

When Home Becomes a Dream: Unveiling the Lived Worlds of Orphaned High School Students in Tacloban City

Bianca Nicole Bermudo^{1*}, Terry Aaron Kaehr¹, Lynard Loreto¹, Pol Francis Cantanero¹, Mark Reyven Ojales¹, Christine Sarvida¹, Rojhen Lou Orocay¹, Cyjeve Egonio¹, Chenchienilla Quiza¹, Norielle Villamor¹, Nathalie Mae Maceda¹, Jolo Bulante¹, Ryan Caspe¹, Enjie Soyosa¹, Ramil Tabuclao¹, Jyridkim Karl Paclita¹, Edwald Tudor Sabalza¹, Elmer Senado Jr.¹, Mark Joevel Buante¹

¹*Sto. Niño Senior High School*

*bermudonicole6@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City during the School Year 2025–2026. It aimed to understand their everyday academic and personal experiences, the challenges they encountered in the absence of parental support, their coping strategies, and their perceptions of home within their present living conditions. Using a qualitative research design, specifically the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the study focused on capturing the authentic voices and meanings drawn from the participants' real-life experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and

documentation, allowing an in-depth exploration of their emotional, social, and academic realities. The findings revealed that orphaned students experienced emotional struggles such as sadness, loneliness, and longing for parental care, along with practical challenges including balancing school responsibilities and household duties, limited financial resources, and emotional stress. Despite these difficulties, the participants demonstrated resilience by employing coping strategies such as seeking emotional support from peers, guardians, and teachers, engaging in prayer and self-reflection, and maintaining focus on their educational goals. The study further showed that students perceived “home” not only as a physical place but as a source of emotional safety, belonging, and acceptance. Moreover, the results highlighted the transformative role of education in the lives of orphaned learners, as it strengthened their self-confidence, nurtured hope, and served as a pathway toward a better future. The findings underscore the importance of supportive school environments, community involvement, and psychosocial interventions in addressing the academic and emotional needs of orphaned students. These insights provide valuable guidance for educators, school leaders, and policymakers in developing programs and support systems that promote resilience, inclusion, and well-being among orphaned high school students.

Keywords: *Orphaned Students, Lived Experiences, Coping Strategies, Qualitative Research, Phenomenology, Resilience, Secondary Education*

INTRODUCTION

Home is often the first place where adolescents feel safe, cared for, and supported. It provides emotional security, a space to rest after school, and a foundation that helps students focus on learning and plan for their future (Calayan et al., 2018). For many students, a stable home environment encourages academic engagement, social confidence, and hopefulness. In contrast, orphaned adolescents—those who have lost one or both parents—often lack this foundation. For them, home may exist only as a memory or a dream they long to achieve (World Without Orphans, 2025). The absence of parental support can affect their daily routines, emotional well-being, and school performance (Escueta et al., 2014).

The Philippine context further complicates this reality. Many families face poverty, limited access to education, and lingering effects of past disasters, making it harder for children to grow up in stable homes (Giri et al., 2022). Tacloban City, for instance, suffered extensive destruction during Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, displacing thousands of families and leaving children without parental care or safe shelter (Better Care Network, 2023; Stensland, 2014). Even years later, some communities in Tacloban continue to struggle with unstable housing, economic challenges, and limited access to essential social services, all of which directly affect adolescents' schooling and daily lives (Giri et al., 2022).

While research has documented the effects of orphanhood and disaster on younger children, there is limited attention on high school students in post-disaster settings. Studies in low- and middle-income countries indicate that orphans experience emotional distress, cognitive challenges, and lower school engagement compared to non-orphaned peers (Escueta et al., 2014; Ntuli, Mokgatle, & Madiba, 2020). These challenges include sadness, fear of the future, and low self-confidence, which can affect both learning and social relationships (Ntuli et al., 2020).

In Tacloban City, most post-Yolanda research has focused on community recovery, housing, and general child welfare, with little attention to the lived experiences of older adolescents navigating education without parental support (Voices from Communities Relocated to Tacloban North, 2021). Moreover, while organizations such as SOS Children's Villages Philippines provide family-like care and educational support, there is a lack of localized research documenting how orphaned high school students experience daily life, schooling, and emotional challenges (SOS Children's Villages Philippines, 2025). This leaves a significant gap in understanding how these adolescents cope, manage challenges, and perceive the concept of home amid their circumstances.

This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the lived experiences of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City. Entitled "When Home Becomes a Dream: Unveiling the Lived Worlds of Orphaned High School Students in Tacloban City," the study adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to describe the students' daily lives, schooling experiences, coping strategies, and perceptions of home. By centering on their voices, the study seeks to provide insights that can guide educators, social workers, and policymakers in designing responsive programs that address both academic and psychosocial needs.

Understanding these experiences is crucial because high school represents a formative stage where adolescents prepare for adulthood, make educational and career decisions, and develop personal identities (Escueta et al., 2014). Without localized research, interventions risk overlooking the unique challenges of orphaned adolescents in post-disaster contexts. By documenting and describing their lived worlds, this

study contributes to knowledge that supports inclusive educational practices, targeted psychosocial interventions, and community programs responsive to the realities of vulnerable youth. In line with this need to better understand their lived realities, this study aims to describe the lived experiences of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City as they navigate their academic and personal lives. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do orphaned high school students describe their everyday academic and personal experiences?
2. What challenges do they experience while pursuing their education in the absence of parental support?
3. What coping strategies do they utilize in dealing with these challenges?
4. How do they describe their experiences of “home” within their present living conditions?
5. What forms of government support do they need in relation to their situation?

Through these questions, the study intends to generate a deeper understanding of the realities, struggles, and coping mechanisms of orphaned high school students. Ultimately, the findings may provide meaningful insights that can inform inclusive educational practices, psychosocial support programs, and responsive government interventions designed to address the needs of vulnerable adolescents in post-disaster communities.

METHODS

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological design, grounded in the interpretive paradigm. Unlike transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on pure description, hermeneutic phenomenology emphasizes the interpretation of meanings individuals ascribe to their lived experiences (Heidegger, 1962; van Manen, 1990). The approach recognizes that understanding is shaped by pre-existing knowledge and context; thus, the researcher engaged in reflexive interpretation, acknowledging personal assumptions while exploring participants’ narratives. This design enabled an in-depth exploration of how orphaned high school students in Tacloban City understood and constructed their sense of “home” after losing one or both parents. The study focused on interpreting the meanings embedded in participants’ stories, considering their social, cultural, and personal contexts. Using van Manen’s (1990) reflective approach, the researcher analyzed the students’ narratives to uncover insights into their struggles, coping mechanisms, and resilience. Ultimately, the design provided contextually grounded findings that can inform educators, policymakers, and communities in strengthening support systems for orphaned adolescents.

Participants of the Study

The participants were eight double-orphaned high school students, aged 12 to 18 years, residing at SOS Children’s Village Tacloban. They represented a particularly vulnerable population whose experiences offered insights into challenges, coping strategies, and academic and personal development in the absence of parental support. Participants were selected purposively to ensure they possessed relevant experiences to the research questions and could provide rich narratives. The selection process involved consultation

with barangay councilors and social workers. Participants met the inclusion criteria of being double orphans, aged 12–18, and willing to openly share their experiences during interviews. Ethical considerations were observed, with informed consent obtained from legal guardians and assent from participants, ensuring voluntary participation and protection of privacy.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Barangay 94 Tigbao, Tacloban City, specifically at SOS Children’s Village Tacloban, a residential facility providing structured care for orphaned and vulnerable children. Tacloban City, a highly urbanized regional center in Eastern Visayas, is known for its commitment to education and post-disaster recovery, particularly following Super Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan) in 2013. SOS Children’s Village Tacloban was chosen for its supportive residential environment, allowing the researcher to engage participants in a natural context. The locale provided rich contextual grounding to understand how orphaned students interpreted their sense of “home” and navigated daily life, schooling, and psychosocial challenges.

Instrument of the Study

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide, designed to explore participants’ lived experiences. The instrument drew on established qualitative frameworks for adolescent well-being and resilience and was adapted to the study’s context and objectives. The guide included three parts: (1) demographic profile, including age, grade level, living situation, and parental circumstances; (2) general questions on experiences as orphaned students, daily routines, and perceptions of home; and (3) specific questions on challenges, coping strategies, support systems, and aspirations. The guide was reviewed by three expert validators—two qualitative research teachers and one language expert—for clarity, cultural sensitivity, and relevance. Since participants were native Waray speakers, the guide was translated into Waray-Waray and validated by a bilingual expert. Kendall’s Coefficient of Concordance (W) indicated a high validation score of 4.93, and minor revisions were applied before use.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected through a structured and ethical process. First, a transmittal letter was sent to barangay officials requesting approval to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researchers coordinated with barangay leaders, school officials, and community representatives to identify potential participants meeting the inclusion criteria. Next, participants’ qualifications—including age, double-orphaned status, residency, and willingness to participate—were verified. Purposive sampling was used to select 8 participants who could provide rich, meaningful data. The researchers personally met with each participant and their guardians to explain the study, expected participation, and ethical safeguards. Informed consent and assent were obtained, emphasizing voluntary participation and the right to withdraw without consequences. Interviews were scheduled at convenient times and conducted in private, comfortable settings to facilitate open discussion. Using the validated semi-structured guide, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews, which were audio-recorded with participants’ permission. After each interview, participants received small tokens of appreciation as a gesture of gratitude for their time and insights.

Throughout the process, all procedures were guided by ethical principles ensuring participants' rights, well-being, and confidentiality.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were repeatedly read for familiarization. Initial notes were taken to capture recurring ideas, emotions, and insights related to being orphaned. Second, key statements were identified and organized into initial codes, which were then grouped into patterns and categories. These categories were further developed into broader themes reflecting the core experiences and meanings in participants' narratives. Third, themes were reviewed and refined to ensure alignment with the data, resolving overlaps and ambiguities. Representative quotations were selected to support the themes, preserving authenticity. Triangulation was conducted through member checking and consultations with other educators familiar with the context. Finally, themes and sub-themes were presented in a dendrogram table, illustrating their relationships and supporting clarity in the analysis. Overall, the process ensured systematic, credible, and comprehensive interpretation of participants' lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Anonymity was maintained by using pseudonyms in transcripts, reports, and publications, and all identifying information was securely stored. Informed consent and guardian assent were obtained prior to participation, with participants fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights.

Verification of data was conducted through triangulation, including member checking and peer debriefing, to enhance credibility and reduce researcher bias. Proper citations were used throughout to maintain academic integrity. Recordings, transcripts, and field notes were stored on password-protected devices and locked cabinets accessible only to the researchers. After completion of the study, all data were securely destroyed. Additionally, an audit trail documenting all research activities, consent forms, letters, and field notes was maintained to ensure transparency and accountability.

By strictly adhering to these procedures, the study maintained the highest standards of ethical conduct while ensuring that the findings accurately reflected the lived experiences of orphaned high school students, providing meaningful insights for educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This presents the results and discussion of the study, exploring the lived experiences of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City. Also, this highlights the participants' perspectives on home, emotional experiences, coping strategies, and aspirations. Findings are supported by direct statements from the students and are interpreted in relation to relevant literature and the study's theoretical framework, providing a deeper understanding of their realities and resilience.

Lived Experiences of Orphaned High School Students in Their Everyday Academic and Personal Lives

This section explores the lived experiences of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City, focusing on three emergent themes: Structured Academic Engagement and Daily Routines, Emotional Adjustment and Perception of Living Situation, and Personal Growth, Responsibility, and Adaptation. These themes highlight how orphaned adolescents navigate school life, manage emotions, and develop life skills within the context of their unique circumstances.

Theme 1: Structured Academic Engagement and Daily Routines

The first theme captures how orphaned students maintain discipline, participate in school activities, and organize their daily lives. It reflects their efforts to follow school rules, engage with learning, and balance academic obligations with personal responsibilities.

Participants emphasized the importance of respecting teachers and following classroom expectations. For example, P1 shared, “*Kailangan hin... respeto... pakikinig... pagsunod sa mga patakaran.*” (It is necessary to... respect... listen... follow the rules.) [L29-31], highlighting the significance of classroom discipline. Similarly, P2 expressed, “*Pumapasok ako at nakikinig sa guro ko.*” (I attend class and listen to my teacher.) [L22-23], reinforcing the value of attentiveness in learning. In addition, when asked about favorite subjects, P1 said, “*Favorite subject ko is Math tapos Filipino.*” (My favorite subjects are Math and then Filipino.) [L33], demonstrating engagement in academic preferences. Moreover, participation in extracurricular activities was also highlighted, as one student noted, “*Mga activity like acting... pag drawing.*” (Activities like acting... and drawing.) [P3, L25], indicating involvement beyond the classroom. Regarding their daily routines, P3 stated, “*Umeskwela tas paguli trabaho naman amola higda.*” (I go to school, then when I get home, I work and rest.) [L23-24], showing a balance between academic responsibilities and personal life. Together, these responses collectively show that students actively engage in structured learning while maintaining personal routines.

The students’ statements reveal that structured engagement provides stability and predictability in their daily lives. Academic interests and consistent participation in school activities help foster a sense of purpose and belonging. Daily routines, including school attendance and home responsibilities, create a rhythm that supports their overall adjustment despite orphanhood.

This theme aligns with Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, which suggests that fulfillment of basic and psychological needs, such as safety and belonging, supports students’ motivation and achievement. Similarly, Rutter’s (1987) Resilience Theory explains that supportive environments, such as structured school routines, foster resilience among adolescents facing adversity. Global studies indicate that orphaned learners who maintain engagement in educational and extracurricular activities demonstrate better coping and academic performance (Cho et al., 2017; Makuza et al., 2024). These findings highlight the critical role of structured engagement in promoting stability, skill development, and academic growth among orphaned students.

In conclusion, Structured Academic Engagement and Daily Routines provide orphaned students with structure, purpose, and opportunities for growth. Consistent participation in academic and

extracurricular activities, combined with adherence to routines, contributes to their resilience and emotional stability. Despite parental loss, these students demonstrate commitment to learning and responsibility, emphasizing the protective role of school-based structures in their daily lives.

Theme 2: Emotional Adjustment and Perception of Living Situation

The second theme highlights the emotional experiences of orphaned students and their perceptions of institutional care. It captures how they navigate feelings of happiness, sadness, and acceptance while adapting to life without parents.

Participants shared mixed emotions regarding their current living arrangements. For instance, P1 expressed, “*Masaya... dahil napunta ako dito.*” (I am happy... because I ended up here.) [L38], indicating a sense of contentment with their placement. In addition, P3 added, “*Naaaruga kami, naaalagaan kami.*” (We are cared for, we are looked after.) [L29], emphasizing the feeling of being nurtured and supported. However, P4 reported, “*May kalungkutan... sometimes happy.*” (There is sadness... sometimes happy.) [L29], reflecting the coexistence of sadness and occasional happiness. Moreover, some students indicated acceptance of their circumstances, such as P8 who said, “*Okay man la... normal man la.*” (It’s okay... it’s normal.) [L68-69], demonstrating a level of adjustment to their situation. Collectively, these responses show the coexistence of positive and mixed emotions among orphaned learners, highlighting the complexity of their emotional experiences.

The students’ emotional narratives reveal a balance of positive feelings and occasional sadness. Gratitude for care and support from the institution coexists with moments of longing and melancholy. Overall, acceptance of their situation indicates an adaptive emotional response, reflecting resilience in the face of parental loss.

This theme is supported by Bowlby’s (1969) Attachment Theory, which underscores the significance of consistent caregiving in fostering emotional security. Even without parental figures, students develop attachment to caregivers, teachers, and peers, which mitigates feelings of loss. Studies by Cluver et al. (2020) and Kivumbi et al. (2019) similarly report that emotional and academic support strengthens orphaned adolescents’ coping mechanisms. Maslow’s (1943) framework also emphasizes that meeting belongingness needs promotes emotional stability and motivation. The students’ emotional adjustment illustrates the dynamic interplay between institutional support and personal resilience, as described in Rutter’s (1987) model.

In summary, Emotional Adjustment and Perception of Living Situation reflect the orphaned students’ capacity to navigate mixed emotions while appreciating care and support. Happiness, gratitude, sadness, and acceptance coexist as part of their emotional development. Their narratives reveal the importance of consistent care and supportive relationships in fostering emotional resilience, which is crucial for academic engagement and personal growth.

Theme 3: Personal Growth, Responsibility, and Adaptation

The third theme focuses on how orphaned students develop life skills, independence, and values while adjusting to life without parents. It highlights their learning of practical skills, formation of respect, and adaptation to institutional living.

Participants emphasized learning life skills and independence. For example, P2 stated, “*Natuto akong gumawa ng gawaing bahay.*” (I learned to do household chores.) [L32-33], illustrating the development of practical skills. Similarly, P5 shared, “*Dre maaram magluto... maaram naak magluto.*” (I know how to cook... I already know how to cook.) [L20], further highlighting the acquisition of essential household abilities. In addition, P4 highlighted personal independence: “*Naging independent ako.*” (I became independent.) [L32], showing growth in self-reliance. Moreover, P6 emphasized value formation: “*Respeto sa mga matatanda.*” (Respect for elders.) [L42-43], reflecting the development of ethical and social awareness. Regarding adaptation to orphanhood, P8 mentioned, “*Nasanay naman nako dumako ngadi.*” (I am already used to living here.) [L68-69], and P7 added, “*Waray, there’s no need to change my life.*” (No, there’s no need to change my life.) [L67], indicating successful adjustment and acceptance of their circumstances. Collectively, these statements show growth, responsibility, and successful adaptation, highlighting the students’ evolving independence and resilience.

The participants’ responses demonstrate that orphaned students actively acquire life skills, independence, and ethical values. They adapt to their living environments, take responsibility for daily tasks, and internalize social norms. Such experiences foster maturity and self-reliance, which support both personal development and academic engagement.

The findings align with Maslow’s (1943) growth needs, suggesting that achieving competence and self-actualization is possible despite the absence of parents. Rutter’s (1987) Resilience Theory further explains that exposure to supportive environments and responsibilities cultivates coping skills and autonomy. Global studies show that orphaned adolescents in institutional care often develop practical life skills and adaptive behaviors (Masten, 2001; Ismailova et al., 2025). The emphasis on respect and household duties reflects cultural values of *pakikisama* and *utang na loob*, consistent with Filipino social norms (Garo-Santiago, 2009; Alampay, 2024).

In conclusion, Personal Growth, Responsibility, and Adaptation illustrates the orphaned students’ ability to cultivate independence, ethical values, and life skills. Their adaptive strategies demonstrate resilience and readiness to manage personal and academic challenges. These experiences highlight how institutional care, combined with personal initiative, enables students to navigate orphanhood while fostering holistic development.

Overall, the lived experiences of orphaned high school students reveal a dynamic interplay between structured routines, emotional adaptation, and personal growth. While academic engagement provides stability and purpose, emotional support and the development of life skills enhance resilience. Collectively, these findings suggest that supportive environments—both institutional and relational—are essential for fostering the well-being, independence, and holistic development of orphaned learners in Tacloban City.

Challenges Encountered by Orphaned Students in Pursuing Education in the Absence of Parental Support

This section presents the challenges experienced by orphaned high school students in pursuing education without parental support. Three emergent themes were identified: Financial Hardship as an Educational Barrier, Social Stigma and Discrimination, and Reliance on Institutional Support and Identified

Resource Gaps. These themes highlight the financial, social, and institutional factors shaping the students' educational experiences and coping mechanisms.

Theme 1: Financial Hardship as an Educational Barrier

The first theme focuses on the economic challenges orphaned students face due to the absence of parental support. It captures how students struggle to secure funds for school needs, take up work to sustain their education, and seek financial solutions independently or through institutional support.

Participants emphasized money as a primary barrier to education. For instance, P4 stated, “*Actually kuan hiya makuri hiya. Number one nala talaga dida, ahmm... Money!*” (Actually, it's really hard. Number one, it's really money!) [L35], highlighting the significant role of financial constraints. In relation to working to fund their education, P4 also shared, “*Gintratrabaho ko. Gintratrabaho ko ha akon lola.*” (I worked for it. I worked for my grandmother.) [L38], demonstrating personal effort and responsibility. Similarly, P5 described independent efforts: “*Namimiling hin paraan.*” (Looking for ways.) [L26], reflecting initiative in overcoming financial challenges. On the other hand, some participants acknowledged institutional financial cushioning. For example, P3 remarked, “*Afford naman ng SOS yun.*” (SOS can afford that.) [L39], and P7 added, “*Hmm waray man problema kay adi ha SOS.*” (Hmm, there is really no problem because SOS is here.) [L82], illustrating that organizational support alleviates some financial burdens. Collectively, these responses indicate that while financial hardship remains a primary challenge, institutional support mitigates its impact for some students.

The participants' responses reveal that financial difficulties are a central barrier for orphaned students, often requiring them to work or seek solutions independently. However, institutional support, such as that provided by SOS, helps buffer these challenges and ensures continuity in education. Financial security within the institution reduces stress and enables students to focus on learning and personal development.

This finding aligns with Maslow's (1943) framework, which emphasizes that unmet physiological and safety needs hinder academic motivation and growth. Rutter's (1987) Resilience Theory suggests that supportive environmental structures, such as institutional financial assistance, help students overcome adversity. Studies globally (Boris et al., 2014; Masten, 2001) indicate that financial hardship adversely affects cognitive and educational outcomes for orphaned adolescents. Locally, research by Aguilar et al. (2023) highlights that institutional support is critical in enabling orphaned learners to access education and reduce the burden of economic vulnerability.

In conclusion, Financial Hardship as an Educational Barrier demonstrates that while orphaned students face significant economic challenges, institutional interventions can significantly reduce these barriers. The combination of personal resourcefulness and organizational support ensures continued access to education and promotes resilience. Addressing financial difficulties is therefore essential for sustaining the academic engagement and overall well-being of orphaned learners.

Theme 2: Social Stigma and Discrimination

The second theme highlights the social challenges orphaned students encounter, including experiences of marginalization and othering. It also reflects the protective factors that allow some students to avoid discrimination and maintain a sense of normalcy within school settings.

Participants shared experiences of being looked down upon as orphans. For instance, P3 stated, “*Opo na ramdaman kona madalas inaapi kaming ampon.*” (Yes, I have already felt it often—we orphans are being looked down upon.) [L43], highlighting the reality of social stigma. In addition, P4 added, “Ahh sometimes.” (Ahh sometimes.) [L42], suggesting that these experiences are intermittent but still present. However, protective factors were also noted. For example, P8 mentioned, “*Private la ito, dbwal ito itakan na kami orphan so pagkafto ha school notmal la waray ka igyayakan na bisan ano ano.*” (It is private and they do not label us as orphans, so going to school is normal.) [L80-82], and P2 expressed, “*Wala panaman.*” (There is none.) [L43], indicating that some institutional arrangements and school environments help shield students from discrimination. Collectively, these statements suggest that while some students experience stigma, supportive school settings can mitigate its impact.

The participants’ responses reveal that social stigma and discrimination remain a challenge for some orphaned students, affecting their sense of inclusion and self-esteem. However, private or supportive school environments provide protection and normalize their experience, allowing students to engage in education without feeling marginalized. Institutional and social measures are critical in buffering the negative effects of orphanhood-related stigma.

Bowlby’s (1969) Attachment Theory highlights the importance of secure social bonds for emotional well-being, which may be disrupted when orphaned adolescents face marginalization. Resilience Theory (Rutter, 1987) emphasizes the role of protective environments, explaining why students in supportive school’s experience less social stigma. International studies show that orphaned learners who receive peer acceptance and institutional support report higher self-esteem and engagement (Cluver et al., 2020; Makuza et al., 2024). In the Philippine context, cultural values such as *pakikisama* reinforce the need for inclusive and supportive peer relationships to mitigate social challenges (Garo-Santiago, 2009).

In conclusion, Social Stigma and Discrimination demonstrates that orphaned students may experience marginalization, yet protective school environments and anonymity significantly reduce these challenges. Ensuring supportive peer and institutional relationships is vital for fostering emotional security, self-esteem, and uninterrupted educational engagement. The findings underscore the importance of inclusive educational practices for orphaned adolescents.

Theme 3: Reliance on Institutional Support and Identified Resource Gaps

The third theme explores how orphaned students depend on institutions to meet their educational needs and identifies areas where support may still be lacking. It highlights both satisfaction with institutional provisions and limitations arising from the absence of family support.

Participants emphasized satisfaction with institutional support. For instance, P3 stated, “*Wala namang kulang, wala naman kulang kung ano ang kailangan ko nabibigay naman ng SOS.*” (There is nothing lacking—whatever I need, SOS provides it.) [L46-47], highlighting the comprehensiveness of the

care provided. In addition, P1 added, “*Ginhahatag na ng atanan.*” (Everything is already given.) [L71], and P5 remarked, “*Kompleto na ako.*” (I already have everything complete.) [L35], further emphasizing the adequacy of institutional assistance. However, some noted gaps in family support. For example, P4 shared, “*It kulang la ha akon is ano pagsuport hit ak family ha akon pagschool. Labi na kakulian it kwarta.*” (What I lack is family support for my schooling. What is especially difficult is money.) [L45-46]. Conversely, P1 reported, “*Waray, waray’k pagsubok.*” (None, I have not experienced any challenges.), suggesting that not all students perceive challenges in this area. Overall, these responses indicate that while institutional care meets most needs, the absence of family support continues to pose potential gaps.

The participants’ statements reveal a high reliance on institutional support for educational and personal needs. While institutions like SOS fulfill most requirements, the lack of family financial support remains a concern for some learners. Overall, institutional provisions significantly mitigate challenges arising from orphanhood, allowing students to focus on education and personal development.

This theme aligns with Maslow’s (1943) emphasis on meeting basic and psychological needs as a foundation for growth and learning. Rutter’s (1987) Resilience Theory highlights the protective effect of supportive institutional environments, explaining students’ adaptive responses despite family absence. Studies globally (Ismailova et al., 2025; Cho et al., 2017) indicate that institutional care can successfully meet educational and life skill needs, though permanent attachment may be lacking. Philippine research further confirms that institutional support improves school attendance, academic achievement, and well-being among orphaned learners (Aguilar et al., 2023).

In conclusion, Reliance on Institutional Support and Identified Resource Gaps highlights that institutions play a crucial role in fulfilling the educational and personal needs of orphaned students. While family absence may leave some gaps, institutional provisions offer stability, resources, and continuity in learning. These findings underscore the importance of robust institutional support systems for orphaned adolescents in navigating education without parental guidance.

Overall, orphaned high school students face multiple challenges in pursuing education without parental support, including financial hardship, social stigma, and the absence of familial assistance. Institutional support, particularly through SOS, mitigates these challenges by providing resources, safety nets, and protective environments. Together, these findings demonstrate that supportive structures are essential for enabling orphaned learners to achieve educational success, foster resilience, and maintain well-being despite parental absence.

Coping Mechanisms and Support Orphaned High School Students Rely on to Manage Their Challenges

This section explores the coping mechanisms and support systems that orphaned high school students utilize to manage challenges arising from the absence of parental care. Four emergent themes were identified: Internal Coping Strategies, Social Support Systems, Organizational and Community Support, and Personal Strengths Developed Over Time. These themes collectively highlight how students draw on personal motivation, social networks, institutional resources, and resilience to navigate educational, emotional, and social challenges.

Theme 1: Internal Coping Strategies

The first theme pertains to how students rely on personal resources to manage challenges. This includes self-motivation, goal orientation, faith-based practices, and emotional regulation strategies that allow them to persevere despite difficult circumstances.

Participants emphasized self-motivation and goal focus as key coping strategies. For example, P1 shared, “*Uh... it akon motivation haakon sarili... may tiwala ako ha akon sarili.*” (Uh... it is my motivation from myself... I have confidence in myself.) [L76], highlighting the importance of personal confidence. Similarly, P7 stated, “*Focus la ha goal, diri ko la pagdudriro.*” (I just focus on my goal; I won’t let myself falter.) [L114], reinforcing goal-oriented perseverance. In addition, faith-based coping was expressed by P4: “*Ahhh... mag pray la kan papa God.*” (Ahhh... I just pray to God.) [L49], showing reliance on spiritual support. Moreover, emotional regulation was demonstrated by P8: “*Ginpapalabay ko it pag isorya... nagigin strong ako.*” (I ignore negative talk... I become strong.) [L94-97], while P7 added acceptance: “*Waray manla haakon sanay naman ak.*” (It’s nothing new to me; I’m used to it.) [L98], reflecting adjustment to circumstances. Overall, these statements collectively indicate that students draw heavily on internal strategies to maintain emotional and academic stability.

The participants’ responses illustrate that internal coping strategies serve as an essential foundation for resilience among orphaned students. By maintaining self-motivation, relying on faith, and regulating emotional responses, learners are able to navigate challenges independently. These personal strategies reinforce their focus on academic goals and their ability to adapt to difficult circumstances.

This theme is consistent with Maslow’s (1943) assertion that self-motivation and higher-level psychological needs support growth and self-actualization. Resilience Theory (Rutter, 1987) explains how internal coping mechanisms help students adapt to adversity. Studies have also shown that orphaned adolescents who employ self-regulation, goal orientation, and faith-based practices demonstrate higher academic engagement and psychological well-being (Li et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2009). These strategies complement institutional and social support, allowing students to maintain emotional stability despite parental absence.

In conclusion, Internal Coping Strategies highlight the critical role of personal agency in managing challenges. Orphaned students use self-motivation, goal focus, prayer, and emotional regulation to persist in their academic and personal pursuits. Such internal strategies provide a foundation for resilience and facilitate adaptive responses in the absence of parental guidance.

Theme 2: Social Support Systems

The second theme emphasizes the role of family members, friends, peers, and guardians in helping orphaned students cope. Support is manifested through emotional encouragement, guidance, and inspiration that strengthens students’ ability to navigate challenges.

Participants acknowledged the importance of familial and peer support. For instance, P1 shared, “*Mga suporta ng mga kapatid ko tapos... pag... pagprays sa taas.*” (My siblings support me and also... prayers from above.) [L76], emphasizing the role of siblings and spiritual backing. Likewise, P2 said, “*Si*

god an nag bibigay lakas saken.” (It’s God who gives me strength.) [L64], further highlighting the encouragement provided by family. In addition, peer support was noted by P3: *“Sa mga kabiga ko madalas chinichill ko la ngan ginhahambing.”* (I usually just chill and talk with my friends.) [L50], and P7 simply stated, *“Classmates.”* (Classmates.) [L104], underscoring the value of friendships in daily life. Moreover, guardians and caregivers were highlighted by P6: *“Sa akon uncle tapos auntie ko.”* (I seek advice from my uncle and aunt.) [L78], while P3 added, *“May family kuan... nakaka open ko.”* (There’s a family here... I can open up.) [L60], reflecting the emotional safety provided by supportive adults. Overall, these responses show that social networks provide guidance, emotional support, and a sense of belonging.

The participants’ narratives indicate that social support systems serve as vital protective factors. Family members, peers, and institutional caregivers help students manage emotional stress, reinforce coping strategies, and encourage academic persistence. Social connections mitigate the effects of parental absence and foster a sense of belonging.

Bowlby’s (1969) Attachment Theory underscores the importance of secure relationships, which can be partially fulfilled through family, peers, and mentors. Resilience Theory (Rutter, 1987) highlights that supportive social networks enhance adaptation in adverse circumstances. Global studies show that emotional and academic support from caregivers and peers increases attendance and engagement among orphaned adolescents (Kivumbi et al., 2019; Cluver et al., 2020). Locally, Philippine studies emphasize the role of extended family and peer networks in nurturing resilience and emotional well-being among orphaned learners (Aguilar et al., 2023).

In conclusion, Social Support Systems are essential in helping orphaned students navigate challenges. Emotional guidance, advice, and encouragement from family, friends, and guardians strengthen their coping capacity. These social networks complement internal strategies, allowing learners to persist academically and emotionally despite parental absence.

Theme 3: Organizational and Community Support

The third theme explores the influence of school-based activities, leadership opportunities, and community or religious programs in supporting orphaned students. These structures provide opportunities for engagement, responsibility, and social integration.

Participants described their school involvement and community support. For example, P6 stated, *“Opo, uh like ha akon ha school... apil ako ha mga activities.”* (Yes, like in my school... I participate in activities.) [L82], indicating active engagement in school programs. Similarly, P8 shared, *“Nagin vice president han bug os nga school.”* (I became the vice president of the entire school.) [L104-105], highlighting leadership roles within the school setting. In contrast, community or religious programs received minimal engagement, as P1 noted, *“Oo... oo.”* (Yes... yes.) [L88], and P8 responded, *“Waray.”* (None.) [L116], showing limited participation outside school. Overall, these responses suggest that school-based support is more prominent than community involvement, offering structured opportunities for learning, leadership, and social participation.

The participants’ responses show that schools serve as critical platforms for engagement and skill development, particularly through participation in activities and leadership roles. Community and religious

programs, while available, appear to play a minor role. Organizational support, therefore, enhances social inclusion and responsibility, reinforcing other coping mechanisms.

This theme aligns with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy, wherein belongingness and esteem needs are met through participation and recognition in school. Rutter's (1987) Resilience Theory highlights that engagement in structured activities builds confidence and social competence. International studies confirm that school-based programs improve emotional and academic outcomes for orphaned adolescents (Makuza et al., 2024; Uwiringiyimana et al., 2025). Locally, Philippine studies also report that school involvement strengthens resilience and promotes psychosocial well-being among learners in vulnerable situations (Aguilar et al., 2023).

In conclusion, Organizational and Community Support demonstrates that schools play a vital role in providing structured engagement and leadership opportunities. While community participation is limited, school-based programs foster skill development, confidence, and social integration. Such support complements internal and social coping mechanisms, enabling orphaned students to navigate challenges more effectively.

Theme 4: Personal Strengths Developed Over Time

The fourth theme focuses on the individual resilience, independence, and optimism orphaned students cultivate through lived experiences. These personal strengths reflect growth from repeated exposure to challenges.

Participants highlighted personal growth and independence. For instance, P4 shared, "*Actually, tak motivation tak la ha akon... nagiging strong ako.*" (Actually, my motivation is from myself... I become strong.) [L63-64], emphasizing the role of self-motivation in building resilience. Likewise, P8 stated, "*Ako la... kaya ko ini.*" (I can handle this on my own.) [L94-97], demonstrating personal independence in managing challenges. Additionally, optimism was expressed by P3: "*Oo po naka tanggap po ako nun.*" (Yes, I accepted it.) [L56], reflecting a positive outlook toward their circumstances. Collectively, these statements indicate that personal strengths develop gradually, enabling students to respond positively to adversity.

The participants' responses demonstrate that orphaned students develop resilience, independence, and optimism over time. These personal strengths allow learners to confront challenges proactively, manage adversity, and maintain hope for the future. Such attributes reinforce the effectiveness of internal, social, and organizational coping mechanisms.

Maslow's (1943) framework emphasizes the importance of self-actualization and personal growth, which aligns with the development of personal strengths among orphaned adolescents. Rutter's (1987) Resilience Theory explains that adaptive capacities, including independence and optimism, emerge from interaction with supportive environments and repeated coping experiences. Global and local studies demonstrate that orphaned adolescents cultivate personal strengths as a response to adversity, which supports academic persistence and psychosocial well-being (Masten, 2001; Aguilar et al., 2023).

In conclusion, Personal Strengths Developed Over Time highlight the emergence of resilience, independence, and optimism in orphaned students. These qualities empower them to overcome challenges, reinforce other coping strategies, and foster personal growth. The development of personal strengths ensures that learners are better equipped to navigate educational, emotional, and social obstacles.

Overall, orphaned high school students rely on a combination of internal strategies, social networks, institutional support, and personal strengths to manage the challenges they face. Internal coping, family and peer support, school-based engagement, and the gradual development of resilience collectively help students achieve emotional stability and academic persistence. These findings highlight the dynamic interplay of personal, social, and organizational factors that foster adaptive coping and holistic development among orphaned learners.

Meaning of Home, Emotional Experiences, and Aspirations of Orphaned Students

This section presents the lived experiences of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City, focusing on the meaning of home, their emotional experiences, and aspirations. The findings yielded three emergent themes: (1) Home as a Place of Emotional Security and Family Belonging, (2) Emotional Attachment and Pain from Family Separation, and (3) Education as a Pathway to Family Restoration and a Better Future. These themes illuminate how orphaned learners perceive home, cope with absence, and envision their future.

Theme 1: Home as a Place of Emotional Security and Family Belonging

The first theme emphasizes home as a source of emotional security, love, and family unity. Participants consistently described home as a space where emotional connections, care, and comfort are cultivated. This perception highlights the centrality of familial bonds and the need for a safe, supportive environment for orphaned adolescents.

Participants shared, “*Usa hiya nga balay nga nag-uurusa kamo pamilya.*” (It is one house where the family lives together.) [P1, L98-100], and P2 added, “*Isang bahay ay isang pamilya na nagtutulungan.*” (One house is a family that helps each other.) [L66]; similarly, P5 also remarked, “*Usa nga balay ngan pamilya.*” (One house and family.) [L51]. In addition, on love and care, P1 stated, “*Kaylangan ito hin pagmamahal, pagmamalasakit.*” (It requires love and care.) [L119], while P3 expressed, “*May pag mamahal at may nag aaruga.*” (There is love and someone takes care of you.) [L66], and P8 emphasized, “*Love, support... dire ka mababayaan.*” (Love, support... you won’t be neglected.) [L137-139]. Furthermore, regarding comfort, P4 said, “*Para ha akon it tahanan kay pahinga.*” (For me, home is for rest.) [L66], and P7 added, “*Oo, tas comfort ako.*” (Yes, I feel comfort.) [L125]. Collectively, these responses underscore that, therefore, home serves as a secure, loving, and comforting environment.

The responses reveal that orphaned students perceive home not merely as a physical space but as an emotional haven where family unity, care, and love are experienced. Comfort and belonging emerged as crucial elements that sustain their emotional well-being. Thus, the idea of home encompasses both relational and psychological dimensions for these learners.

The findings align with Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969), which emphasizes the importance of secure bonds in emotional development. Participants' descriptions of home as a space of love, care, and unity indicate that attachment can still form in non-parental environments, such as institutional or substitute family settings. Previous studies highlight that emotional security fosters resilience (Rutter, 1987) and supports educational engagement (UNICEF, 2009; Kivumbi et al., 2019). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) further explains that home meets the basic physiological and belonging needs, which are essential for higher-order development, including self-esteem and achievement.

In conclusion, home represents more than shelter for orphaned adolescents; it is a foundation of emotional security, familial connection, and comfort. Even in the absence of biological parents, supportive living arrangements enable students to experience love, care, and a sense of completeness. These findings underscore the importance of nurturing environments in promoting psychological well-being among orphaned learners.

Theme 2: Emotional Attachment and Pain from Family Separation

The second theme highlights emotional attachment and the pain arising from family separation. Participants described mixed feelings of support, nostalgia, and coping strategies. This theme underscores the enduring emotional impact of parental absence and the ways orphaned students adjust to this reality.

Participants reflected, "*Sinusuportahan ako ng family ko.*" (My family supports me.) [P1, L103-105], and P4 shared, "*Dito ko naranasan ang tunay na suporta.*" (Here, I experienced true support.) [L69-70]; similarly, P3 noted, "Masaya kami noon... bata pa ako nun." (We were happy then... I was still a child.) [L68-69], while P8 added, "*Namimiss ko kay buo kami.*" (I miss when we were complete.) [L149]. Moreover, coping mechanisms were mentioned as well, with P1 and P6 stating, "Waray." (None.) [P1, L108; P6, L102], and P8 remarked, "*Diko hira gin iisip.*" (I do not think about them.) [156-157]. Together, these responses indicate that, therefore, there is a coexistence of emotional longing and adaptive strategies among orphaned students.

The findings reveal that students experience both support and longing, highlighting the duality of their emotional lives. Nostalgia and missing family members coexist with coping strategies such as emotional suppression and acceptance. This duality illustrates the complexity of orphanhood, where resilience develops in response to emotional challenges.

The emotional experiences reported support Bowlby's (1969) assertion that attachment influences emotional regulation and relationship formation. Rutter's Resilience Theory (1987) explains why students employ coping mechanisms to navigate separation while still forming social connections. Previous studies demonstrate that orphaned adolescents experience grief, nostalgia, and emotional dysregulation (Li et al., 2021; Musisi et al., 2011), yet supportive institutional environments can mitigate these effects (UNICEF, 2023). Maslow's framework (1943) highlights that unmet belonging needs influence emotional adjustment and motivation for growth.

In summary, emotional attachment and the pain of separation shape the lived experiences of orphaned students. While they experience nostalgia and longing for family completeness, students

demonstrate resilience through coping strategies. Understanding these emotional processes is crucial in designing interventions that enhance psychological well-being and social support.

Theme 3: Education as a Pathway to Family Restoration and a Better Future

The third theme explores education as a pathway to family restoration and a better future. Students view educational attainment as a means to achieve personal goals, support their families, and create stable family environments. This theme underscores the aspirational dimension of orphanhood, linking learning to future security.

Participants expressed their aspirations: “*Pangarap ko makatapos hin pag-eskwela.*” (I dream of finishing school.) [P1, L111], and P7 added, “*Makag tapus pag eskwela, pati college.*” (I will finish school, including college.) [L131]; similarly, P4 shared, “*Makapagtapos ha college... BSIT.*” (I will finish college... BSIT.) [L75-76]. Furthermore, on giving back, P2 stated, “*Bibigyan ko sila ng magandang buhay.*” (I will give them a better life.) [L73], and P3 emphasized, “*Matulungan ko ang pamilya ko.*” (I will help my family.) [L71-72]. Regarding family stability, P3 noted, “*Makompleto kami.*” (We will be complete.) [L71-72], and P8 shared, “*Mag-upod kami ha usa na balay.*” (We will live together in one house.) [L152-153]. Collectively, these responses illustrate that education is closely linked to aspirations for family restoration and personal advancement.

The responses indicate that students see education as both a personal and familial investment. Academic achievement is a means to fulfill career goals, support family members, and eventually recreate a sense of familial completeness. Education therefore represents hope, agency, and future stability in the lives of orphaned adolescents.

These findings resonate with Maslow’s (1943) theory, emphasizing that achieving higher-order needs such as esteem and self-actualization depends on fulfilling foundational needs. Rutter’s (1987) framework highlights that resilience is fostered through goal-directed behavior and environmental support. International and Philippine studies demonstrate that orphaned learners prioritize education as a vehicle for social mobility, family support, and improved life circumstances (Cho et al., 2017; Aguilar et al., 2023). This underscores the importance of academic support programs and psychosocial interventions to facilitate educational attainment.

In conclusion, education serves as a pathway for orphaned students to achieve personal aspirations, assist their families, and restore family unity. Students demonstrate agency and determination in pursuing schooling as a mechanism for long-term stability and fulfillment. Supporting their educational goals is thus critical for both individual growth and broader familial well-being.

Overall, the three themes collectively reveal that home, emotional experiences, and aspirations are deeply interconnected for orphaned students. Home provides emotional security and a sense of belonging, while separation from family creates emotional challenges that necessitate coping strategies. Education emerges as a pivotal avenue through which students pursue personal growth, restore family bonds, and secure a better future. These findings highlight the importance of supportive environments, emotional guidance, and academic assistance in fostering resilience among orphaned adolescents.

Government Support Needs of Orphaned Students in Tacloban City

This section explores the government support needs of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City. Through thematic analysis, three major themes emerged: Financial and Basic Needs Support, Government Programs and Institutional Intervention, and Emotional and Academic Support. These themes illustrate how orphaned students perceive and experience assistance in meeting their fundamental, institutional, and psychosocial needs.

Theme 1: Financial and Basic Needs Support

The first theme highlights the importance of material assistance for orphaned students. This includes provision of school supplies, food, clothing, and allowances to address financial constraints and support educational engagement.

Participants emphasized the critical role of material support in their daily lives. For example, P1 shared, “*Paghatag hin relief... school supplies.*” (Providing relief... school supplies.) [L131-132], highlighting the importance of basic provisions. Similarly, P2 noted, “*Mga school supplies malaking tulong ito.*” (School supplies are a big help.) [L72], reinforcing the significance of educational resources. In addition, P4 stated, “*Mayda allowance per month... 5k kada month.*” (There is a monthly allowance... 5,000 pesos per month.) [L94-95] and further added, “*Money... waray may na support ha ira kundi ira la kalugaringon.*” (Money... no one supports them except themselves.) [L98-100], pointing to the ongoing financial challenges faced by some students. Likewise, P7 mentioned, “*School financial.*” (School financial assistance.) [L156], emphasizing institutional support. Collectively, these responses underscore the urgent financial needs of orphaned students and the critical role of tangible support in enabling educational participation.

The participants’ responses indicate that financial and basic needs support is essential for orphaned students to pursue education effectively. Access to school supplies, clothing, food, and allowances reduces barriers to learning and alleviates the stress of financial hardship. Providing these resources contributes to both academic continuity and psychosocial well-being.

This theme aligns with Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs, emphasizing that physiological and safety needs must be met before students can focus on higher-order learning goals. Resilience Theory (Rutter, 1987) also suggests that access to basic resources supports adaptive outcomes despite adversity. Studies show that orphaned adolescents with financial and material support demonstrate higher school attendance, engagement, and academic performance (Boris et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2009). Nationally, Philippine policies such as DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, and Republic Act No. 11767 (2022) reflect efforts to address these needs, though gaps remain in provision and access.

In conclusion, Financial and Basic Needs Support remains a fundamental requirement for orphaned students. School supplies, food, clothing, and financial allowances not only facilitate learning but also reduce stress and enhance resilience. Addressing these needs is crucial for enabling orphaned adolescents to remain engaged in school and maintain a sense of stability amid parental absence.

Theme 2: Government Programs and Institutional Intervention

The second theme focuses on the role of existing programs and institutional support in addressing orphaned students' needs. It highlights awareness, accessibility, and the potential for expansion of government and institutional initiatives.

Participants discussed experiences and perceptions of government assistance programs. For instance, P3 shared, "*Ginkadto kami DSWD... may nagbulig.*" (We went to DSWD... someone helped.) [L89-90], indicating direct engagement with government support. Similarly, P7 expressed, "*Positive! Positive!*" (Positive! Positive!) [L146], highlighting satisfaction with the assistance received. On the other hand, limited awareness was noted by P2 and P8: "*Waray pa / Waray ako aram.*" (There isn't / I don't know.) [P2, L82; P8, L169], pointing to gaps in program knowledge. Moreover, P4 suggested, "*Maghimo hira hin program para damo gihap it ira mabuligan.*" (They should make a program so many more can be helped.) [L103-104], while P8 recommended, "Program for children who need a home." (Program for children who need a home.) [P8], both emphasizing the need for expanded and targeted initiatives. Collectively, these responses reveal both appreciation for existing programs and gaps in accessibility and awareness that require attention.

The participants' narratives indicate that while some government programs provide valuable assistance, awareness and accessibility remain limited. Students perceive the need for expanded programs and interventions that reach more beneficiaries. Institutional support plays a crucial role in supplementing basic needs and creating structured opportunities for assistance.

Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory emphasizes that consistent and responsive support is critical for developing trust and emotional stability. Rutter's (1987) Resilience Theory supports the notion that structured institutional programs act as protective factors, enabling positive outcomes amid adversity. International studies demonstrate that government and community programs enhance access to education, psychosocial support, and life skills for orphaned adolescents (Makuza et al., 2024; Cho et al., 2017). Locally, while programs exist under DSWD and DepEd, findings suggest the need for expansion and greater awareness to reach underserved populations (PSA & ICF, 2023; UNICEF, 2022).

In conclusion, Government Programs and Institutional Intervention are valuable mechanisms for supporting orphaned students. Positive experiences demonstrate the potential impact of such programs, but limited awareness and coverage restrict their effectiveness. Expanding and promoting these interventions will strengthen support networks and ensure that orphaned learners receive equitable access to essential resources.

Theme 3: Emotional and Academic Support. The third theme emphasizes the importance of psychological encouragement and educational assistance. It highlights the need for emotional guidance, tutoring, and family-like support to help orphaned students cope with stress and succeed academically.

Participants highlighted emotional and academic support needs. For example, P8 shared, "*Need talaga namon hin support kay nadodown kami.*" (We really need support because we feel down.) [L177-178], emphasizing the importance of emotional encouragement. Similarly, P4 mentioned, "*Need gihap nira hin support ha ira family.*" (They also need support from their family.) [L94-95], showing the role of

familial backing in students' well-being. In addition, educational support was noted by P1: "*Kailangan nira hin pag-eskwela... school supplies.*" (They need support in schooling... school supplies.) [L140-141], and P8 further added, "*Need namon hin tutor.*" (We need a tutor.) [L186], highlighting the necessity of academic assistance. Collectively, these statements illustrate that both emotional encouragement and educational support are integral to students' overall well-being and academic achievement.

The participants' responses reveal that orphaned students require both emotional and academic support to overcome challenges. Emotional encouragement helps mitigate feelings of loneliness and stress, while academic assistance ensures continuity in learning and skill development. These forms of support complement financial aid and institutional programs, contributing to overall resilience and growth.

Maslow's (1943) framework highlights the role of belongingness and esteem in motivating academic engagement and personal growth. Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory suggests that emotional support from caregivers, teachers, or mentors fosters secure attachment, promoting psychological stability. Resilience Theory (Rutter, 1987) also emphasizes that supportive social and educational networks help orphaned adolescents adapt to adversity. Global studies affirm that counseling, tutoring, and psychosocial interventions reduce trauma and improve learning outcomes (Tol et al., 2022; Kivumbi et al., 2019).

In conclusion, Emotional and Academic Support is vital for orphaned students to navigate both psychosocial and educational challenges. Psychological encouragement, family-like support, and tutoring enhance coping capacity and academic performance. Integrating emotional and academic assistance with financial and institutional support ensures a holistic approach to meeting the diverse needs of orphaned learners.

Synthesis

Overall, the findings reveal that orphaned high school students in Tacloban City require multi-faceted government support. Financial aid, institutional programs, and emotional-academic assistance collectively address the complex challenges these students face. Meeting these needs not only ensures educational continuity but also fosters resilience, emotional well-being, and a sense of security. The interplay of material, institutional, and psychosocial support is therefore essential in enabling orphaned students to thrive despite adversity.

Summary

This study explored the lived experiences of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City during the School Year 2025–2026. It aimed to understand their everyday academic and personal experiences, the challenges they encountered in the absence of parental support, the coping strategies they used to manage these challenges, and their perceptions of home within their present living conditions. Specifically, the study sought to describe their daily lives, identify the difficulties they faced in school and personal life, and examine how they continued pursuing education despite their circumstances.

A qualitative research design was employed, specifically the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, which focused on describing the essence of the participants' lived experiences. This approach allowed the researchers to capture the authentic voices, emotions, and meanings expressed by the orphaned students without manipulating any variables. Through the use of epoche, personal biases were set aside so

that the phenomenon could be viewed purely from the participants' perspectives. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure a rich and in-depth understanding of their experiences.

The study was limited to selected double-orphaned high school students residing in Brgy. 94 Tigbao, SOS Children's Villages in Tacloban City. It did not include non-orphaned students or participants from other locations. The findings depended on the honesty and openness of the participants and therefore may not be generalized to all orphaned learners in the Philippines. Despite these limitations, the study provided meaningful insights into the emotional, social, and academic realities of orphaned students.

The results revealed that the participants experienced emotional struggles such as sadness, loneliness, and longing for parental care. They also faced challenges in balancing school responsibilities with household duties, adjusting to new living environments, and coping with the absence of parental guidance. Limited financial resources and emotional stress further affected their academic motivation and sense of belonging.

To deal with these difficulties, the students developed coping strategies such as seeking emotional support from peers, guardians, and teachers; engaging in prayer and self-reflection; and maintaining focus on their dreams and future goals. The participants also gained important insights about resilience, independence, and the value of education. Despite their losses, they viewed schooling as a pathway toward a better future and a means of honoring their parents' memory. Their experiences showed that education played a significant role in rebuilding hope, strengthening self-confidence, and shaping their aspirations.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from the findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how orphaned learners navigate life after parental loss and how different forms of support influence their well-being and educational journey.

Lived Experiences of Orphaned High School Students in Their Everyday Academic and Personal Lives

The findings revealed that orphaned high school students experience significant emotional and personal struggles in their daily lives. Feelings of sadness, loneliness, and longing for parental care were commonly expressed by the participants. These emotional experiences affect their self-esteem, sense of belonging, and motivation in school. In their everyday routines, students must balance academic responsibilities with household duties and personal adjustments within their current living environments. Their experiences show that schooling is not only an academic task but also an emotional journey shaped by loss and adaptation.

Challenges Encountered by Orphaned Students in Pursuing Education in the Absence of Parental Support

The study found that the absence of parental guidance creates multiple challenges for orphaned students. Financial difficulties, lack of emotional support, and limited academic guidance hinder their

ability to focus fully on their studies. Participants reported difficulties in managing school requirements, coping with stress, and maintaining motivation due to the lack of parental encouragement. These challenges contribute to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about their future. The findings indicate that parental absence affects both the emotional stability and academic performance of orphaned learners.

Coping Mechanisms and Support Orphaned High School Students Rely On to Manage Their Challenges

Despite the difficulties they face, the participants demonstrated resilience through various coping strategies. They relied on emotional support from peers, guardians, and teachers, which helped them manage stress and feelings of loneliness. Prayer, self-reflection, and faith were also identified as important sources of strength. Moreover, students remained focused on their dreams and future goals, viewing education as a pathway toward a better life. These coping mechanisms enabled them to adapt to adversity and continue pursuing their education despite emotional and social hardships.

Meaning of Home, Emotional Experiences, and Aspirations of Orphaned Students

The findings showed that the concept of “home” for orphaned students goes beyond a physical dwelling. Home is perceived as a place of emotional safety, acceptance, and belonging rather than merely a shelter. Their emotional experiences of loss shaped their desire for stability and security. In terms of aspirations, the students expressed strong hopes of achieving success through education, improving their living conditions, and honoring their parents’ memory. Their dreams reflect their determination to build a meaningful future despite their experiences of loss and hardship.

Government Support Needs of Orphaned Students in Tacloban City

The study revealed that orphaned students perceive government support as essential in addressing their educational and emotional needs. Financial assistance, scholarships, and school-related support were identified as crucial in helping them continue their studies. Participants also emphasized the importance of counseling services and psychosocial programs to address their emotional struggles. These findings highlight the need for strengthened government and institutional support systems that respond not only to the material needs of orphaned learners but also to their psychological and social well-being.

Overall, the lived experiences of orphaned high school students in Tacloban City reveal both vulnerability and strength. While they face significant challenges due to the absence of parental care, they also possess the capacity for resilience and hope when supported by meaningful relationships and responsive educational and social programs. These findings highlight the need for sustained and holistic interventions that address their emotional well-being, academic needs, and social inclusion to help them achieve their goals and improve their quality of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers offer the following recommendations to support orphaned students in Tacloban City requires a multifaceted approach addressing their emotional, academic, and financial needs. These recommendations are directed toward key beneficiaries identified in the Significance of the Study, including orphan students, educators and school leaders, future researchers and advocates, Tacloban City and the Filipino community, Department of Education (DepEd), and policymakers.

1. Orphaned Students:

- 1.1 Orphaned students should actively seek support from school guidance counselors, trusted teachers, or peer support groups to help them manage emotional stress and academic challenges.
- 1.2 They are encouraged to apply for available scholarships, financial assistance programs, and school-based aid to lessen financial burdens and continue their education.
- 1.3 Orphaned students should participate in school clubs, leadership activities, or peer mentoring programs to develop confidence, social skills, and a sense of belonging.

2. Educators and school leaders:

- 2.1 Educators and school leaders should develop responsive teaching methods that acknowledge the unique emotional and academic backgrounds of orphaned students to foster a stronger sense of belonging.
- 2.2 They should collaborate with the DSWD to ensure orphaned students have streamlined access to social services, financial aid, and specialized counseling.
- 2.3 Design effective emotional interventions that help orphaned learners cope with loss while building the resilience needed to pursue their education.

3. Future Researchers and Advocates:

- 3.1 Conduct longitudinal studies on resilience and educational outcomes of orphaned youth in Tacloban City.
- 3.2 Conduct a comprehensive study on orphaned youth not supported by government programs in Tacloban City, documenting their challenges, coping mechanisms, and support needs.
- 3.3 Evaluate effectiveness of existing support programs for orphaned youth.

4. Tacloban City and the Filipino Community:

- 4.1 Establish annual scholarships for orphaned students who are not supported by government programs pursuing higher education.
- 4.2 Develop community-led initiatives providing emotional and practical support to orphaned families.
- 4.3 Collaborate with local businesses providing job opportunities and vocational training for orphaned youth not supported by government.
- 4.4 Establish emergency fund supporting orphaned youth in crisis situations.

5. Department of Education (DepEd):

5.1 Develop inclusive school policies addressing needs of orphaned students (e.g., flexible attendance, counseling).

Establish school-based support groups for orphaned students, facilitated by trained counselors.

5.3 Provide scholarships, allowance, and school supplies to 100 orphaned students annually.

5.4 Implement social-emotional learning programs benefiting all students, including orphaned youth.

6. Policymakers:

6.1 Develop policy framework ensuring inclusive education and protection for orphaned youth.

6.2 Expand scholarship programs covering full costs of education for orphaned students.

6.3 Develop emergency response protocols prioritizing needs of orphaned youth in crises.

6.4 Develop a policy framework ensuring financial support for orphaned youth not covered by current government assistance programs.

In conclusion, these recommendations aim to cope within the challenges of orphan students by providing financial support and scholarships, establishing community-led initiatives, implementing inclusive school policies, and conducting research on orphaned youth challenges and resilience to inform targeted interventions.

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