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## Research Article

### **Mother-daughter Communication on Sexual and Reproductive Health: Correlations with Mothers' Profile, Religiosity, and Attitudes towards Sexual and Reproductive Health**

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## ABSTRACT

With the surge in curiosity during adolescence, there is a greater emphasis on parents' inherent responsibility to guide their adolescents and aid in their positive development. This study sought to establish correlations of the quality of mother-daughter communication (MDC) with the mother's profile, religiosity, and attitude toward sexual and reproductive health (SRH) through the eyes of Grade 12 Senior High School female students, 18 years old and above, enrolled in a private university in Manila, Philippines. A total of 116 survey respondents were randomly selected for the study. Descriptive statistics and correlation tests were used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that the majority of the students' mothers are in their forties, earn a monthly income below the population average, and have three children. There was no statistically significant correlation between the age, income, and number of children variables with MDC quality. Respondents' mothers were highly religious and had a favorable attitude towards SRH. There was also no significant correlation between mothers' religiosity and MDC quality. Notably, a significant positive, strong correlation between MDC quality and mothers' attitudes towards SRH ( $r = .6589$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p = 8.94E-16$ ) was found, implying that mothers' positive attitudes toward SRH improve the quality of MDC on SRH. The findings may guide efforts to improve mother-teen communication dynamics on SRH concerns and identify an effective strategy for enhancing quality teen SRH communication strategies; mothers' attitudes toward SRH are critical to the success of adolescent SRH programs.

**Keywords:** attitude towards SRH, parent-teen communication, quality of SRH, religiosity, sexual and reproductive health

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## Introduction

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH), defined as a state of holistic well-being that encompasses physical, psychological, and social facets and concerns an individual's reproductive system (Sanghirun et al., 2021), has established itself as a global priority (Shin et al., 2019). As adolescents' curiosity heightens during identity formation, parents' inherent responsibility to guide their adolescents and nurture their positive development is increasingly vital (Sugiyanto et al., 2020). Diverse measures to address SRH issues have been advocated worldwide as part of the ongoing process of promoting healthy sexual development and mitigating the primary consequences of risky sexual behavior (Isaacs, 2012). Specifically, comprehensive discourses between adolescents and parents continue to be one of the most widely promoted strategies for educating adolescents about SRH. Tuason et al. (2017) asserted that parent-teen communication (PTC) has the potential to shape adolescent sexual values, standards, and behaviors; as such, it may serve as a functional intervention to potentially prevent several SRH issues.

Whatever the potential of PTC, its efficacy depends on the merit of conversations. The quality of such has been evaluated by assessing openness and communication issues in discussions (Barnes & Olson, 1985, as cited in Toombs, 2014). Kirkman et al. (2005) defined parental openness as being subtly responsive to their teen's questions and generally accepting their perspectives while respecting their privacy and comfort. Meanwhile, communication issues may be linked to frequent disagreement, hesitation, and aggression during PTC (Araujo-Robles et al., 2018). Notably, quality is influenced by interrelated factors which affect parental confidence and judgment about sex education. First, parents' age, general income, and family size affect the presence of generational barriers and parents' experience in handling sexuality-centered conversations with teens (Shin et al., 2019). Second, religious beliefs and the level of religiosity of parents are known to influence the extent, frequency, and openness of PTC on sexual matters in families (Janet, 2017; Negy et al., 2015; Regnerus, 2005). These negatively influenced SRH

discussions when religious teachings and sexual matters conflicted (Janet, 2017). Third, parental attitudes toward sexual health topics, since such inevitably manifest in SRH communication (Isaacs, 2012). Parents who encourage discussing SRH with their teens were more communicative about various topics related to their teen's holistic sexual development (Widman et al., 2016). Many studies also show that parents often oppose SRH communication with their children and approach such discussions unfavorably with negative attitudes (Janet, 2017; Lebese et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2018; Negy et al., 2015; Somers & Anagurthi, 2014; Sridawruang et al., 2010).

While parents are generally regarded as the primary source of information about maturing sexuality, related research explains that parents typically feel uneasy or inadequate when discussing sex-related issues and behaviors with their children, which results in their avoidance of SRH discussions despite their obvious need (Byers & Sears, 2012). With that said, teenagers frequently avoid discussing such subjects with their parents out of embarrassment, mistrust, and confusion (Sevilla et al., 2016). In current Philippine society, the lack of parent-teen communication on sexual and reproductive health topics is a persistent issue within households; without due acknowledgement, Filipino teens' SRH concerns may inevitably continue to be unaddressed.

Concerning the present literature focused on the quality of PTC on SRH, most researchers approached the variable qualitatively. They thus conducted in-depth studies that included testimonials instead of applying quantitative methods. Given the component's generalized definition, research on the quality of PTC is indeed excessively varied in terms of the used sub-domains, methods of data analysis, and suggested findings. Most importantly, there is a noticeable lack of relevant published articles focused on Filipino parent-teen dynamics and centered on PTC on SRH topics in the Philippines. A vast area of research concerning the complexities of teenage SRH matters in the country remains unexplored. Of paramount concern, the general aversion of Filipino families to sexual issues has stifled the potentially beneficial development of comprehensive

parent-teen discussions on SRH in the country; as a result, numerous efforts to improve the standards of adolescents' sexual wellness fall short.

This study aimed to determine the relationship of the quality of mother-daughter communication (MDC) with the mother's profile, religiosity, and attitude towards sexual and reproductive health from the perspectives of Grade 12 Senior High School (SHS) female students of legal age from a private university in Manila, Philippines.

## Methods

### *Sampling and Ethical Considerations*

A total of 116 SHS students aged 18 to 21 years old, studying in a private university in Manila, Philippines, participated in this study. A sample size of 113 was calculated using a margin of error = .05 and a  $p \leq .05$  level of significance for a total population estimate of 160. Students were eligible to participate in an online survey only if they met the pre-set selection criteria. The study was also conducted with strict adherence to ethical principles. The critical details, procedures, and benefits were laid out for the respondents to acknowledge, and they were informed that they could withdraw from the survey at any time. Lastly, respondents were assured of the security and confidentiality of data handling prior to beginning the survey.

### *Survey Questionnaire*

A self-administered questionnaire with distinct 4-point Likert scales was used in gathering quantitative data. Pertinent scales and questionnaires discerned from the literature reviewed were adapted for this. First, to gauge teens' mother's level of religiosity, the questions from Nonnemaker et al.'s (2003) research that measured the public and private components of such were used. Second, to ascertain the nature of teens' mother's attitudes towards SRH topics portions of Cleland's (2001) Illustrative Questionnaire for Interview-Surveys for

Young People as well as stances from Sugiyanto et al. (2020) and Svensson and Waern (2013) were adopted. Lastly, to measure the quality of MDC on SRH, parts of Barnes and Olson's (1985, as cited in Toombs, 2014) Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS) were adapted. Moreover, pertinent close-ended questions were used to obtain data about teens' mothers' sociodemographic characteristics and socioeconomic status (SES). The developed questionnaire's post-test revealed that all items were reliable as per Cronbach's alpha test (mother's religiosity = 0.87; mother's attitude toward SRH = 0.90; and MDC quality = 0.96).

### *Data Analysis*

The data were processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in JASP, a statistical application (JASP, 2021). The study utilized descriptive (central tendency measures) and inferential statistics (Pearson's R correlation test) to process the data. In interpreting the strengths of the correlations of the variables examined, the basis was as follows: 0.00 - 0.29: Weak; 0.30 - 0.59: Moderate; 0.60 - 0.99: Strong (Levin & Fox, 2014).

## Results and Discussion

This study identified three major factors that influence the quality of mother-daughter SRH communication: mother's profile based on age, monthly income, and number of children; level of religiosity; and attitudes toward SRH.

### *Mothers' Profile*

Table 1 shows the profile of the mothers based on their age, monthly income, and number of children. Overall, the mothers were middle-aged ( $M = 49.02$ ) and had three children on average. Moreover, the mean shows that the mothers belong to the middle of the income scale. But, in line with the high standard deviation, most mothers had below-average income. This implied that there are mothers with relatively very high salaries.

*Table 1. Profile of the Mothers based on Age, Income, and Number of Children (n=116)*

<b>Socio-demographic Characteristics and SES</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Mother's Age	49.02	5.58
Mother's Monthly Income (in Peso) <sup>a</sup>	74, 153	122, 894.65
Number of children in the family	2.69	1.04

<sup>a</sup> n = 111 due to removed responses

### **Mothers' Religiosity**

*Table 2. Mothers' Level of Religiosity (n=116)*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Qualitative Interpretation</b>
Private Religiosity	3.401	High
Public Religiosity	2.754	Moderate
Overall Mother's Level of Religiosity	3.078	High

Legend: 1.00 – 2.00 - Low; 2.01 – 3.00 - Moderate; 3.01 – 4.00 - High

In sum, Table 2 shows the respondents' mothers' high levels of religiosity ( $M = 3.078$ ).

**Private Religiosity.** The inward manifestation of the mother's faith, which captures the importance of religion to the mother and her general spirituality, is considered high, with a mean of 3.401. The numerical data gathered imply that the salience of religion for Filipino mothers is high, which Tuason et al. (2017) reported contributing to conservative stances on sex-related matters.

**Public Religiosity.** Findings show a moderate degree ( $M = 2.754$ ) of mothers' outward

expression of religion, and a possible implication is that respondents' mothers have limited time for such due to other responsibilities. Relatedly, Regnerus (2005) found that outward religiosity lowered the frequency of sex-related PTC yet positively affected the extent of SRH communication centered on morality. In contrast, Widman et al. (2016) inferred that parents' greater concern towards the perceived detrimental consequences of early sexual activity for their daughters than their sons negates religiosity as the main driving factor behind the frequency of SRH communication with female teens.

### **Mothers' Attitudes towards Sexual and Reproductive Health**

*Table 3. Mother's Attitude towards SRH (n=116)*

<b>Mother's Attitude towards SRH</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Qualitative Interpretation</b>
Teenage Romantic Relationships	2.877	Positive
Contraceptives	2.478	Negative
Sexual Intercourse	2.313	Negative
Sexually Transmitted Diseases / Sexually Transmitted Infections (STDs/STIs)	2.873	Positive
Overall Mother's Attitude towards SRH	2.635	Positive

Legend: 1.00 – 2.50 - Negative; 2.51 – 4.00 - Positive

Table 3 shows that the perceived attitude of respondents' mothers towards SRH is overall positive ( $M = 2.635$ ).

**Teenage Romantic Relationships.** The positive attitude of mothers towards teenage

romantic relationships generated the highest rating ( $M = 2.877$ ). The findings suggest that mothers are reasonably lenient when it comes to their daughters' conventional relations with male peers, owing to the modernization of traditional cultures (Liu et al., 2018). However, as

presented in previous studies, parents have been found to disapprove of their teens' dating because of demanded prioritization of academics and prevalent cultural customs (Liu et al., 2018) and female-focused restrictions (Sridawruang et al., 2010).

**Contraceptives.** Mothers were found to have a generally negative attitude towards contraceptives ( $M = 2.478$ ). It was apparent that mothers' ultimate disapproval of their daughters engaging in sexual intercourse outweighed their positive outlook on other aspects of contraceptive use. Studies have shown that parents commonly forbid their teens from using contraceptives due to beliefs that these may be hazardous and serve as an enabler of sexual intercourse and prohibitive cultures or religions (Janet, 2017; Lebese et al., 2013). Conversely, recent findings have indicated that parents are beginning to condone condoms in hopes of avoiding unwanted pregnancies and human immunodeficiency virus contraction (Tipwareerom & Weglicki, 2017). This coincides with mothers' perceived affirmation of discussing contraceptives and their effectiveness of such in preventing unwanted situations.

**Sexual Intercourse.** The overall attitude of respondents' mothers toward sexual intercourse is negative ( $M = 2.313$ ). These findings

correspond with multiple documentations of parents' distinct opposition towards their teens engaging in sexual behaviors, regardless of whether they were practicing safe sex or not. This may be linked to the beliefs that sex increases the chances of teenage pregnancy or STD/STI contraction (Somers & Anagurthi, 2014), Christian beliefs (Negy et al., 2015), and conservative cultures (Sridawruang et al., 2010).

**STDs/STIs.** The generally positive attitude of respondents' mothers towards the subject of STDs/STIs ( $M = 2.873$ ) is apparent in all the maternal perspectives on the topic; this kind of response may be due to the items being prevention-centered. Despite their general disapproval of condoms, parents feel reassured by knowing that their teens use condoms when having sexual intercourse (Tipwareerom & Weglicki, 2017). The respondents' mothers' overall positive attitude may establish their stand that STD/STI transmission is a necessary issue to address with their daughters.

#### **Quality of Mother-Daughter Communication**

Overall, Table 4 presents a low MDC quality ( $M = 2.455$ ) on SRH from the daughters' perspectives.

*Table 4. Quality of Mother-Daughter Communication (n=116)*

Quality of Mother-Daughter Communication	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
Openness	2.541	High
Absence of Communication Problems	2.369	Low
Overall Quality of Mother-Daughter Communication	2.455	Low

Legend: 1.00 – 2.50 - Low; 2.51 – 4.00 – High

**Openness.** Mothers' responsiveness to inquiries and open-mindedness to teens' perspectives during SRH conversations with the respondents were overall high ( $M = 2.541$ ).

**Absence of Communication Problems.** The absence of misunderstanding, hesitancy, and reservation during MDC on SRH was low, with a weighted mean of 2.369.

The mixed interpretations could be owed to the other variables that may impact the quality of MDC on SRH. Notably, the topic being discussed in a scenario may also play a role in the perceived quality of MDC for that particular instance, resulting in differing quality rates depending on the subject matter.

### Associated Factors to the Quality of Mother-Daughter Communication

Pearson R test results show that the mother's age ( $r = .0940$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p < .05$ ), mother's monthly income ( $r = .1236$ ,  $n = 111$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the number of children present in the family ( $r = .1805$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p < .05$ ) are all positively correlated with the quality of MDC. Moreover, positive correlations were also evident between the quality of MDC and the mother's level of religiosity ( $r = .0921$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and attitude towards SRH ( $r = .6589$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Insignificant direct weak correlations between the quality of MDC and mother's age ( $r = .0940$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p = .3156$ ), mother's monthly income ( $r = .1236$ ,  $n = 111$ ,  $p = .1961$ ), and the number of children present in the family ( $r = .1805$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p = .0524$ ) were also determined. A similar trend was observed for the correlation between the quality of MDC and mother's level of religiosity ( $r = .0921$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p = 0.3254$ ). Most eminently, a significant positive strong correlation was present between

the quality of MDC and mother's attitude towards SRH ( $r = .6589$ ,  $n = 116$ ,  $p = 8.94E-16$ ). (Table 5).

The essential link between parental attitudes towards SRH and the quality of PTC on sexuality-related matters has been corroborated as these attitudes commonly affect parents' views on individual SRH subjects and their manner of proceeding with communication on such (Isaacs, 2012). Thus, the attitudes expressed by parents during meetings must be acknowledged, given that the messages they convey to their children vary accordingly (Jaccard & Dittus, 1993, as cited in Isaacs, 2012). Specifically, parents who promote open and receptive SRH communication build necessary rapport with their teens, especially when dealing with sensitive matters (Sanghirun et al., 2021). Ultimately, parents who encourage discourse with their teens on SRH have more opportunities to advocate safer and healthier practices (Byers & Sears, 2012).

*Table 5. Correlation between Quality of MDC and Mother's Profile, Religiosity, and Attitude towards SRH (n=116)*

Correlations	Mean	Quality of Mother-daughter Communication	
Socio-demographic and SES Characteristics			
Mother's Age	49.02	Pearson r	0.0940*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.3156
Mother's Monthly Income <sup>a</sup>	74, 153	Pearson r	0.1236*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.1961
Number of Children in the Family	2.69	Pearson r	0.1805*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0524
Mother's Level of Religiosity	3.078	Pearson r	0.0921*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.3254
Mother's Attitude towards SRH	2.635	Pearson r	0.6589*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	8.94E-16

<sup>a</sup> n = 111 due to removed responses;

\* $p < .05$ .

### Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the relationship of MDC quality with the mother's profile, religiosity, and attitude toward sexual and reproductive health from the perspective of Grade 12 SHS female students. Respondents' mothers were gathered to have a high level of

religiosity and an overall positive attitude towards SRH. Distinctly, a low level of MDC quality was observed. In contrast to previous studies, it was found that the socio-demographic profiles and SES characteristics of mothers and their level of religiosity showed no significant correlation with the quality of MDC. Lastly, a

significant positive, strong correlation was noted between mothers' attitudes towards SRH and MDC quality, suggesting that mothers' positive attitude towards SRH enhances the quality of MDC on SRH.

Notably, the results could serve as a guide to improving parent-teen dynamics, thus possibly identifying an effective approach to worthwhile and better-quality communication on SRH, which may benefit both the transitioning teenager and parent-teen relationships. It is crucial to acknowledge the significance of mothers' attitudes towards SRH in creating successful adolescent and family SRH programs. Here, educational initiatives dedicated to SRH awareness may be refined and made available, especially for adults who intend to reform their knowledge and attitudes in line with contemporary demands. With this, relevant matters on sexuality must be promptly destigmatized to address the attitudinal barriers of SRH discussions and further ameliorate related concerns present nationwide; consequently promoting a positive perception of such topics and open discourse about pressing SRH issues may be eventually viable in the Philippine society.

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