

Human Act or Act of Nature: The lived experiences of Landslide Victims

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ABSTRACT:

The study focused on the Lived experiences of the Landslide Victims of the City of Naga. The landslide took place last September 2018 where it took lives and property of the city's residents. The study used the phenomenological approach through purposive sampling method in selecting the informants with data saturation as basis to determine the number of informants. Furthermore, the informants of the study are the ten survivor victims of the landslide in the City of Naga, Cebu, Philippines. Likewise, triangulation of data was employed which utilized the secondary source of data from the significant others of the informants. Moreover, after data was collected, it was transcribed and thematic analysis and coding were used to analyze the data gathered with the assistance of the NVIVO software. The themes that have emerged in the study are the following: Losing a home and family, Valuing life, Trauma, Moving on, Determination, Spirituality, Financial problems and Negligence. It is established in this study that disastrous events occur in a very unexpected time in people's lives but with sufficient and sustainable support particularly from the government, this can ease the suffering and make the coping process easier and faster for the victims. Moreover, tragic events can be used as strength and motivation to reach goals in life.

Keywords:

Landslide, victims, support, phenomenology

1. INTRODUCTION

Landslides are environmental occurrences which is described with different movements in the ground which causes rock falls and debris to move downwards. Landslide can be categorized on the basis of its movements of the soil mass which is the grounds for its catastrophe and the intensity of its movement. In addition, landslides cause a substantial magnitude of soil and rock fragments to travel down due to the gravity. Likewise, the sheer form of materials involved and the speed of which they materialize make them potentially appalling as a consequence of the enormous harm that they can inflict lives and property.

Various elements have been noted that cause landslides. These elements can be clustered into two categories: (a) the intrinsic factors like hydrology, geology, and topography, and (b) the

extrinsic variables such as strong rainfalls, earthquakes, and changes of land use. Among these factors, rainfall has been recognized as the main factor leading the steadiness of the slope. Typically, parts receiving higher rainfall relative to the region have higher chances of cases on landslide. Environmental elements such as the slope, aspect, elevation, and plane curvature influence landslide. In addition, landslides can result to even longer time episodes due to root decay and loss of soil strength. Apart from the natural factors, human activities such as expansion, road building clear-cutting, and other anthropogenic activities intensely stimulate the cases of landslide (Mahalingam, R., Olsen, and O'Bannon, 2016)

Glade and Crozier (2005) explained that losses such as mortalities, physical asset loss and economic expenditures occur when people and

their associated structures are exposed to landslides. The extent of the impact hangs on the number of exposed components and their associated vulnerabilities, the consequences of the impacts and the intensity of the landslide event. A disaster has various effects on the people affected by it, Bennett (2016) explained that Landslides are ever-present in any terrestrial environment that has slopes and it is driven by tectonic climatic or human activities in addition hull (2002) describes that landslide disasters can have extensive and long terms effects on the mental and physical health of survivors. Moreover, indications showed that apart from the direct trauma effects of hurt and pain, victims also experienced physical difficulties. Fear, anxiety, sensitivity and anger are some of the common reactions of the victims.

Landslide are distressing endeavors that threaten the well-being of people. Over the years, landslides have caught the attention of the public for their recurrent incidences and vast damage. In addition, Weimberg (2005) described persons who undergo traumatic experiences, He said that they will never forget them. Such painful experiences disturb the victims of the landslide, in which even in their dreams they are haunted by their harrowing experiences. This will have a significant influence in their lives and change their insights about reality. Some victims lose their confidence in mankind, distance themselves from others and from close connections, and shut themselves out psychologically or even physically.

The City of Naga, Cebu, Philippines classified as a third-class city is recognized as being a highly-industrialized and progressive city. Known for its industries which provide work for its populace, the city is also famous of its bay walk park area, of which its residents and non-residents flock in the afternoons to enjoy a good view of the sunset and to enjoy a wide array of dishes sold near the park. Moreover, the city is also a destination for sports enthusiasts since it can cater to a lot of

sports events. Unfortunately, last September of 2018, the City was struck with a tragedy, a catastrophic landslide caused by heavy rainfalls and quarrying operation which hit one of its barangays. In the immediate aftermath, casualties were received and injuries were sustained due to the collapse of houses because of the big boulders and debris that flow into the them. Many people were buried alive. Those who survived were injures. These injuries ranged from extensive abrasions, deep lacerations, and fractures. A large number of people also suffered from post-traumatic stress due to loss of homes and family members. All in all, the devastation killed seventy-eight (78) people in total and leaving millions in damages and homeless families.

It was a crisis in a vast scale; it was even a trending news both local and international, even videos of the landslide were circulated recklessly in the internet. Help came from both the public and private sectors and from local, national and international sources. But after a year of that devastating tragedy the questions remain unanswered, what has happened to those victims of that landslide tragedy? How did they cope with their loss? And how well have they adjusted after losing their homes and love ones?

It is along these views and opinions why the researchers have conducted this study. It is the belief of the researchers that the study will have a great contribution since it will answer the gaps in knowledge as it will describe the real-life situations of the landslide victims of Naga a few years after the tragic event and with the findings propose a course of action to help the victims of this tragic event.

1. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study utilized the phenomenological approach wherein it explores the lived experienced of the landslide victims of Naga. Creswell (2013) describes phenomenology is a methodology of qualitative research that gives emphases on the

commonality of a lived experience within a specific group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, the study used the purposive sampling method wherein a criterion was used in selecting the informants with the saturation of data as determinant on the number of informants in the study. These criteria include; the age must be above 18 years and must be a resident of the landslide area and was directly affected. The informants of the study are the ten (10) victims of the landslide, 5 were male and the remaining were females. An in-depth unstructured interview with observation was done in the private homes of the informants. After data was gathered it was analyzed using thematic analysis.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical considerations of the study are based on the Belmont Report of 1974 which has three basic ethical principles in researches which involved humans as subjects which includes respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

The belief of Respect for Person comprised of at two ethical philosophies. First, individuals should be treated as independent agents, and second, that persons with reduced autonomy are qualified for protection. In the study, the participants may or may not answer the questions asked which is according to their preference that is why there are no rules on how much they should answer; they are given the liberty to deal with the questions asked. Furthermore, there are no students or children involved.

An informed consent was provided to the informants containing the purpose of the study, the potential risk and benefits of the study, contact persons in cases of emergency, the extent of how the data will be kept in confidential and a statement stating that the respondent participated in the study voluntarily.

2. RESULTS

Theme1. Losing a home and a family

The first theme of the study is about losing homes, properties and loved ones. Because of the landslide many were left homeless and many have lost their love ones. One of the informants recalled that he saw one of his relative running and bloodied up, running for his life and outcry for help but to no avail.

“Nagdugo iyang tiil, iyang ulo. Natagakan man siya ug bato. Nag CR siya ana nga time, dayun Nagdagan pa siya niya nangayo pa siyag tabang sa silangan niya giingnan ra siya nga mag iyahay ta ron kay puro ta mangamatay”. - informant 1

Moreover, another informant noted that when he woke and went outside during the landslide incident, he saw people where running for their lives, and after which he saw his aunt crying and told him to look up and saw the horror of the landslide.

“Paggawas nako nilingi pa ko murag naalimungawan ba nahibong ko ang mga taw nanagan na. Mao to nangutana ko sa akong auntie niya akong auntie naghilak na. Gipa tan aw ko niyas babaw”. - Informant 2

In addition, another informant recollected that during the landslide their homes were covered with boulders and along with her daughter.

“Among balay na apil ug katabunan sa mga dagkung bato, akung anak intawn na tabunan ug apil” informant 5

Theme 2. I’m a human being; my life has value (Value of Life).

The second theme of the study entailed the value of human life, that the people accountable for the landslide value the lives of the victims as cheap and can be brought. One of the informants articulated that the victims were paid money but expressed that the amount will never suffice to the damage and lives lost.

“O sir ang kanang kuan sir. Ang nahibaw an nako ang kanang 100,000 sa kuan na siya sa mayor. Ang kanang 100,000 kay kanang balay natakuban jud whole. Pero kung wala lang, paligas ra okay ra ang balay, 50,000. Pero di na ka agi sa ilang

gibuhat dri namu nawagtang mig panimalay ug sa mga kinabuhi nga nakalas” informant 5

Theme 3. A wound that is not of flesh but are deeper and excruciating than anything that bleeds (trauma)

The third theme of the study is about the trauma the landslide had brought to their lives. One of informant noted that every time it rains, it would make him nervous and awake at night.

“kung mag uwan sa amo makuyawan kay ko, di ko katug kay makuyawan ko nga mag landslide nya, matabunan nya mi” informant 1

Another informant, noted that she could not forget until this day the cries of help from her relatives during the chaos of the landslide.

“hangtud Karun di gyud ko kalimut adtung hitabua, katung pagmata naku, pag gawas nakus amo nagkagubot na ang mga taw, akung mga ig agaw nag syagit nangayug tabang – informant 3

Moreover, one of the informants articulate that he misses his brother and sister who were two of the casualties in the landslide and cries often thinking about it.

“sakit kayo huna hunaun akung mga igsoon na apil ug katabun, hapit nata tu sila mahuman ug pag eskwela” informant 2

Theme 4. There is always a time for pain and there is also a time for healing (Moving on).

The fourth theme of the study is about moving on after the landslide. One of the informants have verbalized that he has lost a lot of relative during the landslide and it was a time of great sorrow but life must go on.

“Dili maguwang tos akong mama mga 50 na kapin. Naa na siyay mga apo. Iyang mga apo, iyang mga anak, mga ugangan, hurot tanan, ubay - ubay gyud sila, guol kay mi atung mga panahuna. Lisud sila kalimtan pero kinahanglan sad mo move on kay ana man gyud na ang kinabuhi sa taw daghan ug pagsulay” – informant 1

Likewise, another informant has expressed that she could never forget the tragedy in her lifetime

but knows that she keeps living her life to the fullest.

“katung panghitabua di gyud tu naku makalimtan samtang buhi paku, pero kinahanglan man gyud mo move on ta kay buhi man ta, pagsulay raman tu tanan” – informant 8

Theme 5. I might be broken but I can still fight (Determination).

The fifth theme of the study is about determination. Even with all the difficulties that the landslide tragedy brought in their lives, they are still determined to succeed in life. One of the informants have expressed that even though he has lost his home, he is still determined to finish his studies.

“among balay natabunan ug apil maong karun nipuyu mi ron sa among parente, maong gusto gyud ko makahuman ug skewela para makatabang kos akung pamilya” - informant 7

In addition, another informant said that after the landslide, they were forced to live in the evacuation center for two months, but still he goes to school, and do the laundry on his step father’s place.

“katu ganing few days after sa linug, nagpuyu mis sa gym, adtu mi natug for two months, ni eskwela gyapun ko atu, adtu lang mi manglaba sa akung stepfather, Naa man siya taga ocean man siya” – informant 1

Theme 6. Where there are difficulties, God always provides: (spiritual Faith)

The sixth theme of the study is about the informant’s steadfast faith in God. One of the informants have articulated that with God’s help they will be able to recover from the tragedy.

“kabaw ko nga di gyud mi pasagdan sa ginoo, ma ok raman an tanan kay ang ginoo maloloy on man di man ta pasagdan niya” – informant 4

Moreover, another informant was very grateful to God because despite the difficulties like losing their homes, his family is still able to survive the different everyday trials.

“mapasalamatun mis ginoo nga bisag natabunan apil among balay, maka survive man gyapun mis kada adlaw” – informant 7

Theme 7. Gone broke (financial problem)

The seventh theme is about financial problem, which is a state of a person or individual having difficulty financially. One of the respondents have noted that a few months after the landslide people were forced to go back in the landslide area since they have no other place to live.

“Wala sad ingon nga approved jud. Ang mga taw kay ni force lagig anha kay tungod wala nay gyud lain nga kapuy-an” – informant 1

Likewise, another informant articulated that life was hard and losing their homes only made it worse.

“naglisud naman gani mi daan katung wala pa ang landslide, nasamutan among kalisud kay natabunan among balay”- informant 3

Theme 8. A deafening silence (negligence)

The eight-theme of the study is negligence which means the failure to act on the situation by the government. One of the respondents articulated that it was unfair because the people in their area were not evacuated by the authorities.

“Ang naka unfair lang ana sir kay ang taga tagaytay ila gipalikas ba gipahawa pero kami gipasagdaan ra mi. Tuo guro nila ang landslide dili maabot sa Sindulan didto ra gyud sa babaw” – informant 1

Moreover, another informant verbalized that the government have promised them a land and house but until now it has not been realized.

“Ni promise silag yuta na ihatag ug balay unya karon wala pa man nahuman, kung mahuman paman gani ana ipa raffle paman daw na” - informant 4

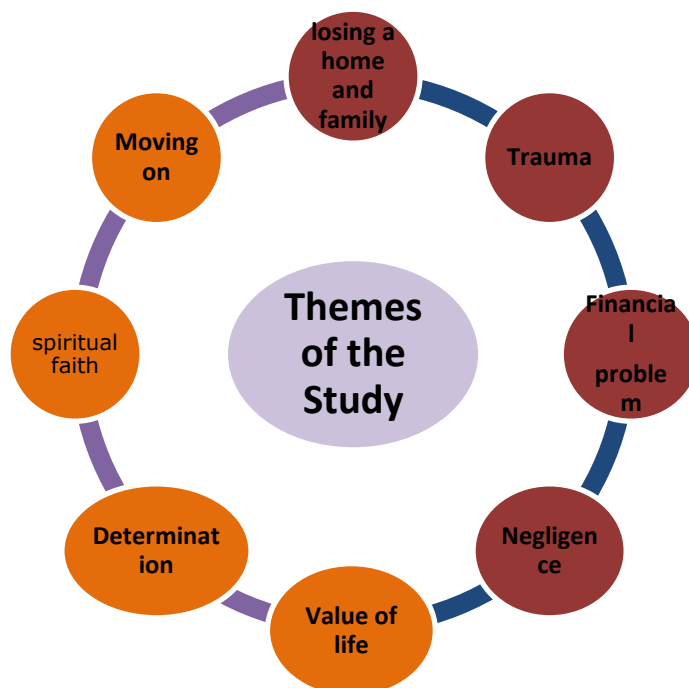


Figure 1. the themes generated in the study

3. DISCUSSION

Being a victim of a landslide incident posed a variety of challenges, as seen in the findings of the study. losing a home and a member of a family are two of the biggest concerns of the victims. Sanchez et. Al. (2009) described that Landslides is personified as one of the most destructive natural disaster that causes loss of life worldwide. Likewise, Lee (2004) echoed that Landslides constitute as one of the more frequent and threatening natural disasters. In Asian countries, landslides after some substantial rainfalls would lead to multiple losses of life and economic losses in billions yearly. Moreover, the Naga landslide victims felt traumatized after the incident, most of them have displayed emotional and psychological trauma. Carr et al., (1997) termed that the nature and severity of exposure to traumatic disasters was found to be correlated with the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In addition, contact with traumatic events has been connected not only to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but also to other kinds of psychological distress symptoms, which included depression, anxiety, behavioral problems, inattention, suicidality and substance abuse (Goenjian et al., 2001).

In addition, the findings of the study have yielded the experiences of the victims on financial

difficulty. Losing their homes contributed to their financial problems. Kervyn et al. (2015) articulated that the effects of landslides on the incomes of a primarily rural population includes, losses of houses and land lead to people being displaced, degradation of the living conditions and outbreak of disease. In addition, it can also cause the loss of crops and animals, the loss of fertile soil and a reduction of productivity in the land area. This can bring a loss of work, income and a shortage of local food production. Likewise, it can also cause a decrease in land values and a destruction of boundaries in land ownership which can lead to land conflicts. The monetary weight is not only carried by direct victims but also by friends and relatives giving assistance.

The study also generated that the landslide victims felt that the lives and the loss of their homes were treated as immaterial by the people behind the landslide incident. Sugarman (2007) described that by utilizing the legal avenue, earthquake victims of certain societal disasters may get hold of recovery financially for their damages against those involve private parties or individuals who are accountable for their grievances although many do not utilize this remedy.

Likewise, the landslide victims also expressed the inability of the government to address their needs. Sugarman (2007) articulated that the single most rudimentary role of state is to facilitate the accessibility of appropriated roots for compensation in the occurrence of a catastrophe. This partly involves the protection of victims' ordinary legal rights. Government might take steps to stimulate potential disaster victims to engage in loss prevention measures. For instance, definite sorts of enhancement on their edifice of buildings can instantly bound the destruction done by earthquakes of varying magnitudes and the state could deliver evidences to the owners of building about these procedures, providing monetary inducements to building proprietors to apply these methods, require owners to yield such precautions now, and penalized owners who unsuccessfully taken such procedures and undergo harm in an ensuing quake.

On the other hand, the study also yielded finding on positive outlook in life by the victims. Victims have expressed that they should move on already with the disaster and hope for the better. Benight et. Al. (1999), enunciated that optimism is an overall character of temperament in which a person believes that future environmental aftermaths will be positive. Moreover, a wide-ranging optimism is associated with lower recount of physical illness burden in patients anguishing from a long-lasting fatigue disorder following a disaster. Likewise, efficacy in coping, loss of resources, social support, and optimism have been found to affect psychological consequence after a disaster.

Another positive finding in this study is the increase in the level of spirituality of the victims. Landslide victims experience of post traumatic stress can produce in challenges to their spiritual beliefs, their views of the world, and their sense of identity and their reasons for living. Even without a belief in on a higher power, people may feel disappointment and anguish. Likewise, Landslide victims might find comfort by firming their religious and spiritual obligations, or by returning to abandoned spiritual principles and practices. Equally, spiritual or religious belief systems may collapse if victims' trust and sense of security is harshly damaged (Tan, 2006).

Lastly the study yielded that even with this adversity the victims revealed their iron-willed determination and resilience to rise up and be better after the earthquake. Manyena (2009) conveyed that resilience is ought to be held as the ability to move onward following a disaster. Likewise, it can be seen that disasters can be abstracted as a catalyst for change (Paton and Johnston 2006). Thus, tragedy encountered in life has disadvantages and advantages. It depends upon on the level of support received and the perspective of the victims.

4. CONCLUSION

Catastrophic and disastrous events occur in a very unexpected time of people's life and when it strikes, situation would never have been easy; the challenges brought by the horrible experience may not be easy to face. The psychological and physical trauma that it brought might not be easy

to forget and cure. It may cause total downfall to the victims if not addressed accordingly. The healing and recovery process may be longer, especially if the expected support from the family members, relatives and particularly from government agencies would not come. Yet, if sufficient and sustainable support both financial and psychological aspects are provided to the victims, it can ease the victims and make the coping process a little bit easier and faster. Nonetheless, tragic events may be used to make the victims move closer and deepen their faith in God and eventually, use it as their strength and motivation to reach their goals in life.

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