















































*“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”.*

In an early age, he risked going to a place where had no one to leave the city where his family was residing to find a peace of mind. He talked to his trusted friends about his experiences and he cried a lot to let out all his emotions when he first arrived in Davao City. With the help of some friends whom he met in the new City, he was able to start a new life and find job.

But then he was not able to run from his past. Noel shared that one night while facing the monitor of his computer, all the abuse he 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”.*

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

Survivors of child abuse are prone to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). According to the American Academy of Child and

Adolescent Psychiatry some of the symptoms of child 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.

Once a child has grown to be an adult, symptoms of PTSD can become more subtle as he or she learns how to cope with this in day-to-day life (Babbel, 2011). PTSD can mimic other disorders such as depression, anxiety, hyper vigilance, problems with alcohol and drugs, sleep issues, and eating disorders are just few. Noel had shared some of his ways in coping with the abuse.

*“Okay, first thing is to always acknowledge 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 to flush 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 pray and have 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.”*

Noel 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 Noel to cope with the abuse.

Noel shared his realization after he experienced the abuse. His painful experiences had greatly helped him in achieving success in his life. Despite the abuse he encountered in the hands of his father, he took it as a positive experience and an inspiration to give his best in life. He 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 bad 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 his tool for moving on in the abuse he experienced. Noel's perspective of life has good effect on his life today for he used his experience as a weapon to become stronger. When asked about how his past experiences affected his life today. He 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 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."*

### **LIFE STORY 3**

At the age of six, Farida was transferred from Manila to her grandmother's house in Cotabato City. She was born in Manila and lived there for years but she was transferred to Cotabato City when his father

was fired from work and could not support them financially. Farida has 3 other siblings and she is the oldest.

Farida's parents were left in Manila while she and her siblings lived in her grandmother. But then, when her grandmother could not support all the needs of her other siblings, she decided to let her sibling lived in the house of their aunts and she was left in her grandmother. She felt alone and lonely when her siblings left but then she believed that it was for their own good.

She thought that she could stay in her grandmother's but when her grandmother had some financial constraints; she was also forced to live in some of her aunt's house. Farida is now 19 years old and a resident of Buliao I, Mother Poblacion, Cotabato City. She is not married and she is currently working as a caretaker of a carenderia in a Super Market. She left her aunt's side and now she is living alone in a space her boss provided.

She is working to sustain herself and sometimes she was lending some money to her siblings that are living in their aunts because after they were given to her grandmother, Farida did not hear anything from her parents.

Farida verbalized how hard it was for her to adjust when she lived in Cotabato City. It was hard because her parents were not around to take care of them. Their family was not rich but they were happy living together. Farida's parents loved them and they provided all their needs.

She could still remember her parents and siblings living together. She remembered some moments with her parents that she could not forget. “*Su kunawna na mapya ged, uman baguli si ama, aden tapik ni ama Jolibee*”. Farida, 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 father would come home from his work, he would bring toys and food. Farida felt delighted and excited as she was often waiting for her father. They would run to her father every time they see him in their coming home from work.

Farida at an early age could not understand when her grandmother visited in the house and took them with her to live with her. She cried a lot and asked her grandmother several times why they needed to go away from their parents. She thought she could be with her parents all the time and she wanted to always be with them. She was confused but her grandmother explained everything to her and even with her age, she tried to understand everything.

As Farida’s grandmother took them with her, she started to live in her grandmother’s house. She made lots of adjustments such as looking after her siblings alone and working inside her grandmother’s house. She did not want to be a burden to her grandmother that was why she did

everything to be of any help. Her grandmother treated them well and they provided their basic needs. She gave them food to eat but she sometimes was limiting their meals.

After months of staying with her grandmother, Farida was informed that her other siblings would live in the houses of their aunts because her grandmother could not sustain them all. She was very young then and she could not do anything. But her grandmother said that it would be the best option for her siblings so she tried to understand. Farida's infant sibling was adopted by a doctor while she was left in her grandmother's custody.

When she stayed in her grandmother for months, she helped her inside the house. She thought that she had a good relationship with her grandmother but there were times when her grandmother would hit her really hard. She was beaten by her and she said it was to discipline her. Every time she made mistake like interrupt in her grandmother's leisure time with her friends, she would be beaten really hard. She was hit with the stick of the mop and she said that the aluminum stick would break when her grandmother would beat him.

Farida did not have the chance to study because she was forced to work. And when her grandmother decided that she should live in her aunt's house in Mabini because she had no money to support her. She did not object because she thought that it would be her chance to escape from her grandmother.

But when she was in her aunt's custody, she experienced abuse much worse from her grandmother. She was forced to work by carrying woods to be paid then the money she would earn was used to buy a kilo of rice for her aunt. "*Banapwat ako sa mga kayo, meka kwana pakapamuku ako sa saka kilo.*" (I used to carry woods and with that I get money and buy a kilo of rice.)

Farida was the one who worked for her aunt's family to survive each day. When she cannot provide her aunt a grain of rice, she was beaten up. And this happened often when she was living in her aunt. She said, "*Mengka diku silan kabamukwan sa bigas bameten ako nilan*" (When I cannot buy a kilo of rice they would beat me up). She was used to be hit by the metal part of the belt, sometimes a bamboo wood or the heel of the shoes. She disclosed that the most painful experience that she had was when her aunt hit her with the heels of the shoes in the face.

She said, "*Ngin I palu na talumpa anan, pembubugel man i sya ko ba (pointing at her face)*" (I was hit with the heel of the shoes in the face and I would get bruises from 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 not even when she was in her grandmother or in her aunt's custody.

Farida stayed in her aunt's house for years and when she had found a place to work in the Super market. She decided to leave her aunt

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. Farida'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 a room in the cafeteria for Farida.

Living was the best thing that Farida did. When she was still in her aunt and she was pent up with all the pain her aunt 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 spoke about it but then they did not care. No one helped her to stop his aunt from physically hitting her. She endured everything that her aunt did to her. And she was given a chance to be away from her aunt. She grabbed the opportunity and left her home.

Even with the entire bad attitude her aunt 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 aunt hurt her and as a way of coping and dealing with the abuse, she moved out from her aunt. Farida 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.

As according to WHO (2008), harmonious relationship within the family can help the child to avoid the so-called abuse. It is important that a child can experience the comfort inside the family and can feel everything he or she needed. It is the family that prepares a child for life in the adult world. Here, the child first experiences the love, care and attention that help launch him into a bigger, more complex environment. The parents are the primary influence in molding children's values, norms, attitudes and standards of right or wrong. Children who spend most of their growing years in an intact family structure generally receive more and better guidance and attention that protect them from engaging in socially unwanted and negative behaviours such as smoking, drug use, drinking or engaging in commercial or premarital sex.

Farida shared that with all her experiences as a child, 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 to school. She did her best in her work and focused herself in working hard for her and her siblings.

Farida often visited her siblings in her aunts' houses to ask how they are doing and to ensure that they will not experience the experiences she had. She gives them money to help in their schooling.

She could not get all her siblings to live with her but she promised herself to look after them. Farida 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 who see that you could do something better. Farida advice every child and said, *“Di silan pedtegas. Kamengka edtegas silan a, di nilan paginugutan I lukes nilan a mapameta y silan.”* (To every child, they should not be hard headed for if they don't listen to their parents they might be disciplined by hitting).

Farida is now living in her boss's cafeteria and she was the one who is looking after into it. She had no constant communication with her aunt who abused her but she was sometimes visiting her. She already forgave her aunt and had made peace with her deceased grandmother.

She is now focusing in her work to make money and help her siblings. Farida's parents had not contacted her and she was told that her parents had separated and both of them already have their own family. She has accepted that fact and decided to live to focus on her siblings.

### **Summary and Implications**

The study revealed that the participants were all able to go in school but were forced to stop because of economic constraints which have caused problems in their family. It was illuminated that the participants' normal family structure was disorganized when they were

left by their parents to their grandmothers. The participants all grew up in their grandmothers except for Noel. The child abuse 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. They enjoyed the feeling of having both parents giving them love and care. They experienced a harmonious relationship with family not until they faced economic constraints which have triggered the abuse.

As gathered in this study, participants' abusers were all part of their family. In the data gathered, it implied that they experienced different forms of abuse. The participants experienced physical abuse shown through the excessive discipline they felt in the hands of their abusers. They were beaten up with the head of a belt, the heels of the shoes and have experienced excessive physical pain with their abusers' beatings. They revealed that sometimes, even without reasons, they were beaten up. The participants expressed that they felt lonely and unloved with the verbal abuse they received. 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 family. 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. 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, 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 child abuse. Noel suggested that victims of child abuse should talk about their situation to people they trust. They should have someone to share their problems and frustrations. Faisal emphasized the need to find the things you love to do. Find an outlet for your pain. Do something you love which would not jeopardize anything in your life. While Farida stated to follow parents and do not be hardheaded. 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 child abuse 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 as a child towards their journey to healing and demonstrated positive coping ways to survive child abuse.

© GSJ