

## Continuing Education for Pregnant High School Students through Knowledge-Bridging using Self-Giving Modules

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**Abstract: Continuing Education for Pregnant High School Students through Knowledge-Bridging using Self-Giving Modules. Objectives:** This action research aims to determine if the Knowledge-Bridging using Self-Giving Modules (KBSM) helps pregnant students continue schooling. **Methods:** This action research employed a phenomenological qualitative inquiry. Using validated interview guide questionnaires, nine participants, composed of parenting students, advisers, guidance counselors, and administrators, participated in the Key Informant Interviews (KII). Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. **Findings:** Results showed ten identified pregnant students finished the school year. The participants affirmed the effectiveness of KBSM saying that the modules allowed them to continue their education and increased their determination to succeed. Moreover, the findings revealed two essential points. First, the KBSM was instrumental in protecting pregnant students. Second, there is a need to institutionalize the program because it just started as an initiative of a values subject teacher. **Conclusion:** Hence, the KBSM was able to help pregnant students continue their studies while handling pregnancy and taking care of their baby.

**Keywords:** education, teenage pregnancy, high school students, action research, Philippines.

**Abstrak: Pendidikan Berkelanjutan bagi Siswa SMA yang Hamil melalui Penjembatanan Pengetahuan dengan Modul Self-Giving. Tujuan:** Penelitian tindakan ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah Knowledge-Bridging menggunakan Modul Pemberian Diri (KBSM) membantu siswa hamil untuk melanjutkan sekolah. **Metode:** Penelitian tindakan ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif fenomenologis. Dengan menggunakan kuesioner panduan wawancara yang telah divalidasi, sembilan peserta, yang terdiri dari siswa parenting, pembimbing, konselor, dan administrator, berpartisipasi dalam Wawancara Informan Kunci (KII). Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan analisis tematik. **Temuan:** Hasil menunjukkan sepuluh siswa hamil yang teridentifikasi menyelesaikan tahun ajaran. Para peserta menegaskan keefektifan KBSM dengan mengatakan bahwa modul-modul tersebut memungkinkan mereka untuk melanjutkan pendidikan dan meningkatkan tekad mereka untuk sukses. Selain itu, temuan ini mengungkapkan dua poin penting. Pertama, KBSM berperan dalam melindungi pelajar yang hamil. Kedua, perlunya pelemagaan program karena program ini berawal dari inisiatif guru mata pelajaran nilai. **Kesimpulan:** Oleh karena itu, KBSM mampu membantu pelajar hamil untuk melanjutkan studinya sambil menangani kehamilan dan merawat bayinya.

**Kata kunci:** pendidikan, kehamilan remaja, siswa SMA, penelitian tindakan, Filipina.

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## ■ INTRODUCTION

Teenage pregnancy is one of the most alarming concerns worldwide, in both developed and developing countries. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report, there are about 21 million women ages 15 to 19 years old give birth in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (WHO, 2022). South-East Asia accounts for 35 per 1,000 girls, while South-East Asia is 47 per 1,000 girls. Specifically, there are 24 babies born every four hours by teenage mothers in the Philippines (UNICEF, 2018). In another 2018 report by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the Philippines ranked fourth (48 per 1,000 births), with Lao PDR (94) as the highest, followed by Cambodia (57), Thailand (50), and Indonesia (48), which ranked fifth (UNFPA, 2018).

There have been numerous attempts to address this problem. The World Health Organization, the United Nations, and other cause-oriented groups implemented programs to reduce teenage pregnancy. Despite so many initiatives, such as sex education (Bordogna et al., 2023; Mbizvo et al., 2023), teenage pregnancy continues to remain an alarming concern anywhere in the globe. Indeed, the more significant challenge for schools is appropriately responding to this concern. This action research focused on how our school addresses this problem with a specific strategy.

This action research was implemented in our school, one of the public schools in the Philippines. With a population of 8,557, we have had an average of eight (8) high school students get pregnant every year since 2010. The highest was in the school year 2016-2017, with ten (10) cases reported. We believe there were other cases not reported. Also, since 2010, we have had an average of five (5) pregnant students drop out of school. The school considered this phenomenon a big concern. Because these girls need the necessary support, the school offered

the Knowledge-Bridging by Self-Giving Modules (KBSM) to let them continue studying even if they did not have to attend regular classes. The implementation of KBSM happened before the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic when distance learning was the best option for schools. As part of the KBSM, we allowed those identified and reported pregnant students to catch up with lessons conducted in regular classes. This study aimed to determine if KBSM was effective in helping pregnant students continue their studies despite their difficult situation. This study would provide scientific evidence of the effectiveness of this strategy, which could be replicated in other high schools in the Philippines.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several studies identified the different factors that contribute to the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy. The effects, both for mother and child, such as physical and psychological, had also been well-documented. The World Health Organization and other cause-oriented groups implemented different programs to address this phenomenon. We provide a review of some of the common factors, effects, and interventions that affect teenage pregnancy.

### Factors and Consequences of Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is a social concern that pierces the fabric of society. With technological advancement and the influence of the media, we see a problem affecting most young people, particularly students. The increase in teenage pregnancy could be attributed to many factors, such as *early sex* (Phiri et al., 2023), lack of education (Anayochukwu, 2022; Asmamaw et al., 2023; Bitew et al., 2023), economic factors (Boateng et al., 2023; Del Mastro, 2023), and a lack of knowledge about contraceptives (Asmamaw et al., 2023; Moshi & Tilisho, 2023; Mukanga et al., 2023). Due to the lack of

education, several researchers found the vulnerability of teenagers to getting pregnant, coupled with their lack of awareness of contraceptives, which all the more facilitated the increase in likelihood. Unfortunately, those in the lower incoming brackets are also susceptible to teenage pregnancy, again citing other factors contributing to such a phenomenon. Hence, teenagers, especially high school students, need much support and education to understand their vulnerability and likelihood of getting pregnant.

For those who are already pregnant, they have to deal with many factors. The effects of teenage pregnancy may vary, but several studies pointed out the most common ones. For example, pregnant teenagers suffer from physical health complications (Eliner et al., 2022; Naik et al., 2022). The changes in their system and the capacity of their young bodies to absorb such a responsibility can take a huge impact on their physical health, even deaths of their own child (Woodall et al., 2023). In addition, when they become mothers, they have to deal with their mental health struggles (Jia et al., 2023; Mabila et al., 2023), including depression and suicidal tendencies (Ajayi et al., 2023; Webb et al., 2023). In short, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers have to face several consequences relative to their situation.

As teachers, we are more worried about the effects of teenage pregnancy on the education of these young girls. Studies showed the tendency for pregnant teens to leave school (Groves et al., 2022; Morgan et al., 2022; Stroble, 2023). It is the reality in schools, which calls for immediate response or intervention. Based on the studies mentioned above, the problem of teenage pregnancy puts these young girls at a significant disadvantage. For those in the academe, this problem poses a more significant challenge and requires an immediate response from all stakeholders. The future of these teens highly depends on their education. If not given proper

guidance and support, they may contribute to other problems that society may have to face in the future.

### **Interventions in Addressing the Problem of Teenage Pregnancy**

Since teenage pregnancy has been well documented, there have been attempts to address this problem. The World Health Organization and the United Nations have several policies and programs addressing this concern. Moreover, the contributions of different stakeholders are crucial in helping pregnant and parenting students. For example, the UNFPA-UNICEF program has shown positive outcomes in different countries (Trisnani & Badruzaman, 2023). Some of the most notable interventions are sex education (Bordogna et al., 2023; Brown et al., 2023), the implementation of policies (Komai, 2023; Zori et al., 2023), and the use of contraceptives (Barral et al., 2023; Chola et al., 2023). The success of any intervention relies on the collaboration of stakeholders. In this action research, we involved the school administrators, advisers, teachers, parents and the students themselves to help us understand how the school's intervention is helping the pregnant students. These stakeholders were also directly or indirectly involved in the intervention.

Aside from those who were already pregnant, there had also been initiatives aimed at helping these girls at the school level. Other interventions are mostly classroom-based behavioral interventions (Sarnquist et al., 2017). However, when these programs failed to address the problem, schools were expected to provide appropriate interventions for those who were already pregnant. In this study, we looked at how was the provision of modules helped pregnant students continue studying even if they stayed at home. Specifically, our school's strategy was the implementation of Knowledge-Bridging using Self-Giving Modules (KBSM).

### **Knowledge-Bridging Using Self-Giving Modules (KBSM)**

The KBSM came into existence out of the need to help pregnant high school students pursue their studies despite their condition. With the help and commitment of teachers and advisers who showed concern and support for pregnant students, the KBSM was born. KBSM is an alternative delivery of instruction wherein pregnant students could receive modules from the Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM) or modules tailored explicitly by teachers to fit their needs. *First*, teachers prepared the modules. *Second*, advisers collected the modules from the teachers. *Third*, advisers gave the modules to the pregnant students through their parents, guardians, relatives, classmates, or schoolmates who are their neighbors. The modules were given every Monday and returned every Friday. *Fourth*, the students read and studied the modules and answered the activities. Just like regular students, advisers followed up on their progress. We also made our follow-ups as initiators of the program. *Fifth*, the students took the examination at home the teachers gave.

Implementing the KBSM is an important area for reflection, especially since this was the first year of implementation. Hence, we approached the implementation of this project through action research, wherein we did action and research simultaneously. We adhered to Reason and Bradbury (2008), who pointed out that action research is a process of action and reflection, theory and practice, with the participation of stakeholders, to find practical solutions to pressing problems. As educators, we were aware of the broader implications of this study. It was not just academic, but it also dealt with societal problems. Action research was fitting for this study because we responded to the problem existing in our school by offering a specific strategy. The main purpose of this action research is to determine if the Knowledge-

Bridging by Self-Giving Modules (KBSM) is effective in helping pregnant high school students continue their studies even without attending regular classes in school.

### **Research Questions**

1. How effective is Knowledge-Bridging by Self-Giving Modules (KBSM) in helping pregnant high school students at a public school in the Philippines continue their studies without attending regular classes?
2. What are the insights of the participants on the implementation of the KBSM?

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This is action research applying qualitative techniques. Specifically, it employed a phenomenological qualitative design wherein the focus is on the experience of the participants in relation to the implementation of KBSM. Their experience as beneficiaries (pregnant or parenting students) and implementers is crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of KBSM. Qualitative inquiry is the best option for evaluating this kind of action research as it is only through the experience that the actual phenomenon is known.

Action research is a scientific activity of investigating educational practices to improve or change future practices (Campbell & McNamara, 2010). Most authors attribute the origin of the term action research to Kurt Lewin, although other authors like McTaggart (2006) recognize another researcher's earlier works as the original source. Moreover, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) defined action research as a "form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational *practices*, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (p. 1)." Furthermore, understanding a specific issue

prompted researchers to reach the crucial moment in the cycle of action research (Kemmis, 2010). In the field of education, Kayaoglu (2015) identified the works of Stephen Corey (1953), Lawrence Stenhouse (1975), Carr and Kemmis (1986), and John Elliott (1991) as the most noticeable ones. These researchers became instrumental in helping shape the practice of researching to improve educational practices. In this study, we sought to understand how effective the implementation of KBSM is in addressing the concerns of pregnant students in one of the public schools in the Philippines.

Consistent with the nature of action research, we also followed the spiral movement

of Kemmis and McTaggart (1990), which consisted of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and re-planning. First, we conceptualized the KBSM and then presented it to our department head, some teachers, and guidance counselors. Second, we implemented the KBSM by distributing the modules to the identified pregnant students. Third, we observed how the modules were helping the students and how the mechanism we installed allowed them to continue studying. Then, we reflected on the initial outcomes and our observations. Finally, we made some adjustments based on our observation and reflection to improve the KBSM, which eventually resulted in the creation of the Save Pregnant Students Program (SPSP).

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of the participants of the study

Participant	Status	Sex
Student 1	Grade 8 Student	Female
Student 2	Grade 9 Student	Female
Student 3	Grade 9 Student	Female
Adviser 1	Adviser	Male
Adviser 2	Adviser	Female
Guidance Counselor 1	Head Guidance	Female
Guidance Counselor 2	Guidance Counselor	Female
School Administrator 1	Administrative Officer IV	Male
School Administrator 2	Principal IV	Male

### Sampling

We used purposive sampling because of the nature of this study. According to Creswell (2009), this technique is used by researchers to ascertain the selection of informants who can give the right information about the phenomenon being studied. We purposely chose the advisers, guidance counselors, school administrators, and the concerned students who were recipients of the KBSM. Nine participants were involved in the key informant interviews as shown in Table 1.

### Data Collection

Aside from monitoring the progress of the pregnant high school students, we specifically

asked them and other school personnel about the effectiveness of KBSM. After the school year ended, we conducted several interviews. We used the Key Informant Interview (KII) technique with interview guide questions. The use of this technique was appropriate because of the sensitivity of the topic. Also, the chosen informants were the beneficiaries and implementers of the program. As Kumar (1989) highlighted, this technique is more appropriate when the informants are knowledgeable and can provide factual data drawn from other sources. In this case, we interviewed the concerned students.

We conceptualized the action research project with the help of the guidance office,

presented it to the department head, secured the necessary permission, and continued with the data gathering. For data gathering, we asked permission from the chosen school personnel, concerned students, and their parents or guardians. Before the interview, we asked them to sign the informed consent. After the interviews, we transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted the recorded data. Before submitting the final output to the Department of Education, we subjected our output to peer review.

To ensure the quality and reliability of data, we did not only collect information from the parenting students. As a form of triangulation, we included the implementers of the program such as the advisers, guidance counselors, and school administrators.

### **Data Analysis**

After the school year, we monitored the beneficiaries by coordinating with the advisers and guidance counselors about their progress, whether they completed or dropped out of school. For the data from the interview, we analyzed these using a qualitative technique. We employed thematic analysis. We followed the method suggested by Colaizzi (1978) and simplified or enhanced by the techniques of Anderson and Spencer (2002) and Tudy and Gauran-Tudy (2020). First, we read the transcribed responses of the participants several times. We selected the significant statements and then formulated their meanings. Out of the formulated meanings, we identified recurring themes. The recurring themes are our final themes which describe the phenomenon on the effectiveness of the KBSM as told by the participants of the study.

### **Ethical Issues**

We carefully upheld confidentiality to protect our participants, who were minors. First, we secured consent from the parents or guardians and assent from the student participants. For the school personnel, we followed the informed

consent protocol. We had them sign the informed consent form before conducting the interviews. As to confidentiality and anonymity, we did not reveal the names of our participants and kept the raw data secured. The interviews with the students were done at the school's guidance office to ensure confidentiality. It was also a place where the students felt comfortable, as suggested by the help of the school counselors. We told that they are free to answer or not all our questions, and if they felt the need to stop the interview, they may do so.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The focus of this study is to determine if the intervention, specifically the giving of modules to pregnant students, was effective in helping pregnant students continue their studies even without reporting to school. The intervention was given before the onslaught of the COVID-19 Pandemic happened. Before this action research, the use of the modules for pregnant students was not widespread then, particularly in our school. As a result, the ten identified pregnant students finished their schooling for the school year 2016-2017. Moreover, we conducted interviews to get feedback on the effectiveness of KBSM.

### **The Effectiveness of Knowledge-Bridging by Self-Giving Modules (KBSM) in helping pregnant high school students**

We interviewed the parenting students, advisers, guidance counselors, and a school administrator to deepen our inquiry. We called them parenting students because they delivered the baby before the interviews. After the interviews, we analyzed the data and identified two emerging themes: continuous education and increased determination.

#### ***Continuous Education***

First and foremost, the student participants were all in unison in saying the modules helped them finish their schooling, at least when they

were pregnant and decided to stay at home. They were all in agreement that their situation was complicated and their education was greatly affected. Although they were already pregnant, they had a big desire to continue their studies. The modules helped them continue learning, meaning they could cope with the lessons, like their classmates, despite not joining the regular classes. According to the student participants, the modules were instrumental because they could continue even if they were not joining the regular classes. It was difficult on their part not to attend regular classes because, for sure, they would be lagging compared to their classmates, but the modules were valuable materials that helped them cope with the demands of the school. One of the student participants said:

*“Since I was not anymore with the regular class, I continued my studies at home using the modules. Even being pregnant, the modules were very helpful (Student 2 or S2).”*

The teachers and school administrators shared the same responses. In the past, there were already modules designed by the Department of Education (DepEd) to help those students who could not cope with the demands of regular classes. Some of these were used in the KBSM program, while the teachers wrote new ones to tailor to the needs of pregnant students. According to one administrator, the KBSM is designed to help students continue their studies even if they are pregnant and cannot attend regular classes. He even emphasized it this way:

*“The modules help pregnant students. The school’s concern is the continuity of formal education regardless of circumstances. Pregnancy is one circumstance that the school must look into to sustain the mandate of the Department of Education (Administrator 1 or ADM1).”*

The advisers echoed the same views because they observed how these learning materials helped the students under their care who

got pregnant. According to them, they considered the modules very helpful for pregnant students to pass the subjects, knowing that they would indeed have difficulty catching up, especially if they are not regular school attendees. One of the advisers put her observation on the implementation of KBSM this way:

*“Learning will not stop, and she will be able to learn more about coping with the problem and gain more confidence that, even though she is already pregnant, she can still continue learning. Hence, learning is not hindered (Adviser 1 or ADV1).”*

The participants also quickly identified that the KBSM was appropriate for pregnant students. The student participants argued that these modules fit their situation. With all the struggles they had to go through, they considered the modules as the right tools or materials for them to continue studying. One student who already gave birth to her baby shared her appreciation of the modules. The student participants recognized it was too much to go to school, given their situation. They said it was physically tiring on their part. One of them shared:

*“I had difficulty going to school. No one will take care of the baby. I breastfed my baby. It is not easy to study every day. Because I was pregnant, I was ashamed to go to school (S2).”*

The guidance counselors, teachers, and advisers agreed on the fitness of using these modules for pregnant students. Although there were modules from the Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM) Program of the Department of Education, especially for Mathematics and Filipino subjects, there were other modules solely tailored to the needs of pregnant students. The teachers made these available to pregnant students. Using these modules was very effective. After all, the pregnant students preferred to stay out of the school premises. One of the guidance counselors shared her observation on using the modules.

*“Actually, the modules were made as an intervention, not for informal students not reporting to the school campus. However, we decided to use these modules because they are appropriate for pregnant students. We gave the privilege on the case of pregnant students because they were victims. They were in a situation which needed help although it was not compulsory on our part (Guidance Counselor 1 or GC1).”*

Hence, from the responses of the students, advisers, guidance counselors, and school administrators, the KBSM allowed pregnant students to continue their studies. In particular, the modules fit pregnant students' needs and helped them pass their subjects even if they were not attending regular classes.

The case of pregnant students, particularly in the context of Philippine culture, was never easy. These students had to face the stigma and pressures from society and, unfortunately, even from the school community. The KBSM was a saving grace for them to achieve their dreams of continuing their schooling. With the use of the modules, the pregnant students were able to catch up with the lessons discussed in regular classes. The use of modules for distance learning has been proven effective during the COVID-19 pandemic, like the use of printed self-learning modules (PSLMs) for Students-at-Risk-of-Dropping-Out (SARDOs) (Ecang & Petalla, 2022). In the Philippines, some schools have to provide printed modules for students without internet access. These modules were considered very helpful and effective in delivering lessons to public school students (Talimodao & Madrigal, 2021). On the part of the study participants, particularly the pregnant students, the KBSM provided them the opportunity to continue their studies at home using the modules while their classmates were in school since these scenarios happened before the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Increased Determination**

The students considered the modules instrumental in strengthening their determination to finish their schooling, more than just continuing the school year when they got pregnant. They knew how important education was. The three student participants said they were determined to finish their studies. They needed to work hard in order to pass the subjects. One student-participant shared how determined she was to continue her studies with the help of the modules. She said:

*“It is self-determination. You have to work hard to pass so as not to waste one's efforts. You study hard for one's future(S1).”*

Despite the fears and difficulties experienced by the student participants, the KBSM gave them the courage to continue their studies. At first, they said there were discouragements and hopelessness. They thought being pregnant ended their dream of finishing their studies. The KBSM provided an opportunity for them. One student even considered the program as a window of hope. She shared:

*“I was happy I became a mother even at an early age. However, I had fears about how to raise the child, but the modules gave me hope (S3).”*

The advisers, crucial to implementing KBSM, were also inspired to help their pregnant students. They were determined to provide the necessary help, especially in collecting the modules from the teachers and giving these to them. It was part of the mechanism for the program to succeed, and they contributed a lot by doing their tasks. One of the advisers had this to say:

*“As a professional teacher, I really appreciate the effort that other teachers make who are extending their service to help her (referring to a student under him) continue*



*learning because it is not that easy to continue learning while having a child or a baby. You need to balance your time and need to be positive. So, as an adviser, it motivates me and other teachers to help her because I know it is for her own growth (ADVI)."*

In short, the KBSM program has given opportunities for pregnant students to continue their studies, and it also helps increase their determination despite their difficult situation. With the help of the teachers and advisers, they could continue their studies using the modules given to them.

Another significant contribution of the KBSM was the students' increased determination to succeed. There was a tendency for high school students to lose hope of achieving their educational dream, given their situation. However, the KBSM ignited their desire to pursue such a dream. It was proven through this study that giving these students a window of opportunity through the KBSM was a relief on their part when placed in a difficult situation. Indeed, with proper support and guidance, pregnant and parenting adolescents are in the right direction to continue their studies (Stroble, 2023). In this study, we proved how KBSM was crucial in helping pregnant students with the support of other school stakeholders.

Being able to continue studying through the KBSM intervention, the student participants were more determined for a higher purpose. They now carry an enormous responsibility, and finishing school has become a two-fold vision for themselves and their baby's future (Ladekarl et al., 2022; Reyes et al., 2022). Whether they are aware or not of the consequences of being pregnant at a young age (Eliner et al., 2022; Jia et al., 2023; Mabila et al., 2023; Naik et al., 2022), they have no way but to look at the brighter side and work for the dreams and the future of their child. With the KBSM, they could set aside the negativity and focus on the brighter side.

## **Lessons and insights on the implementation of the KBSM**

During the interviews, we asked the participants about their insights on the program's implementation. As part of the action research cycle, we would like to solicit the stakeholders' ideas to help improve the program. We asked for their suggestions to improve the implementation of the KBSM. Based on their responses, two themes emerged. These were protection and institutionalized program.

### ***Protection***

Aside from the contribution of these modules to pregnant students in their continued studies, the participants also pointed out how these modules allowed them to be protected. The student participants said that traveling to school was difficult for many reasons. One of these was the physical struggle. Moreover, aside from that, they said that there was a tendency that they may experience bullying because of their situation. Hence, one student participant commented:

*"Sometimes, some students gossip about why I got pregnant so early. I still continue studying and disregard gossip from others (S1)."*

The teachers and guidance counselor agreed with what the students said. They also believed that the giving of modules protected the students against bullying from other students and probably from school personnel. The guidance counselor shared that there were tendencies in the past when pregnant students experienced bullying by their peers and classmates. For them, there was a strong possibility of bullying experience for pregnant students. Thus, they considered the modules a necessity. While explaining her counseling role, one guidance counselor considered the modules as a form of protection for pregnant students. She said:

*"We can find a deeper reason for their situation if we interview them. We cannot be narrow-minded. They need help. The modules*

*are given for them not to be embarrassed (GC2)."*

Though the intention of the KBSM was to help students continue their studies, it turned out to be a way of protecting pregnant students from shaming and bullying. In other words, implementing the KBSM protected pregnant students as a natural consequence of continuing their studies in the comfort of their homes, away from possible bullying from peers and classmates.

With the implementation of KBSM, two vital insights were drawn. These were protection and the need to institutionalize the program. The student participants expressed their fears of being bullied or subjected to gossip; hence, staying at home while continuing their studies protected them from the abovementioned concerns. In this sense, the KBSM was an instrument of protection. It was a positive consequence because they could not attend regular classes. The need for protection is something to be considered by the school (Jain et al., 2023; Stroble, 2023), and we discuss this in the study's implication. Nevertheless, the positive contributions of using KBSM were concrete responses to protect students from the psychological battle they had to endure. They should be protected from the hurdles they have to face. Without the school's creative ways of protecting them, like KBSM, these students would have to face condemnation and hostility within and outside the school. Thus, the KBSM was a welcome note for them. In the comfort of their homes, away from the glaring and judgmental eyes of other students and school personnel, they could continue their studies.

### ***Institutionalized Program***

On the part of the school personnel, they believed KBSM was helpful for pregnant students. However, they wanted to expand this program, not only focusing on just giving modules but other aspects to address the needs of the student. According to them, the program must be

institutionalized or formally structured. Though the guidance counselors were thankful for the initiative of the values teacher taking charge of the program, they would like the program to be recognized and supported by the school. Once the program is institutionalized, the school formally recognizes it as part of the services for students, and the implementation system is in place. In short, there is an assurance of the support of the administration and other stakeholders. A guidance counselor even emphasized that the institutionalization of the KBSM would clarify the roles of teachers. She singled out the importance of the role of the in-charge and the teachers, saying:

"It should be officially adopted and owned by the school. The in-charge should be recognized, and the teachers would undergo orientation about this program," a guidance counselor shared (GC2).

These two themes serve as recommendations to improve the program and to make it more effective. Hence, the second cycle of this action research would be an enhanced program. Part of the re-planning would involve other stakeholders to ensure that institutionalizing the program gains their support and that implementation would be smooth and effective.

The study's results, which fortunately revealed positive outcomes, opened a broader discussion by looking at other aspects besides the KBSM. For example, there is a need to craft national and school-wide policies institutionalizing programs and services for pregnant and parenting students. These policies are geared towards reducing, if not eliminating, experiences of depression and breaking the chains that led to poverty. In other countries, particularly in the United States of America, there was even a proposal to include maternity leave for high school students. Based on the result of the study, it would be helpful if there was a clear-cut policy on

dealing with pregnant or parenting students. The lack of clear policy by the schools will make life difficult for struggling pregnant students. In the United States of America, a “Dear Colleague” letter was issued by the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) clarifying the inclusion of pregnant and parenting students in the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2013). Title IX states that “no person, based on sex, shall be “excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (20 U.S.C. §§1681, et seq.). Policy intervention is a must. Furthermore, teachers’ support is crucial to supporting their determination to succeed (Matlala et al., 2014). Thus, we believe a more comprehensive program is needed to maximize the help extended to pregnant and parenting students. In this study, as expressed by the school personnel, there is a need to institutionalize the program. Hence, as a result of this action research, the Save Pregnant Students Program (SPSP) was born, which is being implemented now in our school.

The Save Pregnant Students Program (SPSP) was formalized through a school principal’s memorandum. The objective of the program, aside from providing academic support to pregnant students, is to provide medical and psychological assistance to pregnant students. If the KBSM was a plain initiative from a values education teacher, the first author, supported by other school stakeholders with no clear designation, this time, the principal assigned six people to help run the program. Aside from those assigned six people, the program included the school nurse, school doctor, guidance counselors, teachers, advisers, and a program in-charge responsible for coordinating with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Department of Health (DOH). The

implementation of the SPSP is the second cycle of action research, which started from the KBSM program.

This study aimed to validate a specific strategy for helping pregnant students continue their schooling even without going to school regularly. As teachers, we felt the need to contribute to the debate and discussion on addressing the concerns of pregnant high school students. We were worried, too, because there is a tendency for pregnant students to quit school (Groves et al., 2022; Morgan et al., 2022; Stroble, 2023). Moreover, there were questions about the readiness or capacities of schools to provide the needed support for these young girls. In this study, we provided evidence on how a particular intervention was effective in helping the pregnant students finish school, at least for the school year they became pregnant, which was also a period covered in this study. Based on the responses and the academic outcome, the concerned students finished the school year. Thus, the intervention has been proven effective. To have these ten (10) young girls able to complete the school year was already a significant achievement because, in the past many were not able to succeed.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Our study was limited to determining the effectiveness of KBSM in helping pregnant students finish their studies during the school year 2016-2017. It did not touch on other aspects or factors that contribute to the success of these students in continuing their studies. We were also limited to interviewing only three willing students. We knew the sensitivity of the cases and respected the refusal of other students not to participate in the formal interviews. Besides, we found it challenging to trace them because some were already in the senior high school program and enrolled themselves in other schools.

### Implication of the Study

We drew two important implications from the results and insights on the implementation of KBSM. First, the Save Pregnant Students Program (SPSP) was created through a school memorandum from the principal. The principal assigned an office within the school solely for the program. The SPSP is a comprehensive program that already incorporates the previous KBSM Program. More people are involved, such as the school nurse, school doctor, parents, guidance counselors, teachers, advisers, and a liaison to government agencies like the Department of Social Work and Development and the Department of Health. Each one has a specific but complementary role in the program. As to how effective this new program is, it is subject to the next action research cycle. Second, the result of the study provides the Department of Education with solid information to look into the success story of KBSM and monitor the progress of the SPSP for a possible recommendation of their application to other schools. The department can also craft a policy or similar program which offers guidance, assistance, and help to pregnant students in all schools.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the responses of the key informants and the fact that all ten pregnant students could finish the school year while pregnant, the KBSM, which started as a simple response to a need, was successfully implemented. The KBSM was even more validated when the COVID-19 pandemic happened since modules became more practical, especially for areas where the internet or online mode of delivery is not feasible. The KBSM was able to help pregnant students continue their schooling, even if they were not attending regular classes inside the classroom. Moreover, the KBSM has evolved into a more effective program, the SPSP, for which the next action research cycle begins. It

will be subjected to another inquiry to determine its effectiveness as an offshoot of the KBSM.

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