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1 Bottles and Books: Life as a Student-Mother

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4

5 **Abstract**

6 Scan to know paper details and author's profile

7

8 *Index terms—*

9 **1 I. INTRODUCTION**

10 Education is contemporary regarded not only as a tool for development, but also a right. Education helps
11 individuals to reach their full potential and empowers women toward sustainable development (Theirworld.org.,
12 2016). It also provides an opportunity for all women to prove themselves personally and professionally (Zerrudo
13 2011). Imbong (2009) cited that education empowers women to be more responsible and productive citizens
14 of the society. Hinton-Smith (2012), revealed that women especially the single mothers believe that education is
15 important for them to provide a better life and future for children.

16 Philippine Statistics Authority reported in 2014 that among the young adult women ages 15 to 24 who
17 experienced early pregnancy and motherhood, 21 percent are with college education while 44 percent are with
18 elementary education. Previous studies (Brooks, 2011 Wilsey, 2013) concurred that the proportion of women in
19 higher education has steadily increased and there is also an increase of student mothers entering HEIs, which has
20 been a global concern. College students who are involved in early motherhood are facing various challenges as
21 these dual roles (parenting and schooling) is not an easy task ??Syuraini, 2020).

22 When a woman experience motherhood role, her behaviour may contrast with this, instead of focusing all
23 her attention on her studies ??Visick, 2009). Springer, Parker, and Leviten-Reid (2009) highlight that being in
24 motherhood while studying is such a challenging role. They might face different barriers including emotional
25 pressures and negative feedback from others.

26 The enthusiasm of their children's success is one of the reasons student mothers re-enter university. This
27 enables them to have a worthy starting point in life, obtain study skills, and improve quality of life (Reay, Ball,
28 & David, 2002; Rita, Muliana, & Handrianto, 2021). This was paralleled by Babineau and Packard (2006) and
29 Mandaret and Wainwright (2010) that the most often reason for adults to re-enter to higher London Journal of
30 Research in Humanities and Social Sciences education is for the betterment of their family's life chances and to
31 be a role model for their children ??Syuraini, Sunarti, & Zukdi, 2019). While Wilsey (2013) argues that it was
32 to improve their working situation. In his study, he found that 68 percent traditional college age mothers and 57
33 percent older mothers revealed this reason. This proved that in spite of the challenges faced by student mothers,
34 they are determined to chase a better living. There have been few related studies of the situation of student
35 mothers in higher educational institutions (Brooks, 2011).

36 In a study by Williams, et al. (2006) Hence, the researcher aim to explore the lived experiences of student-
37 mothers. Specifically, this study wants to describe the barriers and strategies in coping up in their studies.

38 **2 Purpose of the Study**

39 This study aimed to explore the barriers and strategies in coping up in their studies.

40 **3 Research Question**

41 1. What are the barriers and strategies in coping up in their studies.

**12 ALSO NOTED BY NELIA (J), ANOTHER PARTICIPANT: I HAVE TO
SET ASIDE MY ALLOWANCE FOR MY SON'S NEEDS ?**

42 4 II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

43 5 Research Design

44 This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach, which aimed to investigate the lived experiences of
45 student-mothers. A qualitative research study according to Mills and Birks (2014), aimed to examine phenomena
46 that affect the lived reality of individuals or groups in a particular cultural or social context. Phenomenology
47 is one of the qualitative research approaches that intends to accurately describe the phenomenon without a
48 pre-existing knowledge to a framework, but remaining truth to the facts (Groenewald, 2004). More so, using
49 qualitative research, the researchers would be able to connect with the subjects and to see the world from their
50 perspectives (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The researchers found this method most applicable to the inquiry to
51 provide an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of student-mothers.

52 6 Research Participants and Sampling

53 The method used to identify the participants of the study was purposive sampling. The sample size was
54 determined by data saturation, defined as the point when "no new themes are observed in the data" (Faulkner
55 & Trotter, 2017). In this study, twelve (12)

56 7 Data Gathering Procedure

57 The participants were instructed to answer an open-ended question by narrating and describing in their own
58 word the barriers and strategies to cope up in their studies.

59 The researcher administered the data gathering procedure personally and most of the participants completed
60 the activity in about an hour. Finally, the researcher collected the outputs and serialized them as ready for
61 analysis.

62 8 Data Analysis

63 In analyzing the data collected from the participants' outputs, the researcher used the individual interviews,
64 focus group discussion and document analysis.

65 In addition, the use of content analysis especially when a researcher uses gist and analyses in a study [7]. The
66 analysis was used to identify barriers and strategies to cope up in studies.

67 The coding and themes determined from the data analysis were not predetermined by the researcher but
68 emerged through the analysis process. After coding was complete, relationships were created between categories
69 by comparing and contrasting coding from the different cases [8]. The themes that emerged were derived from
70 the students' experiences.

71 9 III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

72 The results of the study provides a discussion of the data and findings from the individual interviews, focus group
73 discussion, and document analysis. The data provides insight on the barriers and strategies that student-mothers
74 describe and experience in their studies. The results are discussed and examined the barriers experienced by the
75 student-mother participants and the strategies in coping up with their studies.

76 10 Barriers in studies

77 Three recurring themes emerged, these are situational and dispositional.

78 11 Situational Barriers

79 The term "situational" in this study refers to the circumstances and conditions described by the participants as
80 barriers related to family, job, and financial commitments and obligations. In this study participants identified
81 several situational barriers.

82 Discussion in this study presents the current conditions describing the lives of student-mothers and their
83 perception of difficulties, uncontrollable events, or occurrences in their daily lives. Student-mother who enroll in
84 college continue to struggle with financial commitments and obligations.

85 Six of the participants suffered from financial constraints. A participant (J), described a barrier that she
86 experienced, I should make some adjustments with my allowance due to my baby's milk expenses.

87 Another participant (J), shared her practiced, my husband is a blind and I need to be a working student as
88 BHW and a sales agent. Ely (J) participant, expressed her observation, whenever my husband did not go to his
89 work therefore we do not have enough money to support our daily needs.

**90 12 Also noted by Nelia (J), another participant: I have to set
91 aside my allowance for my son's needs ?**

92 Barbie (S) another participant, conveyed that, I was so disturbed with my studies whenever we have family
93 problems. Furthermore, I usually get absent with my class because I do not know how to go about it.

94 The situational barriers referred to the circumstances and conditions related to family and financial constraints.
95 Cabrera et al. ??1992) concluded that financial problems themselves had no direct effect on persistence; but, the
96 indirect result of financial problems might affect students' academic and social integration and resolve to persist
97 in college.

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99 **13 Dispositional Barriers**

100 The dispositional barrier of attitude and self-perception is impacted with the juggling of multiple roles, time
101 demands, and conflicts created pressure and conflict for some of the participants.

102 Nelia (J), a participant, expressed her opinion on comments with some people about her, but I need to prove
103 to them that I will never be like this? Ely (J), also a participant, articulated people condemn her case? I
104 need to prove that they are wrong? Cristy(J), another participant, assumed that, sometimes I abandoned my
105 responsibilities as a parent because of multiple roles such as: sales agent, barangay health worker, and a student.

106 To counteract this barriers, various strategies used by the participants. Participants transitioned into college
107 by the use of support systems and the motivation that they were told they could go to college. These student-
108 mothers had college aspirations because their strong belief that they deserved a better life and education was the
109 key to a better life. "Student mothers tend to be really hard workers and are determined to get the job done so
110 will work hard, in spite of all the obstacles.

111 **14 Strategies to cope up in studies**

112 Student-mothers in this study described three strategies: (a) time related strategies, (b) attitudes/beliefs, and
113 (c) self-worth/efficacy.

114 **15 Time Related Strategies**

115 Time related strategies described by the single mothers such as time management, and quality time with
116 their child. Additionally, student-mother are forced to arrange and schedule time for studying, employment,
117 household chores, and class schedules around the care of their children ??Branscomb, 2006;Christie, 2002). Time
118 management was the first strategy that participants described as strategy to successfully fill the roles as student-
119 mother. This held constant across the groups and within each group. The strategy of time management emerged
120 as the "premier" and leading effective strategy for participants.

121 The above responses of the participants emphasized the value of time. Managing time is an issue that draws
122 attention of married students. Time management is a great challenge on the part of married students in doing
123 household chores, school assignments, requirements and other activities.

124 This supports the claim that, meeting individual students' needs [34], to find out the reason for missing classes,
125 time scheduling of activities and providing constructive feedback to students [35] are the other recommended
126 strategies advised by previous researchers. However, poor time management was found to be associated with
127 academic stress by other researchers [36]. Good time management skills involve prioritization of activities and
128 judicious usage of time available for organization of the tasks to be completed. Time management was found
129 to determine academic performance [36]. Moreover, those with sound time management behavior were found to
130 have fewer psychological and physical symptoms related to stress [36]. Close to half of the students had notable
131 weaknesses in their time management skills [37].

132 In addition, female students had significantly better active problem scores under coping behavior. They were
133 hence more mature and composed than the male in analyzing the center of the problem in a calm and optimistic
134 manner, and in finding solutions for the same. Females were also found to be better at time management
135 compared to their male counterparts [36,38].

136 **16 Attitudes/Beliefs**

137 The attitude/belief identified as strategies in this study is a strong religious belief or faith in God.

138 The above statements imply a strong faith in God. This finding approves which indicate that spiritual maturity
139 is an important attribute ??49] .

140 But then London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences again, church going also benefited
141 students because churches often offer positive role-models for students ??50].

142 Likewise, immigrants often used religion as a way to cope with different types of stressors and challenges ??51].
143 The belief in a higher power, or God, gave student participants a sense of control to deal with the challenges they
144 faced. Religiosity and spirituality were accessible constructs to the student participants because these beliefs
145 were integrated into their daily lives by their families of origin.

146 **17 Self-worth/Efficacy**

147 Student-mothers in this study demonstrated a strong sense of self-worth and a value within themselves and a
148 steadfast commitment to overcoming obstacles that they encountered in college. All of these strategies were
149 effective in helping students balance the competing demands in their lives as college students.

18 IV. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

150 School mentors counterbalance negative incidents by inspiring optimism and self-confidence in students who
151 are overloaded [47]. To meet objectives, the student participants organized their lives in ways to accomplish the
152 end results, despite enduring troubles along the way ??48].

153 According to Lei (2010), individuals have different motivations in pursuing something. It could be intrinsic or
154 extrinsic. In this case, the studentmothers had their intrinsic motivations. They decided to continue with their
155 professional growth because they wanted to show to their families and other people that they could do it despite
156 the challenges. More so, they wanted to secure the future of their children by getting that diploma which could
157 give them better opportunities in finding a good job. This motivation of student-mothers according to Wilsey
158 (2013) realizes their self-fulfillment and goal attainment. Thus, McKeown et al., (2002) were correct after they
159 emphasized that education is seen to be relevant by student-mothers to attain their human desires.

160 18 IV. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

161 This study has contributed to the knowledge base on the barriers and strategies identified by student-mothers' life
162 in their studies. The barriers are situational and dispositional barriers while the strategies identified by student-
163 mothers in coping with their studies are time related strategies, attitudes/beliefs, and self-worth / efficacy.

164 University can benefit if they are able to provide and identify the informal and formal systems of support
165 for student-mothers. Student-mothers in college would benefit from the identification of mechanisms that foster
166 within the student an understanding of how to navigate the formal and informal systems within the institution.
167 These support systems could include intrusive advising, identification of an office to address problems or concerns,
168 or the identification of an advocate or a problem solver or go to person.

169 Use of curriculum (orientation to services) designed to inform student-mothers as to how they may successfully
170 navigate, explore, and access university resources. This fluid curriculum could be in the form of a web site that
171 student-mothers can access on an "as needed" basis.

172 Programs on mentoring, tutoring, study skills workshops, focus groups, in place to assist the student-mothers
learner in addressing barriers endured as they attempt to persist in college. ¹ ²



Figure 1:

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¹ Bottles and Books: Life as a Student-Mother

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18 IV. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

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