

The Coping Strategies of Senior Citizens in Managing the Challenges of Aging

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the coping strategies of senior citizens in managing the challenges of aging, using a qualitative design with thematic analysis. Conducted in Barangay Nambaran with 20 elderly participants, the research draws from their real-life experiences of physical decline, memory and sensory problems, emotional distress, and financial limitations. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, and themes were identified from their narratives. Findings show that seniors cope in three main ways: personal efforts such as walking, gardening, storytelling, and maintaining a positive outlook; support from others including family assistance with daily tasks and peer group interaction to reduce loneliness; and community resources such as barangay health services, pensions, and faith-based activities that provide comfort and strength. Among these, family support, spirituality, staying active, and following

medical advice were found to be the most effective in improving quality of life. While community programs and pensions help, limited healthcare access and financial constraints remain barriers. Overall, the study highlights the resilience of senior citizens and emphasizes the importance of family ties, faith, health practices, and community support in promoting well-being and happiness in later life.

Keywords: Senior citizens, aging challenges, coping strategies, family support, spirituality, resilience.

INTRODUCTION

The global population is aging at an unprecedented rate. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), the number of people aged 60 and above is projected to reach 2 billion by 2050 double the figure from 2020. This demographic shift is driven by improved healthcare and declining birth rates, reflecting progress in public health and medical science. However, it also presents complex challenges for older adults and the societies they live in.

As individuals grow older, they often face physical health issues such as heart disease and arthritis, emotional struggles like loneliness, financial insecurity, and a loss of independence. These challenges are intensified by changing family dynamics, especially in urban areas where families are smaller and younger members are frequently occupied with work or living far away. In regions like Southeast Asia, where intergenerational caregiving was once strong, modern lifestyles have weakened traditional support systems (UNFPA, 2022). These difficulties extend beyond personal hardship, placing increasing pressure on healthcare systems and social services.

Despite these challenges, many senior citizens demonstrate resilience by adopting coping strategies to manage the stresses of aging. Coping refers to the thoughts, behaviors, and routines individuals use to maintain emotional and physical well-being. For older adults, this might include staying active, engaging in hobbies,

seeking emotional support, practicing mindfulness, or using technology to stay connected. Some also prepare proactively for future health concerns.

The transactional model of stress and coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), supported by more recent studies, highlights how effective coping can improve quality of life. However, access to coping resources is not equal. Factors such as income, geographic location, and cultural background influence how well seniors can manage aging-related stress. For example, rural seniors may have limited access to healthcare and community programs, while urban seniors may face social isolation despite living in densely populated areas (European Commission, 2021).

This study is vital because it can lead to meaningful improvements in the lives of older adults and broader societal benefits. Seniors who develop strong coping skills are more likely to remain independent, reducing the need for costly institutional care. Research shows that effective coping can lower stress and help prevent mental health conditions such as depression, which is common among older populations (Kahana et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of coping strategies, as many seniors experienced heightened isolation and anxiety (WHO, 2021). By understanding how older adults manage these challenges, we can design better support systems such as community centers, digital platforms, and wellness programs that promote resilience and reduce strain on healthcare services. These efforts align with the concept of “active aging,” where seniors remain engaged, empowered, and valued members of society (OECD, 2023).

Although aging has been widely studied, significant gaps remain in understanding how seniors cope with their unique challenges. Much of the existing literature focuses on general health trends or large demographic groups, often overlooking personal experiences and culturally specific coping strategies.

For instance, while coping mechanisms in high-income countries are well-documented, there is limited research on how seniors in low-income or culturally diverse regions manage financial stress, shifting family roles, or limited access to services (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987; Fry, 2022). Additionally, many studies rely on surveys and quantitative data, missing the rich, personal narratives that reveal what truly helps individuals thrive. This lack of depth makes it difficult to design targeted programs that address the specific needs of seniors especially those in rapidly urbanizing areas or during times of crisis.

This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the coping strategies of senior citizens through in-depth conversations and real-life observations. By listening to older adults and learning from their lived experiences, the research will uncover practical, culturally sensitive ways they manage the challenges of aging.

The findings will provide valuable insights for families, healthcare providers, and policymakers, helping them create more effective and compassionate support systems. Ultimately, this work contributes to a more inclusive and caring society one where older adults can age with dignity, strength, and joy. It also responds to recent calls for more attention to personal coping in aging research, as emphasized in journals like *The Gerontologist* (2023).

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on Lazarus and Folkman’s Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (1984), which explains how individuals respond to stress through cognitive and behavioral efforts. Applying this model, the research focuses on how senior citizens in Barangay Nambaran manage the challenges of aging through various coping mechanisms.

Older adults face multiple challenges like physical, emotional, social, and economic that affect their daily lives and overall well-being. Their ability to cope with these challenges may be influenced by personal and demographic factors such as age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, and economic status. These factors serve as moderating variables, shaping how seniors apply coping strategies to overcome difficulties.

This framework guides the research process by helping to identify, analyze, and interpret the coping strategies used by senior citizens in managing aging-related challenges.

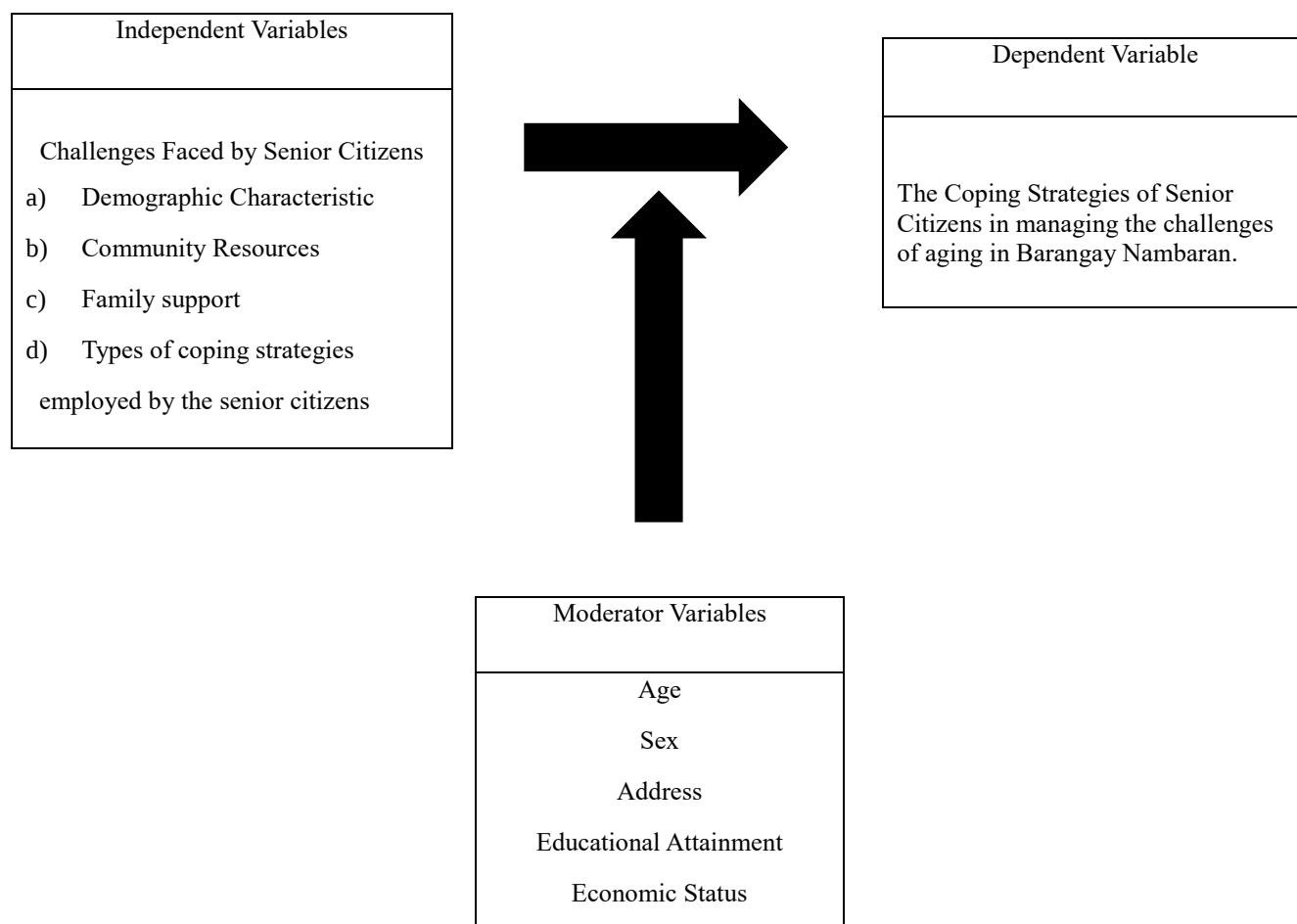


Figure 1. *Paradigm of the study*

Statement of the Problem

The study sought focus on the coping strategies of senior citizens in managing the challenges of aging in Barangay Nambaran.

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the most common aging-related challenges experienced by senior citizens in the study population?
2. What coping strategies do senior citizens employ to manage these challenges?
3. Which coping strategies are perceived by respondents to be most effective in maintaining or improving their quality of life?
4. How do community resources and family support influence the coping strategies used by senior citizens?

Statement of Objectives

The study sought to:

1. To identify and categorize the primary aging-related challenges faced by the study's senior respondents.
2. To document the coping strategies currently used by these senior citizens.
3. To evaluate perceived effectiveness of different coping strategies on respondents' physical, emotional, and social well-being.
4. To assess the role of family and community support in shaping coping responses.

Significance of the Study

The study would be beneficial to the following:

Senior Citizens. This research gives value to the experiences of older adults. It helps them see that their ways of coping are important and can inspire others. It may also help them discover new ways to stay strong and healthy.

Families and Caregivers. The study can guide family members and caregivers in understanding the needs of their elderly loved ones. It can help them give better emotional and practical support.

Health Workers and Social Workers. Doctors, nurses, and social workers can use the findings to create programs and services that match the real needs of seniors, especially in areas like Barangay Nambaran.

Community Leaders and Policymakers. Local leaders and government officials can use the results to plan better services for older people, such as health centers, support groups, or activities that help seniors stay active and connected.

Future Researchers. This study adds to the knowledge about aging and coping. It can be a helpful source for students and researchers who want to study more about the lives of senior citizens, especially in rural or developing communities.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on the coping strategies used by senior citizens in Barangay Nambaran, Tabuk City, Kalinga to manage the challenges of aging. It explores how older adults deal with physical, emotional, social, and economic difficulties through various coping mechanisms. The research excludes seniors from other areas, those below 60 years old, only voluntary participants are included, so findings may not represent all elderly populations in Tabuk City.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were defined contextually and operationally for the purpose of clarity and understanding.

Aging-related challenges. Physical, emotional, social, and financial difficulties experienced by older adults as they grow older.

Cognitive reframing. Shifting thoughts to view problems more positively.

Community resources. Local services, programs, and facilities (health centers, senior clubs, livelihood support) available to assist older adults.

Coping strategies. Practical and psychological methods used by seniors to manage stress and adapt to aging challenges.

Family support. Emotional, financial, and care giving assistance provided by family members to help seniors in daily life.

Filial Obligation. The expected duty of adult children to support and care for aging parents.

Frugality. Use of money or resources to avoid waste.

Gerontologists. Specialists in aging and elder care.

Personal resilience. Staying strong and recovering during tough times.

Prevalent. Frequently seen or widely occurring in a specific group or setting.

Psycho-social factors. Influences from emotions, relationships, and social environment.

Relational process. Interaction that builds or maintains relationships.

Senior citizens. Individuals aged 60 years and above, recognized as older adults in the community.

Literature Review

Palmes, Tolentino, and Dizon (2021) aging presents a range of physical, emotional, and social challenges that require adaptive coping strategies to help senior citizens maintain well-being and independence. They investigated the relationship between coping strategies and quality of life among older adults in Western Philippines. Their findings revealed that both problem-focused coping (seeking solutions and maintaining health) and emotion-focused coping (optimism and acceptance) significantly enhance psychological health and life satisfaction. Moreover, resilience and social participation were found to mediate the relationship between coping and quality of life, underscoring the importance of community engagement and personal strength in managing the realities of aging.

Adeniji, and Olajide (2023) conducted a qualitative study exploring how older adults cope with health-related fears, loneliness, and other age-associated stressors. They identified key coping mechanisms such as health-seeking behaviors, lifestyle adjustments, reliance on social support systems, and spiritual or faith-based coping. A notable strategy was cognitive reframing, where seniors reinterpreted challenges in a positive light to maintain hope and self-worth. The study emphasized that effective coping involves both internal strategies like resilience and a positive mindset and external supports, including family and community relationships.

Similarly, Galiana, Sancho, and colleagues (2020) used structural equation modeling to examine how coping strategies, in conjunction with personal and social resources, influence psychological well-being in the elderly. Their results showed that coping mechanisms such as acceptance, problem-solving, and positive reappraisal not only reduce depressive symptoms but also enhance life satisfaction. The study highlighted coping as a protective factor that buffers against the stress and losses associated with aging, reinforcing the value of integrating personal resilience and social support in later life.

Ross, Hofbauer, and Rodriguez (2022) contributed to this discourse through a systematic review of 16 studies conducted between 1990 and 2021, focusing on coping strategies among older adults with and without cognitive impairment. They categorized coping into external (reminder systems), internal (visualization), and behavioral (reducing expectations) strategies. While external strategies were commonly used across both groups, internal strategies were less prevalent among those with cognitive impairments. Behavioral strategies were more frequently adopted by cognitively impaired individuals. The authors recommended incorporating these strategies into training tools to support memory management in older adults.

Steinert and Haesner (2018) examined the stressors and coping strategies experienced by retirees, noting that retirement can introduce significant stress due to financial concerns, loss of social roles, and health issues. Their study emphasized the importance of coping mechanisms such as social support, physical activity, and engagement in meaningful activities to promote well-being during this life transition.

Chen, Gupta, and Zhang (2020) explored the role of social ties as coping mechanisms in later life through a symposium drawing on data from China, Singapore, and the United States. Their findings revealed that strong family and friendship ties serve as protective buffers against social isolation and adverse health outcomes. Gupta and Pilai highlighted the importance of friendship support, while Visaria's research in Singapore emphasized the role of meaningful companionship. Ruan and Chen's study in China expanded the understanding of coping beyond filial obligations to include diverse forms of social support.

Stephenson and DeLongis (2020) define coping strategies as the thoughts and behaviors used to manage the internal and external demands of a stressful situation. In their chapter, they outline the coping process, categorize coping strategies, and explore factors influencing their effectiveness. They emphasize that contextual factors—such as the nature of the stressor, personality traits, and social context—affect both the choice and success of coping strategies. Importantly, they note that while some strategies are more consistently linked to successful adaptation, no single coping strategy is universally adaptive or maladaptive (Stephenson & DeLongis, 2020).

According to Wikipedia (2022), coping refers to both conscious and unconscious strategies individuals use to manage unpleasant emotions. These strategies may involve cognitive (thought-based) or behavioral actions and can be employed individually or socially. Coping helps people maintain mental and emotional well-being when

facing life challenges. These strategies may be adaptive (beneficial) or maladaptive (harmful), and it is generally recommended to use those that promote well-being (Wikipedia, 2022).

Algorani and Gupta (2023) offer a clinical perspective, defining coping as the conscious and voluntary mobilization of thoughts and behaviors to manage stress. This distinguishes coping from defense mechanisms, which are subconscious responses. They introduce the concept of coping styles—relatively stable traits that shape how individuals respond to stress. These styles are consistent across time and situations. Coping is further divided into:

Reactive coping: responding after a stressor occurs

Proactive coping: preparing to neutralize future stressors

They argue that proactive individuals thrive in stable environments due to their routinized and less reactive nature, whereas reactive individuals perform better in variable settings (Algorani & Gupta, 2023).

Galiana et al. (2020) supported these findings by demonstrating that coping mechanisms such as acceptance, positive reappraisal, and problem-solving reduce depressive symptoms and improve psychological well-being. Using structural equation modeling, they showed that coping plays both direct and indirect roles in promoting life satisfaction, positioning it as a protective psychological resource against the losses associated with old age.

Similarly, Adedeji, Adeniji, and Olajide (2023) found that older adults rely on cognitive reframing, health-seeking behavior, and emotional regulation to maintain hope and self-worth. Their study emphasized the interplay between internal strengths (resilience, positive mindset) and external supports (family, community), highlighting the multidimensional nature of coping among seniors.

Cheng, Fung, and Chan (2021) introduced the concept of coping flexibility, which refers to the ability to shift between problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies depending on the situation. Seniors who exhibit this flexibility experience greater resilience and lower levels of depression, underscoring the importance of psychological adaptability in successful aging.

Coping is also shaped by social and cultural contexts. Li and Chen (2022) found that in collectivist societies like those in Asia, older adults often depend on socially oriented coping, including family support, intergenerational interaction, and community involvement. Demers and Robichaud (2009) noted that behavioral coping strategies—such as maintaining hobbies, joining group activities, and seeking social participation are linked to better mental health among community dwelling seniors. In the Philippines, Santos and Bautista (2022) identified bayanihan (community cooperation), pagpapasensya (patience), and pananampalataya (faith) as dominant coping traits among urban Filipino elderly, showing that cultural values foster collective coping and emotional resilience.

Kafle, Gautam, and Sharma (2021) emphasized the role of social recognition and family bonds in Nepalese elderly coping, while Aubrey et al. (2023) provided an integrative review of stress and coping strategies in later life, reinforcing the importance of both psychological and social resources. Parial (2024) explored how age-friendly communities in the Philippines empower senior citizens through strengthened social networks, a finding relevant to Barangay Nambaran where communal resources and family ties support coping. Economic coping was addressed by a 2025 study in Barangay Buayan, General Santos City, which showed that seniors manage limited financial resources through family assistance, prioritizing essentials, and community support.

López, Sánchez, and Cruz (2023) found that seniors often rely on emotional regulation, religious faith, and positive reframing to maintain psychological stability despite physical decline. These strategies promote emotional resilience and self-acceptance, aligning with coping patterns observed in Barangay Nambaran. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified coping challenges due to isolation and health risks. Ayalon et al. (2021) reported that seniors used emotion-focused strategies like watching uplifting content and calling loved ones to combat loneliness. Smith et al. (2022) found that virtual social networks helped reduce stress, while Czaja et al. (2020) and Boot et al. (2023) highlighted the role of technology—such as health apps and video calls—in enhancing coping and reducing isolation.

Mindfulness and resilience-building have also gained prominence. Smith and Baltes (2022) showed that practices like gratitude journaling and breathing exercises improve mood and reduce sadness. Ong et al. (2023) emphasized resilience through positive memory recall, and Krause (2024) found that faith-based groups offer hope and community. Aldwin et al. (2023) noted the rise of personalized coping plans and culturally specific strategies, while Carstensen (2024) advocated for positive aging through meaningful relationships and activities.

Recent literature underscores that coping among older adults is a multidimensional process shaped by personal resilience, social support, and community systems. López, Sánchez, and Cruz (2021) examined the relationship between coping strategies, resilience, social participation, and quality of life. Their study found that coping strategies alone are insufficient to ensure well-being; rather, resilience and social participation serve as mediating factors that enhance life satisfaction. Seniors who engage in social activities and maintain positive emotional regulation report better mental health outcomes, suggesting that coping must be understood as a collective and relational process involving family and community support.

In the Philippine context, Palma and Magat (2023) explored anxiety levels among senior citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic in Camarines Sur. They discovered that while high anxiety was common, seniors with strong family ties, religious involvement, and community engagement demonstrated more effective coping responses. Faith, prayer, and social connection emerged as primary strategies to manage uncertainty and fear. These culturally rooted coping mechanisms are especially relevant to Barangay Nambaran, where family-oriented values and religious practices are foundational to daily life.

Complementing these external supports, internal resilience and meaning-making have also been emphasized in qualitative studies. A 2023 cross-case analysis by social gerontologists revealed that seniors who practice acceptance, positive reframing, and engage in purposeful activities—such as gardening, volunteering, or religious service—exhibit greater psychological stability. These internal coping mechanisms foster emotional strength and complement external resources, creating a balanced and holistic approach to aging. Promoting meaningful daily routines and purpose-driven living in Barangay Nambaran may therefore enhance elders' coping capacity.

Community and environmental support further play a critical role in strengthening coping. Parial (2024), in her article *Establishing Age-Friendly Communities in the Philippines*, argued that empowering older adults through participatory programs and accessible services increases their resilience and motivation. When seniors are involved in decision-making and community projects, they develop a sense of belonging and purpose. For Barangay Nambaran, initiatives such as health seminars, social clubs, and livelihood programs may significantly assist senior citizens in managing daily challenges and improving their overall well-being.

Economic coping is another vital dimension in the lives of Filipino seniors. Singh and Villanueva (2025), in their case study of Barangay Buayan, General Santos City, found that most elderly residents rely on family support, government pensions, and small-scale livelihood activities to meet daily needs. Budgeting, frugality, and community assistance were common coping mechanisms. These practical strategies reflect the likely experiences of seniors in Barangay Nambaran, where economic vulnerability may be mitigated through similar support systems.

Access to healthcare also influences coping effectiveness. A 2024 study published in the *International Journal of Community Health* found that older adults with access to local health centers and regular check-ups reported higher life satisfaction and better management of chronic conditions. The study concluded that coping strategies are more successful when supported by strong healthcare systems and responsive local governance. In rural barangays like Nambaran, improving healthcare delivery may significantly enhance seniors' ability to manage both physical and emotional challenges.

Finally, broader psychosocial factors contribute to successful aging. Kearney (2020) emphasized that individuals who adapt effectively to aging challenges experience improved functioning in social, emotional, and occupational domains. Maintaining positive relationships, engaging in physical activity, and pursuing lifelong learning were identified as key coping strategies. Murat (2022) added that preventing social isolation through early intervention and collaborative community efforts reduces depression and enhances coping among seniors.

Synthesizing these findings (2021–2025), coping strategies among senior citizens are shaped by three interrelated domains: personal resilience, social support, and community systems. Personal resilience enables older adults to manage stress through emotional strength and acceptance. Social support—derived from family, peers, and faith-based groups—provides emotional security and belonging. Community systems, such as barangay programs and healthcare access, serve as external reinforcements that sustain these coping efforts. Together, these elements create an environment conducive to positive aging, especially in culturally rich and community-oriented settings like Barangay Nambaran.

METHODS

This chapter presents the research design, locale and population of the study, data gathering instruments, data gathering procedures, reliability and validity of the instrument, treatment of data.

Research Design

The researchers used a qualitative design to examine how senior citizens cope with aging. Data would be gathered through in-depth interviews, focusing on their personal experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. The responses would be analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights into how they manage the difficulties of aging.

Locale and Population of the Study

The study was conducted at Nambaran, Tabuk City, Kalinga. The respondents of the study would be the senior citizens.

Data Gathering Instrument

The researchers used in-depth interviews as the main instrument for data gathering. The first part will record the profiles of the respondents, including their names, age, sex, occupation, educational attainment. The second part will focus on open-ended questions that explore senior citizens' experiences with aging, the coping strategies they use, the effectiveness of these strategies in maintaining quality of life, and the influence of family and community support in their coping process in Barangay Nambaran.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers asked formal permission and approval from the Barangay Captain of Nambaran to conduct in-depth interviews with senior citizens residing in the barangay. Upon receiving approval, the researchers would personally visit the community and engage participants through face-to-face interactions. Each senior citizen would be invited to participate in a semi-structured interview aimed at exploring their lived experiences, perspectives, and insights related to the research topic.

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

The interview guide was presented to the Research Council for review and approval prior to its administration. Feedback, corrections, and suggestions from the Council will be carefully considered and integrated to enhance the clarity and cultural relevance of the instrument. The guiding questions will be based on the coping strategies of senior citizens in managing the challenges of aging and the instrument has been adapted and modified from existing frameworks to suit the need of the community in Barangay Nambaran.

Treatment of Data

The data gathered through in-depth interviews was transcribed, organized, and coded. The researchers would apply thematic analysis to identify recurring ideas, patterns, and themes from the participants narratives. This process ensures that the voices and lived experiences of senior citizens are faithfully represented, highlighting their challenges, coping strategies, and the role of family and community support in managing aging.

Themes And Sub Themes	Codes	Direct Quotes
1. Sensory and Cognitive Decline	Weak eyesight	"Nakapsut a panagkita"
2.1 Poor eyesight and hearing	Hearing problems	"Adda met deperensya ti pa nagdinggeg ko"
2.2 Memory loss	Forgetfulness	"Gagangayen a makalipatko iti lalay kin babakit a mabaon."
	Mental decline	"Ti rigat ko ket ti panagkalipat ko."
2. Emotional and Psychological Challenges	Loneliness	"Mabuting ag maymaysa"
3.1 Fear of loneliness	Emotional isolation	"Mabuteng kami a mawaywayas no awan ti kadua mi"
3.2 Stress and worry	Anxiety about health	"Madanaganak amangan no biglaak laengen nga atakeen ti puso."
	Emotional burden	"A mangnayon iti danag ken ladingit."
3. Financial and Resource Difficulties	Limited pension	"Ti pension ko ket saan pay laeng nga umnay a pangsuporta iti amin a masapul ko."
4.1 Insufficient financial support	Financial hardship	"Nu mamingsan kit haan umnay ti shaod ko"
	Lack of medicine	"Awan pay ti naawat ko nga agas wenno tulong manipud iti lokal a klinikami."
4.2 Limited access to medicine and services	Limited health resources	"Kunada nga awan mabalin a maala"

Objective 2: Coping Strategies Employed by Senior Citizens

Themes And Sub Themes	Codes	Direct Quotes
1. Engagement in Physical Activities 1.1 Exercise and walking 1.2 Gardening and farming 1.3 Household chores	Walking Physical activity Gardening Farming activities Simple tasks Staying active	“Aginanaak ken agehersisioak kas iti pannagna ken panaghardin.” “Makatulong dagitoy a naalumamay a panaggaraw a mangbang-ar iti ut-ot iti bagik.” “Mapanak iti talonmi nga agmula iti nateng.” “Ti panagtrabahok iti talon ti mangpatalinaed kaniak nga acktibo” “Agaramid kadagiti babassit nga aramid iti pagtaengan.” “tan hija ran akag oh kaya owon”
2. Spiritual and Religious Practices 2.1 Prayer and faith 2.2 Church involvement	Prayer Faith in God Church service	“Han na kararag hija ran man ah an Han ugjat mangtod as pigha tot malagpasan luhan gway pagsubok Han whijag.” “Tan Han na panag pamati tao mas achu ran namnava tao” “Hadnan panahelwhe Han Apo kit hija ran mangmangtod as peace of mind na whaag jas hija ran napapapigha achaavi”
3. Family and Social Interaction 3.1 Family bonding	Spending time with family Caring for grandchildren	“Hadna Mahavir an me Han oras me gway mawhuron me ran pamilya vi ihon “ “Chana hurod me at Chara apo vi mangmangtod as kapayapaan ah chaavi jas mangtod as lagha ahchaavi”

3.2 Community participation	Community gatherings Social interaction	“Had na panag alaga vi ha Apo vi hija ran mangtod as lagha ahchaavi” “Han na panag tipon Han komunidad hija ran magtod as rag o jas nakakatulong tapnu malabanan ti likliknaon ti mysa men mysa”
4. Health Maintenance Practices 4.1 Taking medicines 4.2 Rest and relaxation	Medication compliance Maintenance medicine Adequate rest Relaxation	“Kanayun nga agtuar iti agas nga inreseta ti doctorko” “Agtomar iti maintenance medicine para iti high blood” “Ikkak ti bagik iti umdas a panaginana tapno makaungar ti bagik.” “Ikagkagumaak ti agrelaks babaen ti panangaramidko kadagiti makaparagsak nga aktibidad.”

Objective 3: Most Effective Coping Strategies in Improving Quality of Life

Themes And Sub Themes	Codes	Direct Quotes
1. Family Support as Source of Strength 1.1 Emotional support 1.2 Happiness through family bonding	Family love and care Support from children Joy from grandchildren Reduced loneliness	“Haad nan hingwerjan mangmangtod cha as ayat jas panag amma” “Charan arak uh mangmangtod cha as turung Nan manwhuwururan” “Charan apok ket mangtod as laghak Naraghaak honkun as manhahachut”
2. Spiritual Well-being 2.1 Prayer and faith	Spiritual peace Strength from faith	“Na panagkararag mangtod as terra jas pammati an Apo dios” “Na panagkararag mantod an haon as pidha”
3. Active Lifestyle and Productivity 3.1 Gardening and farming	Productive activities Staying active	“Manmura as matipoy Makaturung an haon”

3.2 Exercise	Improved physical health	“Ta agwad tergwahok ad uvah tot puvigha ran longag” “Patirajun gway man exercise makaturung Totbmatakirajun nan longag han pighara tot achi malikna ran hikab na”
4. Medical and Health Practices 4.1 Medicine and treatment	Pain management Better sleep	“Nan panagtuver uh han akas tuvurung tot ma-aan nan hikab” “Haad jara tuvurung tot aji malikna ran hikab na jas mangtod an haon as panag irara jas makahujopak as man gwaru”
Objective 4: Effects of Community Resources and Family Support on Coping		
THEMES AND SUB THEMES	CODES	DIRECT QUOTES
1. Importance of Family Support 1.1 Financial assistance	Financial help from children	“Dagiti annak ko ti tumulong a mangbayad kadagiti gastusen para iti agas ko”
	Daily needs support	“Isuda pay ti mangited kaniak iti kuarta a paggatang iti bagas, kape, ken asukar nga kasapulak”
1.2 Emotional and physical care	Care from family	“Isuda ti pamilya nga mangay-aywan kaniak”
	Emotional support	“Diak maproblemaan ta addada nga sidadaan nga mangtulong kaniak”
2. Senior Citizen Pension as Support 2.1 Pension assistance	Pension support	“Kasta met nga dakkal met ti tulong kaniak ti pensyon ko kas senior citizen”
	Source of medicine budget	“Us usarek ti pensyonko a manggatang dagiti agas ko”
3. Community and Barangay Support 3.1 Barangay and clinic services	Access to clinic	“Mapmapanak iti klinika tapno makaala iti agas para iti nangato a presyon ti darak”
	Community programs	“Makisalsali nak kadagiti programa iti barangay”

3.2 Religious and social community	Church activities	“Ti relihiyoso komunidad ket mangted kaniak iti naespirituan a suporta”
	Socialization	“Dagiti programa ti barangay ket mangted kadakami iti gundaway a maki ammammo met kadagiti kapada mi nga senior citizen”
4. Lack of Community Resources 4.1 Insufficient medical support	No medicine available	“Kunada nga awanen ti maited da nga agas”
	Lack of barangay support	“Kinyak Awan ti naawat ko nga suporta manipud idiyay barangay mi nga tulong”
	Limited income Dependence on self	“Gapu iti dayta, saan nga umanay ti maur urnong ko nga kwarta”

Understanding the Coping Mechanisms of Senior Citizens in Dealing with the Problems of Aging

Coping mechanisms of senior citizens in dealing with the problems of aging indicate the presence of various factors including the physical, emotional, social, and economic elements that define their lives. While the process of aging poses many challenges for individuals, seniors cope in various ways through the use of family support systems, spirituality, physical activities, health management, and community facilities. In this study, the researcher adopts a phenomenological approach towards understanding the lives of senior citizens and coping mechanisms utilized by them.

Objective 1: Aging-Related Challenges Experienced by Senior Citizens

Physical Health Decline, Sensory and Cognitive Impairment, Emotional and Psychological Distress, Financial and Healthcare Resource Limitations

These lived experiences show a situation of slow physical, sensory, emotional, and financial instability as aging is associated with increasing health constraints and lowering quality of life. First of all, the theme on physical health instability shows how the worsening physical states emerge in people's lives. It can be illustrated in such statements, for instance, as “My body is slowly getting weak and frail,” and “There are fewer things that I am able to perform due to my weakened physical state.” In other words, aging is perceived by the interviewees as a phenomenon of physical weakening that restricts them in performing regular activities. Body pain and the symptoms of arthritis, as expressed by such statements as “Arthritis and pains in joints,” and “Various kinds of physical discomfort such as back ache and body pains,” suggest how chronic diseases add to the process of physical weakening and exhaustion. In addition to that, various chronic illnesses, including high blood pressure, kidney diseases, and tuberculosis, make the process even worse as can be seen in such statements as “Kidney problems are what trouble me most,” and “High blood pressure troubles me a lot.” Another important problem that was identified by some individuals included movement. This is evident from phrases such as, “Now I am finding it difficult to walk,” and “I cannot walk very long distances,” meaning that as one ages, they become less

independent and active. Moreover, the decline in sensory and cognitive abilities indicates the weakening of the physical senses and mental abilities of older people. For instance, the following statements show how sensory loss leads to communication problems: “Decline in eyesight and hearing ability” and “I find it difficult even with hearing.” There are also statements that show problems in memory such as “Memory losses like forgetting trivial things is frequent” and “The problem is memory loss.” Additionally, emotional and psychological difficulties provide evidence of the emotional strain caused by growing old and becoming sick. One of the recognized emotional difficulties is the fear of loneliness, which appears in phrases like “Fear of being alone,” and “There is fear of being alone without anyone accompanying us.” This indicates that the elderly suffer from emotional loneliness, and at the same time, they worry about depending on others because there is nobody else to assist them. In addition, stress and worry were expressed in phrases such as “I worry that I may have a sudden heart attack,” and “That just causes more worry and sadness.” This shows that the emotional problem of the elderly stems from health concerns, as well as the uncertainty about the future. Finally, the elderly face financial and resource problems, which intensify their struggles as they get older. The theme regarding lack of financial support explains that due to financial constraints, they cannot meet their basic requirements, as seen in phrases such as “I still cannot make ends meet even with my pension,” and “Sometimes, whatever I have is still not enough.” Another issue related with poor access was medicine and healthcare services as evidenced by the claims that “I did not get any medications or help from our local clinic,” and “They said there were none.” The point here is that poor availability of healthcare services prevents senior citizens from taking good care of their health issues. All things considered, the experiences of elderly people are affected by the interrelationship between various aspects of aging.

Objective 2: Coping Strategies Employed by Senior Citizens

Engagement in Physical Activities, Spiritual and Religious Practices, Family and Social Interaction, and Health Maintenance Practices

Coping mechanisms used by senior citizens illustrate how older adults cope with issues related to aging in terms of physical, spiritual, social, and health behaviors. First, the theme on being involved in physical activities indicates that engaging in exercises helps maintain physical and psychological well-being of senior citizens. For instance, statements such as, “I rest and do exercise such as walking and gardening,” and “These gentle movements help relieve the pain in my body,” indicate that physical exercise is considered helpful for easing body pain and keeping strong. In addition, being involved in such activities as gardening or farming, shown in the statement, “I go to our farm to plant vegetables,” and “Working in the farm keeps me busy,” illustrates that exercising provides an individual not only with physical exercises, but also with activities that are meaningful for him/her. Also, doing housework and some other minor things can be seen in their attempts to stay physically active. Spiritual and religious practices appear to be important ways for coping with challenges for senior citizens. Church activities also make the seniors find peace as seen in this theme; “Serving in the church gives us peace and faith.” Such responses show that religious activities enable senior citizens deal with fear, loneliness, and insecurity through building their faith and emotional state. Socialization and family connections are also very important as far as coping up with experiences is concerned. Family bonding and support is another prominent theme that reveals the importance of having emotional connections and groups. This can be seen from such statements as “Spending time with siblings and grandchildren makes us happy and gives us peace,” “It gives me joy and a reason to live if I am able to take care of my grandchildren.” It shows that family ties offer seniors some comfort, happiness, and sense of meaning in their lives. Participation in community activities makes them cope better with loneliness since “community interactions give us joy and minimize our loneliness” and “We interact with our families and friends so as not to be lonely.” Last but not least, senior citizens’ health maintenance practices provide examples of how they make active steps to cope with their health-related issues and sustain their well-being. For example, medication compliance was another important practice mentioned in the interviews, and such comments as “I always take my medicine as prescribed by my doctor” and “I always take my maintenance medicine due to my high blood pressure” revealed participants’ understanding that they should comply with their doctors’ prescriptions

to keep under control chronic diseases. Additionally, resting and relaxing activities can be seen as an effective way to cope with certain problems, as expressed by “I give myself rest because I need my body to recuperate” and “I try to relax as much as possible through activities that make me happy.” Thus, sufficient sleep and relaxing activities are beneficial in dealing with stress, restoring energy, and improving their lives in general.

Objective 3: Most Effective Coping Strategies in Improving Quality of Life

Family Support as Source of Strength, Spiritual Well-being, Active Lifestyle and Productivity, and Medical and Health Practices

The most effective coping skills used in enhancing the quality of life of senior citizens emphasize the role of emotional support, spirituality, engagement, and health care in ensuring a healthy life at an elderly age. The topic on family support as a source of strength emphasizes the value of family members who give emotional comfort, happiness, and encouragement to their elderly members. Comments such as, "Family gives love and care," and "My children assist me" show that the support from families helps in reducing the suffering caused by growing old because it gives a sense of safety and emotional assurance. Enjoying time with the grandchildren is another source of happiness, which can be captured from the statements, "Time with grandchildren brings happiness" and "I am not lonely." Moreover, spiritual well-being can be considered another efficient coping mechanism employed by seniors. Phrases such as “Praying makes me feel at peace with God,” and “Through prayer, I feel strong and brave,” indicate that spirituality is important for providing emotional stability, hope, and inner peace despite all physical and emotional difficulties faced during aging. It seems that faith and prayer are important for increasing strength and coping with fear and stress linked with senior age. An active way of living and productivity are also important factors that may improve the lives of seniors. Farming and gardening, as evidenced by phrases such as “Growing vegetables improves my life,” and “Agricultural work strengthens the body,” are effective methods of enhancing physical fitness and productivity of seniors. The importance of being physically active lies in helping the aging person not only retain their physical capability but also in inspiring them mentally and emotionally. Exercise became another vital strategy, according to the seniors' testimonies, since, as they noted, "Regular exercise keeps me physically stable and reduces pain." Hence, it could be concluded that exercising is essential in ensuring the physical movement and health of aging people by reducing their pain levels. Finally, various medical and health practices become important coping strategies that help senior citizens cope with health issues and improve their state. The theme of medicine and treatment could be seen in quotes like, "Taking my medicine helps relieve the pain," and "This help relieve my discomfort and make me relax." Thus, it could be argued that taking proper medication plays an important role for senior citizens in relieving pain and improving their sleeping pattern. This, consequently, would result in enhanced physical health and increased comfort. Overall, the research results prove that healthy family relationships, spiritual practice, physical exercises, and medical treatment become effective coping strategies, contributing to better well-being and greater satisfaction from life.

Objective 4: Effects of Community Resources and Family Support on Coping

Importance of Family Support, Senior Citizen Pension as Support, Community and Barangay Support, and Lack of Community Resources

Community resources and family assistance on coping with senior citizens show that interpersonal relationships, government aid, and community resources greatly affect their capacity to cope with daily necessities and other health problems. The theme of the importance of family assistance suggests that families still play an important part in providing financial and emotional assistance to seniors. This is shown through the statements, “My children are helping me pay for my medicine expenses,” and “My children give money for rice, coffee, and sugar.” This shows that financial assistance from one’s own family members is important to address some of the necessities as well as medical issues. Moreover, emotional and physical assistance from families contribute greatly to the psychological well-being of individuals; as exemplified by the statements, “They are the people who are

helping take care of me,” and “I feel safe and happy knowing that they are there for me.” Furthermore, senior citizen pension becomes a key element of government support, which assists the elders in meeting their needs concerning their day-to-day existence and good health. For instance, statements like “My senior citizen pension is a great help,” and “My pension allows me to buy medicines” imply that the supply of such kind of support is very effective in terms of providing financial aid to meet primary expenses, especially related to medical care and buying of essential medicines.

In addition, community and barangay support were found to be another important cause of coping skills among elderly people. First, “I go to the clinic to obtain medication for my high blood” reveals that there are opportunities within communities for accessing services provided by local clinics to get essential medicines. Second, participation in local community programs may be viewed as an important cause of coping with hardships, and thus “We participate in programs in the barangay.” In addition, the involvement of senior citizens in the religious and social communities proves useful because of the benefits that it brings to them emotionally; “Religious community helps spiritually.” However, insufficient community resources continue to pose a challenge that slow down their capacity to cope. Inadequate health facilities are illustrated in phrases such as “They claim it is not available,” suggesting a problem of inadequate medication and services. Similarly, inadequate finances are noted from statements such as “What I earn is not enough,” and “I depend only on myself,” meaning that some older people have financial problems and do not receive enough outside help. The challenges limit their ability to access resources fairly. Generally, the results indicate that although family support, pensions, and other community facilities improve coping skills among older people, their lack makes them less capable.

Summary of the Findings

The findings showed that senior citizens face different challenges arising from old age. These include physical challenges, sensory and cognitive impairments, emotional and psychological challenges, and financial challenges. Some physical challenges may include being weak, suffering from chronic diseases, experiencing pain in the body, and mobility problems. Sensory and cognitive challenges included poor eyesight, difficulty in hearing things, and memory loss among others. Senior citizens have been found to suffer from loneliness, being anxious about their health status, and lacking enough financial resources for health care expenses. To cope with their challenges, senior citizens use a number of methods. The first method is being engaged in different types of exercises like walking, doing gardening, farming, and light housework. The second method includes engaging in spiritual exercises, which entail praying to God and attending religious programs. Family support and socialization are other methods, through which senior citizens reduce loneliness and improve their emotional stability. Proper medication, sufficient sleep, and relaxation also enhance good health among senior citizens. Family support was revealed as one of the most effective means to enhance the quality of life for senior citizens. Family members provide a sense of comfort for seniors in the form of care, love, money, companionship, and other services. Spiritual welfare, participation in productive activities, and appropriate management of one’s health were also discovered as factors that improve their quality of life by making them resilient and healthy. On the other hand, family support, pensions for senior citizens, and community resources have been recognized to have positive effects on their coping mechanism. The financial support of families and pensions will cater to their medical costs and requirements, while community resources, medical assistance, and religious services will enable them to socialize and access proper health care facilities. Nevertheless, lack of community resources, medical assistance, and insufficient money have been found as hindrances to their coping mechanism in life. Over all, the study emphasizes that while aging involves multiple physical, emotional, and financial challenges, older adults exhibit resilience through diverse coping mechanisms. Strong family ties, spiritual faith, active lifestyles, health maintenance practices, and accessible support systems are essential in helping them maintain their well-being and improve their quality of life.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that senior citizens face several barriers during their aging process. These barriers include physical problems, problems related to hearing, seeing, and remembering things, emotional challenges, and financial issues. Physical problems include diseases, physical weakness, restricted movement, and other factors that may hinder their day-to-day life. The problems of hearing, seeing, and remembering are psychological problems and require adequate care and attention for managing them efficiently. Emotional problems may result due to depression, anxiety, and other factors. Similarly, senior citizens face problems related to finances. Despite facing different problems and issues, senior citizens adopt several coping mechanisms. These coping mechanisms include using the support of their family members, taking part in religious activities, leading a healthy lifestyle, and staying active whenever possible. Senior citizens use their family's support system to overcome the difficulties faced by them and lead an independent lifestyle. Apart from this, they take part in spiritual activities, which make them strong emotionally and help them gain hope. The findings also highlight the important role of family support, senior citizen pension and community resources in helping older adults to cope with the challenges of aging. Family often provides emotional, physical and financial support, and pensions and community programs help with daily needs and healthcare costs. However, a few seniors still suffer from limited resources, poor medical services and financial struggles. The study shows that older adults are resilient and can adapt to the difficulties they face, but stronger family support, better healthcare services and improved community programs are necessary to enhance their well-being and quality of life.

Recommendations

For Government

1. Ensure better access to healthcare facilities by making medicines, routine health examinations, and consultations readily available to senior citizens.
2. Develop health programs in the communities focusing on the prevention and management of diseases such as high blood pressure, arthritis, kidney failure, and others related to the age group.
3. Create health programs promoting physical fitness and mobility among senior citizens, thus helping reduce their physical deterioration.
4. Offer health programs to deal with the problems associated with loneliness, anxiety, stress, and other emotions affecting the senior population.
5. Develop more programs to assist the senior citizens in meeting their basic requirements through financial assistance.

For Senior Citizens

1. Participate in activities involving physical exercises such as walking, gardening, and other exercises suitable for senior citizens.
2. Engage with spiritual and religious programs that offer emotional peace and social interactions.
3. Focus on strengthening ties with the families of senior citizens.
4. Engage in community activities as well as join organizations formed by senior citizens.
5. Participate in health education sessions emphasizing adherence to medicine intake, healthy habits, and self-care.

For Future Researchers:

1. Create a healthy aging program that would address all the physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and economic needs of senior citizens.

2. Investigate different strategies by which older adults can be motivated to continue being productive through gardening, livelihood projects, and volunteer work.
3. Study how senior-friendly environments can be created so that they could be conducive for daily life.
4. Continue studying policies and programs that guarantee the rights of senior citizens.
5. Perform more studies about aging in order to enhance current programs and develop effective interventions for older people.

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