Lived Experiences of Parents with Child at Risk

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ABSTRACT

Parents play a crucial role in the full development of the child. Parents are the child's first role model that influences them in the basic values, like religious values, and issues related to their future, like educational choices that will tend to prevent them from engaging in illegal activities. This study was conducted to determine the lived experiences of parents with children at risk in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. It is a phenomenological study where the researchers made interview guide questions to gather data on the parents' lived experiences. The study was conducted on randomly selected parents with at-risk children in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City.

Moreover, seven parents with children at risk were purposely selected to be part of the research study participants. The participants were selected with the criteria where Parents of a Child at Risk/custody of the child in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City, have difficulties coping with their child at risk and are willing to participate in the study. Four themes were identified in the study: Emotionally Stressed, Parental Acceptance, Giving a Child at Risk Effective and Positive Discipline, and Proper Parenting Approach. The study's findings show that most parents with children at risk experienced emotional stress, parental acceptance, giving their child at risk effective and positive discipline, and proper parenting approach. However, some Children at Risk tend not to listen to their parent's advice and choose to be with their peers or groups prone to committing illegal acts. Through this, the parents will have ni choice but to accept their children's decisions. Even though their child committed illegal acts, they still gave effective and positive discipline with a proper parenting approach in handling their child at risk. Therefore, it was recommended that Parents with Child At Risk in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City, continue to give effective and positive discipline in handling with risky behavior of their children at risk to avoid them and prevent them from committing other illegal acts. Moreover, parents encouraged children to always follow and listen to their parent's advice to avoid and prevent them from committing or engaging in another illegal act because if the child at risk is disciplined and making their current situation as their teacher, it can reduce the burden of emotional stressed of the parents and that will create a healthy environment for them.

Keywords: Challenges; Child at risks; Emotions; Experiences; Parents.

1. Introduction

The experience of parenting is said to be one of the most challenging and rewarding roles in life. However, when a child is labeled as "at risk," the challenges are often magnified, and the rewarding aspect of parenting can be overshadowed by the stress and uncertainty brought on by the child's situation (Fox, 2019). The purpose of this thesis is to explore the lived experiences of parents with a child at risk and gain insight into the unique challenges and coping mechanisms of these parents. The concept of "at-risk" children refers to a broad category of children who may be vulnerable to a host of negative behaviors and outcomes, including academic underachievement, behavioral problems, involvement in drugs and crime, and suicide (Katz, 2020). In addition, parents of "at-risk" children can be pressured to navigate complex and often emotionally distressing situations, such as addiction, abuse or neglect, or mental health issues (Golan, 2022).

Lack of supervision, environmental neglect, and even emotional abuse of children through parenting styles can place children at a greater risk of physical harm (Morrongiello, 2020). Suppose children do not feel secure in their relationships with their primary carers and do not get enough stimulation; that can negatively impact their development and ability to form intimate relationships (Wang, 2022). Therefore, adequate nurturing in early life is extremely important because it allows them to develop positive behaviors to prevent youth crimes and violence. Poverty and low-income family governance are greatly responsible for children committing illegal acts (Abiodun,

2019). Most struggle with multiple social and economic issues in their homes and communities. These issues range from being on the streets as a result of poverty and: or family dysfunction to coping with peer pressure about risk-taking, such as minor theft and substance abuse (Jemal, 2022).

Therefore, intervention needs to be holistic to achieve maximum sustainable impacts. They must recognize the root causes of a child's criminal behavior and identify appropriate services to help the child at risk address the problems. Services needed may include support for basic education and skill training, employment, drug rehabilitation, and family counseling (Modipa, 2022).

To gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of parents in dealing with their child at risk, it is very important to determine the understandable meaning of such experiences that can give us some ideas, particularly to those parents with the same situation, on how to deal with their child at risk (Merritt, 2021). As a parent, you are the most important teacher in your child's life and know your child's best. Moreover, it is also important to strengthen the protective factors in parents' lives to help ensure that children and youth function well at home, school, work, and community (Yule, 2019).

2. Methods

The study was conducted using a qualitative research method and a phenomenological methodology. The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Parents with Child At Risk. Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology was used to interpret data from research participants to obtain meaningful themes. The study was conducted in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental.

Before the actual data collection, the researchers obtained permission from the University's Dean of the College of Criminology to pursue the study and conduct the interview via a formal letter signed by our Thesis Adviser and lastly signed by the Barangay Captain of Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City. After obtaining the necessary permissions, the researchers coordinated with the Barangay Captain of Carangan, Ozamiz City, for the list of identified participants and proposed an interview schedule. In the interview, the researchers and participants strictly observe proper distancing and wearing face masks. Furthermore, the researchers informed the participants that the conversation would be recorded and assured them that all their responses would be kept strictly confidential.

The study participants were 7 Parents with Child At Risk in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City. They were identified through the office of the said Barangay based on the following criteria: (1) Parents of a Child at Risk/have custody of the child in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City; (2) has difficulties confronted in coping with their child at risk; and (3) willing to participate in the study.

The researchers developed an interview guide to gather the required data from the participants. The researchers developed an interview guide that is the main tool for gathering the required data from the participants. The tool contains questions about parents' experiences with children at risk in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City. That is composed of opening questions to obtain the needed profile of the participants, the core questions, and the closing questions. Furthermore, recording devices were also used in recording their responses during the conduct of the interview.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Profile of the Participants

This part presented the different themes that were derived from the different responses of the participants of the study during the conduct of the interview. It is evident in the study that our participants were Parents having children at risk.

Further, based on the responses of the participants of the study, there were four themes identified such as (1) Emotionally stressed, (2) Parental acceptance, (3) Giving a Child at Risk Effective and Positive Discipline, (4) Proper parenting approach.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Code Name	Age	Civil Status	Type of work
P1	38	Married	Truck Driver
P2	30	Single	Tricycle Driver
P3	45	Married	Housewife
P4	36	Married	Farmer
P5	36	Married	Tricycle Driver
P6	35	Married	Tricycle Driver
P7	37	Married	Housewife

3.2. Emotionally stressed

Emotional stress is one of the most difficult aspects most people face when dealing with or attempting to meet the responsibilities of caring for their children (Munawar, 2021). Most participants revealed their various feelings when dealing with their child who was at risk, particularly when their child did an illegal behavior.

These were the participants' common experiences:

"I have experienced many difficulties, including shame and sadness because, of course, he is my child, as well as anger and headaches, especially when he does bad things." (P1, 2-4)

"It's a shame for me because I always got called at the barangay." (P4, 60)

"I'm having a headache cause it's really tired to think how to handle him." (P5, 78-79)

"What I feel is worried and sadness about why he did this because he is my son." (P2, 22-23)

Parenting stress is associated with lower parental sensitivity toward their children, thus negatively influencing child outcome (Ward, 2020). Therefore, individual differences in parenting stress, experienced by most parents as those aversive feelings associated with the demands of the parenting role, are an important aspect of parent, child, and family functioning (Johansson, 2020).

While parenting occurs in a context, it is often judged based on societal expectations of childrearing practices and optimal outcomes, with little understanding of the factors contributing to parenting behaviors. The experience of adversity has the potential to impact the parental sense of competence and parenting practices (Scannel, 2020).

The first identified theme is primarily focused on the emotional stress that every parent experiences when their child is at risk and techniques to deal with the many emotions that they feel every time their child does something wrong.

3.3. Parental acceptance

Parental acceptance does not mean you have to agree with your child's feelings but that you will support, encourage and try to understand them and help them develop self-awareness as best as possible (Moorcroft, 2020). Acceptance in parenting can be conceptualized as being able to see and acknowledge the uniqueness in your child without pressing for this to change (Lopez, 2021).

These were the participants' common experiences:

"So, the way I deal with my son's experiences is to accept them and reduce my sadness because feeling sad will affect my life, especially if I keep thinking about him right away." (P3, 43-45)

"I did not let my emotions get in the way of accepting who he was, and I prayed to the Lord that he would guide my son so that he would not make the same mistakes again." (P1, 6-7)

"As a parent, the methods I have used to cope with my experiences are the only ones who accept and understand my son because, even though he has a problem, he is still my son, and I still tell him he did something wrong." (P2, 23-25)

" Accepting my child's risky behavior and never allowing my emotions to rule me has been my approach in dealing with such experiences. Allowing your emotions to control you increases the likelihood of harming your child." (P6, 88-90)

Acceptance fosters a healthy environment for the entire family and has numerous benefits for a child's mental health. It may also enhance your relationship(Barnes, 2020). Unfortunately, not all parents, particularly those with delinquent children, can embrace their children easily. Accepting the child's behavior is the most important and courageous move a parent can make for their children, particularly CAR. Parents' approval of their children's behavior may positively impact the child's physical and mental health.

The second identified theme, Parental acceptance, focuses on parents with a positive attitude about dealing with and accepting their children's behavior, particularly delinquent youngsters, and how they handle certain situations calmly, even when difficult. In addition, they always show the love of parents towards their children.

3.4. Giving a Child at Risk Effective and Positive Discipline

Effective and positive discipline teaches and guides children, not just forces them to obey. As with all other interventions aimed at pointing out unacceptable behavior, the child should always know that the parent loves and supports him or her. Trust between parent and child should be maintained and constantly built upon (Dadds, 2019).

These were the participants' common experiences:

"My style of disciplining my child who is at risk is to just talk to him, advise him, and not hurt him too much because no matter how much you hurt him and the child does not believe, you cannot do it. I am also teaching him what should and should not be done so that he also knows that it is wrong to leave. I also pray that the Lord will guide him so that he can no longer do bad things." (P1, 12-16)

"One of effective ways in disciplining my son is simple: I will only talk to him in a good way that is good for him and good for me, and I should really pray to God that we can have a good conversation so that he does not scold me." (P3, 51-53)

"One of the ways I discipline my at-risk child is to talk to him calmly and give him alternative counsel while never hurting him. I also advise him to pray to God and seek forgiveness for his transgression." (P6, 94-96)

"I use simple methods to discipline my at-risk child: I talk to him calmly, never hurt him, and always treat him the same way I did before." (P1, 16-17)

Discipline attempts to teach parents concepts and tools to help them develop mutually respectful relationships through structured and experiential learning (Caroll, 2020). Many parents are drawn to Positive Discipline because they know punishment is not effective in the long term, and they like the idea of being kind and firm at the same time. However, they do not fully understand what it means to be kind and firm simultaneously, which is much easier to say than to do (Nelsen, 2019).

The focus of Positive Discipline is mainly to help parents to achieve effective discipline; it may also help parents modify their parenting style towards an authoritative style and away from a permissive or authoritarian style. For instance, in the warmth/involvement factor, there are items such as Giving praise when the child is good, giving comfort and understanding when the child is upset, and expressing affection by hugging, kissing, and holding the child (Caroll, 2021).

3.5. Proper parenting approach

The parenting approach may be premature and thus represents an important avenue for intervention upon parental support (Rhodes, 2019). These styles encompass parents' behaviors and attitudes and the dynamic environment in which they raise their children. Their approach is "spare the rod, spoil the child." They expect children to obey without question. Effects of Authoritarian Parenting (Landsford, 2022).

These were the participants' common experiences:

"When dealing with my child, I employ simple methods such as approaching him softly and never hurting him. Talk to him nicely, and I never treat him differently every time I approach him." (P7, 109-111)

"My methods of dealing with my at-risk child are simple: I use a proper approach, like calm him down well, or normally, I do not hurt him too much, and it is normal that when I discipline him, I only talk to him because hurting the child can make things worse." (P1, 8-11)

"I use a normal or proper approach, like talking to him nicely, because it will get worse if you beat him." (P5, 80-81)

"My coping mechanism that I use in handling my at-risk child is simple the first thing I did is approach him in a calm way and I never hurt him because hurting your delinquent child may increase the possibility that he may do it again." (P6, 92-94)

Permissive and authoritative parents share a responsive approach, nurturing, and involvement. Both show respect for children as independent beings. However, unlike permissive parents, authoritative parents do not let their kids get away with bad behavior (Sahithya, 2019). Parents need support.

Intervention programs and services can help, although they need to be based on approaches that have been rigorously tested and shown to work (Franck, 2019). As a parent, you give your children a good start in life. You nurture, protect, and guide them. Parenting is a process that prepares your child for independence. As your child grows and develops, there are many things you can do to help your child (Utomo, 2022).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

After data collection with participants in the study, the research revealed the following findings, which were grouped by themes such as Emotionally Stressed; Parental Acceptance; Giving a Child At Risk Effective and Positive Discipline; Proper Parenting Approach. These are the common lived experiences of parents with children at risk in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City, based on the interview results conducted by the researcher. Based on the findings of the study, most parents experienced emotional stress, parental acceptance, giving their child at risk effective and positive discipline, and proper parenting approach. Some Child At Risk tends not to listen to their parent's advice and choose to be with their peers or groups prone to committing illegal acts. Through this, the parents will have no choice but to accept their child's decisions. Even though their child committed illegal acts, they still gave effective and positive discipline with a proper parenting approach in handling their child at risk.

Parents with Child At Risk in Barangay Carangan, Ozamiz City, may continue to give effective and positive discipline in handling the risky behavior of their children at risk to avoid them and prevent them from committing another illegal act. Moreover, parents encouraged children to always follow and listen to their parent's advice to avoid and prevent them from committing or engaging in another illegal act because if the child at risk is disciplined and making their current situation as their teacher, it can reduce the burden of emotional stressed of the parents and that will create a healthy environment for them.

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