**Experiences, Coping Strategies, and Lessons Learned during Double Disaster in the Philippines: COVID-19 Pandemic and Typhoons**

Narrative Analysis

*Ali: Recognizing the Resiliency of Filipinos Amidst Crisis*

Ali, a college student pursuing Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) from Tuguegarao City in Cagayan, discloses that she is worried about the probable contract to COVID-19 since number of positive cases is recorded in the adjacent community in her place of residence. Though she understands that one’s life must continue while there is the health crisis around, it is hard to wipe away her fear in performing some of the outdoor activities. Unlike before when various transactions are successfully executed, this situation challenges her to do all the necessary tasks assigned to her since being anxious hinders her to go outside of their house. In fact, she expressed her sentiment by saying, *“I am scared to go out for some errands.”*

The concern of this future educator does not only focus on how she can adapt with the new normal. Ali also thinks about the safety and well-being of her father who works as member of the Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) team. Her fear about the nature of her father’s occupation heightens when Typhoon Ulysses, the strongest typhoon for 2020, hit her hometown, Tuguegarao City in Cagayan. She knows that health protocols are impossible to follow during those toughest times because the top priority of essential workers, like her father, is saving the lives of their fellow. Her father, on the other hand, had decided not to go home to keep his daughter safe; hence, Ali needed to be alone.

The government, according to Ali, plays their significant role during double disaster. These struggling times test how public servants are genuine with their sworn responsibility. So aside from giving some updates about pandemic and natural phenomenon from time to time, their respective offices have been instrumental in the distribution of basic commodities for all Filipinos regardless of their social status and backgrounds. Showing compassion to the needy, as one of the distinct characteristics of a Filipino, is also depicted as Ali declares, *“In our compound, we never forget to do ‘Bayanihan’.”*

Ali’s optimism never fades while the contagious disease is around. In the aftermath of one of the worst natural disasters ever to hit the Philippines, she encourages her fellow Filipinos to show resiliency as they go back to their way of living. She also gives emphasis on the importance of extending a helping hand to the needy in order to cope with the crisis and to build a strong and invulnerable nation. *She articulates, “To be in the middle of a double disaster, we need to become strong and positive. As the situation has always been teaching us that no matter how hard, we should always have strong heart and soul, and a positive mind to go along this journey. As a community, we should also open our hearts to the needs of our fellow constituents and help one another in order to create a strong and invulnerable nation.”*

*Bevy: Maximizing the Strengths to Do Good Deeds*

Bevy, a BSED student from Santo Tomas, Isabela, considers having enough resources as an important factor to support the needs of all family members during state of public emergency like pandemic and calamity. She also identifies the challenging part she needs to endure amidst double crisis. Since she manages to continue her study through distance learning, life of a student during these times is difficult for Bevy for there are tons of activities to be accomplished at home in a short period of time.

In the face of adversity, she appreciates the value of close-knit family in conquering life’s challenges. She recounts how her grandmother’s house functioned as a comfortable niche during the hit of typhoon. Her hardworking father who strives to do his best to earn for the living has provided them financial assistance. She also points out how the relationship among family members is strengthened by showing love to one another. Instead of worrying, Bevy accepts what they are going through and remind them to continue trusting God.

Bevy’s experiences in the middle of pandemic and typhoon teach her an important lesson. She takes into her account to not rely on state action and civic group effort. The best option she can choose is to maximize her full potential to help her family and other people. This realization is excerpted from her statement: *“Do not ask what the government or other people can do for you, instead ask what you can do for your family and for others.”*

*Abigael: Acting as a Role Model in Trying Times*

Abigael, a Business Administration student taking a major in Financial Management at Marikina City in Metro Manila, shares what she is going through during COVID-19 pandemic and the recent typhoons. These events have brought her to a more stressful situation. She was having a hard time thinking on how she can find a good source of income that will support the needs of her family. It is imperative for her to seek a well-paying job because her father does not hold a permanent position in a department he belongs. For this reason, her flexibility has been demonstrated to survive in these trying times. She learned to manage her time wisely to do all her school stuffs while working hard. Aside from facing financial problem, she recalls her struggling moments when series of school activities are needed to be finished to avoid beating the deadline. It is an exhaustive work for Abigael because of the adverse condition she must face due to typhoon. As the bread winner of her family, she does not have any choice but to work so that all the bills will be settled.

During the interview, Abi points out the importance of being a law-abiding citizen especially during health crisis. There should be no room to become a disobedient member of the society since the government do their best to contain the spread of the virus. Abi proudly announced that she had stayed at home for several months until the community quarantine was lifted. Furthermore, she understands that environmental and health problems happen for a certain purpose. She might not tell exactly what it is, but she knows that it is just a way of Almighty God to teach us to be courageous enough in facing life’s trials. She confesses that she leaves everything in God. It is highlighted in this part of the interview, *“During these two disasters I lean on the promises of God the everything happens for a reason.”*

Since much of her time was spent at home than ever before, she learned valuable lessons. First, one must follow health protocols because these are enforced for the welfare of the citizens. She explains, *“It is important to follow the protocols/ rules of the government for our own safety.”* Second, active users of various social media platforms need to validate information they obtain whether it is coming from credible source or not. She reminded that citizens must do fact-checking since proliferation of fake news is spotted as a trending one. She mentions, *“It is also essential to search for the reference before accepting news to identify if it is fake or not.”* Finally, she underlined that civic activity like reforestation must be done in order to avoid the occurrence of flashfloods. Strict imposition of no to illegal logging and deforestation must be carried out as well.

*Trishia: Demonstrating Positive Mindset while Conquering Life’s Challenges*

*How can you stand courageously when life throws you challenges which seem impossible to overcome?* This statement is what Trishia, a student from Oriental Mindoro, articulates how she has managed to do whatever it takes in conquering the disruptive impact of health crisis and natural phenomenon. She gives full details on how she and her family members dealt with number of unforeseen circumstances. They experienced moving from their home to a house rental because of the misunderstanding between family and relatives. This incident added financial burden to their family because Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was being imposed by the government during that time. She describes such episode of their lives as a ‘*worse part*’ for they need to pay truckload of bills while their parents were not allowed to go to work. She explains the reason why they are advised to stay at home by saying, *“What made the situation worse was both of my parents were unable to work. This is because along with the implementation of community quarantine, it is also mandated that non-essential shops and businesses will be temporarily closed.”* Meanwhile, the assistance given by the local government to every household really helped them to survive for almost three months of a total-lockdown. She says, *“But by God’s grace, we managed to survive almost three months of a total-lockdown without any source of income. Assistance from our local government shared a big part of our endurance.”*

Trishia also narrates the kind of life they need to endure when her hometown was placed under general community quarantine (GCQ) that denotes a less strict quarantine. Fortunately, her mother went back to work while her father still waited for the new government directive which will allow construction companies to perform their community functions. Trishia, as the eldest child, tries to put herself on the shoe of her parents on how they perform their roles in the family, ensuing to be more concerned and anxious. She even considered herself as a worthless child as she honestly declared that she cannot offer anything to solve such kind of problems but to pray fervently. Here is Trishia’s description about the situation, *“With all the circumstances we are trying to go through, I thought it would be impossible if another worry will add. It hurt so bad every time I saw how exhausted and stressed my parents are. I felt useless because there’s nothing I can do to ease their worries, the same way with how I cried every time I hear bad news and stories of struggles online.”*

When asked about her perception toward the reopening of the class amidst the pandemic, Trishia expresses that she wanted it to be postponed. She declares that she was one with those netizens who strived to push academic freeze for the school year 2020-2021. However, she needed to accept the fact that studying must continue to avoid the speculated learning gap among students. She utters, *“Time goes by, and I have no choice but to deal with the new normal living as well as studying.”*

While the entire family strives to recover from all the toughest trials, they lament due to the loss of their loved one. This inevitable event simultaneously occurred with Typhoon Quinta that wreaked havoc on her province. Her grief is seen in this part, *“Along with our mourning were the ravages of typhoon Quinta but thank God, no one from my family was harmed and it left no serious damage to our home. We indeed manage to surpass that night, but our broken hearts remain grieving.”*

Reiteration of monetary matter as the leading problem of the family during the double disaster was still heard at the middle part of the interview. Trishia speaks about how she did not want her parents to feel worried about her academic status. Therefore, she decided to accept tutorial class. With the strong will and unceasing determination, she was able to earn enough money for the procurement of wi-fi as one of the needed devices to join online class. To make her stay at home more productive, she helped her mother in her small business venture, online selling. She also experienced participating to some online contests and read some books as her way to achieve a stress-free life.

*Nature is kind but can be cruel too.* According to Trishia, it is normal to feel terrified when nature started to take a revenge for all our wrongdoings. Though it happens, she realized that it becomes an instrumental to be aware on what to prioritize in life. She also stressed the importance of saving money so that in the event of financial emergency, there will be available fund to use in order to survive. She also portrays not only love for herself but also shows concern about the welfare of the people around her. She also emphasized the significance of being obedient to the mandates of the government.

Trishia briefly conveys the things she has learned in times of crisis. First, Filipinos must not solely depend on the government assistance since we belong to the third world country or developing country. Second, the readiness in facing calamities must be levelled up. *“Even without a sign of an approaching disaster, we must still be prepared and ensure ourselves if we are ready for the unexpected.”* Third, people must back up the leaders in realizing all the goals for the betterment of the society. Lastly, one must learn to extend a helping hand to the needy. The conversation ended up by reminding the government to be accountable at all times on how they allot budget for various projects and programs.

*Chezka: Finding Ways to Bring the World into Home*

Chezka, a student from Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro, discloses how double disaster caused her to be anxious about her health status and her studies. Her main concern focuses on her learning experience in which she must spend ample time to study and answer the content of learning modules. Every time she encounters confusing lesson, she needs to communicate with her teachers through social media platform, Facebook messenger. As an internet savvy, she shows disappointment on the existing weak internet connection that hinders her perform further research about different topics. She shares, *“I struggled answering some part of my modules plus the internet was sluggish that’s why I can’t access some of the information I needed.”*

On the other hand, strong winds due to the onslaught of typhoon triggered her to be more worried about the structure of their house. She specifies this information by saying: *“I was also worried about the situation of our house because that time, the wind and rain was so heavy, and I thought I’m going to lose our roofs.”*

Chezka’s journalistic skills help her in dealing with these struggling situations. Before believing to a specific information, she conveyed the need to verify whether the data comes from reliable sources. She utters, *“For us to be safe, we stayed inside our house and waited for the announcement and news from the government officials and legitimate sources.”* Likewise, she makes herself busy to at least lessen her stress and worries by watching k-dramas, reading stories, making Tiktok video with her sister, and selling pre-loved clothes online.

As a young leader, she learned a lot of things from this experience. She noted the importance of establishing social awareness by stating the fact that no one knows what might happen in the future. She says, *“We don’t have the idea on what will happen next, only God can tell and the best thing to do is to be prepared.”*

*Nya: Reflecting in Times of COVID-19 and Natural Calamities*

Nya is a Business Administration student major in Financial Management from Marikina City in Metro Manila. She cites that she had planned a lot of things to achieve and accomplish for the 2020, unfortunately they got cancelled because of COVID-19 and typhoons. The sadness is perceived in her eyes as she shares her sibling’s story of hardship. She narrates that her sister was instructed not go to work for several months since the Philippine government had released an order to cease all company’s operations with the exemption for the public and private sectors that offer basic human needs. When the community quarantine was finally lifted in Marikina City, her sibling was able to start working again. However, the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses became the reason for the suspension of her sibling’s work anew. Meanwhile, she expresses her gratitude to her aunt for allowing them to stay at their house even after the typhoon.

When it comes to her studies, Nya finds online classes challenging. She mentions that one must know how to adapt the immediate shift in mode of education from tradition face-to-face learning to distance learning. This statement is supported by her utterance: *“In studying, there are lot of adjustments. We are doing an online class and it's really challenging to me.”* She describes how learning happens during the pandemic by saying: *“Our professors give us lessons every week and meet us once a week. We have an asynchronous and synchronous class. I'm doing the tasks or assessments that I have to comply on our asynchronous class.”* She also mentioned the essence of different social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as a quick escape to her hectic class schedule. Meanwhile, it is a sigh of relief for the student like Nya, who is bombarded with loads of schoolwork, to have at least one-week academic break. She expresses her glee hearing this news telling that for a short period of time, she does not need to worry about her online class requirements.

She proudly discloses that she is a good follower to the mandate of the government because she just stayed at home. People during the community lockdown would be allowed to go out of their respective dwelling places if they need to buy essential goods, if they are serving as frontliners, and if a certain emergency case occurs. She also gives her observation to the way people interact in the new normal. Though Filipinos are known to have strong family ties, Nya noted that social distancing and wearing of face mask are practiced all the time like when communicating with family members, relatives, and friends.

Because she gained a lot of time reflecting about her experience, she learned to be grateful about everything, be it small or big event in her life. It is also revealed how faithful Nya is to the Almighty Lord. In the middle of catastrophe, she said that we must remain believers of God and we must always trust Him whatever happens. Here is the message she conveys, *“I learned that even on the hardest time, I should still praise the Lord. I learned to fully trust on God's promises, and I learned the beauty of giving.*” Lastly, she calls the attention of the government officials to see the situation of those people who are severely affected by double disaster and to provide them urgent assistance. The interview ends with Nya’s plea: *“The government should reach every person affected by this double disaster. They should go and see the real situation of the victims so they will know what, where, and who really need their help and support.”*