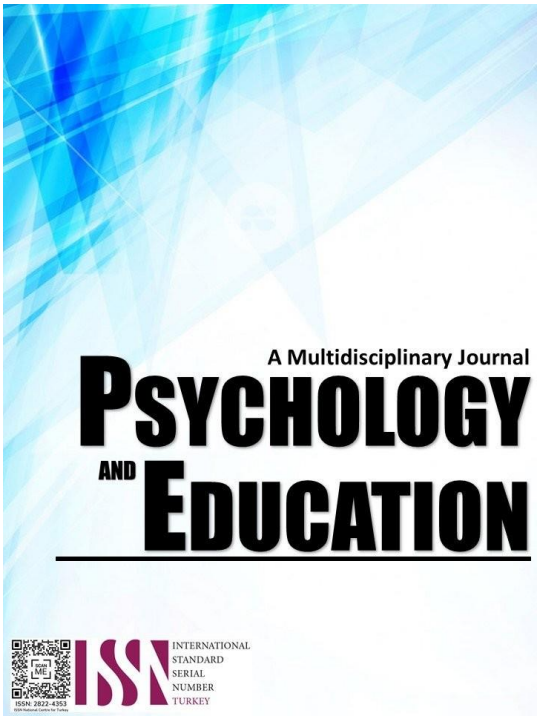
RESILIENCE AMIDST ADVERSITY: DEMYSTIFYING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BATANG INATAY



PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Volume: 37
Issue 1
Pages: 6-18
Document ID: 2025PEMJ3538
DOI: 10.70838/pemj.370102
Manuscript Accepted: 04-07-2025

Psych Educ, 2025, **37**(1): 6-18, Document ID:2025PEMJ3538, doi:10.70838/pemj.370102, ISSN 2822-4353

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Research Article

Resilience Amidst Adversity: Demystifying the Lived Experiences of Batang Inatay

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Abstract

Young single parents frequently face substantial financial and emotional hardships. A comparison between France and the UK illustrates these disparities: while a mother in France received €683 monthly in child benefits for three children, her sister in the UK received none due to a means-tested welfare system and higher childcare costs. In the U.S., 41% of parents reported debilitating stress, with similar figures observed in the UK. Despite these challenges, many young single parents display resilience, developing time management skills and relying on support systems to cope. In the Philippines, the issue of teenage pregnancy remains pressing, with one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in Southeast Asia, often resulting in adverse health, educational, and socioeconomic outcomes. This study employs qualitative transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of Junior and Senior High School students in the Philippines who assume the dual parental roles of Batang Inatay—a term denoting young single parents acting as both mother (Nanay) and father (Tatay). Through in-depth interviews, the study reveals that economic pressure often forces participants to prioritize income over education, leading to mental and emotional fatigue. While some derive motivation from their hardships, others feel trapped in a cycle of poverty and limited opportunity. Coping mechanisms include time management, emotional resilience, social support, and, in some cases, avoidance strategies. While caregiving fosters maturity and responsibility, it also restricts personal freedom and hinders academic and professional aspirations. The findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policy interventions to support the well-being and development of young single parents.

Keywords: *inatay, young single parents, social support, emotional resilience*

Introduction

A responsibility of being a single parent at an early age is indeed one of the most difficult circumstances of early pregnancy issue among high school students. It poses a significant threat to educational attainment and future opportunities for young Filipinos. With a high incidence of adolescent pregnancies, many students are forced to drop out of school, compromising their chances of completing their education and securing better socio-economic prospects. This, in turn, perpetuates a cycle of poverty, limiting their potential and hindering national development.

Early pregnancy is reported globally as one of the leading causes of school dropouts among girls (Maslowsky, et al., 2021). Teenage pregnancy as emphasized by Angwaomaodoko (2024) particularly disrupts the academic process of the girl child, and as a result, the majority of adolescent mothers permanently drop out school. Similarly, United Nations Population Fund (2020) reported that adolsecnt pregnancies often lead to school dropout, limiting education and economic opportunities. It is associated with higher health risks for both mothers and babies, including maternal mortality, low birth weight, and infant mortality (World Health Organization, 2019). Moreover, it perpetuates cycles of poverty and social inequality, as young mothers often lack access to education, employment, and healthcare.

In the same vein, Philippines is one of the Asian countries which shares similar situation. In a study conducted by the National Demographic and Health Survey in 2013, one out of every young Filipino women age 15 to 19 is already a mother or pregnant with a first child. Therefore, the government in partnership with the different non-government agencies should exert efforts in resolving this issue (Salvador et, al., 2016). Teenage Pregnancies are often associated with social development issues such as lack of sufficient education and poverty. This often results to single parenthood which catalyzes conditions that renders the mothers to become irresponsible. Hence, in this research, single parenthood is being named as "Batang Inatay" fulfill dual roles by providing both parental support as "Ina/Nanay" (mother) and "Tatay" (father) to their families. Between the ages of 15 and 21 these individuals face the difficult transition from adolescence into adult responsibilities.

At Isulan National High School the Batang Inatay take on family responsibilities because of economic struggles or parental absence. These young people face multiple emotional, financial and social challenges that force them to build resilience and coping mechanisms in order to manage caregiving responsibilities while continuing their educational pursuits (Walog et al., 2022).

Specifically, individuals like the Batang Inatay, those who not only provide financially but also serve as the primary caregivers in their families face unique cultural and familial expectations that set them apart from other young people in similar situations. These obligations sometimes go beyond what most young people go through since they must negotiate society expectations of adulthood while still in their early years. Looking toward at participants' Batang Inatay distinct experiences at Isulan National High School fueled the desire to conduct this study. There are various studies conducted about early pregnancy survey but the study on the context of Batang Inatay life and education experience is limited.

Thus, this study examined how these young people view and manage the junction between education, financial difficulty, and the great amount of parental obligation using a phenomenological method. The central thesis of this study is that the experiences of Batang Inatay reflect the broader socio-economic and cultural challenges of rural communities. These young individuals shows how resilience and adaptive strategies arise in response to the complex demands of being both caregivers and students. At the same time, this study foreground the importance of providing more resources and support for youth in these situations, ensuring they are better equipped to handle the pressures they face.

Research Questions

This study explored the intricate and intertwined relationship between economic adversity, cultural expectations, and resilience, focusing on how these factors influence the personal growth and well-being of Batang Inatay at Isulan National High School. Specifically, this research paper sought to answer the following:

1. How do Batang Inatay perceive the impact of economic struggles on their well-being and personal growth?
2. What coping mechanisms do Batang Inatay use to balance caregiving responsibilities with personal development amidst economic challenges?
3. In what ways do cultural and familial expectations shape the lived experiences of Batang Inatay facing economic hardships?
4. How do Batang Inatay interpret their dual roles as both primary caregivers and individuals striving for self-improvement?

Methodology

Research Design

This research used qualitative phenomenological research that aimed at exploring the lived experiences of Batang Inatay as they navigate the dual responsibilities of caregiving and pursuing education. Phenomenology is an approach that seeks to understand the essence of human experiences and focuses on how human interpret their realities, Creswell (2013). This design is particularly suitable for understanding how Batang Inatay perform their dual roles in facing economic hardship, cultural expectations, and personal growth challenges.

Hence, Breun (2009) emphasizes that phenomenological research captures subjective interpretations of the participants, and not solely relying on objective measurements. This is ideal approach for illuminating the unique, multifaceted experiences of participants which is the Batang Inatay on this research, who face financial pressures while simultaneously fulfilling both parental and academic roles. By centering on the respondents' personal narratives, this phenomenological approach enables an in-depth exploration of how Batang Inatay interpret and balance their responsibilities, develop resilience, and respond to socio-cultural expectations.

Thus, the qualitative phenomenological design provides the framework to uncover the essence of the participants' experiences, focusing on the challenges, coping mechanisms, and the influence of cultural and familial expectations that shape their lives and well-being.

Respondents

The initial step in this investigation involved identifying seven (7) Batang Inatay students at Isulan National High School during the school year 2024-2025. The participants of this study were the Batang Inatay students, aged 15 to 21, who are currently enrolled at Isulan National High School. These students embody a unique socio-cultural role, taking on the dual responsibilities of both "Ina/Nanay" (mother) and "Tatay" (father) within their households, often due to the absence or incapacity of one or both parents. Individuals from low-income households, where financial pressures and family circumstances compel them to become primary caregivers and, in some cases, income earners are the participant for they possess the qualifications.

Their caregiving roles extend to managing household responsibilities, providing emotional support to younger siblings or their own child, and occasionally engaging in part-time or informal work to help household needs. As a student often experiencing both physical and emotional stress and exhaustion they face the challenging task of balancing and managing their caregiving obligations with their academic responsibilities, This study seeks and tend to explore how Batang Inatay students interpret and manage these intersecting roles, with a focus on understanding the resilience and adaptive strategies they develop to navigate their educational and caregiving duties.

Purposive sampling were used to select the participants of the research, specifically targeting students who perform unique roles as both caregivers and students in their tender years of 15-21 years old. Purposive sampling, or judgmental sampling, is a type of research using nonprobability technique where participants are chosen based on specific characteristics that directly align with the study's objectives.

As Creswell (2014) said that purposeful sampling involves selecting participants because you believe that they might contribute something to you analysis. This approach is particularly effective for in-depth qualitative research, as it allows the researcher to gather detailed insights from those with relevant firsthand experiences. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgement when choosing members of the population to participate in the study (Foley, 2018).

The following shall be the inclusion criteria to ensure that participants are aligned with the objectives of the study. The objective for

this study ensure that selected participants are representative of the Batang Inatay demographic, focusing on the following characteristics:

Participants must be Batang Inatay students taking on both parental roles in their household. The age between 15 to 21 years old is an age group in which young adults are experiencing significant developmental challenges may it be physical, emotional and social aspect, and Batang Inatays are of no exception in this changes while balancing academic and caregiving responsibilities. To ensure the study is situated within a specific educational context the participants must be currently studying and attending classes at Isulan National High School Participants must express willingness to participate in in-depth interviews and share personal experiences regarding their caregiving and academic roles.

Selecting a sample of 7 to 10 Batang Inatay students is appropriate for several reasons:

The phenomenological approach calls for the capture of rich, complex insights rather than sweeping generalizations. A smaller group lets each member delve further into their experiences.

For the researcher as much as the respondents, in-depth qualitative interviews take time. Within reasonable limitations, a sample size of 7–10 lets one fully collect and analyze the data.

Usually with a lesser number of participants, data saturation in qualitative investigations is reached notably in cases when the sample is homogeneous in terms of the particular events under investigation.

Thus, this sample size is enough to maintain the study focused and practical while yet allowing significant, in-depth qualitative data on the experiences of Batang Inatay students.

Participants will be excluded from the study if they are under the age of 15 or over the age of 21, have not experienced significant economic hardship. Those who do not have caregiving responsibilities for family members. Those who has cognitive impairments or severe mental health conditions that would affect their ability to participate in in-depth interviews. Who are not studying and enrolled at Isulan National High School for school year 2024-2025, and those who are unable or unwilling to provide informed consent and lastly those who have language barriers preventing effective communication in Filipino or English.

Instrument

The semi-structured, in-depth interview was the primary data collection tool for this research. Michael Quinn Patton (2014), describes semi-structured and in-depth interviews as flexible yet systematic methods for collecting qualitative data. A semi-structured interview is an appropriate tool in phenomenological studies because it allows open-ended questions to facilitate responses by participants in their own word. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that semi-structured, in-depth interviews are essential in qualitative research for understanding participants' lived experiences.The semi-structured format provides room for flexibility in that the interviewer can revert to specific areas of interest while maintaining a focus on the key themes of the research, such as economic hardship, caregiving responsibilities, and coping mechanisms while also allowing participants to naturally guide parts of the conversation based on their unique perspectives..

An interview guide, based on the study's research questions, will address core topics such as the respondents' caregiving duties, academic pursuits, emotional well-being, and family expectations. Between 15 to 30 minutes is the expected time that this interview will last and will be audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure precise transcription and reliable analysis. This approach allows the study to capture the complex, multifaceted experiences of Batang Inatay students as they navigate dual roles under challenging circumstances. Turner III (2010) provides practical guidance for novice researchers on designing and conducting qualitative interviews. He emphasizes that an interview guide is essential for maintaining focus and structure in semi-structured interviews. Kallio et al. (2016) focus on a systematic framework for developing an effective interview guide, highlighting its role in improving validity and reliability. Both authors agree that a well-developed interview guide is crucial for collecting rich, meaningful qualitative data while ensuring consistency and depth in responses.

Procedure

The data gathering process involved the following steps:

Recruitment of Participants, Purposive sampling was used to identify potential respondents who meet the study's inclusion criteria identified through Isulan National High School. An initial screening was use to ensure they meet the requirements for participation.

Informed Consent, each respondent received a thorough briefing on the study's purpose, their involvement, and the confidentiality of their responses. Cohen, et.al (2018) highlight that informed consent should be an ongoing process, not just a one-time formality. Respondents then signed informed consent forms, ensuring voluntary and ethical participation. Denzin & Lincoln (2018) argue that informed consent is particularly crucial in qualitative research, where participants may share personal or sensitive information.

Interviews, depending on their inclination, semi-structured in-depth interviews will take place in a convenient environment and reachable for the participants either online or in person. With participant permission, an audio-record will be sent for proper transcription during the interview.

Data Transcription. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim in order to preserve the authenticity and detail of each participant's experiences. These transcriptions are the basis for thematic analysis.

Data Saturation. The interviews continued until data saturation is reached, meaning no new themes or insights emerge from additional interviews. This ensures a comprehensive representation of the Batang Inatay participants' experiences.

This procedure ensured that data collection is thorough, ethical, and sensitive to participants' personal and cultural contexts.

Data Analysis

Given the qualitative research approach of the study, thematic analysis was the main analytical tool applied to review the facts. Thematic analysis is a widely used method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). This approach ensures a systematic yet flexible framework for understanding participants' experiences in depth.The thematic analysis technique consists on several steps:

The thematic analysis technique consists of several steps. The researcher read the interview transcripts multiple times to fully immerse themselves in the data and grasp the complexity of each participant's experience. This initial phase, known as "familiarization with the data," is critical for ensuring that themes are derived directly from the participants' narratives (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014).

Coded codes were then organized into broader themes that reflected the core ideas of the Batang Inatay. Familial support, financial strain, personal well-being, time management, and caregiving challenges emerged as dominant themes. This process of clustering codes into themes is a key aspect of thematic analysis, as it allows researchers to identify overarching patterns and meanings within qualitative data (Clarke, Braun, & Hayfield, 2015; Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016).

The identified themes were reviewed in line with the research objectives to provide a deeper understanding of how Batang Inatay manage the dual demands of caregiving and academic commitments amid financial challenges. Reviewing and refining themes ensures that they accurately capture the data and align with the study's purpose (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Member-checking was employed, allowing participants to examine and review the transcriptions and interpretations of their interviews to ensure validity, reliability, and dependability. This feedback process is an essential technique for enhancing the credibility of qualitative research, as it ensures that findings authentically represent participants' perspectives (Birt et al., 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Through thematic analysis, this study reveals the rich, complex experiences of Batang Inatay, shedding light on how they cope with challenges and demonstrate resilience in the face of socioeconomic adversity. Thematic analysis is particularly valuable for uncovering coping strategies and adaptive responses within vulnerable populations (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Terry et al., 2017).

Ethical Considerations

A substantial ethical aspect with specific consequences for this qualitative research arose primarily from the methodology employed in the study. Ethical considerations in qualitative research are essential to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wiles, 2013). The researcher guaranteed to safeguard any gathered data, with the release of information strictly adhering to a rigorous informed consent process. Informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle that ensures participants fully understand the nature of the study, potential risks, and their rights to withdraw at any time (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001; Bryman, 2016).

Ethical challenges pertinent to the proper conduct of the research, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining anonymity were identified and performed. Protecting participant anonymity and confidentiality is crucial in qualitative research, as it fosters trust and encourages honest responses (Patton, 2015; Kaiser, 2009). Thus, adherence to ethical guidelines governed various aspects of the study concerning population and data, encompassing but not limited to these considerations. Ethical frameworks such as those established by the Belmont Report (1979) and the American Psychological Association (2020) provide key guidance on ensuring respect, beneficence, and justice in research practices (Flick, 2018; Tracy, 2020).

Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the study's results and findings, drawing connections to the relevant literature reviewed earlier. It also highlights the essential key themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts, offering a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and insights.

Profile of the Participants

Table 1 shows voluntarily-given information as regards to each participant's name, age, sex/gender, and grade-level. It discloses the profiles of the seven (7) participants who took part in the data collection procedure of this study. These participants, who are both senior and junior high school students enrolled at Isulan National High School, were selected based on the criteria of being employed while attending school during the academic year 2024-2025.

Table 1. *Participants' Profile*

Participants	*Age*	*Gender*	*Grade Level*
John	20	Male	Grade 12
Ice	19	Male	Grade 11
Patty	17	Female	Grade 10
Ash	16	Female	Grade 10
Aina	16	Female	Grade 9
Sheila	16	Female	Grade 9
Erich	15	Female	Grade 9

Impact of economic struggles on the well-being and personal growth of Batang Inatay

Emergent Theme 1: Economic Hardship and Strain

The theme of economic hardship and strain underscores the challenges individuals face due to limited income and the difficulties of securing stable employment. These financial struggles are compounded by the emotional and psychological toll of constant insecurity. As many individuals struggle to meet basic needs, they are burdened by the stress of managing limited resources while trying to provide for their families. The constant effort to earn enough, maintain a livelihood, and balance family responsibilities can lead to feelings of exhaustion and hopelessness, as highlighted in global studies on financial strain (Zimmerman et al., 2021).

Income scarcity remains a key driver of financial hardship, restricting access to essential resources such as healthcare, education, and housing. Many individuals live paycheck to paycheck, unable to afford even basic necessities, which can lead to a sense of social exclusion. According to Ravallion (2021), income inequality is particularly pronounced in developing countries, where a large portion of the population relies on informal and unstable employment. These conditions limit opportunities for upward mobility, resulting in a poverty trap that can be difficult to escape (Liu et al., 2021). Job instability exacerbates this issue, leaving individuals vulnerable to economic shocks and unable to plan for long-term stability.

The psychological effects of economic hardship are equally significant. Financial insecurity often leads to stress, anxiety, and depression, as individuals worry about their ability to meet their needs and provide for their families. This stress can negatively affect mental health and overall well-being, making it harder for individuals to cope with daily challenges (Zimmerman et al., 2021). Studies have shown that the constant pressure to survive financially contributes to chronic anxiety, which has long-term implications for emotional health and resilience (Conger et al., 2019). In addition, the inability to participate in social activities due to financial limitations can contribute to feelings of inadequacy and alienation.

In many cases, the strain of economic hardship is not only felt by individuals but also extends to their families. Parents facing job instability and low wages often struggle to provide for their children's education, healthcare, and other needs. This can lead to poor academic outcomes, emotional distress, and health problems for children (Eisenberg et al., 2020). As job insecurity increases, the emotional toll on families becomes more pronounced, creating a vicious cycle of hardship.

The situation in the Philippines reflects these global trends. Many Filipinos are employed in the informal sector, where job security is minimal, and wages are often insufficient to meet even basic needs. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the financial strain faced by many, as widespread job losses and economic uncertainty deepened existing inequalities (PSA, 2021). To address these issues, there is an urgent need for policies that focus on creating stable, well-paying jobs, expanding social safety nets, and providing access to affordable healthcare and education. These measures are essential to breaking the cycle of economic hardship and improving the well-being of families in the Philippines.

Emergent Theme 2: Education as a Means of Improvement

For many Batang Inatay, financial struggles reinforce the importance of education as their only pathway to a better future. Despite economic hardships, several participants persist in their studies, believing that academic success will eventually lead to financial stability. This supports the work of Zhang et al. (2021), who found that students facing economic hardship develop an enhanced sense of academic commitment as a form of resilience.

While some participants use financial struggles as motivation, others find them a significant distraction that diminishes their academic focus, expressing how their priority has shifted toward work due to its immediate financial rewards. This perspective aligns with Duquennois's (2022) study, which found that students struggling with financial instability often prioritize employment over academics, leading to lower engagement in school. This reflects the findings of Yuldosheva (2023), who reported that financially burdened students frequently question the practicality of continuing their education, particularly when immediate survival needs are more pressing.

In her research, Phan (2002) discusses the role of education in combating poverty. She emphasizes that while various methods have been employed to address poverty, including significant investments in education, health, and healing, a critical perspective is necessary. education is a powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty, but it requires active participation and self-awareness from individuals. She argues that rather than relying solely on external assistance, the poor must recognize their situation and take

responsibility for improving their own lives.

Education is both a priority and a source of pressure. While families encourage Batang Inatay to pursue schooling as a means of improving their lives, the challenge of balancing academics with caregiving duties makes this pursuit overwhelming (Rocchetta, 2019; Chang et al., 2020). Guilt is a feeling of deserving to be blame on a situation that you cannot alter. Mental strain due to societal and familial expectations, fearing failure and disappointment is (Vassallo & Muscat, 2022; Phan, 2022). This high level of pressure exacerbates their emotional and mental struggles, forcing them to navigate complex decisions between prioritizing their child, meeting financial demands, and continuing their education (Zhang et al., 2021; Forbes-Mewett, 2020).

The findings disclose that cultural and familial and even societal expectations function as both a source of encouragement and inspiration and an additional burden. While these expectations push Batang Inatay to beaver for success, they also create significant emotional and logistical challenges. The struggle to balance caregiving, financial obligations, and academic responsibilities spotlights the resilience of Batang Inatay, as they continuously adapt to the societal and familial pressures placed upon them.

As Skinner, E, & Saxton E. (2020) found that students with robust personal and interpersonal assets were more likely to employ adaptive coping strategies, leading to better academic outcomes. Conversely, those with vulnerabilities or fewer supports were prone to maladaptive coping, negatively affecting their school performance. These findings suggest that education can serve as a means of improvement by equipping students with the necessary skills and resources to navigate academic challenges effectively.

Finally, Ansong, D., et.al (2018) highlighted the significance of academic self-efficacy and educational aspirations in enhancing academic achievement. They found that students with higher self-efficacy and aspirations tended to perform better academically, with these factors serving as mediators in the relationship between household assets and academic performance.

Emergent Theme 3: Impact of Economic Struggles on Mental and Emotional Well-being

The theme indicates that economic difficulties will limit the access to resources and opportunities, making it impossible to pursue education and personal aspirations. The stress of balancing care giving and financial survival leads to mental and emotional fatigue, causing some to feel overwhelmed and discouraged. Most of the participants expressed that their financial situations give them no choice but to prioritize work and caregiving over self-improvement, leaving little time or energy for personal growth. The sense of being capsulized in a situation that cycle economic hardship is evident, as they struggle to meet their child's needs while also striving to build a better future for themselves.

Moreover, Duquennois, C. (2022) argues that when students face financial pressures, they tend to experience increased anxiety and reduced time and resources to devote to their studies. These economic constraints not only elevate the risk of dropping out but also hinder engagement and overall academic performance.

Survival and self-improvement are the factors that places the Batang Inatays sacrifice their own personal goals to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities and duties as the bread winner of their family. While some express feelings of regret and helplessness, others demonstrate a strong will to rise above their circumstances, Mutya et.al (2022)

The study reveals that Batang Inatay interpret their economic battles not just as a source of suffering, but also as a defining factor in their journey toward self-discovery and perseverance. Pedroso et.al. (2022) While their hardships place significant emotional and financial burdens, they also serve as a foundation for resilience, determination, and the pursuit of a better future. Colet, et.al. (2022)

Emergent Theme 4: Struggles in Balancing Responsibilities

Navigating the complexities of the life of the Batang Inatay by putting through their roles as primary caregivers while simultaneously striving for personal and educational growth capacitated them to show the manual dexterity of financial, emotional, and academic obligations, often at the cost of their own well-being. Emotional exhaustion, time constraints, and self-doubt are some of the significant challenges that Batang Inatay may face even though caregiving foster resilience, steadfastness, maturity and strong sense of responsibility. Their perspectives on their roles differ, some see caregiving as a hindrance to self-fulfillment, while others view it as a driving force behind their determination to succeed. Batang Inatay constantly negotiates their identities in spite of the heavy responsibilities, figuring out how to reconcile their caring responsibilities with their dreams for a better future. Gutierrez (2024)

Some Batang Inatay embrace their responsibility resulting from the outcomes of their life choices and family relationships. The chronicle of unmasking a constant bickering between their own end goal and the pressing responsibilities their circumstances demands is what dual roles as persons striving for, Their self-improvement and main caretakers unveil a difficult blend of resiliency and self-sacrifice, Abenoja R, et al (2019). They accept the permanence of their situation and grow to meet its demands as t is what they believe as a result of their own past choices and life circumstances. Beneath this acceptance, though, is a deep rooted emotional and psychological struggle in which their choices in real life is affected by societal expectations, weariness, and identity conflict. Bashir, S., & Khan, M. I. (2022)

While they recognize the importance of education as a pathway to upward mobility, their immediate caregiving responsibilities often overshadow their academic pursuits, conflict between duty and self-fulfillment is one of the driving factor that create tension that these Batang Inatays is dealing with. For Batang Inatays', caregiving has made them no choice but to be mature on their tender years, Making

them choose survival over self-discovery. This aligns with Revenko's (2020) findings that breadwinners frequently experience identity crisis, as their personal development is often secondary to their caregiving obligations. The circumstances made them switch their role from being the one need to be taken care of, to they are the ones giving care to their family members so their role which is typically associated with exploration and growth, is instead viewed as a structured means to secure a better future, rather than an opportunity for personal enrichment.

Emergent Theme 5: Resilience and Perseverance in the Face of Financial Challenges

Batang Inatay's financial hardships lead to a complicated reality whereby financial volatility face by the Batang Inatays impacts their welfare and personal development, it led to a complicated reality for them. Their stories provide a mixed view on one hand, financial difficulties restrict their chances, while on the other, and these challenges strengthen their will to better their life. It indicates that economic difficulties will limit the access to resources and opportunities, making it impossible to pursue education and personal aspirations. The stress of balancing caregiving and financial survival leads to mental and emotional fatigue, causing some to feel overwhelmed and discouraged. Most of the participants expressed that their financial situations give them no choice but to prioritize work and caregiving over self-improvement, leaving little time or energy for personal growth. The sense of being capsulized in a situation that cycle economic hardship is evident, as they struggle to meet their child's needs while also striving to build a better future for themselves.

Survival and self-improvement are the factors that places the Batang Inatays sacrifice their own personal goals to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities and duties as the bread winner of their family. While some express feelings of regret and helplessness, others demonstrate a strong will to rise above their circumstances

The study reveals that Batang Inatay interpret their economic battles not just as a source of suffering, but also as a defining factor in their journey toward self-discovery and perseverance. While their hardships place significant emotional and financial burdens, they also serve as a foundation for resilience, determination, and the pursuit of a better future.

Financial pressures lead the students/Batang Inatay to develop survival strategies and methods that would result to their long-term resilience, Forbes-Mewett (2020), Similarly, Reid et al. (2019) emphasize that economic struggles can create stress and self-doubt, but also serve as a powerful motivator for growth and ambition.

Adaptive Coping Strategies on Caregiving and School Responsibilities

Emergent Theme 1: Coping Mechanism to Balance Caregiving and Personal Development

The emergent theme of coping mechanisms to balance caregiving and personal development explores how individuals navigate the complex task of managing caregiving responsibilities while striving for personal growth. This balancing act is especially prevalent among those with familial responsibilities, as individuals often find themselves juggling work, personal ambitions, and the care of their loved ones. This dual burden can lead to stress and burnout, but individuals develop coping strategies to manage the tension between their personal goals and caregiving duties.

One primary coping mechanism that many employ is time management, where individuals prioritize their responsibilities and allocate time for both caregiving and personal pursuits. Research indicates that effective time management is crucial for individuals trying to balance work and family life, particularly for caregivers (Van der Meer et al., 2020). By creating structured schedules, many caregivers manage to carve out time for self-development activities such as education, hobbies, or career advancement. This strategy helps reduce feelings of overwhelm and allows individuals to maintain a sense of control over their lives despite the pressures of caregiving (Allen et al., 2019).

Another coping strategy involves social support, which plays a pivotal role in balancing caregiving and personal development. Individuals who have access to strong social networks—whether through family, friends, or community groups—are better equipped to manage the emotional and physical demands of caregiving. Emotional support from loved ones provides caregivers with reassurance, while instrumental support (such as assistance with child care or household tasks) can free up time for personal development (Hernandez et al., 2021). In this context, social support not only buffers against the negative effects of caregiving stress but also facilitates personal growth by offering the caregiver time and energy to focus on their own needs and aspirations (Berkman et al., 2021).

Additionally, self-care practices emerge as a key mechanism for coping. Individuals who prioritize their physical and mental health through activities like exercise, meditation, or hobbies are more likely to maintain their well-being despite the challenges of caregiving. Studies show that regular self-care can mitigate the negative impacts of caregiving, such as burnout and emotional exhaustion (Harris et al., 2020). Taking time for oneself allows caregivers to recharge, thus enabling them to continue providing quality care while pursuing their personal goals. Moreover, self-care enhances emotional resilience, allowing individuals to cope with stress more effectively (López et al., 2020).

However, balancing caregiving and personal development is not without its challenges. As some studies have pointed out, caregivers often experience role conflict when personal goals clash with caregiving duties. This conflict can lead to feelings of guilt, stress, and resentment. According to Doherty et al. (2021), many caregivers report sacrificing their own aspirations in favor of their family's needs,

leading to delayed personal development or career stagnation. This role conflict can strain relationships with both family members and colleagues, especially when caregiving responsibilities become overwhelming or are perceived as undervalued (Barker et al., 2019).

Emergent Theme 2: Coping Mechanism to Manage Stress and Emotional Well-being

This theme reveals that their social world is often shaped by their role as a caregiver and a student, which forces them to prioritize their jobs over their relationships. Some students feel disconnected from their peers, which may lead to loneliness or a sense of detachment from the school community. This supports the findings of Zhang et al. (2021), who reported that financially struggling students often experience role strain, leading to chronic exhaustion and emotional distress.

However, detachment may not be purely negative. For many, it will be the beginning of the development of emotional resilience. Such as in this study, the participants learn to reframe their situation on to detachment as a temporary and necessary condition to reach their goals, viewing their sacrifices as a means to an end. Their coping mechanisms, such as emotional regulation, reliance on family support, and the self-awareness of their sacrifices, underscore their resilience in the face of adversity.

Batang Inatay exhibit two main approaches in terms of stress management: mental resilience and self-motivation (Gómez Molinero et al., 2018; Vassallo & Muscat, 2022) and emotional detachment and avoidance

Moreover, (Skinner & Saxton, 2020). Some participants view their struggles as temporary and push themselves forward with self-encouragement and long-term goal setting, while others cope by mentally blocking out stress and focusing on their daily survival. However, "using avoidance strategies such as neglecting personal well-being or suppressing emotions can lead to long-term burnout and exhaustion because the feelings is bottling up" (Shereshkova, 2023).

Furthermore, Masten (2001) research on resilience highlights how individuals manage to adapt and keep going during difficult times, often leaning on their own inner strength and external support. The way the respondent continues to tackle their overwhelming tasks, even while stressed, shows resilience in practice.

Emergent Theme 3: Coping Mechanism through Family and Social Support

Family is often the first source of emotional, financial, and psychological support. Studies emphasize the importance of a stable family environment in helping individuals manage stress. Ansong et al. (2018) highlight that perceived family economic hardship affects student engagement. When students receive emotional and financial support from their families, they are more likely to stay motivated and succeed academically.Social support functions as an emotional anchor, providing attestation and comfort in times of challenges, while care for one self, although limited due to time constraints, is still carry out as a way to briefly look into with their inner selves amidst external demands. These strategies are part of a self-directed narrative that students create to help them endure their dual roles. This aligns with studies (Zhang et al., 2021; Bashir & Khan, 2022) that come up the role of family support in reducing stress and improving academic persistence among student-parents. Nonetheless, not all participants have access to this type of support among their family members, paramount to them to learn how prioritization work and flexible time management strategies (Bartlett et al., 2021), where they structure their schedules around caregiving, schoolwork, and employment.

Cultural and Familial Expectations on Batang Inatay's Lived Experiences

Emergent Theme 1: Financial Contribution as a Familial Obligation

The theme of financial contribution as a familial obligation centers on the expectation that individuals provide financial support to their families, often due to cultural norms and societal expectations. In many cultures, including the Philippines, there is a strong sense of duty to contribute financially to one's extended family. This expectation can create significant pressure, especially for individuals who may already be struggling to meet their own personal financial needs. Financial support is viewed not only as a responsibility but also as a symbol of one's success and social status within the family and community. As a result, individuals often feel compelled to prioritize family obligations over their own needs, potentially leading to feelings of guilt or inadequacy when they are unable to meet these demands (Dube, 2021).

The cultural value of family is a key factor in shaping this sense of obligation. In many cultures, including Filipino culture, family ties are strong, and individuals are expected to contribute to the well-being of their relatives, even if it means sacrificing personal goals or needs. Bautista and Ramos (2019) note that, particularly in collectivist societies, familial solidarity is paramount, and individuals are expected to financially support family members in need, whether it be for education, healthcare, or general living expenses. This can lead to a situation where individuals may forgo opportunities for personal development or financial growth to fulfill their familial duties, potentially affecting their long-term financial stability (Liu et al., 2021).

Emergent Theme 2: Education as a Familial Priority and Cultural Expectation

The theme talks about Education is both a priority and a source of pressure. While families encourage Batang Inatay to pursue schooling as a means of improving their lives, the challenge of balancing academics with caregiving duties makes this pursuit overwhelming (Rocchetta, 2019; Chang et al., 2020). Guilt is a feeling of deserving to be blame on a situation that you cannot alter. Mental strain due to societal and familial expectations, fearing failure and disappointment is (Vassallo & Muscat, 2022; Phan, 2022). This high level of

pressure exacerbates their emotional and mental struggles, forcing them to navigate complex decisions between prioritizing their child, meeting financial demands, and continuing their education (Zhang et al., 2021; Forbes-Mewett, 2020).

The findings disclose that cultural and familial and even societal expectations function as both a source of encouragement and inspiration and an additional burden. While these expectations push Batang Inatay to beaver for success, they also create significant emotional and logistical challenges. The struggle to balance caregiving, financial obligations, and academic responsibilities spotlights the resilience of Batang Inatay, as they continuously adapt to the societal and familial pressures placed upon them.

Emergent Theme 3: Emotional and Mental Pressure from Financial Struggles

Some Batang Inatay acknowledged that while their families expect financial support, their earnings are barely enough for their own survival and that of their children. Financial struggles often prevent student caregivers from meeting familial expectations, Forbes-Mewett (2020). Indicating that while they find ways on how to contribute to their family expenses, being financially constrain makes it difficult. This supports the findings of Laroco (2022), which emphasized that economic hardship significantly impacts students' ability to fulfill family expectations. The interjection of cultural and family expectations greatly shaped Batang Inatay's way of dealing their current situations, through their experiences, we can understand their struggle by immersing ourselves to their situation. This cultural and familial expectations can both inspire and burden them. The expectation to excel academically, perform personal and social obligation, and offer financial assistance results in a complicated emotional disharmony whereby one must choose between fulfilling duties and responsibilities and pursuing personal desires, (Ravenko, 2020). While some people look into these in positive tone, others look into it as a trigger for stress, emotionally tiring and it may result into a feeling of uncertainty about one's abilities. Batang Inatay constantly confer with their duties in spite of these deterrents, trying to strike a mix between self-improvement, financial obligations, and caring while bearing social and family expectations..

Dual Roles as Both Primary Caregivers and Individuals Striving For Self-Improvement

Emergent Theme 1: Acceptance of Responsibility amidst Challenges

The theme of acceptance of responsibility amidst challenges highlights how individuals come to terms with their obligations, particularly in situations of adversity. This theme explores how people in difficult circumstances, whether financial, emotional, or social, embrace their responsibilities despite the significant challenges they face. The acceptance of responsibility often reflects an individual's commitment to family, work, or other social roles, even when the personal cost is high. In many cases, this acceptance is driven by deeply ingrained societal and familial expectations, which require individuals to maintain their roles despite hardship (Hernandez et al., 2020). This willingness to shoulder burdens, despite facing difficult conditions, speaks to the resilience and sense of duty that many individuals embody in the face of adversity.

Cultural values often play a significant role in how individuals accept their responsibilities. In many societies, including the Philippines, there is a strong cultural emphasis on family loyalty and interdependence, which necessitates accepting the weight of family responsibilities regardless of personal challenges. Studies have shown that individuals in collectivist cultures are more likely to prioritize family obligations over personal interests (Bautista & Ramos, 2019). This cultural expectation often drives individuals to accept responsibility for the well-being of family members, even if it means sacrificing their own personal development, mental health, or financial stability. As such, individuals often perceive their role as a caretaker or provider as non-negotiable, and the act of accepting these responsibilities becomes a central aspect of their identity.

Emergent Theme 2: Coping with Physical and Emotional Exhaustion

The theme focuses on physical and emotional weariness enjoined in performing the dual roles is a recurring theme. The overwhelming nature of their daily lives leaves little room for rest, reflection, or leisure, reinforcing a survivalist mindset rather than one that allows for holistic self-improvement. Batang Inatays' experiences can heightened their anxieties that may lead to depression due conflicts on their role. This lassitude can be experience both physically and psychologically, as many grapple with the pressure to meet familial and societal expectations.

Even though they're exhausted and feeling down, they keep pushing forward, understanding that the responsibilities they carry are tough but essential. Thankfully, they have some support in taking care of their child, which gives them a little breathing room to study or rest. However, the continuous performing different duties and responsibilities in a day doesn't leave much space for them to breath or take time to reflect, only doing so when everything else is finished.

Emergent Theme 3: Caregiving as a Barrier to Academic and Personal Growth

Participants' interpretation of caregiving as either a barrier or a source of growth is a notable condition of being divergent. While caregiving experience of the Batang Inatays can foster maturity and a strong sense of responsibility, it also restricts their natural aptitude or proficiency to fully engage in personal and academic growth. The lived experiences of Batang Inatay disclose a paradox of resilience and constraint. Their struggle is not just about balancing time and energy but also talks about their capabilities in navigating deepseated cultural and familial expectations of being the one who will either take care of the family members or the one who will be a breadwinner of the family that shape their aspirations, choices, and self-worth. Their journey is one of adaptation rather than liberation, where

resilience is not necessarily about overcoming hardship but about enduring it in the hope of a better future.

For the participants, the heart of their daily lives is a constant battle that make them more resilient and persevere to overcome and stand tall despite their circumstances. Their experiences as a constant struggle against time constraints, exhaustion, and the balancing of competing priorities are what make them work hard to be a better version of themselves. Job management alongside academic responsibilities will result to physical weariness, mental stress, and emotional strain, which can unequivocal in symptoms like sleep deprivation, anxiety, and other mental health challenges (Wijesooriya, 2024).

However, despite these overwhelming challenges, they display incredible resilience. It reflects on their determination a deeper sense of purpose and agency beyond simply surviving any circumstances that life thrown to them. This is consistent with the 2019 results of Baker and Montalto showing how financial restrictions drive students to give basic survival top priority over personal growth. For many, the ability to financially support their families and work toward a better future provides them with meaning. In this way, their endurance becomes a powerful coping mechanism, closely tied to their hope for a brighter tomorrow. This supports the findings of Yuldosheva's (2023) research that students with financial instability has the tendency to sacrifice their own education for family obligation.

Conclusions

Based on the summary of findings, the following conclusions are derived.

Batang Inatays' economic struggles has a significant impact on their well-being and self-discovery. The financial burdens they face often make them choose to prioritize means for survival over self-improvement, leading to chronic stress, exhaustion, weariness, and limited opportunities for education. While some perceive financial hardship as a motivation to work harder, others experience discouragement and helplessness, struggling to find balance between their responsibilities and a strong desire to achieve something.

Various coping mechanisms were used by the Batang Inatays to manage their caregiving responsibilities and personal development. To navigate their roles they rely heavily on family support, time management, emotional resilience, and external social connections. However, while some strategies, such as structured goal-setting and prioritization, foster adaptability, others, like emotional detachment and overworking, may contribute to long-term burnout.

The Batang Inatays' decision making can be greatly influenced by cultural and familial expectations. On positive note, these expectations serve as a source of motivation, pushing Batang Inatay to to go on resolutely in their academic endeavor while fulfilling their other responsibilities. On the other hand, they create immense pressure to meet financial obligations and maintain family dignity, leading to guilt, self-doubt, and emotional distress. The tension between meeting traditional obligations and pursuing personal aspirations adds another layer of complexity to their struggles.

The interpretation of their dual roles as caregivers and individuals striving for self-improvement varies among Batang Inatay. Identity crisis can be the result on the acceptance of their caregiving responsibilities as a necessary reality, others experience identity conflict, feeling restricted in their ability to explore personal and academic growth. Caregiving fosters resilience, maturity, and a strong sense of responsibility, but it also limits their freedom, self-discovery, and career opportunities.

Their resilience is evident in their ability to financial countenance, emotional, and social hardships, yet their circumstances often force them to sacrifice personal aspirations for immediate survival. The study suggests that Batang Inatay live in a paradoxical reality where caregiving both strengthens and constrains them. The findings accentuate the need for increased institutional and community support to help Batang Inatay balance their responsibilities without compromising their well-being and long-term goals.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to provide better support for Batang Inatay in balancing their caregiving responsibilities and personal development:

Financial Assistance and Support Programs -Schools, government agencies, and private organizations may implement scholarship programs, financial aid, and livelihood assistance specifically designed for student who are performing multiple roles. Community-based financial literacy training .

Strengthening Coping Mechanisms and Mental Health Support- Stress management seminars and mental health counseling should be available, Modular learning and blended education are two flexible learning choices that would help people satisfy their dual obligation.

Balancing Cultural and Familial Expectations with Personal Growth-Community awareness initiatives may be carried out. Batang Inatay should get parenting education and life skills training from local groups and schools Workplace rules should be more inclusive.

Empowering Batang Inatay in Their Dual Roles- The school may offer career counseling services. Safe areas like community centers or daycare facilities should be created by local government authorities. Policies supporting inclusive education should be strengthened.

Further Research on Coping Mechanisms- Other researchers may look closer at the coping strategies employed by Batang Inatays and the consequences on emotional well-being and academic performance of numerous coping strategies. Knowing the components of student resilience may direct more effective interventions.

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