Parenting and academic experience:
The dual roles of motherhood and student life

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Education is a transformative force, particularly for women, as it facilitates empowerment and promotes gender equality. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of individuals entering tertiary education, including a rising number of student mothers. Hence, this study aims to explore the unique experiences faced by student mothers in navigating their dual roles as both students and mothers. Using purposive sampling, ten (10) student-mothers were interviewed, and their experiences were analyzed using a phenomenological approach. The findings revealed 03 major themes: (1) the lived experiences of student-mothers, which include conflicting demands, finances, self-neglect, feelings of inadequacy and guilt, social stigma, and support system; (2) personal meanings they provide for their experiences; which includes motivations, disappointments, character improvements, fulfillment, and lessons learned; and (3) their aspirations and inspirations, such as proving themselves, drawing inspiration from their family, and their dreams for themselves and their children. These findings emphasize the diverse experiences of student mothers, ranging from their hardships to how they provide meaning to their experiences. Recommendations for supporting student-mothers include tutoring services, class considerations and exemptions, scholarship programs, and counseling services to assist them in fulfilling their dual roles effectively.

1. Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of personal and societal advancement, providing the tools necessary for individuals to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to the betterment of the world (Theirworld, 2016). It is regarded as a gateway to success, opening numerous opportunities and paving the way for a promising career and fulfilling life. Education is crucial for women as it has been a facilitating factor towards women's empowerment.

However, an issue that disproportionately affects women's educational attainment is teenage pregnancy. Around 21 million girls aged between 15 to 19 years old become pregnant each year (World Health Organization, 2024). In the Philippines, the cases of students who became parents in their teenage years continue to rise, with the majority of births (27.3 percent)

being born to young moms aged 20 to 24 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018). Twenty-three percent of these women give birth more than once. According to the same data, five percent of teenagers are aged 15-19 (Philippine Statistics Authority & ICF, 2023).

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of individuals entering tertiary education, including a rising number of mother students (Hayati, 2020). They take on dual roles as they enter the schools, balancing their student life and motherhood. Thus, student-mothers must divide and compromise their time, needs, responsibilities, and aspirations to fulfill their demanding responsibilities (Espiritu et al., 2023). Managing their dual roles is challenging, leading to student-mothers struggling to meet their academic and maternal duties (Syuraini, 2020).

Prior research has documented the numerous challenges student-mothers face that affect their ability to thrive academically. Studies have explored undergraduate student-mothers' experiences (Callender, 2018; James, 2019; Kensinger & Minnick, 2017; Simon, 2020), support mechanisms in tertiary education (Corfe, 2019; Dickson & Tennant, 2017), as well as the challenges and coping strategies they employ (Anibijuwon & Esimai, 2020; Dankyi et al., 2019; Ogunji et al., 2019; Ojo et al., 2020). In the Philippines, research has examined topics such as the challenges student-mothers face (Dasig, 2020), their motivation to finish their schooling (Yang & Bullecer, 2016), their academic journeys (Torres et al., 2020), and the need for societal change to support their higher education (Ato, 2018).

However, few studies have focused on how student-mothers make meaning of their experiences. Hence, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring their lived experiences, providing insights into how they make meaning of their experiences as mothers and students, and also to shed light on their aspirations and inspirations as they pursue their education while fulfilling their maternal responsibilities.

2. Theoretical basis

This study is anchored on the feminist standpoint theory and feminist perspective, providing a lens to examine and understand the experiences of women, particularly in the context of motherhood. Feminist standpoint theory places a particular emphasis on the knowledge derived from the everyday experiences of women. Rooted in the idea that marginalized groups, such as women, possess a distinctive standpoint that provides valuable insights, it asserts that understanding women's experiences necessitates exploring the challenges and circumstances that are common among them (Wood, 2009). By focusing on the standpoint of women, the study aimed to uncover a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and challenges related to motherhood.

Further, the feminist standpoint allowed for an exploration of women's experiences and challenges associated with motherhood. This framework recognizes that women, as a social group, share common positions and consequently encounter shared experiences. To truly understand the perspectives of those outside the dominant group, it is essential to conduct research from their perspective. In this context, feminist standpoint theory contends that individuals within a specific social position, in this case, women, have a unique and valuable perspective that contributes to a more thorough comprehension of their experiences (Lorber, 2001), which this study seeks to identify.

Research shows that student mothers have limited capabilities to meet their personal needs due to their financial status, which is greatly affected by school-related expenses

(Montalto et al., 2018). Balancing the dual role of motherhood and student life often results in heightened stress, making them vulnerable to mental health issues like Postpartum depression, endangering both maternal and child health (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). Student-mothers aged 20 and below are highly vulnerable to mental health issues as this is also a demanding education level (Agnafors et al., 2019), as feelings of anxiety, sadness, and depression can also hinder academic performance (Mboya et al., 2020). Stereotyping such as being financially unstable, irresponsible, improvident, and even lustful about early-age pregnancy and student mothers create an unwelcoming environment and foster isolation, exacerbating the challenges they face (Jones et al., 2019). Thus, it is essential to implement support mechanisms for student mothers to create a more inclusive environment to manage their dual role of motherhood and student life.

3. Methodology

3.1. Qualitative design and methodology

Qualitative research design is a methodology that aims to understand human behavior, opinions, themes, and motivations. It delves into phenomena that influence the lived realities of individuals or groups within a specific cultural or social context (Bell et al., 2021).

In this qualitative study, a phenomenological approach was used to delve into the lived experiences of student mothers, how they give meaning to their situation, and their aspirations and inspiration. Phenomenology is used to understand people's lived experiences and an effort to extract meaningful insights (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

3.2. Research site

The research was conducted at the Philippine Normal University - Mindanao, the Multicultural Education hub and institution offering only education programs. It serves diverse students and strives to be culturally responsive to mainstream and marginalized sectors (Cajetas-Saranza, 2015). Located in the Caraga region, the region with an alarming rate of early-age pregnancy, with one out of eight women aged 15 - 19 giving birth. (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA] & ICF, 2022). PNU Mindanao, the only regular school, has 80% of its population are women (Gender and Development, 2023). The increasing number of student-mothers enrolling in the university each year necessitates this study, mainly because of the university's rural context and predominantly female student population.

3.3. Selection criteria and participants

This study has ten purposive selected participants who are well-positioned to provide valuable insights and information regarding the focus of the research (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). They are selected using the following selection criteria: (a) Female; (b) Bonafide student of the Philippine Normal University- Mindanao; (c) Has a child/children.

3.4. Data collection

A semi-structured interview was used and adapted to the study's context. This method allows researchers to obtain pertinent information and facilitates posing follow-up questions for clarification purposes (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The researchers followed and modified the interview guide questions from the study of Manalang et al. (2016) in line with the research questions of this study. In collecting data, the researchers obtained permission from the Philippine Normal University - Mindanao to survey the institution, with student-mothers from

this campus as the participants. They have been sought for their consent, ensuring voluntary participation while transparently communicating the nature of their involvement and potential risks. Interviews were conducted at a location convenient for participants, with explicit permission obtained for audio recording before each session.

3.5. Data analysis

This qualitative study used thematic analysis to analyze the gathered data, which helped the researchers familiarize the data and investigate the implications of the concepts that emerged from participant's experiences (Labra et al., 2019). Thematic analysis is a method for studying qualitative data that comprises examining a data set for repeating patterns, understanding them, and reporting them (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It is an iterative process consisting of six steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating codes, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) locating exemplars.

3.6. Role of researcher

The researchers played a vital role in this study by collecting, interpreting, and comprehending student-mothers' experiences. The integrity of the research depends heavily on the researcher's competence, openness, and honesty, as they aim to gain insight into the participant's thoughts and feelings. This process involves probing potentially personal and sensitive aspects of the participant's lives, requiring careful consideration and empathy. The researchers also recognized the potential for biases in qualitative research; thus, they adopted a series of methodological safeguards, including detailed record-keeping to minimize the likelihood of errors, enhanced transparency of the research process, and the involvement of all researchers in the data interpretation process.

3.7. Methods of validation

Four (4) criteria are used to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The credibility of this study was ensured through prolonged engagement with the participants until data saturation was achieved. An audio recorder was used during the individual interviews, which were transcribed and compared to ensure correctness (Thomas, 2006; Tong et al., 2007).

Meanwhile, transferability was ensured by using purposive sampling to select participants to maximize the range of specific information obtained from and about the particular context and by purposefully selecting the participants regarding their knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. A broad description of the data collected regarding their experiences will be created.

Confirmability was ensured through a review of the relevant literature, which will be done to establish what was known and unknown on the subject under study.

Lastly, dependability in this study was ensured through the recordings and transcripts of the interviews, which were made available when needed. Also, the study's findings have been supported by related literature on the phenomenon under investigation.

3.8. Potential ethical issues

This research was subjected to various considerations to ensure the ethical conduct of the study. As such, to minimize the potential ethical issues in this study, the researchers followed the

05 Principles of Research Ethics set by Lund Research Ltd. (2012), which are (1) minimizing the risk of harm, (2) obtaining informed consent, (3) protecting anonymity and confidentiality, (4) avoiding deceptive practices, and (5) providing the right to withdraw.

The participants were asked about their willingness to participate in the study, after which they were asked to sign a consent form to assure the researchers of their complete participation and prove that they had volunteered. The participants were briefed on this research's processes, risks, and benefits. Participants were assigned codes to protect their privacy, and interviews were conducted privately. Lastly, the secrecy of the interview transcripts was maintained, and personal information was not disclosed or utilized beyond the scope of this study.

4. Result and discussion

4.1. Profile of the participants

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the ten participants.

Table 1

Profile of The Participants

Participant	Current Age	Year Level	Age during their first pregnancy	Year Level during their first pregnancy	No. of children	Civil Status
001	21	Third year	17	Grade 11	1	Single
002	21	Third year	19	First-year College	1	Single
003	20	Second year	17	Grade 12	1	Live-in
004	26	Second year	18	Grade 10	2	Married
005	24	Third year	22	Second Year College	1	Live-in
006	21	Third year	18	Grade 11	1	Live-in
007	21	Third Year	19	Grade 12	1	Married
008	24	First-year	20	Grade 12	1	Live-in
009	32	Second year	20	Grade 10	4	Married
010	28	Second year	18	Grade 9	2	Married

Source. Data analysis result of the research

As shown in Table 1, the first pregnancy of the participants was when they were around 18 years old, and most of them were still in high school. Most of them are married or have a live-in status with one child. The participants came from diverse backgrounds and situations; they all shared a common experience of balancing the dual roles of students and mothers.

4.2. Results and discussions

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data using thematic analysis, the researchers have identified 03 significant themes with corresponding sub-themes.

Table 2

Themes and The Corresponding Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Lived experiences of student-mothers	Conflicting demands Finances Self-neglect The feeling of inadequacy and guilt Social stigma Support system
Meanings of their experiences	Being motivated Disappointments Fulfilling Character improvement Lessons learned
Inspiration and aspiration	Proving herself Family as inspiration Dreams for herself Dreams for her child

Source. Data analysis result of the research

Under the theme of Lived experiences of student-mothers, the following sub-themes are identified: conflicting demands, finances, self-neglect, feelings of inadequacy and guilt, social stigma, and support system. Meanwhile, under the Meanings of their experiences are the following sub-themes: motivation, disappointment, fulfillment, character improvement, and lessons learned. Lastly, the following sub-themes are identified on the theme of Inspiration and Aspiration: proving herself as an inspiration, dreams for herself, and dreams for her child. The sub-themes that emerged reflect the everyday experiences that student mothers face while fulfilling their dual roles as mothers and students.

4.3. Discussion

Theme 1: The lived experiences of student-mothers

The first central theme can be best summarized with the following sub-themes: conflicting demands, financial problems, self-neglect, feelings of inadequacy and guilt, social stigma, and support system. Collectively, it can be concluded that student mothers face complex and multifaceted challenges as they navigate their dual roles as students and mothers. Despite these adversities, they persevered with the help of their support systems, including partners, family, classmates, and friends.

Conflicting Demands

Student mothers often encounter conflicting demands from the responsibilities of motherhood and student life. Mothers are expected to devote their time and attention to their children. Students are expected to attend classes, dedicate their time, and focus on studying their lessons and answering their schoolwork. The conflicting demands on their time and attention create a constant struggle to balance both roles, as illustrated by the following statements:

...it isn't easy when it comes to managing your time for your child and your studies, etc. (Participant 001)

...being a student mother is difficult because you must allot and manage your time to do your school tasks while caring for your child. (Participant 005)

It isn't easy, especially with time and time management, especially when it comes to my schooling; if there's an activity inside the school, I don't attend it because I choose my responsibility as a mother over being a student. So it affected me. (Participant 002)

These statements align with the study of Andres (2021) and Gaytos et al. (2019), which states that students-mothers are faced with the dilemma of fulfilling equally urgent and critical conflicting demands at school and home. They are conflicted about what to prioritize and which must be sacrificed because their responsibility as students and mothers is equally essential.

Finances

Student mothers often think about their finances, as it is one of the most affected aspects of their motherhood and student life. Many of them find themselves in a situation where financial constraint affects their ability to provide for their child's needs and education. Although some receive financial support from their parents, partners, and relatives, these contributions are barely enough to meet their needs. This is evident in the following statements:

... finances affected me a lot because I have to buy for my child's needs; my parents' allowance has to be budgeted to purchase my child's needs, so I can say that it affected me. (Participant 001)

As a mother, I need financial assistance. I need to have money all the time for my schooling and my child. (Participant 006)

Right now, our finances are just barely enough for my allowance, transportation fees, and amortization; it is just enough to pay for my allowance. My partner's salary is just barely sufficient to sustain our weekly needs. (Participant 008)

This sub-theme supports the study's findings by Dankyi et al. (2019), in which finances and the lack of them negatively affected student mother's educational performance. They cannot manage and fulfill their responsibilities because they have to worry about their finances and how it impacts their education and maternal role (Mamhute, 2011).

Self-neglect

Due to the overwhelming demands of their dual roles, student mothers often neglect their personal needs. Sacrificing personal care and well-being to fulfill their academic and maternal responsibilities is a reality for them. It is best illustrated in the statements below:

My health has been affected because of my duties. When I had to do multiple tasks at school, I was so stressed that I didn't notice that I was neglecting my health, etc. I sometimes don't have the time to take a bath, etc. I only do it twice a week because of time constraints and because I feel unwell. (Participant 002)

I don't have the time to bond with my friends. I don't have the time to be with them when they get together, especially if they are far away. (Participant 006)

The stress from managing my dual roles is triggering my dormant genetic disease and causing my blood pressure to increase. (Participant 004)

The statements above highlight the student-mother's physical and emotional toll of self-neglect. This is consistent with the study of Cabaguing (2017), who found that student-mothers frequently sacrifice their personal needs to fulfill and balance their responsibilities. Their presence is absent from any social gatherings that serve as bonding time with friends. They even surrender their own time for hygiene and health maintenance. Further, the study by Taukeni (2014) shows that student mothers are forced to neglect themselves due to their circumstances, leaving them feeling lethargic and weak.

The feeling of Inadequacy and Guilt

Balancing the responsibilities of motherhood and education often leads to feelings of inadequacy and guilt among student mothers. These negative emotions develop when they cannot manage and balance their parental and academic responsibilities, resulting in a sense of failure in meeting the expectations of mothers and students. Participants expressed these sentiments in the following statements:

... in my experience, I feel like I'm the only one who isn't excelling in our class while the rest of my classmates excelled. (Participant 001)

It is lacking. I need to provide more for more children's physical needs. In guiding my child, I feel like I can't provide for it right now since I am still exploring how to guide my child correctly. (Participant 001)

It is not a good feeling; I am so focused and dedicated much of my time and resources to school that I forgot to buy my children's needs. Looking at their faces, I feel so guilty that I haven't spent time with them because of my schooling. (Participant 009)

The sentiments above align with the findings of Gaytos et al. (2019) and Cabaguing (2017), who noted that inadequacy and guilt are prevalent in student mothers. They feel guilty when they cannot fully take care of their child, while on the other hand, they feel inadequate because they lack the time to focus on their studies, which negatively affects their academic performance.

Social Stigma

Due to their circumstance, student mothers are often stigmatized by other people, primarily by their family members, relatives, and neighbors. Receiving harsh comments and judgments can impact their emotional well-being, though some student-mothers use these experiences as motivation to persevere. This is best illustrated with the following statements:

I received comments such as why I decided to return to school now that I am already a mother. (Participant 004)

My neighbors commented about why I was going back to school when I was already a mother. They would then scold their children, saying that they shouldn't go back to school when they are already a mother, and then leave their children to their parents to take care of them. (Participant 008)

Their judgments inspired me to do better and prove they shouldn't judge my situation. (Participant 010)

These experiences are consistent with the findings of Gatbonton (2021), who identified that student-mothers face stigma and prejudice for their community and families because of their circumstances. Pardillo (2023) further stated that being a student-mother is unusual in the Philippines, thus leading to social stigma in their community.

Support System

Support systems play a critical role in helping student-mothers manage their overwhelming responsibilities. Financial, emotional, and physical support from their partner, family, relatives, friends, and classmates significantly alleviates student-mothers' challenges, enabling them to manage their dual roles effectively. This is reflected in the participant's statements:

I wouldn't say that I am struggling because the people that surround me, especially my husband, are very supportive of me. (Participant 010)

My life as a student mother is not that hard, especially since my partner is always there supporting me emotionally and financially and all the support I need. (Participant 005)

I didn't have a hard time adjusting because my classmates were easy to reach out to and were very respectful to me as someone older than them. I also didn't feel any discrimination in my situation; instead, they were very supportive of me. (Participant 008)

The sub-theme supports findings from Manalang et al. (2016), where it was found that student-mothers often rely on the support of their social networks, such as their family, friends, and partners, to manage their maternal and academic responsibilities effectively.

Theme 2: Meanings of Their Experiences

The second central theme can be best summarized with the following sub-themes: motivation, disappointments, fulfillment, character improvement, and lessons learned. These sub-themes reveal that student-mothers attribute various meanings to their dual roles, ranging from feelings of satisfaction, motivation, and disappointment. Through these experiences, student-mothers learn valuable lessons that shape their character and strengthen their resilience as they navigate to fulfill their dual responsibilities.

Motivation

The experiences of fulfilling their dual roles have motivated student-mothers to pursue their education and provide for their children. This motivation stems from their recognition of the transformative value of education and its potential to improve their future. It is best illustrated by the statements below:

Becoming a student-mother positively affected me. I am much more motivated to strive hard. (Participant 006)

I look forward to finishing my education and meeting my child's needs. (Participant 001)

I am motivated to pursue my dreams, etc.; if this situation hadn't happened to me, I would not pursue to continue my education. (Participant 002)

The statements of this sub-theme resonate with the findings of Torres et al. (2020), stating that student mothers are often motivated by their responsibilities to excel in both motherhood and academics. Andres (2021) further noted that student mothers have recognized the importance of completing their education as a transformative process, which explains the drive of students to finish their education.

Disappointments

Despite their motivation, some student-mothers express disappointment in their current circumstances, often feeling that their responsibilities hindered them from achieving their initial plans. This disappointment is particularly evident among those who felt that motherhood had limited their academic performance. The following statements highlight these sentiments:

I am disappointed because I already have a goal in mind but cannot attain it because of my situation. (Participant 001)

I can focus more on my studies if I am not a mother. (Participant 001)

When I was still single, I was active and could do whatever I wanted, but now it isn't the case anymore. (Participant 007)

This sub-theme aligns with Pare (2009), who observed that student-mothers often experience frustration and disappointment in their current situation, which stems from the different stressors they have faced in balancing their dual roles. Additionally, Anane et al. (2021) further stated that student mothers often think of giving up on their schooling, which is caused by the frustration and disappointments they feel throughout their experience.

Fulfilling

Despite the difficulties of balancing their responsibilities as a mother and a student, many student-mothers feel a profound sense of fulfillment when they successfully manage their dual roles, which emerges from overcoming challenges and adapting to their situation, which is best captured in the following statements:

It is fulfilling for me to do both roles, which I didn't expect. (Participant 001)

It is fulfilling because I didn't expect that I could do both roles. I carried on and adjusted to my dual responsibilities at home and school. (Participant 008)

I feel complete (becoming a student mother) and don't need anything else. (Participant 010)

The feeling of fulfillment mirrors the study of Lovell (2013), who noted that student-mothers feel a strong sense of satisfaction from continuing their education while caring for their children. It gives them a sense of fulfillment that they can effectively manage their responsibilities.

Character Improvement

The experience of becoming a student-mother is life-changing, significantly changing their attitude and character. Many changes observed include becoming more practical, responsible, patient, independent, and mature. These character improvements are seen as a positive outcome of their circumstances, as illustrated in the statements below:

I am much more practical now. I want to finish my education, get my license, and work as soon as possible to provide their needs. (Participant 001)

I am mature now because I know what to prioritize and can control myself because I know my limits. (Participant 008)

I am responsible now because someone depends on me and needs my guidance. (Participant 005)

The statements are consistent with Torres et al. (2020), who found that student-mothers' responsibilities help foster personal growth, developing traits such as responsibility, maturity, and resilience among student-mothers.

Lessons Learned

Navigating student-mothers' dual responsibilities has brought lessons they have cherished and applied. These lessons often involve a shift in perspective, appreciating support systems, and a deeper understanding of motherhood and balancing dual roles. It is best illustrated in the following statements:

I have changed my perspective on how I see people and now understand their situation better. It made me realize that I should not judge people easily because I don't know what they go through. (Participant 002)

I learned a lot of things when I became a student-mother. I appreciate my parents more, which made me realize that what they've been saying is true. (Participant 007)

I appreciate life and its importance even more. It also made me understand student mothers' struggles and hard work. (Participant 006)

These reflections align with Pardillo (2023), who found that student-mothers learn valuable lessons from their experiences of fulfilling their dual roles. Throughout their experience, they have learned meaningful values that serve as springboard towards self-development (Andres, 2021).

Theme 3: Inspiration and Aspiration

The third central theme can be best summarized with the following sub-themes: proving herself, family as inspiration, dreams for herself, and dreams for her child. These sub-themes collectively highlight that student-mothers draw inspiration from their families and the desire to prove themselves, motivating them to persevere in their dual roles and strive to achieve their aspirations for themselves and their children.

Proving herself

Student mothers frequently face stigma and prejudice due to their circumstances. Instead of being affected by it, many use those negative perceptions as an inspiration to prove their worth and successfully manage their dual responsibilities. The following statements best reflect this:

I tell myself I need to finish my schooling so they can change their views and perspectives of me as a student-mother. (Participant 008)

I want to prove to my relatives that I can succeed despite their backward mindset. (Participant 001)

Their hurtful words made me stronger and more capable of achieving my goals. And if I do, I will thank them for motivating me. (Participant 007)

This sub-theme fully aligns with the study of Pardillo (2023) and Andres (2021), which found that despite facing stigma, they channel these negative perceptions into inspiration, motivating them to complete their education and reach their dreams amidst difficult circumstances.

Family as Inspiration

For student mothers, managing their parental and academic responsibilities is an immense challenge, and their perseverance is rooted in the inspiration they draw from their families. They are highly motivated to fulfill their dual roles because their family inspires them.

My husband inspired me to continue my schooling. He motivates me, and oftentimes, he is much more excited than I am to go to school. (Participant 010)

I want to strive hard on my course to give my child a better future. (Participant 008)

My baby is my source of strength. Because of my baby, I strived to try and fulfill my responsibility as a student and a mother. (Participant 006)

This sub-theme parallels the findings of Sicam et al. (2021), who stated that student mothers see their family as their primary motivation to continue their education while managing

their parental responsibility. Their source of inspiration, which enabled them to push through the challenges of their dual responsibilities, comes from their family (Dasig, 2020).

Dreams for herself

The pursuit of education by student mothers stems from their aspirations, such as finishing their studies, working in a stable job, and being financially stable. These dreams are not solely for their benefit but also extend to their children and families. It is best illustrated in the following statements:

My dream for myself is to provide my needs and wants. (Participant 007)

I see myself as financially stable and working a stable job to support my family. (Participant 006)

I want to travel and work abroad. (Participant 001)

This sub-theme aligns with Cabaguing (2017), who found that, despite motherhood responsibilities, student-mothers continue to aspire to complete their education and achieve their dreams. Additionally, Gatbonton (2021) states that student-mothers value the transformative force of education and are much more motivated to achieve personal goals through education.

Dreams for her child

The student-mother's dream for their children often mirrors their desires. They want their children to complete their education and live a stable life. However, many interviewees stressed that they don't want their children to face situations similar to what they currently experience.

I want my child to finish his education with his dream course. (Participant 006)

As much as possible, I don't want him to be in a similar situation as I am. (Participant 001)

I want my child not to face the hardships I face right now, etc. (Participant 009)

The statements correspond with Cabaguing (2017), who found that despite their challenges, they remain committed to their education motivated to secure a brighter future for their children. Similarly, Gaytos et al. (2019) further stated that having children brings out the best in student mothers, who are "double motivated" to achieve their goals and provide better opportunities for their children.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This phenomenological study aims to explore the lived experiences of student-mothers, how they derive meanings from their experiences, and their inspirations and aspirations. The interview results revealed that student-mothers faced everyday experiences, ranging from managing challenges to finding personal significance in their dual roles. One major issue identified is the conflicting demands for time and attention, as student mothers struggle to balance their responsibilities, often finding it difficult to commit to either role fully. Financial strain is another prevalent issue, as limited resources are frequently stretched to support their educational and maternal needs. This economic burden leads to the deprivation of their needs and wants, as they often prioritize their child's needs over theirs. Social stigma is another aspect they experience, especially in the early stages of their motherhood. Student mothers frequently contend with feelings of inadequacy and guilt because of the perceived failure to meet societal expectations. This internal struggle is often compounded by external pressure, such as criticisms from family, relatives, and friends, which worsens their situation. However, a strong support

system is crucial in providing emotional and practical support that helps student-mothers manage their dual roles. Despite these challenges, student mothers find renewed purpose and motivation in fulfilling their roles as students and mothers. Their challenges drive them to persevere, be resilient, and be determined to succeed. For them, pursuing education is a personal goal and an investment in their future. They view academic success as a path toward financial stability, which can secure a better future for their children. Their aspiration of providing a better life for their families motivates student mothers to overcome obstacles and strive towards their personal and educational goals.

Based on the study's results, the researchers recommend supporting student-mothers through tutoring. School administrators and faculty should understand their circumstances more and excuse them from school programs if they are valid. Also, the school should provide counseling services to help them manage their stress and receive professional advice. Lastly, future researchers can expand sample sizes and compare similar educational institutions to enhance data richness.

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