



## Psychosocial and Physical Risks: Retelling the Stories of the Orphans

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### ABSTRACT

This study is meant to describe the psychosocial and physical risks of the orphans in Capiz, Philippines, taking into account their situations/experiences before coming to the orphanage, their coping mechanisms, and their aspirations. This is descriptive qualitative research anchoring from Stake's model in conducting a case study. This study covered four (4) female orphans as case participants from the orphanage, whose ages range from 8 to 18, with different narratives and life stories. In this study, it emerged that their stepmother, stepfather, and stepbrother emotionally, physically, and sexually abused them as the majority of the themes they experienced. The cited abuse is considered one of the primary reasons that brought the children to the orphanage. The children's coping mechanisms in the orphanage are positively affected by the people who saved and brought them into it. The activities in the orphanage, such as attending mass and praying, helped them strengthen their faith in God, eventually lightening their burden; other than leaving their negative experiences, the orphans' aspirations in the orphanage are to finish their education and help others, especially their siblings.

**Keywords:** Psychosocial, Physical Risks, Case study, Orphans, Violence against women and Children.

### INTRODUCTION

We need to see a child as a gift to be welcomed, cherished, and protected, for they are created equal (Pope Francis, 2015). Children should have the same opportunities in life, the chance to grow up healthy and happy, to receive a good education and to live in a loving and caring environment. So, a child must be provided with all the basic services necessary for his physical, mental, emotional and intellectual growth and development (UNICEF, 2016). Thus, orphanages rescue these unfortunate children who are physically sexually abused, neglected and abandoned and to provide them with food, clothing, shelter and education. These orphanages shared one mission to make

the world a better place for these children. Caritas in Poland serves children with special needs to help maximize their quality of life. The Little Servant Sisters of the Immaculate Conception run it (DSWD, 2015). The scenario around the world that gives the picture of orphan children could likewise be true in our country. One of the largest orphanages in the Philippines is Hospicio de San Jose, which caters the needy, orphaned, and abandoned children. It provides residential group-care services for children's physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual well-being. It assumes these abandoned and orphaned children's care, custody, protection, and maintenance (Gonzales, 2015 ).

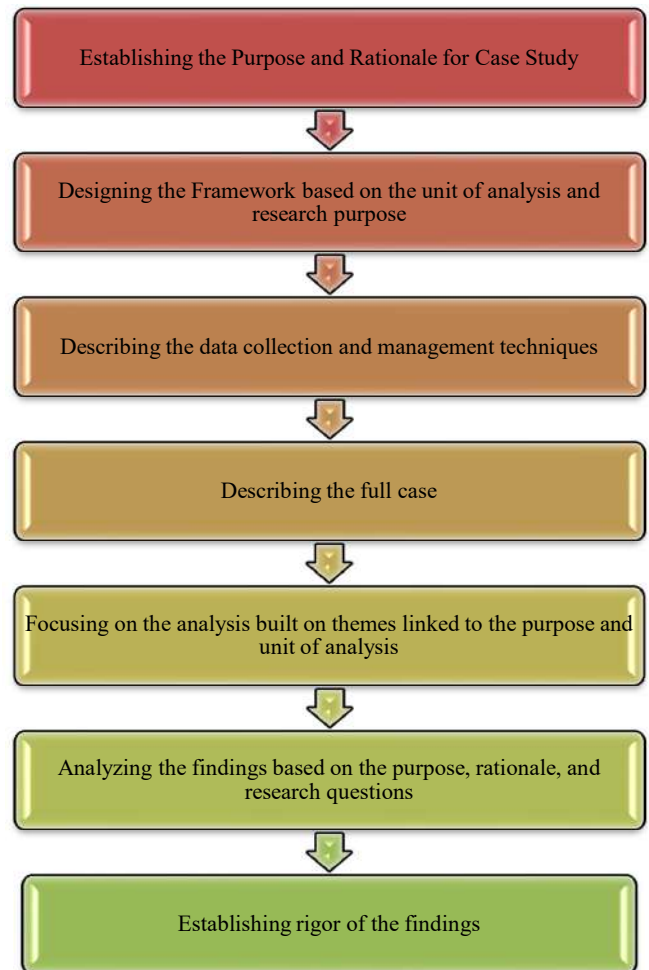
The Philippine constitution values women's and children's dignity and guarantees full respect for human rights. It shall prevent further abuse and provide relief from violence against a woman and her child. The state also recognizes the need to protect the family and its members, particularly women and children, from violence and threats to their safety and security (Anti Violence Against Women and their Children Act 2004 or R.A NO. 9262). The state highlights the need and significance of providing stronger deterrence and special protection against child abuse, promoting children's welfare, and enhancing their opportunities for a useful and happy life (R.A No. 7610). The only orphanage in the province of Capiz, Philippines, caters to children with a nurturing place they can call home for their protection, guidance, and security and need a loving life atmosphere. The orphanage is a catholic, child-caring institution that envisions children, specifically girls, who are dependent, abandoned, neglected, and surrendered to realizing their worth, dignity, and potential; and be saved and protected at all costs from any abuse or exploitation, thus restoring a right relationship with God and their families, and protecting the child from prematurely entering an unstable home, thus endangering her welfare and well-being. They are prepared for life in their community as valuable, contributing members who demonstrate strong Christian values and help them develop their full potential toward self-sufficiency and independence (Sts. Joseph Manual of Operations, 2016). The researcher has witnessed the different styles of coping strategies and aspirations though the orphans have been through an unpleasant experience in life. The researcher realized these children need adults to understand, respect, and love without distinction or discrimination.

### Statements of the Problem

The study generally aimed to describe the psychosocial and physical risks of orphans in Capiz, Philippines. Specifically, it sought answers to (1) What are the lived experiences of the orphaned children before coming to the orphanage?; (2) What are the coping mechanisms of the children from their previous experiences?; and (3) What are the children's aspirations regarding their education, family, and self?

### Conceptual Framework

This case study focused on the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and aspirations of the orphans residing in the Orphanage in Capiz, Philippines. Yin (2003) proposed a very straightforward protocol approach for case study emphasizing field procedures, case study questions, and a guide for the final write-up. The procedures are intended to assist the researcher in carrying out the case study and increase the reliability of the research.



**Figure 1**

shows the schematic diagram of the proceedings involved in collecting participant data.

Similarly, Stake (1995) has proposed a series of necessary steps for completing the case study method, including posing research questions, gathering data, data analysis, and interpretation. A remarkable distinction is Stake's emphasis on a more naturalistic approach, the importance of

the philosophical underpinnings of the case study method, and the importance of the description of contexts, in which this study will anchor. Gillham (2000) proposes a case study model. However, the model only focuses on the data's analysis and presentation. It does not include the participants' validation phase regarding the study's final findings. In this study, the participants will validate the findings that state the themes and meanings of their responses. The conformity of the participants to the findings is very important in this study because it will disclose the salient points in the lives of the orphaned children. Thus, Stake's model is deemed appropriate in the study.

### Research Methodology

The study was meant to describe the situations/experiences of the orphans before coming to the orphanage, their coping mechanisms, and their aspirations in life. This study covered four (4) female orphans as case participants whose ages range from 8 to 18 years old and have different stories in life. This is descriptive qualitative research anchoring from Stake's model in conducting a case study. The researcher conducted an unstructured interview with the designed focus and secondary questions as the guide. The questions were translated into vernacular for the participants' convenience.

Moreover, ethical considerations were undertaken, such as permission from the ethics committee and execution of the informed consent of the participants and the administrators of the orphanage. The study's revelations are expected to give deeper insights into the various psychosocial problems experienced by the participants, their coping mechanisms, and their aspirations in life. It is also hoped that the findings of the study may give insights into the orphans' deep psychosocial problems that may enable the administrators of the orphanage to organize adequate programs for the welfare of the orphans and provide a haven for the orphans where they can build self-esteem and social values.

### Results and Discussions

#### Profile of the Participants

The participants of this study were four (4) female orphans. Their ages ranged from 8 to 18 years old, with different narratives and stories in life. Table 1 presents the participants' profiles, which were categorized according to age, gender, type of case, and educational attainment.

#### Case Study 1: "Nelie"

Nelie (not her real name), ages 8, a grade 2 pupil from Roxas City. Her father is a fisher-

Participants	Present age	Gender	Types of Case	Educational Attainment
1	8	Female	Physically abused & neglected	Grade 2
2	15	Female	Orphan & Sexually abused	Grade 4
3	15	Female	Sexually Abused & neglected	Grade 8
4	18	Female	Broken family & Neglected	Grade 8

**Table 1**

presents the participants' profiles, which were categorized according to age, gender, type of case, and educational attainment.

man. Nelie lives with her stepmother who has children from her first husband. Since her father is a fisherman, he has to work the whole day and return home during the evening. When her father is at work, her stepmother brutally abuses her physically. She narrates:

“When my father is at work, my stepmother chains me in our house’s post for the whole day and beats me with wood up to her content. She will release me during nighttime when father is about to come home. She gives me fish bones and a little rice for my food. My father does not know what my stepmother is doing. I am afraid to tell him for she threatens to kill me if I tell my father. This is the scenario of my life every day, every time my father is away from home. She hangs me upside down, chains my hands and beats me with a burning wood. Sometimes, she pricks me with the needle at my back. When my father is at home, she is very nice and kind and pretends to love me. She does not want me to go to school or even play outside with other kids.”

The mother of her stepmother caught her daughter hanging Nelie upside down while beating her. She asked for help from their neighbors the moment she saw this. They notified the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). When the social workers from the DSWD visited Nelie’s house, the stepmother was caught in the act for they saw Nelie chained in a post at their house. The DSWD brought Nelie to the orphanage. After three weeks in staying at the Orphanage, Nelie got sick, and she was hospitalized and diagnosed that she had a needle stuck in one of her ribs at her back. She underwent an immediate major operation. The doctor told the sisters that Nelie only had an unstable chance of surviving the operation. The sisters and the orphans prayed harder for a miracle. Indeed, God heard them, and Nelie had a successful operation. It’s been a year since she was operated. Now, Nelie seems happy and contented as she stays in the orphanage.

**She reveals:**

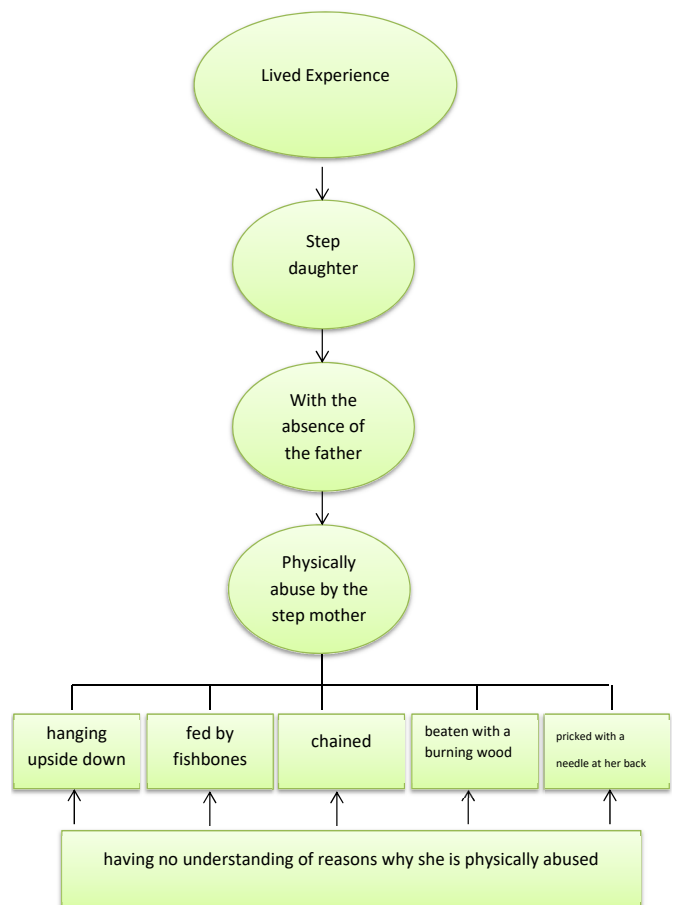
“Here at the orphanage, I am happy and feel secure that nobody will hurt me anymore unlike what my stepmother did to me. I can now play with my friends. I would be very happy if we had visitors here at the orphanage, for they brought

us food, clothes, and toys.”

Nelie got through with all the abuse from her stepmother and the major operation that almost caused her death if she was not strong enough to fight for her life. She is very energetic and plans to finish her schooling and be what she wants someday. She explains: “I want to finish my school and to be a teacher someday like ma’am Dolores (her adviser in grade2) I want to teach children how to read and write.”

When asked if she wants to go back to her dad, she answers with full determination: “I want to go back home with my dad without my stepmother.”

Though Nelie is only eight years old and the youngest of the four participants, She revealed that when she was angry with her peers, she wanted to beat and even kill the person with whom she got angry. She remembered the phys-

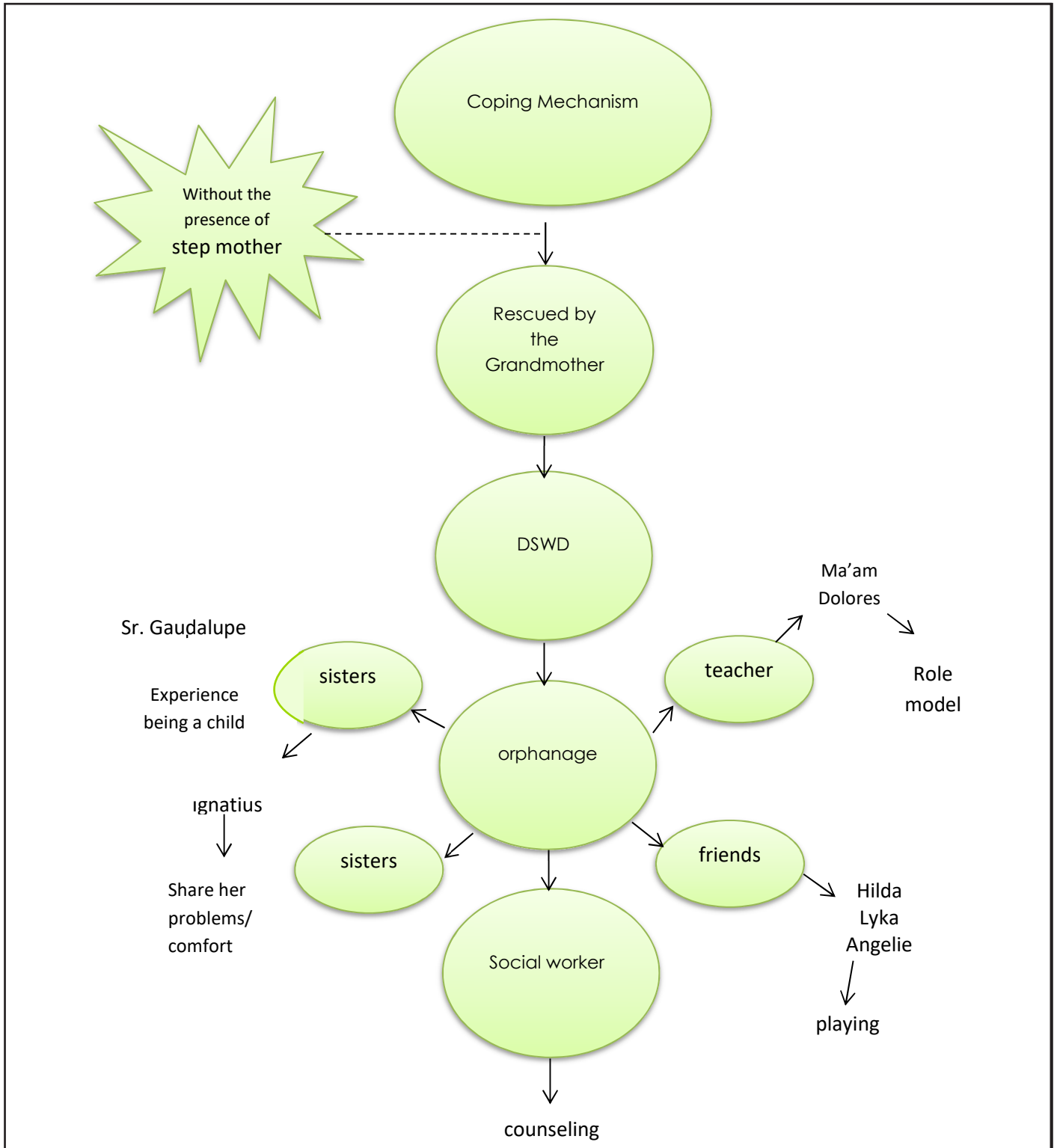


**Figure 2**

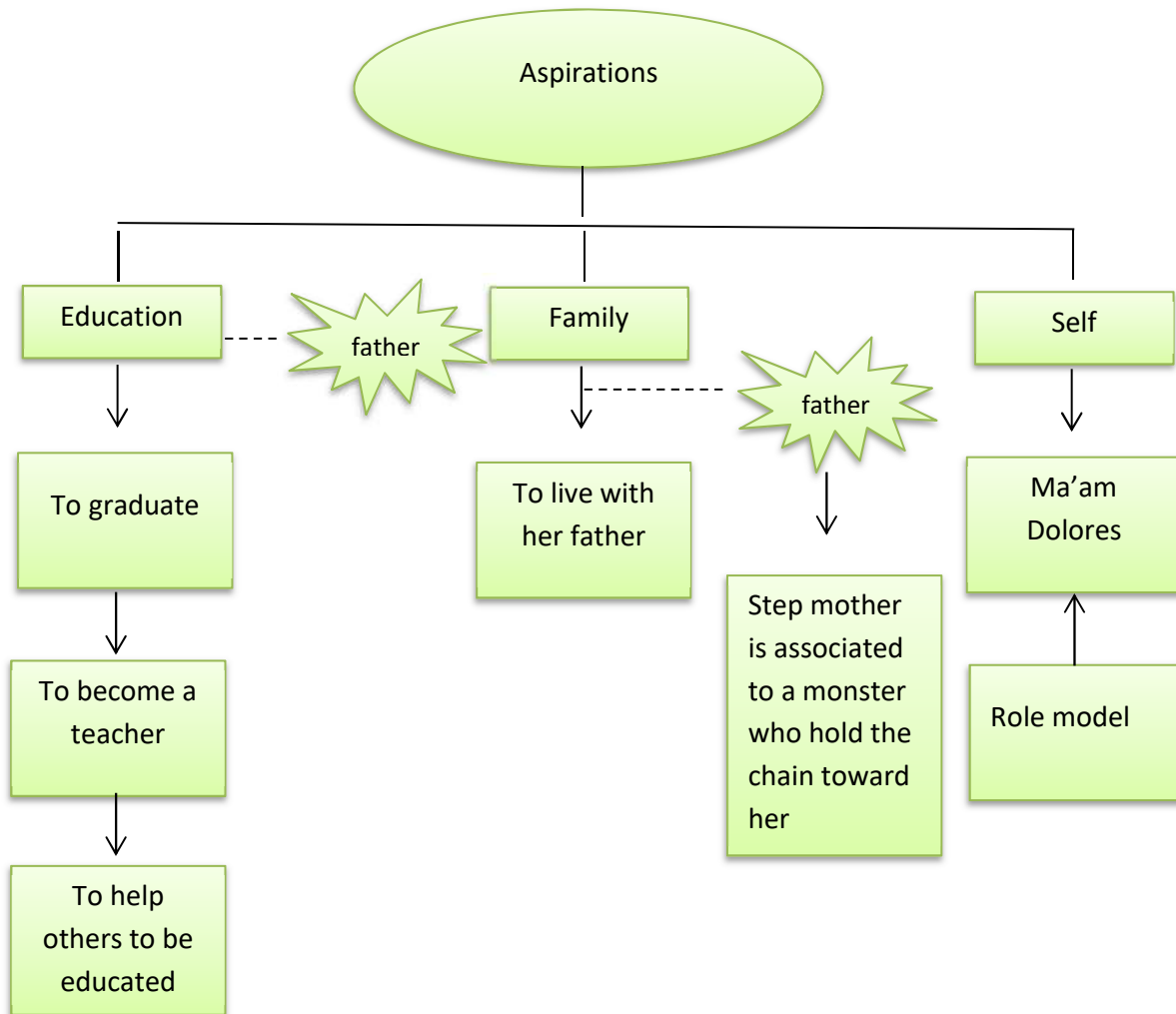
Diagram showing the Lived Experiences of “Nelie”

ical abuse that her stepmother had done to her. She held a trauma. She is afraid of the dark stairs and places. Being asked why? She explains:

“If I am in dark places, particularly in dark stairs, it is as if I see a monster, who looks like my stepmother holding a bunch of chains.”



**Figure 3**  
Diagram showing the Coping Mechanisms of "Nelie"



**Figure 4**  
 Diagram showing the Aspirations of "Nelie"

**Case Study 2 : "Monic"**

Monic (not her real name) ages 14, a grade 4 pupil, and an orphan. Because of life's shortcomings, she ended up living with her stepbrother, whom she met for the first time. She considered him a father. However, that respect was lost during the time that he "touched" Monic. Her father was a fisherman, and her mother was a teacher. The memories of her parents are still fresh to her before they died and how happy they were. She witnessed the deaths of her parents and a sister. She felt remorse for her parents' death because her siblings were scattered. She relates:

"Even though we are poor, we are happy and contented in our life. As the eldest, I cared for my

two younger siblings while my parents were at work. Huhuhu... Later, my sister got sick, and unfortunately, she died. Huhuhu... A week later, my mother, beyond all problems, got sick and died. After a month, my father also died. After those unfortunate events, our grandmother cared for us only for a month. Our half-brother on my father's side, whom I first met, took us from Masbate and brought us to his house in Punta Cogon, Roxas City, hoping he could help our lives better. Instead, they make us feel more miserable because of the maltreatment we received from his wife and children. They treated us like servants, our nephews and nieces bullied us, and sometimes they did not give us food. Huhuhu... My stepbrother started to molest me when I was five years old. I was afraid and ashamed to tell



someone, for I had no idea to whom I would confide. But I always pray to God to help us with our situation. One of the DSWD social workers went to our place and looked for us, for they received a report about us. They got us and sent us here to the orphanage. However, in this series of unfortunate situations. My brother was left in my half-brother's custody since the orphanage accepts only girls. The DSWD returned him to my half-brother. When we arrived, some sisters, orphans, and Ma'am Cora welcomed us."

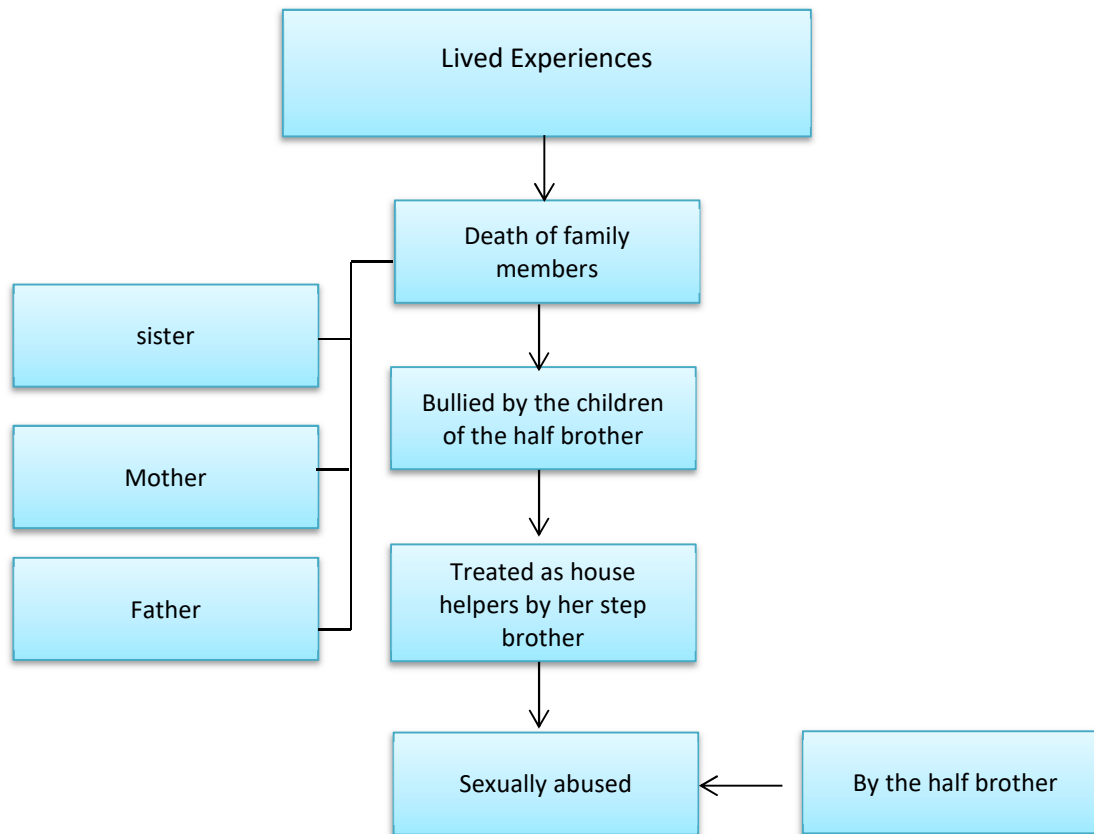
When she asked how life was here in the orphanage, She answers:

"At first, I was scared of the orphans that they might bully us like we had experienced before. However, as days passed, I realized they are friendly and kind to us. Hmm... here in the orphanage, I love helping the sisters in their work, like cleaning and gardening. I love cooking food for the sisters and my fellow children in the or-

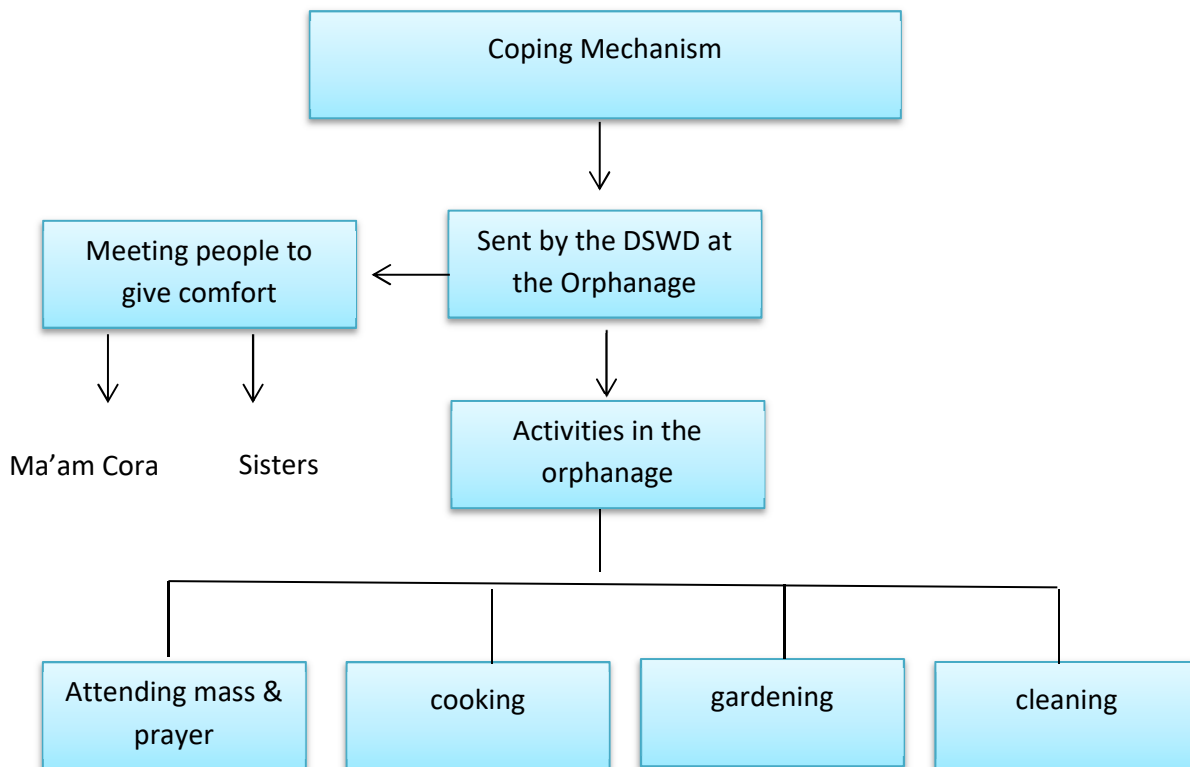
phanage. This lessens my problem and makes me happy, but sometimes I think of my brother left in my half-brother. Here, I confided to the social worker in the orphanage that I was a raped victim of my half-brother. The sisters and the social worker helped me recover greatly with their advice and prayers. The sisters showed us good examples of being good children and taught us to pray. I pray that my brother is in good condition every day during mass. I grew up here and learned to forgive and be strong."

Like other children, Monic has many dreams she wants to achieve. She believes she can fulfill all she wants to be through her dedication and strong determination. She explains:

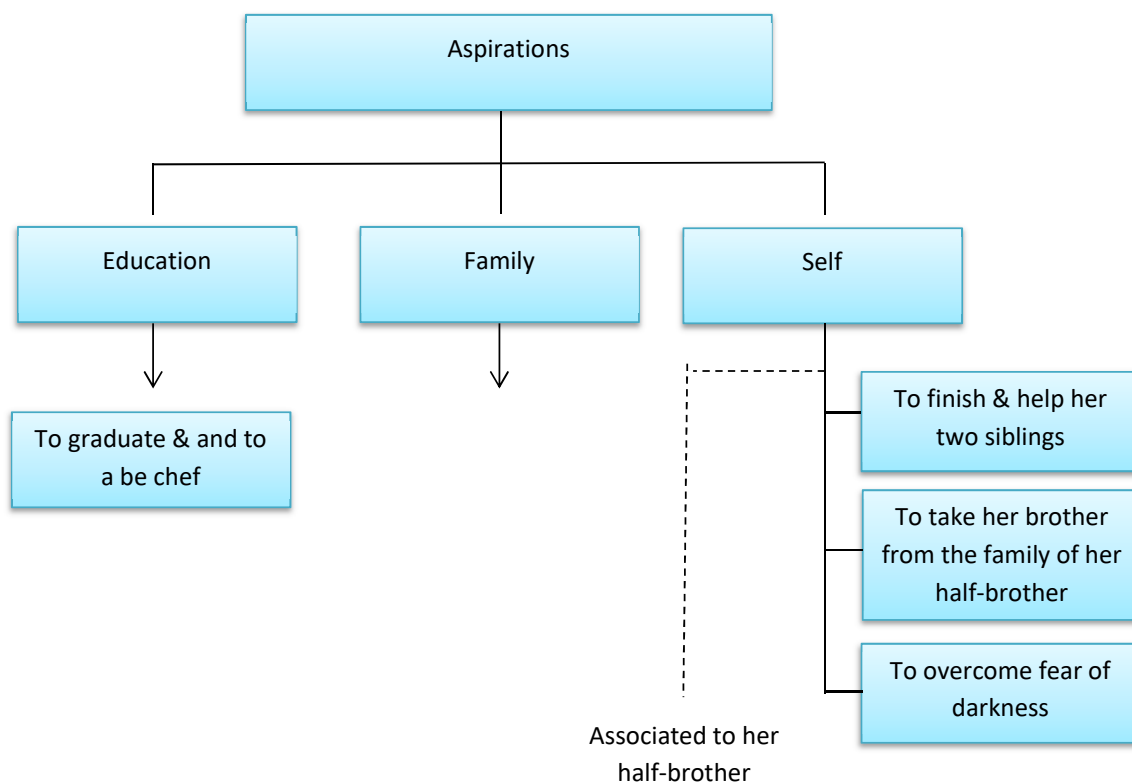
"All I want is that someday I and my siblings will be together under the same roof. I want to finish my studies. I want to find a stable job so I can help my sister in school and get my brother from my half-brother. I want to be a chef and to have



**Figure 5**  
Diagram showing the Lived Experiences of "Monic"



**Figure 6**  
 Diagram showing the Coping Mechanisms of "Monic"



**Figure 7**  
 Diagram showing the Aspirations of "Monic"



my own restaurant someday.”)

The abuse made Monic fear the dark; though it’s been 7 years since it happened, it reminds her that whenever she is in a dark place, she feels alone, and someone could harm her. She explains: “I am scared if I am in dark places, for it seems my stepbrother who raped me is there watching and trying to rape me again.

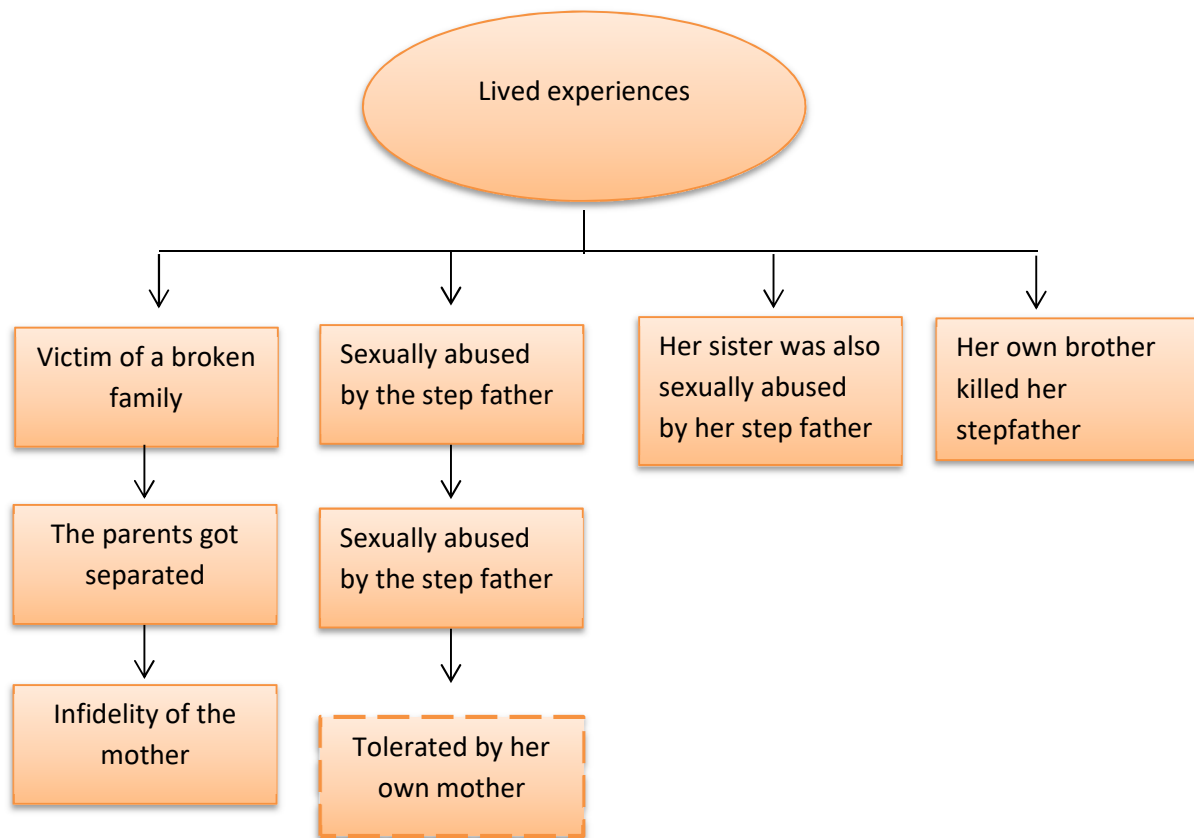
**Case Study 3: “Angel”**

Angel (not her real name) is 18 years old and a grade 8 student. Her father was a carpenter while her mother was a laundry woman. Her father left them when he found out that her mother is in a relationship with another man. She relates:

“Before my mom had an affair with another man, we were happy. Every night they always fight. Then, my father left us. My mother, my youngest sister, and I left our place in Masbate and

lived with her boyfriend here in Roxas City who became my stepfather. Huhuhu... He started to rape me when I was 8 years old and did it several times until I was 12. Huhuhu... My mother knew about this but she tolerated the matter. When my eldest brother visited us ... huhuhu... I confided to him what my stepfather has been doing to me. He managed to take me there and brought me to our uncle’s house in Lonoy and they brought me here (in the orphanage) for they believe that the sisters can help me recover from all of the miseries that had happened to me. When I was here, I was informed that my stepfather also raped my sister.. huhuhu... as a result, my eldest brother killed my stepfather. ”

At the orphanage, the sisters and the social worker joined forces to help Angel to recover from her painful experiences. She showed a strong determination that she would recover and be able to move on with the help of the



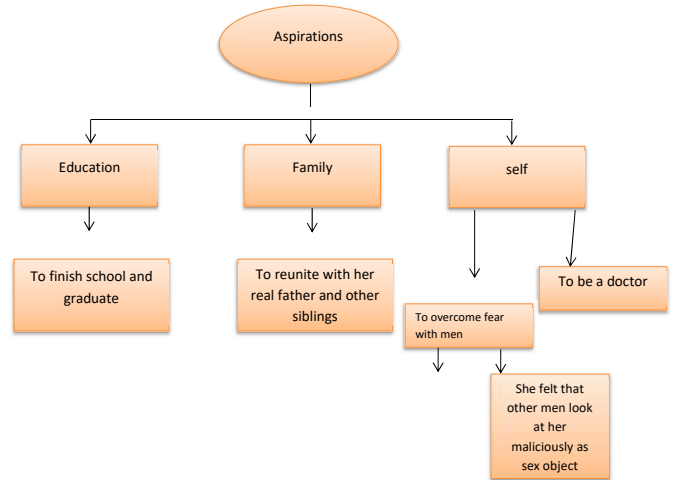
**Figure 8**  
Diagram showing the Lived Experiences of “Angel”

sisters and the social worker. She explains:

"I felt secure and safe while I stayed here... huhuhu... that nobody can ever touch me again. Despite the nightmare that never leaves me every night, the sisters, Ma'am Cora, and the children do their best to make me happy. I attend mass daily with the sisters, and praying with them makes me feel better. The sisters help me a lot to recover. The orphans here help me too. I realized that I am not the only victim of abuse here. The sisters and the orphans did their best for me to recover to make my life worthwhile."

Being an abused child, Angel never stopped believing that she would be the best person someday despite the unpleasant experiences that she had been through. She still has aspirations for her family, education, and herself; these dreams can motivate her to fight and become invulnerable to anyone. She explicates:

"I want to return to my father and live together with my siblings huhuhu... in Masbate. As for my mother, I already had forgiven her. I want to finish my study so I can go home with my father and siblings. Hmmm... I want to be a doctor someday."



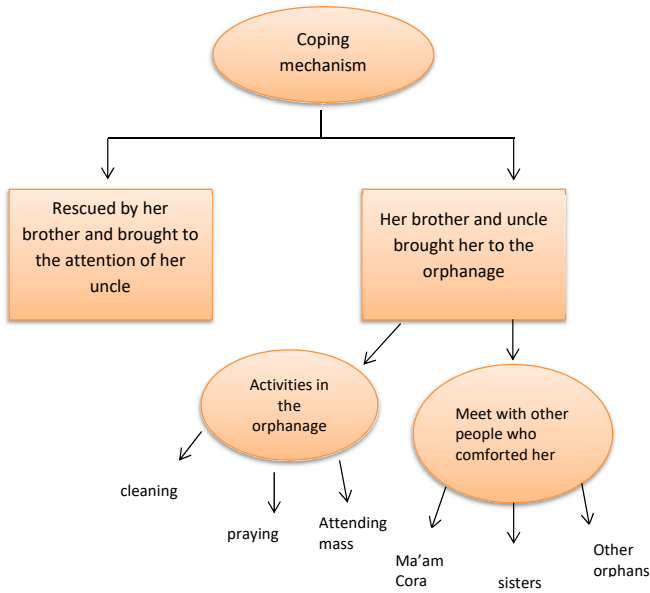
**Figure 10**

Diagram showing the Aspirations of "Angel"

**Case Study 4: "Jade"**

Jade (not her real name) ages 18 and a grade 8 student. She was brought to the orphanage together with her sister by the Brgy. Captain to save them from the danger that falls upon them. During the interview, Jade poured out to the researcher with tears all of her painful experiences at home, feeling remorse for their parents and their lives. Though she said they were not a perfect family, they were happy sometimes. She explains:

"Huhuhu... Before my parents separated, my parents had a happy and sometimes chaotic relationship. Chaotic because I witnessed my dad's physical abuse of my mom. However, I did not know why, for I was still a child then. We were wealthy before, for my father owns a martial arts training center in Manila named after me. I am the oldest and had 2 siblings. Our parents provided us with love and material things. My mother... hmmm... takes care of us while my father works. When I was 2 years old, my family transferred to Lono, Roxas City, where my mom's relatives lived. Since my father managed the business, he seldom comes home but still provided for the family's needs. As young as 12 years old, I discovered huhuhu... that my mom had a relationship with another man but I was afraid to tell my father about it. I kept everything as a secret. When my father returned home, he discovered my mother was pregnant. I confided everything I knew about my mom, but my father blamed me for not telling



**Figure 9**

Diagram showing the Coping Mechanisms of "Angel"

him from the start. Huhuhu..."

According to Jade, it was the start of the misery of their family's life. Her father did not return to Manila to work; instead, he induced himself into booze every day. They always fought, and he physically abused his wife in their presence. Their living becomes poorer as a rat. Her parents did not want to send her to school. Because of this, she applied to be a working student with one of her teachers. Every weekend she goes to her teacher's house to work and receives 250 pesos as payment. She divided the 250 bills for their food and for her allowance.

A town official knew the case of the family. She offered help to bring Jade and her youngest sister to the orphanage so they could study and be cared for. Jade accepted the help because she wanted to study and escape the chaotic life from their home. Jade and her youngest sister (from the other man) were brought to the orphanage with their mother's consent. They arrived at the orphanage full of determination that she and her sister would survive and could find happiness there. The sisters, social worker, and some of the orphans welcomed them with warm smiles. She considered staying at the orphanage would be their new life without their parents. Though life in the orphanage is not easy, she strongly believes that God can help them move on to the best life they want. As she explicates as:

"Life here in the orphanage is not easy compared to the other teenagers like me. We have our routine schedule for everything. For example, we must wake up as early as 4:00 a.m. to attend the daily mass with the sisters and pray the 15 mysteries. Then, take our breakfast and go to school beside the orphanage managed and owned by the sisters. At the evening, right after suffering, we have our little time for recreation and study our lesson for the next day."

To forget what happened to them. She spent her time studying and doing the assignment that was assigned to her during the weekend. She found out that spending her time studying and doing her assignments alleviated her not thinking of her past experiences at home

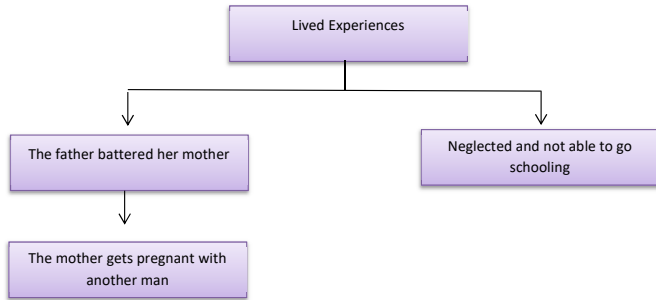
- thus making her happy. As Jade explains: "I kept myself busy so I won't be able to think of my past experiences. Every weekend we have assigned tasks for us like cooking, cleaning, and gardening. I enjoy helping the sisters in cleaning. I am fond of cleaning at the chapel, where I think I can release or pour out what bothers me. I like that we have our scheduled time for a half hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament with the sister. That time I can pray huhuhu... that my mother changes her decent life for a better one for she have living with another man. And also, I am praying for my father that he recovers soon and be back again with his company and earn money so that he will get us here and live together with my siblings. Praying with the sister and helping them of their work makes me feel better. Hmmm... I gained many friends at school, and by their company, I sometimes forget my problem and worries."

**And she continues:**

"With the help of the sisters and the social worker here, I can adjust my life from the chaotic life I had before. The sisters never cease to remember to have a positive outlook and begin to focus on what life is now. I realized that life is not bad as I thought. If I have to think about life positively, I will be happy. I realized my sister and I could continue without our parents' presence and support. Life is not always a bed of roses after all."

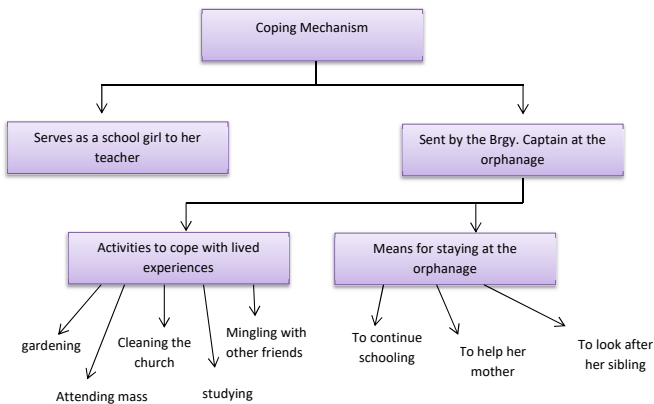
Though she admitted that life in the orphanage was not easy for her, she kept going on. One thing that keeps her from moving on is her aspirations and her dreams to be the best person she can be. When asked about her aspirations for her family, education, and herself, she answered in tears:

"Huhuhu... The idea of thinking that my parents' relationship would be back to normal is impossible. All I want for my mother is to be a decent woman and to be a better person not only for us her children but most especially for herself... huhuhu... I always keep my father's promise that he will return to get us here after graduation so that we will be together. For my studies, I will accomplish this not just for my parents but for myself that someday despite this chaotic life that my family and I have been through, I can have



**Figure 11**

Diagram showing the Lived Experiences of "Jade"



**Figure 12**

Diagram showing the Coping Mechanisms of "Jade"

my say, huhuhu.. I survive without their support. Hmm... For myself, I want to be a tourism graduate someday. To have my own business and to meet a lot of tourists. With this, I can help my youngest sister finish her studies so she will not become like our mother. I'll let other people say huhuhu... and judge us as they say, "What is the tree will be the fruit," however, when the right time comes, someday I will make a big difference before their eyes. Huhuhu..."

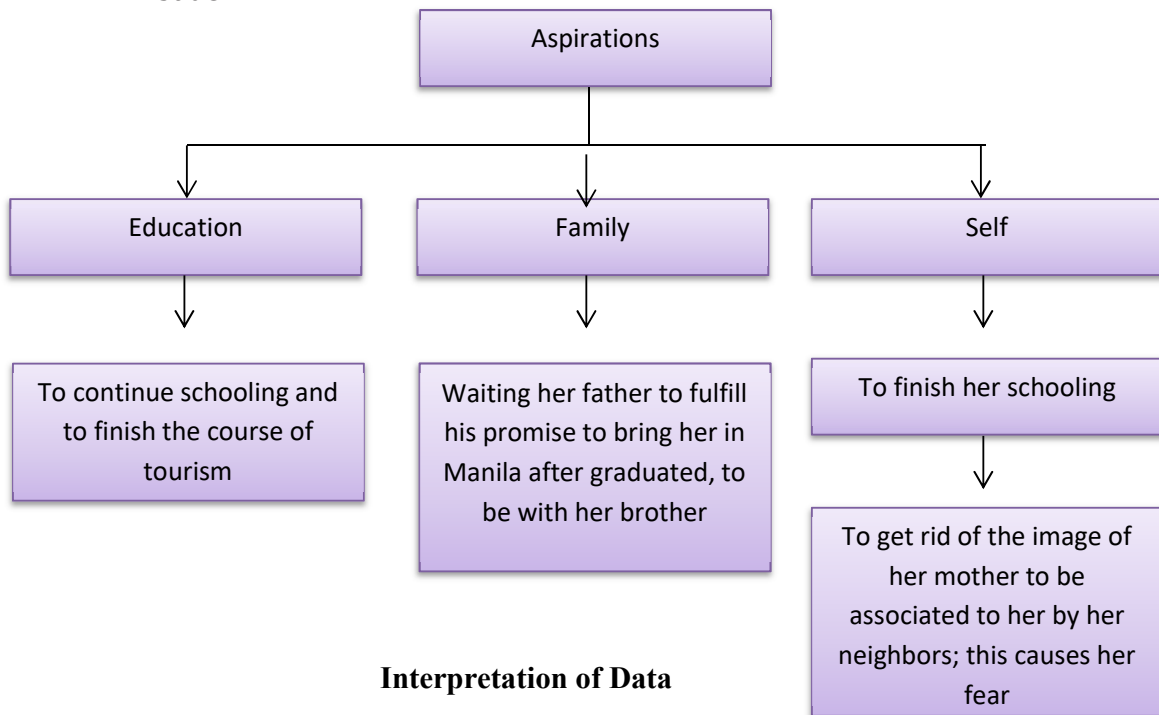
When Jade was asked on her greatest fear. She answers:

"I am afraid of people, particularly men, for my mother's immoral act. I am ashamed to face people for fear of being mocked, insulted, and compared to her. huhuhu... "

**Interpretation of Data**

**The Lived Experiences of the Orphans.**

The family is considered to be the cradle of personality. Home is the only place where all the needs of a growing child can be best met. One fundamental right of the child as a human being is to belong to a home and a family and provide the child a well-rounded development to grow up as a free, useful, and active



**Interpretation of Data**

**Figure 13**

Diagram showing the Aspirations of "Jade"

member in an atmosphere of peace and love. Most children experience sensitive parenting, develop secure attachments, and form healthy self-concepts. Unfortunately, some are not lucky with these rights. Like the four participants, they encountered their sad fate in their family and their relatives, stepmother, and stepbrother with whom they considered supposed to be their next guardian after the unpleasant experience at home. The great majority of the participants lived in miserable conditions before they were brought to the orphanage. Domestic abuse was one major reason for this study that caused psychological and emotional breakdowns on the part of the participants. Domestic abuse includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect, as experienced by the participants in this study. The data results conform to the findings of a National baseline study on Violence against Children (NBS-VAC) (2016) that eighty percent of Filipino children have experienced at least one form of abuse in their entire lifetimes. Three of five children or youths experienced physical (66.3 percent) and psychological abuse (59.2%) and bullying (65 %), while one in five (17.1%) was sexually violated. It is also confirmed by the report of the World Health Organization (2002) stating that the intentional use of force or physical power, either by act or threat, against oneself, another person, or a group or community, which causes or has a substantial likelihood of causing injuries, death, psychological harm, developmental disruptions, disturbances or deprivations. Indeed, these programs give the highest importance to the prevention of family breakdown and family break up as a preventive strategy for child neglect, abuse, and abandonment and truly benefit globally, including all the orphanages in which they have one purpose in mind that they have to give a haven to live in for these unfortunate children. One of the most important influences a father can have on his child is indirect—fathers largely influence their children through the quality of their relationship with the mother of their children. One reason why children were vulnerable to these incidents was the absence of the birth father, who the father was considered the defender of the house. Fathers influence their children in large part through the excellence of their relationship with the mother of their children.

Similar to two out of the four participants revealed that they were raped. One of them was raped by her half-brother, whom she considered supposed to be her next guardian after the death of their parents. The other one was raped by her stepfather, which the mother tolerated. This caused her to feel neglected and unloved. In the study of Kendall (2006), girls are most likely to be abused by family members, especially stepfathers, while boys are more likely to be abused outside of the family. Girls may be more vulnerable to sexual abuse because the people most likely to abuse them are right in their very homes. And Kendall (2006) also found out that for girls, approximately half of perpetrators are family members; for boys, only 10 to 20% are. While fathers and stepfathers are the most likely to abuse, other family members can also be abusive, including brothers, uncles, grandfathers and "friends of the family." The result conformed to the study of Villareal (2006), who found out that children without fathers to protect and care for them are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and abuse. This was also in conformity with the study of Masondo (2006), who stresses that losing one parent produces intense feelings of vulnerability, loneliness, emptiness, and a desire for a fulfilling life. They feel life could be much different had their parents still been alive. Notwithstanding, the result varies from the finding of Pinheiro (2006) that one of the factors that make them highly vulnerable is their lack of autonomy due to their young age and the consequent high levels of emotional, economic and social dependency on adults or institutions which make it difficult for them to put a stop to the abuse, request help or report the situation. One of the participants' parents got separated for her mother's infidelity to the father. According to her, this was the colossal cause of her parent's separation and was the start of the misery of their family. This participant suffered a lot of emotional and verbal abuse by her parents and neighbors; for she was blamed for the separation. By this, she felt confused. This finding conformed with the study of Nogales (2015), who states that children who feel responsible for their parents' split may experience anger, shame, confusion, and resentment.



Another participant was brutally abused physically by her stepmother. She was beaten by wood, pricked with a needle at her back, hanged upside down, chained, and fed with a fishbone. She revealed that when she was angry with her peers, she wanted to beat and even kill the person to whom she got angry. She remembers the physical abuse that her stepmother had been doing to her. The narration was similar to the results of the study of Evans, Davies, and DiLillo, (2008), which refers that a child who has also been physically abused displays the highest levels of behavioral and emotional disturbance. Children may 'externalize' their feelings and confusion through aggressive or anti-social behavior, whilst others may 'internalize' the behaviors, resulting in higher levels of depression, anxiety, and trauma symptoms. Both situations turn out badly if the abusive behavior is corrected quickly or if there is a necessary intervention program to make a child whole again so that they may see that they are worth something as a precious gem and capable of being loved as all children should be.

#### **The Coping Mechanism of the Orphans.**

The behavior of the participants is determined by the lived experiences each participant. Their behavior gleams on their wants, needs, goals, aspirations, and purpose in life. Thus, children need support and motivating factors to cope with emotional trauma resulting from the death of their parents and physical and sexual abuse. Coping mechanisms are used to deal with stressful childhood unpleasant memories. The coping mechanism could be the expressed feelings of the child. Although participants in this study experienced sadness and sorrow and felt what had happened to them had caused some difficulties in their lives, none considered it as something that could make them lose control over their lives. Despite these children's challenges, they still developed some coping strategies to adapt to these adversities. The researcher found that the children had different styles of coping with their previous unpleasant experiences to help them recover and face their life anew. The four participants in this study engaged in activities in the orphanage to lessen their burden and make them better if they engaged in such activities as cleaning, gardening, cooking, studying, play-

ing, attending mass, and praying with the sisters. The findings are confirmed by Andacao et al. (2014), stating that some children who were domestically abused and some were orphans and physically maltreated were doing their best to alleviate their hindrances in life. Past experiences were seen as the worst hindrances to continue living, leading them to lose their hopes. The study of Lugo (2014) also conforms to the findings of this study who, stresses that with the daily struggles, both physiologically and psychologically, domestically abused children were still hoping to survive and overcome their problems. Thus, the children who experienced the death of both parents maltreated physically and were sexually abused develop talents and skills that help them cope with their negative psych-social experiences. Regarding the persons who gave them comfort, advice, and assistance to cope with their experiences, the four participants preferred to talk with the sisters and the social worker assigned to the orphanage. It shows that the participants had established a good rapport, trust, and faith with the sisters and the social worker than with their fellow children in the orphanage and their friends in school. The result was comparable to the study of Herman (2001), who pointed out that to maintain hope and meaning, a child will often preserve faith in her parents or caregivers, constructing explanations absolving them from blame and responsibility to accommodate primary attachment to the caregivers. Herman (2001) added that, unable to develop a sense of safety, abused children frequently seek external comfort and solace. To maintain hope and meaning. As Henderson (2006) stresses, a child will preserve faith in his parents or caregivers to sustain hope and purpose. Thus, the participants chose the sisters and the social worker to comfort them. Two participants felt loved, accepted, and belonged to a family. They felt secure and safe in the orphanage. They believed that nobody would hurt them again as their stepmothers had done. The finding conforms with the results of the study conducted by Mark (2006), who mentioned that belonging to a family provides a sense of well-being and security. Benson (2006) also confirmed this finding and found that a functionally adequate home encourages growth, confidence, respect for person-

ality, and an emotionally healthy home. And he added that a child in a broken home where the parents do not have confidence and affection is deprived of many of his emotional necessities. It is clear from the findings in this study that home and the parent-child are to be found the important roots of the growing child that has love, affection, care, sympathy, and emotional security are as important as food, clothing, and shelter. Fears or phobias of animals, the dark, and strangers are common. A single unpleasant experience triggers fear, or the unpleasant experience may repeat it. During the interview, the participants in this study revealed to the researcher that they had developed a fear of their sad fate, which they did not want to happen to their lived experiences at home. The darkness impaired our vision, first and foremost, which is a massive part of our ability to understand and manage our surroundings. Darkness blinds one of our most important senses and leaves us lacking control and vulnerability. Unlike the two participants, they showed symptoms of trauma or phobia not of the darkness in and of itself but because of what hides in it. They fear dark places associated with the abuse they had suffered. The tendency to them is not to go to dark places. This can be associated with the fact that every individual who comes from darkness may eventually seek for light – a hope for a brighter future. However, the two participants revealed that they were afraid of people – particularly men. They had evident signs of social stigma: fear of being mocked or rejected by the community, insulted, and compared. One came from a broken family for her mother's infidelity to her husband. She revealed that she was ashamed to face people for fear of being mocked, insulted, and compared to her mother. However, one of the participants was afraid of being ridiculed and causing commotion by people. Since she was not a virgin anymore, she believed that in the eyes of men, she was a masochist and dirty. The result conforms to the study of Wilson (2001), which pointed out that abused children have no sense of ownership or protection of their bodies as they assume that their bodies are for public use.

### **The Aspirations of the Orphans.**

Aspiration is starvation to fulfill our dreams and visions. When we aspire to a goal, that aspiration guides our decisions to become a better one. The aspiration gives us a sense of purpose to make the world a better place to live. Participants in this study were not deprived of themselves to aspire to who they wanted to be in the future. They looked at their unpleasant experiences as an agent to aspire to better themselves with the pains they have endured as an orphan in a dysfunctional family with abusive live-in partners, stepmother, and stepbrother, they still have an aspiration to make themselves invulnerable in the future as what Andacao et al. 2014 stressed that aspirations and hopes were stable goals of the children who suffered domestic abuse and their fears were a poignant blueprint to their opening of preference of destiny. Their aspirations are incongruent with the study of Lugo (2014), who revealed that domestically abused child was still hopeful to survive and overcome their problems. Most victims hoped they could finish their studies, have a good future, someday become professionals and land a job. Just like everyone, domestically abused children are no exception. They aspired to be someone else too – an artist or businesswoman, police officer or soldier, doctor of medicine, registered nurse, HRM, caregiver, social worker, and professional teacher. To achieve these aspirations, their mechanism was studying well, accompanied by prayers and self-trust (Pajo, 2014). Their aspirations for the family, education, and self are driven by the need to care for their younger siblings and go home with their fathers. The researcher discovered that most participants had hope for the future. They demonstrated great courage and determination to care for their siblings and boost their self-worth. Life, indeed, is a choice; like the participants in this study, they chose not to be stuck in the past rather, they used it to propel themselves forward. Their unpleasant experiences indeed bash them down; however, they learn to bounce right back up to face the world with more confidence and a strong heart. There are over a thousand orphanages that cater to children all over the world. The closest form of substitute for home would be the ideal alternative way to parenting. With the response to the needs of the vulnerable children, realiz-



ing their worth, dignity, and potential saved and protected at all costs from any abuse and exploitation, the orphanages and institutions substitute for the ideal home for these children that it will call them home for their own and will provide children with food, clothing shelter, and education until they can stand on their own feet. The above-mentioned orphanages have the same mission and vision for upgrading the rights of children despite the flaws of orphanages, they will always be there for as long as there are thousands of homeless children seeking a home for themselves. The findings and analysis of the study construed to the theory of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The human needs of the participants were not fulfilled as to their basic biological needs, which supposedly is to be provided by the parents and foster parents in the absence of the latter. Instead, the supposed to be "parents" were the ones who caused the negative lived experiences of these children. The individuals they met at the orphanage, who served as their counselors and role models, provided the safety needs, love needs, and esteem needs. Their life aspirations are to finish their education, achieve their degree, and help their other family members. These aspirations are yet to be fulfilled and will direct them to fulfill better self-actualization.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

The lived experiences of the orphans were unpleasant – that is, they were emotionally and physically abused not by any affiliations but by their stepfathers, stepbrothers, and stepmothers. It may be assumed that in the absence of real parents, the foster parents (such as mentioned above) took advantage of the vulnerability of the children. Instead of having pleasant experiences, abused children developed fear and trauma that destabilized their trust to others or even themselves.

The children's coping mechanisms in orphanages are positively affected by the people who saved and brought them into the orphanage. The positive environment and positive reinforcement given to them by the sisters, teachers, and social workers have helped them recover, if not totally to forget and leave their negative experiences.

The activities in the orphanage, such as attending mass and praying, helped them strengthen their faith in God, eventually lightening their burden.

The aspirations of the orphans in the orphanage, other than leaving their negative experiences, are to finish their education and help others, especially their siblings. Reunion with some family members, like their real father and siblings, come out as their aspiration for the family. Having a renewed self-image, overcoming the fear of darkness, and going on to school are some of the self-aspirations of orphans. It may be assumed that after experiencing darkness in life, every individual aspires to have a better self and brighter future – including being emotionally stable and free from the trauma they had experienced.

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