PROFESSIONALS' PERSPECTIVES ON BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS OF SUCCESS WITH TEEN PARENTS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Zuleima Carrillo
California State University - San Bernardino

Victoria Valenzuela
California State University - San Bernardino

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PROFESSIONALS’ PERSPECTIVES ON BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS OF SUCCESS WITH TEEN PARENTS IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

A Project
Presented to the Faculty of California State University, San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Social Work

by
Victoria Valenzuela
Zuleima Carrillo
June 2020
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Approved by:

Dr. Deirdre Lanesskog, Faculty Supervisor, Social Work
Dr. Armando Barragan, M.S.W. Research Coordinator
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the barriers and facilitators of success with teen parents who are in the child welfare system. The study examines these issues through the perspectives of professionals and paraprofessionals. The literature review suggested that having children at a young age negatively affects the mother as well as the child and that adolescents who have received or are receiving services from child welfare agencies become teen mothers at higher rates.

The study used a qualitative, exploratory design. The data was obtained from in-depth interviews with 15 professionals and paraprofessionals who provide direct services to parenting teens who are in the child welfare system. The participants were recruited via purposive as well as snowball sampling. Four of the participants identified as being mentors of a non-profit agency that works with parenting teens, two participants identified themselves as being county employed social workers, three participants identified as current group home employees, two participants identified themselves as retired county macro-level social services practitioners as well as county social workers, two participants identified as foster family agency employees, one participant identified as an employee of a city foundation, and one participant identified herself as a former foster parenting teen who is now employed by the county. The interviews were
conducted using a ten question semi-structured instrument designed by the researchers.

The findings suggest that barriers and facilitators for teen parent success include stability, housing, support and mentorship, and specialized services. The research also identified proactive efforts that can be implemented by child welfare agencies so that the needs of parenting teens can be met and therefore have higher chances of success. Teen parents would have a higher chance of success if a specialized unit and mentorship programs were developed within child welfare agencies. The results from this study have implications for social work practice related to policy changes as well as prevention and intervention measures.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this project could not have been completed without the contributions of the 15 participants who took the time and participated. This project could have not been completed without their dedication and worthy experience.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my family who guided me and supported me throughout my educational journey. I would like to thank my mother for teaching me the meaning and importance of being a strong woman. I would like to thank my father for teaching me about humility and kindness. I would also like to thank my sisters’ Cinthia, Neyra, Alina, and the love of my life Abel, who were patient with me through stressful times throughout this program. Lastly, this is dedicated to all the strong Latina women who are striving for something better.

Zuleima Carrillo

I would like to dedicate this paper to my father who is watching me from heaven and who never leaves my side. I would also like to dedicate this work to my mother and sister Enid, who encouraged and supported me throughout my educational journey.

Victoria Valenzuela
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Problem Formulation

Teen pregnancy has always been a concern in the U.S. While norms regarding nonmarital sex have changed greatly throughout the years, teenage pregnancy and childbearing are still viewed as a social and public health problem (Anastas, 2017). Rates in teen pregnancies have declined through the years, but not to the point where the problem is close to eradication. Anastas (2019) states, “even as rates of adolescent childbearing have been declining in the United States for some years, reaching a historic low of 24.2 per 1,000 women in 2014, a drop of 9% from 2013” (p.134). In other countries, such as the UK there has been a decline, but in both the US and UK teen pregnancy rates are consistently higher than in other parts of the world (Anastas, 2017). Twenty-four per one thousand women still seems to be a high rate for a country that that is full of resources to prevent teen pregnancy, which is a major problem (Anastas, 2017).

Out of the existing percentages of teens who get pregnant, a large majority are minorities. African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaskan native and many other socioeconomically disadvantaged youth of any race experience the highest rates of teen pregnancies (CDC, 2016, unpaginated). In essence, teen pregnancy is a teen minority socioeconomic issue, rather than an overall teen problem. Disadvantaged teens are more likely
to become pregnant compared to non-minority teens. According to The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2016), 1 in 3 Hispanic teens will become pregnant before the age of 20. Non-Hispanic African American and Hispanic teens have the highest births in all U.S. states (Martin et al., 2017, as cited in Alzate et al., 2018). It is safe to say that poverty and race cannot be overlooked when discussing factors for teen pregnancy.

Having children at a young age negatively affects the mother, as well as the child. Teen mothers experience serious bio-psychological, economic, and cultural consequences such as poor health, lower educational attainment, increased financial dependency, as well as low cognitive development and other adverse consequences (Boulis et al., 2012; Alzate et al., 2018). These challenges often lead to child welfare involvement. A meta-analysis focusing on teen pregnancy found that adolescent girls who are receiving or have received child protection services in the past become mothers at higher rates compared to non-child welfare involved young teens (Connoly, Heifiez, & Bohr, 2012, as cited in Anastas, 2017). For this reason, teen pregnancy is a topic of interest to child welfare agencies. A study using linked births and Child Protective Services (CPS) records in California demonstrated that teen mothers had higher rates of alleged and substantiated abuse and neglect reports compared to adult parents (Garward et al., 2015). It is understandable that teen mothers go through a lot of challenges because they were not ready for such a responsibility. They are children having and raising children. The goal of child welfare is to promote the
well-being of children and families. Having more knowledge regarding the issue will benefit child welfare agencies and therefore will benefit teen parents and their children. Finding a way to break the cycle of teen pregnancy and child welfare involvement would be a way to contribute to the promotion of well-being.

There have been numerous research studies that focus on consequences and deficits of teen pregnancy, however, there has not been much research done on barriers and facilitators of success among teen parents in the child welfare system. Findings of barriers and facilitators of success among teen parents would allow child welfare agencies to gain insight to what some of the contributing factors that lead to teen parent’s success or failure. Most importantly, this study will gain insight of the professionals who are working with teen mothers who have first-hand experience on the attitudes, ideas, and behaviors of teen mother’s. Through a better understanding of barriers and facilitators there can be changes to approaches and services that are offered to teen mothers. Agencies and professional will understand what is working, what needs more improvement and/or what needs to be eliminated.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of the study is to examine professionals’ and paraprofessionals’ perspectives on barriers and facilitators of success with teen parents in the child welfare system. This study will explore professionals’ beliefs related to the facilitators and barriers to success among teen parents in the foster
care system. This study examines the perspectives of experienced professionals and paraprofessionals in hopes of informing potential interventions to serve this population. The study’s findings may inform and benefit child welfare agencies and caseworkers. Findings may also identify strengths and weaknesses in existing approaches. Finding a way to break the cycle of teen pregnancy and child welfare involvement will be a way to contribute to the promotion of well-being. Numerous research studies focus on the negative consequences of teen pregnancy; however, little research examines the barriers and facilitators of success amongst teen parents in the child welfare system.

Significance of the Study for Social Work Practice

Understanding the recipe for success amongst teen parents involved in child welfare will allow the agency to provide needed resources as soon as there is an open case. Child welfare agencies will be able to use and incorporate findings into case management when working with teen parents. The findings will add to the improvement of the child welfare system. The primary goal of our study is to determine the barriers and facilitators of success with teen parents in the child welfare system, through the lenses of professionals. The following articles and research studies described in the literature review will be used throughout the research process.

The significance of this project is that findings will contribute to social work knowledge and practice, especially in the child welfare system. Social workers
may be able to use information identified by this study to implement reduce barriers and to promote facilitators of success among teen parents in the child welfare system. The research findings will help child welfare agencies better their case management interventions when working with this population. Consequently, if there is a clearer understanding among child welfare social workers on what is improving the lives of teenage mothers and what is not, then implementations of working interventions could be added and the aspects that have no meaningful contribution to their success can be eradicated from case management.

In regards to practice, there has been some studies done on the effectiveness of social support as one factors to facilitate positive outcomes in the teenage mother’s life. If there is more information discovered on the effectiveness of social support, social workers can arrange their methods in order to incorporate this type of intervention into their practice. This evidence will affect the implementation stage of the generalist intervention process by guiding social workers to the proper interventions they should implement. Social workers will have a focus on social supports and helping the teenage mothers to find a support group within their community. This research will also affect termination in regard to the social workers ensuring that the client will leave with adequate continued social support. When coming into first contact with teenage mothers, child welfare social workers will approach with the idea of promoting social support as the first step to overcoming barriers.
On the policy level, these findings can change the nature of the involvement of the social workers and could even be a step to a policy change or funding in favor of teen parent success in the child welfare system. It can bring up the question of to what extent does the social worker have an impact on the teenager’s life? Therefore, the findings may influence the way social workers provide resources in the sense that there might no longer be a push on interventions that have not been proven effective and more implementation on the ones this study has found essential. Most importantly, it may change to whom we refer the teenagers to receive services that are not available within the child welfare agency. It might give a clearer understanding about which service agencies can meet the needs of the teenager more effectively.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This section will review the prevalence, effects, and statistics of teenage pregnancy, as well as previously used interventions that were used in the efforts of reducing teenage pregnancy. The section will end by discussing the theories that guided the conceptualization of the topic.

Underlying Causes of Teen Pregnancy

Teens who have experienced some sort of trauma have a higher risk of becoming teen mothers. Garwood, Gerassi, Jonson, Plax and Drake (2015), compared the risk of teen pregnancies between children living in poverty with no CPS report history to teens living in poverty who have history of CPS reports. The research was conducted because it is believed that certain subpopulations of youth who have past trauma are at an increased risk of teen pregnancy (Garwood et al., 2015). The study found that 16.8 percent of teens with history of poverty had been pregnant at least once by the age of 17, and 28.9 percent of teens with history of poverty, abuse, and neglect had been pregnant before the age of 17 (Garwood et al., 2015). The study concluded that child maltreatment is a major contributing risk factor for teen pregnancy among low income teens (Garwood et al., 2015).
Teen pregnancy is not only a social problem, it is also a monetary issue. Teen pregnancy has a negative impact on the U.S. economy. The public cost of teen pregnancy was 9.4 billion dollars in 2010 (Garwood et al., 2015). These resources could have been used elsewhere. The findings of the study were drawn from a longitudinal administrative data study that tracked the outcome of children involved in the child welfare system (Garwood et al., 2015). The study consisted of three groups of participants (3,281 young women); one child randomly selected per family, children who had reports of abuse and neglect, children with families who receive (AFDC), and children who receive (AFDC) and who were neglected and abused (Garwood et al., 2015). The sampling window was from 1993 to 1994 and ended in 2009 when researchers stopped following the children through electronic administrative records. The limitation of the study was that use of electronic administrative data did not take into consideration relevant challenges and behaviors that occurred in the studied population that could have affected the data collected (Garwood et al., 2015).

Ngum, Liamputtong, and Mcmichael (2015) used intersectionality theory in order to be able to understand lives of minority teens. Teenager mothers who are faced with early motherhood may experience conflicts between their new position as mothers, their culture, and their adolescent needs, which leads to challenges and conflicts. The study was qualitative and utilized in-depth interviewing methods that drew upon phenomenology and cultural competence frameworks (Ngum et al.,2015). In-depth interviews were conducted to 16 women who were
African, had migrated to Australia, and had experienced teen pregnancy (Ngum et al., 2015). Results found that participants received good support from their mothers and siblings but rarely from the father of the baby (Ngum et al., 2015). Having a strong support system contributed to their success as teen mothers. The findings were used to advocate for policymakers to support the role of young mothers’ support system because it facilitated teen parents’ success (Ngum et al., 2015). A limitation to the study was that researchers did not interview fathers in order to get a different cultural perspective of the issue (Ngum et al., 2015).

Alzate, Villegas, and Salihu (2018) studied the cultural-contextual factors that impact the high rate of Hispanic teen pregnancy in Oklahoma from the perspective of providers and parent partners. The research consisted of using a Community Based Participatory Research study at the Latino Community Development Agency, which was an organization that serves the community (Alzate et al., 2018). The study was qualitative and consisted of interviewing 33 service providers and 14 Latino parents (Alzate et al., 2018). The study found that the value of respect among Latinos was a risk factor for teen pregnancy as well as contextual aspects such as underfunded schools, Mexican media, lack of bilingual providers (Alzate et al., 2018). The study also found that gender roles also influence the vulnerability of teens and lead to pregnancy (Alzate et al., 2018). A limitation to the study was that findings cannot be generalized to all Hispanic adolescent because everyone is at a different level of acculturation (Alzate et al., 2018).
Boustani, Frazier, Hartley, Meinzer and Hedemann (2015) examined youth care workers’ perceptions of the sexual health needs of at-risk youth in foster care. The study highlights the importance of adolescence as a developmental period in which teenagers will more likely engage in high-risk behaviors which can lead to pregnancy or delinquency (Boustani et al., 2015). Not to mention, if they have experienced some sort of trauma or poor family functioning, the risk is much higher (Boustani et al., 2015). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 youth care workers from a shelter for youth or foster youth at risk (Boustani et al., 2015). The questions were open-ended and centered around their perceptions of what contributes to inflated rates of teenage pregnancies (Boustani et al., 2015). The common themes all led to relating to the youth having no social support or lack of (Boustani et al., 2015). One of the limitations in this study were that the sample size was too small and only represented two sites (Boustani et al., 2015). Also, the setting was in an area with competing demands which provided a smaller data set and lack of information available for this youth group (Boustani et al., 2015). This study strongly supports the efforts of what facilitates success and stressor in a teenager’s life. It will be useful in having a template of what kind of themes will be common when interviewing social workers.

Prevention and Intervention Services/Program for Teen Pregnancy

Wilkinson, Russell, and Lee (2006) examined the understanding of cultural sensitivity through the practitioner’s lens on pregnancy prevention programs for
Latina teens. The study was conducted using qualitative interviews with 58 practitioners employed in teen pregnancy prevention agencies and programs in the Bay Area and Central Valley in California (Wilkinson et al., 2006). The interpretive phenomenological perspective was used to acknowledge that practitioners’ experiences are linked with social, political, and cultural context (Wilkinson et al., 2006). The three themes that emerged in the study were that practitioner’s definition of cultural sensitivity were consistent with existing models, strategies for cultural sensitivity were complicated, and lastly; practitioners identified personal and professional characteristics associated with cultural sensitivity amongst employees (Wilkinson et al., 2006). A limitation to the study is that the recommendations found have an influence on one another (Wilkinson et al., 2006).

Payne and Anastas (2015) examined the nurse-family collaboration with social workers in implementing the Nurse Family Partnership model of home visiting. This model sought to enhance the mental well-being of teenage mothers in order for them to properly care for their infant and for themselves (Payne & Anastas, 2015). This model focused on preventive work by providing these home visits by nurses and social workers (Payne & Anastas, 2015). Social workers are used as facilitators in the well-being of the teenage parent and help guide and support the mother by providing mental health care and connecting them to mental health care providers (Payne & Anastas, 2015). This program has proven effective with outcomes such as enhancing child development, increasing school
readiness, reducing child abuse reports, and improving long-term family functioning (Payne & Anastas, 2015). This study also noted the issue with failing to form secure attachment between the mother and their infant (Payne & Anastas, 2015). Limitations of this study and possible beneficiaries would be to have access to the mental health history of the teenage enrollees to the program (Payne & Anastas, 2015). Neither the mental health history nor current domestic violence exposure has been documented in this program for possible negative implications (Payne & Anastas, 2015).

Allen, Philiber, and Hoggson (1990) examined a program that aimed to prevent teenage pregnancies, among other negative behaviors among teenagers (1990). This study used a comparisons group to determine what factors were the facilitators of success for the program to work (Allen et al., 1990). The motivation of this study was due to there being only research as to what programs work and not enough for why they work or what makes them work (Allen et al., 1990). The program has proven effective in the areas of reducing teenage pregnancy, along with school failure and dropout rates by 30% to 50% in contrast to comparison groups (Allen et al., 1990). The method under study is the “helper-therapy” principle in which it is suggested that helping other people can lead to personal growth (Allen et al., 1990). The Teen Outreach Program was conducted at 35 different sites in 30 schools and participants in this study included 632 students from the Outreach Program and 855 comparison groups (Allen et al., 1990). The outcome was that the program was most effective with the younger teenagers as
opposed to the older ones (Allen et al., 1990). The limitations of this study include that there still needs to be more research on the relationship between volunteer service and teenage successful outcomes (Allen et al., 1990). This study has proven the importance of preventative work and having the teenager involved in the community. It has shown that preventative work, along with social worker involvement, can be a facilitator for success in teenage mothers.

Rosell, Scarborough and Lewis (2010) examined the importance of a continuum of care for teenage mothers. Specifically, it addresses the work and effectiveness of the Tandem Teen Prenatal and Parenting Program that was created through collaboration with nurses and social workers (Rosell et al., 2010). Among the negative outcomes of teenage pregnancies were child abuse and neglect, which is relevant to the child welfare and the involvement of social workers in the teenage mother’s life (Rosell et al, 2010). Tandem focused on the importance of understanding that teenage pregnancy has challenges that are multidimensional and, therefore, the aid cannot stop at prenatal care (Rosell et al, 2010). Tandem used a client-centered approach on the matter that is administered through a multidisciplinary team (Rosell et al., 2010). Limitations to this program included challenges faced by having a collaboration with various agencies and amount of staff is smaller than that of the demand for service (Rosell et al., 2010). Within the agencies there are differences in style, approaches and perspectives (Rosell et al., 2010). This in part shows that when dealing with a collaboration there can be conflicting perspectives as to which
intervention and services are more appropriate for a teenage mother. Social worker at CPS have collaborations within their agency that will pose a threat to an accordance in services being used.

Minnick and Shandler (2011) examined the effectiveness of a one session intervention called Teen Voices/Teen Choices designed to educate teenagers about the reality of being a young parent in hope to deter them from pregnancy at a young age. This study also mentioned the importance of the involvement of social workers in the intervention process due to their skills and knowledge and also how they are contacted in times where there is no clear direction on what steps to take next (Minnick & Shandler, 2011). The researchers pointed out that teenagers have an idealized belief about pregnancy in that it is easier to give birth at a young age, when in fact, there are a lot of potential risks (Minnick & Shandler, 2011). This intervention/session is facilitated by former teenage mothers to 9 to 12th grade students in various schools (Minnick & Shandler, 2011). This study used a one-group pretest-posttest design for evaluation on whether the goal of the one session program was achieved (Minnick & Shandler, 2011). Limitations of this study included lack of future follow-up research in order to determine if in fact pregnancy was postponed (Minnick & Shandler, 2011). This study noted the importance of guidance through social workers being effective. If not the family, the social worker can be used as a form of support so that the teenager can start to make better life-changing decisions that will have a positive impact on their life. This means that the beliefs and perception on
teenage pregnancy of the social worker are of meaningful importance in the teenage mother life. Also, the perception of pregnancy that teenagers have can be one of the indicators as to why teenage pregnancy occurs so much.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The theory that best fits and guides this study would be Erikson’s Psychosocial theory of development and its 8 proposed stages (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2015). Erikson stated that adolescence is a time for exploration and the stage where a person really gets to know themselves and are able to adopt an identity in which they feel comfortable with (2015). Zastrow also argues that adolescence is when personal identities begin to take form and through experimenting ideas the adolescent can establish a sense of who they really are (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2015).

The adolescent is in a transition phase of their life which goes from childhood to adulthood, and in that transition, there is a lot of exploration of various roles that help guide them into a better perception of who they are so that they can adopt an identity (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2015). This stage is called identity vs. role confusion. Erikson’s construct of identity is but a main tool for understanding the personality development from adolescence into adulthood (Waterman, 1982). Its uniqueness now meets a crisis to be solved with new identification with people of their same age group and with leaders outside of the family (Waterman, 1982). Meaning that as an adolescent who is making these
life transitions they are expected to be in a crisis when they cannot figure out their place in which they identify themselves.

In assessing how well someone is achieving their sense of identity there is a main focus on a clear sense of self definition, a presence of goals, values and beliefs, activity towards implementing commitments, range of identity alternatives, self-acceptance, sense of uniqueness, and confidence in one’s personal future (Waterman, 1982). Since the teenage mother is rushed into the role of motherhood without any time for exploration, it is no wonder that the teenage mother, on the very premature stage of identity exploration, would have some difficulty adjusting. For one, the teen’s presence of goals would be disrupted with the addition of their child. Second, the confidence in their personal future might diminish. A teenage mother is not given the chance to explore that stage, thus, only given the option of confliction. As stated, if a person is not given the chance to integrate the appearing roles then there will be difficulty in their identity exploration (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2015). There is no smooth transition into motherhood for the teenager, therefore, guidance through that new role is beneficial for a more positive outcome.

The second theory found to have some relation to teen pregnancy would be systems theory. Mele, Pels and Polese (2010) stated that systems theory can be defined as a coherent whole which analyzes phenomenon seen as such whole and not just the sum of its elementary parts. The focus of systems theory is of the interactions and relationship between parts in order to understand
functioning and outcomes (Mele et al., 2010). System theory is used to explain problem holistically rather than just focusing on the immediate concerns. For instance, with teen pregnancy we tend to only see one person and their problem, such as being pregnant at a young age, but we fail to examine what is causing this to happen. To get a better understanding of this phenomenon, we need to look at all aspects of the person’s life and look at how complex it can be. For example, the teenager is surrounded by friends, family, schools, teachers and other systems. If we think about how much influence each system has, we can better understand how they impact the teenager’s life to take such risky decisions. Think about how family plays a huge role in guidance and connection. Fail to properly guide can result in many deviations and surprises.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The following section includes a full description of the research methods and procedures used to complete this study. This section addressed the design of the study, sampling methods, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, and lastly, data analysis.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore professionals’ and paraprofessionals' views on the barriers and facilitators of success of teen parents who are in the child welfare system. This study used an interview guide, including ten open-ended questions designed by the researchers. The study explored risk factors to teenage pregnancy, as well as barriers and facilitators to a healthy, stable life according to the perspective of professionals' and paraprofessionals who have worked for at least two years with teen parents who are in the system.

This study used a qualitative design. Fifteen professionals and paraprofessionals who have worked with teen parents for at least two years were interviewed by the investigators via face to face interviews as well as over the phone. The participants were employed with either a foster family agency, county
child welfare agency, or organization that supported teen mothers. At the time of
the interview participants provided informed consent to participate in the study by
verbal or written consent. Verbal consent was used when the interview was over
the phone. Researcher emailed informed consent form to be signed and returned
to researcher. This design encourages the professionals and paraprofessionals
to share their subjective views on the topic. The findings of the study added to
the knowledge on the issue, benefitting child welfare agencies and, therefore,
benefitting teen parents and their children. Finding a way to break the cycle of
teen pregnancy and child welfare involvement would be a way to contribute to
the promotion of teen parent well-being. This design allowed the participants to
express their views on what they have observed to be the barriers and facilitators
of success amongst teen parents who were or are currently in the system.

Unfortunately, conducting a qualitative design study had its limitations.
The researcher’s biases can negatively impact this type of study, like many other
qualitative studies. Researchers remained mindful of their biases and discussed
them with their research advisor to minimize their impact on the study. The
research question, decisions about procedures, and data analysis were all
influenced by the researcher’s knowledge and standpoint (Grinnell & Unrau,
2014, p. 596). Having two researchers for this study reduced the chances of
discrepancies due to biases. Both researchers reviewed and interpreted the
findings in different rooms. They then got together and discussed each interview
after they were done coding. This procedure reduced the chances of discrepancies caused by personal biases.

Sampling

The researchers interviewed a total of fifteen individuals from seven agencies through purposive and convenience sampling. The first participants were recruited through personal circles and professional networks. The researchers had access to potential participants at their internships and at school. Both researchers had ties to individuals such as social workers, professors who worked in child welfare, foster care specialists, and county workers who have worked with teenage mothers and fathers who are in the child welfare system. The researchers recruited the rest of the participants through snowball, non-probability sampling. Participants who were obtained through personal and professional circles referred the researchers to other professionals that qualified for the study. The participants had to have at least two years of experience working with teen parents who are in the child welfare system. The researchers then invited those individuals to participate in the study. The goal was to interview fifteen participants, and fifteen participants were interviewed.

Data Collection and Instruments

Researchers conducted nine face-to-face interviews and six over the phone interviews with participants. The interviews were conducted with the use of an interview guide. The interview guide consisted of ten open-ended
questions. All fifteen participants were asked the same questions in the same order to enhance consistency. Demographic information such as age, income, ethnicity, and marital status were not collected as these were not relevant to the study. However, participants were asked to disclose their job titles, preparation, and years of experience. Researchers believed the participant's job title was essential, as well, and their preparation and years of experience, as they wanted valuable knowledge from experienced service providers.

Furthermore, the fifteen questions that were asked were constructed in a way so that participants could elaborate on their thoughts and experiences. All the questions explored the themes and commonalities between the participants' perspectives on what they believe contributes to the prosperity or hardship of teen parents who are in the foster care system. This study aimed to discover possible solutions that can help prevent foster care youth from becoming pregnant at such high rates, as well as interventions that can be implemented to serve this population better so that they have a higher chance of being successful.

Procedures

The data was gathered through in-depth interviews with professionals such as social workers, foster care specialists, mentors, and public health employees who have worked with parenting teens who are or were in the child welfare system. Participants were recruited through the researchers' personal
circles; those participants referred the researchers to other professionals that qualified for the study. The participants were given an informed consent form. The goal was to audio record the interview and all fifteen participants gave permission to be audio recorded. After the interviews were conducted, each participant received a $30 gift card as an incentive. The researchers contacted each participant directly and the time and exact date was determined beforehand in accordance to the participants’ schedule and convenience since professionals’ work schedules varied.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researchers made every effort to protect the subjects in this study by obtaining participants’ informed consent and by maintaining confidentiality. Prior to the interview, participants were given an IRB approved informed consent form and an audio consent form. The participants who were interviewed over the phone received the consent form and questionnaire through email prior to participation. The participants were informed about confidentiality, and that they were not obligated to answer questions that they were not comfortable responding to. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary, which means that they had the option to stop their participation in the study at any time. Participants were informed about who was completing the study, who was supervising it, and what they could receive for participating in the study. Each interview took about 20 to 40 minutes to complete and was conducted by the researchers. The researchers provided a $30 gift card to each
participant as an incentive. Interviews were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed prior to analysis by the researchers.

To protect their identities, participants were assigned a number ranging from one to fifteen, as names were not used in the study. The interview was conducted in a place of the participant’s choosing where participants felt safe and could speak openly. Every interview was recorded using an audio recording device, and the audio was then transferred to a computer that only the researchers had access to. The goal of this method was to protect the confidentiality of each of the participants. Information obtained from the interview was not discussed with other individuals in the agencies. The audio recordings were transcribed by a professional transcription service. Once the interviews were transcribed, they were sent back to the researchers, who reviewed them for accuracy. To protect the participants’ confidentiality, no identifying data was included in the transcription.

Data Analysis

Analyzing the data was a lengthy and time-consuming process, as several steps needed to take place to have the end result. The researchers independently reviewed each transcript, noting patterns, trends, and categories. During this process both researchers referred back to the research questions, focusing on what professionals in child welfare perceived as barriers and facilitators of success with teen parents. Both researchers came together to
process, compare, and refine the themes. In order to bolster the trustworthiness of the data, the researchers triangulated the data from different participants and agencies across three counties. After the data was coded into initial themes, the researchers consulted with their research supervisor to further refine each theme and to relate the themes to one another, using axial coding.

Summary

This chapter described recruitment, sampling and data collection procedures. The chapter also described the qualitative methods to collect and analyze the data. This study used a qualitative design, along with purposive or judgmental sampling and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Interviews were conducted to collect the data using an interview guide created by the researchers. Procedures on how to protect the participants and their right to confidentiality and identity was also presented in the chapter. Precautions were discussed on how to protect the data collected once the researchers have obtained it. Finally, a description on how the data was analyzed was also presented.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter describes the participants in the study, and the study’s findings. The researchers interviewed a total of 15 individuals from seven agencies through purposive and convenience sampling. All participants were interviewed in February and March 2020. All 15 participants were employed at agencies that serve parenting teens in the foster care system. All participants had at least two years of experience working with this population.

Barriers and facilitators of success with teen parents in the child welfare system were identified and categorized into 3 themes including: stability and housing, support and mentorship, and specialized services. In this chapter, the demographics of the research participants and the identified themes are detailed.

Demographics

The ages of the interviewed participants ranged from early 20’s to upper 60’s. Four of the participants identified as being mentors of a non-profit agency that works with parenting teens. Two participants identified themselves as being county employed social workers. Three participants identified as current group home employees. Two participants identified themselves as retired county macro-level social services practitioners as well as county social workers. Two
participants identified as foster family agency employees. One participant identified as an employee of a city foundation, and one participant identified herself as a former foster parenting teen who is now employed by the county. All participants were professionals or paraprofessionals. All interviewed participants had some type of college education and 80 percent of the participants had a master’s degree in social work. All participants reported providing direct services to non-child welfare involved parenting teens as well as foster parenting teens across Southern California.

Stability and Housing

Many of the participants identified lack of stability as a barrier to parenting teens success. They suggested that parenting teens lack stability and a sense of belonging because teens are constantly being moved from placement to placement and many of them eventually end up in group homes. Many of the placements are not suited for parenting teens for several reasons, which will be further discussed. Participant 6 discussed how teenage mothers in foster care arrive at placements with an array of circumstances and needs that require a type of guidance and attention that foster parents are not trained or unwilling to provide. Participant 15 mentioned that teens in foster care “need a good parental figure, the kind that’s not controlling but is there to help” and it is hard to find placements that provide that type of parental figure parenting teens are in need of. She explained that teens need foster parents who understand their situation and can also be sympathetic and help them when in need because foster teens
tend to be stubborn and difficult because they have been let down so many times. Participant 6 stated, “Many of these foster families that are welcoming teen mothers into their home and care are not prepared to take on that responsibility and, overall, do not want to deal with the situation of caring for two.”

Lack of Placements for Parenting Teens

Our participants explained that the lack of monetary compensation was the primary barrier to recruiting foster parents for foster youth with children. Foster parents are only compensated for the teen, not for the teen’s child. One participant explained that parenting teens are difficult to place because they have a child and the majority of foster parents,

…don’t want anything to do with you because they do not get paid for the baby, the teen does, and they do not like that because they consider it another person they still have to take care of and feed. (Participant 15)

In addition, case management for a parenting teen requires a lot of work and dedication because it is not just one person whose future is at stake. The foster family, however, is still responsible for the success and well-being of both the teen mother and the child.

Challenges with Belonging and Relationships

Many of the participants described that teenage mothers have difficulty engaging and feeling a sense of belonging due to the trauma they have experienced throughout their lives. Participant 9 reported that even if a decent placement is found for the teen mother and the child, there will still be moments
in which the teen mother will feel a sense of loneliness and feel that they do not fit in. She described this experience with a former client explaining,

I remember there was a girl who would come from her foster mom’s house and she would bring her little baby and all she owned in the whole world was just a duffle bag of clothes, like that’s it! Every time she would come to the program she would bring that duffle bag. It was everything she owned. It almost seemed like she was on the run or didn’t have a real home. (Participant 9)

Unfortunately, this is a fairly common experience for children and teens in foster care. Teens do not have a sense of belonging which adds to their trauma. Participant 9 went on and explained that teen mothers who are in foster care are scared to plant roots in their placements or make plans for the future, unlike non-child welfare involved parent teens. Foster care teens do not feel that a future is attainable for them. The client participant 9 described probably carried her most valuables with her because she was used to not knowing what would happen next as she lacked stability, and therefore a sense of belonging.

In addition, teen foster parents struggle to build relationships. Participant 9 explained that many of her clients who have had good placements have been able to build relationships with the foster parents, however; they felt that the relationship was not genuine and therefore were unable to trust them. She mentioned a specific client and stated, “the foster mom tries to be a grandmother figure to the baby, but she doesn’t feel like it is real.” Participant 2 stated that
teens often tell her, “I don’t trust adults. I can’t trust anyone.” The teen participant described was fortunate to be placed in a good loving placement that was willing to take her and the child, but unfortunately, she was unable to fully open up and trust her. The consequences from lack of stability and a sense of belonging from previous placements show up when trying to connect and build a close relationship with their current foster family, which becomes a challenge. Parenting teens might have never experienced stability and a sense of belonging because they were removed at a young age and were never able to reunify with their families. Participant 9 disclosed that some teens become pregnant because they desire love and a child is someone who will love them unconditionally. “They want a blood relative that will love them no matter what. I remember a lot of them telling me this.”

Lack of Housing and Child Care

Another barrier that was identified, along with placement and stability, was lack of housing and childcare for teen mothers who will soon age out or have aged out of the system. Many participants mentioned housing as an obstacle for teen mothers to succeed because it is very difficult to attain due to the high cost of living. Participant 5 stated, “A lot of the parents that I’ve had to deal with have problems with trying to find housing, especially in California. There’s a huge backlog of housing.” Teenagers who age out of the system do not receive any additional funds from child welfare and find themselves struggling because they lack a strong support system and stability.
Forced into Difficult Environments

Parenting teens have a hard time leasing because they lack credit history and a lot of renters do not rent to teens that do not have credit. As participant 6 reported, there are no direct services to support housing for teen mothers. Therefore, parenting teens are forced to live in housing situations that may not be the best circumstances and around people who may not have their best interests in mind. Participant 7 reported how some teen mothers stay in these relationships because they have nowhere else to go. They have no home if ties are cut with their own family. The environment with their partner will at times be limited on space for the teen mother and child. Sometimes, other people in the home may participate in behaviors that are not the healthiest for a baby, such as domestic violence, smoking, and drug consumption. In essence, we can see how lack of housing might force a teen mother to once again enter an unhealthy environment right after leaving another.

Participant 6 talked about how his role as a social worker was to advocate for housing for the teen parent. Participant 6 described a time when he had to negotiate with the landlord in order for the teen mother to keep her housing, situations are difficult when your client is not yet quite an adult. It was also mentioned by participant 6 that shelters are an option, but many teens opt out because they do not feel safe. Participant 6 stated, “I had teen mothers that would choose to stay in a park with their children rather than in a shelter.” Participant 8 felt that teen mothers need a safe space for them and their children
in order for them to be successful in life and reduce the chances of future child
welfare involvement. Participant 12 feels that there is a need for transitional
housing for those teens who age out of the system and transition to independent
living. It can be assumed that transitional housing services and resources for
teens who age out of the system are much needed as they are a determinant of
success. If the teen is stable, she is more likely to stay out of troublesome
situations which many times lead to child welfare involvement and the cycle will
continue.

Support and Mentorship

Accessibility to support and mentorship was identified by participants as a
facilitator towards successful outcomes for teen mothers who are in the system.
Most of the participants reported that continuous support, encouragement, and
engagement from the social worker was a means for better outcome. Participants
admitted that this group of clients are not easy to work with due to the nature of
their childhood trauma and background. It is harder to engage a teen parent
because they tend to be defiant, however; they are defiant because they are
scared. We have to keep in mind that these individuals were removed from their
own parents as children and are now scared that their child may also be
removed, which is why they can be defensive and hard to work with.

Meaningful Engagement and Encouragement

Participant 12 reported that because of that distrust, social workers have
to really work on engagement so that a solid relationship can be built. The social
worker needs to be understanding and patient, as well as follow through and be transparent. Participant 12 said that teenage parents need a social worker who can listen and say things like, “Listen. I understand that you want to have independence but this is how things are.” Transparency and validation take you a long way when working with this population.

The way social workers manage the case influences the outcome of the teen mother. Positive interactions can create positive reactions from the client. Participant 3 affirmed that the agency worker has to start by showing genuine interest in the well-being of the teen mother and the child without any presence of judgement because teen mothers are already coming into the agency believing that they will be judged because of their age. Participant 3 recalled a successful client story and stated,

I think the techniques that worked for her was just knowing that I wasn’t there to judge her, and that I wasn’t gonna give up on her, and just knowing that she had that support in me. That’s something that worked with that one. (Participant 3)

To further build on that, social workers need to show commitment as well as hope. Part of being a “good” social worker starts with being able to build rapport with a client, which takes a certain skill set. Participant 15 mentioned that social workers need to be supportive in a way that is not controlling and guide them through the process so that they can have a sense of empowerment. Participants
emphasized that parenting teens are kids raising kids and need guidance and genuine support.

Need for Mentoring

Mentorship was also a facilitator to success, according to participants. Most of the participants reported that parenting teens need and desire emotional support and guidance. They need someone who can listen and understand where they are coming from without being judgmental. Participant 9 stated that teens need, “...somebody that they can count on, somebody who’s gonna be-you know, somebody that can love them, somebody that can be an ear to hear whatever they’re going through.” Parenting teens benefit from having a mentor relationship as a support system because a mentor would be someone that would be consistent throughout placements.

Mentors could be of any age group; they just have to be able to connect with the teen. Participant 4 stated that teen mothers benefit from being around other young moms that they can relate to. If teen mothers can see that others have surpassed their same struggle, then they will feel motivated to do the same. Participant 7 shared that mentorship is also about teen mothers having a safe place to go and feel a sense of connection. It was stated by participant 8, “when you’re connected with other young people that are like you, you’re gonna be more successful, especially when you have a platform such as Generation Her to mold you and guide you and help you.” Generation Her is a successful non-profit organization that empowers parenting teens by connecting them to a supportive
community of other teen mothers and adult mentors who were teen parents as well. Participant 10 mentioned that it is essential for teen mothers to build that human connection with someone who they can relate to.

Participant 6 stated that even though mentorship programs are proven to be effective “...it is one of the things we do not offer, and that’s the-in public child welfare, we really don’t connect people who look like them.” The participant went on and explained that child welfare agencies do not have a system of peer or group support within the agency, they have to rely on outside sources for services like these. Having some type of mentorship program within the agency would be beneficial as all foster youth and children could benefit from a support group or mentorship programs.

Teen Parent Partners

Many of the participants believed that child welfare agencies could create a peer support group that caters to this population by developing Teen Parent Partners. Participant 14 mentioned that Teen Parent Partners would be a good idea because teens who have been successful could turn around and be a support system for parenting teens who are in the same situation. A person who “has been there done that”, stated participant 14. Teen Partners would be a success within agencies because parenting teens are more likely to listen to them than an adult government agency worker that is coming and telling them what to do.
Specialized Services

Many of the participants identified a need for specialized services so that parenting teens can have higher chances of success. Participant 11 explained that parenting teens should have specialized housing so that they can be around other teen mothers who are experiencing the same struggles, have the same needs, and who are like-minded. She stated that special housing is needed because “they should not be tempted to do some of the things other girls that age are doing.”

Lack of Adequate Group Homes

There are a couple group homes in the region that are designed for parenting teens, however; they only take up to six girls, which is why some parenting teens end up in normal group homes. She explained that a high number of teens who are in group homes go AWOL when around other teens, which is why it is not always a good idea to place teens in these types of facilities. She mentioned that it is not uncommon for infants to be removed from their mothers who are in foster care due to them continuously running away over the weekends and consuming substance. Participant 9 described a similar situation. She stated, “I’ve got one girl right now that is on my heart. She got her baby taken away and is also in foster care.” Teen mothers should not be placed with non-parenting teens in regular group homes because they are at risk of being trafficked, which is why they AWOL.
Unique Services for Teen Mothers

The lack of relevant services and resources was also identified as a barrier to success by many of the participants. Several participants mentioned that there is little to no services that are specifically for teens. Participant 14 stated, “the county really struggles with having available resources for a lot of stuff; parenting- I don’t know of any parenting education classes that are specifically geared towards teenage parents.” If teens are referred to a parenting class, they will most likely attend parenting classes that are intended for adult clients who have an open case. Teens will probably not benefit from these types of educational classes because their needs are completely different than those of adults.

Teen parents who are in the system are unique in many ways and need different resources and services than an adult client would need. Participant 10 explained that parenting teens need education on proper care for the baby and for themselves. They need more prevention and intervention programs that can teach them valuable skills that they will be able to use once they transition out of foster care and therefore have a higher chance of success. She explained that it has always been hard to get teens into educational programs and to keep them in school due to lack of resources. It is important for teenage parents to receive appropriate resources because they are trying to figure out who they are and trying to parent at the same time.
Participant 6 mentioned that teens do not qualify for the majority of the entitlement programs adults do, yet there is nothing similar for them. A teen parent can receive public assistance, but there is nothing that supports the educational part just as participant 10 explained. Participant 6 stated, “there’s nothing that supports childcare so they can go to school or work. There’s no real training programs set up for adolescents. We don’t have these things, so we are like jugglers. Continuity is difficult.” Several participants explained that there are many outside resources that have helped teen parents such as WIC, teen parent nonprofit organization programs, job training and resume building programs, Nurturing Parent Program, and Cal-SAFE.

Specialized Unit of Social Workers and Expert Staff

There is a shortage of placement options for parenting teens who are in foster care like previously mentioned. Participant 14 suggested that a good way to solve this challenge is by developing a “whole subset of foster homes and additional group homes that are aimed just for teenage parents. The only foster kids they take in are teenage parents, so that’s their expertise.” These foster homes and group homes would be part of a specialized unit of well-trained staff and foster parents so that they have the skills that are needed to work with this population. She stated, “teenage parents would have a lot of resources and would be more likely to be successful.” Her point is valid as specialized housing would be beneficial because providers would only work with this specific population and would have the experience, skills, and resources to help minimize
the challenge parenting teens experience due to the lack of available and appropriate placements.

Almost all of the participants identified a need for a specialized unit where parenting teens are the only clients, social workers have or a reduction of caseloads. Participant 11 explained that one of the difficulties about being a social worker is not knowing what services are in place for a certain population. The majority of social workers do not work with a specific set of clients, they work with a variety of them and oftentimes do not know what services are in place and also do not have a lot of time to invest on their client due to their high caseloads. If the social worker does not have experience working with a specific clientele, they will probably not refer them to the appropriate services because they lack the knowledge. Participant 12 stated,

I think having a specific unit of social workers who were specifically trained to deal with that, I think would help this population and there would be higher chances of success. Having an entire unit of social workers that would be responsible for not only case management, but also training and talking to youth before there was a pregnancy. (Participant 12).

The participant’s point is important because there also tends to be a lack of preventative services within child welfare agencies. Having a unit that is specifically designed for parenting teens and who is equally invested in at risk teens would be a way of preventing pregnancies as well as securing success amongst this population.
Summary

This chapter delineated the demographics of all the 15 participants and the themes that were identified throughout the study. The study identifies the following barriers and facilitators of success within teen parents who are in the child welfare system: lack of stability and housing, support and mentorship, and specialized services. All 3 themes were identified individually by both of the researchers using analytic and theoretical coding techniques. The three themes represent the leading barriers and facilitators to success these participants come across when working with parenting teens who are in the foster care system.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the study’s findings, relates them to the existing literature on teen parents in the child welfare system, and suggests implications for child welfare policy and practice. The study’s limitations are also discussed in this chapter.

Stability and Housing

Our findings suggest that the lack of stability in placements and in housing are barriers to success for teen parents in the child welfare system. The data collected from participants indicated that the lack of sense of belonging parenting teens experience stems from housing instability. Foster children and youth have numerous foster home placements throughout their lives in foster care, which makes it difficult for them to build meaningful attachments. If placements fail to provide the teen with a sense of belonging, teens will most likely run away or not try to build relationships with caregivers. Parenting teens are in need of a good parental figure that can help guide them and can be a support system. This is consistent with the literature, which suggests that having a strong support system contributes to the success of the parenting teen (Ngum et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, it is hard to recruit foster parents because they are not suited for the care of a teen and a child, and are also unwilling to foster teen
Parents due to lack of monetary compensation. Teen mothers are afraid of planting roots in placements because they have a hard time trusting adults due to the trauma they have experienced throughout their lives. Many of the teens have never experienced a sense of belonging, which at times leads them to wanting to become mothers. All they want is to be loved unconditionally and have a family or someone they can trust. This is consistent with the literature which suggests that foster teens with a history of trauma, abuse, and neglect have higher rates of teen pregnancies compared to other youth, however; they the reasons behind such high rates are not well understood (Garwood et al., 2015).

**Practice and Policy Implications**

Child welfare agencies should consider modifications to their placement matching and recruiting efforts in order to provide more appropriate placements for parenting teens. The issue of adequate placement and stability could be addressed by compensating foster parents for the care of the child in addition to the payment for the teen. Foster parents may be more willing to open their doors to parenting teens if they have that additional income coming in, especially because the child is small and does not have any behavioral problems that are rooted from trauma. This intervention could reduce the number of placements parenting teens are placed in and might also create a more stable environment for the teen and the child.
Support and Mentorship

Our findings suggest a relationship between human connections and successful outcomes within parenting teens. Our participants suggested that access to support and mentorship programs could improve the lives of parenting teens who are in foster care. Teens benefit from the support other teens experiencing the same situation can provide. This may be especially important for teen mothers who lack support from their biological family and therefore need someone to connect to that can give them the type of support a family would provide. This finding is consistent with the literature that suggests that lack of support is a barrier to success for parenting teens in child welfare (Boustani et al., 2015). Connecting young mothers who have success stories will create more support needed for teen mothers, as well as a feeling of empowerment while receiving that human connection.

The data obtained also indicated that having access to mentors, support groups, and “good” social workers also facilitates success amongst parenting teens. Teens are harder to engage and therefore need someone who is genuine, consistent, and can listen without judgement. Social work engagement and follow-up are key components for client success. These findings are consistent with Minnick and Shandler’s (2015) findings of how social work involvement, intervention, and guidance are important. They found that social workers can be used as a form of support which will have a positive impact in parenting teens'
lives. This study is in accordance to participant reports on the importance of having a supportive worker to properly guide teen mothers towards success.

**Practice and Policy Implications**

Even though mentorship programs and support groups are proven to be effective, it is a service that is not being offered by child welfare agencies. Child welfare agencies rely on outside service providers for mentorship programs. Many of the participants recommended the creation on Teen Parent Partners which would be a group of teen parents who have been successful and are now giving back, just like Parent Partners. This idea sounds feasible as Teen Parent Partners would be part of the agency and would serve as an advocate and could also facilitate support groups where teens experiencing the same situation can gather and support each other.

**Specialized Services**

During the review of the transcripts it was noted by both of the researchers that every participant who mentioned a lack of appropriate placements for parenting teens also mentioned a need for a specialized unit as well as services that cater to this population. A high percentage of the participants recognized that there are currently not enough placements for parenting teens for the demand that exists. There is a shortage of foster parents who take parenting teens in because they do not get paid for the infant, which is inconvenient for them. Because of this, parenting teens end up in group homes that are not suited for
their care. There is also a shortage of space in parenting group homes, which adds to the challenge. Parenting teens should be placed in specialized housing in order for them to be around other girls who they can relate to and not be tempted by the activities non-parenting teens their age engage in. Teens who are placed in group homes are at high risk of being victims of commercial sexual exploitation, which is the reason why children of foster teens get removed and become dependents of the court themselves. Teens tend to AWOL and consume substance when encouraged and around other non-parenting teens.

In addition, lack of relevant services was also identified as a barrier amongst this population. Child welfare agencies lack specialized services for parenting teens. Because of this, teens have no choice but to take advantage of services that are meant for adult clients. These services are not effective because parenting teens have different needs than those of adults. Parenting teens are in need of special education, appropriate services, prevention and intervention programs that can teach teens valuable skills that can be utilized across their lifetime. The participants that mentioned a need for a specialized unit also included a special unit of social workers that would only work with this client population. This finding is consistent with the literature, which notes that teenage mothers who are faced with early motherhood may experience conflicts between their positions as mothers and their adolescent needs, which leads to conflict (Ngum et al., 2015).
Practice and Policy Implications

To address the lack of appropriate placement and services, like participants mentioned, a specialized unit could be developed. The specialized unit would consist of a group of well-trained professionals and paraprofessionals that could productively collaborate with each other in order to effectively meet this population’s needs, so that parenting teens in foster care could have higher chances of success. These professionals would consist of group home staff, foster parents, therapists, service providers that provide parenting teen centered services, public health staff, social workers, mentors, as well as teachers and other school district staff. Specialized foster homes with well-trained foster parents and additional group homes could also be developed with the help and support of the well-equipped specialized unit of professionals and paraprofessionals.

Providing specialized units of social workers that would be responsible for not only case management, but also training and talking to youth before there was a pregnancy would be greatly beneficial as it can serve as a preventive factor. Research shows that teens who are involved with child welfare services become teen parents at higher rates compared to non-child welfare involved teens, which is why preventive measures are crucial (Anastas, 2017). Back end social workers do not have enough time to engage and properly provide parenting teens with the dedication they need due to their high caseload and also
because they are not familiar with services geared for this population, which is why a special unit of social workers is needed.

Limitations of Study

Our study is limited in several ways. First, our data lacked the perspective of current and former foster teen mothers, as well as of foster parents. Future studies should include the perspectives of foster parents and teen mothers. Our participants had extensive experience across many agencies and counties, but their views may differ from those of workers in other agencies or regions, and their views may differ greatly from those of the clients they serve. Second, our participants may have felt obligated to provide socially desirable responses to our questions, as they knew the researchers were interested in improving services for teen parents in child welfare. Third, the quality of our data may have been negatively impacted by the switch from in-person to telephone interviews necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews conducted via phone lacked engagement and human interaction. Yet, even those interviews conducted in person were sometimes impacted by the participants’ busy schedules. Some participants appeared to be in a hurry and provided short responses, thereby limiting our ability to delve into some topics we hoped to explore.
Summary

Ensuring that parenting teens in foster care have the enough resources necessary to be successful is a challenging task for many different reasons. The 3 themes recognized in the study provide readers with a glimpse of the barriers and facilitators of success parenting teens face when they are under the care of the state. Many of these themes interrelate with each other and can easily apply to the needs of every child who is in foster care. Child welfare agencies and other agencies that provide services to parenting teens who are in foster care should pay attention to these barriers and develop services that could help facilitate their success once they age out of the system. The situation will unlikely improve if prevention or intervention measures are not taken.
APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine Professionals' Perspectives on Barriers and Facilitators of Success with Teenage Parents in the Child Welfare System. The study is being conducted by Zuleima Carrillo and Victoria Valenzuela, MSW students under the supervision of Dr. Deidre Laneskog, Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board Social Work Sub-Committee at California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to identify professionals' perspectives on barriers and facilitators of success with teenage parents in the child welfare system.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked in-depth questions regarding their experience when working with teenage parents who are in the child welfare system. Participants will be asked about trends, consequences of teen pregnancy, similarities between the teen parents, factors that promote to their well-being, as well as barriers.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in the study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the research study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your responses will remain anonymous, and data will be reported in group form only.

DURATION: The interview will take no more than 40 minutes to complete.

RISKS: There are minimal risks to the participants, such as feeling uncomfortable discussing challenging cases, but nothing more than one would experience in everyday life.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to participants, although what we learn from this study may improve child welfare services.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Deidre Laneskog at 909.537.5501.
RESULTS: The results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks (http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2020.

This is to certify that I am 18 years or older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document, and agree to participate in your research study.

Place an X mark here ___________________________ Date ___________________________

I agree to be tape recorded: _______________ Yes _______________ No [optional – in case you intend to interview your participants and record their interviews]
The following interview guide was created by researchers, Zuleima Carrillo and Victoria Valenzuela.
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

8) If you had all the resources you could possibly need, how would you change the child welfare system to better serve teen parents?

9) Is there anything I should have asked you, but I didn’t?
APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
December 16, 2019

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Administrative/Exempt Review Determination
Status: Determined Exempt
IRB-FY2020-141

Zuleima Carillo Deirdre Laneskog, Victoria Valenzuela
CSUSB - Social Work
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Zuleima Carillo Deirdre Laneskog, Victoria Valenzuela

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Professional perspective on barriers and facilitators of success with teen parents in the child welfare system" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of California State University, San Bernardino. The IRB has determined that your application meets the requirements for exemption from IRB review. Federal requirements under 45 CFR 46. As the researcher under the exempt category you do not have to follow the requirements under 45 CFR 46 which require annual renewal and documentation of written informed consent which are not required for the exempt category. However, exempt status still requires you to attain consent from participants before conducting your research as needed. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee following these requirements are highlighted below. Please note failure of the investigator to notify the IRB of the below requirements may result in disciplinary action.

- Submit a protocol modification (change) form if any changes (not matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study to ensure the risk level to participants has not increased.
  - If any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research, and
  - Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system when your study has ended.

The protocol modification, adverse/unanticipated event, and closure forms are located in the Cayuse IRB System. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillespie@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

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Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board
REFERENCES


ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. Victoria Valenzuela and Zuleima Carrillo collaborated on the following sections:

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusion

Both Victoria Valenzuela and Zuleima Carrillo contributed to the formatting, editing, and revisions process throughout the preparation of this paper for submission.