



Natural Disasters Reconstruct the Self: A Thematic Analysis of Youth Survivors' Narratives about Typhoon Haiyan

Nimrod Delante

James Cook University Singapore
nimrod.delante@jcu.edu.au

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Abstract

People can create vivid images about a natural disaster that has caused them pain and suffering. Just as people do this, natural disasters also have the capacity to reconstruct people's sense of self. We discovered this through listening to the youth survivors of typhoon Haiyan and understanding their narratives about the disaster. This study attempted to answer two research questions: (1) How do the youth survivors view Haiyan? (2) How do these views reconstruct themselves? We used in-depth interviews to capture the survivors' narratives and we utilised thematic analysis in analysing those narratives guided by grounded theory. We found that the youth respondents had created striking images about typhoon Haiyan. These include a wild beast or a Godzilla, Noah's Ark, a bulldozer, a nuclear bomb and a thief which suggest a predominant idea: that Haiyan was catastrophic. Surprisingly, viewing Haiyan as twist of fate and blessing in disguise suggests that the youths were reflective of their own conditions. How did these images help in reconstructing themselves? Firstly, they helped the youth survivors in building a culture of self-education and sense of agency. Secondly, they helped them build a sense of resilience. Lastly, they enabled them to strengthen their faith.

Keywords: Haiyan, natural disaster, narratives, thematic analysis, reconstruction, self

The Value of Narratives

Narratives can serve as a conduit to express people's intense emotions such as grief, longing, hatred and trauma after experiencing a disaster. Narratives about natural disasters is a rich source of vivid images and can illustrate concepts, ideas and themes such as disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management to name a few, which will be useful in disseminating messages on advocacy and social mobilisation to the public and in encouraging policy change both in the national and local levels. Since narratives reflect reality, they can serve as tools to uncover manifestations of power such as political feuds, corruption, loss of trust in governance and other socio-economic problems such as poverty, housing congestion and lack of health and sanitation (Kargillis, Kako & Gillham, 2014). Lastly,

narratives may illustrate images of hope and messages of rehabilitation, recovery, *bayanihan*¹ and change. These may be helpful in creating bottom-up strategies that other disaster-prone communities in disaster-prone regions in the Philippines and other parts of the world can emulate and implement on their own.

This focus on youth survivors' narratives is driven by the principle of contextual narratology, a poststructuralist view that enables participants who are sharing their stories to relate the phenomena they have encountered to specific cultural, historical, thematic, symbolic or ideological contexts, (Meister, 2013) with them being in the subject position as experiencers of the phenomena such as a natural disaster. With narratives, we can be informed about how disaster survivors reconcile their experiences with the present, how this helps them question and interrogate themselves, and how they tend to reconstruct themselves.

The novelty of our study lies with the fact that it will capture narratives from the perspective of the youth survivors who are generally viewed to be more truthful in sharing their experiences, opinions, and emotions (Fu, Xu, Cameron, Heyman & Lee, 2007). Moreover, the utilisation and analysis of narratives by the young people who are both victims and survivors of the disaster is novel in the sense that it invigorates a bottom-up approach (in lieu of the top-down approach), which can enhance community awareness and psychosocial and psychological preparedness mechanisms (e.g., disaster risk reduction, recovery, coping and rehabilitation) when it comes to dealing with natural calamities.

This study therefore explored how the youth participants' sharing of their experiences served as: (1) an avenue for them to create striking images about Haiyan, and (2) as an opportunity to reframe their sense of self.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How do the youth survivors view Haiyan?
2. How do these views reconstruct themselves?

Respondents of the Study

The respondents for this study included 25 select youths² in Tacloban City and in Palo, Leyte, Philippines. They were aged 19-28 as of 2017 when we conducted the in-depth interviews. Fifteen of them are males and 10 are females. They are residents of San Jose, Tacloban City and Palo, Leyte. All of them survived Haiyan.

Research Procedures and Ethics

For us to be able to conduct the interviews, we had to undertake house visits in two badly hit areas: San Jose in Tacloban City and Palo. We secured the list of Yolanda survivors from the city social work division office (CSWDO) in Tacloban City where permit to conduct the study was also obtained. Letters of approval from the local government unit (LGU) of Tacloban, LGU Palo and DSWD Region 8 (Eastern Visayas region) were secured prior to the conduct of the interviews. The mayors of Tacloban and Palo as well as the regional director of the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD) in Eastern Visayas signed our letters of permission granting us the clearance to conduct our study. In the Philippines, LGUs are authorised to make decisions about projects, e.g., research projects of local scope, by virtue of Republic Act 7160: An Act Providing for a Local Government Code of 1991. Therefore, approval from the local governments of Tacloban City and Palo, Leyte, along with the support from the Department of

¹ Spirit of communal unity to achieve a desired goal

² Youths are defined by the United Nations (UN) as those persons between 15-24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by UN Member States.

Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) regional office established the legitimacy of this research study.

After explaining the main objective of our study, we asked the youth respondents if they were interested to participate in an interview. For those who agreed, an informed consent sheet, both in English and in Waray-Waray versions, was explained and provided for them. With their agreement, we invited them to sign the consent form and a schedule for an interview was arranged within the confines of their homes. To get a record of the participants' demographics, we asked them to go to a secured Qualtrics URL prior to the interviews. We provided a mobile phone or a tablet with internet data connection for them to key in their demographics. In the 'Results and Discussion' section, numbers are used to refer to the youth respondents as a way of making their identities anonymous, e.g., youth 1, youth 2, youth 3, etc.

Anticipating that some respondents may experience distress during the interview, a guidance counsellor who is a resident of Tacloban City was commissioned to be on-call in order to provide professional counselling services in his private office. To determine behaviours of distress during the interview process, we used an observation checklist adapted from Pretzlik and Sylva (1999; see Appendix B). The guidance counsellor's private counselling office is a 10-minute ride from Tacloban City to Palo and vice versa. Reaching the private clinic of the counsellor can be done through common public transports in the area including jeepneys, tricycles and motorcycles. The guidance counsellor promised to provide free counselling services as a way of giving back to his community, especially to counsel Haiyan victims. Despite having a few respondents who were emotional (mostly in a form of sobbing or crying) during the interview process, no one opted to see the guidance counsellor on board; everyone was able to carry on with the interviews.

In-depth Interviews

To invite the youth survivors to share their experiences with super typhoon Haiyan, we conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with them which helped us capture their narratives. In-depth interviews are proven to be effective in achieving depth and breadth of information in qualitative research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The corpus of stories that we gathered from in-depth interviews helped us in looking for themes that served as our basis (1) to capture the images of Haiyan that the youth survivors have created, and (2) to understand how Haiyan has helped them reconstruct their sense of self. We used an audio recorder in conducting the interviews after informed consent had been obtained. All of them consented to the use of audio recorder. We transcribed the narrative data in Waray-Waray³ and translated them to English for analysis. As native Waraynons, we are well-versed with Waray-Waray because this is our first language, therefore, translation was not a problem.

The interview questions used in getting the youth respondents' narratives are found in Appendix A. These questions were guided by Anderson (2011) and supported by Kargillis and Kako's (2014) suggestions when conducting interviews with survivors of calamities, man-made or natural. These questions invite reflection and self-disclosure. The questions also encourage the use of preference with a focus on sharing a personal story (Kargillis & Kako, 2014). Because these questions are in English, we translated them in the first language that the youth survivors were familiar with, that is, in Waray-Waray, the main language in Leyte and Samar. We conversed with the respondents in Waray-Waray to help them express their ideas freely and comfortably.

Thematic Analysis

³ Waray-Waray is the widely spoken language in Tacloban and Palo in Leyte. It is the main language in the Eastern Visayas region comprised of Leyte, Samar and Biliran.

Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative data analysis method across the social, behavioural and more applied (clinical, health, education, etc.) sciences. Its main purpose is to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that offer an answer to the research question/s being addressed. Patterns are identified through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, iterative reading and theme development and revision. It is an inductive way of coding and theme development which is directed by the data (The University of Auckland, 2019).

The textual data underwent an extensive textual coding that helped us in the identification of codes, code structures, concepts and themes which became the basis for our thematic analysis. In the framework of thematic analysis, textual coding refers to a line-by-line reading and interpretation of textual data that will pave the way for codes to emerge. Codes gathered will help the researchers to create code structures or categories, which, in turn, help in the creation of themes, concepts and parallelisms that will be the researchers' key material in interpretation, analysis and insight formation (Yale University, 2015). Textual coding and thematic analysis are governed by the interpretivist framework of framing social reality. Interpretivism asserts that the researcher and respondents are interdependent and mutually interactive; that due to the complex and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality, the researcher goes out to the field to investigate and be more open to new knowledge or new ways of thinking that respondents offer, thereby creating an emergent and collaborative nature of understanding social reality that is unique, specific, time-bound and context-bound (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2009; Myers, 2008). From a qualitative researcher's point of view, truth and meaning reside in the respondents' minds and interpretations, not in the researchers'. The researchers' role is to tell a story that illuminate those truths or meanings held by the researched.

How do the youth survivors view Haiyan?

One of images that the youth survivors have created about Haiyan is a *wild beast* or a *Godzilla*. In the movie, Godzilla is viewed as a massive unidentified terrestrial organism that emerged from the depths of the Pacific Ocean and caused a devastating tsunami killing thousands of people. Just as the people wanted to kill the beast to protect the earth from collapsing due to seismic movements it had created, Godzilla also tried to kill those people who were planning to end his life and his race. The result were buildings massively destroyed, thousands of people killed, and huge cities flattened. To the youth survivors, Haiyan was a Godzilla, a beast that killed thousands of people in Tacloban, Palo and other nearby towns; a huge beast that stomped the city into ashes.

Related to this is the image of a *bulldozer*. “*Baga gud man ginbuldos an Tacloban, Sir. Na-flat gud hiya. Bagan gin agian hin pison.*” (Tacloban was bulldozed. It was flattened.) said youth 8. A bulldozer is a powerful track-laying machine with caterpillar tracks and a broad-curved upright blade at the front used for clearing, pounding or flattening the ground. It has an irresistible force that can clear away the ground from heavy objects such as rocks and other forms of concrete. Haiyan, to the youth survivors, was likened to a bulldozer because it pulverised the city, leaving only a few concrete buildings standing frail.

Haiyan was also associated with the movies 2012 and *Noah's Ark* suggesting an end-of-the-world argument. The movie 2012 shows how the turbulent storm surge and deluge of water carried away and drowned almost all living and non-living things. It was caused by extreme weather condition that was forming in the Atlantic. The movie shows how earth was falling apart, that the world has an expiration date and its end has come. Similarly, in the Bible, Noah has been summoned by God to build an ark in preparation for a long deluge to be followed by drought. This was God's plan to cleanse the world from sinful inhabitants. Youth 1 narrated: “*Kuan, makaradlok hin duro adto nga experience, baga maikukumpara ko adto nga bagyo nga kuan, inin end of the world. Katapusan han katawhan, tungod nga agi han kamakusog han bagyo, makaharadlok, ngan baga ako hin na mental block, baga diri na ak maaram kon ano an akon bubuhaton.*” (I thought Haiyan was the end of the world. It's power was enormous.

Nothing could rival its force. I was shocked. I didn't know what to do.). To the youth survivors, Haiyan seemed to have re-enacted the events in the movie 2012 and Noah's Ark, a Biblical story that somehow served as a reminder for people to repent from sins and to follow the righteous path to save their souls.

Haiyan was also viewed as a *nuclear bomb* that pulverised Tacloban and its nearby towns. It shook the whole city. Because of this, the government seemed to have been crippled and anarchy ensued in the city. This anarchy was represented through widespread looting and burning of establishments, shooting others with guns who were not willing to share their food and other goods, and smouldering street barricades demanding payment from passing vehicles who were trying to leave the desolate city. According to Mulles (2014), there were deaths everywhere. There were no leaders. The police, the army, the politicians, and the civilians, everyone was a victim. Many of them lost a loved one. It was a moment of panic and despair. Exodus was seen as a better way to escape the desolate situation.

Youth 2 stated: "*Baga baga hin kuan, hin giyera. Tungod nga pagkita ko ha gawas, nagsasaramok an mga tawo, ngan mayda mga kapulisan, mga sundalo, ngan mayda gihap nagkakaada hin balita nga an mga priso nagkagawas ha city ngan provincial jail, ngan an mga tikang ha bukid, an mga NPA, ito ba nga mga sinisiring nira nga Badjaو namumurihiyo hin kabtangan ngan kinabuhi.*" (Haiyan was like war to me. It was chaotic, the place, the people, everything was in chaos. There were no leaders. The police and army did not know what to do. Then, a rumour came out that convicted felons have escaped the city and provincial jails. Also, the NPA (new people's army) and the Badjaos were suspected to be out in the city, looting food, money and jewellery and even killing people.). As a nuclear bomb, Haiyan led the city government of Tacloban and Palo to lose control of its people, to lose the sense of government creating tremendous chaos, crime and violence.

To some, however, Haiyan was a *twist of fate*, an unfortunate turn of events. When Yolanda struck Leyte, there was no rich and no poor. Everyone was equal. Everyone suffered the same suffering, physical or psychological. In short, in times of disasters, everyone else's feet are on the ground, vulnerable to risks including death. Youth 8 captured this in these lines: "*Bagan twist of faith ma'am kay, in a way, an mga riko ngan mga pobre papratas po. An kwarta waray value, waray gud kami mahihimo kundi for survival gud. Nanlo-looting talaga ma'am, amo adto an siyahan namon nga ginhimo. An pinaka importante nadara namon an tubig ngan de-lata para ha amon pamilya. Nakakita kami hin warehouse nga damo an tawo, upod an akon mga bugto po, kumuha kami hin mga sako tapos nag-alsa kami hin mga tubig ngan de-lata pauli gamit an sako.*" (Haiyan was a twist of fate for all victims. Money had no value. Everyone was equal. No rich, no poor. What we all wanted was survival. We did not want to die. We looted for food and water in open shops and warehouses in order to survive. I was with my siblings. We thought it was the right thing to do. I mean, who would not do that in a hopeless situation?).

To other respondents, Haiyan was viewed as a *blessing in disguise*. Haiyan served as a reminder for people to self-reflect and to challenge their social consciousness, environmental awareness and moral compass. "*Para ha akon, an Yolanda bagat, unique hiya, nga bagat may positive ngan negative... kay bagan napabag-o gihap niya an kinabuhi han mga tawo diri la hi ako, kundi tanan gihapon nga nagin biktima nagkaurusa... maski an iba nga bansa diri magkarasya, ngan hin it Pilipinas nag aaragway an mga lider ha politika, pero nagbinuligay gihap ngan an iban nga bansa nag-send gihapon hira hin bulig ha aton.*" youth 10 narrated. (Haiyan was unique. It brought both negative and positive effects. Yes, it caused thousands of deaths, but it also brought people and nations together. There were no enemies. All nations were united to help the victims regardless of race and religion. It was heart-warming to know that the world came forward to help and stayed behind us. I was humbled.).

Some of the respondents felt guilty about their actions. Youth 13 recounted that she was regretful about the way she disposes of her garbage and her uncaring attitude towards nature.

She also narrated about how irresponsible people are in terms of throwing away their waste to riverbanks, lakes and the ocean. Another youth (youth 17) was honest to have recounted the serious business his uncles and father have in terms of performing illegal logging activities in the mountains of Leyte as their way to make a living. Yet another (youth 9) shared his personal observation about the immoral activities that people are engaged in, such as premarital sex, using drugs, marital infidelity among couples and the endemic corrupt practices of many of the local government officials and businesses. These, according to the youth respondents, are reminders for the people of Tacloban and Palo to repent.

Lastly, Haiyan had been viewed by the youth respondents as *a thief and a corrupt politician*. In many democratic governments such as the Philippines, corruption seems to be deeply rooted in people's culture (Transparency International, 2016). A corrupt politician is one who uses and abuses his power to accumulate an illegitimate private wealth to maintain his hold of power and for other personal gains, leaving the majority of people in hunger, poverty and desolation. Haiyan was perceived as a corrupt force because for months, it left the people of Tacloban and Palo in deep sorrow, hunger and hopelessness. It sucked the energy, material resources, emotions and even sanity from the people and left them in depression. Youth 3 shared this construct through a poem below. Youth 3 described corruption in a form of taking advantage of donations from international agencies and the seemingly unending political dispute between the two prominent political families in the country.

Kawatan
by G. M. D. C. (Youth 3)

It kamatayon baga la hin kawatan
Yana ada ka, buwas waray na ngay-an,
Pakabuhi, butang, kwarta ngan kinabuhi
Tanan ito nawara ngan ginbawi.
Masakit mawarayan hin kwarta, butang ngan kaurupdan.
Pero masakit nga pati it bulig ngan donasyon kinawatan.
Tawo nagpapakabuhi pero opisyal puros nan-ngangawat.
Hasta it news gintatakpan ngan nan-ngunguwat.

Ano it problema hit paggawas hit tunay nga ihap hit patay?
Nahadlok ba it gobyerno nga waray na hira makukuha nga pahalipay?
Gobyerno nga dapat bumulig nga waray pili,
Pero kay "Romualdez ka ngan Aquino an presidente!"
Tagan unta puros higugma it mahuna-huna,
Pangawat, kudit, buwa - tanan ito panguwat.
Maski an bata surat la an padara,
Maaram kami ngan sana an pangawat masiwalat.

English translation:

Thief
by G.M.D.C. (Youth 3)

Death is a thief.
Now you live, tomorrow you die.
Occupation, thing, money and life,
All these will have an end.
It is painful to lose money, things and relatives.
But it is more painful that donations are stolen.
Citizens work, but officials steal.
Even the news misleads the people.

What's wrong with revealing the real number of casualties?

Is the government afraid to lose donations and incentives?
The government must help without favouring anyone,
But no, because "You are a Romualdez and the president is an Aquino!"
Let pure love be given to those who hunger,
To steal and lie - all these are forms of deceit.
The child offers nothing but a letter,
We hope the corrupt practices be exposed.

Graft and corruption are ingrained in the Philippine political system. Proof of this are surveys by international agencies (e.g., Transparency International) evidenced through the "neglect of basic infrastructure and existence of chronic underinvestment in the armed forces and civil service" (Heydarian, 2013) breeding capacity deficit and painful absence of basic services leading to a lackadaisical response to crises such as a natural disaster. It is sad to say that during the height of Haiyan's wrath, little was done for the local people, especially the poor and the marginalised, despite the spill over of international donations that reached the Philippine government. Transparency, clean government, and moral integrity are tested in times of natural disasters. In the case of Haiyan, corruption bred like insects, and as this practice continues in the country, it will gravely impact the lives of the underprivileged.

How do these views reconstruct themselves?

Building a Culture of Self-Education and Sense of Agency

In reconstructing one's self, Haiyan *acts as a reminder for the youths to learn the science behind typhoons and storm surges*. We can reconstruct ourselves if we are willing to educate ourselves about scientific facts and the reasons behind these facts. This education entails acceptance that weather patterns are unpredictable, and these include the unpredictability of typhoons. Learning about the characteristics of typhoons, storm surges and the weather as a whole must be a personal call; it should not only be the job of scientists or weather forecasters, argued youth 13 and youth 17. Both of them expressed that the world has changed drastically in the past two decades. It is now a world of advanced technology, machineries, and artificial intelligence. We can always access the internet to learn about storms and typhoons and to adapt effective life hacks and survival skills. "*Diri ini dapat ginta-take for granted. Dapat ngani ha esweklahan gin i-introduce na ini han mga bata para maaram na hira kon ano an bubuhaton kon may bagyo.*" (Typhoons should not be taken for granted. Typhoons must be seriously taught in schools to keep the children informed and that they would know what to do when typhoons come.), said youth 17.

Youth 19, youth 22 and youth 24 explained that Haiyan must have taught the people in general about the paralysing impact of climate change. Haiyan, to them, must be considered as an educational prompt that should persuade people to take climate change seriously; to accept that climate change is not a mental construct but a reality. Haiyan must have alerted the people that future typhoons would even be stronger and more deadly due to climate change. Haiyan must be a wake-up call for people to reflect on their roles and relationships with nature. The tremendous carbon footprint that are deposited in the atmosphere would have a more debilitating impact on humanity in the next 50 years or so. This will be exacerbated by people's lifestyle that increases global warming not to mention the tons of plastic wastes that people throw away to the oceans, lakes and riverbanks that destroy our natural habitat. Alunan (2014), the editor of the book *Our Memories of Water*, which is a memoriam for the victims of Yolanda, expressed that the people in the Third World nations are the ones that suffer the most from natural calamities even if they are not the ones who contribute greatly to carbon footprint. The Philippines remains an agricultural country; most of its produce are agricultural; not industrial or technological. Compared to the highly developed nations, the Philippines remains at the

bottom in terms of contributing damage to the atmosphere brought by carbon emissions that alter weather patterns. However, the Filipinos suffer the most when it comes to facing the ill effects of climate change.

To the youth survivors, *preparation is key*. Any typhoon should not be underestimated. People must be ready; they have to be resourceful and mentally strong. Typhoons must be a test for them to apply safety skills, life skills and survival skills. The poem below captures a unique attitude of Filipinos: being hopeful that a bad incident or calamity does not come despite the higher probability for that calamity to come. This wishful thinking syndrome is popularly called the ‘sana’ attitude in Filipino, e.g., *Sana di mangyari* (I wish it won’t happen) or *Sana lumihis ng landas and bagyo* (I wish the typhoon will change its course). In the poem, youth 15 said “A typhoon which demolished families/ Why did you come?/ I wish you went somewhere...” (lines 5-7). Common in the Filipino mindset, youth 9, youth 13 and youth 16 shared a collective comment that challenges this mindset: to change this wishful thinking to proactive thinking so that people will take typhoons seriously and focus on planning and preparation which are key to safety and survival during calamities. They asserted that it is important for people to act on their own realities rather than wait for orders from the government. As youth 16 mentioned, “*Diri na kunta kita magsigen yakan hin sana, sana, sana... Kailangan gud kon bagyo andam kita ngan nanginginano mintras wa pa pa umabot an bagyo. Kay an weather forecast diri man ito nagbibinuwa.*” (We must stop wishing for the typhoon to change its direction. The weather forecast does not lie. We cannot stop a typhoon from coming. It’s beyond our control. We must prepare and not delve into wishful thinking).

Bagyong Yolanda
by K. M. Y. (Youth 15)

Ang bagyong kumitil sa karamihan
Ay hindig hindi malilimutan kailanman
Sana mga tao ay makabangon ng tuluyan
Nang bayan ay hindi malungkot ng sukdulan.
Ang bagyong nagbuwag ng pamilyang Pilipino
Bigyan mo sana ng kasagutan ang tanong ng mga tao
Kung bakit ika'y dumating sa aming bayan
Sana ay hindi na lang para wala ng kalungkutan sa aming kabahayan.
Mga pamilyang naghiwalay sa isat-isa
Sana ay magkita-kita na
Muling ibalik ang kasiyahan sa bawat puso
Nang muling masilayan ang ngiti sa bawat nguso.

English translation:

Typhoon Yolanda
by K. M. Y. (Youth 15)

A typhoon that killed many lives
will never be forgotten.
May the people stand tall,
And may the nation rise from grief.
A typhoon that demolished families,
Why did you come?
I wish you went somewhere.
You brought sorrow to our homes.
You separated hundreds of families.
I wish they will meet some day.
Let joy return to every heart,
and smile to every face.

Building Resilience in the Family and Community

Just as natural calamities break families and communities apart, they, too, have the power to put these families and communities together. This is true to the youth survivors. To them, Haiyan was *a test of compassion, selflessness, resilience and unity*. No typhoons can break them. Their love for each other and their unity are their strength. Haiyan was a testament that they were selfless, brave and resilient for the sake of their family. Their sense of unity, cooperation, courage and resilience is captured in the poem below.

Tindog Tacloban! Tindog mga Kababayan!

by K. K. M. G. (Youth 9)

Usa nga bagyo
Bagyo nga nagpatumba ha akon ginhigugma nga Tacloban
Bagyo nga naghatac hin pahimutang nga diri ko mangangalimtan
Bagyo nga nagkuha hin diri maihap nga kinabuhi
Bata, lagas, babaye, lalake – waray pili.
Pero bisan ano kakusog nga bagyo it mangadi ha am,
Nangingibabaw it gugma ha tagsa-tagsa.
Pagkalipay, pagburubligay, pagtuo ha Ginoo ngan pagin positibo,
Labis na pagkaurusa makikita mo ha mga tawo.

Bisan ano kakusog it bagyo,
Bisan ano kakuri an natabo,
Waray makakatibag ha akon ginhigugma nga kababayan.
Ha kada problema may solusyon,
Ha kada dagok ha kinabuhi may paglaum,
Ha kada kasiruman may lamrag nga makikita.
Hi Yolanda usa nga bagyo nga nagigin rason
Para makita kon ano't tinoed nga Taclobanon.
Hi Yolanda ka la!
Diri mo mapipirdi an mga Taclobanon!

English translation:

Rise Tacloban! Rise My Countrymen!

by K.K.M.G. (Youth 9)

A typhoon that knocked down my beloved Tacloban,
Unforgettable and deadly, it took countless lives,
Child, elderly, male, female – no one was spared.
But no matter how strong a typhoon comes,
Love dominates in each one of us.
Joy, cooperation, trust in God and optimism,
Unity, most of all, will prevail.

No matter how strong a typhoon is,
No matter how tragic the situation can be,
No one can tear down my beloved country.
In every problem, there is a solution,
In every downfall, there is hope,
In every darkness, light will shine through.
Yolanda has provoked the real Taclobanon.
You are just Yolanda! You will never defeat the Taclobanon!

Haiyan also served as *a reminder to value life and family above material things*. Youth 17 narrated: "*Han gin-anod an akon Nanay han baha, ginbuhat ko gud an nga tanan nga masalbar la hiya. Nakit-an ko an akon Nanay ngan nasalbar ko hiya. Kasiring ko diri ko na hiya makikita. Kami nala ni Nanay an pamilya yana.*" (I did my best to save my mother from the flood. I

thought I won't see her anymore. She's the only one left. She's my only family now.). By valuing family, the youth survivors affirmed that it is important to set aside personal conflicts and resolve disputes. “*Siguro panahon na nga an mga personal nga bikil ha panimalay dapat na mawara. Han panahon han kalamidad, diri dapat ginpapairal an garbo. Kailangan gud magtinabangay.*”, youth 5 shared. (It's about time to look for each other as a family. Personal conflicts must not prevail. In times of disasters, pride should not persist. Everyone needs to help each other.). Material things are useless in times of disasters. There's no rich and no poor. Everyone wants to survive. To the youth survivors, money during the time of Haiyan had no value. It was family that matters to them. Any community that is devastated by the natural calamity must be cohesive and strong. Without unity and cohesion, the community will disintegrate, and peace and order will vanish.

As a community, youth 15 and youth 22 were asking the people of Tacloban and Palo to rise and have courage. There is no point to stay in a corner and grieve forever. The people must learn to let go so they can carry on with life. This message of optimism, rising up and courage is captured in the poem below.

Bangon Tacloban!

D. F. M. (Youth 22)

Ginpaluhod kita

Han usa nga kalamidad.

Nawuwurok ngan nagnguyngoy han kasakit.

Pero nawara na hi Yolanda.

Gumawas na an balangaw ha sinirangan.

An lamrag

han

adlaw

nagyayakan:

“Paghigugma kamo ngan pagkaurusa.”

Bangon Tacloban!

Pangamuyo ha Makagarahum.

Pagmata ngan atubanga an sinirangan.

Ha imo dugo, kinabuhi.

Ha imo kasingkasing, waray kahadlok.

Diri ka namon biyaan.

Didi ka namon itubyan.

Ini nga mga pagsulay aton mapipirde.

Ha pagkaurusa ngan paghigugma

Kita magmalampuson.

English translation:

Rise Tacloban!

D. F. M. (Youth 22)

Yolanda made us kneel.

We grieved in pain,

We mourned in sorrow.

But Yolanda is gone.

The rainbow has come.

And the daylight is telling us:

“Love each other and be united.”

Rise Tacloban!

Kneel and pray to the Almighty.

Wake up and face the rising sun.

In your blood is life.

In your heart, courage.

We will not leave you.
We will not forsake you.
All these trials we can defeat.
With love and unity,
We will prosper.

Strengthening Personal Faith

There is no single, widely agreed definition of faith. To some people, faith is the quality of being concerned with the human soul as opposed to material or physical things. To others, it is a source of inspiration in life; something that encompasses beliefs in immaterial realities or experiences of the transcendent nature of the world. To the youth survivors, this sense of faith is associated with their strong relationship with God that is greatly influenced by their religious beliefs. To them, Haiyan stood as *an instrument for them to cling to faith and hope* no matter what the odds. Youth 12 exclaimed: "*Han nananalasa an bagyo, waray gud kami sabot kon mabubuhi pa kami hadto nga delubyo. Nag-inampuon la kami ha Ginoo. Grabe an amon pangamuyo nga salbaron la kami niya kay hiya man an Makagarahum.*" (We did not think we will survive that monster. All we did was pray to the Lord. We were calling His name because we believe He is the most powerful.). Youth 9 added: "*Kasiring namon waray na katapusan an makusog nga uran ngan hangin. Kasiring namon diri na magpapawa. May kaluoy an Ginoo. Diri hiya napabaya ha aton.*" (We thought the strong winds and the heavy rains would not stop. We thought we would see light no more. God is merciful. He did not leave us. He does not forsake us.).

Through faith, Haiyan has coaxed people, in general, *to repent from sins and to recalibrate their seemingly skewed moral compass*. Some of the youth survivors believed that Tacloban has already been vastly infested by immorality and social malaise including corruption, drug addiction, criminality, premarital sex and marital infidelity. They believed God has a way to cleanse the city through natural calamities, a symbolic and literal illustration of the deluge that happened in the Bible. To save Noah and his family, God asked him to build an ark because a deluge was about to come, a way for people to be cleansed from their immoral acts. "*An sossyudad man gud bagan mahugaw na. Makarimadima na an mga ginpapanmuhat han kabataan ngan mga katawhan labis na premarital sex ngan droga. Makaharadlok. Bagat feeling ko diri na hira natuod hin gaba ngan kon may Ginoo pa*" said youth 1. (Society is filthy. People's acts are abhorrent. Young and old alike perform immoral acts such as premarital sex and drugs. I think they no longer believe that there is God. This is God's way for them to repent from their sins. This is God's way to cleanse our society.)

Youth 8 added: "*Damo nga tawo an nawawara hin landas. Damo na an mga ginpapanbuhat magraut. Bagan waray na hira kahadlok ha Ginoo. Bis ako nangangalimtan ko na magsimba. Mas damo an akon oras ha barkada ngan lakwatsa. An pag ampo ngan pagsimba nangangalimtan ko na. Leksiyon gud ini hi Yolanda ha amon.*" (I think a lot of people are lost. They perform distasteful acts. They don't fear the Lord anymore. I'm guilty of this. I even forget to go to church. I have enough time to spend with friends, but I have no time to spend in the house of God. God has taught me a lesson, indeed.). These youths' testaments seem to suggest that it is right to be guilty and to incriminate one's self as a form of repentance from sins.

Conclusion

The youth respondents constructed clear and vivid images that portray their views about Haiyan, a natural disaster that have caused them pain and suffering. In return, Haiyan enabled

them to reconstruct themselves by building a sense of agency and resilience and strengthening their faith. In general, natural disasters can be reflective instruments for the youths to re-examine and interrogate themselves making the relationship between people and natural disasters an active, two-way street. The value of narratives, in this case, those narratives of survivors of a natural calamity, is profound and life changing. The themes and meanings derived from these narratives should not be underestimated because they have the capacity to influence decisions and to understand human struggles more deeply.

Recommendations

It would be noteworthy for the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD) of the Philippines to harness the insights that can be drawn from this narrative study and other similar studies and utilise them as input to enhance the delivery of psychosocial services and other customised interventions targeted to the youths and children who have experienced the wrath of natural disasters.

At the national level, it is worthwhile if the local government units (LGUs) and the national government institutionalise a system to harness key research findings of studies of this nature, such as the findings of this particular study, as input to the planning processes and implementing guidelines of both DSWD and the Department of Education (DepEd), the primary governing bodies that deal with youths and children in the country. Without a strong mandate from the national government and without the support of the LGUs, these meaningful narratives will only remain as narratives printed on paper. It is advised that lessons from studies of this nature must be drawn deliberately to influence practice and make an impact on the ground. The LGUs, through DSWD and DepEd, may explore and provide avenues for these narratives to surface by either integrating them into the teaching and learning processes in both basic education and higher education levels, or providing dedicated platforms to hear these narratives from the youths themselves. An example would be creating a volunteer aid group or disaster resource network whereby experts (e.g., guidance counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists) are available to facilitate focus group discussions with the youths and provide expert opinions about children and youth victims who are suffering from trauma and depression brought by deaths in the family due to natural disasters. These will help these agencies and institutions become more informed and able to deal with psychosocial and psychological issues that children and youth victims face because of the devastating impact of natural calamities.

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Appendix A*

Individual Face-to-Face Interview Questions with the Youth Respondents

[English Version]

1. Tell us something about your experience with Haiyan. How did you view Haiyan?
2. The next question may make you feel uncomfortable and/or emotional as these questions might be distressing. Please tell us if you want us to continue asking these questions or not.
 - If the answer to question #2 is NO, stop immediately.
 - If the answer to question #2 is YES, ask this question:
 - What was the most traumatic experience you had with Yolanda? How did you feel about it?

[Waray-Waray version]

1. Alayon daw sumati o istoryahi kami han imu nanunumduman kaparte han Yolanda. Anu an imo gin-agihan o eksperyensiya parte hadto nga bagyo?
2. Iton masunod nga mga pakiana in medyo sensitibo. Ayaw la pag-alang, sumati la kami kon mapadayon ba kami pagpakiana o diri na.

- Kon diri, ayaw kabaraka maundang kami dayon pagpakiana.
- Kon okay la ha imo, ipapakiana namon an masunod:

a. Anu an pinakamaka haradlok, pinaka makurulba o pinakamakalilisang nga imo na eksperryensiyahan han Yolanda? Anu an imo gin-abat parte hadto?

*Waray-Waray translation by Lemwel Pagliawan, Teacher, San Jose National High School, Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines

Appendix B*

Observation Scale for Behavioral Distress (OSBD): Eight Behavior Categories**

Category	Definition	Examples	Non-Examples
Information seeking	Any question regarding the interview	“When will it stop?” “Do I need to answer that question?”	“Will I get a gift?”
Cry	Crying sound and/or onset of tears	Sobbing; crying sounds; tears while they flow	Sniffling; heavy breathing
Scream	Loud vocal expression at high pitch	Sharp, shrill, harsh, high tones; shriek	Loud yelling but at low pitch
Restraint	Youth must be physically held down by parent, sibling or any significant relative		
Verbal resistance	Any verbal expression of delay, termination or resistance; must be intelligible	“I want to go.” “Stop.” “No more.” “Don’t hurt me.” “I don’t like this.”	
	Verbal or nonverbal; seeking hands; hand holding; physical or verbal comfort	“No, no!” “Hold me.”	
Emotional support	Any word, phrase or statement referring to pain, discomfort or unhappiness	“Help me.” reaching out to be held.	“Mother, get me out of here.” is VS, not ES.
Verbal pain	Random, gross movements of arms and legs or whole	“That hurts!” “It’s painful/sad, you know.”	“Will it hurt?” is IS not VR

body; flail in response to "Owww."
restraint
"Ouch!"

Flail
Pounding fists; kicking legs
repeatedly and randomly;
flapping of arms on self

ES = emotional support; IS = information seeking; OSBD = observation scale for behavioral distress; VR = verbal response

**adapted from Pretzlik & Sylva (1999) with slight modifications to fit this study*

***Interviewers brought a copy of this form during the interviews with the youth respondents to serve as behavioral distress observation guide. Interviewers were mindful to advise distressed respondents to seek professional counselling from an on-board professional counsellor in Tacloban City*