

Triumph in Adversities: Psychological Trauma and Resilience through the Lens of Families of Ambush Victims

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Abstract. This study explored the experiences of children whose parents were victims of ambushes in Luzon, Philippines, using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Five participants from Cavite, Laguna, Palawan, Manila, and Makati shared their stories. The data were analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), revealing several key themes about their emotional, psychological, and social challenges. These themes highlighted how the children coped with emotional turmoil, adjusted their routines, and found resilience through family and community support. The findings emphasized the critical role of support systems in helping children heal and adapt after traumatic events. This study provides insights into the impact of such tragedies on young individuals. It underscores the need for family and community resilience programs, promoting recovery and long-term well-being.

Keywords: Children; Ambushes; Resilience; Support systems; Trauma.

1.0 Introduction

Losing a family member is an incredibly distressing experience that affects every family differently. Various circumstances, such as suicide, terminal illness, or a heart attack, can contribute to the profound grief that ensues. However, the challenges become even more complex when a loved one is suddenly attacked and killed by someone. Navigating the aftermath of a sudden death is emotionally, physically, and mentally exhausting for all family members, who find themselves in a state of profound shock and grief. Boise (2023) states that children rely on their parents for affection, guidance, security, and necessities. The death of a parent introduced uncertainty into every aspect of their lives. Family members who remained found it necessary to relocate or make significant lifestyle adjustments.

Additionally, those left behind, including the surviving parent, siblings, grandparents, and other relatives, were also grieving, making it challenging for them to be emotionally present for the teenager. Many adults lacked the necessary skills to assist younger family members in healthily navigating their grief. Surviving parents might have avoided difficult discussions, believing it was in the child's best interest. However, it was crucial to recognize that an adolescent's ability to handle grief was heavily influenced by the coping mechanisms demonstrated to them. In addition, Teaff (2019) explained that an ambush, characterized by its sudden and vicious nature, brutally disrupted lives, leaving enduring scars—both visible and invisible. Whether on the battlefield, in conflict zones, or on urban streets, the surprise element of an ambush thrusts victims into fear and uncertainty. Coping with the aftermath of such a tragedy was immensely challenging, necessitating support from friends, family, or professional counselors. As Theisen-Womersley (2021) mentioned, the Philippines study, conducted in

collaboration with the Global Initiative for Stress and Trauma Treatment (Gist-T), focused on displaced communities in Marawi and was part of a mental health needs assessment following a recent conflict. The investigation of Theisen-Womersley identified a noteworthy prevalence rate of PTSD, specifically at 78%. Elevated levels of symptoms associated with traumatic stress could be attributed to the prevailing environmental stress and insecurity in situations of continuous displacement. The diverse traumas endured by these communities, encompassing human rights violations, bereavement, anxiety, familial disintegration, economic hardship, and ethnic prejudice, collectively contributed to the complex and multifaceted nature of the trauma experienced.

The Filipino people were frequently characterized as resilient, attributed to their ability to recover from adversity and maintain a positive outlook despite facing challenges. This resilience was apparent in their reactions to natural disasters, historical adversities, economic difficulties, loss of someone, and a robust community spirit. The capacity to unite in times of need and a profound sense of community played a crucial role in aiding individuals and communities in overcoming diverse hardships. It is important to note that higher-income areas were not immune to the risk of trauma; instead, the predictive community-based factors were fewer. Traumatic events could be random, affecting individuals across various socioeconomic backgrounds. Examples included illness, injuries, catastrophic accidents, and other unforeseeable incidents that had the potential to impact anyone at any given time.

The study found interest in pursuing a study about the psychological trauma and resilience of families of ambush victims because researching children who lose a parent due to an ambush attack was important for several reasons. This research provides valuable insights into the psychological, emotional, and social impact of such traumatic events. Additionally, this research on children who lose a parent due to ambush attacks was crucial for both immediate and long-term support. It contributed to the academic knowledge base and had practical implications for improving the lives of affected children through targeted interventions and support systems. This research aimed to understand the experiences of psychological trauma and resilience in the children of ambush victims. Focusing on the impact of ambush on families and understanding the grief experiences of children who lost parents to ambush compared to those experiencing other external causes of death, the study employed qualitative methods to delve deeper into this complex phenomenon.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This research utilized a qualitative research design to delve into the psychological trauma and resilience experienced by the families of ambush victims. Specifically, the study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). According to Smith and Fieldend (2021), IPA was a qualitative research approach within psychology that emphasized an idiographic viewpoint, seeking to understand how individuals within specific contexts comprehend particular phenomena. These phenomena often relate to personally significant experiences, such as major life events or the evolution of crucial relationships. IPA drew its theoretical foundations from phenomenology and hermeneutics, distinguishing itself from other qualitative phenomenological psychology approaches through its unique blend of psychological, interpretative, and idiographic elements.

2.2 Informants

With the utilization of purposive sampling, the researcher chose five (5) young adults from Luzon who lost their parents during their childhood due to an ambush. These participants, aged 20 to 30, were selected based on their recovery from their past experiences. The research findings pertain directly to the individuals included in the study and do not encompass those diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

2.3 Instrument

This research used an in-depth semi-structured interview to explore and understand the lived experiences of children in the study. A semi-structured interview represented the essence of in-depth qualitative interviewing, which was directed toward understanding the participants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words. The adaptable semi-structured interview format provided the researcher with the flexibility to prompt or guide the interviewee, particularly when seeking additional information or finding the interviewee's responses intriguing. To ensure the psychometric soundness of the guide questions, expert and content validity were observed. Lawshe's validation method, as cited by Zach (2021), was utilized to calculate the Content Validity Ratio, resulting in a value of 1.00. This validation method measured the content validity of each

item by having experts or a panel assess it. Three scales were used per item to identify whether it was "essential," "useful but not essential," or "not necessary."

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The participants were recruited through referrals from the researcher's friends at other universities and from the National Union of Journalists in the Philippines. The survey was scheduled to occur at the participants' residences or online. Prior permission was obtained to address privacy and data confidentiality issues during the collection process. The researcher visited some participants' homes, while others conducted an online "kamustahan" according to a prearranged schedule agreed upon by both the researcher and the participants. During these visits or pre-interviews, the researcher sought the participants' cooperation in completing a preliminary survey in their homes. The pre-interview served as a tool to identify which family members met the criteria outlined in this study. The researcher prioritized the well-being and comfort of the participants, scheduling interviews based on their availability and providing a safe space. This approach facilitated participants openly sharing their experiences while responding to interview questions. A letter of consent was secured from the participants before the actual interview. Due to the current situation after the pandemic, the researcher conducted both online and personal interviews, depending on the participants' agreement after the pre-interview. Three participants preferred an online interview, and the researcher used Zoom as a platform. However, the two participants were more willing to conduct a face-to-face interview; it was held at their houses.

2.5 Ethical Consideration

This research adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the school's Research Manual, ensuring participants' rights, well-being, and dignity throughout the study. Young adult respondents were not pressured during interviews and could withdraw without consequence. Informed consent was obtained, and the study's significance and objectives were explained in detail. Confidentiality was maintained, with participant identities protected using codes. To prioritize participant safety and mental health, the researcher strictly adhered to the interview protocol and focused solely on relevant subjects. Rapport-building techniques were employed to ensure participant comfort. Mental health crisis hotline numbers were provided before interviews, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw without repercussion. Similar measures were taken for online narrative interviews. Additionally, the contributions of other scholars and authors were duly recognized.

2.6 Data Analysis

The study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) for the interpretation and analysis of these responses. IPA was utilized to delve into the subjective experiences of individuals through thorough, reflective inquiry. IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) involved selecting a small group of individuals who had shared a specific experience. Both methodologies prioritized the unique experiences of individuals and over-generalized findings. IPA was a specialized application of the broader idiographic approach. According to Ho and Limpaecher (2023), in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the focus is dual. Firstly, it delves into the distinctive experiences of each participant, uncovering idiographic themes presented in their narratives. Subsequently, it explored overarching patterns of meaning across participants, identifying "superordinate themes" that tie them together. These could be understood as themes within the individual (intrapersonal) and across individuals (interpersonal). The process of IPA was iterative, emphasizing continuous sense-making. Researchers engaged in multiple readings of each transcript, coding and recoding to extract as much detail as possible from the data.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The themes that came out of the semi-structured interviews were the following: Striving for Stability Amidst an Emotional Storm, Disruptions in Routine, Social Interactions, and Well-Being, Emotional, Mental, and Behavioral Coping, Distancing from Feelings, People, and Occasions, Emotional Echoes of the Past, Catharsis through Multifaceted Coping Strategies, Journey of Healing from Denial to Acceptance, Family Resilience Amidst Emotional, Financial, and Legal Challenges, Continued Healing by Honoring the Past, Acknowledging the Present, and Embracing the Future, The Transformative Impact of Trauma on Familial Dynamics and Interpersonal Bonds, Recovery through Self, Family, and External Support, Strength in Unity and Triumph in Adversity, Adaptation in Family, Emotions, Practicality, and Legality and Threads of Resilience Binding Self and Family.

3.1 Striving for Stability amidst Emotional Storms

Through subordinate themes such as Initial Shock, Emotional Turmoil, Disbelief, Difficulty Processing, Attempts at Composure, and Prolonged Emotional Impact, the stories illuminate the complex interplay between cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects, thereby enriching our understanding of the human by the theme Striving for Stability Amidst Emotional Storms.

Initial Shock

In exploring trauma response, there was a profound and nuanced examination of human resilience in the face of adversity. The theme of Initial Shock is where individuals confront the abrupt and surreal nature of distressing events. In recounting their experience, respondent ANA vividly described the overwhelming sensation of feeling:

"On that day, I was surprised – from that moment, I started feeling nervous. I was extremely anxious. I was overwhelmed with nerves. It got to the point where I felt like I was going to faint... I felt like I was in shock... I was stunned when I heard that he had been shot several times. I felt dizzy. I was nervous."

Similar to DONDIE's experience, when he mentioned that *"For a while I was in State of Shock and Disbelief. I was totally shock when I saw him"* about his father, capturing the disorienting impact of the moment. This sentiment was echoed by another participant who described the sensation, *"It felt as if the ground suddenly disappeared beneath me,"* illustrating the profound sense of dislocation experienced.

Emotional Turmoil

Transitioning from shock, the narrative revealed Emotional Turmoil, wherein a tumultuous array of emotions emerged. *"I was already feeling nervous at that time. I couldn't explain it,"* articulated participant BOBBY, encapsulating a storm of strong feelings, like anger, sadness, worry, and frustration. Each emotion hit hard, showing how trauma could mess up one's mental and emotional health. Same experience with Participant DONDIE:

"That day, I was shocked. From that moment, I started to feel nervous. I was so anxious, like I was about to faint. I felt shocked and dizzy when I heard he was shot several times. It was like the ground disappeared beneath me. I was already nervous, and I couldn't explain why. It felt like my whole world changed overnight. I was so angry. He was shot near our house – it felt so unfair. I wanted to cry so badly. My heart was screaming. I wanted to shout, but I couldn't. It was just so frustrating."

Moreover, another respondent added, *"All I could ask was 'Why'"* illustrating the persistent questioning and internal turmoil that accompanied such distressing events.

Disbelief

Amid profound disbelief, the desperate longing for a different reality flowed through the narrative. *"I wish it were just a dream – that there was still a chance for Papa to live."* ANA encapsulated the fervent wish to reverse fate, clinging to the fragile hope that the tragedy could somehow be undone. This sentiment resonated deeply with the initial stages of grief, where denial served as a shield against the overwhelming pain of acceptance. The perceived incongruity with the father figure's character compounded the shock of the situation.

Difficulty Processing

Transitioning further, Difficulty Processing is an emerging sub-theme. Individuals navigated a landscape where everything felt confusing and overwhelming, like they were lost in a maze with no clear path forward. Participant CATHERINE stated, *"I couldn't process what happened – it was like I went deaf."* Their words were tinged with a sense of mystification and helplessness. It was as though they had been thrust into a world of shadows and half-truths, grappling with the enormity of what had transpired. The participants' youth compounded the overwhelming complexity of emotions at the time of the tragedy. *"What do you expect? I was 14 that time,"* Participant ANA reflected, highlighting the immense challenge of comprehending and navigating such a profound loss at such a tender age.

Attempts at Composure

Despite the turmoil and emotional turmoil, Attempts at Composure surface as individuals strive to maintain stability amidst the storm:

"What? Like I tried to be calm for my younger siblings," reflected on BOBBY's response, highlighting the instinctual desire to protect loved ones in times of crisis. It was a testament to the unwavering resilience of the human spirit, shining brightly amidst challenges and difficulties. "What? Like I tried to be calm for my younger siblings,"

BOBBY reiterated, emphasizing the significance of familial duty in steering their decisions amidst such turbulent periods. Amidst the uncertainty and fear, they drew upon their inner reserves of strength to shield their younger siblings from the full brunt of the tragedy, representing an unwavering pillar of support amidst the chaos.

Prolonged Emotional Impact

Lastly, Prolonged Emotional Impact had cast a long shadow, with the trauma resonating through the years. DONDIE's heartfelt words, *"That day, our family had plans... But they didn't push through because dad was killed,"* reveal the sudden and devastating nature of their loss. This moment underscores how trauma can abruptly alter life's course, shattering not only plans but emotional stability. DONDIE further shared, *"But that anger? It stuck around for years before finally fizzling out,"* illustrating the lingering emotional pain and the slow, complex process of coping with grief. These reflections highlight the long-term impact of traumatic loss, where emotions like anger can persist even as time moves on.

This experience aligns with **Horowitz's Trauma Response Theory** (1986, as cited in Dalrymple, 2020), which explains that trauma survivors often go through phases of denial and intrusive thoughts, with these emotional cycles gradually decreasing in intensity over time. Healing, or "completion," happens when new information is integrated with existing beliefs, though triggers can bring back old emotions and restart the cycle.

Similarly, Allarakha (2024) outlines a typical progression for trauma survivors: an initial stage of shock, followed by emotional upheaval filled with fear, anger, and sadness. As the emotional intensity fades, survivors often face disbelief and cognitive dissonance, struggling to make sense of what happened. Additionally, Estevez (2022) adds that trauma usually leads to fragmented and intrusive memories, making it hard for individuals to process their experiences mentally. This confusion adds to emotional distress, but over time, individuals attempt to rebuild stability and understanding.

3.2 Disruptions in Routine, Social Interactions, and Well-Being

The narratives provided by the respondents shed light on the profound influence of trauma on their daily lives, unraveling various themes and sub-themes that underline the complexity of their experiences. Trauma was a pervasive phenomenon that profoundly disrupted individuals' daily functioning, influencing multiple aspects of their lives. The study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of individuals affected by trauma, focusing on disruptions in routine, social interactions, and overall well-being. By conducting a narrative analysis of qualitative responses, the research sought to elucidate the multifaceted nature of trauma and its implications for daily functioning.

Disruption of Regular Activities and Responsibilities

In the aftermath of traumatic events, the first sub-theme, Disruption of Regular Activities and Responsibilities, individuals often navigate a disrupted landscape of daily life, grappling with the profound impact on their routines, social interactions, and overall well-being. This interruption reflected a tangible shift in day-to-day activities and underscored the broader upheaval experienced within familial dynamics and personal responsibilities. The excerpt from participant ANA:

"That's why I took almost a month off from school. Because there was a death threat, it's like our family still couldn't figure things out.

It highlights the immediate response to a traumatic event. The individual's decision to take a break from school underscored prioritizing safety and emotional well-being over academic pursuits.

Security Concerns and Heightened Alertness

Amidst the turmoil of disrupted routines, the sub-theme of Security Concerns and Heightened Alertness emerged, casting a shadow of apprehension over individuals' sense of safety and well-being. Accounts of receiving death threats and the subsequent implementation of heightened security measures revealed the pervasive impact of trauma, extending beyond psychological distress to tangible fears for one's physical safety. In the excerpt of BOBBY, he mentioned:

"We received a death threat during the wake. Oh, and there were still threats even after. Toward us, toward my older sister. For the family, it all felt so sudden. And we had to buy guns. We trained in using them, stuff like that. We went shooting so many times. That's also part of why I got hooked on different activities. Anyway. Um. Yeah. A lot changed after that."

The description vividly captured the tangible feeling of danger and the steps taken to deal with it.

Trust Issues and Relationship Strain

Amidst the backdrop of heightened vigilance and disrupted routines, another sub-theme emerges—Trust Issues and Relationship Strain. Trauma, with its insidious tendrils, corroded the bonds of trust that underpinned meaningful connections, leaving individuals grappling with feelings of isolation and suspicion. CATHERINE's statement:

"Something changed when it came to trusting people... I found it hard to open up to others or let them in, fearing I might lose them too."

It illustrates how trauma causes fear of vulnerability and damages relationships, making it difficult to build new bonds or maintain existing ones.

Trauma also disrupts daily routines and heightens alertness, causing both psychological and physical symptoms. DONNIE described this as a *"constant ache in your chest, this, like, feeling that never goes away,"* showing how trauma can create ongoing physical discomfort linked to emotional distress. DONNIE also expressed fluctuating emotions, from anger to overwhelming sadness and confusion, reflecting the unpredictable psychological impact of trauma.

These experiences align with **Horowitz's trauma response theory**, which includes phases of intrusion (intrusive memories and emotions), avoidance (steering clear of reminders), and arousal (heightened alertness and physical symptoms). Participants showed symptoms consistent with these phases: disrupted routines, social withdrawal, hypervigilance, and emotional instability. According to Braich (2023), trauma disrupts everyday life due to emotional overwhelm and practical difficulties. It also increases feelings of insecurity and causes relationship strains, along with psychological and physical symptoms.

3.3 Emotional, Mental, and Behavioral Coping

The answers provided by the participants offered valuable insights into the complex interplay of emotional, mental, and behavioral strategies for dealing with trauma, all encapsulated within the overarching theme of "Emotional, Mental, and Behavioral Coping."

Anger and Confusion to Profound Sadness and Frustration

As individuals grappled with the profound impact of traumatic events, a spectrum of emotional responses emerged, ranging from Anger and Confusion to Profound Sadness and Frustration. ANA stated, *"To be honest, I don't know. Anger—of course, because Papa was dead"*, reflecting the complexity of emotions experienced post-trauma. The individual's admission of feeling anger intertwined with grief highlighted the intertwining of conflicting emotions in response to loss. This internal battle mirrored the broader struggle to navigate the aftermath of trauma, where individuals grappled with discerning their feelings and finding a sense of direction amidst the chaos. Moreover, CATHERINE statement:

"That's why the lack of justice is infuriating. Why did this have to happen? Who did it, and why? So many questions keep running through my mind, fueling the frustration and anger even more."

It highlighted the frustration and anger arising from a perceived absence of justice and comprehension regarding the traumatic incident. The flood of unresolved queries worsened feelings of powerlessness and amplified emotional turmoil, adding layers of complexity to the coping and recovery process. These accounts vividly illustrated the diverse range of emotional reactions to trauma, spanning from fury and exasperation to bewilderment and profound sorrow. The turbulent passage through these conflicting emotions mirrored a broader challenge in traversing the aftermath of trauma, as individuals wrestled with inner discord and external ambiguities in their pursuit of healing.

Depression and Emotional Numbness

Amid the storm of emotions, the theme of Depression and Emotional Numbness emerged as a poignant testimony to the lasting impact of trauma on individuals' mental health. BOBBY expressed:

"It felt like being thrown into the ocean. An open ocean. I had to keep myself afloat. Otherwise, I'd drown. So, by the second year after 2015, what was I? I was already depressed."

It vividly portrayed the overwhelming sense of despair and isolation experienced post-trauma. The individual's analogy of being adrift in an open ocean poignantly captured the profound sense of aimlessness and vulnerability, where the struggle to keep afloat symbolized the ongoing battle against depression and emotional numbness. Moreover, DONDIE stated:

"But maybe the toughest moments are those quiet times alone, when everything slows down, and the heaviness of his absence becomes unbearable. It's in those moments I find myself seeking solitude, shutting out the pain, because sometimes, it's just too damn much."

It further elucidated the pervasive nature of emotional numbness and grief in the aftermath of loss.

Coping Mechanisms and Escapism

The individual's account of seeking solitude to evade the overpowering pain highlighted the isolating and suffocating effects of unresolved trauma. During those moments of solitary contemplation, the absence of their loved one became magnified, deepening feelings of emptiness and hopelessness. These stories powerfully illustrated the significant impact of trauma on individuals' mental health, especially concerning depression and emotional numbness. The battle to navigate through the relentless waves of sorrow and desolation stood as a silent testament to the lasting toll of loss and unresolved trauma on individuals' emotional well-being. In the quest for solace amidst the storm, individuals often turned to Coping Mechanisms and Escapism as a means of navigating the uncharted waters of grief and trauma. The BOBBY mentioned:

"I lost focus. It turns out, getting into a relationship became my escape too. Almost, yeah – being in a relationship kind of became my way of coping. Hahaha. So yeah, first girlfriend. That became one of my coping mechanisms – having a partner."

This sheds light on the role of relationships as a form of escapism and coping mechanism. The individual's admission of turning to romantic relationships as a means of distraction highlighted the allure of seeking solace and validation outside oneself during times of emotional distress. Moreover, the reference to the first girlfriend as a coping mechanism underscored the complexities of seeking refuge in external sources of comfort. While relationships may have offered temporary respite from the overwhelming tide of emotions, they also presented a deeper struggle for connection and understanding amidst the turmoil of unresolved trauma. This dual nature of escapism through relationships highlighted the nuanced interplay between seeking comfort and grappling with the underlying emotional challenges inherent in navigating grief and trauma.

Paranoia and Social Withdrawal

Yet, even amidst the facade of coping and escapism, the specter of Paranoia and Social Withdrawal looms large, casting a shadow of fear and uncertainty over individuals' interactions and relationships. BOBBY reflect:

"At least they don't forget about Daddy. Even though it feels like someone's always watching your every move."

This captured the pervasive sense of paranoia and hyperawareness that often accompanied trauma. The individual's observation of feeling constantly watched and scrutinized reflected the profound impact of trauma on their perception of safety and trust in their surroundings. Moreover, the reference to receiving death threats and experiencing heightened vigilance further elucidated the pervasive nature of mistrust and paranoia post-trauma. The individual's description of feeling unorganized and constantly on edge underscored the enduring impact of traumatic events on their sense of security and well-being. This heightened state of alertness not only isolated individuals but also exacerbated feelings of loneliness and alienation as they grappled with their internal struggles.

Yearning for the Past and Bargaining with Reality

The participants' expression of Yearning for the Past and Bargaining with Reality reflected deep emotional pain and a struggle to come to terms with their loss. This aspect of the trauma response involved a profound longing for the way things were before the traumatic event, particularly the presence of their deceased loved one. Their descriptions evoked a sense of nostalgia for moments shared with their father, highlighting the irreplaceable nature of those experiences. DONDIE experienced and stated:

"Another major bummer is when I see other kids with their dads at grad parties, weddings, or just strolling down the block. There's this mix of jealousy and sadness, a reminder of what's lost and what could've been. It's like I'm just watching a movie of someone else's life, knowing my own story took a different turn, one I didn't pick and can't change."

Similarly, EARL stated:

"Let's just say – it's like being a kid who had something taken away, and you just couldn't stop crying because you wanted it back so badly. In my case, I wanted my dad to come back. I kept wishing that what happened wasn't real. Or even if it was real, I was hoping he'd still live. I was willing to bargain for anything... On the way there, I kept saying, I hope Dad wasn't hurt too badly. I hope he can still survive. I was willing to give up everything – just for Dad to live. That's how I prayed. I would trade it all, to have my dad back."

As mentioned by Phifer (2022), individuals who encountered trauma embarked on a nuanced and dynamic psychological journey, characterized by a sequence of distinct emotional and cognitive stages. Initially, they were enveloped in a tumultuous array of emotions, ranging from profound anger and confusion to a pervasive sense of emotional disarray. This initial phase often precipitated a withdrawal from social interactions, driven by heightened paranoia and a fundamental mistrust of others, as individuals grappled with the destabilizing impact of their traumatic experiences. Subsequently, there was a notable descent into a state of profound sadness and emotional numbness, wherein individuals struggled to access or process their emotions, leading to a sense of detachment from both themselves and their surroundings. Amidst this emotional turmoil, there emerged a poignant yearning for a return to the perceived safety and normalcy of the past, coupled with attempts to negotiate or bargain with the harsh realities of the present circumstances.

However, according to Gabel (2021), confronted with the stark and unyielding nature of their trauma, individuals often turn to various coping mechanisms and forms of escapism as a means of temporarily alleviating their distress and seeking refuge from the overwhelming weight of their emotions. Through these intricate and often overlapping stages, individuals navigated the complex terrain of trauma response, underscoring the profound psychological impact of adverse experiences and the enduring quest for healing and restoration. This delineation of stages in trauma response illuminated the multifaceted nature of human resilience and underscored the importance of comprehensive approaches to trauma intervention and recovery.

3.4 Distancing from Feelings, People, and Occasions

The participants' narratives shed light on how individuals experienced a sense of detachment or numbness towards events or scenarios following traumatic experiences, encompassed within the central theme of "Distancing from Feelings, People, and Occasions."

Emotional Detachment

This detachment manifests in various forms, beginning with Emotional Detachment, in which individuals describe experiencing a detachment from their own emotions and experiences. Whether it's a pervasive numbness or a sensation of moving through life without feeling, the participants convey a profound disconnection from their emotional terrain, characterized by an inability to connect with or understand their internal state fully. ANA stated:

"Of course, it's like being disappointed in everything. Back then, I just felt like nothing good was happening to us anymore – ever since Papa died. You get used to disappointment, that's how it is."

This illustrated the widespread feeling of emotional detachment and disillusionment that follows trauma.

Disinterest in Others

Besides emotional detachment, there's a noticeable Disinterest in Others, where individuals express a diminishing concern for the opinions or actions of those around them. For ANA, the statement was:

"I just don't care about my surroundings anymore. Like, fine – say whatever you want to say. You don't even know what happened. Some people will judge you anyway. So for me, I don't care about them anymore. I have to deal with my struggles. And if you guys aren't helping, then why would I even listen to you, right?"

This powerfully illustrates this disinterest and disillusionment with interpersonal connections post-trauma. The individual's disregard for others' viewpoints and judgments revealed a profound detachment from their social environment, driven by a feeling of being misunderstood or unfairly judged. This lack of interest in others' perspectives arose from a necessity to prioritize their hardships, leading to a withdrawal from social interactions and a focus inward on their emotional well-being. Furthermore, BOBBY mentioned:

"Things are just demotivating – loss of interest. I'm not even trying to win you over. It's like – if you want to leave, then leave. If you don't, then don't. I'm not forcing anyone. That's how it is."

This further clarified the lack of interest and apathy toward external stimuli and interpersonal connections.

Avoidance and Disengagement

In coping with this detachment, Avoidance and Disengagement emerged as prevalent coping mechanisms, allowing individuals to create emotional distance from triggering situations or topics. From EARL experience:

"But there came a point when I just didn't want to talk about it anymore. Because it's the same thing over and over, like, at gatherings, of course, the relatives are there – they'll ask how you are. And I'm like, what am I even supposed to say? Then, after one aunt asks, your uncle will ask again. It gets exhausting. Sometimes it feels like it would be easier just to make an announcement so everyone hears it all at once."

This vividly portrayed the use of avoidance as a coping mechanism to create emotional distance from triggering conversations about the traumatic event.

Seeking Solitude

Ultimately, Seeking Solitude becomes a sanctuary for individuals grappling with the complexities of grief and trauma. CATHERINE stated, *"I'll prefer to lock my room and deal with it alone,"* emphasizing the reference to solitude as a means of confronting and processing emotional distress. This deliberate choice to seek isolation underscored the individual's recognition of the therapeutic value of solitude in navigating their emotional journey. Moreover, DONDIE's statement:

"But maybe the toughest moments are those quiet times alone, when everything slows down, and the heaviness of his absence becomes unbearable. It's in those moments I find myself seeking solitude, shutting out the pain, because sometimes, it's just too damn much."

This eloquently articulated the transformative power of solitude in providing solace amidst the storm of grief and trauma. The individual's acknowledgment of finding refuge in solitude during moments of overwhelming pain underscored the profound sense of comfort and agency derived from introspection and quiet reflection.

The participants' accounts reflected characteristics of emotional numbing, a key aspect of the Horowitz trauma response theory. This included detachment, disinterest in others, and avoidance of triggering situations or people. While these behaviors may have temporarily alleviated emotional pain, they could have hindered the healing process by impeding the whole processing and integration of traumatic experiences. Understanding emotional numbing's effects was crucial for providing effective support and interventions to those coping with trauma. According to the study of Khiron (2023), in the aftermath of trauma, individuals might have found themselves withdrawing from emotional connections and social interactions as they grappled with overwhelming feelings. This withdrawal often served as a protective measure, allowing individuals to create a psychological buffer against further distress. Moreover, actively avoiding reminders of the traumatic event became a common strategy to minimize triggers and prevent re-traumatization. Seeking solitude provided a refuge for individuals to process their emotions in a space free from external pressures, enabling them to navigate their internal struggles at their

own pace. These responses, while appearing as disengagement to others, represented adaptive mechanisms individuals employed to cope with the profound effects of trauma on their emotional well-being and sense of control.

3.5 Emotional Echoes of the Past

The participants' responses provided an exploration of the triggers that evoked intense emotional responses when remembering what happened to their parents, encapsulated within the main theme of "Emotional Echoes of the Past." These triggers manifested in various forms, each eliciting a profound sense of loss and grief that reverberated through the participants' lives.

Anniversary and Event Trigger

Emergent Anniversary and Event Trigger experiences underscored the absence of their parents, particularly during milestones and special occasions that were once shared as a family. The ANA recalls, *"There are still moments when the trauma resurfaces, especially during anniversaries or similar events,"* highlighting the enduring impact of these reminders on individuals' emotional well-being.

Flashbacks

Flashbacks represented another potent trigger, transporting individuals back to the moment they first received the news of their parent's demise. The ANA mentioned:

"It's difficult to put into words the overwhelming mix of emotions that come flooding back when I remember that tragic day."

This effectively captured the visceral essence of these flashbacks. These abrupt memories provoked a strong wave of emotions, reigniting the raw intensity of the person's initial response to their parent's passing. The struggle to express fully the overwhelming blend of feelings underscored the deep and intricate influence of these flashbacks on the individual's emotional state. Moreover, DONDIE stated:

"It's like a flashback to that moment when I first heard the news about my father, the shock and disbelief crashing over me all over again. It reminds me of the fragility of life and how quickly everything can change."

This clearly depicting the vivid and intrusive quality of these flashbacks. The person's portrayal of the shock and disbelief washing over them once again emphasized the profound emotional turmoil sparked by these memories. These flashbacks acted as poignant prompts of the traumatic effects of their bereavement, confronting individuals with life's fragility and the suddenness of its changes.

Reflections and Unanswered Questions

The ANA mentioned:

"There's also the constant battle with questions that may never have answers. Why did it happen? Could I have done anything to prevent it? These questions haunt me, and no matter how much time passes, they still linger in the back of my mind."

This effectively conveyed the ongoing battle with unanswered questions and the pursuit of closure. The person's depiction of wrestling with inquiries that may have remained unresolved emphasized the enduring sense of uncertainty and yearning that accompanied the absence of a parent. Moreover, the statement of CATHERINE, *"Ako kase binuhay na ako ng what if, For me, it's like I've been kept alive by all the 'what ifs' illustrating the pervasive influence of 'what if' scenarios in the individual's thoughts and emotions."*

Objects and Shared Memories

Objects and Shared Memories evoke a mix of nostalgia and sorrow, offering individuals comfort in tangible reminders of their parent's presence. Whether it was a cherished possession, a familiar tune, or a passing resemblance in a stranger, these triggers transported individuals back in time, enabling them to revisit moments of closeness and connection with their parents. Yet beneath the surface lay a profound sadness, as these reminders underscored the permanence of their parent's absence and the void they left behind. ANA mentioned, *"Sometimes, just the slightest reminder a song he used to sing, a favorite meal we shared,"* beautifully illustrating how seemingly ordinary triggers could transport individuals back in time, enabling them to revisit moments of closeness and

connection with their parents. These reminders acted as touching reflections of the love and connection shared with their parent, providing both solace and sadness in equal parts.

Social Reminders of Loss

Social Reminders of Loss served as reminders, evoking emotions of yearning and longing for the familial ties they'd lost forever. Whether it was observing families together or encountering strangers who bore a resemblance to their parents, these social triggers acted as painful reminders of the relationships that had been severed and the moments they'd never share. Confronted with these reminders, individuals struggled with the stark reality of their parent's absence, wrestling with the enduring impact of their loss in the fabric of everyday life. ANA mentioned, *"even just a passing resemblance to one of them in a stranger can send me spiraling into a whirlwind of emotions,"* vividly capturing the intense emotional impact of encountering strangers who bore a resemblance to their parents. This seemingly innocuous similarity acted as a potent trigger, unleashing a flood of emotions and memories, and serving as a stark reminder of the relationship that had been severed.

The main theme of the participants' responses revolved around the profound emotional impact of triggers associated with memories of their deceased parents. This theme emerged strongly due to the participants' heartfelt reflections, vividly illustrating the enduring reverberations of loss and grief in their lives. The subordinate theme delved into the diverse array of triggers that intensified emotional responses and deepened the experience of grief and loss, including anniversary and event triggers, flashbacks, reflections and unanswered questions, objects and shared memories, and social reminders of loss. These triggers aligned closely with Horowitz's trauma response theory, demonstrating how the emotional echoes of the past continued to shape individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the aftermath of their parent's passing.

As mentioned by Lyadurai et al. (2022), in moments of trauma, individuals often find themselves engulfed by intrusive memories, vividly reliving the event triggered by even the slightest stimuli. Alongside these memories emerged a torrent of unanswered questions and unresolved emotions, compelling us to grapple with the incomprehensible and seek closure amidst chaos. Objects and shared memories assumed profound significance, serving as tangible links to the past or to those we've lost, each holding a narrative of its own, laden with emotion and memory. However, within the chaos, there was a comforting presence found in social signals and group traditions. Whether through joint ceremonies, community assemblies, or just being around compassionate individuals, people discovered unity in their sorrow. These communal ties served as crucial support systems, providing empathy and reassurance, emphasizing that although the suffering may have been personal, the process of overcoming it was shared.

3.6 Catharsis through Multifaceted Coping Strategies

The multifaceted coping strategies adopted by the participants served as effective interventions in navigating the complexities of their thoughts and emotions following the traumatic event, encapsulated within the main theme of "Catharsis through Multifaceted Coping Strategies." These interventions encompassed a diverse range of approaches, each offering a unique avenue for healing and growth in the aftermath of loss.

Therapy and Support Groups

Therapy and Support Groups emerged as foundational pillars of support, providing individuals with a safe space to process their emotions, explore coping mechanisms, and find solace in shared experiences. The excerpt illustrated the transformative impact of therapy and support groups in navigating the complexities of grief.

"We did family and individual therapy, so for me... first off, therapy is a total game-changer. Talking to a therapist who really gets it has been everything. It's a safe space where I can just let it all out, sort through my emotions, and learn how to cope better. Then there are support groups – honestly, they've been a godsend. It's surreal how much it helps to talk with people who've been through the same thing."

ANA had described therapy as a "total game-changer," highlighting its role as a safe space where they could freely express their feelings and learn coping strategies. Moreover, participation in support groups was depicted as a "godsend," emphasizing the invaluable support gained from connecting with others who had experienced similar losses. Despite differences in the circumstances of their losses, the shared bond within the support group offered a sense of validation and companionship amidst the chaos of grief. Furthermore:

"I thought I found peace in being alone. But the truth is, I just really wanted support from my family. I just didn't know how to ask for it back then. I eventually learned."

CATHERINE underscored the importance of leaning on one's support network, including friends, family, and mentors, during times of struggle.

Mindful Practices and Self-Care Rituals

Mindful Practices and Self-Care Rituals served as essential components of individuals' coping arsenals, offering moments of respite and rejuvenation amidst the storm of emotions. From meditation and mindfulness exercises to engaging in hobbies and activities that brought joy and fulfillment, individuals prioritized their mental and emotional well-being, nurturing themselves with compassion and kindness. Setting boundaries and prioritizing personal needs enabled individuals to safeguard their peace of mind, saying no to triggers and commitments that exacerbated their pain while embracing activities that nurtured their souls. ANA mentioned:

"And what else... Oh, and mindfulness? Huge. Taking a breather – it was actually our therapist's suggestion. Doing some meditation, or even just going for a walk in nature – it's insane how much it calms the storm inside. And self-care? That's non-negotiable. Whether it's sweating it out in a workout session or treating myself to some good food – it all matters."

This part emphasized the significance of mindfulness and self-care in coping with emotional turmoil.

Creative Expression

Creative Expression emerged as a powerful outlet for processing grief and finding meaning amidst the chaos. Whether through writing, art, music, or other creative endeavors, individuals channeled their emotions into tangible forms of expression, finding catharsis in the act of creation. By pouring their hearts out onto the page or canvas, individuals honored their pain and transformed it into something beautiful, finding solace in the act of creation and the release it brought.

"Or diving into hobbies that light me up – making time for myself is, like, essential AF. Writing, drawing, playing music – anything that lets me pour my heart out really helps me process the grief and find bits of beauty in the mess. I'm always listening to music, stuff like that."

From ANA's perspective, it emphasized the importance of engaging in activities that brought them joy and provided an outlet for processing grief. Music, in particular, was highlighted as a coping mechanism, with specific artists mentioned as sources of comfort. *"I expressed myself through writing and art. Or I'd play music – like, the whole house, my whole room – you'd just hear my music blasting. It's like... I didn't want to hear my own thoughts. They were too loud. Too much pain, to be honest"* CATHERINE, shares their personal experiences with creative expression, including writing, art, and music, as a means of coping with grief.

Escapist Behaviors

Escapist Behaviors, such as drinking or smoking, emerged as maladaptive coping mechanisms employed by some individuals in their quest to numb the pain. While these behaviors offered temporary relief from the intensity of grief, they ultimately hindered the healing process, perpetuating a cycle of avoidance and denial. Despite their allure, these escapades served as distractions rather than solutions, veiling the true source of pain beneath a cloud of intoxication. BOBBY mentioned:

"I got exposed to drinking... When I got to college, it felt like I had broken out of a cage. I had to study in Manila because that's where my course was. I'd liken it to being thrown into the ocean. Anyway, in college, that's when I got into drinking – and it became an escape from all the other escapes. Then came smoking. I was just trying to forget the pain."

In addition, the individual shared their experience of being introduced to drinking during college as a form of escape. They likened the feeling of entering college to being thrown into the ocean, suggesting a sense of overwhelm. Drinking and smoking became coping mechanisms to deal with the pain, highlighting how individuals may turn to substances to numb their emotions and avoid facing their grief.

Reminiscence

Reminiscence served as a tool for honoring the memory of lost loved ones, allowing individuals to cherish the happy times and lessons shared with their parents. By focusing on the positive aspects of their relationship and celebrating their parent's life rather than fixating on their passing, individuals found comfort and closure amid grief. Objects imbued with sentimental value, such as their parent's clothing, served as tangible reminders of their presence, offering a sense of connection and continuity amidst the void of loss. DONDIE mentioned:

"One thing I do is think back on the good memories I shared with my dad. I remember the happy times and the lessons he taught me. This helps me focus on his life rather than just his passing..."

EARL discussed:

"Also, things like Dad's clothes – they help. It's little things like that that bring comfort."

The individual reflected on their practice of reminiscing about the positive memories and lessons learned from their father, which helped them shift their focus from his death to his life. Additionally, they mentioned finding solace in tangible reminders of their father, such as his clothing, highlighting the importance of sentimental objects in the grieving process.

According to a study by the American Psychological Association (2023), when confronted with trauma, individuals often resort to a range of coping mechanisms to navigate their emotions and experiences. These methods can include engaging in activities that offer temporary relief or distraction, reflecting on memories and experiences, and seeking ways to express their emotions creatively. However, it's important to recognize that while some coping strategies may provide momentary comfort, others can lead to further distress if relied upon excessively. Therefore, fostering a balance between confronting difficult emotions and finding healthy outlets for expression can be key to promoting resilience and healing in the aftermath of trauma.

3.7 Journey of Healing from Denial to Acceptance

The journey of healing from denial to acceptance is a profound and transformative process that unfolds over time, as individuals navigate the depths of their emotions and confront the reality of their loss. Within this journey, several sub-themes emerge, reflecting the evolving nature of their feelings and coping strategies.

Acknowledgment of Intense Emotions

Acknowledgment of Intense Emotions, this stage signified the beginning of the journey, where people confront the intense feelings of pain, sorrow, and frustration that come with their loss. Even if they tried to ignore or push down these emotions, the truth of their grief remained, emerging again during times of vulnerability and introspection. As time passed, individuals slowly accepted the permanence of their loss, understanding that their emotional reactions were normal and justified given their circumstances. The acknowledgment of ANA:

"Sure, the pain never really goes away," CATHERINE also mentioned, "but it's not something that can be easily erased from my life. I've just come to include it as part of my life story – and from it, I've gained lessons and growth. But there are still times when the pain and memories suddenly come back. And that's okay – I've just accepted that it's part of my journey toward healing."

In this excerpt, the individual acknowledged the enduring nature of grief, recognizing that the pain of loss remained a part of their life story.

Normalization of Intense Emotions

Normalization of Intense Emotions became a crucial element of the healing journey, this aspect involved individuals adapting to the fluctuating nature of their emotions. Despite experiencing moments of relief or diversion, the shadow of grief persisted as a consistent presence. By accepting and adjusting to this reality, individuals recognize their emotions as an essential component of their path, understanding that healing does not entail eliminating the pain but rather finding ways to coexist with it. ANA statement:

"Authentically embracing my emotions, even the challenging ones"she added "But you learn to live with it, you know."

Similarly to the statement of BOBBY:

"It's like, with interviews like this... and topics like this, it's like – it doesn't hit as hard anymore. I don't really think about it that much now."

The individuals reflected on the process of normalizing intense emotions and learning to live with grief. They emphasized the importance of authentically embracing all emotions, including the challenging ones, as part of the healing journey.

Acceptance and Adaptation

Acceptance and Adaptation signified a shift towards embracing the reality of their loss and integrating it into their sense of self. Rather than allowing grief to define their identity or dictate their future, individuals reclaimed agency over their lives, finding strength and resilience in the face of adversity. This process involved developing healthy coping mechanisms, cultivating meaningful connections, and finding fulfillment in life despite the challenges. ANA stated:

"And through it all, we've become stronger and closer as a fam... I've accepted that his loss will always be a part of me, but it doesn't define who I am or dictate my future."

Also from the statement of BOBBY, *"I've learned to live without dad"*, which reflected on the process of accepting and adapting to life without their father. They acknowledged the permanent impact of his loss but emphasized that it did not define their identity or determine their future. Despite the initial difficulty, they described how their family had grown stronger and closer over time, highlighting their resilience in the face of adversity. CATHERINE stated:

"I also developed healthier ways to manage my thoughts and emotions, and I became stronger through everything I went through... In the end, I realized that overcoming traumatic events doesn't mean they completely disappear. It's about learning to live with them in a way that allows you to thrive and still find fulfillment in life, despite the challenges."

Commitment to Honoring

Commitment to Honoring memories became a guiding principle in the journey of healing, as individuals sought to preserve the legacy of their loved ones and keep their memory alive. Whether through rituals, traditions, or acts of remembrance, individuals find solace in cherishing the moments shared with their parents and carrying forward their values and traditions into the future. From the statement of ANA:

"Keeping his memory alive... finding ways to honor my father's memory."

In addition, EARL mentioned that:

"I've found strength in honoring my father's memory and living my life in a way that would make him proud. Whether it's pursuing my passions or advocating for causes that were important to him, I find purpose in carrying on his legacy."

As mentioned by the Trust Mental Health Care Team (2023), trauma has an enormous impact on individuals, who typically traverse a sequence of emotional stages. Initially, there's a recognition of the intensity of emotions experienced, signifying a crucial acknowledgment of their impact. This acknowledgment paved the way for a gradual acceptance and adaptation to the circumstances surrounding the traumatic event. As individuals came to terms with their experiences, they committed to honor their emotions, allowing themselves to authentically process and express their feelings without judgment. This commitment served as a fundamental pillar in the healing journey, fostering resilience and facilitating personal growth in the face of adversity. By embracing their emotions and experiences, individuals could navigate the aftermath of trauma with greater self-awareness and strength, ultimately reclaiming agency over their lives.

3.8 Family Resilience amidst Emotional, Financial, and Legal Challenges

The resilience of families facing emotional, financial, and legal challenges is a testament to their strength and adaptability in navigating adversity. In this exploration, we delve into three key facets: emotional resilience and the importance of support systems, the role of legal advocacy in ensuring security amidst uncertainties, and the

practical and financial hurdles families encounter and overcome. By examining these aspects, we aim to shed light on the multifaceted nature of family resilience in the face of adversity.

Emotional Resilience and Support

The responses indicated a significant merge on Emotional Resilience and Support. Emotional resilience, As seen in the responses, emotional resilience is crucial for navigating the aftermath of traumatic events. Participants described experiencing a range of emotions, from grief and confusion to anger and frustration. The process of coming to terms with these emotions and finding healthy ways to cope is essential for family resilience. Seeking professional help, such as therapy and counseling, played a vital role in this aspect, allowing family members to process their feelings and support one another effectively. The ability to acknowledge and address emotional struggles demonstrates an adaptive response to trauma, facilitating healing and strengthening family bonds. From the story of ANA she stated that:

"After that whole mess, we were just drowning in feels – grief, confusion, and anger all rolled into one hot mess. But like, we had to pull ourselves together, you know? We couldn't just wallow in misery forever. So, we decided to get professh help, like therapy and stuff.. It really helped us sort through our emotions and deal with the pain in a more, like, healthy way."

Legal Advocacy and Security Concerns

Legal Advocacy and Security Concerns after traumatic events, tensions within families could intensify, leading to increased feelings of insecurity and frustration. Participants emphasized the challenges encountered in their quest for justice for their loved ones and in understanding the intricacies of the legal system. Delays in legal proceedings and the absence of resolution in cases added to the families' ongoing distress and apprehension. Moreover, worries regarding personal safety, such as facing death threats, heightened their sense of vulnerability and unease. The participant expressed a heightened sense of vigilance and caution following the loss of their father, acknowledging the need to prioritize safety in their family's daily activities. BOBBY mentioned that:

"Of course, after we lost Dad, we had to be extra careful. We couldn't go out, especially without security. So yeah, like I said – basically, we were on our own, each dealing with things in our way", where individuals remain on high alert due to perceived threats, impacting their sense of security and well-being.

Practical and Financial Challenges

Practical and Financial Challenges, significant stressors emerged for the families, compounding the emotional burden of their loss. Adjusting to life without the primary breadwinner required reassessing priorities, making difficult budgeting decisions, and seeking assistance from various sources. The absence of the father figure not only disrupted family dynamics but also placed financial strain on the household. However, the families' resilience was evident as they sought support from professionals and explored alternative income-generating opportunities, demonstrating adaptability and resourcefulness in overcoming these challenges.

As stated by the research of Resnick (2023) in her study about How to Heal from Trauma, the author mentioned that in the realm of trauma response, individuals often grappled with a multitude of challenges that extended beyond the emotional realm. Support played a vital role in aiding individuals as they navigated the aftermath of trauma. Having a supportive network of friends, family, or professionals could provide a crucial buffer against the emotional toll of traumatic experiences, fostering resilience and promoting healing. Additionally, legal advocacy and security concerns were significant considerations for individuals dealing with trauma. Seeking legal assistance could provide individuals with a sense of empowerment and protection, helping them navigate complex legal processes and address security concerns related to the traumatic event. By addressing these issues, individuals could regain a sense of control over their lives and begin to rebuild a sense of safety and stability. Practical challenges also posed significant obstacles for individuals coping with trauma. From managing daily tasks to navigating financial strain caused by medical bills or loss of income, these challenges could further exacerbate stress and feelings of vulnerability. Addressing practical needs, such as access to resources and support services, was essential in promoting individuals' ability to cope and recover from trauma.

3.9 Continued Healing by Honoring the Past, Acknowledging the Present, and Embracing the Future

Legacy of Love

The participants expressed a commitment to honoring their loved ones' memories by focusing on the positive aspects of their lives and the lessons they imparted. Despite the pain of loss, they found motivation to live meaningful lives and make their departed loved ones proud. This aligned with the concept of legacy, where

individuals strive to preserve and carry forward the positive impact of those who have passed away. By channeling their grief into positive actions and embracing the values instilled by their loved ones, participants demonstrated resilience and a sense of continuity in their healing journey. Participants in the study expressed a commitment to embracing the concept of legacy in coping with the loss of their loved ones. One participant articulated this sentiment, ANA stating:

"Instead of letting the tragedy consume me, I've chosen to focus on the positive aspects of my father's life and the lessons he taught me."

Integration and Growth

In addition, the other Sub-themes highlighted Integration and Growth, the responses herein underscored a dynamic process of integration, whereby individuals assimilated their encounters with loss into their personal identities and overarching life narratives. DONDIE stated:

"It's not something I've completely gotten over. Though I've made strides in handling the pain and its effects on me, there are moments when it hits me afresh or presents new challenges."

While acknowledging the enduring impact of trauma, participants articulated a discernible sense of equanimity and fortitude, facilitating their progression with optimism and appreciation, as EARL discussed:

"But still, While I've learned to navigate my grief and honor my father's memory, there are moments when the emotions overwhelm me, reminding me that healing is an ongoing process. I've made progress in finding resilience and strength in the face of adversity, but I don't think I'll ever fully overcome the impact of losing my father in such a tragic way."

This narrative hinted at a metamorphic odyssey of development, wherein individuals cultivated the art of coexisting with their trauma, catalyzing personal evolution and contentment. Through the acceptance of healing as an ongoing journey and the embracement of life's adversities, respondents exemplified a profound reservoir of resilience and adaptability, indicative of their innate capacity for growth and transformation.

Memory and Rituals

Another Sub-themes Memory and Rituals played a significant role in the participants' healing processes, providing avenues for connection and remembrance. Whether through prayers, social media posts, or engaging in activities that their loved ones enjoyed, participants sought to keep their memories alive and maintain a sense of connection across the divide of loss. This aligned with the concept of continuing bonds, where individuals maintained emotional ties with deceased loved ones through various means of remembrance and commemoration. By actively preserving and honoring their loved one's memories, participants found solace and strength in their ongoing relationship with them. The individuals articulated a deep sense of longing and connection with their deceased loved one, particularly their father, highlighting the significant role memory and rituals played in their healing process. ANA stated:

"I pray and hope that he is Guiding and that he is proud of me."

The individuals expressed a desire for their father to be proud of them, indicating a continued emotional bond and a wish for his guidance even in his absence. DONDIE mentioned:

"His memory will always be alive sa family."

This emphasized the importance of keeping their father's memory alive within the family, suggesting that rituals and remembrance activities contributed to this preservation. DONDIE added:

"I hope you are proud of me. Of what I'm doing."

It shared a personal moment of reaching out to their father through social media, demonstrating how they used platforms like Instagram to express their feelings and maintain a connection with him.

Personal and Social Support

Personal and Social Support, seeking support from both personal and professional networks emerged as a crucial aspect of the healing process. Participants described various coping strategies, such as listening to music, writing letters, and seeking therapy, to manage their emotions and navigate the complexities of grief. While they may have still experienced moments of overwhelming emotions or feelings of loneliness, the presence of supportive relationships provided comfort and validation. This underscored the importance of social connections and self-care practices in facilitating healing and resilience in the face of trauma. The response from BOBBY:

"Then, regarding that – when we started talking about our emotions, we became more open. It started when we had sessions with a psychologist, a family friend. But we didn't really feel convinced at first. So eventually, we went to Manila – to Ateneo – for psychological help as a family. We did a family consultation. In that way, we were able to overcome challenges."

This showed a proactive approach to dealing with their emotions and grief, although there was initial skepticism about therapy.

Pursuit of Justice

The Pursuit of Justice emerging as a persistent theme among participants was the ongoing impact of unresolved trauma and the quest for accountability. Despite the challenges and frustrations of navigating legal systems, participants expressed a commitment to fighting for justice as a means of honoring their loved ones' memories and addressing the injustice of their deaths. This reflected a sense of moral obligation and resilience in the face of systemic barriers and the enduring pain of loss. By refusing to relent in their pursuit of justice, participants asserted agency and advocated for meaningful change, embodying a spirit of resilience and determination in the face of adversity.

"What's hard is the fight for justice. It feels like it never ends. Normally, when someone dies, you move on. But in our case, the injustice keeps reminding us. And you have to keep fighting. Because if you don't, then who will? What happened to my dad wasn't right. So we fought. Good thing we didn't give up."

As stated in the study by Helgesen (2020), the inheritance of deep affection from lost loved ones becomes a guiding light, sustaining them through the darkness. Despite enduring unimaginable trauma, the children demonstrated remarkable resilience as they navigated their way forward. Cherished memories and meaningful rituals served as anchors in their grief, offering solace and a space for reflection. The presence of empathetic caregivers, understanding friends, and supportive communities played a crucial role in their healing journey. Driven by a desire for closure and accountability, they advocated for justice, honoring the memory of their loved ones and striving to prevent similar tragedies.

3.10 Transformative Impact of Trauma on Family Dynamics and Interpersonal Bonds

The central theme observed from the participants' responses revolves around the transformative impact of trauma on family dynamics and interpersonal bonds. This theme reflected how individuals navigate their relationships with family members and others in the aftermath of a traumatic event. The sub-themes emerging from the responses further elucidated this dynamic: resilience and familial bond, emotional complexity and growth, trust issues, vigilance, and struggle with anger and injustice.

Resilience and Familial Bonds

The participants described how trauma brought their families closer together, fostering Resilience and Familial Bonds. They emphasized the importance of leaning on each other for support, communicating openly, and treasuring the time spent together. This suggests that traumatic experiences serve as catalysts for deeper emotional connections within families. Moreover, the shared experience of grief led to increased empathy and understanding among family members, highlighting their collective capacity to adapt and grow in the face of adversity.

The participants in the study emphasized how traumatic experiences, such as the loss of a loved one, unexpectedly brought families closer together. This sentiment resonated strongly with the experiences shared by ANA, said:

"Within my family, his loss brought us closer together in ways we never anticipated."

This individual highlighted the transformative effect of relying on each other for support, communicating openly, and cherishing their time together, mirroring the study's findings. Furthermore, the reluctance of some family members to discuss problems, as described by CATHERINE, who shared, "*that was the first time we talked about what happened to Dad as a family,*" reflected the initial barriers to communication that many families faced in times of adversity.

Emotional Complexity and Growth

The individuals in the study highlighted significant personal growth and Emotional Complexity and Growth resulting from their experiences with trauma, aligning closely with the sentiments expressed by the ANA:

"In my relationships with others, I've become more compassionate and understanding."

This acknowledgment of the complexities of human emotions and the importance of offering support and kindness reflected a heightened awareness of emotional intricacies and a commitment to fostering meaningful connections.

Trust Issues and Vigilance

The participants in the study shared experiences of developing Trust Issues and Vigilance in their relationships with people outside their families, echoing the sentiments expressed by DONDIE:

"With people outside my family, I feel like I have to protect myself."

This individual's fear and reluctance to get close to others reflected the emergence of defensive mechanisms aimed at safeguarding emotional well-being in the aftermath of trauma.

Struggle of Anger and Injustice

The participants in the study grappled with the Struggle of Anger and Injustice towards external forces responsible for their trauma, echoing the sentiments expressed by the participant who shared:

"And then with others, you just can't adapt – no matter how hard you try."

BOBBY struggled to come to terms with the perpetrators' actions, which reflected the profound impact of trauma on individuals' psychological and emotional states. Moreover, the participant's description of the ongoing difficulty in reconciling their emotions, particularly feelings of anger and resentment towards the perpetrators, aligned closely with the study findings, BOBBY added:

"I'll never forget the anger. The injustice..."

This acknowledgment of the lasting impact of traumatic experiences on individuals' emotional well-being underscored the complex nature of healing and recovery.

According to the study of Sisto et al. (2019), resilience often blossomed within the framework of familial ties, especially during challenging times. When individuals are confronted with trauma or adversity, their capacity to rebound and adapt underscores their resilience, a quality frequently nurtured by the support and solidarity found within their family circle. During crises, familial connections offered solace, steadiness, and fortitude, fostering a profound sense of belonging and safety essential for navigating hardship. Nevertheless, according to Halady and Cottone (2023), past traumas or betrayals could give rise to trust issues and heightened vigilance. Individuals might become acutely attuned to potential threats, approaching new relationships or situations with wariness and skepticism. While this vigilance served as a protective shield against further harm, it could also erect barriers to genuine connections, straining familial bonds and impeding the ability to accept support and reassurance.

Furthermore, according to Smith (2020), the battle with anger and injustice often follows in the wake of trauma. In the face of perceived unfairness or mistreatment, feelings of resentment, frustration, and indignation might surface. This anger might be directed towards those deemed responsible or towards the circumstances themselves, manifesting as a yearning for justice or a sense of helplessness. Such struggles could disrupt familial harmony as individuals grappled with their emotions and sought understanding amidst their experiences.

3.11 Recovery through Self, Family, and External Support

The central theme emerging from the participants' responses was the concept of recovery through self, family, and external support. This theme underscored the significance of roles and responsibilities within the family unit in facilitating resilience and the ability to overcome tough times. The sub-themes further elucidated this notion.

Changes in Family Roles and Unity

Changes in Family Roles and Unity participants described how the redistribution of roles and responsibilities within the family during tough times contributed to their ability to cope and recover. They shared personal experiences of stepping up to fulfill newfound responsibilities, such as managing the household or providing emotional support, despite the initial challenges and pressures. This transition in roles fostered a sense of unity and cohesion within the family, as each member played a vital part in navigating through adversity. The collective effort to uphold the family's well-being strengthened their bonds and resilience, ultimately enabling them to emerge stronger together. Participants in the study described how the redistribution of roles and responsibilities within the family during tough times contributed to their ability to cope and recover. One participant expressed the intensity of their experience, and ANA stated:

"Being the only daughter and the eldest in the fam during tough times was like, majorly intense, you know? Like, suddenly I had to be this emotional rock for everyone, and it was, like, much pressure."

The participants reflected on how their experiences within the family context during tough times facilitated personal maturation and growth. One participant acknowledged the transformative impact of assuming responsibilities beyond their years. This highlighted the role of familial responsibilities in shaping one's character and fostering resilience.

Personal Maturation and Growth

The participants reflected on how their experiences within the family context during tough times facilitated Personal Maturation and Growth. They acknowledged the transformative impact of assuming responsibilities beyond their years, which compelled them to confront the realities of life and develop resilience and strength. Through these challenges, individuals learned valuable lessons about self-reliance, adaptability, and perseverance, contributing to their overall development and maturity. Another participant discussed their journey towards maturity, BOBBY stated:

"But now, it's different. I've grown up – I'm a bit more mature now. I can handle it."

This illustrated the ongoing process of personal growth and development, as individuals navigated through challenges and emerged with a greater sense of self-reliance and maturity.

Multifaceted Support Systems

Participants highlighted the importance of Multifaceted Support Systems, encompassing both internal family support and external resources such as therapy, in navigating tough times. One participant reflected on their journey towards healing, CATHERINE stated:

"After years, I've learned to lean on my support system and to honor my father's memory in meaningful ways... I've also sought therapy to help me work through lingering feelings of grief and trauma, and it's been incredibly helpful in my journey toward healing."

This illustrated the significance of emotional support from family members and therapeutic intervention in facilitating the healing process.

In summary, the responses underscored the interconnectedness of individual and familial dynamics in the process of recovery from tough times. Roles and responsibilities within the family unit played a pivotal role in fostering resilience, unity, and personal growth. By embracing their roles and supporting each other, families could navigate adversity together, drawing strength from their collective efforts and external support systems to emerge stronger and more resilient in the face of challenges. Moreover, according to Kirya (2021), individual growth became a beacon of hope in the darkness, as family members embarked on personal journeys of healing and

resilience. Each triumph over hardship became a testament to the indomitable human spirit, fueling the collective resilience of the family unit. In the face of profound loss, resilience bloomed as a resilient family nurtured the seeds of hope and renewal within each member.

However, according to Thurston et al. (2021), resilience did not exist in isolation. In their time of need, resilient families leaned on a vast network of support, drawing strength from the embrace of loved ones, the warmth of community, and the guidance of professionals. Together, these diverse pillars of support formed a sturdy scaffold upon which the family could lean as they navigated the complexities of grief and reconstruction. In the shadow of tragedy, resilient families rose to the occasion, transforming sorrow into strength and despair into determination. With unwavering courage and boundless love, they honored the memory of their fallen father, forging a legacy of resilience that would endure for generations to come.

3.12 Strength in Unity and Triumph in Adversity

Flexible Family Collaboration

The first sub-theme was Flexible Family Collaboration. The participants emphasized the importance of collaboration and unity within the family unit during tough times, highlighting how each family member played a crucial role in navigating through adversity. One participant reflected on their family's collective effort, ANA stated:

"But hey, we somehow managed to pull through, thanks to our roles and responsibilities. Like, we each had our part to play in this whole recovery drama."

This illustrated how each member contributed to the family's resilience and

Facing Challenges Directly and Realistically

Secondly, Facing Challenges Directly and Realistically. The participants described the family's proactive and realistic approach to confronting challenges directly, emphasizing the importance of open communication and facing difficulties head-on. One participant reflected on their family's communication style, CATHERINE stated:

"We've maintained open lines of communication, allowing each family member to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs openly."

This highlighted the transparent communication within the family, fostering understanding and cohesion, even amidst challenging situations.

Finding Meaning and Growth in Adversity

Lastly, Finding Meaning and Growth in Adversity. Participants highlighted the family's ability to find meaning and growth amid adversity, emphasizing the importance of cherishing memories, values, and moments of joy shared within the family. One participant reflected on this. BOBBY stated:

"What's most important is that we cherish our memories and the values we share. We draw strength from one another and from the beautiful moments we had together."

This underscored the family's resilience and strength derived from their shared experiences and cherished moments, despite the pain and hardships they endured. Another participant acknowledged the family's adaptation to their circumstances, CATHERINE mentioned:

"Yes, we've already adapted...But that doesn't mean we don't still feel the pain."

This reflected the family's acknowledgment of their ongoing emotional journey, even as they learned to adapt and find moments of joy amidst the pain.

In essence, the reactions demonstrate how families show resilience and adaptability when confronted with significant life changes or obstacles. Their ability to work together, confront challenges directly, and focus on finding significance and personal development mirrored the core principles of the Family Resilience Model. Through promoting unity, open communication, and the search for meaning within the family, they could better

overcome adversity and emerge from challenging situations stronger. According to Osher (2024), flexible family collaboration involves the ability of family members to work together effectively, adaptively, and cohesively in various situations. It implied the willingness and capacity of family members to communicate openly, share responsibilities, and make decisions collectively. This collaboration could manifest in different forms, such as problem-solving together, supporting each other emotionally, and coordinating efforts to achieve common goals. However, achieving flexible family collaboration was not without its challenges. One major challenge was the diversity of perspectives, needs, and preferences among family members. These differences could lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, and difficulties in reaching a consensus. Moreover, external stressors such as financial pressures, work demands, and health issues could further strain family dynamics, making collaboration even more challenging.

3.13 Adaptation in Family, Emotions, Practicality, and Legality

The central theme of adaptation in family, emotions, practicality, and legality was evident in the participants' responses, highlighting specific instances where their families had to adjust routines, roles, or expectations to maintain resilience.

Family Adaptation

The first Sub-theme was Family Adaptation. The participants described the significant adaptation in family dynamics following major life events like the loss of a parent, necessitating adjustments in roles and responsibilities within the family. One participant reflected on this, CATHERINE stated:

"After Dad's death, we had to adjust our family dynamics. Mom became the sole parent, so she also had to take on additional responsibilities – both emotionally and financially."

This highlighted the need for families to redistribute tasks and responsibilities to maintain functionality and resilience in the absence of a parent.

Practical Challenges and Transition

Secondly, Practical Challenges and Transition. Families faced practical challenges and transitions that required adjustments to maintain resilience. Financial setbacks, job loss, unexpected expenses, and the need for relocation were cited as specific instances where families had to tighten budgets, prioritize costs, and adapt to new circumstances. These practical adjustments were essential for ensuring the family's survival and well-being amidst adversity, requiring creative problem-solving and resourcefulness to overcome obstacles and thrive in changing environments. Participants described the practical challenges and transitions families had faced, requiring adjustments to maintain resilience. One CATHERINE shared:

"There were times when we experienced financial setbacks, like job loss or unexpected expenses. So we had to tighten our budget, cut back on non-essential spending, and find creative ways to get by."

This highlighted the need for families to tighten budgets and find innovative solutions to overcome financial difficulties, ensuring their survival despite setbacks.

Emotional Adjustment

Thirdly, Emotional Adjustment was indeed a critical aspect of adaptation highlighted in the responses. Participants described how their families supported each other emotionally through tough times, as one ANA mentioned:

"And let's talk about expectations. Oh! Were those expectations a whole vibe shift! We had to, like, reframe our mindset and adjust our expectations of ourselves and each other."

This illustrated the need to reframe mindsets and manage expectations, acknowledging the pressure and challenges faced by each family member. Furthermore, participants shared instances where emotions ran high, expressing moments of anger, frustration, and even breakdowns. Despite these challenges, they emphasized the importance of mutual support and understanding within the family unit. This collective approach to emotional resilience enabled families to navigate the ups and downs of their experiences together, providing mutual support and knowledge during periods of grief, anger, guilt, and sadness.

Legal Matters and Seeking Closure

Lastly, Legal Matters and Seeking Closure. When families go through a traumatic event like the loss of a loved one, they often have to deal with legal matters to find closure. As DONDIE shared:

"And then, Mom also spearheaded the efforts to seek justice for Dad's death, handling the legal procedures and challenges to find closure."

This shows how parents often take the lead in seeking justice, such as filing lawsuits or going to court. Doing this helps the family feel that someone is being held responsible and brings a sense of peace, allowing them to start healing and moving forward.

Martinelli et al. (2024) explain that when families face significant changes—like moving, divorce, or death—they must adjust in many ways. They deal with everyday problems like finding new schools or jobs, and also handle strong emotions like sadness, stress, or anger. Supporting each other and talking openly helps families stay strong during these times. Yopp et al. (2020) add that after a parent dies, families face emotional and legal tasks, such as settling the will or dividing property. These legal steps help prevent conflict and give the family a sense of fairness and closure. Handling these matters not only solves practical problems but also helps the family begin to heal emotionally and look ahead with more peace and strength.

3.14 Threads of Resilience Binding Self and Family

The central theme of "Threads of Resilience Binding Self and Family" emerged from the participants' responses, indicating how their families organized daily life to stay strong and bounce back from challenges. Within this theme, several sub-themes became apparent.

Structured Daily Dynamics and Familial Bonding

First Sub-themes: Structured Daily Dynamics and Familial Bonding. Participants emphasized the significance of structured daily dynamics and familial bonding in maintaining resilience within their families. BOBBY shared:

"We make sure to keep our daily lives organized and strong para makabawi from challenges. We prioritize safety and bonding moments, like mga family activities and gatherings, to keep the positive vibes flowing."

This highlighted the intentional effort made by families to establish routines and engage in activities that promote togetherness and positivity. ANA reflected on their family's resilience, stating:

"No matter what life throws our way, we bounce back stronger. We've got this unbreakable bond that's, like, our secret weapon against any drama."

This underscored the importance of familial bonds in providing strength and support during tough times.

Promotion of Open Dialogue

Second sub-theme Promotion of Open Dialogue. Open communication indeed served as a cornerstone of resilience within families. As CATHERINE shared:

"We hold regular family meetings to discuss upcoming events, concerns, and goals."

This demonstrated the intentional effort made by families to create opportunities for open dialogue and problem-solving, thereby fostering understanding and unity among family members. Moreover, another participant emphasized the importance of communication in daily interactions. ANA stated:

"Throughout the day, we keep the fam vibes strong with our little rituals."

This highlighted how regular communication, whether through family group chats or casual conversations, contributed to maintaining a supportive and cohesive family environment. By promoting open dialogue and regular communication, families could effectively address concerns, provide support, and navigate challenges

together as a unified unit. This transparency strengthened familial bonds, enhanced problem-solving skills, and ultimately contributed to the resilience of the family as a whole.

Self-Compassion

Lastly, Self-Compassion and patience are identified as essential elements of resilience within the family context. Participants stressed the importance of being patient with oneself, allowing time for healing, and acknowledging the complexity of emotions that arise during difficult times. By practicing self-compassion and accepting support from others, individuals and families could navigate the healing process with greater resilience and strength. As ANA wisely pointed out:

"Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time, but it's possible, and you'll come out stronger on the other side."

Dilworth (2023) highlights the importance of having structured daily routines within the family, such as regular mealtimes, bedtime rituals, and family traditions. These routines provide a stable and predictable framework that helps family members feel safe, supported, and connected. During challenging or changing times, these established patterns offer comfort and a sense of normalcy. Beyond mere physical proximity, family closeness involves building strong emotional bonds through spending quality time together, engaging in meaningful conversations, and collaborating to solve problems. These actions foster trust and mutual understanding, which strengthen the family's resilience in the face of difficulties.

Hopp and Fisher (2022) further emphasize the role of transparent communication within the family. Encouraging honest dialogue creates an environment where family members can freely share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns without fear of judgment or criticism. This open communication nurtures empathy, validation, and emotional support, which reinforce family connections and improve emotional well-being. Self-compassion is also identified as a key factor in both individual and family health. It involves treating oneself with kindness and empathy during times of struggle or setbacks. When families practice and encourage self-compassion, they foster a culture of support and understanding both internally and towards others. This attitude helps build inner strength, resilience, and acceptance, acting as a protective shield against life's challenges. The passage ties these ideas to the Resiliency Model, which identifies core aspects of family resilience such as belief systems, organizational patterns (like routines), communication methods, and problem-solving skills. By maintaining consistent routines, promoting honest and empathetic communication, and embracing self-kindness, families enhance their ability to adapt to and recover from adversity. These practices cultivate unity, flexibility, and positivity within the family unit, ultimately promoting greater resilience and overall well-being.

4.0 Conclusion

In the face of adversity, resilience is not just an individual trait, but a collective endeavor woven through the fabric of family bonds and supported by external networks. The journey through trauma unveils the profound capacity for adaptation, growth, and healing within the human spirit and familial context. From emotional turmoil to practical challenges and legal complexities, families demonstrate an innate ability to recalibrate, evolve, and endure. Through structured routines, open communication, and self-compassion, they navigate the tumultuous seas of grief and reconstruction, emerging stronger together. The study showed from these narratives that resilience is not merely about bouncing back from adversity but about weaving threads of strength, unity, and renewal within incorporating themselves and their families. It's a testament to the power of human connection, the importance of seeking support, and the transformative potential of embracing vulnerability with kindness. Ultimately, it's through collective efforts, empathy, and understanding that people find the courage to confront life's challenges and emerge resilient, united, and stronger than before.

During the bleakest hours, when hope seems on the verge of fading away, it's the solidarity within families that guides them through. Every hardship they face becomes a testament to the unbreakable resolve ingrained in their familial ties. Yet, amid the turmoil, there are moments when the weight of challenges feels overwhelming and pain echoes in every heartbeat. It's in these instances that resilience goes beyond individual strength, transforming into a powerful display of courage fueled by the collective spirit of kinship. As the storm rages, families stand as strongholds against despair's relentless onslaught. Each member, a symbol of unwavering determination, refuses to yield to the darkness. Yet, even in their steadfast resistance, they bear the scars inflicted by adversity. It's in the quiet moments of contemplation, amidst the ruins of shattered hopes, that the actual depth of their resilience

shines through. It's not only about enduring the storm but also about emerging from its fury renewed, strengthened by shared suffering and united strength.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

The author solely conceived the study design, conducted the data collection and analysis, interpreted the results, and wrote the manuscript.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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