

Problems and Practices of Teen Mothers at School in Khon Kaen Province, Thailand¹

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Abstract

In a strictly sexualized society, teen mothers often face social exclusion. However, in the study on which this article is based, although the teen mothers encountered such problems, they did not surrender to social dominance. They tried to fight for dignity and acceptance. The aim of this study was to investigate the use of capital and habitus in the practices in educational institutes of 20 teen mothers living in Khon Kaen province. Qualitative research methodology was employed to conduct the study. Data were collected through life histories, in-depth interviews, and observation. Data were analyzed by content analysis based on Pierre Bourdieu's framework. The study found that when teen mothers were faced with bias and gossip of their school friends, non-acceptance of their pregnancy at school, and physical conditions that interfered with studying, they tried to manage and negotiate with the context in order to solve these problems. They had access to various types of capital, namely economic, social, and cultural capital as well as habitus, which enabled them to pursue their goals. For instance, some teen mothers from financially well-off families, together with their parents, used their economic capital to transfer to another school to avoid discrimination. For those who remained in the same school, some were able to use social capital, especially social bonds with their teachers and friends who helped them to continue with

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their studies, protected them, and helped relieve their stress. Their cultural capital was linked to habitus in the use of the culturally-valued concept of motherhood to negotiate with friends not to terminate their pregnancy. The article, therefore, argues that these teen mothers, while seen as having very limited resources because of their young age, were able to use economic, social and cultural capital as well as habitus to negotiate with the constraining social field of relationships in school to keep their social position and to transform their status from “victim” to that of active “agency.”

Keywords: teen mothers, teenage pregnancy, capital, habitus, agency, negotiation

Introduction

In recently years teen motherhood has been a growing phenomenon in many countries around the world, including Thailand (World Health Organization, 2018). Pregnancy and childbirth of Thai teens is becoming a serious problem. It was reported that childbirth among teens aged between 15-19, who are expected to stay in school, has increased at an alarming rate (Bureau of Reproductive Health, Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, 2017). Teen mothers, unprepared for and incapable of taking responsibility, have faced a variety of issues like prejudice and social non-acceptance (Muensit, Thongyou and Lapanun, 2017; 2019). Moreover, in Thai society, pregnancy before marriage is perceived as a deviance from the social norms of a “decent woman” (Inthawong, 2009; Yodnakhornchong, 2008). Non-acceptance contributes to a number of social problems, such having to drop out of school, which deprives them of opportunities to further education and self-development. This situation results in loss of job opportunities, poverty, and unequal access to the means to improve their life and that of their children (Seeda, 2010; Department of Social Development and Welfare, 2009; Center for Policy Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, 2012).

Even though pregnancy and childbirth have serious effects on female teens, this study shows how some young women refused to surrender to the crisis they were experiencing. Instead of abandoning

educational opportunities, they tried, using every means, to secure future education for themselves and their children. As in the study of Yakasem and Chaiyasung (2014) and Jirawatgul et al. (2012), some teens planned to continue their education after giving birth, hoping to get a well-paid job to support themselves and their children. Such struggles show that even though a society may view teen mothers as victims, they can also act as an active agent, that is, as a person who does not surrender and can negotiate with the social context and the socially dominant culture in order to live with human and maternal dignity. Therefore, the study focused on the negotiating practices of teen mothers when faced with their social context, with an emphasis on relationships with educational institutes.

This article aims to portray the image of teen mothers as one of “agency,” in which they are able to deal with problems including negotiation with the social and cultural contexts that suppress them in educational institutes under the scope of habitus (the habitual tendency system) and the capital they access in order to do so. The study aimed to answer the question of how teen mothers, pressured and suppressed by the demands of motherhood, use habitus and capital in the practice of negotiating with the educational context.

Concepts

The aim of this article was to understand the problems and practices of teen mothers in educational institutes. The study used the practice theory of Pierre Bourdieu as its conceptual framework (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). “Practice” is a strategy humans use to fight against rules and orders to seek a position in a society. Practice is an outcome of capital, habitus and field, which is a space where a battle to occupy and access valuable resources begins. Thus, the performance and efficiency of each practice depends heavily on habitus and on an individual’s capital that already exists or is acquired later (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990; Swartz, 1997). The teen mothers in this study resorted to this strategy to survive and gain acceptance from their school.

“Habitus,” according to Pierre Bourdieu, refers to ingrained habits, skills and dispositions that an individual possesses due to his/her life experiences. It is the permanent internalization of the social order in the human body and mind. Intrinsic values of different social class, gender, ethnicity, education distinctively shape individuals’ habitus, which affects the way that they perceive the surrounding social world and react to it. Meanwhile, an individual’s reactions and practices can also reshape habitus. This interactive process highlights both the constraints that govern social life and the strategies that emerge from acting (Bourdieu, 1977; Chantavanich, 2011b).

Bourdieu viewed “capital” as a social power that can exist in various forms under different circumstances. Capital can be categorized into economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Although these kinds of capital have different forms, they are not completely free from each other. They can change from one type to another. To secure a place in a variety of fields, agency will use different kinds of his/her available capital, guided by habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; Swartz, 1997).

This article focuses on the problems and practices of teen mothers in school, with the aim of explaining how they used habitus and capital in dealing with problems. These problems occurred in social and cultural contexts in the field of relationships in their school related to people around them, especially teachers and friends/classmates. The article shows how teen mothers did not surrender to these problems, but used habitus and occupied capital in the negotiating practice with the context that suppressed them. It also explores what makes “victims” transform themselves into “agency” that possesses the potential to negotiate with the dominant structures which allow existence in society, as seen in Figure 1.

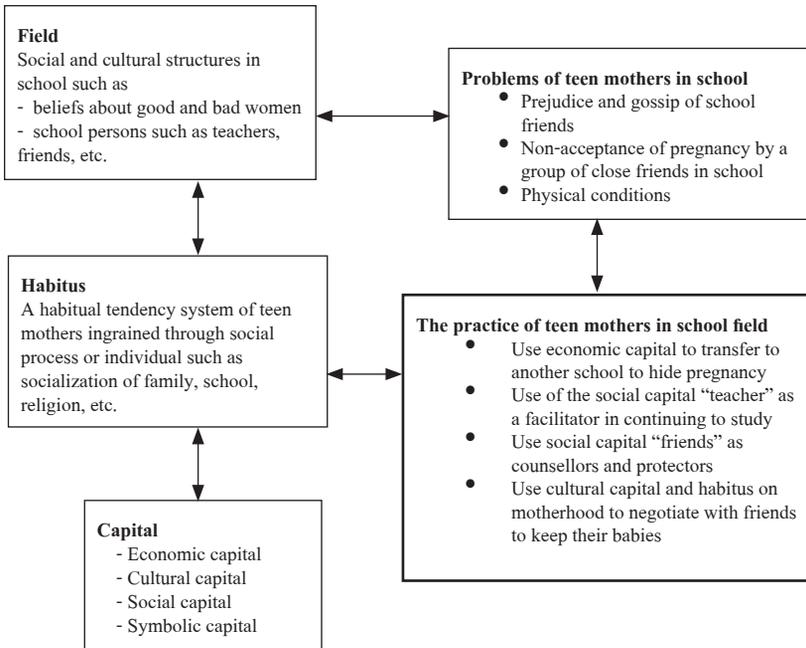


Figure 1 Study's framework

Source: Authors

Methodology

This study was conducted using the qualitative method. The study also used phenomenology as a guideline to study the phenomenon of teen mothers in order to understand their problems and practices in educational institutions. Analysis was divided into three levels; 1) the individual level, which analyzes problems and practices in the field of educational institutions; 2) the household level, such as family members who are close to teen mothers, parents, husband, and relatives; and 3) the social level, which includes teachers, friends, and staff in educational institutions. The units of analysis units are at the household and social levels, which allow this research to comprehend the context surrounding teen mothers, which affects their practices in the field of educational institutions.

The target participants of this research were 20 women under the age of 30 who had experienced unintended pregnancies when they were in school and had given birth to their children at the age of 15-19. All consented to provide information for the study. Participants were purposively selected from the following three sources: 1) recommendations from local public health officers, 2) recommendations from researchers' networks, and 3) teen mothers whom the researchers knew. Analysis was conducted to choose the most appropriate participants. After the teen mothers from the three different sources were selected, some of them recommended other teen mothers to the researchers. As a result of this snowball technique, more participants were selected based on the same criteria mentioned above.

The research site of this study was in the city and the rural areas of Khon Kaen province, located in the northeast region of Thailand, because of significant increase in the number of teen mothers in the province (Bureau of Reproductive Health, Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, 2017). In 2012, it was found that the number of teen mothers in Khon Kaen province ranked nearly the highest in the region (Information and Communication Technology Center, 2013). Data were collected from January 2015 to April 2017, using in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and life histories. The tools for data collection included interview guidelines, life history recording guidelines, and observation guidelines. Each in-depth interview lasted approximately one hour, and was conducted two to three times with each informant. The data elicited from the informants were verified for reliability and validity using triangulation to verify the data collected from different times, places, and people (Chantavanich, 2011a). Content analysis was used to analyze the data based on the practice framework proposed by Pierre Bourdieu.

For ethical concerns, this research obtained an approval for ethics in human research from the Khon Kaen University Ethics Committee for Human Research (KKUEC) on December 12, 2014.

Results

The results are divided into the following three parts: 1) the educational context of the teen mothers, 2) problems of teen mothers in educational institutions, and 3) the practices of teen mothers in educational institutions. The details are as follows.

Educational Context of Teen Mothers

Pregnancy during school caused some teens to drop out, a practice that negatively affected their educational opportunities and their future. At the same time, there were some teen mothers who tried to remain on their educational paths to ensure a well-paid job that could financially support them and their family. Although they faced various problems that could discourage them from pursuing educational opportunities, they fought with determination to achieve their educational goals.

From the interviews it was found that the teens were all studying at different levels. To present a clearer picture of their practices in the field of education, the educational background of teen mothers is categorized into lower-secondary education, upper-secondary education, and vocational education and post-secondary education as follows.

1) Teen mothers in lower-secondary education

There were three mothers in this group. After they found out that they were pregnant, they continued going to school until they completed Matthayom 3 or Year 9 (compulsory education). Two of them became pregnant when they were in Matthayom 3, continued their study until they completed it, and gave birth during the school break of the second semester. The other was pregnant during the second semester of Matthayom 2 (Year 8), but still went to school until she gave birth during the school break and then continued her studies until completing Year 9.

After giving birth, the first two mothers completed Year 9 and decided to drop out of school because of the demands of raising their

children. However, they tried to recover their educational opportunities by enrolling in non-formal education. One of them received a bachelor's degree and the other continued studying at the upper-secondary level while looking after her child. At the time of the research she expected that she would receive an upper-secondary education certificate in the near future. She planned that once her child went to nursery school, she would return to her studies to complete the higher vocational education program that she had intended to receive before becoming pregnant. The third mother, after completing compulsory education in Year 9, decided to drop out of school permanently because she had to look after her child as well as work to relieve financial problems in her family.

2) Teen mothers in upper-secondary education

This group of women were pregnant during high school years (Years 10-12) and Years 1-3 of high vocational level. Seven were pregnant during school time and nine during their time in a vocational college. These teens dealt with school life when they were pregnant and with family involvement after childbirth as follows.

2.1) When the teen mothers were pregnant, they dealt with their education in three different ways.

(1) They stopped going to school once they knew they were pregnant and told their parents or guardians about the pregnancy. Eight mothers immediately left school.

(2) Three mothers suspended their education temporarily. They went to school until they were due to give birth and took a break to give birth and raise their children.

(3) Five mothers continued their studies as usual. They maintained a normal school life even though they were pregnant. Some mothers gave birth during the school break and returned to school when a new semester started. Others continued their study until they completed a certificate of upper-secondary education or a certificate of high vocational education and gave birth after graduation.

2.2) After giving birth, teen mothers dealt with their education in three ways as follows.

(1) Four mothers dropped out of school permanently. They completely terminated their education. Some had stopped going to school once they found out they were pregnant, while others tried to continue their school life until they completed upper-secondary education or high vocational education. After giving birth, none of them furthered their education.

(2) Six mothers went back to study. Some of them gave birth during the school break and returned to study when school started. The others took a break after giving birth to care for their child and came back to school after that. Some were able to complete upper-secondary education and high vocational education, but some failed to do so.

(3) Six enrolled in non-formal education. Some were those women who had dropped out when they learned that they were pregnant and some were those who completed compulsory education or Year 9, but could not continue their study in a formal system because of the burden of raising a child or financial problems. As a result, they decided to shift from formal to non-formal education.

3) Teen mothers in post-secondary education

There was one mother who was pregnant during her first year at university and decided to drop out. After giving birth, she continued her education in a vocational college until she received a certificate of higher vocational education.

Table 1 Educational paths of teen mothers during pregnancy, after childbirth, and currently

Education level of teen mothers during pregnancy	Age (years)		Education status when they were pregnant	Education management		Current education status
	Giving birth	Present		Pregnant	After giving birth	
Lower-secondary education						
1. Nam	15	17	Matthayom 2 (Year 8)	Continued to study until the child was born	Continued to study until completed Matthayom 3 (Year 9)	Matthayom 3 (Year 9)
2. Ploy	15	17	Matthayom 3 (Year 9)	Continued to study until completed Matthayom 3 (Year 9)	Non-formal education	Matthayom 3 (Year 9) and currently enrolled in non-formal education
3. Kung	16	30	Matthayom 3 (Year 9)	Continued to study until completed Matthayom 3 (Year 9)	Non-formal education	Bachelor's degree
Upper-secondary and high vocational education						
1. Bow	16	19	Year 3 of high vocational certificate	Continued to study until completed a higher vocational certificate	Higher vocational education	Year 3 of higher vocational certificate
2. Kai	17	19	Year 2 of high vocational certificate	Took a break when the childbirth was near	Returned to attend Year 2 of high vocational certificate	Year 3 of high vocational certificate
3. Wan	17	20	Year 1 of high vocational certificate	Dropped out permanently	Dropped out permanently	Matthayom 3 (Year 9)
4. Em	17	23	Year 1 of high vocational certificate	Dropped out when childbirth was near	Returned to attend Year 1 of high vocational certificate (dropped out)	Matthayom 3 (Year 9)
5. Ning	17	24	Year 1 of high vocational certificate	Dropped out permanently	Dropped out permanently	Matthayom 3 (Year 9)
6. Mali	18	19	Matthayom 5 (Year 11)	Dropped out permanently	Non-formal education	Matthayom 3 (Year 9) and currently enrolled in non-formal education
7. Ing	18	19	Matthayom 6 (Year 12)	Continued to study until the child was born	Continued to study until completed Year 12	Upper-secondary education

Table 1 Educational paths of teen mothers during pregnancy, after childbirth, and currently (cont.)

Education level of teen mothers during pregnancy	Age (years)		Education status when they were pregnant	Education management		Current education status
	Giving birth	Present		Pregnant	After giving birth	
8. Fon	18	19	Year 2 of high vocational certificate	Continued to study until the child was born	Continued to study until completed a high vocational certificate	High vocational certificate
9. Ar	18	20	Matthayom 6 (Year 12)	Dropped out permanently	Non-formal education	Matthayom 3 (Year 9) and currently enrolled in non-formal education
10. Fah	18	21	Matthayom 6 (Year 12)	Dropped out permanently before giving birth	Non-formal education	Matthayom 3 (Year 9) and currently enrolled in non-formal education
11. Karn	18	22	Year 3 of high vocational certificate	Continued to study until completed a high vocational certificate	Dropped out permanently	High vocational education
12. Min	18	24	Year 2 of high vocational certificate	Dropped out permanently	Non-formal education	Matthayom 6 or Year 12 (Non-formal education)
13. Maeo	18	27	Year 3 of high vocational certificate	Continued to study until completed high vocational level	Left school permanently	High vocational education.
14. Ann	19	19	Matthayom 4 (Year 9)	Dropped out permanently	Non-formal education	Matthayom 6 or Year 12 (Non-formal education)
15. Japan	19	20	Matthayom 6 (Year 12)	Dropped out permanently	Non-formal education	Year 2 of higher vocational certificate
16. Aoi	19	20	Year 3 of high vocational certificate	Took a maternity break	Returned to complete Year 3 of high vocational certificate	Year 1 of higher vocational certificate
Post-secondary education						
1. Pond	91	82	First year at university	Dropped out permanently	Higher vocational education	Higher vocational education

*Remark: The names given are pseudonymous.

Problems of Teen Mothers in Educational Institutions

Becoming a mother during school time resulted in several problems and obstacles for teen mothers that they could not avoid. The problems are discussed below.

Prejudice and Gossip among School Friends

Teens who were pregnant and gave birth during school time often received insulting looks and comments from their classmates. Nam, a teen mother who was pregnant when she was in Matthayom 2 (Year 8), was bullied by her school friends about her pregnancy. She recalled, “Some made fun of me by asking why I came to school, why I didn’t go home to stay with my child” (Nam, [pseudonym], 2016). Prejudice and gossip among school friends negatively impacted the emotional stability of teen mothers, who were already feeling anxious and afraid of how people viewed them. They were too embarrassed to continue their study in school. The case of Em is an example. She was pregnant in Year 1 of her high vocational certificate and lost her baby seven hours after delivery due to heart failure. A month after giving birth, she returned to study just for three weeks before dropping out permanently because she felt discouraged and overwhelmed by the intolerance of classmates.

When I got back to school, the major problem was school friends. Some people understood my situation, and some just didn’t. They wouldn’t talk to me and gossiped that I used to be pregnant. This was a major problem for me in my studies. (Em [pseudonym], 2015)

The statement above is confirmed by information given by Joy, a high school teacher. “The school allows pregnant students to study. They can come back after giving birth. But they usually end up leaving school because they can’t stand the criticism” (Joy [pseudonym], 2015). Experiencing critical and intolerant words and reactions of friends at school contributes to emotional instability in teen mothers and eventually made those who returned to school to give up on their studies.

Non-acceptance of Pregnancy by Close Friends during School Time

When the teens were pregnant, they became extremely anxious because they were afraid that they would disappoint their parents and also they also felt embarrassed by gossip and the fact that they might have to drop out of school. As a result, many teens decided to hide their pregnancy, especially from their parents, and some chose to terminate it for the sake of their future, as Maeo, a third-year high vocational student, recounted.

There were four people in our group and we all became pregnant. The other three used suppositories to get rid of the baby. They are very easy to find in the drug store in front of the school which sold them to the students secretly. My friend told me about how to get rid of the baby, which is so terrifying. She did that because she didn't want to disappoint her parents and she was afraid of rumors and gossip, and her future. Some students have already had two to three abortions. (Maeo [pseudonym], 2016)

When Maeo's friends learned she was pregnant, they advised her to have an abortion for her future, but she refused. They were not happy with the choice she made because they were worried about her future along with the negative reactions that she had to suffer from others when they learned that she was pregnant. Her friend asked, "If you keep the baby, what about your future? Aren't you afraid of gossip?" It is obvious that not only does society have prejudice against teenage pregnancy, but some teens also view pregnancy as an obstacle to education. Therefore, some of the women decided to terminate their pregnancy to avoid social intolerance and to create a better future ahead.

Unfavourable Physical Conditions

Pregnancy is not only an obstacle to teen mothers' education, but it is also something they have to hide from teachers and friends. In addition, the fatigue caused by pregnancy is one of the ongoing problems that prevents teen mothers from concentrating fully on their studies. In the case of Fah, she was pregnant during Year 12. She had to hide her

pregnancy and continued to study as usual until she gave birth. However, during the time she went to school, she was suffering from morning sickness, which made her weak.

I went to school as usual. Sometimes I skipped classes because I felt so weak. If I wasn't feeling well I would go to my friend's house and rest until noon. After that I went to school. I went to school almost every day, but if I had a headache, I would just skip. (Fah [pseudonym], 2015)

The exhaustion caused by pregnancy also takes a toll on studying even after childbirth. The main responsibility of teen mothers is to look after their children alone, especially during the night. Lack of sleep greatly contributes to exhaustion. Moreover, teen mothers also have to go to school during the day, which makes them even more exhausted. Aoi, who was pregnant when she was in Year 2 of high vocational certificate, said,

I had to look after my baby during the night, so I felt sleepy during the daytime. A few weeks after returning to school, I had so much milk that I had to use sheets to cover my breasts, which were swollen and resulted in a fever. (Aoi [pseudonym], 2016)

From the case above, it can be seen that even though some teen mothers were determined and tried to hold onto their educational opportunities, the problems of physical changes both during and after pregnancy, as well as the burdens of motherhood had a great impact on their school life.

Economic Conditions Obstructing Studies

Among the educational obstacles that teen mothers face are their economic situations and those of their families. Most of the women in the study were from poor families. Their parents held minor positions as employees in government or in the private sector and they did not earn much money. Some families also had debts to pay. Furthermore, parents had to subsidize the expenses of an infant, such as dairy products

and clothes, as well as food for family members and the family of the teen mother. Such financial demands prevented parents from supporting the teen mother's education. Some teen mothers were unemployed because they had to look after their children and their husbands did not have a job so they were not able to support the family. Thus, although teen mothers see the importance of education and wish to continue studying, they lack the money and support to do so. Some have to leave school like Ar, who became pregnant during Year 12. She decided to end her school life in order to look after her child, and most importantly, she had a problem with study expenses because her husband's income was mainly from working in a factory, which was not enough to support the family. As a result, Ar had to ask for help from their parents, who already had to look after her sister, for baby products and clothes. Having much debt, her parents mortgaged their land to get the money for the teen mother's education. Finally, due to motherhood burdens and economic struggles, the educational prospects of teen mothers like Ar, Mali, Wan, Preaw, and Ning came to an end. In other cases, however, the economic capital of family members enabled some teen mothers to continue their education by transferring to another school, as discussed in the following section.

Practices of Teen Mothers in Coping with Pregnancy

The three problems mentioned above were just the effects of becoming a teen mother. They caused female teens to struggle to negotiate with the situation they were facing in order to hold onto their educational opportunities and a better future. The practice was driven by habitus and various kinds of capital. Four different ways in which teen mothers used habitus and capital are discussed below.

The Use of Economic Capital to Transfer to Another School to Hide Pregnancy

Teen mothers felt anxious because they had to face gossip and derisive looks from teachers, friends, and staff in the schools they attended. To

avoid these problems, some teen mothers chose to leave the school and move on to a new one after their child was born. In this study two teen mothers, Aoi and Pond, moved to a new school after giving birth. Aoi was pregnant during Year 3 of high vocational college. Her family was relatively well-off. Her father was a technician in a private company that is renowned for stability and good welfare benefits and her mother had earlier opened a small grocery store as a way to deal with loneliness rather than out of necessity.

When Aoi and her boyfriend found out they were having a baby, they kept it a secret for four months before deciding to tell their parents. It turned out that Aoi's parents did not reprimand Aoi harshly as she had feared even though they were very disappointed in what they viewed as her misconduct. Therefore, she talked to them about her studies and asked if she could take a break until the baby was born, and then return to school. Some friends noticed her bump and asked, "Are you pregnant?" She admitted that she was, but deep down she felt embarrassed and did not want to go to school anymore. When her parents knew how she felt, they decided to have her drop out of school to assure that no one else would find out about her pregnancy and allow her to rest until the baby was born. Aoi's mother said,

She came to tell me she was pregnant. Soon afterwards, she told me that she wanted to drop out (temporarily). She would go back to school after she gave birth to her baby. But the school didn't allow that. She didn't want to go to school. She felt extremely embarrassed so I suggested that she withdraw from the school. Some teachers asked why she withdrew. They suggested that if she didn't have enough money, she should borrow money from the school's loan fund. So, we told them it's not about money. We insisted on leaving. (Mom [pseudonym], 2016)

After her baby was born, Aoi resumed studying in another school near her home to allow her to spend more time with her child. Her parents still supported her study expenses and helped her look after the

baby when she went to school. The practice of transferring to another school to hide a pregnancy was not unique to this teen; it is also the practice of other families that try to support a teen mother in avoiding problems they face while pregnant. It also highlights how economic capital has an impact on the future of a teen's education and possible choices. The economic capital accumulated by these families allowed the teen mothers to choose the practice of transferring to another school to avoid the taunting of classmates and those who are critical of them because of their pregnancy. However, quite a number of pregnant teens with similar habitus and motivation to study were not able to do the same because of economic constraints. Most of them chose to quit studying. We can see that differences in economic capital result in different practices. Moreover, teen mothers who can continue studying until they receive a certificate or a degree (a symbolic capital as explained by Bourdieu) are able to transform economic capital to cultural and symbolic capital, which can serve as tools for seeking better jobs and accumulating economic and social capital on their own.

The Use of the Social Capital “Teacher” as a Facilitator in Continuing to Study

It is obvious that a pregnant teen attracts a lot of attention from school friends, teachers, and school staff. Some of these view teen mothers with disapproval, while others understand and sympathize with them, especially teachers who understand the situation teen mothers have to face in educational institutions, while attempting to hold onto their educational opportunities with determination. This is the reason why teachers lend a helping hand to protect teen mothers from hardships and try to facilitate their studies. In Nam's case, she was pregnant in Year 8. Because she had a tiny body frame and her bump was too small to be noticed, nobody knew about her pregnancy until her baby was born. News of her pregnancy spread across the school because her friends visited her in the hospital. When she returned to school, other students often teased her about having a baby. Even though it seemed funny on the surface, she could feel the disparagement in their words and it left

her feeling uneasy. She tried to ignore what people said, and her counsellor teacher always told others to treat her with respect. The teacher once talked to her personally after finding out she was pregnant. Nam revealed how uneasy she felt when people looked at her cynically and friends treated her badly, but she tried to endure it in order to finish secondary school because she could use the diploma to find a job or further her education. After talking with the teacher, she felt more at ease because at least there was an adult who understood and did not view her pregnancy negatively. This interaction was comforting to her. Moreover, the teacher's sympathy and kindness also passed along to her friends, both biased and not biased, to make them understand the condition of teen mothers although she did not agree or support the idea of student's pregnancy.

My class teacher was really nice to me. She once called me and asked about my pregnancy. She asked what my friends thought about this and I said most of them were fine. But some looked down on me and said something that made me feel uncomfortable. I tried to ignore them. One day she overheard someone making fun of me. She informed them that it was none of their business, they had no right to interfere with other people's business. For whatever reason, no one could speak badly against me, she said. Since then, nobody dared to make fun of me. She always told everyone that we all have bad days, so don't try to bully others. She said I was really admirably strong that I could survive what I was going through. (Nam [pseudonym], 2016)

The sympathy and kindness of a teacher can help teen mothers to get through a difficult situation if it can lessen criticism. Thus, teachers play a significant role in helping pregnant students to continue their education. The bond between teacher and student helps protect teen mothers from the prejudice their friends have against them. Knowing there is someone beside them can give teen mothers confidence. Such a relationship is not only formed by a teacher's sympathy towards a

student, it is also from student's perseverance to fight for a better future with determination. It is important for teachers to protect, cherish, and give students the opportunity to thrive on an educational path. It is clear that teen mothers can benefit from their relationship with a supportive teacher to achieve their goals.

The Use of the Social Capital of "Friend" as a Counselor, Advocate and Protector

Teens who become pregnant in school usually do not tell their parents because they are afraid they will be disappointed and that their education will end. Therefore, they hide it and rely on some trustworthy friends to provide them some advice and assistance, especially when it is time to go to school. An example can be seen in the case of Fah, who was pregnant during the school break before moving on to Year 12. She told no one but her friends that she was pregnant and asked for some advice. She was afraid to tell her parents and thought that people of her age would understand her better. Having trustworthy friends around made her feel less anxious because they were very helpful and always protected her when she was having a hard time.

I was curious so my friends bought a pregnancy test for me. When I found out I was around 3-4 months pregnant, I was depressed and didn't talk to anyone much. But my friends made me happy so I almost forgot that I was pregnant. During that time, I went to see my friends at their houses and went to school as usual. I didn't even think about anything until the fifth or sixth month. Sometimes when I felt weak I would go sleep at my friend's house. I went to school in the afternoon. I went to school almost every day, but I would skip some classes if I had a headache. In mathematics class I'd fall asleep with my head on the table. The teacher would ask if I was really sleepy. I always said that I had gone to bed late the night before, or when I had a headache or felt sleepy I would ask my friend to shield me from the teacher's sight. When my seven friends saw me sleeping, they all would help me. For instance, my chubby

friend would sit in front of me so the teacher couldn't see, or she might leave a big bag on the table, or she might ask friends to sit in a circle so I could sleep in the middle. (Fah [pseudonym], 2015)

Friends are those who relate to teen mothers the most and they play an important role in a teen mother's education. Friends provide the supportive relationship that helps teen mothers get through their pregnancy problems and help them to feel they are not walking their path alone. The relationship between teen mothers and friends can be considered a form of social capital that teen mothers employ to give advice, listen to problems, and protect other teen mothers when they are facing a variety of problems in educational institutions.

The Use of Cultural Capital and Habitus on “Motherhood” to Negotiate with School Friends to Keep their Babies

Several teens chose to terminate their pregnancy to avoid being teased and harassed at school. Some chose to keep the baby even though they had to face many problems like having to drop out of school, feeling that they had disappointed their parents, as well as enduring criticism and gossip from people around them. The problems can also include dissatisfaction of their close friends who have different views towards pregnancy. In the case of Maeo, she was pregnant in the third year of her vocational certificate program. While all of her friends who became pregnant chose to have abortions, she went to a public health center to receive prenatal care. She never thought of having an abortion.

All of my friends had abortions. When they knew I was pregnant, they immediately told me to get rid of the baby. But I said no. They were worried that if I kept the baby, my future would be dim and people would gossip a lot. So I asked myself why I had to care about them. For me, I don't care about anyone but my parents. I never wanted to have an abortion and I would have felt sorry if I had done so. Even a dog loves her own baby. The baby chose me. No, I couldn't do that. (Maeo [pseudonym], 2016)

The pregnancy termination suggested by friends reflects the prejudice that pregnant teens have to tolerate from even their friends. Maeo's friends wanted her to abort her child because they thought that a teen is not capable of being a mother or raising a child. This was true in Maeo's case, as her friends suggested that she terminate her pregnancy because they all did. They thought they were young and not ready to carry out the responsibility of raising a child instead of staying in school. Moreover, pregnancy during school time deviates from Thai social norms according to which women have to remain "reserved" and not "rush" to do things they are not yet supposed to do. Thus, it is impossible for pregnant teens to avoid gossip and verbal insults from society, especially from family and relatives. Women who violate the social norms of a so-called "decent woman" are considered a disgrace to the family. Maeo was concerned about that, too, but she just ignored friends' suggestion. She used the concept of "motherhood" to negotiate with friends to save her child by comparing a human with a dog that loves her baby. She told them that she loved her child too and wanted to be a mother no matter what problems of teen pregnancy she had to face. Although her friends were not happy with the choice, they finally respected her decision because they felt that the child chose her to be its mother, so she would do her best to raise the child with love and shelter it from any harm. These ideas had been taught by her family and society so they made her understand the mother's role very well and when it was time to be a mother, she could do it automatically.

Cultural capital obtained from social institutions is valuable for teen mothers in terms of negotiating a situation when they encounter discrimination because of their pregnancy. This cultural capital has been instructed for a long time until it becomes a part of a teen mother's life or the habitus. The emergence of the habitus of motherhood in turn helps preserve and reconstruct the cultural capital of motherhood among these young mothers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Educational institutes are like battlefields for pregnant teens, who have to fight against fault-finding and gossip about their pregnancy among their friends during school time. Moreover, their physical condition makes it difficult for them to fully focus on their studies. The results show that teen mothers used habitus and various kinds of capital to deal with these problems. They used economic capital to transfer to another school to conceal their pregnancy. For social capital, teachers played an important role in helping teen mothers to continue their education as did friends, who served as counselors, helpmates, and protectors. Finally, cultural capital was used in connection with habitus. One of the teens in this study used her motherhood to negotiate with friends in order to keep their child. The findings also revealed that economic capital played a vital role in dealing with problems. Even though the teen mothers themselves did not have such capital, some of them could practice through their family's economic capital to create educational opportunities for themselves. The practices of future education of teen mothers would not succeed without support from their parents. It is even more difficult if their family lacks economic capital to drive the practice. Therefore, economic capital is considered very important for teen mothers' practices in the field of educational institutes. Different social backgrounds result in different practice strategies. Better-off families are likely to provide their children with more educational opportunities than poor families. Having access to educational opportunities allows such teen mothers to transform the family's economic capital into cultural capital, in the form of a certified institute. This cultural capital leads to the accumulation of economic capital. The various kinds of capital, which include the habitus of each person, are solid grounds that facilitate the "practices" of teen mothers to deal with problems they were facing in educational institutes without surrendering to problems and pressures that were troubling them. The practices under the scope of capital and habitus eventually transformed teen mothers from

“victims” into “agency” to deal with the social structures that dominated their position in society, especially in educational institutes, for the future of themselves and children.

However, this study has certain limitations in terms of access to families with high economic status. This status often means high social status. As a result, this group of people did not want to reveal much information that could affect the family’s reputation. If more data had been obtained from this group, it would have been possible to identify more diversified strategies conducted by teen mothers from various economic and social levels.

Recommendations

From the study, it was found that teens who became mothers while they were in school often faced social rejection, especially from their school friends who tended to stigmatize them, which could be seen in the form of blame, gossip, eye expressions, and insulting gestures. These put a great deal of pressure on teen mothers in educational institutions, resulting in distress and anxiety about continuing to study. Some teen mothers eventually decided to drop out of school, in spite of the fact that there is a law supporting the rights of teen mothers to receive an education, that is, the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Alleviation Act, AD 2016. Negative attitudes towards teen mothers in educational institutions have pressured many teen mothers to “disappear” from the education system, making them lose both the opportunity to further their education as well as prospects for self-development.

Therefore, educators and counsellors should initiate a campaign to raise awareness of teen pregnancy among staff in educational institutions. With informed attitudes, people will better understand teen mothers, which can lead to an end to discrimination against them. At the same time, campaigns are needed to educate teen mothers about their right to receive an education in educational institutions. In this way they will feel empowered to continue their education, attain a place in their community, and make a contribution to society.

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