

**International  
Institute of  
Social Studies**

*Erasmus*

## **Changing Social Norms to Ease Higher Education of Student Mothers in Caraga Region, Philippines**

A Research Paper presented by:

***Elvie C. Ato***

(Philippines)

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

**Social Policy for Development**  
(SPD)

Members of the Examining Committee:

Dr. Auma Okwany

Dr. Kristen Cheney

The Hague, The Netherlands  
December 2018

***Disclaimer:***

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the International Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

***Inquiries:***

International Institute of Social Studies  
P.O. Box 29776  
2502 LT The Hague  
The Netherlands

t: +31 70 426 0460  
e: info@iss.nl  
w: www.iss.nl  
fb: <http://www.facebook.com/iss.nl>  
twitter: @issnl

***Location:***

Kortenaerkade 12  
2518 AX The Hague  
The Netherlands

## Dedication

This piece of work is dedicated  
to the many women in the Philippines,  
who deserve to have greater entitlements  
than what they are currently having ...

And to God Almighty, for the faithfulness and undying love.

# Contents

<i>Acknowledgment</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>List of Appendices</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>List of Acronyms</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>x</i>
<b>Chapter 1 The Glimpse of the Study</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Research objective and question	3
1.3 Methodology	4
1.3.1 Description of the Research Site	4
1.3.2 Sampling Methods	4
1.3.3 Methods and Sources of Data	5
1.3.4 Scope and Limitation and Research Challenges	6
1.3.5 Positionality and Ethics	6
1.3.6 Organization of the Paper	7
<b>Chapter 2 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Social Norms	8
2.2 Social Exclusion	9
2.3 Agency	10
2.4 Summary Analytical Framework	10
<b>Chapter 3 The Philippine Policy Context of Disengaging and Re-Engaging University Schooling</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Overview of the Philippine Policies on Pregnancy	12
3.2 Pregnant Policies Categorization of MCW	13
3.3 What does MCW say and not say?	14
3.4 What is CMO No. 1 series of 2015 in relation to MCW?	14
3.5 Gains of Implementing MCW	15
3.6 Conclusion	17
<b>Chapter 4 Leaving and Re-Joining with University Schooling: The Case of Saint Paul University (SPU) – Surigao, Caraga Region, Philippines</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1 Background of SPU-Surigao	18
4.2 SPU-Surigao's Policies on Pregnancy	19
4.2.1 Pregnancy as Ground for Exclusion	19
4.2.2 Certificate of Marriage as Requirement for Schooling Re-Entry	21
4.2.3 Voluntary Pregnancy Testing As Requirement to All Women Students	21
4.2.4 No Policy Denying Enrolment to Men Who Caused Pregnancy	22
4.3 Experiences of Exclusion: The Three Cases of Single Student-Mothers in SPU-Surigao	23

4.3.1	The Story of YM	24
4.3.2	The Story of CY	25
4.3.3	The Story of KL	25
4.4	Conclusion	26
<b>Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations</b>		<b>27</b>
5.1	The Real Scenario	27
5.2	Recommendations	28
<i>References</i>		34

## Acknowledgment

It has been a long journey, but I was privileged not to take it alone. It would not have been possible without the support of the following individuals and institutions:

To my supervisor, Auma, for the support and guidance. Your insightful views made this journey a good avenue for learning.

To Kristen, my mentor and second reader, for the thoughtful remarks during the academic year and for the constructive and rational comments on my research paper.

To the International Institute of Social Studies, for creating an environment of learning while having fun during our 15 months stay in the Netherlands!

To the Dutch Government through the Netherlands Fellowship Program for awarding me a scholarship grant that allows me to pursue my Master's degree in one of the reputable academic institutions in the Netherlands.

To the National Economic and Development Authority-Caraga Region, for all your support guys! and for the opportunity to be away from work as I improve my capacities to become a better public servant after this undertaking.

To my two discussants, Satvika and Daniel, for all the valuable feedback you provided during the research seminars.

To my friends from the Philippines and all over the globe for all the amusing video calls amidst writing the RP, funny and sometimes serious chats on FB messengers and whatsapp, and for the encourgements and prayers.

To my friends here in Holland especially to my Den Haag daughters - Kristel, Hazel, Karen, Maru, Arisa and Neeanne- for the entertaining eating and chatting sessions in Dorus; Bazaarlaan and Neeanne's kitchens, and other things we did just to re-charge our brains like roaming around the grocery stores and clothing shops in Centrum, occasional walks to parks and the beach, etc. To my favorite *mag-inas* -April and Luna- for always being there to laugh with me during my happy times and never leave me during my low times. Guys, you made me still feel at home while living miles away from home.

To my family, for the deep affection; care and prayers. To my kids - Benz, Kekent and Ella - all your *parayig* and encouraging words inspires me to strive harder. Nay, Tay, Berly, Medy and Upi, thank you for looking after my children while I am away.

To Jeroen, my *wakwak*, for the encouragements and humorous *bisaya* and *tagalog* mixed with English conversations we have that serves as my stress reliever amongst all the challenges encountered in accomplishing this research...

*Salamat kaayo!*

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 List of Research Participants (Single Student Mothers)	30
Appendix 2 List of Key Informants (Former Students and Teachers)	30
Appendix 3 List of FGD Participants	31
Appendix 4 Excerpts of the Philippines' Magna Carta of Women	31
Appendix 5 Excerpts of the CHED Memorandum Order No. 1 series of 2015	32

## List of Acronyms

ASSCAT	Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology
CRDP	Caraga Regional Development Plan
CarSU	Caraga State University
CBCP	Catholic Bishop's Conference for the Philippines
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
CMO	CHED Memorandum Order
CRC	Convention on the Rights of Child
DepEd	Department of Education
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GAD	Gender and Development
GOCCs	Government-owned and - Controlled Corporations
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICCP RD	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IRR	Implementing Rules and Regulations
ILO	International Labour Organization
LGUs	Local Government Units
MCW	Magna Carta of Women
MORPHE	Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education
NDHS	National Demographic and Health Survey
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NGAs	National Government Agencies
PCW	Philippine Commission on Women
PopCom	Commission on Population
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
RDC	Regional Development Council
RDC-SDC	Regional Development Council-Social Development Committee
RGADC	Regional Gender and Development Council
SDC	Social Development Committee
SDSSU	Surigao del Sur State University
SPU	Saint Paul University
SSCW	St. Scholastica's College-Westgrove
SSCT	Surigao State College of Technology
SSM	Single Student Mother
SUCs	State Universities and Colleges
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

UDHR  
UNESCO  
UNFPA

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
United Nations Population Fund

## **Abstract**

The Right to education as a crucial part of an individual's life is legally guaranteed for all without any discrimination. Despite the many interventions, international and national policies and legal instruments to promote gender equity in education, participation in education including higher education is still constrained for young mothers who suffer pregnancy related exclusion. This research is an attempt to make visible the constraints and experiences of single student mother from Surigao City, Philippines and their efforts to realise their rights to education. By examining the policy environment that defines the education of single student-mothers and their experiences in school, this research reveals how social norms and other factors influence the implementation of a policy protecting the education of all females including pregnant young women. The research findings point to the intersecting challenges that these young student-mothers face which are shaped by social norms and the powerful rules and regulations of a religious-based institutions that undermine the implementation of the policy.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

Equalizing opportunities in education to accelerate human capital development is part of the country's medium-term development blueprint, the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022. This shows the government's acknowledgement of the role of education in advancing socio-economic competence of the country through human capital development. This paper gives emphasis on the relevant gains and misses of the Philippines' right to education policies from 2010-2018, with specific focus on a policy protecting education for all females and its implications to the lives of single student-mothers in higher education. It also guides the policy makers in determining starting points for improvements in the Philippine higher education sector and in adopting appropriate measures towards the full realisation of the right to education in an equitable manner for all females.

## **Keywords**

Magna Carta of Women, single student mothers, social norm, education, exclusion

# Chapter 1

## The Glimpse of the Study

### 1.1 Background

The right to education is one of the fundamental human rights that a person should have. In the Philippines, education – especially higher education – takes up a main spot in the Philippines' political, economic, social and cultural life. As stipulated in the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article 14, Section 1), every Filipino is entitled to have access to and quality education at all levels. The right to education is also specified in various international human rights treaties. These include Article 5 (a) of the 1960 Convention Against Discrimination in Education, Article 13 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The right to education has been highlighted significantly in Article 10 of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), under which Philippines reports annually on its progress made. Education is increasingly perceived as central to the inclusive and sustained development of a society (UNESCO, 2012:1). However, educational exclusion of women and girls was one of the main challenges faced by many societies of the world over the years.

For the past twenty years, the rates of early childbearing across the world have been declining except in the Philippines. The Philippines is a developing country located in the Southeast Asia, the only country in the Asia Pacific Region with a rising rate of early childbearing over the last two decades (UNFP, 2016 and CRDP, 2017). "Data reveals that the number of teenage pregnancies aged 10-19 years old, have increased to 70 PhP 33 billion in lost income alone due to early pregnancy" (Herrin 2016). Among the regions in the Philippines, early childbearing is highest in Caraga Region (CRDP 2017; NDHS 2013) with 38 percent of women aged 15-24 years who begun childbearing. Thus, Caraga Region is an interesting context in which to study the constraints to the completion of higher education for student mothers.

Educational completion for student-mothers in college is a lot harder compared to other college students (Marandet and Wainwright 2010: 788). Student-mothers experience difficulties in performing their role as a mother and as a student simultaneously (Cabaguig 2017; Bullecer and Yang 2016; Manalang et al 2015). Failure to achieve college completion does not only affect their future but also the future of their children to be. The Philippines is currently experiencing high unemployment rates among the 15- to 24-year-old Filipinos, which is more than twice the overall unemployment rate of the country, and stagnated labor force participation of women (PDP 2017).

Being a pre-dominantly Catholic country, Philippines culturally 'prohibits' the notion of early childbearing. In some private Catholic schools in the Philippines, unmarried female students who were found to be pregnant are expelled (Manalang et. al 2015:3; Bueno 2017). This resulted in a considerable number of women who are denied their right to education, making them at risk of unemployment (David 2014; Dizon-Luna 2017: 82) and early marriages and starting a cycle of poverty that affects not only them but their children (David 2014). Having an uneducated mother does not help the child. This may result in a range of disadvantages for individuals, families and to the country as the cycle of poverty will continue from one generation to the next.

The 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) published by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) revealed that early childbearing is most common amongst

poor women who reside in rural areas. Caraga Region is the second poorest region in the country based on the 2015 poverty data (PSA, 2015). The NDHS shows that of 10 women aged 15-19, one had begun childbearing. It also reveals that four in 10 Filipino women aged 20 to 24 were already mothers. These age ranges—15-19 and 20-24 are also the usual age of college students in the Philippines.

In 2009, Republic Act 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) - an all-inclusive women's rights law aimed at eliminating discrimination through the recognition, protection, fulfilment and promotion of the rights of women in the Philippines – was passed into law. Specifically, the MCW explicitly forbids institutions from excluding or expelling women who are pregnant.

One of the assumptions anticipated in this research is the availability of a localized version of the MCW at the level of the state universities and colleges (SUCs) and the higher education institutions (HEIs) considering that it has been nine years since RA 9710 or the MCW was passed into law. Also, the implementation of the MCW should protect and help student mothers in college to exercise their agencies and prevent them from being excluded while pursuing their studies.

Under the MCW, all concerned national government agencies (NGAs), bodies, instrumentalities, including government-owned and - controlled corporations (GOCCs), private entities, local government units (LGUs), private and state universities and colleges (SUCs), and private and public schools are required to integrate gender issues and concerns to their annual plans and to use at least five percent of their annual total budgets to implement gender-related programs and projects. Each year, all departments of the government, including their attached agencies, offices, bureaus, state universities and college, and GOCCs; must have their Gender and Development (GAD) Plan and Budget as an attachment of their annual proposed budget. All their gender-responsive programs, project and activities should reflect in their respective GAD Plan and Budget.

The 2019 GAD Plan and Budget of the four SUCs in Caraga Region, namely: Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology (ASSCAT), Caraga State University (CarSU), Surigao del Sur State University (SDSSU) and Surigao State College of Technology (SSCT) do not mention anything about assistance extended to pregnant students. Only one SUC mentioned noted the “need to provide economic support to marginalized students” (SDSSU 2019), but it does not specifically mention pregnant students as one of the groups of marginalized students.

Studies by Cabaguing (2017), Bullecer and Yang (2016), and Manalang et al, (2015) provide a basic understanding of the challenges encountered by college student-mothers in performing their role of motherhood and being students despite the ‘protective law’. For instance, the three studies mentioned above found that: a) college student-mothers experienced struggles –financial difficulties and time management on parenting and studying- in managing their twofold role (Manalang et al 2015, Bullecer and Yang 2016; Cabaguing 2017) ; and b) a support group - friends and families - plays an important role in helping them cope with the pressures of being a mom and a student at the same time (Mandalang et al 2015; Bullecer and Yang 2016; Cabaguing 2017). However, these studies do not mention support from the school, whether in the form of policies or other interventions that ease the difficulties faced by the student-mothers in coping with their dual role. Although these students are being stigmatized by society since early pregnancy in the Philippines can be considered as deviation to the norm (Mandalang et al 2015), still they are motivated by the belief that having reached college graduation would bring them success in life (Bullecer and Yang 2016). Thus, their life stories can motivate and inspire other college student-mothers to continue their higher education (Cabaguing, 2017) to have a better life and against the challenges of juggling motherhood and schooling.

Studies conducted in the Philippines prove that there is a relationship between support received by the college student-mothers and high probability of university completion (Manalang, et al 2015; Bullecer and Yang 2016; Cabaguing 2017). Their need for socialization has been sacrificed due to time constraints as their schooling and time spent with their child are of utmost importance. Student-mothers in college experienced financial issues but these did not hinder them to complete their education (Manalang et al 2015; Bullecer and Yang 2016; Cabaguing 2017). The various studies concluded that there is a need to raise awareness in the higher education sector on the difficulties faced by student-mothers as a gender issue to give them assistance and provide them the necessary educational support that facilitates their graduation.

There are several studies conducted related to MCW in the Philippines. One study focuses “into the very language used in the 2009 Philippine Magna Carta for Women, and explores how the wording of this legislative milestone for Filipinas strengthens women’s rights, or actually weakens or defeats the purpose thereof” (Ruizo 2013: 25). According to Ruizo (2011), “although the law in the main affords security for women’s rights, in the fine, it contains provisions and clauses that are not as accurately phrased, so that they open-up crevices for repression, oppression, abuse and misuse to seep into the otherwise watertight gender-equality law” (25). Valente and Moreno (2014) also did a study which tries to find out the “level of political representation of women at the level of the smallest unit of Philippine government—the village or barangay”. Another study was also conducted “using the capabilities approach to assess the MCW’s potentials and limits to contributing to Philippine development, particularly the country’s efforts at reducing poverty and inequality” (Durano 2014). Durano found out that, “the Magna Carta of Women fails to acknowledge the contributions of care work and the implications of the gendered division of labor. The capabilities approach highlights the challenges attached to these observations. Where human rights are viewed as ethical demands, the MCW succeeds in giving attention to aspects of women’s lives that require state support” (1).

The implementation of MCW helps a lot of women from being excluded in school. Most of the government-run colleges and universities and majority of the private universities in Caraga Region, Philippines are compliant to the provisions of the MCW<sup>1</sup> specifically on rights to education. However, there are still few private-run and religious institutions that exclude women from school simply because they are pregnant<sup>2</sup>.

There is hardly any literature available on how despite MCW some women in higher education are still excluded. Even when policy allows women to re-join the school system, university administration and religious beliefs prevent student mothers, thus perpetuating elusive form of exclusion against them. Thus, this study investigates the gaps and tensions in the policy implementation and how social norms hinder or facilitate school re-entry for single student-mothers in the non-compliant institutions.

## 1.2 Research objective and question

This research is aimed at exploring how social norms influence the educational exclusion of single student-mothers in Caraga Region’s higher education since the passage of Republic Act 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) in 2009 – a milestone legislation on wom-

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Lyra Viajar, Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Person of CHED Caraga (29 May 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Lyra Viajar, Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Person of CHED Caraga (29 May 2018)

en's human rights in the Philippines. Particularly, this paper intends to examine how social norms influence the implementation of the said law, which is argued to be very persistent especially in institutions that are private and religious and in which state control is not so strong.

To achieve this objective, one main research question and two related sub-questions were formulated:

### ***Main Question***

How do social norms affect the implementation of the policy protecting the right to education of single student-mothers in Caraga Region, Philippines?

### ***Sub-Questions***

- What are the experiences of exclusion among single student-mothers pursuing their education in a Catholic-run higher education institution (HEI) in Caraga Region, Philippines?
- What are the gaps in the policy protecting the right to education of single student-mothers in a Catholic-run HEI?

## **1.3 Methodology**

The study was approached using mainly qualitative methods since the research explores the experiences of single student mothers in relation to their educational participation. Thus, qualitative is the suitable methodology to use because it gives “value of depth over quantity and works at delving into social complexities in order to truly explore and understands the interactions, processes, lived experiences, and belief systems that are a part of individuals, institutions, cultural groups, and even the everyday” (O’Leary 2014: 130).

### **1.3.1 Description of the Research Site**

The research was conducted in Caraga Region, Philippines. It is in the southern part of the country. The Saint Paul University (SPU) - Surigao - a Roman Catholic private university run by the Sisters of Saint Paul of Charters – is located in Surigao City, Caraga Region, Philippines. It is composed of two campuses: the main campus in the heart of Surigao City (which houses the academic units and offices) and the Luna Campus at Brgy. Luna (which houses the high school and grade school). SPUS was established in 1906 and became the first university in the Caraga region. It is identified as the center for development in teacher education and the regional center for Gender and Development, it being the seat of CARAGA Women's resources center

### **1.3.2 Sampling Methods**

In this research, the SPU-Surigao as one of the institutions that is non-compliant to MCW was identified to be the university where former single student-mothers studied before they were excluded from entry into school. The identification of the research participants was done through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a process which requires building a sample through referrals (O’Leary 2014: 190). The moment the first respondent use study participant is identified, she or he will now be asked to identify potential participants who qualified the research criteria (O’Leary, 2014:190). Snowball sampling was very helpful in this research as the researcher had a limited contact and access to these single student-mothers that dropped out of school or were refused enrolment from SPU-Surigao. This

was done with the help of a former teacher who said that the university had pregnant students that dropped out of school or were refused enrolment. The young mothers were selected since they fitted within the main study criteria of being students in the identified university and who became pregnant within the period 2010-2018 when they were former students.

For the identification of the key informants, snowballing sampling was still utilized with the help of the same teacher who identified the former teacher and the current teacher. The two former students are the researcher's colleagues who happened to be enrolled in the sampled university within the period 2010-2018.

The identification of the FGD participants is purposive. Originally, the researcher chose representative from the four public HEIs in the region, representatives from two big Catholic-run private HEIs, one representative each from CHED, CHR and PopCom, and the RDC-SDC Secretariat. However, during the actual FGD, all invitees joined the FGD except for the representatives from PopCom and CHR.

### **1.3.3 Methods and Sources of Data**

As the topic of this research is of a life experiences of people, and the researcher and the research participants have no established relationship yet, the type of interview used was informal. This choice was made to "establish rapport, gain trust and open up lines of communication" (O'Leary 2014: 218), and to give research participants the sense that the atmosphere is safe for them to speak about their experiences in life. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, wherein the researcher prepared an interview guide with pre-determined questions, but the researchers had the versatility to "shift in order to follow the natural flow of conversation" (O'Leary 2014: 218). This research opted for the use a semi-structured interview to guarantee that all the essential information is collected, while at the same time invigorating a comfortable environment to the interviewees. Lastly, interviews were conducted face-to-face in a one-to-one manner. This research chose one-to-one interviews over having multiple interviewees to avoid research participants being marginalized or uncomfortable to speak in front of other interviewees. The choice was also made to avoid making the research participants embarrassed in sharing their experiences with others around.

Primary data were collected from the participants of this study which includes those girls who got pregnant while pursuing their university education. This is to describe the realities experienced by these girls. The MCW was implemented in 2009, and these women happened to bear their first children. A total of three (3) young single student-mothers (SSM) were interviewed, with only one (1) was interviewed in person. The other two (2) were interviewed through Facebook messenger. The one interviewed in person allowed the interview to be recorded the moment the consent was asked. However, when the researcher had additional questions, Facebook was also used to seek more information. Two of these SSMs are currently studying in another school in the same region, while the other one was able to graduate from the sampled university.

For the key informant's interview, one teacher (currently working), one former teacher and two former students of the university were also interviewed to determine how their opinions confirm or contradict with those of the SSM. Conducting interviews with them also provided constructive opinions on how they perceive educational exclusion of SSMs in the university. The researcher also interviewed one staff from CHED to have a grasp on how MCW and CMO are being implemented in the region.

To get alternative point of view from the Caraga Regions' higher education sector, a focus group discussion (FGD) was also carried out. The FGD participants were composed

six (6) selected HEI officials, one (1) staff from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) - Caraga Regional Office' and one (1) from the RDC-SDC secretariat. Majority of them were female (7 women and 1 men). They were chosen on the significant level of information they have on the higher education's sector's initiatives and policy interventions for single student-mothers in the region. FGD was more of a discussion rather than a strict question-and-answer process (O'Leary 2014: 218). There might be important information that may emerged from this process "that might not arise from direct questioning" (O'Leary 2014: 218).

While data collected from semi-structured interview were the main source of data, this research also reviewed a variety of documents on pregnancy and education as secondary sources of data. Section 16 of the MCW-IRR and CMO No. 1 series of 2015, the state policy documents on pregnancy in the Philippines were referred extensively. The SPU-Surigao Student Handbook 2015 Edition was also consulted.

#### **1.3.4 Scope and Limitation and Research Challenges**

The researcher chose 2010 as the starting year for the research's coverage as this is the beginning of the implementation of RA 9710 or the Philippines' Magna Carta of Women (MCW) signed in 2009. The research focused only in one city of Caraga Region, Philippines where the non-compliant university to the MCW is located. The fieldwork posed some limitations, difficulties and challenges. One of the challenges faced during fieldwork was the difficulty in locating some of the possible research participants because most of them are out of the research site anymore. The researcher made use of the social media, specifically the Facebook, to contact and get in touch with them and do the interview through exchange of messages on the Facebook messenger.

Another problem faced was the difficulty in making and keeping appointments with key informants at specific dates and times. Most people involved were very preoccupied with work in their various offices. The researcher had to reschedule appointments several times before succeeding in obtaining information relevant to this research.

The researcher also find difficulty in accessing data and information from sampled university as they are not so accommodating in responding to queries. The researcher sent email asking some data to the university official who attended the FGD conducted for this research, but received no reply from him.

One of the important challenges during my fieldwork is the opposing responses of the research participants were handled without overpowering the flow of conversation and interviews. During the FGD, one of the responses of the university official was very contrary to the responses of the single student-mothers that were interviewed beforehand. The researcher really made it sure to manage own feelings, expressions and reactions to avoid showing biases and disagreement to arguments posed.

#### **1.3.5 Positionality and Ethics**

It is noteworthy to consider positionality and ethics in conducting research on educational exclusion of single student-mothers. As a researcher, it is crucial to note the positionality as researcher and how the position of research participants is understood. In this research, the researcher acknowledged her positionality which might have influenced with her relationships to research participants and the entire process of knowledge production. Her positionality as a mother and an older person than her interviewees have been a good starting point to relate to the lives of the research participants and have understanding on what they have been through as she was once a young mother before. The three student-mothers

who participated in the research told her that they feel so comfortable talking with the researcher, even very personal and very sensitive topics as they feel understanding coming from her instead of judgment. As a member of the Secretariat of the Social Development Committee of Caraga Region and in-charge of the region's education sector, the researcher is familiar of the arguments and discussions to the social norms and religious practices in the educational system. The research participants perceived her as a government employee whom they could trust. As a native speaker of Visayan language and live within the same region as the research participants, they feel comfortable talking to the researcher and expressed their selves wholeheartedly. These positionalities may have influenced how the research paper was written and presented.

Ethics was considered as one of the essential features in conducting research. Throughout this research, anonymity and confidentiality are assured among the research participants. Although one of the student mothers informed the researcher that her identity may be revealed in the research as she was not afraid on how SPU-Surigao will react, but confidentiality was maintained and code name was used instead. In presenting the findings, there were no any trace of knowing the profiles of the research participants. All the names and places used in this research are all code names and assumed name of places as part of the anonymity and confidentiality measures in this research.

### **1.3.6 Organization of the Paper**

Chapter 2 provides a conceptual and analytical framework that serves as a critical lens for analysing educational exclusion experiences of single student-mothers. It revolves around the concepts of social norms, social exclusion and agency. It has a framework that intends to explain how policy implementation are influenced by several factors that leads to educational exclusion of women in higher education, thereby restraining them to exercise their agency.

Chapter 3 gives emphasis on the policy context that guides the Philippines' higher education institutions on pregnancy in school and rights to education of young mothers. The two main policies that shape the young mothers' experiences of leaving and re-joining with the education system were reviewed.

Chapter 4 highlights the case of the Saint Paul University (SPU)-Surigao with discussion on the background of SPU-Surigao and its institutional policies. It also highlights the educational exclusion experiences of single student-mothers while leaving and attempting to go back to school; and how they moved forward after leaving SPU-Surigao.

Chapter 5 brings together the points that come out from the study into a conclusion from the perspective of the research questions. The chapter also discusses the suggestions and recommendations such as implications for policies to protect the education rights as far as realising the right to education for single student mothers is concerned.

# Chapter 2

## Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This research seeks to examine how the right to education of single student-mothers is protected in a situation where there is a law that is supposed to protect them and yet exclusion is still happening. To attain this, it is essential to give a conceptual framework to analyze the exclusionary factors that have shaped the experiences of single student-mothers in higher education. Social norms theory and the concepts of social exclusion and agency are adopted in this research paper. Social norm is determined to be the most prominent theory because this research intends to examine how social norms shape the participation of women in higher education. The concepts of social exclusion and agency can help in making sense of the data collected from the field about the experiences of women who got pregnant and were denied re-admission to school from 2010-2018.

### 2.1 Social Norms

Social norms refer to the unofficial, mostly unwritten, precept that define acceptable, proper, and compulsory actions in a given group or society (Cislaghi and Heise 2018: 2). This research agrees with Mackie et al (2015)'s claim that,

The actions of an individual range from the highly independent (like taking one's purse on the way out the door in the morning), to the dependent (listening to a radio show after learning from an acquaintance that it is entertaining,) to the highly interdependent (each driving on the right side of the road because everyone else does). A social norm is held in place by the reciprocal expectations of the people within a reference group. Because of the interdependence of expectation and action, social norms can be stiffly resistant to change (7).

The Philippines' policies on pregnancy as stipulated in the MCW and the experiences of exclusion on some women in higher education are explored using the theory on social norms. After the analysis, findings unveiled very important revelation that it is hard to change social norms in the case of SPU-Surigao. However, there are ways to change it, as social norms are not cast in stone; they certainly develop over time, and sometimes can change very fast (Cislaghi and Heise 2018: 2). Miller and Prentice (2016: 341-342) in their article 'Changing Norms to Change Behaviors' identified three reappearing strategies to change social norms namely: social norm marketing; personalized normative feedback; and facilitator-led group conversations. Social norms marketing is "a means of correcting norm misperceptions that involves publicizing (marketing) the actual rate of the misperceived behavior via the media, posters, emails, etc" (Miller and Prentice (2016: 341). In changing group behaviour, social norms marketing campaigns aimed at correcting people's misperceptions of what others in their group do and approve of (Cislaghi and Heise 2018: 2). The second approach is personalized normative feedback, "where people receive information on how they are performing against others around them" (Cislaghi and Heise 2018: 2). The third strategy is facilitator-led group conversations, "where participants look critically at existing norms and practices within their group and renegotiate those norms among themselves" (ibid).

Changing the collective perception of a community of individuals can also lead to social action that, in turn, will affect individual behavior (Miller and Prentice 2016: 344). For example, university officials might be more willing to accept pregnant or parenting students in school if their perceptions of the norm will change, that rather than looking at pregnant

women as immoral they can look at them as human who made mistakes but still have rights to education. Hence, these women should finish their education so that they will contribute to the advancement of socio-economic competence of the country. Although, changing perceptions of the norm will not necessarily change behavior of all people all the time. However, it will work for some of the people some of the time, so it is important to determine what strategy is the most appropriate at a situation (Miller and Prentice 2016: 344). The strategies mentioned above will also be used in identifying what is the best option to use in changing the norms of SPU-Surigao to facilitate inclusion of student mothers in the university.

## 2.2 Social Exclusion

While according to Peace (2001: 17), “social exclusion is a contested term, not only is it used to refer to a wide range of phenomena and processes related to poverty, deprivation and hardship, but it is also used in relation to a wide range of categories of excluded people and places of exclusion”. Irrespective of the contested definition of social exclusion, the concept can be understood as “a situation in which people are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a situation” (United Nations, 2016). It has also been defined as “the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from the society in which they live” (Hickey and du Toit, 2007: 2).

“Social exclusion” is a concept that can be defined “narrowly” and “broadly” (Peace 2001: 26). He said that,

It is in this latter, broad and flexible sense that the concept of social exclusion can be useful for developing a different and more complex understanding of the factors and influences that lead to well-being and relative advantage on the one hand, and disparities, inequalities and relative disadvantage between members of a community on the other hand (Peace, 2001:26).

In a school setting, when students are excluded from going to school because they are pregnant is a form of social exclusion which may lead them “to be in a disadvantage situation...they are socially isolated in some sense they have, or experience, weak social relatedness...may lack ties to the family, local community...or even the nation” (Peace 2001:27).

Educational exclusion – like refusing enrolment of single pregnant student in an academic institution – is a form of social exclusion since it facilitated some relative disadvantages among pregnant students. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization said that exclusion in education does not only mean “out-of-school children” (UNESCO, 2000:3). There are six forms and expression of educational exclusion according to UNESCO, and these are:

Exclusion from having the life prospect for learning; exclusion from entry into school or an educational programme; exclusion from regular and continuing participation in school or an educational programme; exclusion from meaning learning experiences; exclusion from recognition of the learning acquired; and exclusion from contributing the learning acquired to the development of community and society (UNESCO, 2000:3).

This concept of social exclusion, especially the educational exclusion will facilitate the analysis of the experiences of single student-mothers from entry into university.

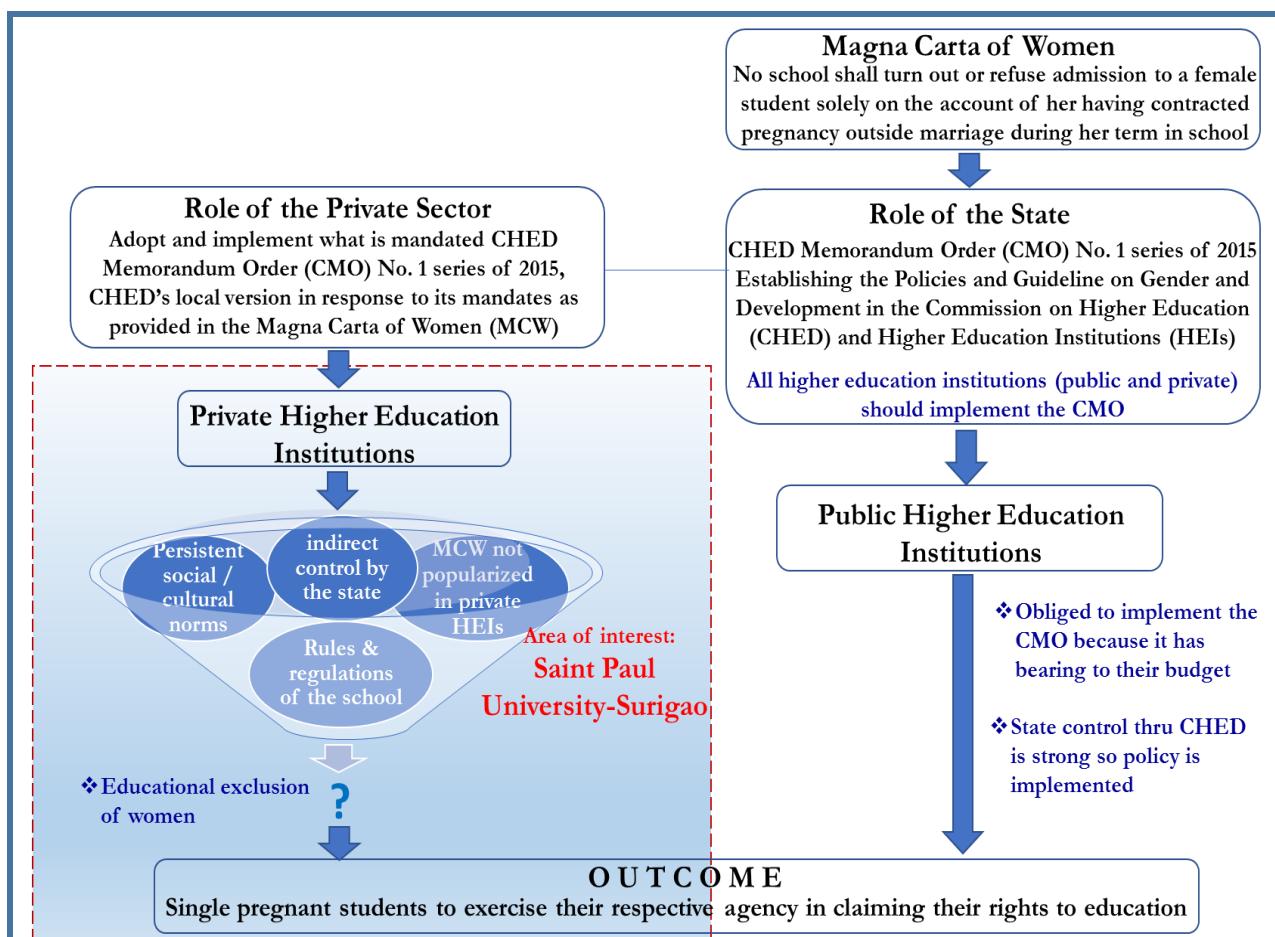
## 2.3 Agency

Agency is an individual's power to consequently decide which action to take or not to take (Berner 1998: 4). It represents one's freedom. If a person is poor, he has barely any choice but to look for paid work to survive, thus, it is to be expected that the person will submit himself to the rules and regulations of his workplace (Berner 1998: 4). On the other hand, the person has also some choice "whether to take one job or another; and under certain conditions, he may not find ways to bend or even alter the rules" (ibid).

Aside from a person's action which can be observed as clear expression of agency; it also comprises "the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or the power within" (Kabeer 1999: 438). Agency can be on its positive sense when an individual is not only able to determine and follow what they want but is able to do this despite oppositions (ibid). It will be on its negative sense when an individual's choice of what they want to do is supersede by others using threats and violence (ibid).

Agency is therefore an essential concept that will provide an analytical lens to understand the actions taken by the single student-mothers (SSMs) to undermine, comply or negotiate with university's rules and regulation on the notion of pregnancy outside marriage. This will also be used as to how the SSMs moved forward with life after their experiences at SPU-Surigao.

## 2.4 Summary Analytical Framework



The framework above harmonizes the above theories and concepts on social cultural norms, social exclusion and agency, and links it to the realities in the higher education of single student-mothers. It intends to explain that policy implementation is influenced by social norms and attitudes of people. It highlights the factors underlying the non-implementation of a rights to education policy in a religious-based institution, which lead to educational exclusion of single student-mothers; thereby constraining their ability to exercise their agency.

The framework shows that both the state and the private sector have roles to play in implementing the provision of the Philippines' Magna Carta of Women specifically on rights to education which says, "no school shall turn out or refuse admission to a female student solely on the account of her having contracted pregnancy outside marriage during her term in school". The state, through CHED, formulated CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 1 series of 2015 Establishing the Policies and Guideline on Gender and Development in the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The state recognizes the complementary roles of public and private HEIs, thus the adoption and implementation of this policy guidelines does not distinguish between private and public HEIs. The implementation of this policy guidelines in public HEIs is not that challenging since they are obliged to implement the CMO as it has bearing to the approval of their annual budget. Public HEIs' budget proposals pass through CHED and one of the requirements for the approval of their annual budget is their compliance to the CMO. Thus, single pregnant students' agency in public universities is not restricted.

The role of the private sector especially the private HEIs is to adopt and implement what is mandated in CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 1 series of 2015. Although most of the private HEIs are adopting and implementing what is in the CMO, there are still private-run religious institutions that do not implement the said policy. This research takes the case of Saint Paul University (SPU)-Surigao as the area of interest for this research. Despite the MCW and the CMO, there are still factors that hinder the implementation of the said law/policy. There are social and cultural norms that are persistent, like Saint Paul University-Surigao where state control is not that prominent. Another factor is that MCW and CMO were not popularized in private HEIs. SPU-Surigao has its own rules and regulations that they follow and the result of it is that they still chased single pregnant women and excluded them. Thus, the agency of single pregnant students in the case of SPU-Surigao is situated and constrained because they were not able to articulate their own views and plans.

# Chapter 3

## The Philippine Policy Context of Disengaging and Re-Engaging University Schooling

This chapter is an analysis of the policy context that guides the Philippines' higher education institutions on pregnancy in school. This analysis is based on the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) and the CHED Memorandum Order No. 1 series of 2015 that have relevant sections on female student pregnancy. A summary of the two policies is first provided<sup>3</sup>, followed by a review of the policies situation --- what the policies say and do not say. The current gains of the policies vis-à-vis its effect to the lives of women in the Philippines is also discussed in this Chapter.

### 3.1 Overview of the Philippine Policies on Pregnancy

The Philippines' Magna Carta of Women (passed in 2009) has relevant section on female student pregnancy (R.A. 9710, 2009:12). This law banned the dismissal of unmarried women who work or study in an academic institution. Specifically, section 16-C (Equal Access and Elimination of Discrimination in Education, Scholarship and Training) of MCW-Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) covers the rights of spouseless students who get pregnant to able to go on her studies, states that:

- C. Expulsion and non-readmission of women faculty due to pregnancy outside of marriage shall be outlawed. No school shall turn out or refuse admission to a female student solely on the account of her having contracted pregnancy outside marriage during her term in school.
  1. No female student shall be expelled, dismissed, suspended, refused or denied of admission, or forced to take a leave of absence in any educational institution solely on grounds of pregnancy outside marriage during her school term. When needed, students who are pregnant shall be accorded with a special leave of absence from school upon advice of the attending physician, and be given an opportunity to make up for missed classes and examinations. The same leave benefits shall likewise be accorded to pregnant faculty members, and school personnel and staff.
  2. Pregnant students shall be assisted through available support services while in school, such as but not limited to counseling to ensure completion of their studies (MCW-IRR 2009: 58)

Many countries have put in place policies on pregnant women within the education system like countries in sub-Saharan Africa. There are three (3) categories of pregnancy policies according to Chilisa (2002: 24) namely: expulsion, re-entry and continuation policies. Expulsion policies automatically expelled women once they are found to be pregnant (Chilisa 2002:23). Continuation policies authorize for continuous attendance to school immediately after childbirth, and are considered to be transformative as they challenge gendered ideologies and practices and are also responsive not only to the academic needs of woman but also her own and her child's needs (Chilisa 2002: 24). On the other hand, re-

---

<sup>3</sup> Excerpts of the two policies are provided as Annex IV and V

entry policies required women to disengage school for maternity leave, which includes lactation, and only allowed for re-entry after specified period of time (*ibid*). The re-entry policies are observed to engage with the prevailing norms which is based on cultural and traditional beliefs on pregnancy and motherhood.

### **3.2 Pregnant Policies Categorization of MCW**

It is not clear as to what category of pregnancy policies is the MCW should fall under among the three categories: “expulsion policies”, “continuation policies” and “re-entry policies” as claimed by Chilisa (2004). Nonetheless, it is obvious that MCW is not categorized under “expulsion policies”. It is clearly stipulated in section 16 of MCW-Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) that: expulsion and non-readmission of women due to pregnancy outside of marriage shall be outlawed (MCW 2009).

Looking at it through the characteristics of a “continuation policies” based from Chilisa’s (2004 :24) definition of “continuation policies” mentioned above, the MCW contains incomplete features of a “continuation policies”. It only says that women can continue to go to school despite being pregnant, which based on the researcher’s understanding is that they can continue schooling without interruption until childbirth. However, it does not indicate that women can go back to school right after giving birth. There is no clear stipulation in the MCW as to when the student-mother can leave school in preparation for childbirth and when she can go back.

As to the policy’s response to the academic and personal needs of women and their children, the MCW does not provide clarity and specific solutions. Although it indicates ‘assistance to pregnant students through available support services while in school (MCW, 2009), it does not enumerate clearly what assistance and services are available for pregnant students.

The MCW also states that pregnant student shall be accorded with a special leave of absence from school upon advice of the attending physician and be given an opportunity to make up for missed classes and examinations (MCW-IRR 2010: 58). On this tone, the MCW can fall under re-entry policies. Re-entry policies as conceptualized by Chilisa (2004) require women to leave school for maternity leave which includes lactation, and only allow for re-entry after specified period of time. The MCW does not necessarily require women to leave school for maternity leave, it just says : “when needed, students who are pregnant shall be accorded with a special leave of absence from school upon advice of the attending physician and be given an opportunity to make up for missed classes and examinations” (MCW IRR, 2010:58). However, there is no agreed procedure for establishing the duration of the leave and at what specific time – after how many months - she can go back to school, the decision and the interpretation of the said provision is up to the teachers, parents and the student-mothers.

The MCW can be considered as partial continuation and partial re-entry policies. However, the characteristic of a “continuation policies” is more prominent in the MCW because it encourages uninterrupted schooling and only requires women to leave school when necessary. This stipulation of the MCW deviates what is supposed to be the norms on pregnancy that the mother should have enough time to recuperate her health from childbirth and at the same time have enough time to lactate for her baby. However, on a positive note it also allows women to exercise her agency on deciding over what is the most convenient time for her to leave and to go back to school.

### 3.3 What does MCW say and not say?

As discussed in the previous section, the MCW gives importance to the continuation of women's schooling despite being pregnant and allowed to leave school when needed. It also gives value to the counselling of the affected pregnant students to ensure completion of their studies. This can be interpreted that being single pregnant students may be suffering from stigma as they are deviating from the norm. The prevailing norm is that pregnancy does not happen when still in school, but only after marriage. It may be one of the reasons why they are being stigmatized. The counselling indicated in MCW is for the pregnant students only, it does not talk about counselling for both student, the father of her child and her parents to discuss important matters such as ensuring a good pregnancy outcome, ensuring safe delivery and the possibilities of going back to school after delivery.

The MCW lacks many things: it only has provision that allows women to go to school despite being pregnant but does not clearly state support for them that could facilitate their completion. Although it has provision on assistance to pregnant students, it does not specifically state the assistance they can avail. For instance, even if they are allowed to go to school, the school is still not mindful of their condition as evident in schedules and type of activities. In this case, it can be deduced that they are still excluded. It might be necessary to give pregnant students flexible time to school attendance and special privileges to activities that maybe harmful to their health and the baby, among others. Other assistance to them may be in the form of capacity-building activities on how to look after their child to facilitate mother and child bonding, the benefits of breastfeeding to the mother and the baby, the benefits of having full vaccination of the baby, among others. These capacity-building activities shall not be given to the mothers only but to the fathers as parenting should be a shared responsibility between the mother and the father.

The MCW does not say how cases of pregnancy are being handled while in school and upon re-entry after giving birth. In terms of handling pregnancy cases while schooling, it is silent as to what procedure the school has to follow upon knowing that a student is pregnant. There is no mention also on the guidelines as to how student mothers should be being handled upon re-admission. They could be allowed to join at the level where they left before maternity leave. Counselling services should also be available to student-mothers and their partners, including ways of avoiding future unplanned pregnancies. They shall be treated like any other normal students and not keep reminding them of their wrong decisions. For them to have a support group, creation of a young mothers' club may be a good initiative to be facilitated for them. Support from parents for the care of the child at home while the student mother is in school is encouraged. In this way, it avoids unnecessary interruptions to the student-mothers' studies. Above all, confidentiality and professionalism shall be adhered in handling student mothers.

Since MCW does not provide a clear procedure as to how pregnant students are to be handled by academic institutions. Results of the FGD of research reveal that every university in Caraga Region, Philippines has different institutional policies used in handling pregnancy cases in their respective institutions.

### 3.4 What is CMO No. 1 series of 2015 in relation to MCW?

While the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) is the Philippines' local translation of CEDAW, Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 1 series of 2015, Establishing the Policies and Guideline on Gender and Development in the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is CHED's version in response to its mandates as provided in the MCW.

The MCW Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), which were approved in March 2010, stipulate the CHED's mandates as follows: 1) Develop and promote gender-sensitive curriculum; 2) Develop gender-fair instructional materials; 3) Ensure that educational institutions implement a capability-building program on gender, peace and human rights education for their officials, faculty and non-teaching staff and personnel, promote partnerships between and among players of the education sector; 4) Promote partnerships between and among players of the education sector; 5) Encourage advertising industry and other similar institutions to provide free use of space and installation of displays for schools, colleges and universities for campaigns to end discrimination and violence against women; and 6) Guarantee that educational institutions provide scholarship programs for marginalized women and girls set the minimum standards for programs and institutions of higher learning (MCW IRR, Rule IV, Section 16-A).

The MCW also mandated CHED to monitor and ensure compliance of educational institutions to the provision in Section 16-C No. 2 and 3 which states that:

2. No female student shall be expelled, dismissed, suspended, refused or denied of admission, or forced to take a leave of absence in any educational institution solely on grounds of pregnancy outside marriage during her school term. When needed, students who are pregnant shall be accorded with a special leave of absence from school upon advice of the attending physician and be given an opportunity to make up for missed classes and examinations. The same leave benefits shall likewise be accorded to pregnant faculty members, and school personnel and staff
3. Pregnant students shall be assisted through available support services while in school, such as but not limited to counselling to ensure completion of their studies.

The CMO only offers general provisions on respecting human and fundamental rights of women; refraining from discrimination and violation of their rights; and promoting and fulfilling the rights of women in all spheres (CMO 2015: 17). There is also a provision in the CMO in response to its mandate in MCW IRR Section 16-A. However, it does not state anything about its response to its mandate in MCW IRR Section 16-C No. 2 and 3, which is supposed to serve as guidelines on pregnancy policies in the Philippines. These guidelines should include all the necessary information in terms of assistance that pregnant women can avail of, how pregnant women be handled while in school, and how the school could assist them upon re-admission. The guidelines should serve as the HEIs' blueprint on pregnancy in school to be implemented in their respective institutions.

### **3.5 Gains of Implementing MCW**

The Magna Carta of Women, passed in 2009, spares several pregnant women of being excluded in school. This was evident within the six universities that were part of the FGD.

Unmarried students are now allowed to continue schooling while pregnant. They will also allow to continue going to school after delivery. MCW helped pregnant students to cope with their present situation and most of them finished theirs studies (FGD Results conducted 23 August 2018).

One of the significant gains of MCW is that most of the public and private HEIs in Caraga Region are doing away from excluding women<sup>4</sup>. The implementation of the policy is working well in the public higher education institutions (HEIs) maybe because it is tied on their budget. Per MCW, public HEIs are required to have at least five percent of their annual total budgets to implement gender related programs, projects and activities. These HEIs are closely monitored by CHED especially on the implementation of CMO No. 1 series of 2015 and they are required to have their Gender and Development (GAD) Plan and Budget as an attachment to their annual proposed budget<sup>5</sup>. This might facilitate compliance to MCW among government-run HEIs. The notion of MCW working well in public HEIs is consistent with what Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Leonor Briones said in the news that public schools are discouraged from expelling pregnant students from school as this would give them another traumatic experience (Revita 2017). “Generally, in public schools no, we are discouraging that. It’s bad enough that our child is about to bear another child because she is still young. It is bad enough that she goes through the trauma, the shame, and the embarrassment,” (Sec. Leonor Briones). It is also consistent with what KL (one of the student mothers interviewed in this research) said that the government-run university where she is currently enrolled does not discriminate pregnant women. In fact, the school creates a friendly environment to student mothers and it created an atmosphere that is very facilitative to the educational completion of these student mothers.

Another gain of the MCW implementation is apparent in one of the cases filed at the Supreme Court of the Philippines on the dismissal of an employee of a Catholic school on the ground of premarital sexual relations and pregnancy out of wedlock, the ruling said that:

There is no law which penalizes an unmarried mother by reason of her sexual conduct or proscribes consensual sexual activity between two unmarried persons. Such conduct is not denounced by public and secular morality. It may be an unusual arrangement, but it certainly is not disgraceful or immoral within the contemplation of the law (Punay, 2015).

Just recently the PCW welcomes the Commission on Human Rights' (CHR) initiative to probe the policy of Pines City Colleges in Baguio City of subjecting female students to mandatory pregnancy testing (PCW, 2018).

We are equally alarmed of the school memorandum which has gone viral. We question the true intent of the school requirement in the context of the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) which prohibits the expulsion or non-readmission of female students due to pregnancy. We will coordinate with CHR, the designated Gender Ombud under the MCW regarding the outcomes of their investigation and make necessary steps to address the situation (PCW Chairperson Rhodora Bucoy).

These can be interpreted to mean that the MCW indeed has an effect to the lives of Filipino women.

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Lyra Viajar, Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Person of CHED Caraga (29 May 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Lyra Viajar, Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Person of CHED Caraga (29 May 2018).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the discrepancy in the implementation Magna Carta of Women and CHED Memorandum Order Number 1 series of 2015 points to quite a few issues. The first issue is the fact that beneath the attempts to response to advancing justice and women's human rights in the country, some women in higher education are still in a disadvantage position because of the loopholes in terms of state policies' implementation. The CMO is CHED's local version of the MCW, thus policies on pregnancy in school should be incorporated in the CMO. However, it reality it is not what happened. The CMO is silent about it. Although, there are general provisions about all HEIs to fullfill its obligation in respecting, protecting and promoting women's rights, but still it would be different when specific provision on policies on pregnancy is clearly stated in the CMO. It will give the CMO more authority to impose HEIs' obligations to implement Section 16-C of the MCW IRR. This vagueness in the policies provided spaces for religious-based HEIs the opportunity to practice policies of pregnancy which is based on their religious beliefs therefore not following what the law is saying. However, despite the vagueness in the policies the MCW and CMO did have some positive effects to the lives of many women in the Philippines.

Secondly, Philippines' policy can be categorised as continuation policy, especially because pregnant women are allowed uninterrupted schooling and only required women to leave school when necessary. This policy is very transformative in nature as it offers woman the ability to make choices and exercise her agency.

# Chapter 4

## Leaving and Re-Joining with University Schooling: The Case of Saint Paul University (SPU) – Surigao, Caraga Region, Philippines

This chapter is an analysis of the policy environment that guides and shapes the experiences of single student mothers of leaving and re-joining with schooling. This analysis is based on the institutional policy of the SPU-Surigao that has relevant sections on female student pregnancy. The policy stipulations within this document was reviewed against MCW and the experiences of the single student mothers in relation to their educational participation. The findings presented demonstrate that university policies on pregnancy challenges single student mothers' (SSM) efforts to re-engage with schooling. The agency and resilience of the SSM as analysed from their stories is explored.

### 4.1 Background of SPU-Surigao

Higher education in the Philippines is provided by both private and public institutions. Higher education institution (HEI) refers to an education institution authorized and recognized by the CHED to offer bachelor's degree or graduate courses (RA 10931, 2016:3). It plays a dynamic role for a country to compete globally through the skilled human capital resources it produces (Conchada and Tiongco 2015:2). The HEIs are governed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) that was created on May 18, 1994 through Republic Act No. 7722, or the Higher Education Act of 1994 to supervise and develop the Philippines higher education sector as a potent resource for national development (MOPRHE 2008).

The Saint Paul University-Surigao (SPU) is operating under the supervision of CHED Caraga Regional Office and under the umbrella of the Saint Paul University System. The Saint Paul University System is a network of Paulinian education institutions bound by its commitment to form Christ-centered, integrated and competent persons in the service of the church and society (SPU Website, 2018)). Through collaboration, complementation and resource sharing, the system ensures the delivery of quality programs and services by its members, thus affirming its leadership role in education for social transformation (*ibid*). The Saint Paul University System is managed by the (SPC) Congregation of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres. Let us walk to the memory lane of SPUS. In 1915, the Bureau of Commerce issued Articles and Certificates of Incorporation to legitimize the school's existence. The three Sister from the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Paul Chartres responded to the invitation to administer San Nicholas School in 1926. In 1949, San Nicolas School changed its name to San Nicolas College. Several developments on the infrastructure of the school and its facilities; curriculum development; permits to offer courses; and accreditation of courses were done from 1951 to 2001. St. Paul University System, San Nicolas Campus was registered and approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission on August 29, 2002. On February 9, 2004, Certificate for University System was granted by CHED to the six Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) namely: St. Paul University Tuguegarao, St. Paul College Manila, St. Paul College Quezon City, St. Paul College Dumaguete, St. Paul College Iloilo and St. Paul University System San Nicolas campus. The St. Paul University System was regarded as the first University System to be recognized by

CHED in the country. March 10, 2004 SPUS-SNC changed its name to St. Paul University Surigao (SPU Website 2018).

SPU-Surigao's total enrolment for academic year 2014-2015 is 438, while number of graduates for academic year 2013-2014 is 302. According to the former teacher I interviewed, there are about 8 single pregnant students that are excluded in Saint Paul University-Surigao from 2011-2016<sup>6</sup>.

## 4.2 SPU-Surigao's Policies on Pregnancy

The disparity between what is stipulated in the policy and what is the actual practices in the ground points out to several concerns. The first concern is the fact that despite the attempts to provide education for single student mothers, the government's laws and policies, while in place, require stronger and better enforcement. Moreover, there is a tension between the church and the state in terms of implementing what is in the law and what is the religious group is practicing. There are still schools in the Philippines that are excluding or expelling women simply because they are pregnant. This was validated by what Secretary Leonor Briones of DepEd said in the news that some private schools are still doing exclusion or expulsion of single pregnant women (Revita 2017). The case of SPU-Surigao is a classic example on this.

### 4.2.1 Pregnancy as Ground for Exclusion

The university policy for students involved with pregnancy is stipulated in Article 4, section 4 of the Saint Paul University (SPU)- Surigao Student Handbook 2015 Edition. One of the “sanctionable acts or omissions” is when the student is engaged in “premarital sex, cohabitation without the benefit of marriage, marital infidelity, lesbian, homosexuality, sexual harassment, or any other form of sexual perversion, prostitution, involvement in sex scandal and abortion” (SPU Student Handbook 2015: 105). These acts are classified as ‘grave’ offenses. Having been pregnant without getting married falls under this sanctionable act. The gravity of acts is classified as minor, less grave and grave wherein “grave” was the highest. However, it is clearly stipulated in the MCW that it is illegal to fire or refuse a “pregnant woman in school even if she is unwed, but the Catholic Bishop's Conference for the Philippines (CBCP) is insisting on an exemption for women who study or work in Catholic schools: They believe they should have the right to fire or expel unmarried women who are pregnant since it goes against the Catholic Church's moral religious teachings” (Ong and Flores, 2009). Discourses on young single mothers as immoral is very prominent in the institutional policy of SPU-Surigao. The above policy of the school is based on the religious norms since it is a catholic-run university and is upholding the value of being Christ-centered wherein “a student should follow and imitates Christ, doing everything in reference to Him” (SPU Student Handbook 2015: 104). Students are expected to be “modest, simple, decent and morally upright” (ibid). SPU-Surigao being run by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres who are missionaries considers pregnancy outside marriage as immoral. This is based on Chilisa's (2002) claim that the religion of missionaries considered pregnancy outside marriage as immoral and those that conceived were expelled (23). One of the SSM said that,

I was not able to continue my studies since it is a policy of the school to dismiss students who got pregnant while studying. Although I discovered my pregnancy during the end of

---

<sup>6</sup> Interview with AC, Former Teacher of Saint Paul University -Surigao

the second semester of my second year in college, I chose not to enrol the next semester because I know the school administration won't allow me to study while carrying my baby (KL).

When asked about the reason why they are dropping-out of school, the most common response from the single student mothers and key informants revolved around the policies of the university which goes beyond the law. According to Chilisa (2002), "immediate withdrawal of those affected by pregnancy may be viewed as a punishment, reflecting society's disapproval of pregnancy before marriage" (30). The religious norms in the school are too much, thus, pregnancy outside the sacrament of marriage causes educational exclusion as identified by the single student mothers in this study. This was confirmed by one of SPU-Surigao officials,

I admit that before I took over the previous VP for Student Services who is a nun, pregnant students will automatically be ejected out of school and will not be granted re-admission if not married in church. I took over that position in 2015 and since then we are more lenient with our policies. We are allowing re-admission of student mothers even if they cannot present certificate of marriage, but we encourage them to be discreet with their feelings in public until such time they are married in church. The university is just upholding its principles by having morally-upright students because as a Catholic-run university we are giving moral religious teachings<sup>7</sup>.

When the question on whether the university/school allow single student to continue schooling while pregnant, the representative from Saint Paul University-Surigao answered "yes". He even had the same answer when the question on whether a single student can continue schooling after delivery was being asked during the focused group discussion (FGD) conducted for this research on 23 August 2018 at NEDA Caraga, Butuan City, Philippines. His answers were the opposite of what has the single student-mothers were saying during my interview with them. One of the student mothers said that,

I was already enrolled at SPU-Surigao when I discovered that I am pregnant, but I stopped going to school because school administration doesn't allow pregnant student going to school (CY).

The researcher disagrees with the answer of the university official that SPU-Surigao is allowing students to continue schooling while pregnant because it is clearly observed that the university policy is based on the notion of having good morality as a social norm which has been advocated by the Catholic Church. The researcher follows what Chilisa (2002) claimed that "the physical separation through expulsion of those involved in pregnancy from the rest of the students is symbolic of the importance of reproduction in distinguishing between adults and children, especially as giving birth mark into entry in womanhood (30). On the other hand, the researcher may agree with his claim that they are now allowing re-entry of student mothers even without the certificate of marriage because it is also consistent with the story of the two student mothers I interviewed. One of them said that,

After I delivered my baby, I visited the school to inquire for the possibility of enrolling again. I was allowed to go back to school, but the office of the student affairs asked me to submit a letter stating that me and the father of my child should have to get married soon. They asked me to be discreet so that nobody will know. However, one of the teachers exposed my secret which made me feel humiliated and discriminated, so I decided not to go back to school again (CY).

Even though student-mothers are allowed for re-entry, but it does not guarantee full inclusion of student mothers back to the education system since there were conditions to

---

<sup>7</sup> GM, SPU official, 23 August 2018 during the FGD for this research

fulfill. Thus, exclusion still exist grounding it from Hickey and du Toit's (2007) definition of social exclusion as "the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from the society in which they live" (2). Student-mothers should be allowed to go back school after delivery without any conditions and requirements because they are entitled to it. The case of CY has not scaped the stigma that the society imposed on pregnancy outside marriage.

The scenario above has some adverse effects to single student mothers because they experienced a negative self-identity since the university administration and the society perceived them as immoral, making them excluded from going to school. This follows to the dominant ideas of women as promiscuous and flirt that's why they got pregnant.

#### **4.2.2 Certificate of Marriage as Requirement for Schooling Re-Entry**

Despite of the claim made by the university official that they are now allowing re-entry of student-mothers even without the Certificate of Marriage, one of the research participants was not able to go back to the university simply because she can not present a marriage certificate during the time she went back to school. The policy of SPU-Surigao stated that, student mothers are only being granted re-admission only if they comply with the conditions stipulated in the "Re-admission Guidelines for Old Students who did not obtain an Honorable Dismissal" which is the submission of a "sacrament of marriage contract from the Catholic Church for those who changed status" (SPU Student Handbook, 2015:79). The prevailing social norm that the university believed-in is that marriage is still considered as a requirement for having children. One of the SSMs expressed that,

The Dean of my college and other teachers visited me at home after my baby was born and convieniced me to go back to school because they wanted me to finish schooling. Since I really wanted to have a degree, I went to the school and ask the school administration if I can go back to school but I was denied because I cannot show to them a Certificate of Marriage. One of the nuns there was my former teacher and she knows everything about my situation. I felt so bad (KL).

She was excluded from school just because she cannot comply with the social norm of being married in a church since she already has a baby. Although she is trying to exercise her agency by talking to the university and express her desire to go back to school, but her agency was controlled by the social norm of the university thereby experienced exclusion. This exclusion become a challenge to her university completion. It could mean that the number of semesters that she finished before getting pregnant may be useless because if she transfers to other university not all subjects will be credited.

#### **4.2.3 Voluntary Pregnancy Testing As Requirement to All Women Students**

In relation to the policy mentioned above, female students are obliged to undergo pregnancy test every end of the semester as one of the requirements in acquiring their clearance from school. The said clearance will be the basis for their admission in the next semester so if the result of the female student's pregnancy test is positive this will lead to her dismissal from school. This school policy is also practiced by other private HEIs in the Philippines. The Pines City Colleges in Baguio City is now under investigation by the Commission on Human Rights on their policy of subjecting female students to mandatory pregnancy testing (Philippine Commission on Women 2018). Of the three women participants in my study only one of them and a former student who graduated in 2015 said that the above-mentioned policy existed in SPU-Surigao during their time.

A pregnancy test is required for a female student to be cleared from her obligation for a semester (KL).

We are obliged to have pregnancy test every end of the semester. If a female student is found to be pregnant she can't have her clearance which means she cannot enrol in the next semester (BC, former student who graduated in 2015).

The researcher can say that maybe the said policy existed before 2015 but not anymore in the recent years since KL got pregnant in 2014 and BC graduated in 2015; and CY and YM got pregnant in 2016. KL and BC claimed it did exist during their time but CY and YM on the other hand claimed that it did not exist on their time. CY and YM's story is consistent with what GM, the SPU official is saying that after 2015 SPU is more lenient to its policies on single student mothers.

As KL said it did happen before, I can say that undergoing a mandatory pregnancy test is a form of discrimination against women which is very humiliating on the part on these students. They should have the right to education no matter what their situation would be. Pregnant or not pregnant they should not be denied going to school as CEDAW (1979) mentioned that, "the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination".

#### **4.2.4 No Policy Denying Enrolment to Men Who Caused Pregnancy**

The women interviewed find it unfair since there is no university policy denying enrolment of male students who impregnated female students. Only women are being punished and consider as transgressors of the act which is consistent with Pietsch's (2002) argument that "illegitimacy has been recognized both historically and contemporarily as a purely female transgression" and 'unwed fathers' are not at all identified as deviants (6). Student mothers relate their stories which goes like this,

Me and the father of my child went to the same school, but per school policy he could continue his schooling while I was forced to leave school. However, he decided to stop schooling because he can't stand with the many gossips that he heard about our situation. My point is that the school administration did not forced him to leave school which is very unfair and discriminating on my part (CY).

My partner and me are both studying in the same university. While I was denied for enrolment he can continue his studies. However, he chose to transfer to other university because he can't stand with the gossips about what had happen to us (KL).

The university policy on single student pregnancy have not escaped the socially constructed gender ideologies and discourses and have absolutely set different standards on educational participation and parenting between young mothers and their partners. In the university student handbook, it says that "pre-marital sex and cohabitation without the benefits of marriage" is a grave offense but why give the sanctions to women only? Why their male partners do not have punishments? The researcher follows Roosemalen (2000) argument that,

It remains largely the girl's responsibility to act as gatekeeper, to provide the moral inertia, or to set the limits on sexual activity...the responsibility for avoiding pregnancy remains firmly on the shoulder of these young women...the blame and responsibility are placed on the woman (218).

Within the university policies is the clear observation with the dominant discourse of childcare as women's responsibility that can only be fulfilled by young mothers and a lenient attitude towards the sexuality of the male students. It is obvious that the university is

not ‘neutral entities...[but]...mirror and reproduce the social norms and inequalities in wider society’ (Okwany as cited in Wekesa 2010: 21).

All the policies of SPU-Surigao mentioned above overtly contradicts what is stipulated in the MCW and CMO. Their policies are based on religious norms which is hard to change. However, it does not mean that it will never be changed anymore. It will just need new ways of changing it and ‘social norm marketing’ can be the strategy to use in introducing new perspective of the misperceived behavior by utilizing the media, print ads, internet among others. By giving a different perspective on the right to education for example that it should be enjoyed by anybody even the unmarried pregnant student may change the norms of the university.

Results of the FGD conducted for this research also reveal that the reason why exclusion still happens is because the MCW is not popularized yet in the private-run higher education institutions of the region. Thus, there is a need for advocacy campaign on MCW and CMO to private HEIs in the region to facilitate compliance of the provisions of rights to education of women in MCW.

### **4.3 Experiences of Exclusion: The Three Cases of Single Student-Mothers in SPU-Surigao**

To understand educational exclusion as form of social exclusion, the first point of discussion dwells around the discourse on rights to education. Right to education is very essential to the lives of single pregnant students as education has always been acknowledged as the sustainable solution in alleviating a person’s economic situation and in addressing other personal challenges. Educating them will translate to more socio-economic advances that will benefit the entire society, including improved economic productivity, increased household incomes, more literate members of society and respect for women’s rights (CMO 2015: 4). Consistent with what the student mothers mentioned during the interviews conducted, they acknowledged that being able to complete their studies may result to a high employability chances for them. Attending school will give a person the opportunity to participate in the processes of development and socio-economic advancement (Albert, 2016:1) and I agree with what Kelly claimed that, “schooling is recognized as a facilitator of labor force participation, female empowerment, improved health outcomes, and greater civic engagement” (2011: 1).

Education is very important but it’s not easy to become a student while having a lot of responsibilities on yourself, your family and the baby. Studying is much harder because focusing your studies is very challenging (KL).

The sentiments of KL were like the situations of the other two women who participated in this research. Studies in the Philippines also found that women believe in education as essential in having a better future that despite having a baby they continue to study. They experienced financial problems and challenges in time management of being a parent and a student at the same time (Manalang, et al 2015, Bullecer and Yang, 2016 and Cabaguing, 2017)

The researcher got the opportunity to talk to three single student mothers (SSM) and asked for their personal insights about their experiences as single mother and as a student at Saint Paul University (SPU)-Surigao. These three women are all single, two of them has partners but they are not ready for marriage yet. The other one has no partner at the time of this research and no chance of marriage to the father of her child due to irreconcilable differences.

### 4.3.1 The Story of YM

Meet 22-year old YM. She is 19 years old and in summer before her senior year in college when she got pregnant to her daughter Ara who is turning 3 years old in December 2018. She is taking Bachelor of Science in Psychology at SPU-Surigao. YM came from an influential family in Surigao City. She discovered that she was pregnant during summer break, so she decided not to enrol for two semesters and went to Manila – a place outside Surigao City - to continue her pregnancy without being noticed by the people in Surigao City especially the university administration.

After discovering that I am pregnant, I decided not to enrol for 2 semesters. SPU Surigao doesn't allow pregnant students to get on with attending school for reasons I don't know. Maybe because as a catholic school, they're thinking about their image (YM).

In this case, the researcher can say that YM is excluding herself voluntarily because she knew that she can't continue going to school if the university discovered that she was pregnant. After giving birth to her child she decided to go back to school. Although the university administration has no knowledge of her situation, but she took the initiative to talked to the university administration and convinced them of her desire to finish study. She told them what really happened, so it is only after-the-fact that university knows of what she has been through. Fortunately, SPU-Surigao did allow her to continue her studies despite having a baby but not married in a catholic church which go against the rules of the university. One of the key informants said that the reason why YM could go back to school is because the university administration is a bit apprehensive of not accepting her back because YM's family is very influential, she came from a family of lawyers<sup>8</sup>. The school may be afraid that their operations might be jeopardize if YM's family will fight for her rights<sup>9</sup>. This was confirmed by the other SSM participated in this research that there was one student coming from an influential family who was accepted back to the university despite having a baby but not married<sup>10</sup>.

With the support of her family, YM was able to her university studies so she is now a registered Psychometrician who is working as HR Associate in one of the construction firms in Manila on weekdays. On weekends, YM is taking her Master's in Psychology.

With the increasing competition in any field there is, I have this desire to acquire more knowledge for myself to equip myself for the demands in the future and of course, for my professional growth and development that's why I enrolled in a masteral degree which I attend every weekend. It's physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausting but I'm driven with my desire and passion (YM).

In the case of YM, I can say that she was able to exercise her agency positively after giving birth to her daughter as she was able to have her way to go back to school and break the rules of the university. However, she had not fully exercise her agency because educational exclusion still happened when she found herself to be pregnant. Her choice of not enroling for two semesters is supersede by the university's exclusionary policy. Although YM has agency but the agency that she has situated and constrained.

---

<sup>8</sup> Interview with AC, former teacher of SPUS (27 July 2018)

<sup>9</sup> Interview with AC, former teacher of SPUS (27 July 2018)

<sup>10</sup> Interview with KL, student mother who got pregnant in 2014, interviewed on 04 August 2018).

### 4.3.2 The Story of CY

The second SSM is the 21-year old CY. She is 18 years old and in second semester in her third year in college when she got pregnant to her son Benjo who turned 2 years old last April 2018. She is taking Bachelor of Science in Psychology at SPU-Surigao. CY came from a middle-class family in Surigao City. She was already enrolled at the university after discovering that she was pregnant. However, she decided not to continue her studies because the university administration doesn't allow pregnant student going to school. As mentioned in the previous section, CY inquired for the possibility of going back to school. While talking to the representative from the Office of Student Affairs the representative said to CY,

You have to submit a letter stating that you and the father of your child to get married in church soon. Since are only few knows your situation, please be discreet. Do not show public display of affection (Qoute by the Representative of the Office of the Student Affairs as recalled by CY).

However, CY's secret was not contained since one of the teachers exposed her secret. She can't stand the humiliation and discrimination received while in the university, so she decided to stop going to school. According to CY, her partner wanted to make an appeal to the university administration on what had happened, but it is CY who refuse to do so because she does not want embarrassment and to experience another round of humiliation again.

For CY studying back to SPUS is not possible for her anymore, so she went to Manila. With the support from her grandmother, she is currently studying AutoCad software - a computer-aided drafting *software* program used to create blueprints for buildings, bridges, and computer chips, among other things – with the hope that after finishing the course she will land a job in Australia. Her grandmother lives in Australia and she assures CY of helping her have a job.

### 4.3.3 The Story of KL

Finally, the 21-year-old KL. She is 17 years old and a mother to Andrew who is 4 years old. She is taking Bachelor of Science in Education at SPU-Surigao. KL is one of the officers of the SPU-Surigao Student Council. Same with CY, KL came from a middle-class family in Surigao City. It was towards the end of second semester when KL discovered she was pregnant. She decided not to enroll the next semester because she knows that the university administration will refuse her enrolment when they found out she was pregnant.

In the previous section, it was mentioned that KL was visited twice by the Dean of the College of Education in SPUS and one teacher from SPUS convincing her to go back to school. With her aspiration to finish her studies she talked to the school administration and asking for the possibility of going back to school. While talking to the representative from the university said to KL,

You cannot go back to school since you cannot provide the sacrament of marriage contract from the Catholic Church as the requirement for re-admission (Qoute by the Representative of the university administration as recalled by KL).

KL just focused on taking care of her son while having part-time online jobs to have income. She said that life was not easy especially that she does not have enough income to provide for her and her baby's needs. Currently, KL was a first year-irregular teacher's education student at the Surigao State College of Technology, a government-run college in Surigao City.

In the case of CY and KL, the researcher can say that educational exclusion is very evident right from the start of their pregnancies up to the time they delivered their babies be-

cause they are excluded from entry into school or an educational programme of which UNESCO (2012: 3) acknowledged to be a form of educational exclusion. The exercise of their agency is restricted and superseded by the rules of the university. In this case it is the situation where agency takes on negative meaning since other actors override the agency of the women openly, using power, or secretly when social norms ensure certain outcome without the exercise of agency (Kabeer:1999:438).

The women in this study namely: KL, YM and CY all experienced educational exclusion because they are deviating from what is supposedly the norm. The normal women of their age should be in school to study and not to get pregnant. Since they are pregnant they must take a role as a mother which is not in accordance to what is expected of them, so exclusion comes in. In addition, the religious norm of the university which is very strong made them even more excluded.

Family support to children as a social norm is very strong in the context of the Philippines. Filipino identity is typically and strongly defined by close-knit family ties (Medina 2001; Wolf 1997 as cited in Alampay and Jocson 2012). It is also observable from the stories of the research participants. Support from families is the number one factor that allows them to move forward in their respective lives.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The discussion in this chapter indicates how the policies on pregnancy of the university violates and contradicts what is in the law which resulted to educational exclusion of women. The discussion also specifies how school-based gendered norms is very prominent in the university policies like pregnant women must stop schooling while men who impregnated them can continue their studies. It also shows how single student mothers within the context of a catholic-run university may nurture specific norms about their participation to education. The discussion also reveals that the SSMs have adopted these norms and take them as given. The agency of these women is constrained, they just accepted what the university policies are saying. While this is true to some women who participated in this research, one of them also contest these norms. She is exercising her agency and go against the flow of common expectations by talking to the university administration insisted her right and continue attending school. Family support to pregnant student also surfaced as the number one factor that enable them to move forward with life.

# Chapter 5

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This research is aimed at establishing how social norms affected university schooling of women in Caraga Region, Philippines. To establish the nature of interaction between social norms and the education of single student mothers, the two main policies of the state and the institutional policies of the identified university that shape the single student mothers' experiences of leaving and re-joining with the education system were reviewed. The study also explored the agency and resilience of single student mothers in their clamor of going back to school but need to hurdle the existing norm of the university which is argued to be very persistent and the government domination is not that robust. As such, the next section summarizes the study's findings.

### 5.1 The Real Scenario

Educational participation of single student mothers in Caraga Region, Philippines has been facilitated by right to education policies. These policies to protect the rights of women despite some ambiguities has been in placed but social and cultural norms in religious-based institution like the SPU-Surigao is uncooperative. The policy of the SPU is exactly the opposite of what is stipulated in the law leading to educational exclusion of single student mothers which resulted to their constrained agency. SPU's policies have an inherent lenient attitude towards the sexuality of the male students as manifested in the way that student mother's partners can get away from the 'moral' responsibility through allowing them to go back to school while their female counterparts are not.

The current policies on right to education indeed have an effect to the lives of women in the Philippines. Although these policies are not so well-known in a few private HEIs but most of the public HEIs in Caraga Region are aware of it and they are doing away from excluding pregnant women. The current policies allow women to exercise their respective agency especially in claiming their rights to education. However, the said policies have also some ambiguities. The CMO does not mentioned anything at all about policies on pregnancy. Thus, there is no provision as to when pregnant women can be sent home from school and at what point they can re-join schooling. It also does not mention about how HEIs should handle pregnancy cases in their respective schools.

The study also revealed that the social and cultural norms of the SPU-Surigao which is clear in their rules and regulations is strong and the result of it is that they still refuse pregnant women to continue schooling. I agree with Mackie et al (2015) claim that "a social norm is held in place by the reciprocal expectations of the people within a reference group. Because of the interdependence of expectation and action, social norms can be stiffly resistant to change" (7). The law itself does not change people's attitude. The only way to change it, is by doing advocacy campaign to shift norms. Advocacy campaign is an example of social norms marketing which can be used to change the management's attitude of SPU-Surigao to come to engage with this idea of norms. Social norms marketing is one of the three strategies to change norms conceptualized by Miller and Prentice (2016) which may be use in the context of SPU-Surigao to change the current norms that exclude pregnant women in the university.

It also surfaced in the study that all SSMs experienced exclusion the moment they discovered they are pregnant since they were not allowed to continue their studies. Their agency within school is restricted as it is overruled by policies of the school. Although all of

them made a conscious decision of going back to school after childbearing, only one was able to continue schooling. She was able to exercise her agency positively after childbirth as she was able to have her way back to school and interfere its rules. In the case of the two SSMs, educational exclusion is very apparent right from the beginning of their pregnancies up to the time after childbearing because they are excluded from entry into school or an educational programme which is acknowledged to be a form of educational exclusion. The exercise of their agency is controlled and superseded by the policies of the university which made the SSM's agency to take on the negative meaning.

Finally, despite the efforts to fully implement the MCW and the CHED CMO, the tension between the State and the Church makes it difficult for the other laws to be fully implemented. In the Philippines, the state and the church are supposed to be a separate, yet most of the lawmakers are deeply religious people..." they are imposing their own religious beliefs on a population of over 100 million" (Jolley 2018).

## 5.2 Recommendations

As a recommendation of this study, I argue that if the social norms in a catholic-run university is changed so that single student mothers will manage to finish their education, the probability of them landing a good job is high. Thus, the likelihood of her child/children to be poor is low. This follows what Albert (2016) claimed that by having everybody the equal opportunity in school participation and completion can ameliorate individual's participation in the development processes and socioeconomic growth and progress (1). Everyone should be given the opportunity to be in school including the single student mothers. To do away with exclusion and facilitate their completion, the following recommendations are suggested from this research:

For Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to:

- Strengthen advocacy on MCW and CMO through conduct of student orientation
- GAD Plan as a requirement for CHED accreditation and renewal on their License to Operate

For Commission on Higher Education to:

- Require GAD Plan and Accomplishment Report from private HEIs and SUCs
- Lead the review of the MOPRHE 2008 particularly Article 21 Section 106 specifically on the meaning of "immorality" under "exclusion" as category of administrative penalty.
- Make guidelines on handling pregnancy cases in school for HEIs' reference.
- Adopt the social norm marketing strategy to change the social norm of the catholic-run university through the conduct of information, education, campaign (IEC) to all concerned stakeholders.

For students to:

- Strengthen advocacy on MCW and CMO through mandatory attendance to orientation
- Strengthening partnerships with Student Council to promote Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health (RP-RH) Law

For parents to:

- Support student mothers especially on taking care of the babies while student mothers are in school.

Other government agencies

- Tripartite monitoring on GAD implementation of public and private HEIs by PCW, CHED, CHR, POPCOM, LGU and RGADC
- Tripartite advocacy campaign on changing social norms of religious-based HEIs on their misperception of norms from single student mothers by PCW, CHED, CHR, POPCOM LGU and RGADC
- Establishment of Student Centers in all public and private HEIs to be equipped with literature and information materials on the Magna Carta of Women, CMO No. 1 series of 2015, among others.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

List of Research Participants (Single Student Mothers)

Name	Background	Date of Interview
KL	A 21 year-old mother of a 4-year old son. She is currently studying in one of the government -run college in Surigao City. She got pregnant at the age of 17.	Interviewed on 4 August 2018 at Surigao City, Philippines
CY	A 21 year-old mother of a 2-year old son. She is currently studying a short course (AutpCad Software) in Manila. She got pregnant at the age of 18.	Interviewed thru Facebook messenger on 13 August 2018
YM	A 22 year-old mother of a 2 year-old daughter. She is a BS Psychology graduate at SPU-Surigao. She is currently working in a private firm in Manila. She got pregnant at the age of 19.	Interviewed thru Facebook messenger on 21 August 2018

### Appendix 2

List of Key Informants (Former Students and Techers)

Name	Background	Date of Interview
RB	Former student of SPU-Surigao who graduated in 2011. He is 26 years old now and currently working in one of the government offices in Butuan City.	interviewed on 8 August 2018 at Butuan City, Philippines
AC	Former teacher at SPU-Surigao. She is 24 years old now and currently working in one of the universities in Butuan City.	interviewed on 27 July 2018 at Butuan City, Philippines.
BC	Former student of SPU-Surigao who graduated in 2015. She is currently working in a private firm in Cebu City.	interviewed thru Facebook messenger on 15 August 2018
HM	Current teacher of SPU-Surigao. He is 25 years old	interviewed thru Facebook messenger on 18 August 2018

**Appendix 3**  
List of FGD Participants

Name	Gender	Designation	University/ Office
GM	M	Vice President for Student Services	Private HEI
EB	F	Vice President for Research Development and Extension	Public HEI
LB	F	GAD Focal Person	Public HEI
JC	F	GAD Focal Person	Public HEI
HA	F	GAD Focal Person	Public HEI
ZA	F	Director, Office of Student Academic Affairs	Private HEI
LV	F	GAD Focal Person	CHED
MM	F	Acting RDC-SDC Secretary	RDC Secretariat

**Appendix 4**  
Excerpts of the Philippines' Magna Carta of Women

The passage of the MCW in 2009 marks a milestone in Philippines' history and for the status of Filipino women. The MCW takes on a context of rights for women based directly on international laws. It recognizes human rights guaranteed by the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, the **Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC)**, and the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** (Durano, 2014:2). It also launches the Philippines Government's legal obligation to protect and promote women's human rights and adopts the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women's (CEDAW)** definition of discrimination (Durano, 2014:2).

As a State Party of the United Nations (UN) - CEDAW, the Philippines is obliged to pursue and implement programs, projects and activities that contributes to the attainment of women's empowerment and gender equality. CEDAW was signed on July 15, 1980 and ratified on August 5, 1981 is known as the International Bill of Rights of women which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and enter into force as an international treaty on September 3, 1981. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Discrimination against women as defined by CEDAW is "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field." (CEDAW, Part I, Article I).

The Philippines' compliance with CEDAW holds much significance in the drive towards gender awareness and sensitivity, and more important, in the institutionalization of gender policies, standards and guidelines as a way of life for the Philippines. The MCW is the Philippines local translation of the provisions of the CEDAW.

The MCW defines marginalized as "disadvantaged, or vulnerable persons or groups who are mostly living in poverty and have little or no access to land and other resources, basic social and economic services such as health care, education, water and sanitation, employment and livelihood opportunities, housing, social security, physical infrastructure, and the justice system" (MCW, 2009). "Unmarried mother who has preferred to keep and rear her child/children instead of having others care for them or give them up to a welfare institution" (Republic Act 8972, 2000) falls under the "Solo parent" category of the MCW's marginalized sector (MCW, 2009).

The MCW has relevant section on female student pregnancy (R.A. 9710, 2009:12). This law banned the dismissal of unmarried women who work or study in an academic institution. Specifically, section 16 of

MCW-Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) covers the rights of spouseless students who get pregnant to able to go on her studies, states that:

(c) expulsion and non-readmission of women faculty due to pregnancy outside of marriage shall be outlawed. No school shall turn out or refuse admission to a female student solely on the account of her having contracted pregnancy outside marriage during her term in school.

The Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Technical Education and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) shall monitor and ensure compliance of educational institutions to the following:

- 2) No female student shall be expelled, dismissed, suspended, refused or denied of admission, or forced to take a leave of absence in any educational institution solely on grounds of pregnancy outside marriage during her school term. When needed, students who are pregnant shall be accorded with a special leave of absence from school upon advice of the attending physician, and be given an opportunity to make up for missed classes and examinations. The same leave benefits shall likewise be accorded to pregnant faculty members, and school personnel and staff.
- 3) Pregnant students shall be assisted through available support services while in school, such as but not limited to counseling to ensure completion of their studies (MCW, 2009)

The MCW is supposedly the government's response to advancing justice and women's human rights in the country. Specifically, this law explicitly forbids institutions from excluding or expelling women who are pregnant. However, in the context of my research there are still private higher education institutions (HEIs) in Caraga Region, Philippines which do not follow what the law is saying. On the interviews done with the single student mothers one of the questions asked is if they are aware of the MCW. Two of them answered "no" and the other one answered "yes, I have heard about it but does not know exactly what it is". Their answers are consistent with the result of the FGD conducted for this research which says that MCW is not popularized in private HEIs. These private HEIs are governed by CHED with the Philippines' Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education (MORPHE) of 2008 as the guiding policy of the state for its operation.

## Appendix 5

Excerpts of the CHED Memorandum Order No. 1 series of 2015

While the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) is the Philippines local translation of CEDAW, Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 1 series of 2015, Establishing the Policies and Guideline on Gender and Development in the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is CHED's local version in response to its mandates as provided in the MCW.

The MCW Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), which were approved in March 2010, stipulate the CHED's mandates as follows:

1. Develop and promote gender-sensitive curriculum;
2. Develop gender-fair instructional materials;
3. Ensure that educational institutions implement a capability-building program on gender, peace and human rights education for their officials, faculty and non-teaching staff and personnel, promote partnerships between and among players of the education sector;
4. Promote partnerships between and among players of the education sector;
5. Encourage advertising industry and other similar institutions to provide free use of space and installation of displays for schools, colleges and universities for campaigns to end discrimination and violence against women; and
6. Guarantee that educational institutions provide scholarship programs for marginalized women and girls set the minimum standards for programs and institutions of higher learning (MCW IRR, Rule IV, Section 16).

Article 14, section 4 of the Philippine Constitution mentioned that, "the State recognizes the complementary roles of public and private institutions in the educational system and shall exercise reasonable supervision and regulation of all educational institutions". Thus, CHED administers the institutionalization of the required policies, standards and guidelines to build its internal capacities and those of its external clientele and stakeholders in mainstreaming gender and development within CHED and in the various functions of higher education (CMO, 2015:3).

On July 2, 2010, CHED Special Order creating the GAD Focal Committee and Secretariat, which initiated the GAD Program of the Commission was approved (CMO, 2015:4). The constitution of a GAD Focal Point System – an interdependent group of people in all government instrumentalities tasked to catalyze and accelerate gender mainstreaming - within CHED marks the start of the formulation of the set of Policy

Guidelines to guide all HEIs in their related responsibilities under applicable laws, rules and regulations of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) – a government agency mandated to promote and protect the rights of Women in the Philippines. The said set of guidelines was issued by CHED on 26 January 2015 at Quezon City, Philippines (CMO, 2015:4).

The CMO considers gender mainstreaming as one of the major strategies in educating and informing sectors of society on the need to recognize and respect the rights of both men and women. It also acknowledges the importance of educating more women as this could result to socio-economic advances that the society can benefit such as increased economic productivity, higher family incomes, knowledgeable members of society, and respect for the rights of women. It also considers gender mainstreaming in higher education is of (CMO, 2015:4).

However, the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 1 series of 2015 or the CHED's local translation of the provisions of the MCW, only focuses on mainstreaming gender and development in CHED and in the higher education institutions (HEIs). The CMOs highlight the enabling mechanism that's CHED and HEIs shall establish, such as the GAD Focal Point System, and the integration of the principles of gender equality in the trilogical functions of higher education like 1) curriculum development, 2) gender-responsive research programs, and 3) gender-responsive extension programs (CMO, 2015:4). Its focus is more on building the capacities of its internal clientele only. There's not much mention about interventions or capacity building activities to external clientele. Specifically, it does not talk about how pregnant students should be handled and how HEIs should facilitate school re-entry of these pregnant students. Rather, under Part V (Curriculum Development) of the CMO it contains a general provision on how CHED shall "ensure that HEIs promote and develop Gender-Responsive Curricular Program (GRCPs) that prevent all forms of gender-based discrimination in instruction, research, extension, as well as in the marketing methods and the use of promotional materials" (CMO, No.1, 2015:17).

In addition, it ensures the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment through the "provision of availability, and accessibility of opportunities, services, and observance of human rights which enable women to actively participate and contribute to the political, economic, social and cultural development of the nation" (MCW, Section 4-A). There was no stipulation in the CMO on when pregnant women can be sent home from school and at what point they can re-join schooling. It also does not mention about how HEIs should handle pregnancy cases in their respective schools. CHED could have made a guidelines on handling pregnancy cases in carrying its mandate in monitoring and ensuring compliance of educational institutions on MCW's provision that, "no female student shall be expelled, dismissed, suspended, refused or denied of admission, or forced to take a leave of absence in any educational institution solely on grounds of pregnancy outside marriage during her school term" for the HEIs to use.

## References

'Educational Resiliency in Teen Mothers', (2014) Doctorate in Education. Greeley, Colorado: University of Northern Colorado.

'Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2013'(2014) . Manila, Philippines, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) [Philippines], and ICF International.

**'Philippines must Act on Magna Carta of Women'** (Last updated 2010) (a webpage of Center for Reproductive Rights). Accessed August /8 2018  
<<https://www.reproductiverights.org/feature/philippines-must-act-on-magna-carta-of-women>>.

'Saint Paul University- Surigao' (a webpage of SPU-Surigao). Accessed September 18 2018  
<<http://www.spusedu.com/>>.

'Saint Paul University-Surigao'. Accessed October 28 2018 <<https://www.revolvy.com/page/Saint-Paul-University-Surigao>>.

Alampay, L. and Jocson, R. (2011) **'Attributions and Attitudes of Mothers and Fathers in the Philippines'**  
, *Parent Sci Pract.* 11(2-3): 163-176.

Albert, J.R. (Last updated 2016) 'What do Statistics Say about Basic Education in the Philippines' (a webpage of Philippine Institute of Development Studies). Accessed September 15 2018  
<<https://dirp3.pids.gov.ph/websitemcms/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidspn1619.pdf>>.

Associated Press (Last updated 2016) **'Philippines Only Country in Asia Where Teen Pregnancy Rising'** (a webpage of Associated Press). Accessed September 2 2018  
<<http://philippineslifestyle.com/philippines-teenage-pregnancy/>>.

Bernardo, D. (2017) 'Robredo Discusses how to Address Teenage Pregnancy  
' *Philippine Star Global*, Health and Family. August 23, 2017, .

Berner, E. (1998) "Social Structure and Human Agency: An Introduction", *Mimeo* : 1-7.

Bueno, M. (Last updated 2017) **'Teenage Pregnancy Study in the Philippines'** (a webpage of UK Essays). Accessed June 2 2018 <<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/health-and-social-care/teenage-pregnancy-study-philippines-4836.php>>.

Cabaguing, A. (2017) 'Motherhood and 'Studenthood': The Lived Experiences of College Student Mothers in Samar State University', *International Review of Social Sciences* 5(3): 213-219.

CCHED (2015) **'CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) no. 1 Series of 2015 Establishing the Policies and Guideline on Gender and Development in the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) '**. Commission on Higher Education.

CCHED (2008) *Manual of Regulations of Private Higher Education*. Quezon City, Philippines: Commission on Higher Education.

Chilisa, B. (2002) 'National Policies on Pregnancy in Education Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Botswana', *Gender and Education* 14(1): 21-35.

Cislaghi, B. and Heise, L. (2018) 'Theory and Practice of Social Norms Interventions: Eight Common Pitfalls', *Globalization and Health* : 1-8.

David, R. (Last updated 2014) '**Like Tanzania, Catholic Schools in the Philippines Expel Pregnant Girls**'. Accessed May 10 2018 <<http://consciencemag.org/2014/09/12/like-tanzania-catholic-schools-in-the-philippines-expel-pregnant-girls/>>.

Dizon-Luna, S. (2013) 'Failure to Stay in School: A Study on Female Adolescent Dropouts', *ResearchersWorld -Journal of Arts, Science & Commerce* 4(2): 81-86.

Durano, M. (2014) 'Rights and Capabilities: Reading the Philippines Magna Carta of Women from the Perspective of the Capabilities Approach', *UP School of Economics Discussion Papers* : 1-27.

Herrin, A. (Last updated 2016) (a webpage of UNFPA). Accessed September 20 2018 <<https://philippines.unfpa.org/en/news/p33b-potential-income-lost-due-teen-pregnancy-0>>.

Hickey, S. and du Toit, A. (2007) 'Adverse Incorporation, Social Exclusion and Chronic Poverty', *CPRC Working Paper 81* : 1-25.

Jolley, M. (Last updated 2018) '**Young, Poor and Pregnant: Teen Mums in the Philippines**' (a webpage of Al Jazeera). Accessed October 9 2018 <<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/young-poor-pregnant-teen-mums-philippines-180123080457459.html>>.

Kabeer, N. (1999) 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment', *Development and Change* 30: 435-464.

Kelly, C. (2011) 'Investigating School Quality and Learning Outcome among Adolescents in Malawi', *Promoting Health Transitions to Adulthood Policy Brief Number 34* .

Kruvelis, M., L. Cruse and B. Gault (2017) 'Single Mothers in College: Growing Enrollment, Financial Challenges, and the Benefits of Attainment', *Institute for Women's Policy Research* : 1-10.

Mackie et al (2015) 'What are Social Norms? how are they Measured?', pp. 1-100. California: UNICEF.

Manalang, D., P. Liogson and E. Bayubay (2016) 'The Lived Experiences of College Student Mothers in Managing their Dual Roles: An Exploratory Study', *ResearchGate* .

Marandet, E. and E. Wainwright (2010) 'Invisible Experiences: Understanding the Choices and Needs of University Students with Dependent Children

', *British Educational Research Journal Vol. 36, No. 5, October 2010, pp. 787-805* 36(5): 787-805.

Miller, D. and Prentice, D (2016) 'Changing Norms to Change Behavior', *The Annual Review of Psychology* 67: 339-356.

Mulongo, E. (2006) 'Young Single Motherhood : Contested Notions of Motherhood and Sexuality in Policy Discourses/Program Interventions', Masters of Arts in Development Studies. The Hague, The Netherlands: International Institute of Social Studies.

NEDA (2017) *Caraga Regional Development Plan, 2017-2022*. Butuan City, Philippines: National Economic and Development Authority - Caraga Regional Office.

NEDA (2017) *Philippine Development Plan, 2017-2022*. Pasig City, Philippines: National Economic and Development Authority.

Nelima, W. (2010) 'Bending the Private-Public Gender Norms: Negotiating Schooling for Young Mothers from Low-Income Households in Kenya', Masters of Arts in Development Studies. The Hague, The Netherlands: International Institute of Social Studies.

O'Leary, Z. (2014) *The Essential Guide in Doing Your Research Project*. (2nd edn) Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage Publication.

Ong, G. and Flores, H. (2009) 'Catholic Schools Warned Vs Possible Violation of Magna Carta of Women

Read More at [Https://www.Philstar.com/headlines/2009/08/22/497952/catholic-Schools-Warned-Vs-Possible-Violation-Magna-Carta-women#YTwpV6ZUMHKmKX6U.99](https://www.Philstar.com/headlines/2009/08/22/497952/catholic-Schools-Warned-Vs-Possible-Violation-Magna-Carta-women#YTwpV6ZUMHKmKX6U.99) 'The Philippine Star, Headlines.

Peace, R. (2001) 'Social Exclusion : A Concept in Need of Definition?', *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* (16): 17-36.

Philippine Commission on Women (Last updated 2018) '**Statement of PCW Chairperson Rhodora M. Bucoy on the Mandatory Pregnancy Testing of Students of Pines City College**' (a webpage of PCW). Accessed November 13, 2018 2018

<[https://www.pcw.gov.ph/article/statement-pcw-chairperson-rhodora-m-bucoy-mandatory-pregnancy-testing-students-pines-city-college?fbclid=IwAR2O\\_N8erhf10Ah0ndwJtW3IVxvZ1MiXdWMQIQV9fKbyaxuDF6qHMSRB2ZY](https://www.pcw.gov.ph/article/statement-pcw-chairperson-rhodora-m-bucoy-mandatory-pregnancy-testing-students-pines-city-college?fbclid=IwAR2O_N8erhf10Ah0ndwJtW3IVxvZ1MiXdWMQIQV9fKbyaxuDF6qHMSRB2ZY)>.

Philippine Statistics Authority 'Annual Per Capita Poverty Threshold, Poverty Incidence and Magnitude of Poor Families, by Region and Province: 1991, 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2015'.

Philstar Global (2018) 'Pines City Colleges' Mandatory Pregnancy Test Policy

Read More at [Https://www.Philstar.com/happens/530#FAg38IC3Sdwk3w0P.99](https://www.Philstar.com/happens/530#FAg38IC3Sdwk3w0P.99) 'The Philippine Star,

Pietsch, N. 'Possession: A Feminist Phenomenological and Poststructuralist Analysis of Illegitimate Pregnancy, Pregnant Embodiment and Adoption' (a webpage of University of Toronto). Accessed September 5 2018 <<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/17389/1/pietsch.pdf>>.

Punay, E. (2015) 'School can't Sack Unwed Mom – SC

Read More at [Https://www.Philstar.com/headlines/2015/02/25/1427381/school-Cant-Sack-Unwed-Mom-sc#gQbvm5jZeqfmUXG5.99](https://www.Philstar.com/headlines/2015/02/25/1427381/school-Cant-Sack-Unwed-Mom-sc#gQbvm5jZeqfmUXG5.99) 'The Philippine Star, Headlines.

Republic of the Philippines (Last updated 2009) 'Republic Act 9710 Implementing Rules and Regulations' (a webpage of Philippine Commission on Women). Accessed August 27 2018

<[http://pcw.gov.ph/sites/default/files/documents/laws/republic\\_act\\_9710.pdf](http://pcw.gov.ph/sites/default/files/documents/laws/republic_act_9710.pdf)>.

Republic of the Philippines (Last updated 1987) '**the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines**' (a webpage of Office of the President). Accessed October 23 2018

<<https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/1987-constitution/>>.

Revita, J. (Last updated 2017) '**DepEd Won't Expel Pregnant Students**' (a webpage of The Sun Star Philippines). Accessed July 2 2018 <<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/121046/>>.

Roosemalen, E. (2000) 'Forces of Patriarchy: Adolescent Experiences of Sexuality and Conceptions of Relationships', *Youth and Society* 32(2): 202-227.

Ruizo, L. (2013) 'A PRELIMINARY DICTION STUDY OF THE PHILIPPINE MAGNA CARTA OF WOMEN Words as Shapers of Filipinas' Rights', *Review of Women's Studies* 21(1): 25-37.

UN Women (Last updated 2009) 'Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)' (a webpage of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). Accessed August 18 2018  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>.

UNESCO (Last updated 2012) 'Addressing Exclusion in Education A Guide to Assessing Education Systems Towards More Inclusive and just Societies' (a webpage of UNESCO). Accessed September 2 2018  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002170/217073e.pdf>.

UNESCO 'Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960' (a webpage of UNESCO). Accessed August 20 2018 [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=12949%26URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC%26URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12949%26URL_DO=DO_TOPIC%26URL_SECTION=201.html).

United Nations (Last updated 2009) 'Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).' (a webpage of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women). Accessed September 2 2018  
<http://www.un.org.eur.idm.oclc.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#article1>

University of Maryland 'From Social Exclusion to Inclusion: Single-Mother Families and Social Policy in Taiwan' (a webpage of Center for International Policy Exchanges). Accessed November 7 2018 [http://www.umdcipe.org/conferences/policy\\_exchanges/conf\\_papers/Papers/1461.pdf](http://www.umdcipe.org/conferences/policy_exchanges/conf_papers/Papers/1461.pdf).

Valente, J. and Moreno, F. (2014) 'Women's Representation in Local Politics: Evidence from the Philippines', *Women's representation in local politics: Evidence from The Philippines* : 1-22.

Velete, M. (Last updated 2017) 'In Defense of Single Moms, by Single Moms' (a webpage of Philippine Daily Inquirer). Accessed September/14 2018  
<https://www.pressreader.com/philippines/philippine-daily-inquirer/20170512/282720521883082>.

Wolfe, L. (Last updated 2018) 'A Look at Gender Discrimination Against Women' (a webpage of The Balance Careers). Accessed September 5 2018  
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/gender-discrimination-against-women-from-cradle-to-ceo-3514893>.

Yang, A. and Bullecer, M. (2016) 'Perseverance, Experiences and Motivation of Single Mothers to Finish College', *The Bedan Journal of Psychology* 2: 166-173.