



Perception of Youths, Parents, and Teachers toward Youth Sexual Activity and Sexual and Reproductive Health Education in an Urban Slum in the Philippines: A Case Study in Tondo,...

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論文内容の要旨

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**Perception of Youths, Parents, and Teachers toward Youth Sexual Activity
and Sexual and Reproductive Health Education in an Urban Slum in the
Philippines: A Case Study in Tondo, Manila**

（フィリピンのスラムにおける若者の性行動およびセクシュアル・リプロダクティブ
ヘルス教育に対する若者、親、教師の認識：マニラ・トンドを事例に）

Sexual knowledge and behavior among youth are controversial issues discussed worldwide. Sexual activity without adequate knowledge can have unintended consequences that have negative impacts on their future, including things, such as education, employment opportunities, and health. Although abortion is a recognized medical procedure, it is prohibited by law in some countries. The countries where abortion is strictly restricted are more likely to have unsafe abortions. In other words, adolescent pregnancy is considered to have negative consequences, whether the choice is between childbirth or abortion. This underscores the importance of prioritizing efforts to prevent teenage pregnancy before it occurs.

In 2021, the Philippine government issued a landmark presidential decree that made the prevention of adolescent pregnancies a national priority. This significant policy emerged because the country had one of the highest adolescent birth rates among ASEAN countries. According to the strict anti-abortion laws, pregnant adolescents have to choose childbirth. The government is concerned about the broader economic implications of adolescent pregnancy and childbirth. In this situation, the government has tried enhancing sexuality and reproductive health (SRH) education, which focuses primarily on preventing adolescent pregnancy. The Philippines has been considering implementing SRH education since the enactment of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012. Although SRH education has been discussed for many years, the situation is complex based on cultural and religious dimensions.

Based on this background, the urban slum of Tondo, situated within the city of Manila, the nation's capital, is the focus of this study. Tondo is known to be one of the poorest slums in the world and has the highest number of births in Manila. In addition, the presidential decree is concerned with the rising dependent population in the Philippines. However, Tondo already has a high population and density. The people there already face challenges accessing essential public services, including government-funded family planning and health services. Therefore, focusing on Tondo has significant implications for the global goal targeting of leaving no one behind.

Various factors influencing adolescent sexual activity, including inadequate SRH education, are identified in the previous research on adolescent pregnancy. On the other hand, some research gaps have also emerged. This study suggests three research gaps. The first significant research gap exists due to the underrepresentation of male perspectives in previous studies because although there are previous studies that describe reasons for youth to be involved in sexual activity, most of them focus on the perception of pregnant adolescents.

The second significant research gap arises from a lack of studies exploring parental perceptions and behaviors concerning SRH education in low-income Filipino families. Studies of parental narratives in countries other than the Philippines suggest that parents' cultural and religious beliefs are related to their communication about SRH at home. Still, this may not always apply to Tondo, as culture and religion vary from country to country and region to region.

The third significant research gap exists due to insufficient studies examining secondary school teachers' perceptions and behaviors regarding SRH education in the Philippines. A previous study in Tondo found that pregnant students were kicked out of school, but the results are limited to an analysis of the narratives of pregnant adolescents.

With these research gaps, this study developed three research questions: i) How do both male and female youth living in Tondo decide to engage in sexual activity; How are parents of youth living in Tondo involved in SRH education; and iii) How are teachers in charge of SRH education in secondary schools conducting SRH education.

Based on the research questions, this study has three objectives. First, this study aims to analyze the reasons for engaging in sexual activity among youth living in Tondo from the perspective of both males and females. In addition, the study aims to understand how the content of SRH education relates to their decision-making about sexual activity. Second, this study aims to understand how parents communicate with their children about SRH and what promotes or hinders SRH education from the parents' perspective. Third, this study aims to understand how teachers are involved in SRH education and what promotes or hinders it from the perspective of secondary school teachers in Tondo.

This study investigates and analyzes based on the case study method among qualitative research methods. Qualitative studies understand a unique situation as part of a particular context and interaction. Additionally, since a case study is a research approach that facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon in context, it is appropriate for understanding the specific situation of youth sexual activity in the specific circumstances of an urban slum and the current state of SRH education. A theoretical framework is presented using Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior to understand the youth's sexual activity. It describes what components are involved in youth sexual activity. Then, the perceptions of parents and secondary school teachers involved in SRH education were positioned within the framework.

The study conducted semi-structured interviews to capture the experiences and perspectives of participants. Through purposive sampling, the research included 11

female youths, 10 male youths, 10 mothers, and 10 secondary school teachers in Tondo. The sample size was determined by reviewing 10 previous studies on teenage pregnancy in the Philippines. It could be increased later if necessary.

Individual online interviews were conducted with the youths and their mothers, followed by face-to-face group interviews with 5 participants. The group interviews fostered dialogue and sharing of experiences, enabling a deeper exploration of sensitive information discussed in the individual interviews. Secondary school teachers were interviewed only face-to-face. This study conducted a thematic narrative analysis, enabling the emergence of patterns while maintaining the integrity of individual stories.

The results reveal the reason for youth sexual activity and the involvement of parents and teachers in SRH education in Tondo. First, the results clarified that the reasons for engaging in sexual activity among youth differ between females and males. Female youth predominantly cite the expression of love. In contrast, male youth often engage in sexual activity due to curiosity and peer pressure.

It also revealed that the effectiveness of current SRH education appears limited, as much of the school-based information duplicated knowledge already accessible through the peer's experiences in the community. Generally, youth in Tondo perceive adolescent pregnancy as common in their community. Furthermore, this study identified two instances of sexual violence, highlighting the need for SRH education aimed at enabling males and females to make decisions and act in the same way with correct knowledge.

Conversely, this study also revealed that youth who do not have children hold negative attitudes toward sexual activity, influenced by their observations of peers who have already become parents. Notably, some of them exhibited a strong academic focus, intentionally avoiding sexual activity to enhance their long-term economic prospects.

Second, the result reveals a complex pattern of barriers to parental involvement in SRH education. Mothers also perceive adolescent pregnancy in Tondo as common and do not want their children to undergo the same experience. However, they exhibit reluctance to discuss SRH with their children, primarily due to concerns that such discussions might implicitly approve sexual activity. This concern is particularly pronounced among mothers in the context of cultural and religious beliefs. On the other hand, they perceived that SRH education should start at home. This causes them a dilemma where the desire to prevent their children's early parenthood conflicts with their hesitation to provide necessary information and guidance.

Third, the result reveals contrasting institutional views of SRH education from the teacher's perspectives. Teachers also perceive adolescent pregnancy in Tondo as common.

They acknowledge some taboos surrounding SRH topics. However, following the mandated curriculum, clear government policies, and professional obligations appear to override personal reservations, enabling more SRH education delivery in schools than at home. Teachers' professional identity and a clear policy framework are crucial in overcoming cultural and religious barriers to SRH education.

Based on the results, this study discusses them by reviewing previous studies. First, the background of sexual activity for affection among female youth may be linked to a low level of life satisfaction. Conversely, preserving masculinity and status within the peer group motivated males' sexual activity based on male-specific group dynamics. This study is significant because by simultaneously analyzing the sexual activity among youth from both male and female perspectives, as shown above, the bias towards the female perspective in previous studies was mitigated, and a male perspective was incorporated. In addition, approximately 80% of the population in the Philippines is Catholic. This study supports the viewpoint of previous studies that there is a generalized perception that unmarried sexual activity, even when it is contrary to religious teachings, does not necessarily require adherence to those teachings.

The study is also significant because it reveals a contradiction in mothers' perceptions and behaviors. Mothers in this study believe that SRH education encourages children to engage in sexual activity, which aligns with Catholic teaching. They are more reluctant to discuss SRH topics than youth and secondary teachers. However, mothers begin discussing contraception once their children become parents, regardless of their age. This means that the topic of SRH between parents and children is not always taboo.

Identifying teachers' beliefs about SRH education and the situation was also significant to this study. The secondary school teachers had the most comprehensive view of this study's three perspectives. They understand their students' reasons for engaging in sexual activity and their parents' resistance to communication about SRH. Still, under such a complex situation, they conduct SRH education along with the school curriculum because of clear government policies, contrasting with previous studies in which schools were discouraged from promoting SRH education. Focusing on the contrast point and developing further studies on the relationship between religious beliefs and SRH education contributes to bringing new insights to countries and regions where religious beliefs hinder SRH education.

While previous studies often cited low economic status as a factor in adolescent pregnancy, this study also suggested that such conditions, conversely, can prevent youth from engaging in sexual activity. However, since social changes must be considered, the

results of this study hold significance for future studies that focus on changes in poverty areas over time and the accompanying shifts in people's values.

This study aimed to interpret the results using the theory of planned behavior. Based on the premise that intention precedes behavior, this study clarified the expressions of love, curiosity, and peer pressure that primarily shape intentions toward sexual activity. These are the attitudes and perceptions of the people who behave. However, interpreting sexual activity under violence using this theory is challenging. In this regard, this study provides a new perspective to the theory by suggesting that the intention behind the behavior may be formed by large external forces acting upon them, contrary to the attitudes or perceptions of the person who behaves.

This study, addressing the perception of youths, mothers, and secondary school teachers, provides a detailed understanding of the reasons for youth sexual activity and the current situation of SRH education in each position, and also provides new insights into the similarities and differences between their perspectives. There are gender differences in the reasons why youth engage in sexual activity, and the environment in Tondo has a significant influence. Conversely, their living environment also becomes a factor that discourages their sexual activity. This is not due to the effectiveness of SRH education but rather their lives in poverty and their interactions with teenage mothers in the community.

Of the three perspectives analyzed, the mothers were the most resistant to SRH education. At the same time, the teachers conducted SRH education following the school curriculum, suggesting that a well-organized policy framework, clear school policies, and work identities can help teachers overcome the cultural and religious barriers to SRH education they face. In other words, there is potential to advance SRH education also in areas with various challenges, including cultural or religious barriers. In addition to ensuring that future policies align more closely with the circumstances of youth, emphasizing parental involvement in SRH education could further enhance it.