

Living with the Dead: A Qualitative Study on the Social Well-being of Filipino Families Living in Cemeteries in Cebu City

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Abstract – Cemeteries are built to serve as the homes for the dead. In the Philippines, these cemeteries are also home to the living. This research aspires to explore the social well-being of the families residing in the cemeteries as it aims to spread the awareness of the status of these families to the government and to the entire citizen in the country while it expands the knowledge related to this topic for future research. This study utilized a qualitative research design where researchers interviewed six residents from three public cemeteries. The responses were transcribed and analyzed through coding and thematic analysis. The series of questions were derived from the themes of the theory used for this study's framework. As a result of completing the procedure, the researchers learned that the prevailing reasons of their domicile are due to livelihood plausibility, geographical and generational displacement. The lives of the respondents in the cemetery can be described as those faced with challenges. These include sustaining livelihood, ensuring security and safety and building socio-political significance. This research implies that the families are socially well according to Keyes' social well-being theory in general as they were able to function and contribute in the society. This study increases understanding of an unconventional lifestyle in the cemeteries and could be a basis for future research similar to this topic.

Keywords – Filipino families, Keyes' Social Well-being Theory, living in cemeteries, well-being

INTRODUCTION

As poverty continues to prevail in the country, it is no surprise that nowadays, cemeteries—most especially the public ones—have served as homes not just to the dead but to the living as well. Families live within the perimeter of the cemetery as if it is a fit neighborhood to raise their offspring but still they see to it that they make ends meet. Residents in the cemeteries would work as epitaph makers,—known in the Philippines as *lapida makers*. Some would sell flowers in cans and candles. Children often clean mausoleums and tombs in exchange for a couple of coins. Every abled member in the family works just to secure their daily needs which basically include food and water. In Manila North Cemetery, the Philippines' largest public cemetery, a resident said that living in the cemetery has been quite convenient for him since there are no rents and bills to pay and aside from that, he is just a couple of crypts away to his workplace,

where he works as an epitaph maker so no expenses for transportation are spent [1].

In this century, the Filipino's attitudes toward the dead have ranged from morbid fascination to forbidden subject. The Filipinos honor the dead that visiting them in the cemetery requires solemnity. Although the Filipinos are aware of the families living in the public cemeteries, their stories are still unusual and rare to some. The Filipinos do not even have enough information about these families' social well-being. These families have different reasons for neighboring with the dead. Group of people have chosen to live with the dead for pious and financial reasons. For instance, the culture of *Aghori sadhus* in India considers death as practice and tradition of their religion. Additionally, such culture relies on human remains in the cemeteries as a manifestation of a ritual and food [2]. On the other hand, a considerable size of Filipino population dwells in the public and private cemeteries for economic and financial

reasons. Other families stay for sentimental reasons. There are others who found peace living next to a loved one. But despite the positive emotions and peacefulness these families get while living in public cemeteries, residing in these communities has its consequences on security. For example, Manila North Cemetery, found in the capital of Philippines, has not only been a domicile for Filipino families, the village has been also considered as a hub for illegal social activities such as drug dealing, and has been identified to have high rates of crimes due to a sizeable number of recorded criminals residing in the area [3]. As a consequence, there is almost little to no protection for these families against the lawless activities that exist in the area. It has been furthermore found that every single day that they live is characterized by fear.

The fear is heavily rooted in the possible apprehension that the authorities will evict them without prior warning [4]. The fact that these places are not considered as housing provisions of the state, the residents are constantly confronted with a question in their stability to have a long-lasting home. To this day, the cemetery is not able to exude the peaceful community and environment for human development and progression. As robberies and other lawless activities continue to exist, the families still chose to live in these areas. Even if high unemployment and low income stability is apparent in these communities, the families have found a way to thrive to survive as they are to deal with the demands of their personal and mental health. Even if city authorities have constantly expressed their interests to evict those living the area, grave-dwellers, as they are sometimes called, have found a way to stay. Despite the political and social pressure, using ad-hoc "deeds" is their way of sustaining a home in the area by allowing them to perform maintenance duties on the graves. This, as a consequence, gives them opportunities to work and build a familial home. With this, people would wonder about the social health of these families [4].

In the theoretical sense, the study seeks to augment insights in the literature and resources that relates to living in unconventional and possibly unsafe environments. It may expand pre-existing ideas and knowledge that are presented by the theory that serves as a framework of this study. Also, this study shifts the policy frameworks to the less fortunate in the society such as the families living in cemeteries, who are the subject of the study.

To the future research pursuits, the data and results gathered in this study may provide a structure to those who are interested in this topic and its related topics.

Since a few literatures can be found in this study, future researchers can include this piece of information to support their future inquiries. Also, since qualitative method is utilized in this research, future researchers can conduct a similar study in a rather quantitative method or a combination of both methods.

Life in the Cemeteries

Increase in population, urbanization, and environmental degradation are alarming to the people living in both developed and developing countries. Surprisingly, cemeteries support green urbanization but not all of them are good venues for such movement. Cemeteries are where dead bodies are deposited and transformed without harming the public health. In addition, these places are for those people who want to remember memories with a dead person. Thus, cemeteries were created to serve as resting place for the dead.

In the Philippines, cemeteries are not only for the dead but are also housed by living individuals. An estimated of 10, 000 settlers reside at the Manila North Cemetery (MNC) [5]. In Cebu city, approximately 30 families reside inside the graveyard at Carreta Cemetery of which is between Chinese Cemetery and Municipal Cemetery [6]. The Municipal Cemetery is resided by around 500 families and is known as habitués of thieves. The Chinese Cemetery which is a burial place for Chinese and Filipino-Chinese ancestries is a home to about 100 families [6].

The families residing in the three cemeteries are living below the poverty line. They are squatters who were evicted by landowners who took refuge inside the cemeteries. City officials attempted to provide the families with housing options, but the families refused. They prefer the facilities offered by the graveyard. For instance, mausoleums provide sturdier protection, and are close to their places of work.

Filipinos are resilient and they seem to be doing all right in the graveyard. Their survival instincts are evident from the life they created among the dead. The mausoleums feature television and karaoke sets for five pesos per song [7].

This issue is not only happening in the Philippines. Public Statistics Agency says around two million Egyptians live in cemeteries [8]. Cairo's housing shortage and poverty drove them to the graveyard where they work cutting marble tombs and earn few cents from the families of the dead. The families would occupy a burial plot where below ground are dozens of corpse and children would have nightmares. Grave-dwellers are

branded as “the dead who live above ground” who are ignorant of political conflicts and their country’s status.

In Stoke Newington, north London, a band of homeless people has been using the cemetery for drug-fueled sex orgies [2]. People throw parties and copulate on the gravestones. Life is a constant struggle for these people; no matter what their purpose for living in the cemeteries. Psychological and social health are the concerns for this study especially in the Philippines where only few studies were conducted to see how these taboo settlers are doing.

Keyes’ Social Well-being Theory

Families living in graveyards could be facing challenges in their social life. Social integration, social contribution, social coherence, social actualization and social acceptance are several social challenges that could possibly constitute to social wellness. This research is based on Keyes’ concept of social well-being.

Social health, or the absence of it, has been a distinguished apprehension in the classic sociological theory [9]. In Durkheim’s view, social integration and cohesion, a sense of belonging and interdependence and a sense of shared consciousness and collective fate are some of the benefits of public life [9]. Social well-being can be defined as the assessment of one’s circumstances and functioning in society [9].

Social integration is the assessment of the quality of an individual’s relationship to society and community. Socially, healthy individuals feel that they are part of community. Therefore, integration is the degree to which people feel they have something in common with others that comprises their social reality and their neighborhood. Integration is also the degree to which people feel belongingness or integrated with their community or society. In Durkheim’s view, individuals’ connections to each other through norms and their fondness for society are reflected by social coordination and health. Cultural estrangement is the division that separates self from society. Estrangement is the rejection of society or the realization that society does not reflect one’s own values and lifestyle. Social isolation is the breakdown of personal relationships that provide meaning support. Social integration entails the understanding of collective membership and fate [9].

Social acceptance is the understanding of society with other people through their character and qualities as a generalized category. People who demonstrate social acceptance trust others, think that others are capable of kindness and believe that people can be industrious [9]. In Wrightsman’s (1991) view, socially accepting

individuals hold favorable and positive views on human nature along with Karen Horney’s notion that these individuals feel comfortable with others [9]. People who embody good mental health feel good about their personalities and accept both negative and positive aspects of their lives [9]. Thus, social acceptance of others might be the social counterpart to self-acceptance.

Social contribution is the assessment of one’s social value. It includes the belief that one may be an important and vital member of the society because of something of value to give to the world. Social contribution resembles belief that one can perform certain behaviors, referred as Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy and can accomplish specific objectives [9]. It reflects whether, and to what degree, people feel that whatever they do in the world is valued by society and contributes to the common good [9].

Social coherence is the awareness of the quality, organization and operation of the social world and it includes a concern for knowing about the world. Mentally healthy people not only care about the world they live but they also feel that they can construe what is happening around them [9]. They are not deluded about the idea of living in a perfect world. The sense of personal coherence may be a marker of health: individuals who have coherence attempt to maintain coherence when faced with unpredictable and traumatic life events [9].

Social actualization is the assessment of the potential and trajectory in the society [9]. This means that people who achieve social actualization believe in the evolution and development of the society (trajectory) and in the sense that society has the potential to develop through its citizens and institutions (potential). Healthy people are hopeful about the condition and future of society and they can recognize the society’s potential [9].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research focuses on discovering the reasons of families’ living in selected cemeteries in Cebu City. More importantly, the status of the families’ social well-being and how they deal with their social needs are being identified in the study. On this study, the researchers hope to gain information that would enlighten the society about the status of the social well-being of families residing in cemeteries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is a qualitative descriptive research design. According to Lambert and Lambert in 2012, the descriptive qualitative research design is a method used

to comprehensively present a specific event as they are being experienced by individuals. It involved less interpretation and extraction of significant meanings not to fall under the ambit of phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnography. Rather, it is an objective attempt to qualitatively explain theoretical underpinnings. While other qualitative methods maintain a theoretical stance, this study sought to establish qualitative descriptions and points of views of people living in the cemeteries as theoretically conceived by Corey Lee Keyes [15].

The study was conducted in public cemeteries around Cebu City, Philippines where families reside. The cemeteries were Carreta Cemetery, Cebu Chinese Cemetery and Calamba Cemetery. The study was conducted in the natural setting of the cemetery where no manipulation of the environment was done. The number of respondents for this study was six representatives (two respondents for every cemetery) that can be either extended or nuclear members of the families living in the cemeteries in Cebu City. It is further qualified that the respondent must have been residing in the same area for at least a year. The respondents are chosen from all age range possible to provide multiple insights from multiple perspectives. The study utilized two non-probability sampling methods which are purposive sampling method, which the researchers purposely chose the respondents and snowball sampling, which the respondents recommend other respondent who could possibly possess some characteristics that are of research interest. The use of the local dialect, in this case, the Cebuano-Visayan language, has been used in the interview process in order to obtain genuine and authentic responses.

Before presenting the main sets of questions, participants were asked to provide background information about their gender, age, educational level, civil status, years of living in cemeteries and their most important occupation. Also in this part, an informed consent is indicated for the participants. Stated in the informed consent are their confidentiality and the voice recording of interview to help the researchers in transcribing and analyzing the data from the interview.

The researchers made a list of questions that guided them in the structured interviews with the participants. The questions were derived from Keyes' Social Well-being Scale to suit the necessary information that the research ought to seek. The questions were constructed in Cebuano-Visayan to make it understandable for the respondents who could not comprehend well in English.

The researchers wrote a letter addressed to the Barangay Captain of the respective barangays. In the

letter, the researchers briefly introduced the research, asked permission to conduct the study especially in public cemeteries and requested two barangay *tanods* to assist them while conducting the study within cemetery premises.

In order to get the precise answers to the research problem, several coding was done to come up with the different concepts out from the transcriptions. This helped the researchers to gather accurate ideas necessary for answering the problem in the study. Coding is the process of organizing and sorting out data which are categorized to obtain an easier overview and understanding on the presented data. Researchers coded the data through open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The process facilitates in developing of a theme among responses. The themes were based on patterns seen on the transcription and is reviewed by more than one person. Using the themes derived, they are then supported by verbatim accounts of the responses that could characterize the themes comprehensively. The themes were clearly defined so that others can easily comprehend. For the axial coding, the researchers reviewed every theme for any possible additional information that can be added to the categories. After identifying all the concepts in the context, selective coding then followed. This process required the identification of a core value that would sum up and relate to every idea that was coded from open and axial was taken out to fully understand all the collected data from the transcriptions and yield useful results that can offer new insight to everyone.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

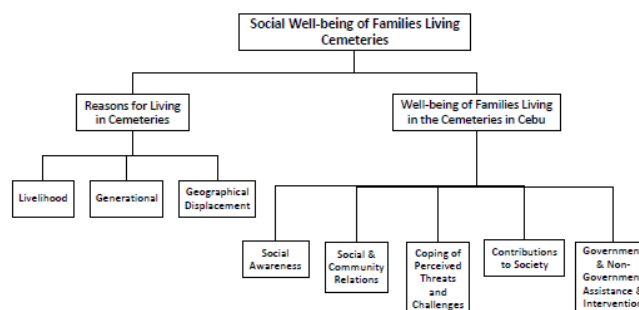


Fig. 1. *The Thematic Outline of the Social Well-being of Families Living in Cemeteries*

As shown in Figure 1, there were two main themes that were derived based on the responses of the respondents in the interviews, the 1) reasons for living in cemeteries and the 2) well-being of the families living in

the cemeteries in Cebu, Philippines. The reasons for living in cemeteries consisted of three sub-themes which were livelihood, generational and geographical displacement. On the other hand, the well-being of the families living in the cemeteries included five sub-themes which were social awareness, social and community relations, coping of perceived threats and challenges, contributions to society and government and non-government intervention and assistance. These main themes and subthemes will be explained and discussed further through the use of the respondents' answers from the transcripts.

Reasons for Living in Cemeteries

A. Livelihood

As poverty remains in the Philippines, the key informants also continue to find ways and means on how they would survive and meet their needs for at least in a day. Hard work is their main key to live on and pursue their needs. They never let themselves remain motionless because they have their family who depends on them. When the researchers asked on what are their sources of income, they answered:

Selling candles, mamalina (burning of grass which people who are going out in the cemetery usually pass by on the smoke out from that grass to drive away spirits), and maintaining the cleanliness of grave stones. That is what most of the people do here. (Mangandila, mamalina, mang gam, mao ra na ang gekuans mga taw diri.) (K11, K12, K13, K14, K16)

When there's funeral, there's work. We take out bones from tombs and look for people who will ask us to make lapida because I know how to make one like this. (Nay trabaho mao nang nay lubong. naay habwa-on namo, ngita mi'g pabuhat og lapida. kamao man sad ko mubuhat pareha ani.) (K13, K14, K15)

The feeling and the benefits that they get out from it is what makes the residents of cemetery to stay there for years even though they have the choice of leaving there anytime whenever they feel so and find some other place. Since their livelihood is just a foot away, they do not need to travel away just to get money because their home is also where they find their source of income. In relation to Keyes' concepts of social well-being, their livelihood can be considered as their social contribution. Living in cemeteries gives potential and actual possibilities of

contributing to the society such as preserving the graves of the dead. For most Filipinos, the graves are considered as sacred and thus must be protected and taken cared of [1]. As these families pursue a plausible livelihood in these areas, their contribution extends as far as preserving a cultural milieu. Additional, this concept of well being is outlined by their social coherence and social integration as they are a community that is built on a communal activity, which is their livelihood.

B. Generational

One of the reasons that they stayed long in cemeteries is that their parents used to live there already before they died, and considered these cemeteries their home. They continued and became a part of what their parents have started in the cemetery. Their parents raised them in cemeteries so they became exposed to the kind of living that they have in bone yards.

I like it here because it where my parents died. (Ganahan ko kay diri man namatay akong ginikanan) (K130. Before, my grandfather was maintenance personnel of Ludo. (Ah, sauna kay akong lolo may whole maintenance sa Ludo. Sa whole jud Ludo.) (K16)

When we asked on how long they have been residing in cemeteries they responded:

Since, I was 15 years old. (Dugay nako diri nag edad pako ug 15 anyos.) (K11)

I think it's my 30th year now. (Murag ika 30 na tingae ron ka tuig na.) (K12)

Since birth (68 years and 20 years) (K13, K16)

I started living here since I was 16 years old. (40 years) (Sugod ko'g puyo diri mga kuan na to, edad ko og 16 anyos.) (K14)

After the achievement of basic needs based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, love and belongingness follows wherein giving and receiving affection of love is so evident [10]. The generational predisposition of living in cemeteries can be characterized by their social integration, which is their sense of collective belongingness to the area. Respondents claimed that they have been living in these areas because these are the same places they were born. Being in these areas would mean of the respondents' belongingness to such community. But as responded in the succeeding

paragraph, respondents' social integration may have been threatened.

C. Geographical Displacement

Knowing that the family is in danger, it will make them think of some other place to stay because their security is threatened and now, finding a way to escape out from it is considered a good decision and solution. Some of the key informants considered their previous location as dangerous and unhealthy.

We were afraid because our previous house down there was prone to fire and there were no wide exit points. (Ang amo gyung balay gyud didto sa ubos, nahadlok sad mi ka yang among balay ngadto duol kayg sunog sunog di mi kadagan dayun kay gagmay kay mig exit.) (KI5)

It is peaceful, that's why we live here. (Ang rason nga dinhi mi nagpuyo kay way mga samok) (KI1, KI2)

On the other category of needs of Maslow, that is the aesthetic need states that there are some people who need beauty and pleasing experiences, as cited in [11]. For some of the key informants, staying in the cemetery is more pleasant and peaceful compared to the streets or their previous residences. While some have socially integrated themselves better than others in the cemeteries, the families' capacity to be socially integrated are threatened with social isolation. They found these cemeteries as alternative integration mechanisms in order to protect themselves from isolation. Their isolation was regarded as the harms that are imminent in their previous domicile. In order to counter the possibility of isolation, they found an option in living in cemeteries as ideal places for living.

Well-being of Families

A. Social Awareness

Access to Information

Social Awareness is the person's knowledge on what is happening in the society. One way of getting this knowledge is by an access of information. When asked how they are able to get the information, they exclaimed:

I get news from the newspapers, television, and radio. (Makakuha ko og balita sa dyaryo, telebisyon ug radyo.) (KI1, KI3, KI4, KI6)

I visit social media like Facebook and Twitter from my cellphone. (Mubisita ko og mga social media sama sa Facebook og Twitter gikan sa akoang selpon.) (KI5)

Even if these areas can be considered as unconventional, awareness is apparent among the respondents. This is characterized by their ability to gain access to useful and vital information about their society. In this regard, it can be seen that the respondents have manifested their potentials for social coherence which is their consciousness about the world. It can be implied that their ability of knowing is not only limited to the livelihood that they have but they also have the knowledge of current issues and events.

Political Opinion

The answers tell that the participants are updated about current events and issues. In line with this, they also have opinions about the latest occurrences in the political field. They say that:

There will only be a program by the candidates if it's election time. (Naa ra'y programa gikan sa mga kandidato kung panahon sa eleksyon.) (KI4)

One time, I insulted our barangay. I asked for medical assistance, instead, they gave me a prescription. I was so pissed at them. (Naa tu'y ka-usa, akoang gi-insulto ang barangay. Nangayo ko tabag medikal pero ila ko gitagaan og reseta. Naglagot gyud ko ato nila.) (KI1)

Our government here did not give us a chance to choose our own barangay captain. They only focus on their own selves first. (Amung gobyerno diri wala mi taga-I og higayon nga mupili og amuang Barangay Kapitan. Ilaha rang gi-una ilang kaugalingon.) (KI3)

It can be observed from the respondents that they are able to express important opinions that regard to their welfare. At this point, it can be said that their empowerment is an embodiment of their ability to be aware and contribute to the society. This is evident in the theory of Keyes (1998) that living in a considerable impoverished area may have significant political contributions. As presented, they have the ability to identify and criticize political schemes that are not justified and may put their welfare in peril. As Keyes noted, they may have the ability to show their ability to

control an outcome that may or may not be favorable to them.

Perceived Discrimination and Stereotype

The key informants also share their thoughts about discriminations that they received from the people living outside the cemetery as well as the caretakers within the cemeteries.

My children have been teased by their classmates. They were mocked for living with the dead. (Akung mga anak kay gisungog sa ilang mga klasmeyt. Sungogon sila kay nagpuyo tupad sa mga patay.) (KI1, KI4, KI6)

We were accused for stealing iron metal. (Gipasanginlan mi nga nangawat og puthaw.) (KI4)

Referring to Keyes' theory of social coherence, the respondents show that they are interacting well with the society. Although they do not get along very well with their neighbourhood and government, they get along very well with their families and relatives. The key informants show natural tendency of good communication with the people close to them. Although as individuals, they have their own interests and objectives. They have the freedom to thrive in the society and survive for their own good.

B. Social and Community Relations

Security

It is one of life's greatest satisfaction is to attain safety and security in the community. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, safety needs are those physical assurance, reliance, protection and freedom from harmful threats surrounding the person [11]. As to the concern of the key respondents, most of them are satisfied and secured living in the cemeteries despite of the recurrence of natural calamities. They revealed:

The place is safe; no harmful threats for there are guards roaming around the area. (Okay raman kay naa man sa'y gwardya diri). (KI2, KI4)

The place is secured unlike if we are on the streets. (Mas safe pa mi diri kumpara ug naa mi sa dan.)(KI3, KI5)

Contrary to the common belief that living in cemeteries are dangerous, the respondents claim that living in these areas are not as dangerous as they seem to be. They further espoused that living in the cemeteries are safer as compared to living on the streets where no

apparent protection is available. As for Keyes' Social well-being, it can be seen that the respondents have ensured a place where they can be socially actualized. They believe in the ability of the cemeteries that they can be well-protected physically, so as their rights and welfares.

Sense of Belongingness

When it comes to the need to belong in a community, some respondents decline their right to join the neighborhood for they have defined their neighbors as toxic people and have the trait of being selfish in the things they own. Although in some aspect cohesiveness was present but only to those who were relatives and close to the group.

Most people here are gossip-savvy. They usually make rumours even when no one did nothing bad to them. People are only interactive to family and relatives. (Puros ngil-ad ug nay kaayuhan, dauton pa ka. Kuan mga gitawag nato'g manghilabot ba, dili hilabtanon nga mangawat ha pero diri kana bang uban tao. Di kay ang kuan ang mga batasan man gyud dinhi gud kay parenti-parenti.) (KI3, KI4, KI5, KI6)

It can be said that living in cemeteries are a way of building a community for them. But for some, there can be a deterioration or threat to that organization. Living in cemeteries can be greatly compromised when communities start to shatter when groups of people are turning their backs on their fellow community member. This can be apparent when groups start to create gossips against other families, individuals are ridiculed.

Form of Communication

Technology is widely known these days may it from rural or urban area and cemeteries are not exempted by these phenomena. The respondents confirmed that they have access to televisions, radio and newspapers for the awareness of societal information in the country and the world. The younger key informants made use of cell phones and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

I listen to the news in the radio and usually read the local newspapers. (Makabalita ko radio usahay unya mubasa pud ug dyaryo.) (KI4, KI5.1, KI6)

I usually get news from Facebook and Twitter. Although I don't get to sign-in all the time, I still get updates for every time I sign-in. (Makabasa

kog balita sa Facebook ug Twitter bisan di ko pirmi mag online.) (KI5, KI6)

Well-being of a person affects the basic functioning not just for himself but also the community. This proves that to be able to assess oneself, it needs to know the stability of the mind [12] and its connection to the people and the social environment. In this case, Keyes was able to emphasize the ability of individuals to pursue relationships about the world and to other people. As technology has become accessible to them, their well-being may be strengthened as such facilitated to bridge the gap of relationships.

C. Coping of Perceived Threats and Challenges

In order to preserve their well-being, families needed to employ mechanisms in their style of life. As there are imminent threats that could endanger their well-being, certain types of behaviours are present among the respondents to maintain an ideal life for themselves and their families.

Desensitization

In the years that families spent living in cemeteries, they have been exposed to aversive stimuli such as threats and challenges in security, health, shelter, interpersonal relations and finances. They grew up to these troubling them but they seemed to manage or have grown used to it. The following respondents have been desensitized in some threats:

Before, there were groups of gangsters, Bloods and Crips, which usually fight and sleep here. When they get here, they get into shootings that resulted in numerous deaths she (my daughter) complained about us living here. But later on, we get used to it because we stayed safe. (Sauna duna man gyud dinhi Bloods ug Crips nga mag away away nya mangatog man dinhi. Ig sud ana nila diri magpinusilay mao tong dunay daghang mga patay diri nga matog lang patyon. Mao nang sya (akong anak) nakareklamo na sya namo sauna nga di sya gusto nga mupuyo diri. Pero nadugay naanad naman lang sad mi diri kay safe man gud mi.) (KI5.1)

For us who have lived here for long, it is okay because we got used to it. (Para namo kay nangaraan naman mi, okay ra kay nakuan na lagi.) (KI6)

The key informants have developed a coping mechanism is called desensitization, the process in which

people develop less emotional sensitivity due to frequent exposure to aversive stimulus. These stimuli no longer bother them. As part of their social actualization, they have developed a certain sense of security as they have been desensitized by certain possibilities of harm.

Passivity

Some key informants shy away and give mere responses to issues usually to avoid conflict. This behaviour shows passivity.

No, nothing. People didn't mind because those who steal get aggressive & hard-headed. We individually mind our own business. The ones who lived here for long, just stayed quiet than argue and fight. (Wala, wala. Wala, wala mao na karon wala bayay paki kay isog bayang mga taw diha di baya mastorya. Kanya-kanya rajug kuan. Nya katong mga karaan, wala hilom nalang kaysa mag gubot nag maayo.) (KI6)

We can actually read the person, if others look at us (with disgust), we could understand. We just do not mind them. (Kita maka psycho mangyud tag taw nu, nga tan awn tag taw makasabot raman gyud ta. Dili nalang nato pansinon oy.) (KI1)

Another coping mechanism they have developed is called passivity. While some have been desensitized, these groups of people learned how to not mind other people's business especially that these may involve possibilities of social isolation. As compared to some respondents that gossiping may be present, to some of the respondents, they have learned to actualize themselves apart from other people's perceptions about them. While in this case, their social acceptance were compromised, they settle to live according to their own terms without being influenced by people's judgments about them.

Education

Life in the cemetery did not hinder the resident's right to go to school and be educated. In this manner education is coping mechanism that would propel them to a better life ahead. It is their way of saving themselves from ignorance. Here are some of the respondents' take on education:

Take your education seriously. That is all I ask from them. All my hard work is for you. No matter how hard our life is I still sent you to school, you did not stop. But it is up to you if you will work hard or not, you will not regret. (Di lang mo magbinuang ug skwela. Mao rajud na akong ika

storya nila. Kani akong pagkayod para inyo mani. Bisag unsa kalisod nato gipa skwela ta mo. Wa ta mo gipa undang. Pero naa ra ninyog maningkamot mo o di, di mo magmahay nako.) (K11, KI5.1)

In order to actualize themselves, they made sure that most of their offspring will be informed individuals and citizens of the country. There were observable efforts from the families to educate the children as they believe that this is a part of the actualization and human development. To further their developmental pursuits, family values such as valuing education and giving importance to its outcomes are inculcated to the family members.

Livelihood as a Coping Mechanism

Just to battle the challenges in finances and their daily needs, most of our respondents look for jobs to make ends meet. Here are some of their concerns:

I am a caretaker here in the cemetery; I also sell flowers and candles. (Mang gam aning menteryo, maninda aning buwak ug kandila.) (KI2, KI4)

I work in Parkmall as a promoter. There are three of us who are working, our eldest up to me. Half of our salary is allotted to our mother while the other half is allotted for our personal expenses. (Sa Parkmall. Promoter. Tulo man mi kabuok nangtrabaho, kamaguwangan hangtod ako. Murag ang katunga sa among sweldo kay sa among mama hapak. Ang katunga ana, amoa na.) (KI6)

It was admitted that there may be no financial stability in these areas; other means of facilitating financial mobility is getting other forms of livelihood or professions. While they consider living in these areas as a primary financial source, they have employed means to protect themselves by finding alternative means of living.

Divine Intervention

Most of the respondents turn to their faith when the challenges are hard to manage. Here are some of their confessions:

The dead only scares you but the living could kill you.

Ghosts only scare you. It depends on you if you fear them. We have defense. This. (takes out his Crucifix necklace). (Ang patay mura raman kag

hadlukon ra ka ana. ang buhi, patyon man ka. mao na, ang kanang panghadlok sa kalag. Dependeng na sa imo og mahadlok gyud ka. naa man tay ikasagang. Kani.) (KI4)

(Typhoon Yolanda) I didn't let them go out (the children). We were just inside. We were praying that we will be saved and nothing bad will happen to us. This was what I did during that typhoon. (Wala nako pagawsa. Naa rami sa sud. Nag ampo lang sd mi nga maluwas nga way mahitabo namo. Mao rajud na akong gikuan atong pagbagyo jud.) (KI1)

Coping styles vary among individuals and families. Every individual's coping mechanism is a reflection of his or her personality and his or her approach in handling stressful situations in life [14]. As stated above, families have managed to get through their everyday lives in various mechanisms. This shows how, despite their disposition in life, families are working hard to survive their unfortunate lives.

D. Contributions to Society

Entrepreneurship

In living in a cemetery community for a long time, people have surely contributed a lot that benefit both the person and the society. For a society to function well, the people must contribute with each other to sustain their needs. This may be through selling and exchanging services needed in the cemetery for the people outside who went to visit their loved ones in the grave. We asked the key informants as to what they have contributed for the betterment of the society and this is what they conveyed:

I sell candles and flowers. I also clean the tombs and mausoleums and maintain cleanliness in the cemetery. (Namaligya ko ug kandila og buwak. Ako sad ang tiglimpyo sa mga nitso ug musoleo ug tig-gam sa minteryo.) (KI1, KI2, KI4, KI6)

Political Contributions

Some of them decided to be leaders and volunteers to support their community and act on what needs to be done to improve their condition and develop their neighbourhood. These organizations have helped the residents sustain their needs from both the government and sponsors from outside the country. The researchers ventured into the youth's chosen path and one respondent revealed that:

Before, I was the president of our organization. I was the one who lead the whole cemetery. What I

do is that I report to the barangay the necessities like food in our community (Kaniadto, presidente ko sa among organisasyon, so, ako ang nag-lead sa tibuok sementeryo. Ang akong buhat kay ako'y tig-report adto sa barangay unsay kinahanglan sa among komunidad parehas anang pagkaon, og uban pa.) (KI6)

Other Professional Pursuits

The life inside the cemetery is difficult. It is hard to get stable jobs and money-generating businesses. Other residents extend their services outside the area. The younger generations who have not finished studying tried their luck finding jobs outside the area. Some of them landed jobs that provide them with enough income.

I am a Sales Promoter in Parkmall. (Usa ko ka Sales Promoter sa usa ka mall diri sa siyudad. Sa Parkmall ba.) (KI6)

Education

The participants are supported with education. The government offers free education for students in the public schools. The researchers investigated on this factor and the respondents declared:

There is free education for the kindergarten and sometimes for the elementary. People living outside volunteers to teach along with foreign sponsors and religious groups. (Naay libre nga edukasyon diri para sa kindergarten ug panagsa as elementary. Ang mga magtutudlo kay tagagawas. Naa sa'y mga sponsors nga mga foreigner ug panagsa mga relihiyosong grupo.) (KI4, KI5, KI6)

Therefore, the key informants are socially well in terms of assessing their contributions to the society. They feel important for doing their part and performing their responsibilities for the growth of the society. While threats may be apparent, they believe that their actions and help for the betterment for the community are achieved and given value by the other people in the society. Further, the respondents have contributed to the society on their own ways. Majority of the people are from their livelihood while the younger generations are through their academic performance and leadership in the organizations. While they also help their families in their livelihood, they are also acing their priorities in the school.

E. Government and Non-Government Intervention and Assistance

4P'S

Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a government program organized by the Department of Social Welfare and Development to help the less fortunate household in the Philippines. Its objectives concern both social assistance and social development of the people. This program has helped some of the residents.

4Ps helped us financially especially for the disabled member in the family. (Nakatabang gyud ang 4Ps sa amo labi na naa miy disabled sa amo.) (KI4, KI5, KI6)

NGO's

Aside from the government help obtained, it has also caught the attention of the catholic and non-Catholic religious groups, local and international organizations who aimed to give justice to the poor situation of the cemeteries. Some of the non-government organizations gave scholarships, feeding programs, school supplies, introduction to some religious activities, seminars and trainings on starting a small business and many more which made the people insightful on daily basis. Some of the organizations that offered help are *International Justice Mission (IJM)*, *Action for Nurturing Children and Environment (ANCE, Inc.)* and other religious and foreign organizations.

I am a scholar of IJM since Grade 1 until now that I am on Grade 7. (Scholar ko sa IJM sukad Grade 1 hantod karon na Grade 7 na ko.) (KI5)

ANCE, Inc. gives help and donations especially for the children during Christmas season. (MUhatag na ang ANCE diri ug mga hinabang labi na paras mga bata taga-Pasko.) (KI4)

The abovementioned government and non-government organizations affected the well-being of the people living in cemeteries for without those, their efforts in surviving in life would be less possible. As mentioned in social contribution, they felt important to the society knowing that there were so many help extended in their communities [9]. It showed that without the guidance and help of the organizations, concerned citizens in the area would have engage themselves in crimes or any illegal activities available to be able to survive in the cruel world. Through those help, some of them found worth and continued to work hard to live every day [12].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Amidst all the struggles and challenges they face every day, these families are still capable of functioning in terms of looking for ways to earn money and providing the family. In lieu of Keyes' definition of Social Well-being, the researchers may conclude that the families living in cemeteries are socially well for most of the indicators can be nuanced by their individual experiences. However, the results are not sufficient enough to state that the families have high social well-being in tackling each dimension. There may be other aspects that are needed to be responded to such as protection from threats like crimes and ensuring equal opportunities for securing their economic resources.

Actions executed by the government which is the most significant body to answer the needs of these families should be made. All families are in need of decent houses where they can stay in their lifetime without the fear of the shelters being demolished or them being driven away from their homes. Also they asked for livelihood to go along their requested shelters. It is recommended that the government should answer the needs for housing and livelihood that these families were crying out. To future researchers, exploring in this topic is a good way to be able to contribute and help the lives of the families living in cemeteries. The marginalized in the society need the help of the people who are capable. Venturing into researches and studies are some of the numerous ways researchers can help them. More researches create more awareness. It is recommended to future researchers that further observations and studies be made to families living in cemeteries to spread awareness globally and somehow alleviate the current status of the people in this particular disposition.

As a consequence to these findings, better policy decisions can be made to benefit the growing population of families living in the cemeteries. As a practical benefit, there must be targeted government programs or initiatives that directly meet the needs of such special population. Given the current state of need, protection and sustainability, local processes can be considered in order to uplift the current conditions of the residents while improving their sense of citizenship and humanity.

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