

Narrating Resilience: Post-Haiyan Stories of Death, Humor, and Faith

Dennis Moreto Bautista, M.A.T.
Leyte Normal University

Abstract

Typhoon Haiyan, the strongest typhoon ever recorded in history to make landfall, struck its first fatal blow on the Philippines in November of 2013. Since then, victims of this horrible event begun recuperating and hoped to return to normalcy. Despite the horrifying experience, the survivors lived to tell many stories of dying, humor, and faith. This study collected multiple experiences of individuals confronted with aversive stimuli and their reaction to it. A qualitative research approach has been utilized, specifically the case study method. This described, evaluated, and interpreted the different personal experiences of Yolanda survivors anchored on the cognitive interference theory and sense of helplessness. The study seeks to describe how the communal coping mechanisms rectify the negative effects of the super typhoon Haiyan. The study emphasized the role of the Filipino values such as pakikipagkapwa (being one with the other) pakikisama (being along with), bayanihan (communal unity) and damayan (compassion) among community members Filipinos utilized these indigenous values as source of strength in coping with their loss. These values are existing endemic mechanism that help them built their lives again and again every time they experience catastrophe or disaster. The result of the study will provide insights on how to make use of the Filipino values in disaster interventions and help improve in the recovery program.

Keywords: Death, Near-Death Experience, Cognitive interference, Sense of helplessness and Faith

Introduction

Death and dying are very significant topics relevant to all, but uncanny to talk about. Those who can openly discuss such topic believe that death is as natural as having life, but the problem is everyone seems to be afraid to face it (Braun & Nicols, 1996). Philosopher Lao Tzu likewise believes that life and death stem from one thread but are viewed from different perspective (Jing, 2008). People tend to accept such proposition that they liken life and death to a river and the sea that blend into one with the ocean. The situation may come in different ways and in different manners, but the same fate is inevitable. Filipinos are aware that when man lives or exists, and man will eventually die, for death is part of existence. It is a great equalizer and a leveler of all individuals because it plays no favorite (Mercado, 1974). Some people consider death as something unexpected while others view it as a result of a willed choice. Others are afraid of it

while others freely willed it. People choose to die for varied reasons. Most often than not, they opt to offer one's self for a greater cause.

Stories of heroism by Filipino soldiers like that of Capt. Cirilito Sobejana, Capt. Rommel Sandoval, and several others who displayed conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty in the battlefield to save fellow soldiers or civilians are some of the examples. The heroism of individuals who wanted to save others from imminent death but die in the process is a testament that death for some is not a fearful experience but something expected. They believe that dying and losing one's life is an obligation and responsibility so that others may live. It is an expected effect of or part of the nature of one's job. Thomas Paine, an American Political Activist, said in his book the Common Sense, that he loves those who can smile under stress and danger and those who gather strength from distress, for these are the people with firm hearts (Paine, 1776). He was referring to the troops of George Washington, who was fighting the British for the independence of America. They continue fighting despite the incompetence of their leader. People choose to die for they know the greater effect of the act they call "the greater good" That is why, soldiers die for their country, people die for their religion, friends die for their friends and others die for their principles. All of the above individuals were heroes because of their personal selfless acts.

Still others view death as a reward of a life well spent and an end to suffering. Socrates, for example, viewed death as the greatest of all human blessings: hence, it should be welcome for it is only through death that man will be liberated from being imprisoned in world of illusion and eventually go back to the real world (Elder, 2016) In Christian perspective, it is the passage of the human soul to the eternal kingdom of God the Creator (Braun & Nicols,1996). It is something not to fear about as long as man is prepared to meet his end. While Nelson Mandela, the late president of South Africa believes that it is a part of man's struggle as he journeys towards his goal, Mandela believes that man always walks through the valley of the shadow of death continually before he eventually reached his desired goal (Mandela, 1953). Death for him is part of the transformation, a motivation that brings in a sense of fulfillment. Man will never transform into what he is in the present without going through the process that includes putting oneself in the line of trouble. Just like what father Abraham did during his time, he defied stories of danger and proceeded to where his God led him. Death and dying are therefore, viewed by some as a motivation for doing what was needed to be done or the tool for the attainment of freedom or simply reaching the goal.

In the face of imminent death, man do sometimes change to prepare himself for the possible demise. They make a real turnaround from what they usually do in preparation for their encounter with the divine creator. Others just continue to do what they love doing for they probably believe that when man dies, everything ends. Indeed, it is true that when man dies, his problems and frustrations die with him. However, others believe that when one dies, he or she will face personal judgement before entering heaven or the afterlife. The idea of the afterlife gives credence to those individuals who prepare for death to come. Death for them is something not to be feared instead an event to be welcomed. It is part of his existence and man cannot do away with it. Instead of fearing death, why not prepare for its coming. That is why many people prepare for their upcoming death. They believe that when one dies, he is finally going home to where he belongs (Brickhouse & Smith,1990).

Death is indeed a welcome event for some, but an unwelcome situation for others.

If death is a part of man's existence, an obligation, a reward, a motivation and a tool for the attainment of freedom and heaven, then why is it that most individual are afraid to face it? Why

is it so? What is in death that we do not want it to come? Why is it that we do not want to face death too soon? What actions to take in the face of imminent death?

The study tends to know, examine the meanings and eventually understand the personal experiences of individuals confronted by death. The researcher will focus on the experiences of the Yolanda (Haiyan) survivors. The super typhoon Yolanda or Haiyan as reported was the strongest atmospheric disturbance that ever made a landfall in history. As broadcasted by CNN, it has an estimated speed close to 400 km/h (Mullen,2013). It destroyed lives and properties of the people leaving in Eastern Visayas, Philippines. As per estimate, nearly 29,000 people were reported injured, more than 6,300 died and 1,061 persons were reported missing. The government reported a total of 89 billion pesos or close to 2 billion US dollars estimated cost of damages (NDRRMC,2014). The most affected areas were the eastern part of Leyte, most particularly, the City of Tacloban, the towns of Palo, Tanauan, Tolosa, Dulag and some parts of Samar and Eastern Samar. A good number of researches conducted to describe the Yolanda experience. Perhaps an equal number of researches were also conducted to know individuals near death experiences. There were only few studies conducted to describe the experience of people who faced possible death, comes close to dying or was in an imminent danger of dying during typhoon Haiyan_(Yolanda). Many of the survivors of the said typhoon came face-to-face with death. Some people were trapped in their houses when the raging seawater came, others found themselves floating and clinging on debris. The strong wind and the storm surge brought by the typhoon battered the people for several hours. It endangered the lives of people that some began to lose hope while others struggle to survive. There were unfortunate stories of people who choose to die when they saw their loved ones struggling and swept away by the raging water.

The world knows what happened on that fateful day of November 8, 2013, but not everyone knows the story of those people who experienced the tragic and cruel situation. Their resiliency was also put into severe test. Most of the said experiences remained untold even until now, leaving the scar healed outside but remains fresh inside. Most of the victims did not undergo healing sessions and therapy. Sharing their stories would somehow help the said survivors open themselves to the healing process, thus forget and overcome the sad experience. They may not experience total healing by sharing their experiences, but they may be able to unload some of the burdens brought to them by the said experience.

The researcher compiled the different stories of the participants and then, evaluated, analyzed, and interpreted. The evaluation, analysis and interpretation will focus on how the participants view the said experience. They will assign meanings to their experiences, specifically on the situation wherein they no longer have control over what is happening. The participants further answered the questions on what they did while waiting for the possible scenarios evidently coming. Some of the questions are: What they did to prepare themselves for any eventualities? How they survived despite the situation? How they cope with the situation?

The study is anchored on the cognitive interference theory, and sense of helplessness. The cognitive interference theory according to Irwin G. Sarason, Gregory R. Pierce and Barbara R. Sarason, refers to the “undesirable and often disturbing thoughts that interfere with a person’s life” (Sarason, Pierce & Sarason, 1996). This is a mechanism used to assess the effects of stress, motivational process and emotion on individual’s thought and behavior. This theory shows that anxiety, phobias and depression are associated with lower cognitive performance. During typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), most of the victims were complacent about what will going to happen. Their complacency was an effect of their prior experiences of the different calamities experienced

including typhoons. However, when confronted by typhoon Yolanda, many of them were unable to make proper judgement. Thus, when the victims encountered the stressful situation like that of the typhoon Yolanda, their performance were impaired. Unfortunately, the impairment of performance resulted in the death of some victims.

The sense of helplessness theory on the other hand refers to a feeling that one is unable to “act or react to a negative situation”. This maybe experienced by anybody confronted by trauma, grief, stress and other factors. A person, for example, who was trapped inside a house, or was floating while clinging on a debris during the Yolanda might find it difficult to do anything. That person will also find it difficult to alleviate the feeling that one experiences for he/she is powerless to change the situation.

Given the above discussion, this paper examines the meanings of the different stories of those who experienced the typhoon Yolanda. Specifically, the participants were asked to answer the following questions:

1. What are the different experiences of the participants who experienced Yolanda?
2. What they did to survive the situation?
3. How they cope with the situation?

Methodology

Research Design

The study used the philosophical and critical social type of qualitative research, which aims to provide knowledge, which involve the existing social structure (Harvey,2011). This will help understand how the participants communicate, express their views and develop symbolic meanings. The meanings that will be generated from the participants, vary and multiple. The researcher then looks for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into few ideas and categories (Creswell, 2014) To investigate this contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, the case study method was utilized. This method is useful especially when the “boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 1994), Data were obtained from interviews using purposive sampling technique. This technique is effective when only a limited numbers of participants can provide primary data due to the aims, research design and objectives of the study (Creswell 2014).

Research Participants

Ten (10) participants who experienced the wrath of typhoon Yolanda were chosen, namely three women and seven men whose age ranges from 15 to 90 years old. They came from the different parts of Leyte devastated by the said typhoon. All were orally informed about the study during the home visit and were asked if they would be willing to share their personal stories about typhoon Yolanda. Later, upon agreement, they were given a written information about the study. The participants were likewise informed about the benefit that they will gain, and “one that it will be meaningful for other besides the researcher” (Punch, 2005).

Data Gathering Procedure

Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted to gather primary data. This type of interview provides indirect data filtered through the views of the one conducting the interview. The interviews were informal, unstructured, and conducted in participant's homes, using open-ended questions. By using open-ended questions, the participants were given the chance to speak what is in their hearts (Creswell, 2014). They were encouraged to speak openly about their personal experiences of the typhoon Yolanda. The researcher closely followed their stories and was sensitive and open to what they narrated. Using the same questioning style, the participants were encouraged to further discuss the issues so that a greater understanding of their experience be understood in-depth. The interviews lasted for 1 hour to 1 hour and 30 minutes and took place three (3) months after the typhoon Yolanda happened. Follow up interviews for validation were scheduled. The first one was done five (5) months after the first interview and another follow-up was done five (5) months after.

The researcher prepared the field notes, which contained observations and what transpired during and after the conduct of interviews. The data recorded in the field notes were the basis for the analysis. *Vis-à-vis* with the data collection, memos, were simultaneously recorded to keep track with the obtained ideas (Creswell, 2014). The ideas collected were eventually connected to the emerging concepts generated in the field notes. The generation of the concepts commenced with the open coding of the data. This process involved the analysis of the collected text data line by line after conducting the interview on each participant. The open coding process were accompanied by constant comparison of each emerging concepts and codes. The initial codes were compared to the newly generated one as they emerged. Selective coding was initiated to delimit the data into precise categories and relate them to the core concept.

Furthermore, secondary data were gathered based on related literature. The purpose of the said process was to refine and compare the coding previously done with existing literatures. This was done to fully saturate the concepts. During the repeat analysis, more ideas emerged and recorded, thus, memo sorting were initiated. The said process continued until theoretical saturation were attained which means that no new concept emerged. As Charmaz (2006) puts it, "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties." To stay on the conceptual level, conceptual categories and properties were continually related to each other.

Storytelling and sharing stories have always been a part of human interaction. They became the foundations to which philosophy, history, religion, law and other important factors of humanity were built. Loss of a loved one is an experience beyond understanding. Some people who experience this would sometimes get depressed or even suffer nervous breakdown. There are seven themes mentioned in the discussion of this paper. The formation of these seven themes emanated from the interviews conducted with the survivors of the typhoon. Storytelling potentially draws on commonalities between the story or the storyteller and the listener or reader. This, combined with the underlying assumption of credibility in the teller's story or experience, can potentially motivate and persuade individuals towards behavioral change and reduces resistance to any action implied by the message. They may be able to unload some of the burdens brought to them by the said experience (Cherrington, 2015). These are the typhoon Yolanda survivors' narrative about their experience.

Results and Discussions

My time to die has not yet arrived

When confronted with danger that might cause his eventual death or notified of a death of a friend or a family member, the first normal reaction is to be in a denial. This is a normal reaction of any individual when confronted with the said situation. One would not automatically believe in the occurrence of such demise especially when the subject is himself or a very close ally. Nobody wants to lose his or her life or someone's life no matter what the cause of death is. Life is precious and nobody wants it to end too soon. In the case of losing a loved one, it is hard because the bonds of friendship and closeness with family and friends are beyond reproach. A Yolanda survivor says:

“It took almost a year before it sinks into me that my dearest cousin who was newly hire police officer when it happened was already dead, I could also die that day. we were together on that day still joking about what we are going to do after the typhoon. When we noticed that their house was already afloat and being carried by the current, we dove into the water and swam towards the drifting house to save his family. Unfortunately, I was hit by a floating debris causing a slight wound in my arm I saw him how he tried to save his whole family from the strong current of the flood water. I tried to help him but he told me to go back because the current was very strong. Momentarily, he was able to get out from the water. I thought in that moment that he may be thinking of saving himself first to be able to plan out on how to save his family. However, when he turned to find them, they were nowhere to be seen. He was gasping and tried to look for them desperately in the surface. Out of fatherly instinct, he dove in the water hoping to save his family. From then on, I never saw him nor any of his family got out from the water. I think my cousin sacrificed his life and chose to die with his family. I then realized that I was not meant to die that day. If he had not went back to the water, he could still be alive today (Abella, 2014).”

Indeed, a number of victims of the super typhoon confessed this type of feeling. They try to deny the possibility that they might die that day and when they learned of what happened to their family member or friend. One survivor remembered the moment when they were already trapped in the ceiling of their house, and he no longer knew what to do. According to him, as the possibility of dying continue to unfold, so many things began to flow into to his mind. He remembered saying to himself:

I am just dreaming; this is not true. I will not be going to die this day because I haven't found yet a love of my life and believe that God will help me because I do believe that He wants me to be happy and have a family of my own. our community was able to rise from the ruins of Yolanda but I am still single (Cobacha & Gerry, 2014).

Death is indeed unpredictable; it comes unannounced but if it is not your time to die yet, God will not give it to you. When one is confronted with death, the person basically would deny the situation.

As we can see, denial is a defense mechanism that aid an individual into accepting what had happened. Man would sometimes cling to a false hope that it is not real. Interestingly, this denial is likewise a coping mechanism to survive and stagger the full impact of grief and pain. Aside from that, it is also a basic human motivation or an intellectual and emotional response to man's basic survival mechanism (Kübler-Ross, 1997).

God can change the situation

The emotional feeling of grief and depression are normal human reactions when losing in various aspects of life. More so when life is lost, or simply, when one is caught in a bad situation. The usual reaction of man is to make concession with somebody who have the power to affect change. If the individual believes in a Supreme Being, he makes a deal with Him. During the wrath of the typhoon Yolanda, several survivors made concession or bargaining with their God. One of the survivors pleaded: "My Lord, please stop this punishment. Save us now and I promise to serve You." (Daisog, 2014). This survivor is now active in the church.

Another participant also said: "I am still young to die, and I am not yet prepared to leave my family. Please help me survive this ordeal (De Paz, 2014)." She finished her studies and pass licensure examination for teachers and is now looking for a teaching job.

It worth nothing that all participants said that they made this kind of emotional appeal to their God that they be saved on that day. They likewise made different promises as part of the deal. This behavior usually happens when one is confronted with a guilt feeling or is so desperate to get back to the kind life they enjoy before the grief event occur (Kübler-Ross, (1997).

In this situation, one is willing to make a major event changed in an attempt to normalize everything (Kübler-Ross,1997) Some participants said that "if we only listened and eventually evacuated, my family would be spared from this kind of suffering

Another participant said that "if I only decided to evacuate into a safer ground, my mother would still be alive" (Calda, 2015) As we can see, guilt is the common reason for bargaining. Man wants to go back in time to avert the not so good event that confronts him at present. This situation offers man false hope. Some people use this as a coping mechanism to avoid grief and anxiety (Kübler-Ross, 1997). From then on, every time a typhoon visits the place, they would always heed to the announcement to evacuate.

Sometimes, it takes time to recover that when the same is not treated, it will result in anxiety leading to breakdown. This psychological state requires professional help. Certain survivors would ask God for intervention to bring back the life of his beloved, and it will be the only avenue for his stressful state of life to be relieved. One participant said: I can't take it. Why did this thing happen to me? Are you punishing me? Why me? (Budano, 2014).

Another participant likewise said that he will find it hard to survive without his wife around. The survivor talks of his wife as love of his life. And another survivor also said: "What will my life be without my children? They were the reason why I work. Yes, I am devastated because I lost

one of my children but thanks God, I still have with me my other children and my family and friends (Budano, 2014).”

Right after the typhoon he committed himself to the service of the Church. According to the conservation of resources (COR) theory individuals possess both internal and external resources and the loss of these resources reduces one’s options and leads to distress (Hobfoll, 1998). However, a resilient individual may call on their internal resources to adapt to stress, which may include self-esteem, locus of control, empathy, and cognitive hardiness. They may also draw on their external resources including social and family support, employment, and other material resources. (Fernando & Hebert, 2011). This according to a study helps the survivor resist the stress caused by the sad experience (Docena, 2015).

Man remained in the past and is trying to negotiate a way out of the hurt that is why he bargain. This is a coping mechanism used by people to find out a way from a situation or an attempt to postpone or disrupt what is inevitable (Kübler-Ross, 1997). Bargaining may also be a manifestation of man’s value for life and the reason for living as a valued asset. One’s life and that of family members are valued assets for every Filipinos. They don’t want to see a member of his/her family be subjected to suffering or die. At some point, they would offer themselves instead in exchange. They are willing to make big sacrifices just to make their loved one’s safe. A participant said that he remembered praying to God saying, “Lord, take me instead and spare the lives of my loved ones (Abella, 2014).” The act may be seen from outside the Filipino context as that of a reactive heroism since it is spontaneous, but it is actually a Filipino value that clearly define who the Filipinos are. This may fall on a Filipino value called pakikipagkapwa, which according to Santiago (1976) the “humanness at its highest level”. It is an internal feeling that is used to actualize the good not only to himself but also to his fellow man (kapwa) (Enriquez, 1992). This is possible because Filipinos are aware of their shared identities. In times of despair and uncertainty, they always make it a point that their family is always safe. Likewise, the presence of supportive family members and friends are necessary to bring back the sanity of those affected by any calamity or uncertainty.

Prayers as tool for acceptance

Death is a gain, as some religion would posit. It is not something altogether bad, as some other people would assert. Some religions say that when a person dies, his soul goes somewhere like heaven, hell or purgatory. It would not be horrifying had he lived only a good life while he was still alive for the reward would be eternal bliss. It would only be concerning if one did not live a virtuous life for the punishment would be eternal damnation. Religion plays an important role in this theme as a deep faith in a Supreme Being honed through the years will bring forth a steadfast life unwavering of the threats of death. One participant said, “I say a prayer, even if I don’t know how to, pray”. Another participant likewise said that “when we were already in the beam of my brother’s house and I saw that the water keeps on rising. I started to pray for forgiveness from God (Espina, 2014).” A beam is a long piece of wood or stone structure that holds the roof of a house or building. During the Yolanda, many survivors found themselves clinging on that part of the house to escape the raging water.

Another participant also shared her experience and she said when they were already in the safer place of their house, she remembered a prayer in preparation for a good death. Despite the fact that she really doesn’t memorize the said prayer, still she tried to say it.” When asked, why

did they pray? They unanimously said that “as a preparation to what will happen next and that God will help them survive (De Paz, 2014).”

Most of the participants were already anticipating that it would be their end. They have no control of the situation and most of them were just waiting as to what will happen next. Another participant said: “I thought that it would already our end. That is why, since I can no longer do anything, I prayed to God that when we die, He will going accept our soul into heaven (Espina, 2014).” As storm intensify another participant said, “anybody who experienced Typhoon Yolanda, will surely pray (Calleja, 2014).” This feeling of hopelessness was felt by almost all survivors since they can no longer control the situation. This feeling leads them into accepting what will happen to them even the possibility of dying.

The Catholic religion was indeed an important influence in the lives Filipino people, most particularly among Leyteño. This is not very surprising because a vast majority of them are professing the faith. (Braun & Nicols, 1997), Although it does not mean that they are religious, however, whenever they are confronted with this kind of situation, most of them would cling into the faith imposed on them. The Church teaches her faithful not to fear death, for it is God who owns their lives and therefore, has the authority to take it back. All they have to do is to prepare for that eventuality and possibility. Their church repeatedly reminds them to emulate Job of the Old Testament who said, “naked I came forth from my mother’s womb and naked shall I return. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be name of the Lord (Catholic Bible New International Version, 2011).” God controls everything and in return man has to surrender and accept whatever He wants. Many of the Yolanda victims accepted their fate for they believe that it was His will. Some survivors viewed it as a wake-up call from God who is trying to tell them something. Some says that this could probably be a hint for them to change. Many believed that the reason for sparing them from death has something to do with an unfinished duty and obligation.

Acceptance is often mistaken or confused with the idea of being “okay” with the situation. (Kübler-Ross, 1997), In real situations, man tried to accept what is going on around him to stabilize his emotion. He is trying to come to terms with the fact that there now exists a new reality. The former reality will not come back anymore. He must understand that what was gone or lost will forever be gone and lost. Lives lost for example, will never be replaced, that is why, man needs to accept that fact for him to be able to move on and eventually evolve into the new reality (Kübler-Ross, 1997).

It may be a sad feeling to see a beloved person dies, but the love and confidence in God surpasses beyond all imaginings. By accepting the new reality, man can live again, strives to be complete again, makes new relationships, and makes new connections. He must try to live a new life in a world where so many things are already not there. However, by doing so does not mean that bad days will forever be gone too, a sad reality. There will forever be bad days and good days; only man needs to outnumber the bad days with good ones (Kübler-Ross, 1997).

Sense of humor draws away bitter realities

Filipinos are known all over the world to be fun-loving people: in fact, the Philippines is truly a country of smiles. Not even a super typhoon can take away the jolliness and humor of Filipinos. In fact, no matter how disheartening the calamity, Filipinos can still find a way to be happy and humorous. Some view it as a survival kit, a diversion and a coping mechanism to overcome the burden of everyday situation. Some consider it as a cushion used to stagger the

impact of events that may no longer be controllable. Truly, laughter is the best medicine for almost all Filipinos. Despite the tragedy, the Yolanda victims can be seen smiling, hopeful and positive. One participant said that “when we were already sitting in the beam part of the house while the strong wind and rushing water continue, one of our friends said that we were as if riding a very fast commuter motorcycle (habal-habal) (Espina, 2014). All of them laughed at the joke notwithstanding the possibility that they might die that day. For an outsider point of view, this behavior is absurd. This might be the reason why Filipinos are considered to be passive to their fate. If such behavior is viewed from within, this is one of the many ways that which Filipinos preserve their sanity. Unknown probably to outsiders, Filipino humor is a storage of psychic energy. It is from there that they draw positive outlook in life. That is why whenever a Filipino is confronted with harsh realities, they always try to be humorous. It is an active social mechanism rooted deeply in the collective consciousness of Filipinos. Filipino humor as viewed by Fr. Leonardo Mercado (1994), are dogmas of Philippine traditions that ranges from general traditions towards life, to general truths, ethics and values (Mercado,1974).

Another instance, it is all over the news and the net that Filipinos can still manage to smile even if the floodwaters are already way over the neckline. The aftermath of super typhoon Yolanda brought down the economy of the affected areas aside from the deaths that occurred. It was a painful situation where survivors do not know where to go to bury their dead and a place to look for food. One survivor said, “root crops are good food, they will not only make you full but also fart” (Budano, 2014) drawing laughter from other people. The root crops are enormous in many parts of Leyte. This is good food and full of nutrition. Its abundances help many survivors sustain life in the face of food shortage after the onslaught of typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan). Filipinos escape the seriousness of the situation by laughing at them. They usually divert from the issue by looking for a comical and nonessential story that surround it. Once the laughter subsided, they look for another amusing story to entertain themselves. It is indeed true, that for Filipinos no issue or problem is bigger than its humor. Why do they do it? The reason might be that through their preference for optimism and cheerfulness, they were drawn away from the ugly and bitter realities.

Supportive community makes people resilient

The survivors were able to withstand the strongest typhoon ever recorded in history to make landfall. The terrible situation after it happened may have been an issue but the survivors view it as another opportunity. An opportunity to help specially their fellow calamity victims. One participant shared that during the onslaught of the devastating super typhoon Haiyan, her husband, Atoy, saw a certain family floating in the water using a debris or log from a wrecked house. Having a good heart, Atoy did not hesitate to go and tried to save the family without thinking of the flying. G.I. sheets, or any danger that was in front of him that time. He felt petty for the small children according to him. He was able to pull the family out of the water and brought them to higher ground.” (Zacarias, 2014). Their being victim themselves did not hinder them from being resourceful. These things are characteristics of resiliency, a known attribute of Filipinos.

Resiliency is the ability to be strong in the midst of adversity. Defined in the general sense as “efforts to restore or maintain internal or external equilibrium under significant threat by means of human activities including thought and action.” (Smith, & Carlson, 1997). Consistent with this view, resiliency is the capability to organize and make use all available resources not only to help oneself, family, and community. It is also an attitude to help everyone out of the devastating impact

of the traumatic experience brought by Yolanda. It played a very important role in the recovery, rebuilding and in motivating the survivors to move forward toward a secured future. One participant said: “If we will not work, we cannot eat. God gave us this trial because He believes that we can survive”. Another participant also said, “We are alive so this gives us another chance. We have to survive. Besides, our families and community are there helping us (Espina, 2014).” They persistently help each other to get back to their feet and move on. As suggested by Markus and Kitayama (1991), in interdependent cultures, the self is connected to and less differentiated from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In these cultures, the experience of emotions depends on the person’s construal of his/her social situation.

Four years after the devastating typhoon, Leyte has already recovered and is in full gear in its rebuilding efforts. Although the whole experience is very hard to forget but the spirit of *pakikipagkapwa* (being one with the other), *pakikisama* (being along with), and *bayanihan* (Community spirit) binds them together to rise again. *Pakikipagkapwa*, *pakikisama*, and *bayanihan* are sacred values that also define who the Filipinos are. These are salient features of the Filipino culture which has been described as collectivist and interdependent (Hechanova, Waelde & Ramos, 2015). In the Philippines, social connections are an important source of strength and are manifested in mobilization of community members and sharing of labor (Galliard, Pangilinan, Cadag & Le Masson, 2008). *Pakikipagkapwa* is treating another person as a fellow human being. *Pakikisama*, according to Fr. Frank Lynch, is a camaraderie that makes the Filipinos flexible and easy to be with. *Bayanihan* is also a form of camaraderie among the people in the community that connotes helping one another in time of need (Reyes et al., 2017).

The mentioned values were utilized by the survivor themselves to cope with their loss. There were also their tools used to survive the aftermath of the catastrophe. Through *pakikipagkapwa*, *pakikisama* and *bayanihan*, they helped one another by providing food, shelter, jobs and even burying their dead in the absence of the government help. The said action can be likened to or is analogous to an act called pooling of resources. They put their acts, supply and resources together to be able to do greater things (Halstead and O’Shea, 1989). Such act helped them survive the calamity. In fact, one participant shared “After the storm and when the flood water subsided, we went to the house of our relatives. We stayed with them because our house was totally destroyed, and we have no food.” Another participant quipped, “the reason probably why we were able to recover easily from the trauma of Yolanda is because of the support of our families (Calda, 2015).”

All of them sustained wound either physically or emotionally, but it did not deter them from supporting one another. Nor the wounds sustained by the survivors, stop their aggressiveness to be of services to their fellow men. Indeed, social connections are important source of strength and are manifested in mobilization of community members and sharing of labor (Galliard, Pangilinan, Cadag & Le Masson, 2008).

The sharing happens not only within the family and friends but within the community. In the community, a very strong bond of friendship was developed. The bond formed between these people was a consequence of their smooth interpersonal relationship rooted in their blood ties. Together with their strong faith in God, their “formidable armor against suffering caused by disaster” (Bankoff, 2003), they eventually arose from the rumbles. As a former seminary professor, Fr. Isagani Petilos said, “Even if we have this kind of situation, there is still hope. Yes, we may have been damaged and devastated, but we are not dead (Petilos, 2014).”

Conclusions

Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) may have been the strongest typhoon in history to make landfall, but the survivors were stronger to have overcome the adversities and painful effects of it. It may have been hurting and insurmountable for a number of survivors but the ability to cope positively was illustrated no matter what by the victims. The themes mentioned in the discussion were mostly employed by the survivors in order to go back to their normal state of life. Sense of denial, bargaining, hopeful acceptance, sense of humor, and resilience were the coping mechanisms displayed by the survivors. These themes helped heal the hurts of their loss whether life, limb, or property.

There are valuable lessons that people can get out of certain tragic episodes in life. The intensity may vary from one experience to another, but the themes mentioned herein can be utilized to overcome painful events in a person's life. Every human person will have to experience sad moments in life. Nobody is spared from such unwanted scenes, nevertheless, he should overcome it and the ability to heal the hurt should be utilized.

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