adolescent decision-making and behavior. Another relevant study by **Higgins et al. (2023)** examined the impact of perceived social norms on parents' willingness to discuss sexual health with their children, finding that misperceptions of community attitudes hindered open dialogue and support. These studies highlight the relevance of Social Norms Theory in understanding and addressing community norms regarding teenage pregnancy.

Next theory posits that an individual's behavior is directly influenced by their intention to perform that behavior, which is shaped by three key components: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), by Icek Ajzen (1985)**. In the context of teenage pregnancy, TPB suggests that adolescents' intentions regarding sexual activity and contraceptive use are influenced not only by their personal attitudes (e.g., beliefs about the consequences of sex) but also by the perceived social pressures from their parents and peers (subjective norms) and their confidence in their ability to control their sexual behavior (perceived behavioral control). Thus, parents play a crucial role in shaping adolescents' intentions through their attitudes, guidance, and communication about sexuality and reproductive health.

Relating the Theory of Planned Behavior to the study of parental influence on teenage pregnancy highlights the significance of parental attitudes and norms in shaping adolescents' intentions and behaviors regarding sexual activity. For example, if parents convey positive attitudes toward open discussions about sexual health and contraception, adolescents are more likely to adopt similar attitudes, thereby enhancing their intention to engage in safe sexual practices. Conversely, if parents hold negative attitudes or fail to communicate effectively, this may lead to adolescents feeling uncertain or unsupported in making informed decisions about their sexual health. The TPB framework suggests that interventions aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy should focus on improving parental attitudes and communication, ultimately influencing adolescents' intentions and behaviors regarding sexual activity.

Health Belief Model by Rosenstock (1996) is a theoretical model concerned in health decision making. This model explains the condition under which the person will engage in individual health behaviors such as preventive screening or seeking treatment for health condition. Health belief model employs two aspects of individuals representations of health behavior in response to threat of illness: perceptions of the threat of illness and evaluation of the effectiveness of behaviors to counteract this threat.

In the context of teenage pregnancy there is perceived susceptibility. It refers to teenagers' belief on their personal risk of becoming pregnant. The higher they perceived their susceptibility of getting pregnant, the teenager most likely to adopt preventive behaviors. On the other hand, the lower they perceived on getting pregnant they are less likely to take precautions. Perceived severity of teenage pregnancy, when the teenager views pregnancy has a negative impact on her school, goals, social life, and health she will most likely avoid it. When the teenager downplays the negative consequence she is less motivated to avoid pregnancy.

**Ecological Systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)**, posits that human development is influenced by the interplay of various environmental systems, which range from immediate contexts, such as family and school (microsystem), to broader cultural values and societal norms (macrosystem). According to Bronfenbrenner, these systems are interconnected, meaning that changes or influences in one area can significantly affect individuals in other areas. In the context of teenage pregnancy, parental influence is situated within these overlapping systems, where parents not only impact their children's immediate environment and experiences but are also shaped by broader cultural and societal norms that dictate attitudes toward sexuality and reproductive health.

Relating Ecological Systems Theory to the study of parental influence on the sociocultural factors contributing to teenage pregnancy highlights the multifaceted nature of these influences. For example, parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's values and beliefs about sex, often informed by cultural norms and societal expectations. These parental attitudes and behaviors can directly impact how adolescents perceive sexual health and their own sexual decisions. Additionally, parental influence interacts with community norms, educational systems, and peer dynamics, creating a complex web of influences that can either mitigate or exacerbate the risk of teenage pregnancy. Understanding this ecological perspective allows researchers and practitioners to design interventions that consider not just parental influence, but also the broader sociocultural contexts in which families exist.

**Sharma et al. (2020)** examined how family dynamics and community values interact to shape adolescents' perceptions of sexuality, finding that supportive parental communication can counteract negative cultural norms surrounding teenage pregnancy. Similarly, **Gonzalez et al. (2022)** employed this theory to analyze how socioeconomic factors, parental involvement, and community resources affect teenage pregnancy rates, emphasizing the importance of considering multiple layers of influence. Another study by **Lee et al. (2023)** applied Ecological Systems Theory to explore how parental guidance, in conjunction with peer influences and media representations, impacts adolescents' decisions regarding sexual activity. These studies illustrate the utility of Ecological Systems Theory in understanding the complex interactions between parental influence and sociocultural factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy prevalence.

### Conceptual Framework

The study of teenage decision-making is deeply rooted in understanding the various external and internal influences that shape adolescents' choices and behaviors. These influences, both from within the adolescent's immediate environment and from broader societal factors, play a significant role in

determining early life decisions, including those related to relationships, sexual activity, and ultimately teenage pregnancy.

“ **External and interpersonal pressures shaping early decision making among youth**” refer to the various factors, both from outside the individual (external) and within the individual’s environment (interpersonal), that shape adolescents' decisions and behaviors. External influences include peer pressure, social media, and societal expectations, while internal influences encompass family dynamics, financial status, and personal values. According to Miller (2021), external factors such as peer pressure and social media can lead adolescents to make risky decisions, including early sexual activity. On the other hand, internal factors, like family dynamics and financial instability, can create emotional gaps or unmet needs, which may push adolescents to seek validation or support outside the home (Perrone et al., 2022). Levine and McKinney (2022) argue that the intersection of these external and interpersonal influences often leaves adolescents vulnerable to making early life decisions without fully understanding the consequences. The subthemes of peer influence and social circles, social media and exposure to external influence, and emotional and financial challenges further illuminate the specific drivers behind early life choices.

*Peer Influence and Social Circles* play a significant role in shaping adolescents' behavior, as peer pressure and the desire for social acceptance can lead to risky decisions such as early sexual activity. Miller (2021) emphasize that adolescents, especially in environments where risky behavior is normalized, tend to mirror the actions of their peers. Peer influence is particularly powerful during adolescence when social belonging is a primary concern, and adolescents are more likely to engage in behaviors that align with their peer group’s norms, even if they may not agree with them initially (Perrone et al., 2022). Additionally, Jessor et al. (2020) found that adolescents who perceive their peer group as accepting of early sexual activity are more likely to engage in such behavior, which increases the likelihood of unintended pregnancies. Therefore, peer influence and social circles remain a critical factor in adolescents' early decisions and behaviors.

*Social Media and Exposure to External Influence* also significantly impact adolescent decision-making. Social media platforms expose teens to a vast range of ideas, behaviors, and lifestyles, often shaping their perceptions of relationships, sexuality, and adulthood. Levine and McKinney (2022) note that social media frequently glorifies early sexualization and romantic relationships, which can lead to unrealistic expectations and behaviors among adolescents. Moreover, studies show that teens who spend a considerable amount of time on social media are more likely to be influenced by external opinions and pressures that encourage early sexual activity and relationships (Miller, 2021). This exposure not only affects how adolescents view themselves but also how they interact with others, often leading them to make decisions based on external validation rather than informed judgment.

*Emotional and Financial Challenges* are significant internal factors that drive adolescents to make early life choices, including early sexual activity and pregnancy. Adolescents who face financial hardships or emotional neglect at home may seek comfort and validation in relationships, sometimes leading to early pregnancies. According to Finer and Zolna (2021), financial instability is a key factor in teenage pregnancies, as adolescents from lower-income backgrounds may see early relationships or pregnancies as a means of achieving emotional or financial security. Perrone et al. (2022) found that adolescents in emotionally unstable environments, where they lack parental support or attention, are more likely to engage in early sexual activity to fulfill emotional voids. These emotional and financial challenges increase adolescents' vulnerability, pushing them to make decisions based on immediate needs rather than long-term consequences, thereby contributing to early pregnancies.

The "interplay of socio-cultural economic factors, family dynamics and external influences on teenage pregnancy" refers to the complex relationship between social, cultural, and economic factors that contribute to adolescents' decisions regarding sexual behavior and early pregnancies. These factors often operate together to create environments where teenage pregnancy rates are higher, especially in communities with limited access to education, poor economic opportunities, and prevailing cultural norms that normalize early parenthood. According to Miller (2021), economic hardship and low educational attainment are strongly linked to higher rates of teenage pregnancy, as these factors often push adolescents toward early sexual activity or relationships for emotional support or financial stability. Similarly, Levine and McKinney (2022) emphasize that socio-cultural norms, particularly those that condone early pregnancies, can influence adolescents' perceptions of sexuality and relationships. Perrone et al. (2022) also argue that family dynamics, such as parental absence or poor communication, can drive adolescents to seek validation outside the home, further increasing the likelihood of early pregnancies. The interplay of these factors forms the foundation of teenage pregnancy, as explored in three subthemes: socio-economic factors and family dynamics, peer influence and social environment, and cultural and media influence.

*Socio-Economic Factors and Family Dynamics*, play a pivotal role in shaping adolescent behavior and decisions that may lead to teenage pregnancy. Adolescents from low-income families or those with limited access to education are more likely to engage in early sexual activity as a means of seeking attention or emotional validation. Jessor et al. (2020) note that adolescents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often lack the resources or support to delay sexual activity, which increases their vulnerability to early pregnancies. Family dynamics, particularly the presence or absence of supportive parental relationships, can further exacerbate this vulnerability. Finer and Zolna (2021) found that adolescents who experience parental neglect or absence may seek out relationships to fulfill emotional needs, further driving the risk of teenage pregnancy.

*Peer Influence and Social Environment*, peer influence is another critical socio-cultural factor that shapes adolescents' decisions, including those surrounding sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. According to Miller (2021), peer pressure, especially in social circles where early sexual activity is normalized, can significantly influence adolescents' behaviors. Adolescents are highly susceptible to the norms and expectations of their peers, and when early sexual engagement or teenage pregnancy is seen as a common experience, it can reinforce the likelihood of such behaviors. Perrone (2022) also argue that social environments, including neighborhoods where teenage pregnancy is prevalent, can create an atmosphere where adolescents are more likely to view early pregnancy as an acceptable part of growing up.

*Cultural and Media Influence*, cultural norms and media representations also contribute to shaping adolescents' views on sexuality and relationships, influencing their decisions around teenage pregnancy. Levine and McKinney (2022) highlight how certain cultural beliefs and values may encourage early pregnancies, often viewing them as a rite of passage or a way to achieve status. In addition, media portrayals of young parenthood can shape how adolescents perceive the reality of having children at a young age. Studies have shown that media can both romanticize teenage pregnancy or present it in a way that downplays the challenges, influencing adolescents' expectations and behaviors (Baker, 2020). The portrayal of early parenthood in media can distort perceptions, leading adolescents to believe that becoming a young parent is a desirable or glamorous choice, further contributing to teenage pregnancy rates.

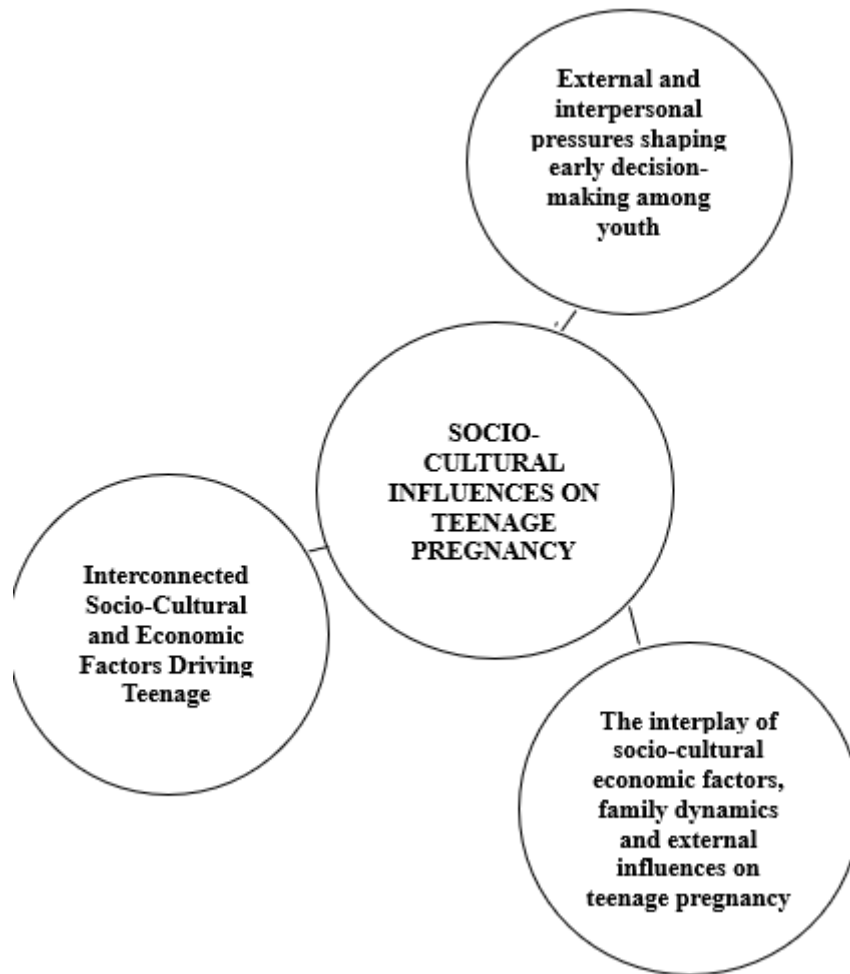
The "**interconnected socio-cultural and economic factors driving teenage pregnancy**" refers to the complex relationship between social, cultural, and economic influences that collectively contribute to the high rates of teenage pregnancy. These factors, when combined, create a situation where adolescents are more likely to engage in early sexual activity and, consequently, face pregnancy. According to Miller (2021), socio-cultural factors, such as prevailing norms that accept early pregnancies, often intersect with economic pressures like poverty and lack of educational opportunities, creating an environment where teenage pregnancy becomes more likely. Levine and McKinney (2022) emphasize that the intersection of these factors compounds adolescents' vulnerability, as they may have limited access to family support, economic resources, or the means to resist peer pressure. Similarly, Finer and Zolna (2021) argue that low socioeconomic status, coupled with unstable family dynamics, exacerbates the risk of teenage pregnancy. This interconnectedness of socio-cultural and economic factors leads to the identification of three key subthemes: Peer Influence and Social Circles, Family Dynamics and Lack of Parental Guidance, and Financial Challenges and Education Barriers.

*Peer Influence and Social Circles*, peer influence and social circles play a significant role in driving teenage pregnancy, as adolescents often look to their peers for validation and guidance. According to Jessor et al. (2020), adolescents who are part of peer groups where early sexual activity or teenage parenthood is normalized are more likely to engage in similar behaviors. Peer pressure within these groups can encourage risky sexual behaviors, leading to an increased likelihood of teenage pregnancy. Perrone (2022) further explain that social circles create a sense of belonging, and when these groups share similar attitudes toward early parenthood, it reinforces the social acceptance of teenage pregnancy, making it more likely for adolescents to follow suit.

*Family Dynamics and Lack of Parental Guidance*, family dynamics, including lack of parental guidance or involvement, are key factors that contribute to teenage pregnancy. Finer and Zolna (2021) found that adolescents who experience less communication or emotional support from their families are more likely to seek out relationships outside the home, often leading to early sexual activity. Family dynamics such as parental absence, neglect, or conflict can further drive adolescents to make decisions based on external influences, leading to higher risks of teenage pregnancy. Furthermore, when parents fail to provide education about sexual health or offer guidance on responsible decision-making, adolescents are left vulnerable to making poor choices.

*Financial Challenges and Education Barriers*, financial challenges and barriers to education are major socio-economic factors that increase the likelihood of teenage pregnancy. According to Levine and McKinney (2022), adolescents from low-income families are more likely to engage in sexual activity at an early age due to limited economic resources and a lack of access to educational opportunities. These challenges contribute to a cycle where adolescents may not see a future that includes educational or career success, and as a result, early pregnancy may be seen as an alternative to economic independence. Jessor et al. (2020) note that when financial instability is coupled with poor academic prospects, the likelihood of teenage pregnancy rises, as adolescents may perceive parenthood as a way to gain a sense of control or meaning in their lives.





**Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study**

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study explored the socio-cultural influence on teenage pregnancy rates. It answered the following questions:

1. What socio-cultural factors are most commonly associated with teenage pregnancy in the communities studied?
2. How do socio-cultural influences impact the prevalence of teenage pregnancy in specific communities?

### Chapter 2

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Design**

This study adopted a phenomenological research design to explore socio-cultural influences on teenage pregnancy rates. The research design was consistent with an exploratory approach, examining the lived experiences of teenage mothers to understand how cultural norms, traditions, beliefs, and social practices contributed to teenage pregnancies. The study aimed to capture the voices of teenage mothers, their families, and community members through in-depth interviews. This method allowed for a nuanced examination of complex phenomena that quantitative approaches might overlook, capturing rich

contextual details. By focusing on personal narratives, the research provided an empathetic and holistic understanding of the issue, emphasizing the voices of those directly affected.

To ensure validity and depth, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds within the locality of Buug. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, complemented by participant observations to gain contextual insights. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns and themes that reflected the socio-cultural influences on teenage pregnancy. This design was appropriate for uncovering the complexities of cultural and social dynamics, offering actionable insights for healthcare professionals seeking to address teenage pregnancy rates effectively.

### **Setting**

The study was conducted in Buug, a municipality located in Zamboanga Sibugay, Philippines. Buug was characterized by its rich cultural heritage and diverse population, with an estimated total population of around 26,000 residents, including a significant number of females of reproductive age. According to recent data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, approximately 15% of the population fell within the reproductive age bracket of 15 to 49 years. This demographic trend was concerning, particularly as the region reported a rising incidence of teenage pregnancy, with statistics indicating that about 15% of births in the municipality were to adolescent mothers. In Buug, teenage pregnancy among individuals aged 15-19 years contributed to 23 cases in 2021. In 2022, the number rose to 36, and by 2023, it peaked at 90 pregnant teenage mothers. In 2024, the number reached 99 teenage mothers (FHSIS 2023). This backdrop highlighted the pressing need to understand socio-cultural influences on teenage pregnancy in Buug, as these factors could significantly influence the reproductive health choices of young women in the area.

### **Participants**

The participants for this study consisted of 7 pregnant teenage mothers aged 18-19 who had experienced teenage pregnancy, regardless of whether the pregnancy was carried to term or not. They were required to be residents of Buug. This specific group was chosen to provide rich insights into the unique experiences and perspectives of young mothers navigating the challenges of early motherhood. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which allowed for the identification of individuals with characteristics relevant to the study. Each participant was approached based on their willingness to share their experiences, ensuring they felt comfortable and empowered to discuss sensitive topics related to teenage pregnancy and parenthood.

### **Instruments**

In this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were used as the primary instrument for data collection. This method proved effective for exploring the lived experiences and perspectives of teenage mothers regarding their experiences with early motherhood and the socio-cultural influences surrounding teenage pregnancy. The semi-structured format allowed for a combination of predetermined questions and the flexibility to explore topics in greater depth as they arose during the interview. This adaptability ensured that participants could share their insights and experiences in their own words, fostering a more nuanced understanding of their circumstances.

The interviews were conducted in a safe and comfortable setting, ensuring that participants felt at ease while discussing sensitive topics. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, providing sufficient

time for participants to articulate their thoughts and feelings. Before the interview, participants received a brief overview of the study's purpose and their rights as participants, including the assurance of confidentiality and the option to withdraw at any time without repercussions. Open-ended questions guided the conversation, encouraging participants to elaborate on their experiences and share relevant stories or reflections. Additionally, follow-up questions were utilized to probe deeper into specific themes that emerged during the discussion. Interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to facilitate accurate transcription and analysis, ensuring that the richness of their narratives was preserved for subsequent examination.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The data gathering process for this qualitative study on socio-cultural influences toward teenage pregnancy began with obtaining permission from the Dean of the Graduate School. Permission was also sought from the Barangay Captain and the Municipal Health Officer, who assisted in the identification of potential participants. Recruitment was carried out using purposive sampling, targeting a diverse range of participants from community centers, schools, and barangay health stations. This approach ensured a broad representation of participants from various socio-economic backgrounds and experiences.

After the participants provided informed consent, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each individual.

The interview process was designed to be flexible, allowing for the exploration of emerging themes that could provide deeper insights into the socio-cultural factors influencing teenage pregnancy. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to an hour, providing ample time for participants to share their personal experiences and perspectives. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate accurate transcription and detailed analysis of the data, ensuring that the richness of their narratives was fully captured and preserved for subsequent examination.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In conducting this qualitative study on community norms and parental attitudes toward teenage pregnancy, several ethical considerations were prioritized to ensure the protection and respect of participants. First and foremost, the Misamis University Research Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. This process involved providing clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any repercussions. This approach adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, which emphasized the importance of autonomy and informed decision-making. Additionally, consent was sought from parents or guardians for adolescent participants, given their age and vulnerability, ensuring they fully understood the study's context.

Confidentiality and anonymity were also paramount throughout the research process. Participant data was coded to protect their identities, and any identifying information was removed during transcription and reporting of results. All data was securely stored and only accessible to the research team, who emphasized the importance of safeguarding participants' privacy. Furthermore, the study was sensitive to the cultural contexts and norms surrounding teenage pregnancy in the community, taking care to avoid reinforcing stigma or bias. Participants were encouraged to share their perspectives in a safe and supportive environment, fostering an atmosphere of trust. By adhering to these ethical principles, the study aimed to

conduct respectful and responsible research that contributed to understanding community dynamics around teenage pregnancy.

### Data Analysis

In this study, I followed the framework of Moustakas, which emphasized a systematic approach to uncovering the essence of participants' lived experiences. Initially, I engaged in self-reflection to identify my own predetermined biases and assumptions regarding teenage pregnancy. This process involved writing down my personal beliefs and experiences, which could have influenced my interpretation of the data. The goal was to remain open-minded and allow the participants' voices to emerge during the interviews. Next, I read and reread the participants' statements, identifying important remarks that helped reveal the influences on teenage pregnancy. I took notes to point out significant themes without initially judging their relevance. The identified statements were then clustered into themes, representing the fundamental structures of the participants' experiences related to socio-cultural influences on teenage pregnancy.

I then proceeded to create a clear portrayal of the participants' experiences based on the interviews, focusing on answering the "what" of the phenomenon. Following this, I interpreted the underlying meanings of their experiences, addressing the "how" of the phenomenon. By combining the "what" and the "how," I achieved a comprehensive understanding of the study. Finally, for validation and verification, I provided feedback to the participants by sharing the descriptions I created, ensuring that they accurately reflected their experiences.

### Chapter 3

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study participants, aged 18 to 30, reveal the complex interplay of socio-cultural and economic factors influencing teenage pregnancy. Many became pregnant between 18 and 19, with some having multiple children, often shaped by peer pressure, limited sexual education, financial instability, and community norms that normalize early motherhood. Participants from the two barangays, in particular, highlighted how cultural expectations and financial struggles influenced their decisions, leading to long-term consequences such as limited educational and career opportunities. These narratives emphasize the need for comprehensive interventions that provide emotional, educational, and financial support to young mothers, addressing both immediate needs during pregnancy and long-term challenges to improve outcomes for both mothers and children. Through the participants' narratives, key themes emerged, including the *external and interpersonal pressures shaping decision-making among youth*; the *interplay of socio-cultural economic factors, family dynamics and external influences on teenage pregnancy*; and *interconnected socio-cultural and economic factors driving teenage*.

### Theme 1: External and interpersonal pressures shaping decision-making among youth

The theme of external and interpersonal pressures shaping decision-making among youth refers to the complex relationship between cultural norms, socio-economic conditions, and individual behaviors that collectively influence the likelihood of adolescents becoming pregnant at an early age. This theme highlights how factors such as societal expectations, financial constraints, and the availability (or lack) of education can significantly shape the reproductive decisions of young people. Studies emphasize the significant role these interconnected factors play in teenage pregnancy. One study found that exposure to family planning messages through media channels had minimal impact on reducing teenage pregnancy

rates in the Philippines. The study suggested that while media exposure is crucial, more effective and engaging content is needed to reach adolescents and influence their sexual and reproductive health behaviors (Pepito et al., 2022). Oyeleye (2021) identified peer pressure as a critical factor, where adolescents are often influenced by their social circles to engage in early sexual activity, leading to higher pregnancy rates among teenagers. A study by Anggraeni, (2023) highlighted how unrestricted access to social media and insufficient reproductive health education contribute to risky sexual behaviors, further increasing the risk of teenage pregnancy. This theme is supported by three subthemes: peer influence and social circles, social media and exposure to external influences, and emotional and financial challenges driving early decisions.

*Peer influence and social circles* play a significant role in shaping adolescents' decisions regarding early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. During adolescence, the desire for peer acceptance often leads to conformity with behaviors observed in social groups. Research by Miller (2020) found that peer pressure is a strong predictor of early sexual initiation, especially in environments where early sexual behavior and pregnancies are normalized as symbols of maturity. Peer groups often serve as the primary source of sexual knowledge, and when this information is incomplete or misleading, it can lead to risky sexual behavior and increased pregnancy rates. Social media has further amplified peer influence, with platforms often glamorizing teenage pregnancy and reinforcing the pressures that exist within offline social circles. Williams (2022) noted that social media can create a reinforcing cycle, where early pregnancies are viewed as socially accepted or desirable. Addressing the impact of peer influence, both offline and online, is critical to reducing teenage pregnancy rates. Educational programs that challenge harmful norms and offer accurate sexual health information are essential for guiding adolescents toward informed decisions.

The statement, "*I got pregnant early because I was carefree when I was with my friends*" (P1), highlights the significant impact of peer pressure on adolescent sexual behavior and pregnancy. Adolescents, eager for social acceptance, often prioritize fitting in over cautious decision-making, making them more susceptible to risky sexual behaviors. Research by Baker (2020) shows that peer pressure and the normalization of early sexual activity within social circles increase the likelihood of adolescents engaging in sexual behaviors. Finer and Zolna (2021) found that adolescents often rely on incomplete or inaccurate sexual health information from peers, which can lead to unintended pregnancies. The carefree attitude expressed by P1 may also stem from a lack of proper sexual education, further compounded by social media's portrayal of early motherhood, as noted by Levine and McKinney (2022). These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive sexual education programs that address peer influence and provide adolescents with accurate knowledge to make informed, responsible choices.

The statement, "*I am influenced by my friends to have sex with my boyfriend*" (P3), highlights the significant role peer influence plays in adolescents' sexual decision-making. Studies have consistently shown that adolescents' perceptions of their peers' sexual behaviors and attitudes can strongly influence their own actions. A meta-analysis by van de Bongardt (2017) found that adolescents who perceive their peers as more sexually active or approving of sexual activity are more likely to engage in sexual behaviors themselves. Prinstein (2016) demonstrated that adolescents' susceptibility to peer influence is a significant predictor of their engagement in sexual risk behaviors, with boys showing higher susceptibility than girls. These findings suggest that peer norms and individual susceptibility to peer influence are critical factors shaping adolescents' sexual behaviors.

The statement, "*Because my mom is not there and sometimes my dad is not there either, I can only spend time with my friends*" (P4), highlights the potential impact of parental absence on adolescents' social

interactions and behaviors. Research indicates that father absence can lead to increased engagement in problem behaviors among adolescents, including early sexual initiation. A study by Jeynes (2018) found that adolescents from father-absent homes were more likely to engage in early sexual activity compared to their peers with present fathers. The quality of the mother-adolescent relationship has been shown to influence adolescents' sexual risk behaviors. A global analysis by Shawon (2023) revealed that adolescents with parents who understood their problems, monitored academic and leisure-time activities, and respected privacy were less likely to engage in sexual activities and risk behaviors. This suggests that the presence and involvement of both parents play crucial roles in guiding adolescents' behaviors and mitigating potential risks associated with peer interactions.

The subtheme of *Social Media and Exposure to External Influence* examines how adolescents' exposure to social media platforms significantly shapes their behaviors, attitudes, and decisions, particularly around sexuality and relationships. Social media serves as a powerful source of external influence, providing adolescents with both information and sometimes misleading portrayals of relationships, sexual norms, and behaviors. The pervasive nature of social media means that adolescents are constantly exposed to peer groups, influencers, and celebrities whose behaviors can normalize early sexual activity or teenage pregnancy, further impacting their decision-making.

There are studies that have emphasized the influence of social media on adolescents' sexual behaviors. Levine and McKinney (2022) found that social media platforms often glamorize teenage pregnancy and early motherhood, creating a narrative where such experiences are idealized, which in turn can influence adolescents to view early pregnancy as socially accepted or even desirable. Robinson (2021) highlighted that adolescents who are frequently exposed to sexual content on social media are more likely to engage in early sexual activity, as these platforms often normalize and sensationalize sexual behavior. Smith and Green (2023) showed that adolescents who interact with sexualized content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok are more likely to develop distorted perceptions of relationships and sexuality, leading to higher rates of risky sexual behaviors and unintended pregnancies. These findings underline the significant role that social media plays in shaping adolescent sexual decisions, calling for better media literacy and sexual education programs to mitigate its influence.

The statements "*Social media ma'am, where it all starts or even on the internet watching pornography*" (P2) and "*Social media is also one of the reasons why teenagers get triggered*" (P5) highlight the significant impact of social media and internet exposure on adolescents' sexual behaviors and emotional well-being. Adolescents are increasingly exposed to sexual content through social media platforms and the internet, which can shape their perceptions of relationships, sexuality, and self-worth. Research by Levine and McKinney (2022) found that social media, particularly platforms like Instagram and TikTok, often portray sexualized content that can normalize early sexual activity and influence adolescents to explore such behaviors. Perrin and Anderson (2020) found that the widespread availability of pornography on the internet contributes to the early exposure of adolescents to sexual material, which can lead to unrealistic expectations about relationships and sexuality. Fuchs (2021) showed that social media not only triggers sexual curiosity but also heightens emotional vulnerability among teens, with exposure to idealized images and cyberbullying increasing feelings of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

*Emotional and Financial Challenges Driving Early Decisions* refers to the difficulties adolescents face in managing emotional pressures and financial instability, which can significantly influence their decision-making regarding relationships, sexual activity, and early pregnancies. Adolescents from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds or unstable family situations may perceive early pregnancy as a way to gain

emotional support or a sense of security, while others may feel trapped in situations that limit their future prospects. Research by Jessor et al. (2020) highlights that financial hardship is a key factor in early sexual behavior, as young people often engage in relationships or sexual activity in search of emotional validation or material support. Miller (2021) found that adolescents from low-income families or single-parent households are more likely to experience higher levels of emotional distress, which can drive them toward early sexual activity or relationships as a means of coping with these challenges.

In a similar vein, Perrone et al. (2022) pointed out that emotional instability, such as lack of parental support or exposure to family conflict, often leads adolescents to seek affection or emotional connection through early sexual encounters, further increasing the likelihood of teenage pregnancy. These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive support systems that address both emotional and financial well-being, alongside sexual education, to help adolescents make informed decisions and reduce early pregnancies. The statements reflect the emotional and financial challenges adolescents face, which can drive them to make early decisions about relationships and pregnancy. Adolescents in unstable or unsupportive family environments often seek emotional fulfillment or a sense of security through relationships and early motherhood. According to Jessor et al. (2020), emotional deprivation or lack of parental support can lead young people to seek affection or a sense of belonging in relationships, making them more likely to engage in early sexual activity or pregnancy. Miller (2021) found that adolescents experiencing financial instability, particularly those from single-parent or low-income households, are at higher risk of early pregnancies due to limited resources and opportunities. The pressure to provide for themselves and their child, as expressed.

## **Theme 2: The interplay of socio-cultural economic factors, family dynamics and external influences on teenage pregnancy**

The interplay of socio-cultural economic factors, family dynamics and external influences on teenage pregnancy refer to the complex web of influences from an adolescent's socio-cultural environment, family dynamics, and socio-economic conditions that contribute to early sexual behaviors and pregnancy. These factors include peer pressure, family support systems, cultural norms, and financial stability, all of which can either encourage or inhibit healthy decision-making. Adolescents from lower socio-economic backgrounds or dysfunctional family environments may face additional pressures, such as a lack of emotional support or limited access to resources, which can increase their vulnerability to early pregnancies. Additionally, cultural expectations or the influence of social media can exacerbate the normalization of early sexual activity, further shaping adolescents' perceptions of relationships and sexual health.

Several studies highlight the critical role of socio-cultural and economic factors in teenage pregnancy. Miller (2021) found that adolescents from low-income families and single-parent households are more likely to experience early pregnancies due to a combination of financial instability and limited access to support systems. Jessor et al. (2020) emphasized that adolescents facing emotional and familial challenges, such as parental absence or neglect, may turn to relationships or early sexual activity for emotional fulfillment or a sense of security. Furthermore, Levine and McKinney (2022) pointed out that social media platforms often glamorize teenage pregnancy, normalizing early motherhood and influencing adolescents' decisions. These studies reinforce the idea that the socio-cultural and economic context plays a vital role in shaping adolescent sexual behaviors, necessitating a holistic approach in addressing the root causes of teenage pregnancy. This theme is supported by the following subthemes: socio-economic factors and family dynamics, peer influence and social environment, and cultural and media influence.

*Socio-Economic Factors and Family Dynamics* play a critical role in shaping adolescents' decisions regarding relationships, sexual activity, and early pregnancies. Adolescents from low socio-economic backgrounds often face significant challenges, such as limited access to education, financial instability, and a lack of emotional support from parents, which can influence their decision-making and increase the likelihood of early pregnancies. Research by Jessor et al. (2020) underscores that financial hardship and family instability are strong predictors of early sexual behavior and teenage pregnancy, as adolescents in such environments may seek validation or security in relationships, often leading to early pregnancies. Furthermore, Miller (2021) found that adolescents raised in single-parent households or those who experience parental absence are more likely to engage in early sexual activity, as the absence of parental guidance leaves a gap that peers or relationships may fill. These socio-economic and familial factors create an environment in which early pregnancy may seem like a solution to emotional or financial voids, further perpetuating the cycle of teenage pregnancy.

The statements from participants shed light on the real-life impact of socio-economic challenges and family dynamics on adolescents' decisions. P1's statement, "*My friends got pregnant early because they do not have money to continue their study,*" reflects how financial limitations can influence adolescents' decisions, often leading them to prioritize immediate relationships over long-term educational goals. P3's comment, "*Because my mom is not here because she is in Manila and my dad is working in another place,*" illustrates how the absence of parental figures can leave adolescents without proper guidance or emotional support, increasing their vulnerability to early pregnancies. P4's statement, "*Because my mom is not there and sometimes my dad is not there either, I can only spend time with my friends,*" further supports this, highlighting how the lack of parental presence pushes adolescents to seek connection and emotional support from peers, potentially leading to early sexual activity. Finally, P7's remark, "*My friends also got married early because they don't have money to finish college,*" underscores how financial difficulties can drive adolescents toward early commitments such as marriage and pregnancy as a way to cope with their lack of resources. These statements align with studies by Levine and McKinney (2022), which found that financial instability and family dynamics significantly influence adolescents' choices, pushing them toward early relationships and pregnancies in search of emotional support and security.

*Peer Influence and Social Environment* refers to the powerful impact that peers, social circles, and the broader social environment have on adolescents' attitudes and behaviors, particularly regarding relationships and sexual activity. Adolescents, in their search for acceptance and belonging, are highly susceptible to peer pressure, which can normalize behaviors such as early sexual activity. Peer influence can lead adolescents to adopt certain behaviors, often due to the desire to fit in or be seen as mature by their peers. The social environment, including the local community and family dynamics, can either reinforce or challenge certain behaviors. Social media also plays a critical role in shaping adolescent perceptions, as it exposes them to a wide array of behaviors, sometimes glamorizing risky sexual behavior or early pregnancies. Studies by Miller (2021) and Levine and McKinney (2022) have shown that peer influence and the social environment are among the strongest predictors of early sexual initiation, especially when early sexual behaviors are normalized in peer groups. Furthermore, Perrone et al. (2022) emphasized the role of social media in perpetuating unrealistic or idealized images of relationships and sexuality, further influencing adolescents to engage in risky behaviors.

The statements from the participants provide clear insight into how peer influence and the social environment contribute to early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. P2's statement, "*At ours, because we don't have any, because some girls in our barangay stay in their house rather than going outside,*



*everything starts on social media, at that time I was in grade 12, because of the environment, because of curiosity,"* reflects how social media and curiosity, combined with limited activities in the local environment, can lead adolescents to explore risky behaviors. Similarly, P3's remark, *"I am influenced by my friends to have sex with my boyfriend,"* highlights the significant role of peer pressure in shaping sexual behavior, with adolescents often making decisions based on what their friends are doing, particularly in the desire for acceptance. P6's statement, *"Because of what they see on social media, they feel it's okay to do certain things,"* demonstrates how social media exposure normalizes certain behaviors, making adolescents feel that early sexual activity is not only acceptable but also expected in certain social circles. These statements are supported by studies by Levine and McKinney (2022), who found that adolescents are more likely to engage in risky behaviors when they perceive such behaviors as socially acceptable or even desirable within their peer groups and social media circles.

*Cultural and Media Influence* refers to the powerful role that cultural norms and media exposure play in shaping adolescents' behaviors and attitudes, particularly regarding sexuality and relationships. Adolescents are highly influenced by the cultural messages they receive, whether through traditional cultural norms or the content they encounter on media platforms. In the modern age, social media and online content, including television shows, movies, and internet videos, are particularly influential in shaping adolescents' views on sex, relationships, and social acceptance. These forms of media often portray unrealistic and idealized images of relationships, sexual activity, and early pregnancies, which can normalize and even glamorize risky behaviors. Studies have shown that exposure to sexual content in the media can trigger early sexual behavior, as adolescents may see such behaviors as acceptable or even desirable. According to Levine and McKinney (2022), adolescents exposed to sexual content through social media or entertainment tend to form distorted perceptions about relationships and sexual health, which can contribute to early sexual initiation and unintended pregnancies.

The statements from the participants provide valuable insight into how cultural and media influences shape adolescent behaviors. P5's statement, *"Social media is also one of the reasons why teenagers get triggered,"* emphasizes how social media can act as a catalyst for risky behaviors by triggering curiosity, desires, or pressures to conform to certain social norms. This aligns with Perrone et al. (2022), who highlighted that media exposure, including social media platforms, often portrays a distorted view of sexual relationships and early motherhood, which can create pressure on adolescents to conform to these ideals. Similarly, P2's statement, *"Social media ma'am, where it all starts or even on the internet watching pornography,"* reflects how internet access, particularly to explicit content such as pornography, can shape adolescents' perceptions of sex and relationships, potentially leading to early sexual activity. According to Williams (2022), exposure to pornography and other sexually explicit content can desensitize adolescents to the emotional and physical consequences of sex, reinforcing the normalization of early sexual behavior. These studies highlight the need for effective interventions to address the impact of media and internet content on adolescent sexual decision-making.

### **Theme 3: Interconnected Socio-Cultural and Economic Factors Driving Teenage Pregnancy**

Interconnected socio-cultural and economic factors driving teenage pregnancy refer to the complex relationship between various socio-economic, cultural, and familial factors that contribute to early pregnancies among adolescents. These factors are deeply intertwined, where economic instability, lack of educational opportunities, and family dynamics—such as parental absence or poor communication—contribute to adolescents' decisions regarding relationships and sexual behavior. Furthermore, cultural and societal norms often play a significant role in shaping adolescents' views on sexuality, relationships, and

early parenthood. According to Miller (2021), socio-economic factors such as poverty and limited access to education are strongly associated with early sexual initiation and unintended pregnancies. Adolescents from low-income families are more likely to engage in early sexual activity as a way of seeking attention or fulfilling emotional needs that are unmet in their home environment. Levine and McKinney (2022) also argue that socio-cultural norms, including the acceptance of early pregnancy as part of cultural identity, can influence adolescents' perceptions and decisions around sexual health and relationships. This theme reflects the intersection of these external and internal factors, showing how the socio-economic and cultural environment shapes adolescents' experiences and outcomes related to teenage pregnancy.

Several recent studies provide supporting evidence for the interconnectedness of socio-cultural and economic factors in driving teenage pregnancy. Perrone et al. (2022) suggest that family dynamics, particularly parental absence or neglect, play a critical role in shaping adolescent behavior, as adolescents in such environments are more likely to seek validation and emotional support outside the family, sometimes leading to early pregnancies. Jessor et al. (2020) found that peer influences and social circles significantly impact adolescents' sexual behavior, particularly in communities where early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy are normalized. In addition, Finer and Zolna (2021) identified financial challenges and barriers to education as key factors that contribute to teenage pregnancies, with adolescents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often perceiving early relationships and pregnancies as a means of achieving financial and emotional stability. These studies highlight the need for comprehensive strategies that address socio-economic barriers, cultural influences, and family dynamics to reduce teenage pregnancy rates. This includes addressing the subthemes of peer influence and social circles, family dynamics and lack of parental guidance, and financial challenges and education barriers. These themes are supported by the following subthemes: peer influence and social circles, family dynamics and lack of parental guidance, and financial challenges and education barriers.

*Peer Influence and Social Circles* refers to the impact that adolescents' social groups, including friends and peers, have on their decisions, behaviors, and attitudes, particularly regarding sexual activity and relationships. During adolescence, the need for social acceptance and belonging is strong, and peer groups become a critical source of influence. Peer pressure can either encourage or discourage certain behaviors, including risky behaviors like early sexual activity or teenage pregnancy. Adolescents may adopt behaviors or attitudes in an effort to fit in, gain approval, or seek validation from their peers. Miller (2021) found that peer influence is one of the most significant factors contributing to early sexual initiation, especially in environments where such behavior is normalized within social circles. Adolescents often mirror the behaviors of their peers, and in situations where early sexual activity or pregnancies are viewed as milestones or markers of maturity, the likelihood of engaging in these behaviors increases. Perrone et al. (2022) further emphasize that peer groups can either reinforce or challenge norms surrounding sexual health, often providing incomplete or inaccurate sexual education, which can lead to risky sexual decisions.

The statements from the participants provide a clear understanding of how peer influence and social circles shape their decisions. P1's statement, "I got pregnant early because I was carefree when I was with my friends," highlights the role of peer dynamics in encouraging carefree and risky behavior, where the participant's decision may have been driven by the need to conform to the social norms of their peer group. This aligns with Baker (2020), which found that adolescents who are influenced by their peers to engage in risky behavior are more likely to experience early pregnancies. P3's statement, "*I am influenced by my friends to have sex with my boyfriend,*" underscores the powerful effect that peer pressure can have in

driving adolescents to engage in behaviors that they may not have otherwise considered, particularly when such behavior is seen as normal or acceptable in their peer group. P4's statement, "*My friends, I'm upset that they have boyfriends,*" suggests feelings of social pressure or desire to conform to the behaviors of others within their social circle. This reflects the social expectations that adolescents may feel from their friends to engage in certain behaviors, such as having a relationship or becoming sexually active, in order to fit in. Finally, P7's statement, "*My friends also got married early because they don't have money to finish college,*" highlights how financial pressures and social norms in peer groups can lead adolescents to make decisions, such as early marriage and pregnancy, as a perceived solution to economic struggles or life challenges. These participant statements are in line with findings from Levine and McKinney (2022), which indicate that adolescents often turn to their peers for validation and emotional support, particularly when they face personal or financial challenges, leading them to make early and sometimes life-altering decisions.

*Subtheme 2: Family Dynamics and Lack of Parental Guidance* explores how the structure and presence of family, as well as the emotional dynamics within the family unit, influence adolescents' behavior, decisions, and overall development. Adolescents rely heavily on their families for emotional support, guidance, and socialization. When parents are absent, either physically or emotionally, or when there is a lack of emotional connection within the family, adolescents may feel isolated and unsupported. This emotional gap can lead them to seek validation, affection, and guidance from external sources, such as peers, social media, or romantic relationships. According to Jessor et al. (2020), a lack of emotional and physical support from parents is a significant factor that drives adolescents toward risky behaviors, including early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. In addition, Finer and Zolna (2021) emphasize that parental involvement plays a critical role in shaping adolescents' sexual behaviors and that the absence of such guidance often leads to poor decision-making in the realm of sexual health and relationships.

The statement from Participant 3, "*My mom is not here because she is in Manila and my dad is working in another place,*" illustrates the physical absence of parents. This lack of parental presence can leave adolescents feeling neglected or unsupported in their decision-making. As Miller (2020) suggest, adolescents who experience parental absence often lack the necessary guidance and emotional support, increasing their susceptibility to risky behaviors, including early sexual engagement. The absence of parental involvement can lead adolescents to rely more on peers or other influences for direction, which may not always provide healthy or accurate advice. Participant 4's statement, "*Because my mom is not there and sometimes my dad is not there either, I can only spend time with my friends,*" reflects the emotional isolation that comes from parental absence, both physically and emotionally. Finer and Zolna (2021) emphasize that when parents are not actively engaged, adolescents often seek emotional fulfillment and support from their peers, which can sometimes result in unhealthy relationships or risky sexual behavior.

Participant 7's statement, "*I am not close to my parents. We are not allowed to be affectionate to them,*" speaks to the emotional distance and lack of communication within the family. The absence of emotional warmth and open communication can lead adolescents to feel disconnected from their parents and more likely to seek affection and validation from peers or romantic partners, leading to early sexual activity or pregnancy. This sentiment aligns with Jessor et al. (2020), who assert that emotional support from parents plays a critical role in shaping an adolescent's decision-making, and a lack of it may encourage early pregnancies. Participant 6's statement, "*Because of disappointment to my parents, both of them are far from me,*" highlights how emotional disappointment, in addition to physical absence, can contribute to

adolescents feeling neglected or unsupported. This emotional void may lead them to seek alternative sources of support or validation, sometimes at the cost of their health and well-being. Levine and McKinney (2022) suggest that when adolescents experience emotional disappointment from their parents, it may trigger a search for affection in unhealthy places, contributing to early sexual activity and higher pregnancy rates.

The statements from these participants reflect how the lack of parental involvement, both physically and emotionally, can significantly impact an adolescent's decision-making, leading them to seek validation and support from peers or external sources, which can increase the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors, such as early pregnancy. The absence of a nurturing and communicative family environment appears to be a central factor in adolescent vulnerability to early sexual activity and unintended pregnancies, as reinforced by recent studies in the field.

*Financial Challenges and Education Barriers* refer to the socio-economic conditions that hinder adolescents' ability to access education and achieve economic independence, potentially leading to early pregnancies and life choices such as early marriages. Financial challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to educational resources, limit adolescents' opportunities for further schooling, often leading them to make early life decisions to escape financial hardship or improve their socio-economic status. The lack of education, in turn, can contribute to poor decision-making, limited job prospects, and reliance on early relationships for emotional and financial support. According to Baker (2020), socio-economic deprivation is closely linked to higher teenage pregnancy rates because adolescents from lower-income households often have fewer opportunities to finish their education and gain financial independence, leading them to settle for early relationships or marriages. Miller (2021) emphasize that adolescents facing financial constraints are more likely to engage in early pregnancies due to a lack of educational opportunities that could provide better economic stability in the future.

Participant 5's statement, *"I got married early because my parents have no financial capacity for me to proceed to college. I only finished high school,"* reflects how financial challenges limit access to further education, leading to early marriages. Studies, such as those by Levine and McKinney (2022), demonstrate that limited educational opportunities often result in young people feeling forced to enter into relationships or marriages to provide stability or escape financial hardships. Participant 7's statement, *"I didn't continue my studies because it was too difficult for me financially and they couldn't afford to pay for school for me,"* also highlights the direct impact of financial constraints on education. This aligns with Finer and Zolna (2021), who found that lack of access to education and financial resources is a significant predictor of early pregnancies, as adolescents from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to experience reduced educational attainment and are often more vulnerable to engaging in early sexual activity.

Participant 4's statement, *"They got pregnant because they are not happy in their household due to financial problems,"* illustrates how financial instability can create emotional distress in adolescents, pushing them into relationships that may lead to unintended pregnancies. According to Baker (2020), the stress of financial difficulties can impair family dynamics, creating environments where adolescents feel neglected or unsupported, leading them to seek emotional fulfillment elsewhere. Participant 4's second statement, *"Then their house is in the mountains, and they are not monitored by their parents,"* highlights how living in remote areas with limited access to parental supervision can exacerbate the effects of financial challenges. This lack of oversight, coupled with financial strain, can result in early sexual behavior and pregnancies, as there are fewer resources or protective factors in place to support adolescents.

These findings are consistent with Jessor et al. (2020), who note that adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds, where parental supervision is weak and financial resources are scarce, are at greater risk of making early life decisions that lead to unintended pregnancies.

The financial challenges and education barriers experienced by the participants directly impacted their decisions, leading to early marriages, limited educational attainment, and increased vulnerability to teenage pregnancy. The lack of financial resources and access to education often forces adolescents to make choices that prioritize immediate emotional and financial security, which in some cases, result in early pregnancies. Studies consistently indicate that socio-economic factors, including poverty and limited education, significantly influence adolescents' behaviors and decisions, often pushing them into early relationships and pregnancies.

The *Health Belief Model (HBM)* would be an appropriate nursing theory to anchor the theme "Interconnected Socio-Cultural and Economic Factors Driving Teenage Pregnancy." The Health Belief Model focuses on how individuals' perceptions of the risks and benefits of behaviors influence their decisions, including health-related behaviors such as sexual activity and pregnancy prevention. It suggests that individuals are more likely to engage in health-promoting behavior (e.g., delaying sexual activity or using contraception) if they believe they are at risk, perceive the benefits of taking action, and feel they have the ability to make such decisions. In the context of teenage pregnancy, the HBM can help explain how socio-cultural and economic factors, such as peer pressure, family dynamics, and financial constraints, influence adolescents' perceptions of risk and decision-making processes regarding.

The interconnected socio-cultural and economic factors driving teenage pregnancy highlight the need for multifaceted intervention strategies that address the complex web of influences affecting adolescents. Economic instability, lack of educational opportunities, and family dynamics such as parental absence or poor communication create environments where adolescents may seek validation or emotional support through early sexual activity, often leading to unintended pregnancies. Cultural norms and peer pressure further shape adolescents' perceptions of relationships and sexuality, reinforcing early pregnancies as a potential solution to emotional or financial gaps. These findings underscore the importance of comprehensive approaches that include enhancing educational access, improving family engagement, addressing economic disparities, and challenging cultural norms that normalize early pregnancies. Public health initiatives, educational reforms, and community-based interventions must work collaboratively to provide adolescents with the knowledge, resources, and support they need to make informed decisions about their sexual health and future, ultimately reducing the rates of teenage pregnancy.

#### Chapter 4

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Summary**

The study focuses on pregnant teenagers in the Municipality of Buug to see the socio-cultural influences of the pregnancy rate. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions, 1.) What socio-cultural factors are most commonly associated with teenage pregnancy in the communities studied? 2.) How do socio-cultural influences the prevalence of teenage of teenage pregnancy in specific communities? The study utilized a phenomenological research design conducted at Municipality of Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay. The participants included 7 pregnant teenagers through purposive sampling. Data and information were collected covering different Barangays in the Municipality of Buug in a face-to-face

interview using an interview guide. The data underwent analysis using Moustakas' which emphasize systematic approach to uncovering the essence of participants lived experiences.

### Findings

The following are the salient findings of the study.

1. External and interpersonal pressures shaping early decision making among youth. This theme highlights how peer pressure, social media, family dynamics, and financial challenges influence adolescents' decisions and behaviors, shaping their early life choices.
2. Interplay of socio cultural factors, family dynamics and external influences on teenager pregnancy. This theme examines how socio-cultural norms and economic factors, such as poverty and limited education, intersect to influence the likelihood of teenage pregnancy.

### Conclusion:

1. A comprehensive support system that addresses both external pressures and internal challenges is essential to help adolescents make healthier and more informed decisions.
2. Tackling socio-cultural norms and economic barriers, such as poverty and limited educational opportunities, is critical in reducing teenage pregnancy rates.

### Recommendations

1. Engage teenagers in different programs like Healthy Young Ones that support discussion on relationships, sexuality, and values.
2. Guidance Counseling Office and community organizations may create programs that address both external influences, such as peer pressure and social media, and internal challenges like family dynamics and financial struggles, offering counseling, education, and skill-building resources.
3. Policymakers and educators may prioritize programs that challenge socio-cultural norms about teenage pregnancy and provide greater access to education and economic opportunities for adolescents, particularly in underserved communities.
4. The community leaders may create community-based programs that provide holistic support, focusing on improving family dynamics, peer influences, and economic stability, to reduce the factors contributing to teenage pregnancy.
5. Future researchers may investigate the effectiveness of community-based interventions that simultaneously address multiple factors—family, peers, and finances—in reducing teenage pregnancy across diverse demographic groups.

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