



**A JOURNEY TO HEALING: LIFE STORIES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
SURVIVORS IN COTABATO CITY**

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a burden on numerous sectors of the social system and quietly, yet dramatically, affects the development of a nation. This study was conducted to obtain information about the experiences, how the participants survive the abuse and insights of individuals that have been survivors of domestic violence. It is in this aspect that the researchers find the urgency to conduct this study. The participants were a survivor of domestic violence at least 5 years ago. Most of them are separated from their partners, because they knew that it is one of the ways to stop the abuse. Participants also diverted their attention to do things that makes themselves release the pain, some of them looked for a job to busy themselves. Majority of them can say that they are successful and they made their past experiences as a great lesson of their lives to face the challenges and struggles of their journey in life. It is important to acquire information from this participant to know their feelings and emotions about the abuse, and how to deal with the situation. And it could be utilizing by the agencies that are providing programs and services for domestic violence victims.

KEYWORDS: *Domestic violence, Victims, Survivor, Experiences and Challenges, Program and Services, Journey, Past Experiences, Cotabato City.*

INTRODUCTION

Women are very important component of society. They are strong, passionate and independent. However, due to low educational attainment, exposure to mothers being abused by a partner, abuse during childhood, and attitudes accepting violence, male privilege, and women's subordinate status, women are more likely to experience domestic violence (WHO, 2017).

Domestic Violence happens when a person deliberately aims to control their partner through physical, sexual or emotional abuse in a consistent manner. The United States Department of Justice (2011) defines domestic violence as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner.

Globally, there were about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experiencing either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime and almost one third (30%) of all women

who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and or sexual violence by their intimate partner (WHO, 2017).

In the Philippines, Republic Act 9262 also known as Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act (VAWC) protects women from different forms of violence. Furthermore, the law values the dignity of women and children and guarantees full respect for human rights. It also recognizes the need to protect the family and its members particularly women and children from violence and threats to their personal safety and security.

However, despite the implementation of the law, the National Demographic and Health Survey by the Philippine Statistic Authority (2017) found out that one in every four women (or 26%) ever-married women aged 15-49 has experienced physical, emotional or sexual violence by their husband or partner. And one in five or (20%) women have experienced emotional violence, 14% has experienced physical violence while 5% has experienced sexual violence by their husband or partner.

In Region XII, as reported in the Journal of the Philippines-National Statistics Office in the month of March 2011, it had 52 cases, the highest number of reported cases of violence against women.

On the other hand, the Office of Social Welfare Development and Services (2019) reported eighteen cases (18) of different forms of Violence Against Women in the year 2019. Out of eighteen cases, there were nine cases of physical and psychological abused. Six cases of economical abuse and two sexual abuse from different barangays of Cotabato City. This was reported from the 2019 data of the Office of Social Welfare and Development Services.

Hence, this study was conducted to obtain information about the experiences and insights of individuals that have been survivors of domestic violence. It is in this aspect that the researchers found the urgency to conduct this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative method using case studies through interview. The interview will be focused on the participant's personal encounters, feelings, and views as it would answer the research problem. Narrative Study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system. (Stake, 2012)

This study was conducted in Cotabato City, specifically, in Rosary Heights 11, Rosary Heights 10, Poblacion 7, and Bagua 3. This study was intended for individuals who are survivors of violence against women. Interview guide questions were the research instrument used to gather the information needed for this study. The interview guide was composed of self-made and validated open-ended questions that were asked to the participants. In part one, consisted of questions about their life, and the different abuses

encountered by the participants, part two was the supports that the participants received and in the third part pertained to the participant's insights. Open-ended questions will allow the participants to freely state their experiences and insights. The interview guide is composed of three parts.

The researcher used in-depth interview as the method for gathering the needed information. The following steps were followed by the researcher during the data gathering. Firstly, the researchers looked for prospective participants in Cotabato City. Once the participants were identified, the researcher coordinated to the Barangay Officials in the places where the identified participants resided. A courtesy call was made through paper coordination with the Barangay officials and identified participants. The researcher presented an informed consent to the participants of the said study and were asked for their permission to participate in the study and answer the interview guide questions. The identified participants were assured that all the gathered information was treated with confidentiality.

The use of tape recorder during the interview was informed to the participants. In this study, the participants gave their feedback, experiences and insights as violence against women survivor. The researcher has formulated open-ended questions that provided direction for the in-depth interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the life stories of three in-depth participants. These exposed the participant's personal background, abuses encountered, ways in dealing the abuse and insights from their experiences.

LIFE STORY 1

Background of the Participant

Bailanie is 42 years of age and a resident of Barangay Rosary Heights 10, Cotabato City. He is an Islam believer, separated and had 5 children. Bailanie was the one looking after her family, and supported them financially. She was a barangay worker, as a VAWC Desk and has been doing sideline as delicacies (kakanin) vendor.

At the age of fifteen, she got married to his partner that was eleven years older than her. She could not continue her studies because of her husband, caring him and doing the household chores. She gave birth to five, three boys and two girls. Her two sons were already married. She also had a child who was already a licensed professional teacher, and a daughter who was still studying and taking a bachelor's degree in accountancy. She supported her family as a solo parent. Since then, they settled by moving to their own house.

As she described herself, she is patient with the challenges of her life, a loving and caring mother to her children since her husband left them.

Life-Circumstances before the Abuses

Bailanie was a caring and understanding wife. She also had difficulty adjusting to married life since she was only fifteen, when she got married. Her husband treated her well and provided what she needed and wanted and which she also reciprocated such treatment to her husband.

At first, they lived happy as a couple. She got what she wanted and she didn't see and feel that his husband could do such things to her. She felt the love of a husband to his wife. Bailanie narrated how her husband would buy her the things she wanted. She still could remember how good her husband to her.

"Naalala ko pa nung sobrang bait nya pa saakin, hindi ko man lang lubos maisip na magkakaganito kami," (I remembered all the good things that he did to me, I never imagine this could happen to us.)

At the age of sixteen, Bailanie got pregnant with her first child. She recalled: *"Sobrang saya ng asawa ko nung narinig nya sa'kin na buntis ako na magiging tatay na sya, mas lalo nya akong inalagaan,"* (My husband was in ecstatic when he heard that he was going to be a father because of my pregnancy he cared me a lot). When she gave birth to Fahad their first son, she describes that her husband gave more attention to his child. As she said: *"Excited talaga s'yang magkaanak, matanda talaga kasi sya saakin at gustong-gusto na nyang magkaanak. Kaya nung nanganak na ako halos ibigay nya lahat ng atensyon nya sa anak namin,"* (My husband was so excited having a baby, he was older than me and he really wanted to have a baby, so when I gave birth to our first child Fahad he gave his all attention to him.) She was glad then that her husband did not fail to take care of them. She said that her husband treated her well and their child as well for he did not neglect their basic needs.

As years passed by, the married couple was with gifted five children and she said that their life situation was good. But suddenly she narrated that her husband was changing, *"Hindi ko na sya maintindihan, palagi na syang galit saakin. Okay naman sya sa mga anak nya pero saakin nag-*

iba sya,” (I could no longer understand him, he was always angry with me. He is good with our children, but when to me he was different.)

A quote from Timmins (2012), “Every husband has the obligation to provide the sustenance of his wife. She should be provided with food, a comfortable home, suitable clothes and other basic amenities of life.”

Abuses Encountered: Physical and Psychological Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Neglect Abuse

Bailanie’s life changed when her husband changed the way he treated her before. With their five children, she said that his husband only cared with their children. *“Basta simula nung nag-iba sya sakin ng trato, nagtuloy-tuloy na yun, pero hindi ko na lang pinapansin kasi ang importante mabuti naman sya sa mga anak namin,”* (Since the day he changed the way he treated me, that went on and on. But I just ignored it, what matters the most was that he was good to our children.)

Her husband often quarreled with her when she came home from work. Sometimes he uttered words that were not good to hear. She was often emotionally abused by her husband. *“Sinasabihan nya ako ng mga salitang masasakit, na wala na daw akong ginagawang maganda dito sa bahay. Madalas akong nasasaktan sa mga sinasabi nya,”* (He told me hurtful words, that I didn’t do anything good here at home. I was often hurt by what he said.)

She did not know what went wrong, and why her husband was always angry and fought with her. Bailanie also told an experience of her fight with her husband, *“Hindi naman sya noon nag-iinom, pero isang araw umuwi syang nakainom. Syempre nagalit ako, nag-away nanaman kami pero dito sa away na to di lang basta away lang na bunganga, nasaktan na nya ako napagbuhatan nya ako ng kamay. Nasampal nya ako, nasuntok,”* (He never used to drink, but one day he came home drunk. Of course I was angry, we fought again, but in this fight it was not just a mouth fight, he physically hurt me, laid his hand on me. He slapped and punched me.)

With this, Bailanie felt like she was carrying all the sufferings in the world. She cried every night after what happened. To her, it was really unjustifiable, the treatment of her husband to her. She had thought that probably her husband no longer loves her, or he might have another woman. As she narrated, *“Naisip kong iwan na lang sya, pero ayoko ng broken family kawawa ang mga anak ko,”* (I thought of leaving him, but I don’t want a broken family, I pity my children.)

With all the emotions she had inside, Bailanie never spoke to someone about the abuse, she kept it with herself thinking that if someone could know, it could degrade her dignity. *“Naging tahimik lang ako, wala akong pinagsabihan kasi ayokong malaman nila na sinasaktan lang pala*

ako ng asawa ko. Nahihiya ako,” (I just kept quiet, I didn’t tell them anything because I didn’t want them to know that I was just physically and emotionally hurting by my husband. I was ashamed.)

The abuse continued since the day her husband laid his hand to her. Her husband used to physically abuse her when drunk. As she narrated, *“Madalas pag nasobrahan ang away, nasasampal nya ako. Lalo na pag nakainom sya. Tinitis ko na lang yung sitwasyon para sa mga anak ko,”* (Often when the fight gets too much, I was slapped by him. Especially when he drank. I just endured with the situation for the sake of my children.)

The abuse got worse when she tried to work by selling of “kakanin” (delicacies) to help her husband support her family financially. As Bailanie narrated, *“Ayaw nya akong magtrabaho, dito lang daw ako sa bahay. Mag alaga ng mga anak namin,”* (He did not want me to work, he wanted me to stay at home, take good care of our children.) Bailanie felt useless no matter what he did, but despite of what her husband said to her, she did not listen. *“Pareho lang din naman, kung wala akong ginagawa mali ako, pag meron naman mali rin ako,”* (It’s the same, even if I do nothing still I’m wrong.)

Ways in Dealing the Abuse

With all the abuse Bailanie had experienced, he thought about separating with his husband, to go away from him, but she thought of their children on how she could financially support them by doing such. She also thought that it would not do any good for her children having a broken family. Bailanie would cry out her emotions. *“Naiisip ko yung mga bagay na yun, pero mahirap gawin may mga anak ka na kaya naiiyak ka na lang,”* (I thought about those things, but it’s hard to do when you have children, so I just cried.)

Bailanie’s another way of releasing all his emotions and one thing that had helped her with all her past experiences was start working and earn an income to support her husband and keep busying herself. *“Imbes na magmukmok ako sa tabi at umiyak magdamag, di na mababago yung nangyari. Nag-isip ako, magtrabaho para matuon ko yung atensyon ko sa trabaho,”* (Instead of snuggling on the side and cried all night, it never changed what happened. So I thought of a work so I can focus my attention on.)

Bailanie diverted the abuses she encountered in making “kakanin” (delicacies) to sell. She made this as one of her ways to deal with the abuse. Doing income for her family made her happy and one of her way of releasing her emotions, which also led her to be appointed as one of the Barangay Official in their Barangay. She was so happy by this opportunity, thinking that it could help her husband to support their family financially

and lessen the abuse she experienced from him. *“Basta pinagpatuloy ko lang ang mga ginagawa ko, basta kayang suportahan ng trabaho ko ang pamilya ko, syempre masaya ako,”* (I just kept doing what I was doing, as long as my work could support my family, of course I was happy.)

Bailanie could no longer bear her husband’s abusive behavior against her. She decided to separate to her husband. *“Hindi ko na talaga kaya, kaya nagdecide akong makipaghiwalay,”* (I can no longer bear it, so I decided to separate with him.) Bailanie informed the Barangay Captain what she wanted to do with her abusive husband, as she was one of the Barangay Officials. They were settled in the Barangay Hall by the Barangay Captain together with the other officials and trusted people.

“Mas naging magaan na ang loob ko nung naghiwalay na kami, masakit sa una kasi syempre may mga anak kayo, dapat magkasama kaming responsibilidad na magpalaki ng mga anak namin pero mas masakit pag nasasaktan ka na ng asawa mo. Hindi lang masakit sa katawan, masakit pa sa loob mo kasi syempre asawa mo yun tapos saktan gagawa ng ganung bagay sayo,” (I was relieved when we separated, it hurt at first because of course you have children, and we had responsibility to raise our children together, but it was more hurtful when your husband abused you, not just physical pain, but emotional too.)

Bailanie focused herself by raising her children independently. She focused on her worked. She persevered even more to sustain the needs of her children. Her dream was for her children to graduate in college. *“Ayos na sakin na makapagtapos ko sila, ayoko na matulad sila sakin na maagang nakapag-asawa,”* (I would be glad if they can finish studying. I did not want them to be like me who got married early).

Being abused is not something that can ever be taken lightly, and there are aspects of abuse that can be incredibly difficult to recover from. Coping skills do not necessarily solve the problems of abuse, but they can make it possible for victims of abuse to get on with life and find value in what their lives to offer (Clio Stearns,2012).

Suggestions and Recommendations of the Participant

Bailanie was asked about her realizations after her experiences and she said that she learned to have patience in life. Patience for what a person is going through and patience in the situation you are in. She said that she realized how important it is for any person who is dealing with abuse to have patience in one’s life.

As she stated: *“Ang masasabi ko lang, maging matiisin, mababago mo naman ang takbo ng buhay mo, wag puro emosyon,”* (All I can say is, be patient, you can change the course of your life, not just emotions.)

Although the passage of time may give a victim the opportunity to return to a “normal” life, victimization appears to have long-lasting effects (Gilboa-Schechtman and Foa 2010).

The researcher asked Bailanie for his last statement and advices to anyone who is facing the same situation as she was a victim of abuse, she said, *“Para saakin, ang masabi ko lang sakanila maging matiisin sa lahat ng bagay at sitwasyon, kasi hindi natin alam, hindi rin natin kabisado kung anu yung mga mangyayari pa, kaya kung nakakaranasan man sila ng pang aabuso wag agad mawalan ng pag-asa. Bumangon tayo para sa pamilya natin, kasi sarili lang din natin ang makakatulong sa atin wala ng iba. Kung puro lang tayo iyak lalo lang tayo ibababa, mag isip tayo ng mabuti paano makakaalis sa sitwasyong ganun,”* (For me, All I could say to them is that be patient in all situation, because we did not know, what could happen next, and if they were experiencing abuse do not lose hope immediately. We should rise for our family, because it is only ourselves who can help us. If we cry, they belittle us even more. Let’s think carefully on how to get out on the situation).

Positive personal identity can help a person remain centered in the face of challenges. People who have a realistically positive view of themselves are likely to have the strength to deal with problems (Bonnano, 2014).

LIFE STORY 2

Background of the Participants

At the age of twenty-four, Diane was transferred from Manila to her live-in partner’s house in Cotabato City. She was born in Manila and lived there for years but she transferred here in Cotabato City when her boyfriend was fired from work and needed to come back here in Cotabato City. Diane had 3 other siblings and she was the oldest.

Diane’s parents were still in Manila together with her siblings when she transferred here in Cotabato City with her live-in partner. But then, when her boyfriend could not support all her needs, she decided to find a work to make money for them.

Diane is now 28 years old and a resident of Bagua 3, Cotabato City. She was not married and is currently working as a caretaker of a carenderia in a Super Market. She left her boyfriend’s side and now she is living alone in a space her boss provided.

She worked to sustain herself and sometimes she was lending some money to her family that are living in Manila.

Life-Circumstances before the Abuse

Diane verbalized how hard it was for her to adjust when she lived in Cotabato City. It was hard for her because her parents were not around to guide her. Their family was well-off but they were happy living together with her boyfriend since her live-in partner sometimes visited her family. Diane's parents loved them and they provided all their needs, her parents are also supportive to their relationship and always guiding them for what is right to do. She could still remember her parents and siblings living together. She remembered some moments with her parents that she could not forget. *"Namimiss ko na sila, naalala ko pa noong sa bahay pa ako nakatira. Sana di na lang ako umalis,"* (I missed them, I could still remember when I was still in our house. How I wish I never leave.) Diane, enjoyed every moment she had with her parents.

She loved playing with her siblings and looking after them. When her father would go to work, she was left with her mother and siblings. She said her mother loved to look after them. She would comb her hair and taught her some household chores.

And when her boyfriend would come home and visit them, he would bring food for her family. Diane felt delighted and excited as she was often waiting for her boyfriend and she was happy because her boyfriend was generous to her and to her family as well.

Diane has been in a relationship with her boyfriend for four years, and her parents trusted her boyfriend since her boyfriend showed positive attitudes to them. Her boyfriend is working in an agency in Manila, and sometimes her boyfriend gave her money to support her needs and wants. In other word's her boyfriend spoiling her on the things she wanted to have.

"Ramdam ko talaga pagmamahal nya saakin dati, sobrang bait nya saakin. Talagang di ko lubos maisip na masasaktan nya ako gaya ng nagawa nya saakin. Nagbabago pala talaga ang tao pag walang pera, nagtiwala ang pamilya ko sakanya sa paglipat ko dito kasama tapos ganito gagawin nya," (I really felt his love for me before, I can't really imagine he could physically hurt me like what he did. People really change when they did not have money, my family trusted him when I moved together with him, and then he did this to me.)

Abuses Encountered

As Diane moved to Cotabato City with her live-in partner, she started to live in her boyfriend's house. She made lots of adjustments such as doing house chores since she is now living in the other house. She did not want to be a burden to the family of her boyfriend that was why she did everything to be of any help. The mother of her boyfriend treated her well and her boyfriend provided her basic needs.

After months of staying with her live-in partner, Diane was informed that her family wanted her to go home in Manila. She was very young then and she could not do anything. But her boyfriend said that he could provide what she wanted and take care of her so she did not have to go home. Diane really missed her family but she loves her boyfriend so she chose to stay here. She did not have enough money to come back home.

When she stayed in her boyfriend's side for months, she helped his family inside the house. She thought that she had a good relationship with the mother of her boyfriend but there were times that she was scolded by her. As months passed by, their treatment to Diane is changing. She was often scolded by the mother of her boyfriend. Diane respected the mother of her boyfriend so she just let it pass even if it hurts her feelings.

Diane confronted her boyfriend about her situation with his mother, but her boyfriend just told her to be more understanding to his mother since his parents allowed them to stay in the house. "*Sabi nya lang sakin, intindihin at tiisin ko na lang,*" (He just told me to just understand and bear with it.)

Whenever, she would bring the matter up to her boyfriend, she would get the same response until such time that she could no longer bear with it and told things which should haven't been told. As a result, her boyfriend got mad with what she said, "*Basta bigla na lang syang nagalit saakin, pinagtaasan nya ako ng boses noong sinabi ko na hindi ko na matiis ang nanay nya,*" (He just suddenly became angry with me, he raised his voice to me when I said that I could no longer stand his mother.) Diane experienced abuse much worse from her boyfriend. She was forced to work to support the family of his boyfriend. She said that the treatment of her boyfriend to her suddenly changed.

Diane shared one of her experience to her boyfriend abusing her by forcing her to have a sex with her, "*Minsan kahit ayoko kasi pagod ako sa trabaho, pinipilit nya ako. One time na tumanggi ako kasi sobrang pagod ko talaga noon, pinagtaasan nya ako ng boses muntik na nya akong masampal,*" (Sometimes even though I did not like doing it because I was tired from work, he forced me. One time I refused because I was really tired, he raised his voice and was almost slapped.)

Dianne noticed that she was treated badly by the mother of her boyfriend, she no longer confronted her boyfriend about it since she knew what her boyfriend would say about it. She wanted to go back to Manila to her family, but her boyfriend did not want to. Every time she opened-up about this matter her boyfriend gets mad at her. It started a fight between them. She said, "*Ayokong nag aaway kami kasi nasasaktan nya ako, last time na nag-away kami sinampal nya ako, sinisigawan nya ako tuwing nag-aaway kami. Nakakahiya kasi dinig ng kapitbahay,*" (I did not want us to fight, the last time we had a fight, he slapped me, he was

shouting every time we are fighting. It was embarrassing because our neighbors heard it.)

Their neighbors were aware about the abuse that was happening to her but they did not give attention at all. No one helped her to stop the abuse.

Ways in Dealing Abuse

Diane stayed in her boyfriend's house for a year and when she had found a place to work in the Super market, she decided to leave her boyfriend and live on her own. She left home and stayed in her boss's place. She is working as caretaker of a cafeteria in the market. Diane's boss knew about the abuse because she told about it to her. And her boss was kind enough to let her live with them and she provided her a room in the cafeteria.

Moving-out was the best thing that Diane did. When she was still in her boyfriend, she was pent up with all the pain her boyfriend and mother-in-law was inflicting to her. She would live home and went to her friends. She cried out her pain and emotions in her trusted friends. She said she was advised by her friends to tell the abuse to anyone in their neighborhood so she did speak about it but then they did not care. No one helped her to stop her boyfriend from physically slapping her. She endured everything that her boyfriend did to her. And she was given a chance to be away from her boyfriend and to his family. She grabbed the opportunity and left him.

Even with the entire bad attitude the mother of her boyfriend showed her, she still politely bid her goodbye to them and when they started to stop her she fought back by words and defended her that she wanted to live alone for she knew she could support herself now.

The abuse was stopped when she left home permanently and lived in her boss' house, where she was currently working. She accepted the fact that her ex-boyfriend and his mother hurt her and as a way of coping and dealing with the abuse, she moved out from them. Diane also said that she did not receive any professional intervention or help from any agency or people. She coped with the abuse by helping herself and by moving out to the place that inflicted her pain.

Suggestions and Recommendations of the Participant

Diane shared that with all her experiences as a young adult, she learned to accept that life has its ups and downs. She accepted the things that happened in her life and she made it as motivation to be stronger and face anything. With all the pain, she learned to be independent. She worked hard even if she was not able to go home. She did her best in her

work and focused herself in working hard for herself and to support her family even if she was away from them.

Diane gave advice to everyone that is encountering any kind of abuse to make their experience as their way to be stronger. Work hard in what you do best and let the people see that you could do something better. Diane advice in her age and said, *“Wag mag desisyon ng padalos-dalos, kahit pala nasa tamang edad na tayo hinahanap-hanap pa rin natin ang kalinga ng ating mga magulang. Ang hirap mapalayo sa kanila lalo na di mo alam kahihinatnan mo sa sasamahan mo,”* (Don’t make hasty decisions, even if we are at the right age we would still miss the care of our parents. It’s hard to get away from them especially when you are uncertain what happens next with the person you go with.)

Diane is now living in her boss’s cafeteria and she was the one who looked after into it. She had no constant communication with her ex-boyfriend who abused her but he sometimes visited her. She already forgave her ex-boyfriend and had made peace with him and to his mother.

She is now focusing in her work to earn income and help her family. Diane’s parents had contacted her and she was told that if she already has enough money for the fare, she should go back to Manila. Her parents wanted her to go back home.

LIFE STORY 3

Background of the Participants

Glenda is 29 years old and a resident of Barangay Poblacion 7 Tukananes, Cotabato City. She had three sisters and she was the third in the three siblings. He was a graduate of Communication Arts. She also took up Bachelor of Science in Marketing Management but was not able to finish it due to lack of financial support. She was a consistent honor student from kindergarten up to his college years. She graduated in elementary and high school as Valedictorian. She was a consistent Dean’s Lister and graduated in college with flying colors. She was always on top as he wanted to level his father’s expectation. She never experienced to be on top two during his elementary and high school days. She worked really hard and studied most of the time because she did not want to disappoint her father. She stated that her father’s perception was that education will be the key to continue the success of their family that was why she was pressured to always be on top. Her mother is a Catholic while her father is a Maranao. Despite the difference between his parent’s religion, both had accepted each other. Glenda’s mother did not convert into Islam and his father respected his mother’s decision. No one in the family including her followed Islam and her father respected their decision.

Glenda had a boyfriend, and they were almost six years in a relationship. Her father was against their relationship but Glenda ignored

it and she continued her relationship with her boyfriend. She was smart and a good daughter to her parents but when it came to her relationship she's always lying to her parents. When she went to college, Glenda's school is away from her parents, she rented a boarding house where she and her boyfriend stayed for their schooling.

Life-Circumstances before the Abuse

Glenda's family was wealthy. Money was not an issue in their family. She lived comfortably with her three siblings together with her parents. They had family trips together and they enjoyed their family bonding. She was with her parents most of the time. She was second to the youngest but she did not feel inequality in terms of his parents' treatment with his other siblings. She lived comfortably as they were given all they needed. Her father was a generous man in giving them gifts. Glenda's father earned his first million at the age of 24 and so raising them financially was easy for their family. She said, *"So, everything was really good before. We were actually very wealthy."*

As they had the money, they have nothing much to worry about. Glenda felt like her life was in the right places because she had a complete family, loving parents and siblings. They did not need to think about financial problems. She enjoyed every moment she spent with her family. Their simple family talks and the times he had with her siblings.

Glenda was her father's apple of the eye because he believed that she inherited his intelligence and capacities as an individual. With this, her father expected her to do like him or surpass him in the field of academics. She studied hard to always be on top and not disappoint her father.

In her schooling, she was supported by her mother. She remembered that her mother was the very first person who would congratulate her in her achievements. Her mother was the one who encouraged her to do well in her studies without expecting anything. Glenda's parents didn't know about her boyfriend since they are hiding their relationship to them. She was aware that if her parents would know about her relationship they were against it and surely would be angry to her.

Glenda is happy with her relationship, she said *"When I have problem, when my father was pressuring me in my academics, he is the one who is always there for me, where I can say my problems and release my emotions and feelings."*

When they were in college, she and her boyfriend decided to study at the same University and they also rented the same boarding house. Glenda's parents didn't know about it, and she never told it to her parents.

She was afraid that she might not be able to study at that university, and she might be separated to her boyfriend.

Abused Encounter

Glenda's view of happy family was shattered when her father retired from work at the age of 28 after earning his first million. When her father retired, their money was used by her father to his friends and bought everything he wanted. Her father had not realized that it might be their last million so he wasted their money. Her father was already struggling to finance her education. So she was forced to become a working student to support her basic needs in her studies. *"I looked for a job, to sustain myself. We also have difficulty paying rent. I don't want to be too much of a burden to my parents."* She and her boyfriend's situation has changed since she got a job. Instead of helping Glenda in house chores her boyfriend was always away from home with his friends and classmates. Glenda and her boyfriend took different courses, so she did not know where her boyfriend was hanging out when she was in work. Glenda is working in a fast food at night while studying in daylight. Obviously she had no time for house chores when she came home since she was tired.

"Simula nung may trabaho na ako, unti-unti na din nagbabago ang boyfriend ko saakin. Imbes na suportahan nya ako lagi na lang syang gumagala sa gabi kasama mga kaibigan nya at mga kaklase nya. Minsan di na nya ako masundo," (Since I had a job, my boyfriend has also gradually changed on me. Instead of supporting me, he always hangs out at night with his friends and classmates. Sometimes he can't pick me up.)

Glenda noticed that her boyfriend's treatment of her is changing, her boyfriend is always in his friends and often go home drunk. She fought it every time he came home drunk, she said *"Pinagsasabihan ko yan lagi, inaaway ko para matigil nya yang ginagawa nya."* (I was always scolding him; I'm making a fight to stop what he's doing.)

Glenda wanted to separate with her boyfriend since the situation was giving her stress. Her boyfriend got mad about her decision, he did not agree to it. Since then, her boyfriend is always mad at her. *"Lagi nya akong inaaway, madalas pag nag-aaway kami nagkakasakitan na kami natatapunan nya ako ng mga gamit, nagbibitaw pa sya ng mga salitang di maganda. Nag iba talaga sya,"* (He always fights me, often when we fight he threw things at me. He even uttered hurtful words. He was really different.)

According to Glenda, *"It just so happened that what triggered the violence is the economic scarcity, the financial crisis, and as well as he was always drunk. And since we don't have any money and we always making a fight, he's always angry, he's furious, he's always mad"*.

She was often physically hit by her boyfriend for several reasons such as her boyfriend was drunk or they are fighting for being home late. She stated that the abuse was very frequent. *"I would say my body totally adjusted na every time my boyfriend hit me or throw something on me. I experienced everything from bamboo na kahoy, from suntok.* (I would say my body totally adjusted to it every time my boyfriend hit me or throw something on me. I experienced everything from wooden bamboo, punches).

With all the punches she received from her boyfriend, Glenda's got used to the abuse so when asked about her feelings every time she would be physically abused. She said, *"Nasanay na lang ako sa sitwasyon ko, sabi ko sa sarili ko, iiwan ko naman to kukuha lang ako ng tyempo. Di ko na kasi matiis. I am only a student, dapat di ko to nararanasan lalo na sa kanya,"* (I just got used to my situation I told to myself, I will leave him I just need some time to do it. I can't stand it anymore. I am only a student; I shouldn't experience this especially with him).

Glenda was asked if someone knew about the abuse and she said that their co-borders were aware of the physical abuse that happened but they chose to remain silent since most of her co-boarders were afraid to engage themselves to the situation. According to her, *"You know they were a student to. So, when they hear about my screams. When they hear when I cry. They just try to neglect and ignore it because they are afraid of it but they knew."*

Glenda was afraid that if her parents would know about it, so she remained silent to her parents of her situation. Since her parents didn't know that she was with her boyfriend in the boarding house. *"Hindi ko rin masabi sa magulang ko ang sitwasyon ko kasi di nga nila alam na may kasintahan pala ako, lalo na nagsasama kami sa iisang boarding house,"* (I can't tell it to my parents because they did not even know that I had a boyfriend, especially that we live in the same boarding house.

With all the struggles she faced during the abuse, Glenda tried to commit suicide because of the devastation she felt. She took some pills that she found on her cabinet. She was ready to die and leave the world to escape from her pain but she was so shocked when she woke up and she even felt more energetic. *"I was so shocked when I woke up I didn't even expect that I would woke up, but I woke up. At 7 pm I felt so relieved, I felt like I was so full of energy, only to found out that the medicines that I took was actually a vitamin C."* This incident made Glenda to be grateful to the Almighty. She cried hard after she woke up and she thanked God for another chance He gave.

Ways in Dealing the Abuse

Glenda was 20 years old when she left their home to study together with her boyfriend. And when she graduated from College she left her boyfriend and went to Davao City to be away from him and to let her heart find peace. According to her, she did not know where to go and she had no one to lean on at that time. When she was asked if someone helped her, she said, *"Yes, someone helped me, it was actually one of the most special people that I have right now, who really help me a lot because when I was here I really don't have anyone"*.

At the age of twenty-four, she risked going to a place where had no one to live the city where her ex-boyfriend was residing to find a peace of mind. She talked to her trusted friends about her experiences and she cried a lot to let out all her emotions when she first arrived in Davao City. With the help of some friends whom she met in the new City, she was able to start a new life and find job.

But then she was not able to run from her past. Glenda shared that one night while facing the monitor of her computer, all the abuse she encountered flashed out on the screen and everything came back.

"And my jaws starting to be locked. I can't even talk. I...I started to palpitate. I can't breathe anymore that's when the trauma came back".

She was rushed into the hospital and was provided with medicines. Then her doctor said she needed to visit a psychologist so that she could be helped. She went to a psychologist to ask for help. She had sessions with a professional psychologist for her trauma. After some sessions, she was able to conquer her fears of remembering the memories of the abuse she encountered.

Survivors of domestic violence are prone to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). According to the American Academy of Adolescent Psychiatry some of the symptoms of adolescent PTSD include frequent memories and/or talk of the traumatic event, fear of dying, bad dreams, repeated physical or emotional symptoms whatever the child is confronted with the event, loss of interest in activities, regular physical complaints such as headache or stomachache, extreme emotional reactions, trouble sleeping, irritability, anger, violence, difficulty in concentrating and increased vigilance or alertness to their environment.

Glenda had shared some of her ways in coping with the abuse.

"Okay, first thing is to always honor your grief, honor your grief and embrace the pain, there's no other way that you can move out from that misery than to face it and honor it. It means you have to give it time, we have to let it set for a moment and let it go out. Think about all the memories, let it flush out, don't think of it and tomorrow is not, is not go, is not that easy, so let it go, completely flushed it out, and the next time talk to someone, cry it out, don't ever be afraid to always share it to people that you trust,

and when I say trusts, only few, because they might use it against you. So, third one is to always...when you in relationship with God, cliché as it might sound but it is really true, so always communicate and always reunite with the people that you love and again, forgive, just forgive."

Glenda had emphasized the need to forgive and reunite with the people you love so that you could move on from painful experiences and start anew. Forgiveness was one of the ways of Glenda to cope with the abuse.

Suggestions and Recommendations of the Participant

Glenda shared her realization after she experienced the abuse. Her painful experiences had greatly helped her in achieving success in her life. Despite the abuse she encountered in the hands of her boyfriend, she took it as a positive experience and an inspiration to give her best in life. She said, *"I think part of really my success now, part of, a huge part of my success is really because of the pain. I don't really take the possibility is my greatest... step to achieving this. But one of the greatest things that I did and I really took into consideration is really embracing your flaws, and always, always put in mind that when someone does bid to you, it doesn't mean that he is bad. You always have to see the light in everything. You always forgive in the end of the day, always forgive. There's no other success in life then just to be able to sleep at peace, having your own solace and being able to breath freely that whenever you go to places you're not scare that people might hurt you, you let go all of the pain and you use it as your greatest advantage that the next time this, if this happen to me again I know what to do, that's success for me".*

Forgiving was her tool for moving on in the abuse she experienced.

Glenda's perspective of life has good effect on her life today for she used her experience as a weapon to become stronger. When asked about how her past experiences affected her life today. She said,

"Ahm effects, ahm yeah, good effects not bad, ahm right now I can say I'm smarter, I'm tougher and I'm bolder. I'm not afraid of anything, anything that might happen to me, I-I can conquer everything by myself, because I know that I've already experienced everything from the past years and I'm very happy that this happen to me when I was still young, I cannot imagine if this could happen to me if I'm now I'm not in my age and ten years from now it still happens to me I cannot imagine that. So right now, at my age when I am, when I am now building myself, my career, I'm looking forward having a smooth bright because I believe it's not just about having the bad experiences and ahm I want to experience a very smooth ride and that's experiencing, a very good journey learning from the past, so yes, that's it."

Glenda had given her pieces of advice and insights into dealing with domestic violence cases as she stated, *"Siguro ano, the greatest advice that I could ever give to them is ... to always surround yourself with people that you trust, whether family, friends or relatives, and do not be afraid to communicate, always talk, always share because from there if you don't talk, if you don't communicate, the pain inside you will turn you into a monster, it will, it will become your greatest nightmare, and from there you cannot sleep well, you cannot think well, you start to think about dying, about committing suicide"*.

Glenda had given advice to anyone to surround themselves with their loved ones and do not be afraid to share their thoughts. Communication was one of the things that she emphasized in her pieces of advice.

Glenda is living with her friends and loved ones in Davao City for her work but most of the times she visits Cotabato City to meet with her family. She already forgave her ex-boyfriend and they have been seeing each other as a friend once in a while. Glenda is still in Davao City working and focusing in her career. She is now a successful marketing manager in a big leasing company. She was also once featured in a local newspaper in Davao City for her skills in marketing.

Summary

The study revealed that the participants had a good relationship in the beginning with their partners. It was illuminated that the participants' normal family structure was disorganized when they were left from their home and decided to separate with their partner. The domestic violence survivors have shown that they have a normal, intact and happy family life before the abuse took place. The participants felt happiness with their family and to their partner. They enjoyed the feeling of having a partner giving them love and care. They experienced a harmonious relationship with their family not until they faced economic constraints and for their husband and partner being a drunkard which have triggered the abuse.

As gathered in this study, participants' abusers were all partner in life and some of them are live-in partners. In the data gathered, it implied that they experienced different forms of abuse. The participants experienced physical and emotional abuse shown through speaking hurtful words and by physically abuse they felt in the hands of their abusers. They were slapped and punched by their partner, utter unkind words to them that might hurt their feelings. Most of the participants experienced abused to their partner when they got home drunk and start fighting with them. They revealed that sometimes, even without reasons, their husband is always angry. The participants expressed that they felt small and humiliated with the verbal abuse they received, and some of

them is ashamed to share their situation with their family and friends thinking that it would ruin their dignity. They felt helpless and have lost self-worth with degrading words. The participants felt ashamed as they were called names, belittled and mocked. The pain was incontestable as they hear demeaning words from their partner. This had a psychological impact in them. Thus, pain, frustrations and hurtful words caused the participants to feel worthless. They have suicidal thoughts and have lost self-confidence. They have shown panic attacks with people they feel resembling their abusers. Nevertheless, participants have shown ways to cope with their situation and illuminated hopefulness to change their situation.

The participants revived their normal life and survived the abuse through various ways of coping. They stated that they talked about their problems to someone they trust to decrease the pain and some of the participant diverted their attention by making money to support their children, for they are ashamed of sharing their situation instead they independently faced it on their own. They open up their emotions and let out their frustrations. Moreover, they have shown different passion and hobby where they focus their attention to forget about their pains. The participants found an outlet of letting out the pain through doing positive things they love. Through the support they got from the people they trust, and motivations in their heart to support their family with different ways of coping and doing positive things, the participants were able to survive the abuse they experienced. Additionally, the participants verbalized suggestions and recommendations in dealing with abuse. Participant one suggested that to think wisely and be responsible with their emotions, they should always find ways to get up from the situation. She emphasized the need to find the things you love to do. Find an outlet for your pain. While Participant two stated to follow parents and do not be hardheaded. While the third participant suggested that victims of domestic violence should talk about their situation to people they trust. They should have someone to share their problems and frustrations. Furthermore, forgiveness and patience were emphasized by the participants.

Findings of this study have depicted a definite picture whereby participants have completed their journey to healing from domestic violence through their struggle to live a normal and successful life. From the findings, this study indicated worthwhile results of the long struggle of the participants being abused towards their journey to healing and demonstrated positive coping ways to survive domestic violence.

Implications

The participants have experienced good and satisfying life before the abuse. Love and care from their family and partner have been felt by them. It is clearly indicating that abuse has negative effects on their physical and

mental health. The participants had to endure the physical and emotional stress brought by the abuse. There were also situations that triggered to do the abuse, such as being drunkard and an economic problem in the family. Failure to appreciate their partner can lead to abusive actions like beating, slapping and other actions constituting physical and emotional pain.

However, the participants tried to overcome the situation. They had to confront and to fight the struggles of their life. The determination to get out on the situation as a weapon to strengthen them and to give them better perspective. Diverting their attentions to do what makes them happy, and by sharing their feelings and emotions to their trusted persons and loved ones giving them support was their coping mechanisms to survive their emotional stress. They realized that being too emotional can only lead to further frustrations; that no one can help you first but yourself, before seeking help from others.

The participants emphasized that being patient in all situations can be a positive attitude to cope with the situation. It can help the victims to realize that all situations have a purpose and it can lead to think and response effectively to the situations they are facing specifically being a victim of domestic violence. Showing positive attitude in a situation like abusing was difficult but it gave the victims hope to get out and rise to the situation. Forgiveness was also mentioned, forgiving someone who hurt and abused the participant can lead to inner peace. They have learned lessons from these experiences.

Furthermore, improving awareness is meant to help others take action against domestic violence. Awareness and helping others understand the importance of taking action is vital for supporting and protecting victims. Domestic abuse isn't going to disappear overnight, but by increasing awareness and helping others take action on this important issue, change is possible. Awareness for this matter can lead to correct misconceptions and improve understanding of abuse and healthy relationships.

Based on the research, it is recommended that victims of domestic violence should learn different ways of coping such as talking about their situation with the people they trust and surrounding themselves with their loved ones that will help them have positive outlook in life. Forgiving was emphasized by the participants as one way of coping with the abuse. They also recommend that it could be better if there is an available service that will provide to the needs of domestic violence, an immediate response for their situation. There is also a need for government and non-government organizations to work hand-in-hand to advance the needs of the women in terms of their welfare and rights.

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