

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**BRIDGING THE GAP ENHANCING RESEARCH-TO- COMMUNITY  
EXTENSION APPROACH****<sup>1</sup>Elnie D. Calunsag, RPsy, RPm**<sup>[1]</sup>Cotabato State University, Philippines**ABSTRACT**

*To construct a multidisciplinary framework for global education, integrating cultural understanding, psychological insights and literacy skills, a research-to- community extension approach was used as a systematic methodology to transfer research findings into practical applications. This response aims to investigate the varied nature of the research-to-community extension by examining its strengths, weaknesses, and potential improvement as Cotabato State University, a new university, intensifies its threefold functions: instruction, research, and extension. To improve the effectiveness of research -to- community extension, the researcher/project leader delves into the crucial role of community engagement in research, investing in capacity building among recipients and translating research findings into a actionable solutions for communities. Community members received a two-day training to improve their knowledge and capacity to engage in extension activities for long-term sustainability, particularly with regard to managing their children's sexual development.*

**Keywords:** *capacity-building, research-to- community extension, actionable solutions*

**INTRODUCTION**

TARA USAP TAYO: A Capacity building Seminar Workshop for Parents and Caregivers on Handling Adolescents Sexual Development is research-based extension project as a result from the study “Adolescents Perception on Pre- Marital Sex: A Basis for Intervention” as one of the researchers response to Cotabato State University agenda on gender and development. The parents/caregivers and adolescents are the participants of this community extension.

Last 2023, the study conducted by Calunsag, Lopina, Bones, Suarez, and Ali revealed that adolescents have a strong desire to have a better and open discussion with their parents/caregivers about their sexuality. They believed that it would be helpful for them to better understand themselves if they had the chance to communicate with their parents. The difficulty of asking and expressing curiosity is rooted in adolescents’ perception that sex/premarital is taboo or prohibited to talk about. In this context, the extensionist aims to equip

parents with how to handle and communicate sexual development among their children.

Moreover, this project is aligned with the Commission on Population and Development in upholding global commitment to population and development to create better policies and programs for Filipino progress. In addition, the Adolescent Health and Youth Development Program (AHYDP) of the Population Commission is in response to the growing awareness worldwide on reproductive health issues and concerns of the youth and its significant contribution to future population and health trends.

To support the facts, relevance, and urgency of this project to the community below are the statistics and reality check, which includes that here in the Philippines, sexual activity among the youth is becoming more common, and the incident rates remain alarming. On October 23, 2019, the Executive Director of the Commission on Population and Development (PopCom) Juan

Antonio Perez III called on President Rodrigo Duterte to issue an executive order declaring adolescent pregnancy a national emergency (Abad, 2019). This need is supported by a 2017 survey conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), which showed that 196,478 young women aged 10–19 years have experienced pregnancy. The report showed that in a group of 200,000 female adolescents, 60,000 experienced repeat pregnancies. In addition, an average of 150,000 teenagers give birth annually and start a family on their own (Diaz-Sabado, 2019). Further data from the PSA also show that teenage women who have experienced pregnancy belong to poor households and have less or did not receive no formal education compared to women who became pregnant during their adulthood (Recide, 2014).

Hence, in Phase 1, capacitating parents/caregivers through communication skills in handling sexual development or sensitive topics increases understanding and knowledge between parents and children. This is the first intervention program to target parents/caregivers. In this program, early marriage/early pregnancy, risks of abortion, and mental health implications of premarital sex will be avoided or lessened. Likewise, this project supports government and non-government agencies such as the Commission on Population and Development, DOH Adolescent and Health Program, and the Adolescent and Development–UNICEF Philippines, which is in great hope of achieving the important goal of helping parents effectively communicate and handle sexual development among their children.

In Phase 2, the information drive for the promotion of healthy sexuality among adolescents is the execution of the second research intervention program to be implemented in light of addressing the rampant practice of premarital sex in the community, as perceived by my adolescents in Cotabato City, Philippines (Calunsag, et al. (2023). This program is in great hope of achieving its important goal of helping adolescents handle their sexual development and avoid the risk of early sexual initiation.

## METHODS

The present article is based on a recent community extension project implemented as first-hand information to be analyzed and used in future impact studies. A quantitative approach was adopted in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community participants evaluated the program as an intervention program implemented in the community. The rating scores ranges from 4.00 to 5.00, which means very good to excellent. First, the assessment revealed that the purpose of the program was well presented and explained by facilitators at the beginning of the capacity-building seminar workshop (4.5). The participants also revealed that the allotted time (4.6 min) or the duration of the program was reasonable and achievable. Similarly, they added that the program was specific, clear, understandable, and realistic (5.00).

Second, in terms of program content, the methodology is dynamic and interesting (5.00). Likewise, it was sufficient for the participants to express their concerns and challenges about their children's evolving sexual development. Through sharing and group activities, they revealed that the program was interactive and experiential. Hence, they were able to express their thoughts and share their cultural and religious practices. Moreover, in terms of the topic, the participants indicated that the program was well designed and organized (5.00). They added that it was timely and beneficial (5.00) since they had difficulty handling many concerns about their children. In addition, they verbalized that because of this digital age, their children may seek to have online friends and boy-girl relationships that may involve online distractions and undetected online sexual-related activities. Moreover, from the given tips on how to communicate with their children, they rated it excellent (5.00), implying that the sample strategies are simple, insightful, and easy to practice. In addition, in terms of program activities, the participants rated it as excellent (5.00). This

implies that the activities conducted from gauging or “Kumustahan Time” to establish rapport as an important part of the program (Kottler & Shepard, 2008) to group sharing are consistent with the objectives of the seminar. This is also an indication that the input regarding different dimensions of sexual development among adolescents (Gillibrand, Lam, & O’ Donnell, 2011) is sufficient, and the knowledge has been transferred and understood according to participants’ capacity. Third, in terms of program management, the participants also rated the program excellently (5.00), implying that the program was well-planned, coordinated, and scheduled as per approval is concerned with the office of the university extension services office down to the local barangay heads and community.

### CONCLUSION

Implementation of the program is helpful for the community. Capacitating parents as the main drivers of family dynamics in home environments is important for maintaining youth welfare. Youths are said to be the “pag-asa na bayan.” Hence, they need to be protected and help not engage in risky sexual behaviors. As parents learn how to handle sexual development among their children, this community extension program needs to be replicated and studied for its impact on the community. This initiative should have a long-term and holistic approach that can be an agent of societal transformation, helping the community connect and fill the gap in its realistic and timely needs.

Moreover, phase 2 intervention, which is the information drive for the promotion of healthy sexuality among adolescents, should be implemented to address the rampant practice of premarital sex in the community, as perceived by adolescents. This intervention can help adolescents manage their sexual development and avoid the risk of early sexual initiation. The project leader and extensionists are in great hope that it will be materialized for the next year’s university-wide extension proposal for the continuous support and societal contribution of the universities’ stakeholders and the lives of everyone.

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