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“WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!”: AN INQUIRY ON THE PERSONAL NETWORKS OF SELECTED OLDER ADULTS IN POST-HAIYAN DISASTER

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Abstract

We have seen a considerable increase in the number of natural disasters worldwide. There are hurricanes, earthquakes, landslides, drought, tsunami among others that have affected us in recent years. Because of climate changes, these calamities have become more severe and destructive. Unfortunately, the perils of these disasters are almost always borne by those in the vulnerable sectors of the society. One of the at-risks sectors is the elderly community. With the world becoming aged and mature, it is essential to look into the well-being of older adults especially in disaster situations. The author believes that cultivating their personal networks will help safeguard the elders' welfare. This study, consequently, explores on the personal connections of selected older adults in post-disaster community in Tacloban, a city ravaged by super typhoon (ST) Haiyan in 2013. Using focused interviews, findings revealed that older adults remain steadfast and positive on the impacts of ST Haiyan. Because of their personal ties with their families, relatives, the local community, city government, NGOs, and the church, they were able to seek help and support from their networks, which, in effect nurtured resilience in them. It is hoped that through this study, personal networks will be fostered and capitalized to enable, engage, and empower elders in catastrophic conditions.

Keywords: Personal Networks, Elders, Disaster, Haiyan, Tacloban

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Introduction

Natural disasters have become more prevalent and destructive in the past decade. Myanmar's Cyclone Nargis (2008), Haiti Earthquake (2010), Great East Japan Earthquake (2011) to name a few caused massive devastation and loss of life. The extent and intensity of these disasters have been magnified because of climate changes. Effects are felt and suffered by those in the marginal segment of the society like that of the elderly community (Rafiey et al., 2016). When disasters occur, old people are more likely to get distressed because of their physical weaknesses, cognitive shortcomings, or both (Carecentrix, 2017).

The Philippines is a typhoon-prone country. It is situated along the cyclone belt in the Pacific (Gaillard, 2015). According to the World Risk Report (2019), the Philippines is ranked 9th in terms of disaster risk index among 180 countries. On November 8th 2013, a super typhoon (ST) named Haiyan (local name Yolanda) struck Tacloban, a town located on the northeastern tip of Leyte island facing Cancabato Bay and San Juanico Strait (Mikami et al., 2016). According to different sources from government agencies and news reports collected by Bueza (2016): "6,300 killed, 28,688 injured, 1,062 missing, 3,424,593 affected families, and P95.48 billion total cost of damage" (para. 4). These numbers show how Haiyan caused a devastating impact across the central Philippines particularly in Tacloban City. Two-fifths of over 60 years old perished in the disaster (Kulcsar, 2013). This is a considerable proportion of mortality from the old. In this regard, it is important, that we safeguard their welfare and safety from disaster situations.

As the world's population is ageing (United Nations, 2019), understanding how older adults cope and adapt in the face of adversity is vital in order to address their needs and difficulties in future crises – may it be in the Philippines or elsewhere. The author believes that the elders' personal networks play a fundamental role in their survival from calamities.

There are three objectives that this study pursues to address and answer:

- 1) To identify the different personal networks of older adults after the Haiyan disaster.
- 2) To explore on the significant roles of personal networks on the necessities and exigencies of older adults in post-disaster Haiyan.
- 3) To foster the value and utility of personal networks in adjusting and handling adversities among the older adults.
- 4) To understand how personal connections could be a catalyst in order to foster resiliency amongst disaster-stricken older adults.

Literature Review

The world is beset by different natural calamities each day and it is difficult for a vulnerable population like the aged to adapt with these atrocious situations. Knowledge about disasters, construction of the concept of the ageing, and understanding of personal networks are central facets for this study.

Disaster and ST Haiyan

According to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) (n.d.), a disaster is a “serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope with using its own resources” (para. 16). In other words, disasters are unexpected incidents that may bring a great damage, loss or destruction in a particular place or area. Studies show that developing countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India to name a few endure the copious damages of disaster (Yonson & Noy, 2020; Sattler, Claramita, & Muskavage, 2018; Giri & Vats, 2018; Tanwattana, 2018). Hence, it is imperative that a disaster risk reduction program is in place to initiate preparedness so as to minimize adverse impacts brought by the disaster.

Disasters are basically categorized as natural and man-made disasters (Gahler, 2016). In this study, the focus is on natural disasters, in particular the ST Haiyan.

Locally named Yolanda, ST Haiyan has been deemed as one of the strongest typhoons ever chronicled in history (Bueza, 2016). According to the Philippine National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC), it made a landfall in the Philippines on November 8, 2013, which caused 6, 300 deaths (NDRRMC Update, 2013). One of the most severely affected areas was Tacloban City with 2321 casualties distributed across its 138 villages and sub villages (Ching, 2015). The elders were among the most number who were affected or/and died during the disaster (The New Humanitarian, 2013).

Ageing and Disaster

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019), there were 703 million older people at the age of 65 or over in 2019. This means that old people made up the 13% of the total global population.

Older people are one of the most vulnerable sectors of the society especially during disaster situations (Bodstein, et.al., 2014). The mental

state of the elderly is challenged during this time. Posttraumatic stress symptoms could appear that may lead to difficulty among elderly people to cope and adapt (Walsh et al., 2016), which eventually could result to their illness or death (Powell, Plouffe & Gorr, 2009). The consequences of disasters could also elicit debilitating impact to the elderly people (i.e. damage house, physical and mental hard work, death of family member) that could require monetary resources in order to address the consequences of disasters. According to Walsh et.al.(2016), lack or scarcity of money could further add to psychological dilemma that older adults might face following the disaster.

Hostile effects of disasters on the elderly will unquestionably endanger their well-being. It is crucial, then, to understand how older adults handle and adjust to catastrophes as well as how their support system foster strength amongst them.

Personal Networks and Disaster

It can be argued that disasters can provide favourable situations to cultivate personal networks. This is because individuals respond and help each other in order to survive. Seeking and reaching out for support is envisaged during situations of adversities. Past research on disasters, however, focused on movement or displacement of people from disaster areas (Cohen & Bradley, 2010), economic losses (Panwar & Sen, 2018), demographic composition of those affected (Donner & Rodriguez, 2008), but relatively less on the webs of relationships of disaster-stricken communities and individuals. In this study, the author tries to give attention on personal networks as these may possibly lead to better disaster response and recovery among older people. Some of these personal networks are the family, community, church, government, and nongovernmental organizations.

1. Family

The family is the basic unit in society. Many people would always than not see their family as a vital source of support (Northway, 2015). There have been studies that delve into how families enhance the well-being of those with illnesses (Kokorelias, K.M. et.al., 2019; Lam & Bianchi, 2019; McHugh & Starke, 2015), how families contribute to children's education (Maunah, 2019), and how families function on disaster preparedness and response (Cobham, McDermott, Haslam, & Sanders, 2016; Solomon, et.al., 1993). Because members of the family are near or close by with each other, it is normal that they will offer and deliver assistance and support with their fellow family members. As Pfefferbaum & North (2008) avow, "Families support, nurture, and protect children. This is at no time more essential than in the context of disasters" (p.6).

Accordingly, Sturdivant (2009) in his thesis of first responder family members proposes a framework that will optimize family members support systems to increase crisis response. Through this, parents as well as children alike will be more equipped physically, mentally, emotionally to respond when disaster strikes. This paper investigates how family members help and support their elderly parents in times of a natural calamity.

2. Community

The community is another network that is indispensable for people to turn to during an aftermath of a disaster. Daniel Aldrich (2015), whose academic research centers on social capital and disaster, believes that the relationships that people develop are essential mechanisms on how disaster-afflicted areas will recover and progress again. Hence, if there is an increased community engagement among residents, subsequently, this will help the rebuilding process faster and easier. He further stresses that “through strong coordination with local social networks can be used more effectively and efficiently” (p. 31) then revitalization of the community is instantaneous. Furthermore, Aldrich (2019), in his study of the devastation of the Great East Japan Earthquake which caused a magnitude 9.0 and 60-foot tsunami, reveals that despite such destruction there has been better survival and speeded recoveries because of the strong connections of individuals and their communities combined with sound governance from local and national levels. Pacoma & Delda (2019), meanwhile, underscore that “local and translocal ties contribute to household resilience building by way of providing food and financial assistance to the affected households as well as in helping them cope with and recover from stress and trauma as a means to improve psychosocial status” (p.6). Sadri et.al (2017) also adhere with the idea that faster recovery from a disaster could be realized if there was stronger personal networks and higher level of social capital amongst community members as illustrated in their study of rural communities in southern Indiana USA battered by disastrous hurricanes in March 2012.

3. Church

The church, other faith-based institutions, and its leaders have roles to fulfill in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery (Bulmer and Hansword, 2009; Bulmer, 2008). According to Tanner and Komuhangi (2018):

Many churches hold a high degree of trust and influence in their communities, a unique network for information dissemination, and access to hard-to-reach areas. Moreover, they often have resources and

skills that are essential during disaster response: buildings that can be used as shelters, the ability to mobilise volunteers or resources, and the capacity to offer spiritual and emotional support to affected populations (p. 7).

Hirono and Blake (2017), meanwhile, explore on the role of clergy in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. In their investigation of Christian and Buddhist clergy at New Orleans and New York in United States and Tokyo and Fukushima in Japan, they have found that “(a) More American Christian clergies thought that natural disaster relief efforts are their obligation; more American clergies also thought that counselling with pastors can help natural disaster victims. (b) American clergies focus more on “comfort,” “reducing pain,” and hope, while Japanese clergies focus more on “listening” and “praying” when they have a chance to talk with family members who lost their loved ones.”(p. 12). With the Philippines being one of the most religious countries in the world (“Religion Prevails in the World”, 2017), Filipinos faith-based affiliations will greatly play a role in their survival from disaster situations.

4. Government

The UNISDR (2010), meanwhile, highlights the important role of local governments in disaster risk reduction. In their study of different cases around the world, four crucial functions of local governments in disaster risk reduction were emphasized:

1) To play a central role in coordinating and sustaining a multi-level, multi-stakeholder platform to promote disaster risk reduction in the region or for a specific hazard; 2) To effectively engage local communities and citizens with disaster risk reduction activities and link their concerns with government priorities; 3) To strengthen their own institutional capacities and implement practical disaster risk reduction actions by themselves; 4) To devise and implement innovative tools and techniques for disaster risk reduction, which can be replicated elsewhere or scaled up nationwide (p. X).

The UNISDR (2010) also espouses collaboration among different stakeholders, government and civil societies alike, in the operation of disaster risk reduction programs and projects. Moreover, overall leadership is necessary to ensure that policy and decision making processes are performed and resources and support for disaster reduction undertakings are carried out. In this study, the role of the government, both in the local and national levels, is perceived as an important network of older adults to safeguard their well-being in times of adversities like the natural calamities.

5. Nongovernmental organization

A nongovernmental organization (NGO) is a charitable or voluntary group of entities that are independent of any government to promote a program, project or service for the community (Karns, n.d.). During disasters, NGOs are continuously at the forefront to help afflicted communities. The role of NGOs, to a large extent, supplements the duties of the governments. Some examples of countries devastated by natural calamities that NGOs took initiative to assist are the earthquake in Nepal (Jones, Owen, & Wisner, 2016), the Indian Ocean tsunami in Aceh Indonesia (Lassa & IRGSC, 2012; Lassa, 2015), 2008 Sichuan Earthquake in China (Gao, 2019). The contribution of NGOs in disaster response and recovery is unprecedented. These organizations perform a vital role at every stage of the disaster: search and rescue operations, relief actions, recuperation, and readiness in disaster situations (Shaw, 2003). The author believes that NGOs are driving forces in providing assistance in the aftermath of ST Haiyan in Tacloban city.

Method

In an effort to recognize the different personal networks of older adults and investigate the value of these networks in their continued existence after the ST Haiyan disaster, a qualitative approach was used in this study.

Focused interviews were conducted in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of the informants' feelings, perceptions, and opinions about their personal networks. This method also provided an opportunity to elucidate further their ideas and thoughts about the importance of their personal relationships with other people. Selection of informants was done using purposeful sampling method. This was to ensure that only information-rich cases were identified. Through the help of the Office of Senior Citizens Agency (OSCA), ten elders from Tacloban City who have experienced the wrath of the ST Haiyan were ascertained. As such, informants of the study were able to articulate intimately their knowledge and experiences of the ST Haiyan. Informants expressed their viewpoints about the disaster in an insightful and reflective manner.

Informants' responses were lifted the way it was during the interview to provide authenticity of the quotation. Some older adults opted to write their answers on paper because of hearing loss. Most of the informants referred ST Haiyan as Yolanda, the local name of the typhoon. For the elders to express themselves spontaneously and generously, they used their preferred language. Some expressed in pure Waray (a language largely spoken in Tacloban), others in Filipino (the official language in

the Philippines), while several used English (the other official language in the Philippines). Most often than not, informants used a combination of these two or three languages when they answered the questions. For readers easy understanding, responses in Waray and/or Filipino were translated in English by the author. The author speaks Waray, Filipino, and English.

Data gathered were laid out in matrices and arranged according to the questions asked. Themes and patterns were unearthed across data set. Using inductive method, the themes identified were keenly allied to the data to come up with a description of elders' personal networks and the value and role of these networks to their well-being during post-disaster.

Findings

Informants revealed that the aftermath of the ST Haiyan was crucial whether they were going to survive or not. The elders identified their relationships with other people as vital for their subsistence. Their family, the barangay, local government and its different agencies, the church as well as the different NGOs were important networks that the elders were indebted to for their survival.

Profiles of Key Informants

Table 1. Summary of elders' profiles who participated in the interview

Male	6			Average Age	71
Female	4			Average Age	68
Married	6	Single	1	Widow	3
<i>Before ST Haiyan</i>			<i>After ST Haiyan</i>		
Living with Family	9			Living with Family	10
Living Alone	1			Living Alone	0
<i>Profession (Before Retirement)</i>			<i>Profession (After Retirement)</i>		
Government Employee	6			Stay Home	7
Private Employee	4			Volunteer	3

The study had a total of 10 informants, six of whom were males (average age is 71), and four females (average age is 68). Majority of them were married. Three were widowers. Before the typhoon, most of them lived with their families, while one lived alone. After the typhoon, all of the informants lived with their families. This strong affinity to be

together shows Filipinos close-knit family ties (Medina, 2001). The Filipino family is normally comprised of a father, mother, children, and extended family members like the grandparents. All of the informants worked either in the government or private sector. After retirement, majority of them stayed home with some who have become volunteers in different NGOs' and local government's activities.

Several years had passed since ST Haiyan struck Tacloban, the informants would still feel the impact of the disaster. They said they are still troubled and pained every time they thought of ST Haiyan. Some of them were afraid of the dark. Others were terrified just with the strong rain or wind that they would run and lock themselves up in their rooms – to cry and pray.

They may have been able to survive the onslaught of ST Haiyan, the post-disaster was a “completely different ball game”, one exclaimed! The elders believed that more than the physical strength, they had to be mentally and emotionally tough in order to survive. They recognized that the people around them, the attachment with their families, and their connection with others were paramount to their existence up until now.

1. The Family

Being the oldest in the family, the elders are regarded with respect. Hours later after the onslaught of ST Haiyan, the elders gathered the family together and checked if everyone was fine. They all felt the need to talk about their horrible experiences to ease off the anxieties among members of the family. “Stress-briefing!” as one informant uttered. Though they admitted that most of them were in a state of shock of what just happened. With their family on their side, the elders felt an assurance that things will be better in the coming days. As one informant opened, “My family gives me the strength to overcome my fears or trauma after Yolanda. They showed me how to be alive again so we can fight the fears and accept what past is past and to make a new start in life.” This was supported by another informant who divulged: “My immediate family was my source of strength knowing that all us survived was something to be thankful already. Each member of the family became our source of strength.” Aside from the emotional support that they obtained from each other, the elders also received financial aid from their adult offspring especially from their first-born son or daughter who have taken upon themselves the responsibility to provide monetarily for the family. Food supplies were also shouldered by those family members who have jobs.

Their relatives from other cities in the country and those from overseas were also kind and considerate in extending help to the senior citizens. Although they do not live together with the family or with the elders, the relatives lend a hand to those who were affected by the calamity. Most of the support were through emotional and financial provisions. As one informant supposed, "My relatives from different countries like USA and Canada gave help like money and sent goods or foods." Another stated, "My cousins and all my relatives from other regions of the country helped us (me and my family) to stand again and built a new beginning for our family, they helped us with our basic daily needs, they sent us money in case we need something to buy, also with medicines and clothing." The elders' relatives were in solidarity with the family members affected by ST Haiyan. Support in times of disasters is expected from family members (Pfefferbaum & North, 2008) and extended to their own kin. This was not the case, however, with one informant who didn't have any relative to turn to because his relatives were also victims of ST Haiyan.

2. Local Community/Barangay

The barangay which is considered as the smallest governmental unit in the Philippines for a community, locality or neighborhood (S. Zaide & G. Zaide, 1999) also plays a significant part in disaster response and recovery. Some elders, however, acknowledged that because their leaders like the barangay captain and councilors were also victims of ST Haiyan, it was difficult to expect assistance from them. Help and support were not yet felt during the first few days after the disaster, but when the national government as well as the local government begun their relief operations, the barangay officials also stepped up. They mustered and mobilized themselves in order to carry out their duties as officials of their district. Some of the barangay officials facilitated medical missions with the elders. Some abetted in moving the families of older adults to evacuation centers where their needs could be attended to. Most of the informants said that the barangay officials made possible the smooth handing of food and other supplies. An informant held, "our barangay captain gave the relief goods like sardines, noodles, rice, and money from the local government." This was also the case during the aftermath of Typhoon Sendong that affected some barangays in Iligan City Philippines wherein barangay officials assisted in the allocation of relief goods directed by the city and national governments, the NGOs, and other private sectors (Viloria, et.al, 2014). Another informant ardently added that some of their barangay officials genuinely went out of their way to ask help from different agencies of the government and private sectors in order to promote the welfare of their constituents. She said that this was a testament of officials' commitment to their barangay. Some of them are now learning courses and skills like carpentry, crop

production, and barbering from Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), so that after their training and education, they can gain employment or livelihood in the city or elsewhere.

3. Church

Older adults also regarded their faith and the church that they belonged to important in their survival. Most informants held that their priests or pastors and other members of the clergy tendered spiritual sustenance as well as emotional support. “Aada hira pirmi para makinig haimo. Gintatagan ka hin lakas hin loob ngan nangangadi hira para haamon. (They are there to listen to us. They gave us courage and strength and they prayed for all of us.)”. This was also what Hirano and Blake (2017) found in their study on the role of the clergy in post-disaster that counselling, listening, and praying can help victims lessen the pain or trauma. Some informants of this study mentioned the Catholic Relief Services and Caritas organizations were vital in providing them relief goods as well as some supplies to use to rebuild their houses (i.e. plywood, cement, hollow blocks, galvanized iron sheets)

4. The Local Government of Tacloban and Office for Senior Citizens Affairs

The local government units (LGUs) are expected to ensure that the disaster response and recovery is properly managed and well-coordinated (Caliwan, 2019). Apparently, in this situation, the elected officials such as the city mayor and council members were also victims of ST Haiyan; hence, affording assistance was a challenge. As one informant exclaimed, “Oh, it was difficult! The first few days was really tough!”

Subsequently, the national government interceded and got involved and together with the local government unit, hand-in-hand, provided vital services such as water, food, medical care. With the coordinated efforts of the different agencies of the government as well as voluntary agencies, essential services were slowly restored. Because most of the houses of the informants were partially or totally damaged, the Tacloban city government also provided Emergency Shelter Assistance (ESA) through the national’s Department of Social and Welfare and Development (DSWD). Another informant said that that the LGU conducted stress debriefing in order to prevent adverse health outcomes of ST Haiyan. As revealed by Walsh et al. (2016) in their study, posttraumatic stress may result to having trouble among elderly to cope and adapt, which ultimately may lead to ailment or demise (Powell, Plouffe & Gorr, 2009). For this reason, it was important to look after the

elders as well as the other community members' mental health after the disaster occurred. Moreover, another informant mentioned the assistance from other LGUs, not affected by the typhoon, sent some of their people to Tacloban to remove debris and clean the streets, help in the construction, fix electrical wirings as well as restore the water supply.

The creation of the Office for Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA) in compliance with Republic Act 9257 otherwise known as the Senior Citizens Law in the Philippines cemented the fortification of the welfare and good of the people aged sixty (60) and above (Antonio, 2015). Through the OSCA, social services for the elderly are now being afforded and bestowed upon them. This was a huge benefit to the elders especially after ST Haiyan smacked the city. As one informant supposed, "aside from the discounts on medicine, grocery items because of my senior citizen ID, I can also watch a movie for free at Robinson's Mall so I can forget the pains of Yolanda. Our needs and concerns as senior citizens are now being addressed."

5. NGO: Tzu Chi Foundation

Nongovernment organizations play supplementary roles to the government especially in disaster situations (Lassa, 2018). This was also the case when ST Haiyan hit Tacloban. Because of the massive destruction it brought to the city, numerous NGOs (international and national based) travelled to Tacloban to provide support and assistance to the city. During the interview with the elders apropos the aid coming from NGOs, all of them unanimously mentioned the Tzu Chi Foundation (TCF).

This TCF was established in Taiwan in 1966 and has been providing "social and community services, medical care, education and humanism in Taiwan and around the world" (Tzu Chi Foundation, 2014). Some of the informants said that TCF provided cash assistance, relief goods, and medical services. The informants believed that the TCF had a "foresight" in mind to make sure the aid they would provide enabled beneficiaries to recapture reliance in themselves which vanished after ST Haiyan devastated the city. One informant said: "Nagpa trabaho sila ng may sahod 500 pesos kada araw...(They asked us to work and they paid us 500 pesos per day...)". With cash for work, the informants felt that they were "alive again" – helping the community that they are in at the same time earning from the work that they did. In the words of one informant, "Tzu Chi gave us the opportunity to feel confident again...that we can do it...build again what was destroyed by Yolanda".

The senior citizens extended their heartfelt gratitude to TFC because they were not only the recipients but some members of the households also participated in the cash for work program. The elders deemed that it certainly alleviated their financial burdens.

Other NGOs mentioned by the informants were OXFAM, United Nations Children's Fund, JICA, World Vision, WHO, USAID, and Red Cross. These international agencies provided food, clean water, medicine and shelter to the victims. One informant was emotional when she said: "it was the worst disaster that I have experienced in my 65 years...it was heartbreaking but I took comfort that the world and the different NGOs were with us during that most difficult time." A copious number of countries and NGOs, indeed, extended assistance to the different badly hit areas of ST Haiyan (Santiago et al., 2016).

Personal Networks During the Aftermath of Haiyan

A strong connection with the people that they know was something imperative for the elders to obtain the proper assistance that they need after ST Haiyan hit Tacloban. For example, with the barangay, some of the elders have very good relationships with one or two officials, hence, they were able to secure relief goods immediately from the local government. Other informants mentioned that one of the family members or relatives knows a volunteer from TCF who informed them about the cash for work incentive, thus, some members of the family were recruited and employed to clean the streets and nearby surroundings.

Most of the informants were active churchgoers and took part in other faith-based activities. Because of this, they have direct connection with ecclesiastics and other members of the clergy. Support and help came to them unhesitatingly through food, medicines, as well as emotional and spiritual care. Likewise, informants supposed that because they know or have good ties with their personal networks, they have confidence and trust that assistance will be afforded to them. This support may come directly from the elders' personal networks or from their personal networks' network. Based on trust, communication was straightforward and unproblematic among the informants who asked help from their networks. As one senior said: "makuri adto nga panahon pero tungod han atun mga sangkay, paryente, ngan tanan nga naapektuhan... pati an kalibutan kumita han atun maraot nga sitwasyon...Nagpubligay kita tanan para makatalwas kita! (It was a difficult time but through our friends, our family and relatives, and everyone affected by the calamity...and the world saw our dreadful situation...we all helped and worked together so we can save ourselves!).

Table 2. Importance of Personal Networks

Themes	Illustrative Quotes (Translated from Waray to English)
Resources	“We have access with supplies and information that may not be available for us if it were not for our network.”
Support and Help	“Giving relief efforts, providing medical help, and psychological comfort were some of the assistance we got from our network.”
Trust	“We know these people since before, so we have faith and hope in them that they will extend themselves to us.”
Communication	“Built on trust, communication was easy. Understanding each other was not a problem.”

Discussion and Conclusion

ST Haiyan has brought so much destruction in Tacloban City. Despite being one of the most vulnerable sectors in the society in times of disasters, the elderly remained steadfast and positive with the impacts of Haiyan. Though there were bouts of fear and anxiety, their hopefulness was attributed to their strong connection with their personal networks.

Filipinos close-knit family relationship was extremely valuable for financial and emotional support for the elders. Because of the robust bond of families and relatives, it became somewhat an unspoken commitment and responsibility to take care of each other. It can also be surmised that the concept of “utang na loob” or debt of gratitude is at work here (Enriquez, 1994). This Filipino cultural trait is very much prevalent especially in family set-ups, wherein children are expected to give back to their parents for having raised and nurtured them (Alampay & Jocson, 2011). During the ST Haiyan disaster, it was evident that the progenies were doing their best, showing gratitude, and fulfilling family obligations by providing financial and emotional support to their elderly parents.

Older adults were very thankful, as well, with their local community or barangay, the city government, the NGOs especially Tzu Chi Foundation

for affording complementary roles in the recovery process. Canned sardines, meatloaf, noodles, and rice were basic relief goods given to the elders. Other institutions like TCF provided cash for work for some family members as well as medical services, while the city government with the help of the national government and other local government units' endowed cash assistance, medical care, and housing. The church, meanwhile, fostered spiritual and emotional strength to the victims. The barangay, on the other hand, facilitated information to its constituents as well as the distribution of relief goods and cash incentives. All these institutions joined forces and worked together in the rebuilding of the lives of the victims including those of older adults.

Based on the interviews, it was apparent that their healthy personal connection with their networks abetted them the resources that they need in order to survive. This stout bond cultivated social support and utility among the elderly and the different personal networks. Somehow, because of that sense of closeness or familiarity, these personal links created a conscious effort and compulsion to extend help to older adults. This, in a way, led to the solidification of the family, community, as well as the local government to become as a whole.

This paper believes that the ties that bind among informants and their personal networks fostered hope and faith among older adults, that they will rise above these challenges brought by ST Haiyan and carry on with their lives. And they did. Informants were seen as having an optimistic and resilient attitude which contributed much in their pleasant disposition and well-being. They looked revitalized and empowered as they start building their lives again. The massive destruction by ST Haiyan generated kindness and unity amongst people, not just with Filipinos but with other nationalities as well. In the words of one informant as he ended his interview, "The people from Tacloban will always be grateful for the love and compassion of the world. The world made sure that we are all in this together! Damo gud nga salamat! (Thank you so much!)."

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