

Journey To Motherhood: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Pregnant Women in North Caloocan City Through a Descriptive Phenomenological Study

Divina D. Diwata, Mary Ann E. Lopez

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-0668-732X>, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7566-5152>

St. Bernadette Of Lourdes College ^{1,2}

ddiwata@sblc.edu.ph¹, mlopez@sblc.edu.ph²

ABSTRACT

Becoming an expectant mother changes a woman in physical, emotional, social, and spiritual realities. Past studies focused on medical health and clinical needs rarely explored how an expectant woman in the cities transforms her life to adapt to and accept the new realities of motherhood. Understanding these personal realities of urban pregnant women is essential for delivering maternal-focused nursing care. This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of expectant mothers in the urban community of North Caloocan and to understand their journey of motherhood, guided by Edmund Husserl. The data were collected through unstructured, audio-recorded in-depth interviews with fifteen pregnant women and were analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological method. To ensure its accuracy and trustworthiness, the researcher set aside their own personal biases, opinions, and assumptions. Pregnancy is a deeply transformative experience with five key themes that emerged from the participants' narratives: 1. Discovering Pregnancy: Emotional ambivalence from surprise to acceptance; 2. Adapting daily life despite Physical and Emotional Changes; 3. Confronting Challenges by Building Resilience; 4. Drawing Strength from Family, faith and Healthcare providers; and 5. Finding Meaning in Embracing Motherhood. Participants described the pregnancy as a profound journey of transformation that taught them to become responsible mothers and deepened their faith in God. From these findings, it can be concluded that pregnancy is not merely a biological process; it is a deeply meaningful life event for an expectant woman.

Keywords: *Descriptive phenomenology, emotional ambivalence, lived experiences, motherhood, pregnancy, transformative*

INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is the biological process of nurturing life in the womb; it is deeply connected to hope, fulfillment, and the anticipation of childbirth. To fully understand pregnant women, it requires exploring their lived experiences to find meaning attached to pregnancy as they navigate their journey to motherhood.

The World Health Organization emphasizes (WHO, 2023) that achieving a positive pregnancy experience is vital for the maternal survival of every pregnant woman. Therefore, it requires understanding expectant mothers beyond their medical data. Meanwhile, the Department of Health (DOH) continues to improve maternal healthcare services by encouraging early prenatal consultations and providing facility-based delivery services.

Past studies focused on the clinical outcomes of pregnancy, maternal morbidity, and maternal health care access. There are limited qualitative studies that explore the day-to-day realities of pregnant women and how an urbanized community, like North Caloocan, affects the lived experience of an expectant mother. This study sought to understand the day-to-day experience of expectant mothers in an urban community by capturing personal narratives, coping strategies, and personal learning as they make meaning of their journey to motherhood and the essence of pregnancy.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive phenomenological research is to explore and understand the lived experience of pregnant women of North Caloocan. It aims to capture personal narratives, uncovering their emotions, coping strategies, and personal learning as they make meaning of their journey to motherhood and uncover the essence of pregnancy.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focuses on exploring the lived experiences of pregnant women who reside in North Caloocan. This study is grounded in a qualitative phenomenological approach in capturing the participant's personal stories, narratives, emotions, coping strategies, and their own definition of their pregnancy journey. Here are the inclusion criteria for this study

1. The participants must be pregnant during the data collection process.
2. The pregnant woman is currently residing within the barangays of North Caloocan.
3. Age 18 years old or above; the participant must be of legal age to provide informed consent
4. Willingness to participate in an in-depth interview.

The following criteria are individuals excluded from the study.

1. Women who are not currently pregnant.
2. Pregnant women who are diagnosed with severe mental health conditions.
3. Pregnant women below 18 years old; minors require parental consent.
4. Pregnant women who are not willing to have an in-depth conversation.

Review of Related Literature

Literature recognized pregnancy as a life-altering and multifaceted journey that brings significant changes in expectant mothers' physical, emotional, psychological, and social transitions.

The previous studies on the lived experiences of pregnant women across qualitative and quantitative studies showed that pregnancy frequently brings anxiety, emotional strain, and social challenges. It also brings a lot of physical changes such as nausea, vomiting, fatigue, back pain, and symptoms that disrupt their normal daily life.

Transitioning to motherhood, according to past studies, emphasizes that the developmental process goes beyond physiological changes; it reshapes expectant mothers' perspectives on life, relationships, and sense of self as they gain knowledge and support from their family.

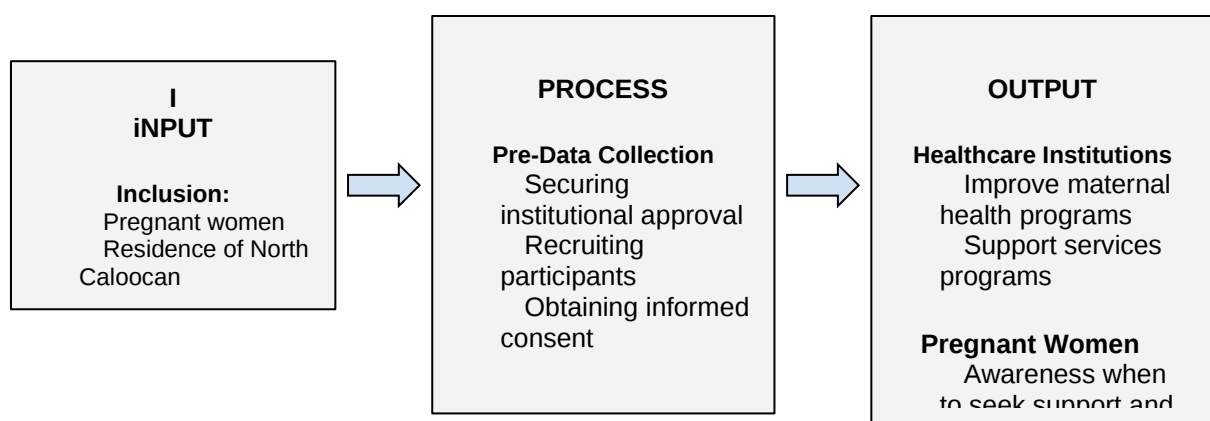
Although previous maternal health research studies emphasized clinical outcomes, poor healthcare access, and financial constraints, there is a lack of qualitative research explaining how women in densely populated communities experience and make sense of their pregnancy.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Human Becoming Theory of Rosemarie Rizzo Parse as the primary theoretical framework (1998). Maternal Role Attainment Theory of Ramona Mercer (2004) and the Theory of Human Caring by Jean Watson (1979) are supporting perspectives of this study. These Nursing Theories will provide a comprehensive understanding of the lived experience of pregnant women, especially in relation to becoming a mother.

Parse's Human Becoming Theory by Rosemarie Rizzo Parse is originally called the Man-Living-Health Theory (Parse, 2014). This model has three core principles of structuring meaning, rhythmicity, and transcendence. This Model is the ideal framework for this study because it will focus on the lived experience of pregnant women and not on the clinical perspective of pregnancy; the goal is to find meaning and to understand their journey to motherhood.

Conceptual Framework



Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design grounded in Edmund Husserl's philosophy to explore the lived experience of pregnant women in North Caloocan City through in-depth interviews and used Colaizzi's phenomenological method.

Research Design

A qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design was adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of our participants. This method was ideal because it allowed the study to capture the essence of the participants' narrative, while staying true to Husserl's descriptive phenomenological philosophy.

Research Step

The research commenced with a comprehensive review of literature to develop a research objective and interview guide. The researcher sought to validate and polish the research instrument, followed by securing ethical approval.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The participants were selected through purposive sampling, eligible pregnant women residing in North Caloocan who voluntarily participated and provided informed consent. Data were collected through unstructured, audio-recorded in-depth interviews lasting 15 to 20 minutes and were conducted until data saturation was achieved.

Data Analysis Methods

The data collected were transcribed verbatim and will be analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis to extract, organize, and analyze the data, which is aligned with Husserlian phenomenology (1970). Throughout the analysis, the researcher practiced epoche (bracketing) to set aside personal assumptions and ensure that the findings reflected participants' perspectives.

Research Hypothesis and Validation

This study is a qualitative phenomenological study that aims to explore the lived experiences of pregnant women rather than test statistical hypotheses. In ensuring that the data collected accurately reflects participants' realities, the researchers actively bracketed preconceptions to reduce personal influence during interviews and analysis. This careful practice established and confirmed that the findings accurately reflect the participants' lived experiences.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study is specific to pregnant women, 18 years old and above, residing in North Caloocan. Participation is voluntary, securing consent prior to the in-depth interview, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Participants have a right to withdraw from the study any time.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed 5 interconnected themes that described the essence of pregnancy as a lived experience: pregnancy is a profound journey that reshapes every aspect of a woman's life. Expectant mothers often begin with shock and joy, eventually learn to accept and develop inner strength. Despite facing medical, financial, and social judgment, pregnant women draw strength from faith, loved ones, and personal determination to build resilience. Ultimately, the findings highlight that motherhood is a journey of self-discovery and evolving identity.

SUMMARY

The research on pregnant women in North Caloocan City reveals that pregnancy is a multifaceted journey; while they navigate emotional shifts and daily challenges, expectant mothers build resilience from strong family networks, medical guidance, and spiritual belief, while learning to embrace the responsibility of becoming a mother.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that pregnancy goes beyond physical changes; pregnancy serves as a catalyst for profound personal growth, resilience and self-identity transformation. Although expectant mothers suffer multiple challenges throughout pregnancy, they overcome these hurdles by learning to accept, having a strong support system, and their faith in God. Overall, **motherhood is a beautiful testament of strength and unconditional love.**

RECOMMENDATION

This study, based on the findings, recommends that families should provide emotional and practical support to pregnant women, especially in their vulnerable moments, and for medical professionals to enhance their prenatal education, counseling, and compassionate care. Policymakers and communities must improve healthcare access, provide financial support and reduce social stigma. Future studies should investigate the diverse experiences of pregnant women across different socioeconomic and community backgrounds to strengthen maternal support systems and policies.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools were used solely for refining the grammar, structure, and formatting in creating this manuscript. No AI tool was involved in gathering data, creating respondent records, or creating the conclusion analysis. The author and adviser remain responsible for the study content, data integrity, interpretation, and final academic submission.

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