

LEFT BEHIND: UNRAVELING THE STORY OF AN ABANDONED CHILD - A NARRATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Child abandonment has been a crisis in the Philippines because of its surprisingly growing population. As reported by the Philippines Without Orphans, a non-governmental organization, about 8 million out of 46 million children are orphans. Thus, this study is conducted as it aims to appraise the struggles faced by an abandoned child. This study also aims to evaluate the hardships of being a student regarding academic performance. Only one participant in Brgy. Telaje is considered using purposive sampling. In analyzing the data, thematic analysis is used. Participants faced financial and emotional challenges but managed to meet their needs through work opportunities. However, the participant continues to struggle emotionally due to past traumas associated with parental abandonment. The participant faced academic hardships but remained determined, excelling and achieving honor student status. The data implies that acknowledging and addressing the issue of child abandonment is critical.

Keywords: abandoned child, struggles, trauma, depression, academic productivity

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1.0 Introduction

Child abandonment has a significant impact on our country's history, culture, and welfare. A study attempted to determine the extent of child abandonment across the world and they identified 124 cases of infant abandonment across the United Kingdom primary causes of child abandonment be poverty or financial hardship, being a single parent, post-natal depression, mental illness, a lack of sexual health education and poor knowledge regarding family planning (Sherr *et al.*, 2019). As stated by UNICEF, a certain number of children are orphans due to the abandonment and neglect of either or both of their parents for reasons of poverty, disease, or other personal reasons.

According to Kaur *et al.* (2018), children who are deprived of parental care and a secure family environment often become vulnerable to a host of psychological problems and psychiatric disorders since these children are then usually reared in institutional homes set up by the government or private agencies, which provide some semblance of order in their lives, they feel discomfort about missing something. In the study by Vergara *et al.* (2018), it was also stated that orphaned children grew up in the absence of love and had no basic needs for survival.

The life Course Theory of Glen H. Elder, Jr., will assist the different experiences of an abandoned child and how the child changes into something different. This theory corroborates the study since one of the objectives is to know how the participant copes with abandonment struggles. It is essential to the participant itself as it emphasizes the need of taking into account life events and turning points throughout the occurrence of the trajectory. Avdibegovic and Brki (2020) state that the consequences of abandonment in the future could cause potential harm to the physical and emotional well-being of the abandoned child as they grow older.

It is important to look into how children live with being abandoned by their parents without knowing how it affects them and many other aspects of their lives. As a result, the researchers were compelled to perform this study, which tries to evaluate the difficulties faced experienced by an abandoned child. This study also seeks to assess the difficulties of being a student in terms of achieving academic achievement.

2.0 Research Methodology

This study employed a narrative method and a qualitative research strategy. It was conducted at Rosario, Tanabog, Tandag City, Surigao del Sur. Its population as determined by the 2020 Census was 4,385. This represented 7.00% of the total population

of Tandag. Only one participant was selected for this study. The participant of this study lives in Barangay Telaje, Tandag City. Among all the teenagers in Telaje, we have chosen the participant that best suits the criteria: a working senior high student, financially unstable, carries the responsibility of the adoptive family, and an academic achiever. The study utilized semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling to gather data on abandoned children's difficulties. Validators, including panelists, validated the study's face and content validity, ensuring its validity in the narrative approach.

Thematic analysis was employed in this study, collecting data through permission, informed written consent, focus group discussion, and transcription. This qualitative research method identifies recurring themes and common issues. Throughout the research study, we ensured that ethics were our primary concern. Before conducting this study, we first personally asked permission from the participant and ensured that all information including her responses and/or answers will not be disclosed to anyone or anywhere. Concerning her mental well-being, we first asked about her mental status and proceeded with the interview when her response was positive. In addition, we guarantee that the reactions and responses of the participants in terms of data results are reliable, valid, fair, transparent, and confirmable.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Based on the results gathered, we were able to come up with the following results:

Struggles of an Abandoned Child

Financial Struggles. Below is the response of the participants as she mentioned her financial struggles:

"ako gagasto tanan, ako gagasto nan amo mga kuanon bitaw, yaun mga kuryente, bayad sa kuryente bayad sa suga, like gi angot ko tanan yadto na time kay tungod dili sila mo suportta (It's just me who supported myself with studies, It's just me who fed my Lola, I paid for everything, I paid for our like... those electricity, dues for electricity, bills for electricity. I endured it all that time because they don't want to support us)"

Delving on the above statement, it can be deduced that the participant do not have enough financial assets to support herself and her grandmother, and was regarded as stressful and the cause of her difficulties. Herself was the only key for her to live her life. Financial

hardship was coupled with poverty due to household costs, and she especially mentioned the challenges she encountered especially in paying electricity, food, and other necessities. The participant needed to take a job that a teenager shouldn't do. Even though she approached her relatives for financial support, they couldn't help her, therefore she had to work hard for her grandmother and herself. She works long hours and doesn't get enough sleep even if she just receives 50 pesos as salary. With that, she became stronger and persevered in living her life with her grandmother.

In addition, Lyness (2018) stated that abandoned children tend to grow up in a more challenging environment with a stronger sense of stigma. That's why the participant was able to survive the financial hardships as an abandoned child, it made the participant aim higher to survive.

Emotional Struggles. A child who was abandoned by a parent can leave with different traumas that may often continue to face into adulthood. As we quote:

"Sa tinuoday makalaong ako na gadumot ako pero, pero inday (katawa with kasakit) like ga sis, ga kuan gayud ako ka mama nasayasingod niya yaun sa ako. Like mo laong ako na ngasa ako pa, yaun ing'ana bitaw na mga kuan, like, sakit masakitan ako nasa gipasagdan ako nila, nasa gihatag nila yaun sa ako na responsibilidad, nasa sa ako sa ("Honestly, I could tell that I'm mad but I don't... I don't know (Laughs painfully) I always question my mother why she did that to me. I'll probably ask her why am I the one who is suffering, questions like that, It's painful to be abandoned and neglected, why did they gave me such responsibility, why was it me. Things like that hurts me a lot but what can I do)."

"yakuan ako nan yadtun time na kuan, like down gayud ako tapos amo yadto na yag attempt ako na mag hikog ("I was so down that time that I attempted suicide)"

Based on the results, the effects of abandonment comprise hatred towards her parents, affliction due to rejection, longing for her childhood experiences, and losing trust in people. The participant is feeling emotionally disconnected as she was rejected by the people who are important to her. She is so emotionally exhausted by the challenges she occasionally can't handle on her own that she once tried to kill herself. She must maintain emotional stability in order to regulate her emotional state because her grandmother is on her side.

As explained in The Paradigm Treatment (2021), abandonment is a powerful psychological trauma that may shape a teen's life perspective and experience. Although birth parents may have approached the adoption process with love and caring for their child, the experience, no matter how smooth, can leave youngsters with emotions of loss, rejection, denial, and despair.

Academic Struggles. She was a working student and she had to balance her studies and her job. With that, the participant lacked focus because balancing work and schooling wasn't easy. There are things she should not be doing, but because of her responsibilities, she needs a way to earn a living. Her experiences in balancing

education and work affected her academics, still, it did not hinder her from being on the honor roll as it was a promise to her grandmother, who died not too long ago, to be on the honor list. She compromises her health because of the several obligations she has to study late at night. Here is the response of the participant:

"Kuan, kibali pag, yaun say mga 12 nasa ako paulion or ala 1. Pag ka yaun kaadlawon ng yaun, kuan, nanha ako mag start mag module kay diba module sa kita yadto (whenever I got home at 12 or 1 in the morning, that's when I start answering my modules because classes were modular, right? That's the time I start it and then wake up at like 4 am or 5 am)"

According to Biçakçi *et al.* (2016), children who experience abandonment may experience health issues like poor academic and occupational performance. Because the participant struggled to keep up with academics, this led to poor academics but still managed to survive in education.

4.0 Conclusion

According to the data gathered, significant conclusions occur. The participant's major struggles as an abandoned child are financial and emotional difficulties, various responsibilities in their livelihood, and lack of support. These battles demonstrate her resolve to manage obligations to her family while pursuing a job to support them. Despite not having much parental assistance, she overcame academic difficulties and found strength in her independence. This change highlights her developing sense of accountability. She struggles with feelings of isolation and confusion, wondering why she must endure the pain inflicted upon her by her missing parents. She lost trust, confidence, and self-assurance as a result of the emotional suffering and trauma she underwent. The participant's determination to succeed academically and achieve her aspirations remained unwavering in the face of discrimination.

The insights gathered on the difficulties, abandonment traumas, and effects on academic productivity as an abandoned child have serious repercussions. Her story becomes a motivating illustration of resiliency, highlighting how the will to persevere should triumph even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and the lack of parental support. Governments, organizations, and other supporting groups can utilize this information to give some assistance to every victim of child abandonment and to implement medical care for them, since they frequently experience a variety of mental traumas and challenges. Furthermore, this study underlines the need for equity in dealing with such circumstances and making parents accountable for their behavior.

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