

# The Lived Experiences of Young Fathers: A Phenomenological Study

James E. Dalis, MSCJ, RCrim  
Cavite State University, Bacoor City, Cavite, Philippines

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study made use of phenomenology. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of young fathers. It also sought to identify the coping mechanism that young fathers used in dealing with the challenges brought by fatherhood. Specifically, the answers to the following problems were sought: 1. What are the lived experience of young fathers in embarking with early fatherhood? 2. What are the coping mechanism of the young fathers in dealing with challenges of early fatherhood? This study made use of hermeneutic phenomenology design. It used a qualitative approach to answer the research problems.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Fatherhood, Young Fathers, Early Fatherhood, Early Fathers*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The role of a father in both the family and the community is vital. Fathers bring their children positive benefits that no other individual is as likely to bring. They provide the family with a feeling of security, physical and emotional, and help the community. They have a style of parenting that is significantly different from a mother's, and that difference is important in the growth of healthy children. Where the part of the father is generally left out in common studies, it makes it difficult to see, hear and understand their untold problems, experiences and struggles (Chili & Maharaj, 2015).

In status quo, one of the factors considered by the community as affecting fatherhood is age. Said factor leads to the introduction of the term young fathers, generally defined as males under the age of 24 or 25 who already have their own children. Since teenage pregnancies usually involve 18- or 19-year-old females, most young fathers are in their early twenties (Dudley 2007). Meanwhile, the Fatherhood Institute (2013) also defined young fathers as those under the age of twenty-five.

Considering the profile of young fathers, Lagerlov (2013) stated that becoming a young parent involves a major transition in life. The change leads to new roles and brings joy, expectations, challenges and obligations for the individual parent and the couple as a whole. The sense of coping and the way that this transition is experienced have implications for the bond with the child, the child's upbringing and the development of the family. It is expected that men who start a family today will create their own role as fathers and find a balance between their job, childcare, housework and hobbies on an equal footing with women.

In relation to the experiences, challenges and obligations that arise in being a father, most young fathers become idealistic. Their aspirations as 'breadwinners', documenting their desire to provide for their families and charting their varied, circuitous and tenuous routes through education and training into employment or on to benefits, reveal the sheer, sustained hard work of young fathers in managing the triple burden of earning, learning and caring, dispelling any vestige of the idea that they are to be written off (Johnson 2015).

On the other hand, while others become idealistic about fatherhood, in the study of Staniforth (2020), some young men consider fatherhood as a threat than a promise. Pop culture reinforces the idea that becoming a young father ruins a man's life by cutting short the wild years of his 20s. In the popular imagination, however, the option of sticking around to provide for the kids isn't much nobler. For many guys, early parenthood reeks of abandoned dreams and stifled potential.

Besides viewing fatherhood as a threat rather than a promise, the study of Premberg (2011) has shown that men's health is also affected by the life transition that becoming a father entails as they undergo biological and psychological changes. Studies show an increased incidence of depression in new fathers compared with the male population in general. More knowledge about the father's role is important to enable public health nurses to understand fathers better and be more aware of their challenges and circumstances.

Furthermore, it was reinforced in the meta-synthesis by Goodman (2005), which contains the experiences of young fathers from various cultural backgrounds. It highlighted that men experienced a plethora of emotions, ranging from helplessness to completeness, as they managed the demands and expectations of their new role. It is also supported in the study of Tan and Quinlivan (2006), where young fathers also experienced

greater psychological and emotional difficulties and have a history of delinquent behavior than their non-parenting peers. In addition, young fathers are more likely than older fathers to report early childhood exposure to domestic violence and parental separation or divorce, thus limiting their contact with positive paternal role models (Tan & Quinlivan, 2006).

Narratives identified changing identities resulting from the responsibility and development of being a father. Young men spoke of feeling lost before they became fathers. Their children were a cause for change to become better people, with focus and purpose. This work aligns closely with the transformative discourse where fatherhood can serve as a catalyst to profound psychological change (Johansson & Hammarén 2012).

Contrary to the studies that show the negative effect of being a young father, there are also studies that says otherwise like the study of Tuffin and Rouchand Frewin (2010). They created a discourse of positive transformation arising from fatherhood whereby the dramatic transformation it instigated offered opportunity for personal development, positive change and psychological growth. Fatherhood broadened the horizons of these young fathers as their newly acquired responsibilities demanded maturity and offered a greater sense of self-importance and deeper appreciation of relationships with significant others.

Moreover, young fathers were given a goal in being a father, which was shown in the study of Wilkes, Mannix and Jackson (2011). It stated that the emotional and psychological impact of parenthood was foremost when, as loving fathers, participants talked about their emotional connection and unconditional love for their children and expressed pride. In addition, fatherhood provided an increased sense of control over their lives and provided a strong purpose around which they could concentrate their energies.

Same with the study conducted by Johansson and Hammarén's (2012), they analyzed the blogs of young Swedish fathers which provided a new social space that enabled narratives that countered the traditional negative stereotypes of young fathers. The narratives identified changing identities resulting from the responsibility and development of being a father. The young men spoke of feeling lost before they became fathers. Their children were a cause for change to become better people, with focus and purpose.

In addition to this, narratives on the analyzed blogs identified changing identities resulting from the responsibility and development of being a father. The young men spoke of feeling lost before they became fathers. Their children were a cause for change to become better people, with focus and purpose (Johansson & Hammarén 2012).

In other research, young fathers talked about their experience moving away from street life, gangs, drugs and excessive drinking in order to become better fathers, (Jaime, Robbins & De Los Santos 2016).

Apart from focusing energy, attention and love to the role of being a young father to their child, it also brings joy to both the young father and mother. In the study of Lemay, Cashman, Elfenbein, and Felice (2011), it was supported that when the respondents were asked what they like about being a young father, the majority (81%) commented on the joy and happiness fatherhood brought them. In contrast, the difficulties these young fathers identified included the burden of responsibility, particularly regarding finances. In addition, young fathers discussed child care issues, particularly getting up at night and caring for the infant when sick. Their relationship with the mother of their baby was also identified as one of the difficulties of fatherhood.

Without question, compared to those who are not yet fathers, becoming a young father offers many experiences that carry difficulties and struggles. According to Wilkes, Mannix and Jackson (2011), financial pressures on young fathers are considerable. With limited educational qualifications and experience, their earning power in the labor market has a low ceiling and the available work often involves long hours of exhausting manual labor which takes time away from being with their child. Not only was quality time with their children scarce, but the complex demands of sleep deprivation, managing child-care and balancing work and financial commitments had a negative impact on attempts to engage with educational goals.

Moreover, young fathers are being burned out from the challenges brought by fatherhood. Finch and Bacon's (2015) stated that this combination of factors was rated as the main stress as they attempted to juggle complex competing demands. While education was often valued as a means of providing a solid foundation for the future, this was difficult to manage without the support of wider family.

Another conflict involved in the transition to fatherhood is that fatherhood duties have replaced traditional years of liberty. Finch and Bacon (2015) noted this with the requirement of accelerated maturation in combination with the loss of the ostensibly carefree years of youth. These stresses were also observable for the young fathers in the study of Johansson and Hammaren (2012), which foregrounded the conflict between being young, fun loving and carefree and the need to take the responsibilities of maintaining a household.

It was supported in a study of African American fathers in which participants acknowledged the conflict between wanting the perceived "freedom of youth" and the responsibilities of fatherhood through which such freedoms were compromised. (Paschal, Lewis-Moss & Hsiao, 2011)

Furthermore, to the difficulties that young fathers face, early fatherhood may either hinder or improve future planning. Wilkes, Mannix and Jackson (2011) stated that for some young fathers, their plans were interrupted by the arrival of their child, but others were stimulated to think about the future in a manner that went beyond the narrow considerations of 'the selfish teen.' Planning involved considerations about their

relationship with the child's mother and, most importantly, thinking about the future of how they could provide for their child.

In addition, a number of studies had documented the adverse stigma associated with young fathers. In Jaime, Robinsons and De Los Santos (2016) study, stigmatization and negative attitudes could start with the child's mother's family for young Mexican fathers but were also more publicly noted among older people who gave them dirty looks when they outwitted their children and partners. Likewise, the study of young Swedish fathers similarly talked about stigma within the society and suggested that this stems from a typical masculinity/fatherhood (Johansson & Hammaren 2012).

It is agreeable that fathering involves a confrontation in the young father's own life with unresolved psychological, social and other problems. It is inevitable that the fathering challenges will force the father either to engage in some kind of generative engagement with these problems or will evoke a hardening of the psychological coping that can potentially disrupt, stiffen and further damage the father, child and family as a whole.

In order to be able to deal with the challenges that young fathers face, they need to adopt different methods that can help them adapt to these challenges and struggles. Raspa, Baile, Bann, and Bishop (2013) stated that adaptation focuses more on seven dimensions of family life: parental knowledge, social support, social life, financial impact, well-being, quality of life, and overall impact. They focused on parental knowledge, losing attention to the other family members which are also vital.

In addition, as the saying that "no man is an island," young fathers should seek the help of their peers. As stated in the work of Hall and Graff (2010), young parents shared that one of the good coping mechanisms was to join support groups and have group conversations with peers. It was further confirmed by Gray (2011) where he claimed that fathers' normal and key coping method is from their outlets and work outside the home and that the most effective tools for the family as a whole are family support and support groups.

In other studies, attending mass and church gatherings are also a good strategy to cope with the challenges and struggles of fatherhood. Along with this, in the study conducted by Belendez, Topa, and Bermejo (2009), religious strategies and support seeking, leading to social support and social interactions, are the top responses of young parents to cope with the challenges of fatherhood. These studies include a decent collection of social, psycho-spiritual and psychological coping mechanisms, but the physical component is missing out on leisure activities. In addition, joining support groups and having a group discussion with friends are one of the good coping strategies (Hall & Graff, 2010).

In other aspects, physical exercise and sports were considered as commonly shared coping mechanisms. The male respondents shared sports like basketball and skateboard. These adaptations help improve two of the seven dimensions of life mentioned in the study of Raspa, Baile, Bann and Bishop (2013), which are the quality of life and well-being. These activities also prove the statement of Gray (2011) about having outlets outside the home.

Without a doubt, with the studies mentioned above, it is still not enough to clearly understand and analyze the experiences and coping strategies that these young fathers are using. Factors involved in the transition to fatherhood have been under-researched, considering the life-changing effects of being a young parent. Research explicitly focusing on the transition to fatherhood is minimal compared to the body of literature on early female fertility and motherhood (Goldscheider & Kaufman 1996).

Moreover, literature regarding parenthood is generally focused on young women, with sometimes neglected or invisible male counterparts. Mothers tend to be seen as insecure, lonely and emotionally mistrustful, while young fathers are often perceived as absent, useless, delinquent and socially excluded (Johansson & Hammaren, 2014).

In addition to this, Weber (2012) stated in his study that the absence of young fathers fostered the development of myths and stereotypes that contributed to young fathers' pathologizing as uncaring, selfish, and indifferent to parental responsibilities.

With this in mind, young fathers are sometimes to blame for their failure to recognize in studies because some young fathers do not cooperate intentionally or refuse to cooperate. In the study of Reeves (2006), he reinforced that the lack of accounts of young fathers was attributed to access difficulties, uncooperative attitudes of gatekeepers, and the unwillingness of young men to participate in research due to the legal repercussions of or perceived negative attitudes towards them. It was also supported by Ferguson and Hogan (2004) that if mothers are reluctant to involve young fathers during pregnancy, birth, or the upbringing of the child, and if the pregnancy was unplanned, young fathers can also be hard to reach.

Nevertheless, Marsiglio (2004) claimed that over the passage of time, fatherhood has expanded at a rapid pace over the past two decades. Moreover, researchers who study fathering represent various academic backgrounds, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, psychiatry, history, economics, and law.

As more facets of men's lives and their roles as parents are studied, our understanding of fatherhood and young father continues to change. In addition, recent research considers the interrelationships between factors such as culture and gender, class, race, religion, and sexual orientation, which allows us to view the

complexity and fluidity of fathering practices and experiences. Even so, researchers have continued to pay little attention to young fathers, despite the recent increased interest in young fathers.

Along with this, the study of Thompson and Walker (2004) indicated that this omission includes difficulties in identifying, contacting, and hiring these young men for research. As a result, little is known about the attitudes, beliefs, practices and experiences related to adolescent and young fathers' parental role, especially the self-identified needs needed to be a good father.

In the Philippines, young fathers are those males who became fathers before they reached the age of 21. Although the country lowered the age of emancipation from 21 down to 18, the same law lowering said age still recognizes those below 21 as young. It is proven by the fact that the Family Code still requires parental consent before a person over 18 but below 21 can be married. This age bracket is considered to be physically adults but is psychologically youths. In this regard, young Filipino fathers are those below 21 years old.

The metaphorical term “haligi ng tahanan (pillar of the house)” is used for fathers who provide their families with protective care, guidance and wisdom. In a traditional Filipino household, the role of fathers in the family was primarily to serve as breadwinners and at the same time, the mothers were responsible for doing the household chores and taking care of the children (Rabaino, 2014).

In addition to this, in the Philippines, being a young father is against the morals of the people. Catapang (2014) cited in his study that teenagers who get impregnated in the Philippines are typically women aged 17-19 years old and young males are the parents in most instances. Since this country's culture leans towards being conservative, teenage pregnancy is perceived to be controversial, and those who have witnessed this phenomenon may have speculated upon it. On the part of the young father, it was found that young men tend to accept the repercussions of their behavior. As a result, young fathers have succumbed to finding financial assistance employment, sometimes even leaving school.

Moreover, Filipino parents have many approaches when it comes to guiding and supporting their families. In the study of Alampay (2014), he presented a wider view of parenting in the Philippines in the study of empirical work published locally and internationally on various aspects of Filipino parenting, including the cognition and behavior of parents towards infants, the essence of parent-child relationships, and the distinct roles of mothers and fathers in child growth.

Furthermore, a significant number of studies on parenting in the Philippines have concentrated on parenting characteristics and types of parenting in recent years. In particular, researchers have sought to examine the influence of various parenting characteristics and/or styles on outcomes such as children's social adjustment, emotional intelligence, academic goal orientation, and identity processes (Pesigan, I., Luyckx, K., & Alampay, L.P, 2014)

Altogether, the experiences encountered by young fathers vary from different aspects of life and the coping mechanism/strategies that each father uses differ from their circumstances. Unfortunately, the abundance of literature about this matter, internationally and locally, focused on the hardship and sacrifices of the mother. Thus, young fathers are unremarkably left out, which makes it hard to understand and assist them

With the above scenarios in fatherhood, they make a strong driving force that this study be conducted to assist and help young fathers and be an eye-opener to the circumstances of fathers that are usually unheard of. Therefore, this study aims to identify and assess the experiences and the coping mechanisms that young fathers turn to.

The researcher aims this study to help the service providers, psychologists, sociologists and the like wherein they may utilize this research as an instrument for the improvement of their services. Furthermore, they may support and assist these young fathers in a way that they will realize that the individuals mentioned above need improved guidance and direction towards outstanding fatherhood because it is in this aspect where the psychological and physiological development of young fathers are stricken.

It also aims to help future researchers who are interested in continuing the said research.

This research also aims to guide the community in directing and helping young fathers with their struggles and challenges since it is in the community where fatherhood experiences are developed or affected in many different ways such as in its economic and sociological aspects.

Personally, this research may lead not only to further understanding, knowledge, wisdom and continued pursuance of education but also to help realize the situations of these respondents and utilize this research in his transition to fatherhood. It would also help him as an educator, that he may impart the results of this study to his students and learners that fatherhood is a community problem that each member of this community must also take responsibility. He expects that they might use these learnings to see and understand the essence of fatherhood in their community as they become police officers.

Moreover, in the researcher's chosen field of endeavor, the criminology profession, that as a society of professionals, this research would pave a way that fatherhood also is an important aspect to consider in the development of a good family. It is because family is the basic political unit in the community, and it is in the community where crimes and lawlessness originate. Thus, the researcher sees it in the viewpoint that striking one of the very roots of crime can lead to a better community.

Finally, with the above scenarios, the researcher's objective is to understand and evaluate the experiences and coping mechanism of young fathers in Bacoor City, Cavite, in embarking with fatherhood, as mentioned by other studies with the lack of literature with regard to young fathers.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

This research used hermeneutic phenomenology. Specifically, Hermeneutic Phenomenology wherein it is focused on the subjective experience of individuals and groups, which attempts to unveil the world as experienced by the subject. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher utilized this design since there was a direct observation and communication with the participants. Further, a hermeneutic phenomenology was utilized since the researcher was able to know and understand the lived experience of young fathers. This method allowed a deeper understanding of the statements given by the participants, thus allowing more thorough analysis and interpretation of the data gathered.

## **III. DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data regarding the lived experience of young fathers in embarking with fatherhood, the coping mechanism used by young fathers in dealing with the challenges of fatherhood.

### **A. Lived experiences of young fathers in embarking with fatherhood**

The following are the findings and analysis regarding the participant's experiences with fatherhood and the struggles and challenges that are brought by fatherhood. These themes are change of perspective, unplanned fatherhood, and conflict within the family.

#### **1. Change of Perspective**

Engaging in fatherhood changes a man's life entirely, from the careless and carefree lifestyle to a life full of responsibility and priorities. Before becoming a father, most of the respondents enjoyed their lives, going to parties, socializing with friends, and doing what they wanted to do. From the experiences of Peter, he shared, "When I was just a young man, I can do whatever I want, and I have the freedom to do things that I really want without hesitation."

It was also affirmed by the statement of Raijin, "Before becoming a father, I am always with my friend drinking, going everywhere we want to go and doing things that we want but after becoming a young father my lifestyle is changed, I can't do what I did before, my mentality is to plan the future to support my family. Abner, on the other hand, shared "Lifestyle ko inom dito inom doon , babaero , happy go lucky , hindi mo ko makikita sa bahay namin dahil lagi akong wala uuwi lang lasing tas gigising hahanap ulit ng kainuman . Maitin ulo laging laman ng away sa kalye at higit sa lahat walang kinikilalang diyos" (I am a drunkard before I became a father, I am always hot headed and getting into street fights all the time and I don't recognize any God). Lucio, also shared the same, "Nung hindi pa po ako tatay, pag iinom lang po, pagala gala po kung saan mag aya ang tropa. Kung saan may inuman pupuntahan kung saan abutan ng lasing duon na lang nakikitulog sa ibang bahay" (When I was not yet a father, I am always go to my friend's place to drink). From these statements, it can be implied that being burdened with responsibilities hinder them from being in their comfortable situation before.

After a few bumps along the road, when these young fathers held their son or daughter in their arms, changes in their life started to arise. Some of the respondents said that they feel blessed, happy, and motivated. Raijin stated, "I feel blessed and happy at the same time I was motivated to pursue my study so that I can provide for my family." This was further supported by Peter's statement, "I'm so happy because my baby was delivered safely and challenged to look for a job to provide for my baby." It signifies that something changes within these young fathers from the carefree and careless lifestyle to a motivated and inspired lifestyle. Through these experiences, they started to find new perspectives in life.

In the study conducted by Madiba (2017), he stated that personal changes were identified by young fathers as a result of becoming a parent. For others, the prospect of becoming a father compelled them to make positive changes in their behavior and lifestyle. Young fathers' perceptions of themselves were affected by their transformation from boy to parent. They realized they wanted to finish school in order to become better fathers due to their experience as fathers. They considered what kind of fathers they wished to be and began making the requisite changes in their lives.

This is corroborated by Staniforth (2020), which states that the old lifestyle of this young fathers will be set aside due to the occurrence of a greater responsibility in their life. Furthermore, this was supported by the Identity Theory by Thoits and Virshup (1997), which seeks to understand the self as a reflection of the change in social structure and roles/statuses where in for this young father their identity changed from the youthful and carefree to a full of responsibility life that was brought by fatherhood.

The findings imply that there are changes in the lives of these young fathers because of the comparison made by themselves in the kind of lifestyle that they have then and now which was brought by fatherhood. As stated by Carl, "I changed my lifestyle, into becoming more responsible in every move I make and become more positive thinker at my situation in the past." It was supported by Shirani (2015) study, stating that the narrative of 'doing my best' has been highlighted as an alternative indicator of good fatherhood from young fathers' accounts.

## 2. Unplanned fatherhood

Engaging in fatherhood requires a lot of preparation emotionally and financially, especially when pregnancy is not planned, struggles and challenges will arise in the process.

When the respondents discovered that they would be a father, they felt worried, scared, and happy about being a father. As stated by Lucio, "I feel a little bit of nervous at the same time I feel happiness and excitement," it was supported by Peter stating, "At first I'm really scared because we are having a hard time telling our parent that we are going to be like parents now" and was further supported by the statement of Carl, "I feel great and nervous because I don't know how my parents feel about it because I failed their expectations in me."

Most of the respondents felt scared and worried upon knowing that their partners were pregnant because they are not yet finished with their studies and do not have a job to support the birth and needs of their baby. As stated by Raijin, "I'm a little bit excited but depressed because I'm studying that time I'm worried about balancing my studies and becoming a father" and Lucio, "I feel a bit scared because I don't have work." These findings are supported by the study of Madiba (2017), stating that, "Most of the young fathers learned about the pregnancy from their girlfriends, but a few learned about the pregnancy when the pregnant girlfriend was brought to the boy's home in keeping with the community cultural practices. The pregnancy news evoked intense emotions for the young fathers such as shock, fear, disbelief, denial, and confusion." It implies that the respondents are not emotionally prepared to accept the role of being a father upon knowing their partner's pregnancy because the respondents are new to fatherhood. They have no prior similar experience or basis on how to take good care and raise a child.

Despite feeling worried and scared with the news of being a father, these young fathers felt happiness upon first glance at their baby. As stated by Lucio, "I cried when I first saw my baby, my heart is overflowing with joy and also thankful to God because my baby is healthy and no complications." In addition to this, Raijin also stated, "I feel blessed and happy when I saw my child."

On the other hand, financial problems and unemployment are common problems that young fathers face because they do not have the capacity to provide yet for their families. As to what Peter shared, "Well, when I became a father, I was really struggling financially because I don't have a job yet." The statement of Raijin supported it, "I have encountered many challenges like our child got sick, financial problems, keeping an eye on the baby, staying awake late at night, etc." These are common for the 17-22 years old because, at this age, these young fathers are still going to school earning a degree and are still depending on their parents for financial assistance.

Similar statement was mentioned by Peter, "Actually I struggled because of the everyday expenses, I don't have a job to support my family." It was supported by the statement of Abner, "Financially sobrang problemado" (I am having a problem financially). It implies that most young fathers are struggling financially for their own families. The study conducted by Clayton (2016) stated that young fathers frequently face a greater number of economic and employment challenges than older fathers. Longitudinal studies show that men who become fathers at a young age are twice as likely to be unemployed at age thirty as men who became fathers aged over twenty-three.

Moreover, in the Transition Theory by Premberg (2011), it was stated that the transition may place additional demands on the individual and may influence him in various ways which was observed among the respondents. Being a father is a big responsibility to these young fathers specially if they are unprepared

emotionally and financially since the up bringing of a child demands a lot from this young fathers which forces them to look for a job in order to provide the needs of his family.

It implies that young fathers are financially unprepared because some of the respondents are still engaged with their studies to pursue their careers. At the same time, these young fathers still depend on their parents for financial aid, which hinders them from totally providing for their own family.

### 3. Conflict within the family

Conflicts and misunderstandings within the family are inevitable. For young fathers, this is a big factor that can affect their transition to fatherhood. Neale and Clayton (2014) stated that grandparents are often the main providers of practical, emotional and financial support for their children. I was contradictory to what Peter shared, "The struggles that we encountered is the understanding in both sides of our opinions and suggestions on how to do things properly. Especially for my in-laws, my partner is always listening to them and disregarding me as if I am not part of the family. My in-laws are also belittling me because I did not graduate yet. They are putting me down with their words and their treatment to me." Same with Abner stating, "Pinaghihiwalay talaga kami kasi nga bata pa kami" (We are being separated since we are still young). It is further corroborated with the statement of Raijin, "I am having a hard time dealing with my in-laws."

It implies that some young fathers have a hard time dealing with their in-laws because some of the respondents are viewed as a liability by their in-laws since they do not have a stable job and are still studying. As stated by Raijin, "They are making me feel like I'm useless to my wife and cannot provide for my child because they are always showing to me that they are buying the grocery supplies in the house and giving money to my wife." Similar with the statement of Abner, "Pinanaringan nila ako na kung sana tinapos ko muna daw yung pag-aaral ko bago ko nabuntis yung anak nila hindi daw sana ganito buhay namin ngayon." (My in-laws sometimes tell me that if I finished my studies before making my wife pregnant we will not have this kind of life today) It was corroborated by the study of Parke and Neville (1987) stated that conflict between young fathers and their parents is likely, especially if the new family lives with their parents.

Similar to the statement of Peter, "Hindi kami nakakapag decision na mag asawa, at sa tuwing mag sasabi ako sa asawa ko, mas pinapanigan niya yung sasabihin ng nanay at tatay niya, hindi narin kami nag kakaroon ng privacy kapag may gusto kaming pag usapan na mag asawa." (We cannot decide as wife and husband, and at times that I'm suggesting to my wife she is always agreed to her parents, and we don't have any privacy if we want to talk about something) which implies that young fathers cannot perform the role of a father living with their in-laws.

This was corroborated by the article of Brown (2020), which identified that most parents feel like their in laws doesn't respect their need for space, which is observed and the young fathers. They want to be the one to decide on how they will raise the child, where will the child stay and other matters related to their families welfare, but because of their current circumstances where in they are living in the same roof with their in laws this personal decisions of these young father are being hampered and is not being exercise.

In summary, the findings of the study reveal that the lived experiences of young fathers can either help or impede them in their transition to fatherhood.

## **B. Coping mechanism used by young fathers in dealing with the challenges of early fatherhood**

The following are the themes that were derived from the interviews conducted

### 1. Family Support

Family is considered a source of strength for all people in the world. A family is a place where you can share your problem and have a shoulder to cry on and comfort in times of distress.

To these young fathers, their family provides big support to them despite having problems and struggles in their transition to fatherhood. As stated by Carl, "Yes I encountered financial problems, but in the end I overcome those problems because of my hustle in life and also my family that helps me to go through it." As stated also by Peter, "Sabi ni mama at papa na unawain ko nalang daw kasi talagang ganito ang buhay ng may asawa, lalo na kung hindi pa nakakapag tapos ng pag aaral, habaan ang pasensiya" (My parents said that I should make myself understand that this is the life of a married person, especially if you didn't finish your studies). It was corroborated by Raijin stating, "I'm very lucky to have my parents because they didn't disown me for what I did instead they supported me and encourage me to continue my studies even though I already have my child." These statements are corroborated by Neale and Clayton (2014), that grandparents are often the main providers of practical, emotional and financial support for their children and new grandchildren.

This was corroborated to the repression - sensitization theory under the macro analytic coping theory which states that people who cope with repression tend to deny or ignore the presence of a stressors to minimize its effect. On the other side, sensitizers tend to react with extreme thoughts, worrying, and obsessive impulses to cope with the sudden encounter. It shows that young fathers try to repress the negative thoughts, criticism and judgement that they are receiving from their in-laws while living with them and focus on the support, love, care and advice that their parents give to them.

Some of the respondents' parents also experienced the same situation that these young fathers are experiencing. It is considered as a factor to help their child instead of criticizing and judging them. It implies that despite a rough relationship with their in-laws, the parents of these young fathers are still fully supporting their children.

## 2. Self-Improvement

Taking good care and improving oneself is considered a way to battle and cope with struggles and challenges in our life.

For these young fathers, they seek self-improvement as a way to cope with the struggles and challenges that are brought by fatherhood. As stated by Peter, “Madalas na ako napunta sa simbahan, kasi doon ako minsan kumukuha ng lakas bukod sa supporta na binibigay ng magulang ko at kapatid ko” (I go to the church most of the time because it is where I get the strength to continue besides from the support of my family). It was supported by Belendez, Topa and Bermejo (2009), that religious strategies and support seeking, leading to social support and social interactions are the top responses of young parents to cope with the challenges of fatherhood. It was supported by the statement of Raijin, “Yes, talk about your feelings to someone like parents and true friends, keep active, eat well, do something your good at, accept who you are, and care for others.”

Similar with the statement of Carl, “I talk to my friends who are also young fathers and ask them how did they managed being a young father, so that I will learn from them.” It was corroborated with the study of Hall and Graff (2010), wherein they stated that joining support groups and having a group discussion with friends are good coping strategies. It implies that being with young fathers who experienced the same can help these young fathers by sharing their own experience and giving advice to them.

## 3. Self-Pity/Self Comfort

Coping with the struggles and challenges brought by fatherhood does not necessarily need to come from the family or peers.

These young fathers also devised a coping mechanism for their self, which is self-comfort. As to what Lucio shared, “I extended my patience even more and expanded my understanding in dealing with people who are talking about us.” In addition to this, Peter also shared, “I fight these emotions by accepting the fact that I am now going to be a father of my own family.” Furthermore, in the statement of Carl, “Sinasabi ko nalang sa sarili ko na intinidhin ko nalang sila, habaan ang pasensya dahil ginawa namin to, mahirap talaga magkaroon ng pamilya kapag wala ka pang trabaho” (At some time, I say to myself to understand them and extend my patience because it is hard to have a family without a job). In the study of Beauchemin (2020), self-comfort can loosely be described as those little mind tricks we play with ourselves to bring ourselves back to a place of ease when we are stressed or scared. A conscious, constructive behavioral practice serves us better. It implies that besides the support they get from their peers and parents, these young fathers also comfort themselves to cope with the challenges and struggles brought by fatherhood.

In addition, in the article of Anderson (2021), self-comfort is a way in which we treat ourselves to feelings of betterment so that we can move forward.. These young father comfort themselves to lessen the negativity and pain that they encounter because of the challenges that fatherhood brings to the young fathers.

In summary, there are coping mechanisms that these young fathers used in dealing with the challenges of fatherhood. These are family support, self-improvement, and self-pity, which reveals that the coping mechanism the young fathers are using is insufficient to address the challenges and struggles brought by fatherhood. These young fathers are still having a hard time in their transition to fatherhood despite having these identified coping mechanisms.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following are concluded:

1. The lived experiences of young fathers identified are; change of perspective, unplanned fatherhood and conflict within the family, which either help or impede them in their transition to fatherhood. These experiences whether pleasant or not, produce changes in the life of the young father which affect their transition to fatherhood.

2. The coping mechanisms that young fathers are using are; family support, self-improvement and self-pity, which insufficiently address the challenges and struggles brought by fatherhood. These coping mechanisms were

adopted in order to help the young fathers adapt to the changes they undergo as they transition to fatherhood.

These coping mechanisms helped these young fathers face the stress and manage their difficult situation.

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