Goals, Visions, and Obstacles of Pregnant/Parenting Hispanic Teenagers

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ABSTRACT

The following study explores the goals, visions, and obstacles of pregnant and parenting Hispanic teenagers. The participants were pregnant and parenting teenagers enrolled in the California School Age Families Education (Cal-SAFE) Program in a Southern California high school. The researchers designed a pre-survey with a Likert scale measuring obstacles (1 being not an obstacle, 5 being a major obstacle), and goals and visions (1 being not important, 5 being very important). The questions with the most significant mean, median, and mode were used to create a short-answer questionnaire to gain further insight. Participants reported the need for schools to provide tutoring that is more accessible, classes on time management, and goal-oriented workshops. The researchers question the effectiveness of existing school programs and the development of new programs or services that meet the needs of this population. This study revealed that it is vital to be in tune with pregnant/parenting teenagers so schools can offer accessible resources. A growth mindset of attending college, needing financial aid, and counseling were expressed as being essential to the participants’ achieving their goals and visions.

*Keywords:* Cal-SAFE,community, emotional support, financial aid, goals, high school,hope, obstacles, pregnant and parenting teenagers, pregnant and parenting minor programs, stress, time management, visions.

INTRODUCTION

**General Statement of the Problem**

Our research group set out to answer the following: What are the goals, visions, and obstacles of pregnant and parenting Hispanic teenagers? Across America, Caucasians currently represent 64% of the adolescent population; however, minority populations are growing exponentially (Berglas, Brindis, & Cohen, 2003). Two of every three babies born to teens in California are born to Latinas (Public Policy Institute of California, 2003). Nationally, Latina adolescents have a higher birth rate than non-Latina Whites with a rate of 81 per 1,000, compared to 26 per 1,000 among non-Latina White adolescents (Dehlendorf, 2010). In 2007, the birth rate for Hispanic teenagers (81.8 per 1,000 aged 15–19 years) was nearly three times the rate for non-Hispanic white teenagers (27.2), and the rate for non-Hispanic black teenagers (64.2) was more than twice the rate for non-Hispanic white teenagers (Mathews, Sutton, Hamilton, & Ventura, 2010). Seventy percent of teen mothers drop out of high school, making pregnancy the primary reason young women dropout early. Only 30% of teen mothers complete high school by age 30, compared to 76% of women who delay parenthood until age 21 or older (Berglas, N., Brindis, C., and Cohen, J., 2003).

**Review of Related Literature**

**Obstacles.**

Previous research has shown the high rate of teenage pregnancy among Latinas in the United States, and “Sociocultural Determinants of Teenage Childbearing among Latinas in California” (Dehlendorf, 2010) investigates the roles of socioeconomic factors and acculturation in teenage childbearing in California. The findings of this study questions common assumptions about the effect acculturation would have on teen fertility. The study challenges the notion that if Latinas acculturate into a higher level of socioeconomic status, there will be a decrease in teen pregnancy.

In the study “Low-income Young Fathers: Contexts Connections and Self” (Glikman, 2004), the researcher interviewed low-income African-American, Hispanic, and White young fathers to examine society’s stereotypes of the misrepresentation these fathers that has lead to inadequate resources for these young fathers. Glikman (2004) expresses there is insufficient attention paid to young fathers by practitioners and policymakers and young fatherhood is referred as an area of “empirical neglect.” It is crucial to have programs and support groups to assist young fathers financially and emotionally. The purpose of the study was to bring awareness of the lack of support and misrepresentation that exists among young fathers and the importance of steering way from the stereotypes of the irresponsible young fathers. Results suggested emphasis on how crucial it is to listen to the young fathers’ narratives/experiences versus the young pregnant or parenting mothers; in addition, the support or the lack of for these young fathers by institutions and their credibility needs to be analyzed. The findings suggested the need for stronger social programs and policies to support the young fathers to be better parents and providers for their child, children, and families. The level of involvement from the young fathers to their child or children depended on the type of relationship they had with their fathers growing up. It was reported if the subjects’ fathers were absent in their lives, there was a stronger goal and desire to be present for their child/children. In conclusion, there was a connection with relationship with the mother of the baby, the relationship with the baby, and the sense of self, which influenced the involvement of young fathers and their success.

“Clinical Perspective: Understanding Psychosocial Complexities of Pregnant and Parenting Teens”(Whiteley, 2010) illustrates the challenges faced by pregnant and parenting teenagers. In addition, the investigators paid close attention to the psychosocial stressors in order to suggest strategies for treatment. The conclusion of the case study is that pregnant and parenting adolescents needed constant support while simultaneously providing support for their children. The investigators stress that early detection of psychological dysfunctions and insufficient social support are detrimental to the well-being of pregnant and parenting adolescents and their children. Clinicians should identify treatment options and services based on the psychosocial complications of adolescent pregnancy and parenthood.

The purpose of “A Study of an Alternative School for Pregnant and/or Parenting Teens: Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence” (Ahmed, 2006) was to systematically evaluate school based comprehensive programs established in the United States and to become aware of the multiple problems faced by pregnant and parenting teens. According to Ahmed (2006), the socio-economic and demographic characteristics among parenting teens, average age, mean number of children ever born, percent of single mothers, and percent received job training for the Paquin School enrollees and for the enrollees from the comparison schools were similar. They were similar in terms of church attendance, family structure of parents, employment of principal earning family member, and current employment; however there was a slightly higher employment rate and annual household income for the latter group. As a result, Ahmed (2006) proposes those exposed to health, educational, and social services from an integrated school based comprehensive services programs can have higher educational aspirations, better reproductive health outcomes, higher contraceptive use, and more breast feeding practice and intention. Ahmed (2006) also suggests this is a well-integrated comprehensive range of services of multiple problems faced by pregnant and or parenting teens from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. The school based comprehensive program not only met short term needs of teens, but also long term needs such as prevention of repeat pregnancy. However, there were some caution and limitations in this study. There was selectivity bias from unobserved differences between the group participants and non-participants. The Paquin School enrollees were self-selected versus randomly selected. There was an absence of longitudinal data at program entry at Paquin School Program versus those who didn’t enter the program. The subjects were exclusively from the African-American race and from low socio-economic neighborhoods; therefore, the findings can’t be applied or generalized to other pregnant and or parenting teens. To conclude, the study was based on self-reported data, which can result in threats of reliability and validity.

“Pregnancy Intentions and Teenage Pregnancy Among Latinas: A Mediation Analysis”(Rocca, 2010), a nonexperimental quantitative design, describes the Latina population’s intentions in becoming pregnant, as their attitudes toward pregnancy seem more favorable than other groups. The researchers discovered that the reasons Latinas are getting pregnant may be less of a function of intentional choice than of situational forces. Rocca (2010) discovers the odds of getting pregnant were more than doubled when there was a level of wantedness. Participants who had a high sense of familism did not necessarily want a pregnancy, but their attitudes toward pregnancy were more favorable. There was not a significant relationship between immigrant generation and pregnancy, although their sample may not have reflected this demographic. The investigators discovered there was an elevated risk with participants who had a mother who gave birth in her teens. In addition, the investigators did not find an association with parental monitoring in this particular sample. They suggest that teens who are at high-risk of becoming pregnant may be monitored so closely that a pregnancy does not occur. In their sample, age was not associated with wantedness; however, there was a positive correlation with age and pregnancy happiness. The older the participant, the more likely she was to have a more positive attitude toward parenting, but this did not mean that she had an intention to become pregnant. This suggested that over time, teenagers may adopt a more positive attitude toward parenting as they increase in age. In regards to school enrollment, there was no association with pregnancy intentions and pregnancy itself. The researchers suggest further studies examine student achievement and attendance. Participants who participated in sports had a lower level of wantedness; the researchers suggest they may have to do with a higher sense of self-efficacy and positive body image. Participants who had low sexual relationship power were twice as likely to become pregnant because of the lack of power they have in the relationship. In addition, they were less likely to be able to negotiate contraception use. As a result, the researcher suggests that removing all levels of wantedness could reduce the pregnancy rate by 16%. Although wantedness is an important risk factor, the proportion of teachers who wanted a pregnancy were comparatively small (14%) to the majority of pregnancies that would occur if wantedness were removed (84%). Rocca (2010) also suggests there needs to be more research and an increased focus on programs that aid in educating participants in contraception use.

**Goals and visions.**

“Factors Associated with Delayed Childbearing: From the Voices of Expectant Latina Adults and Teens in California” (Biggs, 2010) takes place in Fresno or Los Angeles counties and the participants are Latina teenagers (15-19 years old) or adult (22-35 years old) in their second or third trimester of pregnancy with the first child that she expected to deliver and raise. Women aged 20 and 21 years were excluded. The purpose of the study was to determine what factors influenced Latina teens to delay childbearing and whether family factors, such as parental supervision, communication and relationship quality, and immigrant status played a protective role in delaying childbearing until adulthood. According to Biggs (2010) the majority of adult respondents (20 of 34) and over one third of teen respondents (11 of 31) described their pregnancies as intended or planned during the qualitative interview; and reported taking active steps like using birth control to prevent teen pregnancy. Approximately one fourth of adults and half of teens described their pregnancies as unintended, and reported never having used birth control.

In the Dogan-Ates (2007) nonexperimental Comparative study “Teenage Pregnancy among Latinas: Examining Risk and Protective Factors,” three groups of risk and protective factors (e.g. individual, family and extrafamilial) that are associated with teen pregnancy. The study concluded the average self-esteem, locus of control scores, positive attitude towards school, and educational goals did not significantly differ between the two groups. Non-pregnant (NP) teenagers were significantly more likely to be living with both biological parents than pregnant (P) peers, and both groups (NP and P) did not differ significantly in terms of parental assistance with homework and parental support for education. However, mothers of NP teenagers spent significantly more time with their daughters than those of P girls, but no significant different in terms of time spent with fathers. NP girls had fewer relatives (e.g., mother, sister, cousin) who became pregnant as a teenager than did the P girls. NP girls were more likely than P girls to report that their parents imposed curfew restrictions. In addition, NP adolescents more frequently had a regular time to do their homework than did their P peers. NP teenagers spent significantly more time playing on sports teams and more frequently participated in organized activities than did the P teens. NP girls were significantly more likely to spend time reading books and magazines than were P girls. NP teenagers significantly more frequently attended religious services than did their P peers. NP adolescents were significantly more likely to have close friends who were role models of conventional behaviors such as participating in extracurricular and organized activities than were P girls. NP adolescents reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction than did P girls.

In “Hope and Academic Success in College” Synder (2002) proposes students’ levels of hope leads them to choose learning or personal goals. As a result high-hope thinkers are able to conceive multiple strategies to reach their goals and develop alternative action plans in the event they are faced with obstacles along the way. More importantly, these obstacles are viewed as challenges to be overcome and are bypassed by the implementation of alternative pathways instead of viewed as failures. And so Synder (2002) concludes the Hope Scale scores reliably predict higher cumulative GPAs, a higher likelihood of graduating from college, and a lower likelihood of being dismissed because of poor grades. These findings indicate hope is a reliable academic predictor and offer advantages over other methods for conceptualizing academic motivation. Because hope offers unique predictive ability beyond optimism and self-efficacy in regard to several criterions relevant to the academic domain, it may offer a more complete explanation of the underlying motivational processes. In addition, the Hope Theory explains the patterns of behavior predicted by goal theory as well as learning and personal goals.

In the journal article, “Hopeful Choices: A School Counselor's Guide to Hope Theory” Synder (2002) sheds light on to the healthy process of “re-goaling.” This process occurs in three stages: (a) active pursuit of a given goal is terminated; (b) the goal is relinquished altogether; and (c) a new, replacement goal is acquired. The choice to stop pursuing and eventually relinquish a goal most likely is related to the person's level of goal-specific hope and the re-goaling process never stops. With the elimination of a low-hope goal, the process involves the acquisition of a new goal for which pathways and agency can be generated more easily. The significance of this study is the positive role of hope in predicting psychological and physical well-being as well as academic success, so student advocators must consider how students' hierarchies of hope beliefs affect their most important life choices. By including instruments such as the Hope Scale for adults and children, student advocators may be more able to understand how hope impacts students' lives. To succeed in school and to handle the problems that may arise in the academic and social aspects, the notions of goals, pathways toward those goals, and the motivations for using those pathways offer a readily understandable and workable framework for drawing on the strengths of students.

**Assumptions**

We made assumptions in regards to the obstacles, visions, and goals of these pregnant and parenting teens based on our own experiences and suppositions. We failed to ask the participants themselves what they believe their obstacles, visions, and goals are as pregnant and parenting teenagers. We assumed the participants would understand the vocabulary and language used in the pre-survey and short-answer questionnaire. In addition, we assumed that all the participants were fluent English speakers; therefore, the surveys were only available in English. In fact, there was one student in the study who primarily spoke Spanish and limited English. The participant responded to each survey question in Spanish with the help of a translator. We also assumed that the male perspective of goals, visions and obstacles was the same as the female perspective. We constructed the pre-survey with a middle class perspective, as it was assumed that all the participants had food and clothes for themselves and their babies.

**Foreshadowed Problem**

Due to the high-rise in teen pregnancy amongst the Hispanic/Latino population in Southern California, our initial interest of a research topic or foreshadowed problem was to investigate what factors are contributing and/or leading to this phenomenon. After conducting research and in consultation of our peers, we decided to shift from what is causing the high rise of pregnancy in Hispanics/Latinos to what are the aspirations of these young teen parents. We shifted the focus to be on what courses, groups, and programs can be developed in order to best support these teens as parents and as students. Instead of focusing on what could be construed as negative, we decided to explore the promising futures these pregnant and parent teenagers can have despite the demands and the responsibilities of being a parent and a student; therefore, our focus remained on the notion of identifying the goals, visions, and obstacles of pregnant and parenting Hispanic teenagers.

**Definitions of Terms**

In this study, the following definitions apply:

1. **Goals** are the result or achievement toward [which](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/which) effort is directed. Setting *specific* and *challenging* goals motivates people to take action to start on a pathway toward achieving those goals
2. **Visions** are vivid anticipations of where students see themselves in the future. These anticipations can be career, educational and personal directed goals.
3. **Obstacles** can be a person or thing that opposes or hinders students from achieving their goals.
4. **Stress** is any mental, emotional, or physical strain/ tension students feel in their lives.
5. **Time** is the measure of durations of events and the intervals between them.
6. **Time management** is the analysis of how working hours are spent and the prioritization of tasks in order to maximize personal efficiency.
7. **Support/services/programs** are resources available to help students achieve their goals, visions and/or overcome their obstacles.
8. **Owning property** is defined as a valuable asset that is tangible such as a house, television, car, etc.
9. **School** is an institution for instruction in a particular skill or field
10. **Community** is a social group of any size whose members resides in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.
11. **Hope**: in the academic context “reflects individual’s perceptions regarding their capacity to (1) clearly conceptualize goals, (2) develop the specific strategies to reach those goals (pathways thinking), and (3) initiate and sustain the motivation for using those strategies (agency thinking)” (Snyder, C. R., et. al, 2003).
12. **Agency** is recognizing you have the capability and responsibility to start moving towards your goals.
13. **Pathways** are specific action steps towards a goal(s) or knowledge of steps towards a goal(s). This includes how to find the resources, tools, and strategies to help a student get there, and can also be defined as finding ways around obstacles you may encounter as you move toward your goals.
14. **Mindset** is defined as how you think about your basic qualities like intelligence, talent, character, athleticism, etc. There are two types of Mindset:
	1. **Fixed Mindset** is a student believing his/ her basic qualities do not change.
	2. **Growth Mindset** is a student believing his/ her basics qualities can change with the right amount of effort, practice, process, knowledge, and strategy

**Significance of the Proposed Study**

High school students already face an abundance of challenges in school, relationships, and day-to-day living. With the Hispanic race already on the outskirts of the dominant discourse, teenage pregnancy complicates situations for many. The state of the current economy has forced many districts to layoff counselors, overcrowd classrooms, and cut programs and services to some of our most needy populations. Because there is a shortage of resources, many students are falling through the cracks and students are not getting resources they need quickly enough. Schools do offer some on-site programs and support; however, there seems to be a disconnect between administrative policies and the students. Rather than assume there is a lack of will on the students’ part, schedule conflicts or practicalities, such as not having transportation or daycare may be prohibiting students from participating in school support services. Another significant find in this study is that many students desire to pursue post-secondary institutions; however, they lack the funds and do not know how to apply for financial aid or scholarships. The pregnant and parenting teenagers are not connecting with campus resources and personnel. Communication needs to be improved between all parties so students are aware of the avenues available to them.

The implications of this study may be limited to the Hispanic, low socio-economic population; however, the results of this study are important for district and school administration, counselors, support staff and teachers to know so that they can consider the goals, visions and obstacles of pregnant and parenting students when creating and offering services to this population. This study encourages future research into more feasible and affordable solutions to meet pregnant and parenting students’ needs. Rather than simply cutting programs that appear to ineffective or costly, school districts and secondary institutions must consider pregnant and parenting students’ unique situations and needs so that they can refine and tailor these services so they are effective and accessible.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

**Subjects and/or Case**

The participants in this study attend a high school located in an urban city of Southern California. In 2012, approximately 1,200 students are enrolled, with 1,142 students identifying as Hispanic or Latino (California Department of Education Analysis, Measurement, & Accountability Reporting Division, 2012). 1,127 of enrolled students are considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. The participants in the study voluntarily enrolled in the California School Age Families Education (Cal-SAFE) program once they disclosed they were parenting or expecting a child. The Cal-SAFE Academic Teacher, who is also one of the researchers of this study, began coordinating this program at its inception three years ago at this high school. The program currently serves 20 male and female pregnant or parenting teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18, who are currently enrolled in the tenth through twelfth grades. Cal-SAFE’s mission is to support pregnant and parenting students with any needs. Through this support, Cal-SAFE hopes that 100% of the students will graduate, and the student-parents will have tools to help them raise their healthy families. In addition, Cal-SAFE provides free daycare to eligible students. Students must meet the State’s income guidelines, must keep regular attendance, and maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA. This school’s daycare can service eight infant or toddlers. A credentialed child development teacher supervises the daycare, and two bilingual aides support her. The babies attend daycare five days a week from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Food (formula and school food) is free of charge; however, the students must provide diapers and a change of clothing.

Since the Cal-SAFE teacher already has a relationship with the students and also has their consent for release of confidentiality, the researchers invited these students to participate in the study. If there had been more time to conduct this study, the researchers could have invited all Cal-SAFE students in the district to participate. Each student was summoned to the Cal-SAFE teacher’s classroom, where the teacher relayed the purpose of the study to each student individually. He/she was invited to participate if he/she chose, and was allowed to omit any question he/she did not want to answer. Sixteen students (13 female, 3 male) participated in the pre-survey, and 11 students (8 female, 3 male) participated in the follow-up short-answer questionnaire (5 of the 16 students were absent the day the follow-up questionnaire was distributed). Two female students are in junior (11th grade) standing, and 14 students (11 female, 3 male) are in senior (12th grade) standing. All 16 students are Hispanic; 15 respondents are bilingual in Spanish and English, and one student primarily speaks Spanish and limited English. Six of the students are still with the biological parent of their children, while the remaining ten students are raising their children as single parents. The students’ babies’ ages range from 8 months to 2 years of age. Fourteen students reside with their own biological parent(s), while two students reside with the other biological parent of their child. Fourteen of the respondents are currently on-track for graduation (e.g. not missing any credits, passed both California High School Exit Exams (CAHSEE) in English and Math), while two students are currently behind in credits and still need to pass their Math CAHSEE. Six students currently have one or more D’s or F’s on their current report card, and all six respondents are attending to tutoring with Claremont McKenna College (CMC) students participating in the Latino Student Forum (LSF) on Fridays after school on the high school campus.

**Instrumentation/Data Collection**

One of our researchers is currently a Cal-SAFE teacher at a high school in Southern California. The Cal-SAFE program at this high school consists of twenty Hispanic teens, five male, and fifteen female, whom are pregnant or parenting. We used this to our advantage and, with the students’ consent, it was determined that the students would participate in a survey and short-answer questionnaire. The verbal consent was stated as follows: “The purpose of our survey is to examine the goals, visions and obstacles of pregnant and parenting teenagers. The first part of our study consists of a pre-survey where on a scale of 1 to 5 the obstacles in your life (1 being not an obstacle, and 5 being a major obstacle). The second part of the survey, will be a short-answer questionnaire administered on another day. At any time you are welcome to omit any questions or stop participating in the surveys.” Our research team wanted our survey and short-answer questionnaire to reflect our research question: What are the goals, visions, and obstacles of pregnant and parenting Hispanic teenagers? We needed to determine what was important to these students in regards to their goals and what they would consider obstacles to achieving such goals. It was essential for us to provide questions that would cover all dimensions of life. We began brainstorming our survey questions by coming up with specific subcategories for obstacles and goals or visions based on our past experiences as high school students. For the first portion of the survey, we listed the following obstacles we believed to be relevant for students in high school:

* Financial (money, working while in school, finding employment, and obtaining government services)
* Education (completing high school requirements, attending college/trade school, and paying for college/trade school)
* Health (health care, depression, body image, stress, and addiction)
* Support systems (emotional support from your parents(s)/guardian(s), emotional support from the biological parent of your child, emotional support from the other biological parent’s family, emotional support from friends, and finding outreach programs in school and community)
* Legal (issues with the law, immigration, and custody arrangement)
* Miscellaneous (being a single parent, being raised in a single parent household, time, child care, and homelessness)

For this portion of the pre-survey (Appendix A), the researchers used a Likert scale to measure these obstacles from a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not an obstacle, 5 being a major obstacle) in the students’ current life situation. The second portion of the pre-survey consisted of the following list of goals and/or visions we assumed these students might have:

* Education (maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or higher, graduating from high school, and post-secondary education)
* Family (be a stay at home parent, marriage, and building a family)
* Financial (financial stability, full-time career/job, and owning property)
* Relationships (being involved at school and community and having positive relationships with family or friends)
* Miscellaneous (being independent, having personal time, family vacations/travelling, having a positive body image, being emotionally stable)

Again, the researchers used a Likert scale for this portion of the survey, where visions and goals were measured on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being not important, 5 being very important to each individual student).

 Additionally, the role of the students’ teacher was to provide as much time as the student needed out of class for them to take the survey, clarify any questions or concerns the students’ might have, and provide a translator for non-English speaking students. The average time needed to complete the pre-survey was approximately ten minutes. The teacher asked the students to remain anonymous. Upon completion, the researcher collected the surveys and then shared the results with the rest of the research team the next day for evaluation. We were then able to establish a short-answer questionnaire based on our findings. The most prevalent obstacles revealed on the pre-survey were paying for college/trade school, time, and stress. The most important goals or visions were maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or higher, graduating from high school, post-secondary education (college/trade school), full-time career/job, and owning property (e.g. home, car, etc). We created a short-answer questionnaire (Appendix B) in order to gain insight and gather more detailed information about the prevalent obstacles these pregnant or parenting teenagers face and the importance of their goals or visions. The following are a list of questions on the short-answer questionnaire:

1. Describe what stands in the way of you paying for college/trade school?
2. What kind of assistance (e.g. financial aid, scholarship, work study) will you require to help you pay for college/trade school?
3. Do you know how to apply for financial aid assistance for college/trade school?
4. Explain what is causing you stress in your life.
5. What would help you cope with stress better?
6. How is time an obstacle in your life?
7. What would help you to learn how to manage your time better?
8. Explain why it is important for you to maintain a 2.0 GPA.
9. What support/services/programs can the school or community offer you to help you maintain a 2.0 GPA and meet your credit requirements?
10. Explain why it is important for you to graduate from high school.
11. What support/services/programs can the school or community offer that would help you graduate from high school?
12. Explain why it is important for you to attend post-secondary education (college/trade school).
13. What kind of career/job do you see yourself selecting in your future?
14. What support/services/programs can the school or community offer that would help you find or select a career/job?
15. Explain why it is important for you to own property (e.g. home, car, etc.).
16. What support/services can the school or community offer that would help you to plan for the future?

The teacher administered the short-answer questionnaire the following weekin the same fashion as the pre-survey. Once the participants completed the questionnaires, they were brought back to the research team for analysis.

Furthermore, it was an advantage to have a teacher, who teaches in a predominantly Hispanic setting, as one of our researchers for our study. We were able to administer and retrieve the surveys and short-answer questionnaires and received verbal consent from both the teacher and the students without any delays. This researcher had access to the school, trusting relationships with the students, knowledge of their academic performance, and was able to provide ample time to administer the surveys and short-answer questionnaires. In addition, she was also able to provide a translator for non-English speaking students. However, there were some disadvantages to our study. The number of students, or participants, was limited to one school setting and the ratio of females to males was unbalanced. We did not consider language or writing barriers and should have provided the students with surveys and short-answer questionnaires in both English and Spanish. The lack of vocabulary development and comprehension of English Learners were not considered when generating our questions. Also, our middle class perceptions of obstacles and goals or visions influenced the construction of our pre-survey and we failed to mention other dimensions of life, such as having enough clothing or food to eat.

**Data Treatment Procedures**

Once the pre-surveys were collected and our research team was able to meet, we analyzed the data and calculated the mean, median, and mode for each pre-survey question. The survey results showed that the students had a few obstacles and goals or visions in common based on the most significant means, medians and modes evaluated. Three most prevalent obstacles and five most important goals or visions were established. Obstacles were paying for college/trade school, stress, and time. Goals were maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or higher, graduating from high school, post-secondary education (college/trade school), full-time career/job, owning property (e.g. home, car, etc). Therefore, we used the emergent design procedure by creating a short-answer questionnaire to gain insight and gather more explicit information about the topics that were most prevalent in our findings.

**Presentation of Findings**

 The findings of the pre-survey suggest the following are the three biggest obstacles in pregnant and parenting teenagers’ lives: paying for college/trade school, stress, and time. In the pre-survey, respondents were asked to rate on a scale from one to five (one being not an obstacle and five being a major obstacle), whether the following were obstacles in their lives. Table 1 is a presentation of the means, median and modes for the obstacles that had the most significant results:

Table 1:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pre-survey Question** | **Mean** | **Median** | **Mode** |
| #7. Paying for college/trade school | 3.125 | 3.5 | 4 |
| #11. Stress | 2.815 | 3 | 4 |
| #28. Time | 3.0625 | 3 | 3 |

The mean, median and mode for the goals and visions are in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pre-survey Question** | **Mean** | **Median** | **Mode** |
| #1. Maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or higher | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| #2. Graduating from high school | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| #3. Post-secondary education (college/trade school) | 4.875 | 5 | 5 |
| #9. Full-time career/job | 4.6975 | 5 | 5 |
| #10. Owning Property (e.g. home, car, etc.) | 4.5625 | 5 | 5 |

In the written short-answer questionnaire, the students were asked to respond in as much detail as possible to the questions. The findings reveal that six of the 11 students feel they will not be able to pay for college/trade school because either they or their parents do not have the financial ability or stability. All 11 of the respondents reported they would need financial aid or scholarships to pay for their post-secondary education or training. When asked if they knew how to apply for financial aid for college/trade school, nine of the participants stated they did not know how to apply.

 Patterns and trends that emerged from the short-answer questionnaire are that money and balancing family responsibilities are stressors in the students’ lives. As a result, students are not able to find enough time for themselves, schoolwork, jobs, and family. Six respondents state that money or not having a job is causing them stress in their lives. Two respondents state that family problems are stressors. Other single responses included not having transportation, planning for the future, and not having enough time. The participants shared that the following would help them cope with stress better: tutoring, counseling, talking to others, getting help from significant others, and families not fighting.

 Six respondents stated that balancing the responsibilities of school, home, and their personal life is a challenge. Two respondents shared that completing homework is a problem. One student said she is unable to go out because she has the added responsibility of taking care of her younger brothers. When asked what would help them manage their time better, eight participants reported they needed to get organized and start making a list of to-do items or have a schedule. One respondent stated that she would go to counseling, and one student reported that goal setting would help. One student responded her mother helps stay organized.

 Five students stated it is important for them to maintain a 2.0 GPA or higher because it will help them get into college. Two respondents stated that having a 2.0 GPA “makes [them] look good” when they graduate. Three respondents stated that they need the 2.0 GPA to remain eligible for the daycare program. Nine respondents believe that tutoring would help them maintain or improve their GPA, and one student believes counseling would help. Ten respondents explain that it is important to graduate high school so they can go to college. Seven participants added that they want to graduate so they can provide a better life for their babies and families. In order to help them graduate, the participants believe the school or community can offer them tutoring. Two respondents state that adult school is helping them graduate. One respondent believes the Cal-SAFE program and the teachers’ help would aide in graduating. Eleven respondents want to go to college so they can obtain a job that will provide a better life for them and their families. Two respondents feel it is important to attend post-secondary institutions because they will have the opportunity to pursue fields of study that interest them. The participants reported the following jobs/careers of interest: construction or mechanic, child development or a dancing (choreographer), nursing or ultrasound technician, cosmetology or an orthodontist, criminal justice (Crime Scene Investigator – CSI) or a social worker, children’s nurse, secretary, and an electrician. One student believes that the school cannot guide her in her career goals. Two students would like the school to help them plan for their future; one student reported that the Career Center on the school is an option to seek help. One respondent would like to go on field trips to colleges to help discover careers. Two students would like to participate in internships so they can shadow professionals. One respondent believes that a class in writing professionally will help her obtain a job because it will help her develop her English skills.

 Five students reported they want to own property (e.g. home, car, etc.) because they want to be independent and have privacy. Four respondents want to own property so they want their children to have a good childhood. When asked what the school or community could offer to help plan for the future, two students did not know, and two students believe the school cannot do anything for them. One student believes there should be a class where students can talk about future goals or plans. Two students believe that the school should help them find a job or give them information on how to search for employment. One student believes the school should offer her classes that will help her improve her English.

**Limitations of the Design**

One limitation in the study was selecting a small sample size; the focus was one specific school and one Cal-SAFE program in Southern California. It would have been ideal to survey approximately 1,000 or more pregnant and parenting teens instead of limiting ourselves to only 20 students. Due to the focus of only one city, one school, and one of the many programs that exist to support pregnant and parenting teenagers, it limited the ability to gain knowledge and critical information on many more participants and their goals, visions, and obstacles. Instead of including all socio-economic class statuses, there was only emphasis on those ranking in the low socio-economic status because the researchers were restricted to this population. The length of time dedicated to the study was a period of eight weeks resulting in time constraints. More resources and critical information could have been collected if the researchers had more time.

It was assumed all participants understood and spoke English. The surveys were available in English only. There was one student who spoke only Spanish. Although a translator was provided while filling out both the pre-survey and short-answer questionnaire, a blind spot was present in the study because we failed to provide the surveys in Spanish or in any other language needed. The participants were only Hispanic and or Latinos. The selected goals, visions, and obstacles were influenced by middle class values. The specific goals, visions and obstacles presented to these participants were assumed to be what they, as pregnant and parenting teens, were encountering. While conducting the study, we did not consider asking them about their goals, visions and obstacles. In addition, it was difficult to quantify the terms “obstacles,” “goals” and “visions” in the pre-survey (Appendix A). For example, we only assigned values to the numbers 1 (not an obstacle) and 5 (major obstacle) because what we may perceive as a small obstacle, may be large in the purview of a teenager. A limitation is how the student's interpreted the scale of an obstacle and the importance of a goal or vision. We could have provided open answer options for the pre-survey so students could have written individual answers. Another limitation that we have to consider is the fact that all the researchers conducting the study were women. There was no male perspective and or involvement as a researcher. To conclude, the majority of our participants were females; this resulted in the ability to glean more of the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of male teen parents.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the goals and visions of pregnant and parenting Hispanic teenagers and the obstacles that interfere with their goals. All participant short-answer questionnaire responses showed the students' desire to graduate high school and attend college; they clearly believe that post-secondary education is the way to a better life for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, nearly all of the participants admitted to not having a way to pay for post-secondary education, nor did they know how to begin the process of seeking financial assistance. In addition, a significant amount of students are unaware of how to find a job or career. The students’ lack of knowledge of the financial aid process is a serious concern. At the time of this study, the school is nearing the end of a semester term, four-year college/university applications are being finalized, and the financial aid process is about to commence nationally. Although there are resources on campus to assist students in the college application process, such as the Career Center and a part-time college counselor, the students are still unclear about the financial aid process. Hence, schools should thoroughly articulate the college matriculation process to high school students, so they can meet application deadlines and apply for financial assistance. If in the case students are unaware of the process, such as our participants, then the school should provide a step-by-step text and illustrated guide with deadlines that explains the college and financial aid process in a variety of languages that suit the needs of the school’s demographics. Additionally, schools must be able to accommodate students that would rather focus on searching for a job or career instead of continuing their education. Schools may want to consider expanding the variety of Regional Occupational Program (ROP) classes so students’ can explore areas of interest. Students need to be proactive in seeking help in career exploration; however, they may not know where to turn. They seem to have a knowledge of the Career Center, but it is unclear if they understand the services this resource provides. The Career Center could offer a Career Day where professionals from various jobs and careers share their experiences so that students have a general understanding of what vocations are available to them.

Nearly all students responded that tutoring would help them achieve their goal of graduating from high school. Although students desire tutoring, they are still reluctant to attend such sessions. Our researcher, the Cal-SAFE teacher, reports it is difficult to motivate the students to attend tutoring provided by the Claremont McKenna College students. These tutors have time constraints due to their own college, family, and work obligations and are only available to volunteer on Fridays after three o’clock in the afternoon. In addition, the Gear Up program has college tutors available on a daily basis throughout the school day and after school. The time of these tutoring sessions poses a problem for some students. One student focused on not having transportation, so staying after school and finding a way home with a baby was found difficult for her. It is crucial to inform the students of the time constraints, limitations, and availability of tutors. Thus, it is important for them to take advantage of tutoring opportunities when possible.

Since a significant number of participants expressed that they are in need of developing a schedule or be shown how to manage their time, it is recommended that the school offer a course or workshops that assist students in time management and productivity training. The school already has in place support groups, such as Young Men’s Circle, Girl Talk, Gear Up, and a peer counseling program; however, it is unknown if these participants have sought out or been invited to participate in these services. The Cal-SAFE academic teacher can work with the Guidance Counselors in order to refer the pregnant and parenting minors to appropriate services that can help them with stress and time management.

Due to a low self-esteem, lack of role models, resources, skills, knowledge, awareness, and responsibility, having a goal or vision becomes nearly impossible or intangible. If a student has had minimal financial and or emotional support, he or she may be hindered in their ability to improve their own quality of life; therefore, pursuing higher education and a career becomes only a thought versus a reality. As educators we must be aware that our expectations of our students can assist us in promoting growth, or at the same time, it can hinder us in recognizing where students need most guidance. At times, the focus is in the disappointment as to where students should be. School administration and teachers often believe due to the students’ age and life circumstances, they should know better. In many cases, people live in a survival mode. Instead of complaining or judging the students, one needs to guide them in the areas they lack. One must attempt to learn and discover what is interfering in the students’ lives that has resulted in a lack of knowledge or understanding. It is vital to impart the necessary tools to improve their and their families’ quality of life. In light of this study, the school needs to focus more on helping the pregnant and parenting students set goals and search for career areas of interest so they feel they have some direction for the future.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Based upon the limitations of this research, it is recommended that more high schools with and without Cal-SAFE be surveyed. It is also recommended that the researchers learn about the subjects’ demographics and unique issues so that assumptions are not made about the population. In order to learn more about the unique stories of the participants, individual interviews with a sample of participants would provide insight into specific goals, visions and obstacles. It would also benefit to survey or interview the school administration, faculty and staff to discover available resources and also to learn how many students take advantage of said resources. It would then behoove the researchers to investigate the students’ attitudes and perceptions of the resources the institutions offer.

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APPENDIX A

Pre-Survey

**Directions: On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = not an obstacle, 5 = major obstacle), rate the following based on your current situation.**

**Financial**

1. Money

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Working while in school

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Finding employment

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Obtaining government services (e.g. Cash aid, WIC, Medi-cal)

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

**Education**

1. Completing high school requirements

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Attending college/trade school

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Paying for college/trade school

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

**Health**

1. Health care (mental and physical concerns)

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Depression

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Body image

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Stress

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Addiction (e.g. drugs, alcohol, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

**Support Systems**

1. Emotional support from your parent(s)/guardian(s)

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Emotional support from the biological parent of your child

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Emotional support from the other biological parent’s family

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Emotional support from friends

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Finding outreach programs in school and community

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

**Legal**

1. Issues with the law (e.g. probation, court issues, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Immigration

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Custody arrangement

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

**Miscellaneous**

1. Being a single parent

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Being raised in a single-parent household

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Time

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Child care

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

1. Homelessness

1 2 3 4 5

Not an obstacle Major obstacle

**Directions: On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = not important, 5 = very important), rate the following goals and visions.**

**Education**

1. Maintaining a GPA of 2.0 or higher

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

2. Graduating from high school

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

3. Post-secondary education (college/trade school)

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

**Family**

4. Be a stay at home parent

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

5. Marriage

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

6. Building a family

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

**Financial**

8. Financial stability

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

9. Full-time career/job

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

10. Owning Property (e.g. home, car, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

**Relationships**

9. Being involved at school and community

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

10. Having positive relationships with family or friends

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

**Miscellaneous**

11. Being independent

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

12. Having personal time

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

13. Family vacations/traveling

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

14. Having a positive body image

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

15. Being emotionally stable

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very Important

APPENDIX B

Short-answer Questionnaire

**Please answer each question in complete sentences. Please be as descriptive and specific as possible. Thank you! ☺ Please feel free use the back of this paper if you require more space.**

1. **Describe what stands in the way of you paying for college/trade school?**
2. **What kind of assistance (e.g. financial aid, scholarship, work study) will you require to help you pay for college/trade school?**
3. **Do you know how to apply for financial aid assistance for college/trade school?**
4. **Explain what is causing you stress in your life.**
5. **What would help you cope with stress better?**
6. **How is time an obstacle in your life?**
7. **What would help you to learn how to manage your time better?**
8. **Explain why it is important for you to maintain a 2.0 GPA.**
9. **What support/services/programs can the school or community offer you to you to help you maintain a 2.0 GPA and meet your credit requirements?**
10. **Explain why it is important for you to graduate from high school.**
11. **What support/services/programs can the school or community offer that would help you graduate from high school?**
12. **Explain why it is important for you to attend post-secondary education (college/trade school).**
13. **What kind of career/job do you see yourself selecting in your future?**
14. **What support/services/programs can the school or community offer that would help you find or select a career/job?**
15. **Explain why it is important for you to own property (e.g. home, car, etc.).**
16. **What support/services can the school or community offer that would help you to plan for the future?**