

# Embracing the Elderly Affections: Understanding the Lived Experiences Among Filipino Children Raised by Custodial Grandparents

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## Abstract

A child's growth and development correspond with the guidance of the adults. Not only do parents take on full responsibility, but it has also passed on to the hands of their grandparents, commonly in Filipino household traditions. In this regard, this paper discusses providing a clear understanding of the lived experiences of Filipino Grandchildren in the Philippines concerning their adaptation and struggles. This qualitative study utilized the phenomenological approach to fully understand the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants, specifically the Filipino Grandchildren relative to the central question of "What are the common traits of Filipino children raised by grandparents situated in the Philippines?" The necessary set of data was obtained in a forty-three (43) semi-structured interview and formulated themes from the participants' responses. Findings have shown the developmental stages and learnings of the Filipino grandchildren. It is composed of four major themes namely: Deepening Relations, Challenging Ordeals, Advancing Stages, and Enlightening Guidance. The rising number of grandparent care promulgates its distinct features and knowledge in the provision of their grandchildren. It has abruptly led to a significance of the familial tradition of the Filipinos. To build up the spaces, this paper suggests the future researchers to further expand and diversify the selection of participants to collect an all-inclusive verbalization of their lived experiences. Furthermore, to conduct further analysis on how the pandemic (COVID-19) impacts the Filipino grandchildren-grandparents family relations.

*Keywords:* Filipino Grandchildren; Filipino Grandparents; Custodial Grandparents; Family Relations; Care; Growth; Development

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## 1. Introduction

Filipinos are people who are known to have close family ties, wherein it would be deemed unusual for one to be distant and to live alone. As studied by Domingo and Casterline (2019), "only 4 percent of the elderly

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live alone and the percentage for both sexes of all ages is less than 5 percent.” Filipinos co-residing and supporting family members verify that the bond of Filipino families runs deep, ranging into generations. A recent survey (as cited in Arnilla, 2017) “proved some of the observations on the caregiving role played by grandparents wherein it was observed that 27.1% of grandchildren co-reside with their grandmothers and an overwhelming 78.0% of the grandchildren received grandmothers’ care.” Filipinos depend on their family and relatives for support and guidance. It is due to the great sense of filial piety and responsibility that most Filipinos embody which drives one to support their family in times of prosperity and bliss and even in adversity and sorrow.

Naturally, children are raised by their loving parents, however, due to certain circumstances, not many get to enjoy this kind of life. There are children whose grandparents act as their parents from birth or at a very young age. According to Saxena & Brotherson (2013), “there are several potential reasons why grandparents raise their grandchildren, it may be because the parents are having physical or mental health challenges or are facing problems such as abuse, abandonment, teen pregnancy, military deployment, unstable home life or incarceration.” Grandparents may also face many new challenges when the job of raising their grandchildren is handed to them. Yet, despite the obstacles they face, grandparents gain an irreplaceable opportunity to spend time with their grandchildren. Smith & Segal (2020) stated that “raising grandchildren may be challenging but it is also rewarding.” They also stated that grandparents will have a much greater connection with their grandchildren and may also find themselves rolling back to their years.

In this research, the grandparents will be taking responsibility for looking after the child. However, children are naturally attached to their birth parents, which is why trials will ultimately be encountered when an extended family enters into the picture. Taking care of children, whether it may be temporarily or permanently, is not easy as there is no fixed, exact or correct and easy way to care for them. Instead, love, understanding and an explanation should be given by the child’s grandparents in a manner which the child would understand. With this in mind, the quality of their relationship shall develop as time passes. Additionally, to truly grow, both parties should learn to adapt and adjust to the generation gap in order to deepen their relationship and bond. When understanding is achieved, their love for the family shall awaken and blossom like never before.

Equally important, as the parents are away, care and love for the grandchildren are needed. Thus, the grandparents are given the full-time responsibility of providing the affection that the children need. Roles are also given to the elders. They are mentors, teachers, role models, and supporters. According to Schreur, J. (2016), most grandparents have unique abilities and knowledge to share with their grandchildren, creative ways are often used. Providing support to the family is also a responsibility of a grandparent in times of hardship and such. Also, grandchildren often look beyond their parents to their grandparents for how life is to be lived. Children observe adults and learn important things in life.

Furthermore, according to Hayslip Jr. (2017), as parental figures, grandparents serve as role models, provide their grandchildren with nurturance, love, and support, and communicate with their grandchildren about the direction their lives are headed, the child’s feelings about his or her parents, and relationships with age peers. As time goes on, the grandparents build an unspoken routine with their grandchild, they accomplish staple household chores, varying from cooking to cleaning, all the while additionally implementing tasks that cater towards their grandchild’s or grandchildren’s needs. The routine manner of these activities gives them a stronger bond to connect.

Relatively, in this approach, the researchers formulated interview questions to emit the participants’ field of experience. This was done to further investigate their responses. As mentioned by Bunting (2013), a kind and

good set of interview questions that are good to ask are straightforward, open-ended, pointed, light-hearted, and unbiased. Furthermore, this study includes the central question, “What are the common traits of Filipino children raised by grandparents situated in the Philippines?” with four (4) specific questions, and thirteen (13) developmental questions. The past, present, and future perspectives were used as a basis to formally conduct this research.

In this study titled “Embracing the Elderly Affections: Understanding the Lived Experiences among Filipino Children Raised by Custodial Grandparents.” The researchers used a qualitative approach. This study aims to collect and analyze data through direct observations and open-minded interviews providing the researchers with a more in-depth understanding of the study. The researchers have gathered data from multiple respondents through interviews that are unique all the while sharing similar qualities and criteria. The respondents’ robotfoto and identities have been kept confidential to all but the researchers. As the study is distinguished as phenomenology, the questions presented to the respondents in the interview focused mainly on their experiences and their consciousness towards their experiences. The researchers have processed the data from the interviews through cool and warm analysis, such as consented recordings and the emic to etic transcriptions, the data has been analysed and categorized through a dendrogram and will be presented along with the study’s themes in the simulacrum.

Through this phenomenological paper, findings have shown the advantages and disadvantages of being raised by grandparents in terms of both emotional and mental growth and development. Being raised by grandparents has given the children the opportunity to learn several new values and gain deeper insights into various aspects of life. Although trials were faced, with understanding and time, the child’s sense of filial piety and the love and affection for family deepened.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research Design*

This study used the qualitative format and is a phenomenological research design. Qualitative research seeks to describe the meanings of the central themes in the life world of the participants. It is a way to gather data for the betterment of understanding a specific problem. Furthermore, it promulgates a better analysis and encourages people to think critically about their struggles. According to Pathak, Jena, & Kalra (2013), Qualitative research takes a humanistic or idealistic approach to understand a research question. It was first used in psychology studies when psychologists considered the numeric evaluation of human behavior to be tedious.

The study of structures of consciousness processes as seen by a first-person observer is called Phenomenology. In most scenarios where people use a phenomenology study as a tool, interviews are done with a group of participants who have firsthand knowledge of a scenario, occurrence, or experience (Chambers, 2013).

### *2.2. Research Locus and Sample*

This study was conducted in Philippine School Doha located in Mesaimmer, Doha, Qatar.

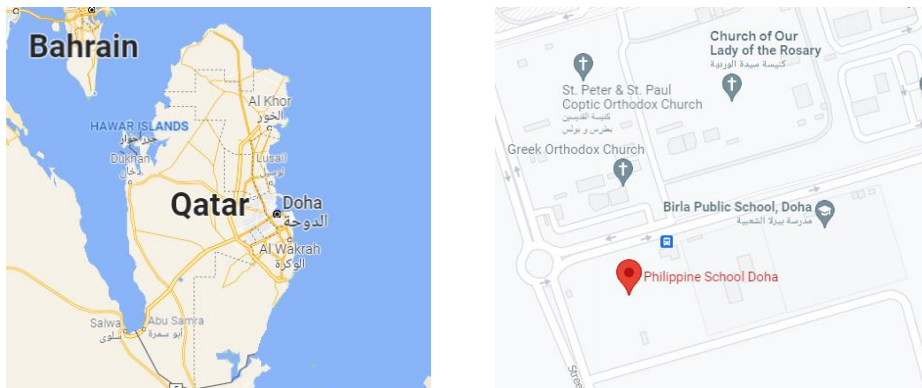


Fig. 1. (a) Map of Qatar; (b) Location of Philippine School Doha

Philippine School Doha is known to be the leading basic learning institution in Qatar. The school is a non-stock non-profit community school that has been serving the Filipino community in Qatar since 1992. The participants for this study were chosen following the criteria set: (1) should be 14-20 years old; (2) spent at least 4 or more years with grandparents; (3) lived with grandparents in the Philippines. The criteria set was followed and observed to get and understand the participants' lived experiences being raised by their grandparents.

### 2.3. Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

The necessary set of data was obtained in a semi-structured interview consisting of forty-three (43) questions. Moreover, the robotfoto is a collection of data with respect to the participant. This includes personal information such as the participant's name, age, profession, and the amount of time spent with the grandparents. Robotfotos were handed to seven (7) participants through e-mail, together with its consent forms. This is to ensure that they are willing to be interviewed and knowledgeable about the purpose of the study.

Using recording equipment, the interview was documented audio-visually. This is to ensure the proper collection of data with no incomplete responses. The recording was then transcribed verbatim as to maintain the integrity of the participant's response. The participants were given the choice for the date and time of the interview along with the letter for the interview to be recorded to which each participant gave their proper consent.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The researchers formulated themes within the study to fathom the ideas gathered from the participant's answers. To effectively analyze the data, the researchers utilized the inductive approach which includes: (1) Transcription of all recorded responses into written text; (2) Analyzation and conversion of the transcription from the language of the participants to the language of the researchers; (3) Reanalysis of the transcription of data to procure a general insight on the participant's experiences; (4) Formulation and organization of the

cluster of themes; (5) Categorization of the formulated cluster of themes in the dendrogram; (6) Creation of a visual representation of the findings, a simulacrum, that will aid readers to understand.

### 3. Findings

This phenomenological study aims to describe the lived experiences of Filipino Grandchildren Situated in the Philippines, specifically those who live with only their grandmother and grandfather relative to the central question: “What are the common traits of Filipino children raised by grandparents situated in the Philippines?” Furthermore, the study focuses on the specific question: “How do Filipino children raised by grandparents situated in the Philippines overcome their struggles and difficulties while growing up?” Certainly, having to leave their parents' nest at a young age is no easy adjustment. Challenges arise as children adjust to living with their grandparents which can instill invaluable lessons, and boost emotional development.

Figure 2 shows the simulacrum focused on four major themes: **Deepening Relations**, **Challenging Ordeals**, **Advancing Stages**, and **Enlightening Guidance**. These themes highlight the stages the grand children go through. As the participants are exclusively Filipino, the nationality was depicted through four leaves in the colours red, yellow, white and blue representing the country's flag. Each colour is then correlated with each of the study's themes. For challenging ordeals, red was utilized to represent the negative energy, and challenges the grandchildren felt and experienced. Deepening relations, yellow symbolizes remembrance, loyalty, honour, and energy qualities needed to deepen and strengthen a relationship. Enlightening guidance, white symbolizes knowledge, innocence, wholeness, completion, a sense of enlightenment and guidance. Advancing stages, blue represents serenity, inspiration, emotion, and wisdom, the qualities that are needed to advance, to create a change in life, to express oneself, and to adapt to life. In relation to the title “Embracing the Elderly Affections” the centre is occupied by silhouettes of grandparents with grandchildren. The platform in which they stand is representative of the grandparents' support and guidance over the child's growth depicted in the main shape of a plant.

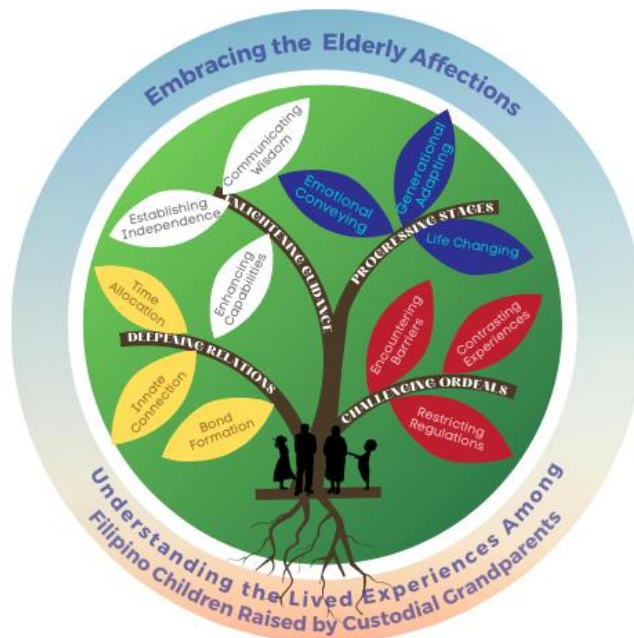


Fig. 2. Simulacrum

## Deepening Relations

A strong bond is the ultimate foundation of a relationship. This is why conscious beings, in response to social instinct, intuitively form bonds with those around them, especially their family. Hence, it is to be expected for one to first and foremost long and strive to build an emotional connection with family. To forge and deepen a relationship, factors such as innate connection, bond formation and time allocation plays a huge role.

Familial bond refers to the intimate connection that only family members can share. It is an innate connection that exists prior to meeting that gives one a sense of home. The respondents affirmed with these replies:

*"We were close from the start. There were never any awkward moments, which is why I would say we didn't have any problems adjusting with each other." (R1)*

*"Conversing with them felt natural because I treated them like my own parents." (R2)*

Despite the innate connection that exists within a family, to build a truly strong relationship it is necessary to form deeper bonds through communication and bonding. As the respondents expressed:

*"I grew up with them so we naturally had a strong and deep connection. But while I was growing up we became closer and our relationship strengthened and deepened through our talks and bonding times." (R7)*

*"Yes, I was able to because the trust was there. They trusted me and I trusted them. We were able to converse without having to even sit down or have a serious talk. We were also able to tell each other anything and that's why I think we had a good relationship." (R1)*

Aligned with the connection that families long to build and develop is the time that must be utilized or expended. The time spent and the moments shared affect the type of the relationship to be created and the feelings that one experiences. This can be seen in the responses:

*"I feel happy because they are always willing to listen to me no matter what. I sometimes babble and chatter but they would still nod their head and chuckle while listening." (R6)*

*"I feel comfortable talking to them, but when the topic is something personal it gets a little awkward because I feel sensitive about it." (R5)*

## Challenging Ordeals

In a setting where grandparental figures are held accountable for a major responsibility, acceptance becomes the key to the other way around. However, beginnings may become difficult too, especially as big challenges come into the picture. Whether it is because of communication, or failure to meet expectations, there are many reasons for family conflict. Contrasting experiences, restricting regulations, and encountering barriers depict the struggles that upheld and faced the grandchildren's realities.

Formulating the sub-theme of contrasting experiences, here it shows how grand parenting styles turned out to be traditionalized, and although compassionate enough to their grandchildren, grandparents may come across as over caring and overprotective. Additionally, some of the methods that are used in order to raise them are strict, with policies and consequences.

*"They were very caring and at times they could be overprotective as well but they always made it a point to teach me and let me do simple tasks." (R7)*

*"Just like any strict parents would do, it has to be detailed. Asking questions like, who are you with, what you are going to do, what event, and more." (R4)*

*"One of the methods that they use is by scolding me whenever I do something bad." (R5)*

*"I'd say they had methods when it came to punishments like grounding." (R1)*

For an effective and evident way of grand parenting, like normal families do, the restricting of regulations and responsibilities are also present. Participants mentioned the most difficult part to comprehend in their upbringing, like preventing them from doing activities.

*"The most difficult part to understand is that they stop me from doing the things that make me happy." (R5)*

*"When they get mad, they will bring back their past like they want me to be like them." (R6)*

*"I didn't really find it difficult because I do enjoy spending time with them. And I think, all the things that they do for me is for the betterment of my future." (R2)*

*"Yeah, I'd say at the time, I found it really difficult to understand why they had to ground me because I didn't get it at the time because I was only focused on having fun." (R1)*

The encountering of barriers, while living with their grandparents, such as the struggles or difficulties, and common misunderstandings are one of their biggest conflicts. Participants said that the lack of quality time with their parents, and failure to seek help are their major struggles. Moreover, common misunderstanding included favoritism, invasion of one's privacy, and bringing up mistakes in the past.

*"It was either the missing parental figures from time to time or how I would keep certain things to myself because I didn't feel like telling them about it." (R3)*

*"I didn't really have any struggles with them. I had struggles with how I communicated with my parents. I found it hard to catch up with my parents and I found it hard to talk to them but in terms of me and my grandparents, I didn't really have any difficulties with them." (R1)*

*"It was the fact that they favored my younger brother." (R2)*

*"Failure to ask for consultation or ask for help whenever I have problems." (R5)*

*"The common misunderstanding of mine is invading my privacy and maybe it's because it's their generation." (R4)*

### **Progressing Stages**

Adjusting to a life with grandparents as parental figures is a very abrupt and unexpected stage the respondents had to go through with no choice of their own. As explained, *"I actually did not have a choice because I was too young and still a baby back then."* (R4). In spite of this, the response received by the researchers was that a few had not acknowledged the change that was coming while the majority of the initial reactions were negative but with a certain happiness overcoming their sadness. As the respondents expressed:

*"I was sad when I heard my parents were leaving. But, I overcame it because they talked to me about it a month in advance." (R2)*

*"At first, of course it was sad. I was unprepared, I felt really incomplete without my parents at first, but eventually I got used to it." (R5)*

*"I was sad because they will leave me in the Philippines with my grandparents, but they will bring my younger brother with them. I do not remember anymore because I was young at that time." (R6)*

*"I didn't feel like it was a life changing moment. Most of the time my parents were not home and I was a very independent child so I think I was prepared for it." (R3)*

The abrupt change and adjustment was not limited to the grandchildren themselves but as well as to the grandparents raising them, noting the generational gap in between the two. The responses of the participants show how all of the grandparents of the chosen respondents are willing to learn and try adjusting to the digital age. As explained further by the respondents:

*"They learned how to use social media platforms to see how we were doing." (R2)*

*"We would help each other. Whenever they had a question about the trends or using social media they'd ask me for help and whenever I wanted to share something about the trends that I knew I would tell them." (R1)*

*"Since I share most of the time with them, they're always open to new things like the TV." (R4)*

*"They would allow me to hang out and do some things with my friends which really suits this generation." (R5)*

The relationship between grandparent and grandchild further developed and grew from the initial negative reaction to a relationship both sides could enjoy and open up to. With one respondent explaining *"I have been with my grandparents since my infancy, which is why there is not that much to explain about how we became close, it was just natural."* (R7). The respondents had established their relationships through communication and proper expression and conveying of their feelings and thoughts. In the words of the respondents:

*“We bonded even over the smallest things like sharing stories and not only me telling them my problems and struggles but them also sharing things from their childhood and their memories and I cherish those small bonding more than when we go out together or have big parties and I think that’s a big reason why we were able to be that close and I was able to tell them anything.” (R1)*

*“I receive help from my grandparents if I don’t have anyone to tell my secrets or problems.” (R2)*

*“By spending a lot of time with them, it really helped me develop a close tie with them especially that they are always with me since the beginning. I just knew they were special.” (R3)*

*“The three of us are always together in the house so it’s not really that hard to be close with them. They are also very open.” (R4)*

*“By doing stuff together and talking random things together, these make our bond stronger.” (R5)*

The grandparents of the respondents had been able to provide for their emotional and physical needs despite the absence of their parents and this made a noticeable difference and change in their lives. Half of the respondents did not consider their parents’ absence as a problem because their grandparents were always there for them and they considered their grandparents to be their parents. However, the other half of the respondents could not say the same, but despite this, the respondents were able to manage their parents’ absence by keeping themselves busy, crying it out, talking to their grandparents, staying strong, and at times by simply not minding it all. As further explained by the respondents themselves:

*“Back then, I didn’t mind it, I was foolish but now I ask my mom for emotional support or I ask her for advice on whatever I’m feeling and I’m thankful she understands.” (R2)*

*“It wasn’t hard because I kept myself busy. I looked for adventures in my barangay, watched tv or explored technology when I had the opportunity to. But at times where I did miss them, I would vent out to my grandparents and cry.” (R3)*

*“I didn’t look at it that way because I had no parents, because to me, my grandparents were my parents. I only saw it as a problem in school, when there were certain times where we had to bring our parents and I would be the kid who had my grandparents with me. I think those were the only times I realized i.t” (R1)*

Leaving the side of parental figures and being handed off to be raised by grandparents certainly has stages that are needed to be progressed through. This includes going through life changing situations, adapting to generations, and learning to convey their feelings. Nevertheless, these aspects and stages were all passed through by the respondents, with the best abilities of both the grandparent and grandchild.

### **Enlightening Guidance**

There are things that you cannot learn on your own, but growing up in an environment without one’s parents shines a light on the new perspectives grandparents bring when raising children of or in a new generation. Despite the generational gap and unique teaching styles each family practice, the intent of raising a child to be a better person with a better future remains. To be the person one is today, a solid foundation

needs to be established by the people alongside you. In this context, grandparents of Filipino children pass on their values, life skills, knowledge, and wise thinking.

*"Well, they taught me not to be selfish, practical, and respectful." (R4)*

*"They are big factors because they're the ones who instilled those morals in you. For example, respect begets respect." (R2)*

*"They would have a one-to-one talk with me and explain what I did wrong and tell me it was alright whenever I did something bad. When I do something good however, they would emphasize on it and give me praise for it." (R3)*

Setting a firm sense of individuality is important to develop one's self. It gives a person of any age, confidence, self-worth, and understanding of the community around them. This awareness prepares the critical thinking of the grandchildren to make decisions for personal or public circumstances they might face in their life. First-hand exposure to learning the realities and outcomes at a young age gives the grandchildren a mature understanding of their surroundings and at the same time teaches them to be resourceful of the situation they are in, and in return leading them to new opportunities. As time passes, this early exposure puts the children at an advantage in the ease of decision making, developing their analytical and innovative skills. The process of arriving at a decision lets the child factor in others' efforts and intent without bias while grasping the importance and worth of its components. As a result, it leads the child to diversified knowledge about demographic and social factors that amplify the individual self.

*"They always told me to always think before I say or do anything and that affected me, even when I was a small child. Because of that, I was able to use my brain early on and I still tell myself that every time I have to decide." (R1)*

*"It affected me differently because I used to be very shy and quiet. They let me out on my own to make friends or do something with my life thinking it would make a difference and it did. I'm now much more friendly and open. They like to push me as a challenge if it will help. I'm now more comfortable around my friends." (R4)*

*"What left an imprint on me was the way they raised me by showing me how to become a caring and understanding person who shouldn't judge people." (R3)*

As times pass by, responsibilities become harder for grandchildren. This makes them learn how to do more tasks and to apply this on their own. When asked the question *"What circumstances were you able to apply the learnings imparted to you by your grandparents?"* (4.4), the grandchildren claim that they have been using their grandparents' teachings in their daily lives, making it an important part of them. Through their grandparents' teachings they were able to learn how to respect, love, help, and be a hard working person. According to the respondents' own explanations:

*"There have been several circumstances wherein I have applied my grandparents' teachings, such as to always be respectful and to think twice and think right before making a decision." (R7)*

*“From my grandmother, her cooking, kindness, patience, and many more. From my grandfather, his impatience, hard work, selflessness, being outgoing, and too many more to mention.” (R4)*

*“I am able to apply all the things I learned from them in my everyday life. From helping my younger siblings to understand how the world works, or when I was a CAT officer I handled many people with various backgrounds, or even to being an older sister to my peers in choir.” (R3)*

*“I’m grateful that they taught me how to be responsible in and out of home, I am grateful that they taught me how to be respectful, how to be disciplined, and how to have self-control. I also learned how to be practical and reasonable.” (R1)*

*“I was able to apply their teachings in my everyday life.” (R2)*

*“To give love and care to other people without any issues.” (R6)*

As the connection between grandparents and grandchild grow deeper, the advice and teachings of the elders starts to show effects in each and every one of them. This causes the grandchildren to overcome encounters of struggles and difficulties. Despite the gap of generations and the different way of teaching from the new generation, the majority of the responses were about how they were thankful for the style they grew up in. They were raised for the betterment of their lives. Other responses were about how different the style used to be. In the words of the respondents:

*“Now that I have grown, I realized that everything my grandparents have done was for my betterment. Moreover, although I had limitations while I was growing up my childhood was still fun, which is why I appreciate and like the way my grandparents have raised me.” (R7)*

*“Overall, the style used by my grandparents is very different from the traditional way of Filipinos. But different doesn’t always mean it’s bad. The style she used is more child friendly because when you just give punishment or get mad instantly at the child they wouldn’t understand because their minds haven’t grasped the idea of how others feel.” (R3)*

*“It was fun. It helped me realize different things and different situations in life.” (R2)*

Such restrictions from their grandparents allowed them to view and learn about their mistakes. This made them change for the better. Such response as:

*“I’d say at the time I would disagree with everything but now that I think about it, I agreed with them grounding me, it taught me how to be cautious of my actions and they would always remind me that I had to always think before I do or say something, and I think that’s a big quote I took with me even after they left me.” (R1)*

*“The restriction I agreed with is sleeping at noon so I can go out in the afternoon. It’s a give-and-take deal because this gives huge benefits for my health.” (R2)*

#### 4. Discussion

Familial bond is a strong connection that can only exist between family members. Nevertheless, despite this strong connection, no other relatives can ever be on par with one's parents' warm embrace. The phenomenological study conducted entails the experiences of children who were raised under their grandparents care rather than their biological parents. The findings of the study indicate that grandchildren go through stages that greatly affect their future relationships with their grandparents. The experiences cause or create a difference in their growth and maturity. Children in these families may encounter problems with psychological development, adjustment, and educational functioning. Grandparents who raise their grandchildren significantly influence the development of these children in the social and educational environments (Edwards, O.W. and Mumford, V.E., 2005). Some of these children face significant barriers to their well-being compared with children living with their parents but tend to fare better than children of single parents or those in foster care (Billing, Ehrle, & Kortenkamp, 2012). Nevertheless, children being raised solely by grandparents appear to be relatively healthy and well-adjusted (Edwards & Andrew, 2006).

Assuredly, different people have varying experiences and ways they choose to handle what comes their way. These ideas are present in the data gathered through both the insights of the researchers and participating bodies, in this case, the chosen respondents. This further supports the idea that being raised under the care of grandparents rather than biological parents can cause a difference in the growth, development, and maturity of the individual. As determined by the gathered responses, overlap of similarities are present, however, with the conducted interviews it is prominent that while all can experience the same problems such as the generational gap between child and grandparent, each respondent had individual solutions or coping mechanisms. A portion of the respondents could see problems as an opportunity to develop the relationship they have with their grandparents and have discussions. While the other portion of respondents sees it as an argument with no winners and mostly kept to themselves instead of engaging. The respondents, as individuals have varying choices, nonetheless, ultimately each go through and experience the same stages that determine their grandchild-grandparent relationship. Such findings and knowledge are salient in this phenomenological study and continue to contribute to the development of new knowledge.

The practice of relatives participating in the care and raising of children is a time-honored cultural tradition in diverse parts of the world. Thus and so the number of grandparents raising grandchildren in the past decades has notably increased, wherein in 2010, 7 million grandparents lived with grandchildren younger than 18 years (Choi et al., 2016). Grandparents, with time, have garnered wisdom through numerous experiences; accordantly Dunifon & Bajracharya (2012) stated that grandparents influence children positively. Moreover, as parental figures, grandparents take on several roles, serving as a role model, nurturer and confidant to their grandchildren all the while loving, supporting and guiding them (Hayslip et al., 2019; Doblin-Macnab & Keily, 2009; Doblin-Macnab et al., 2009, as cited in Hayslip et al., 2019). However, Pilkauskas and Dunifon (2016) opposed, stating that compared to children living with their mothers, children in grand families generally had lower cognitive scores with average language literacy and math grades that were significantly lower than children who lived with a parent. Furthermore, children in grand families were notably less cooperative, displaying more oppositional behavior, and cognitive and inattention issues. Ultimately, grandparents influence children in several ways and in diverse aspects. However, the impact of the grandparents and the progress of the dyad's relation, eventually, are determined by the grandchildren.

Grandparents have an integral role in providing childcare to their grandchildren. The bond that forms between the two burrows deep into maturity and development which blossoms into a specifically cultivated

personality that is littered with consequences. Ge and Adesman (2017) mention that children who are under grandparent care are more susceptible to developing social and behavioral problems, though they could be instilled with definite and positive principles. Though grandparents could promote and instill positive values, traits, and insights, the impairing effects that could be woven into grandparent-induced growth could ultimately compromise the child's interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities. Dunn and Wamsley (2018) regard grandparents as relatively unprepared in the provision of childcare in modern-day settings as they may be out of touch with the present necessities that they have not encountered in their youth. This further exacerbates the issues already present in grandparent-raised children. Hayslip and Fruhauf (2019), in a counterpoint to the negative implications of grandparent care, reiterates a complexity of the dynamics found in the bond between children and their grandparents, which centralizes itself on how the positive influences are offset by the negative influences and vice versa. This means that grandparent care is not innately detrimental to a child's growth as much as it is not inherently beneficial. Examining and weighing both ends of the spectrum is crucial in fathoming the true nature of embracing grandparent care.

With the prominence of custodian grandparents, especially in the Philippine context, there is a necessity to understand the dynamics between grandparents and their children to know how it cultivates individuals. In the generational disparity in the cultural and social atmosphere that a child encounters compared to their grandchildren, the concept of positive and negative implications could form a clearer and more pronounced paradigm wherein decision-making assessments could operate in and could serve as an enlightening idea that would allow grandparents to be at-pace and relevant to the needs of their grandchildren.

### **Deepening Relations**

Deepening relations is the first stage children undergo and experience as they live under the care of their grandparents. This phase allows the pre-existent bond and connection between the grandchild and grandparent to be reformed, deepened and strengthened. The experience of this encounter is invaluable. As explained by Umberson et al. (2010, as cited in Thomas et al., 2017) family members are connected in significant ways through each stage of life and these relationships are a salient source of social ties and influence for individuals throughout their lives.

Widespread across diverse animal species wherein the survival of the young is dependent upon a caregiver, is infant attachment and bonding. However, despite the biological inclination of infant-caregiver dyads to attach, learning about the caregiver is an additional determinant of the success and quality of the bond formed (Sullivan et al., 2011). The tie formed between a child and a caregiver, in this study the grandparent, does not easily dissipate in the passage of time. The familial bond or intimate connection that the family members share gives one a sense of familiarity and security. Nevertheless, the grandparent-grandchild dyad strives to reforge their connection and renew and strengthen their affections. As stated by Saedi & Safara (2017), affection and interest in the family create confidence, security and helpfulness, while inferiority complex and negative effects of deprivation of affection are lessened and possibly eliminated.

Grandchildren may be directly influenced by their grandparents through their interactions with them (Dunifon & Bajracharya, 2012). Thus, the time spent together by the grandparent-grandchild dyad is crucial to the progression of their relationship and individual growth. In consonance with Viguer et al. (2010), the dyad needs to undertake various recreational activities, that tend to develop connections and induce satisfaction, together. For such actions are inclined to improve the quality of their relationship and develop a long-lasting bond between them.

## Challenging Ordeals

The role that grandparents undertake can vary, just as how each family is unique depending on their style and beliefs. Through circumstances such as approval and acceptance, inevitable challenges cannot be avoided mid-air. From the phenomenological approach of the selected grandchildren, the findings highlighted their conflicts and how they made an impact on their individuality. As mentioned by Lombardi (2021), grandparents face a dramatically different parenting world while navigating their roles as family elders, than the one in which they raised their kids. Practically, due to the changing of time, the generation is adaptable to new practices and ideas. Thus, a growing number of grandparents are foregoing the traditional grandparent-grandchild relationship (Smith & Segal, 2020). Furthermore, this encapsulates the overview of their barrier as modernized youth which is difficult for them, appearing the deeper meanings grandparent-as-parent role have been neglected and disregarded and resulting in contradictory statements.

In addition, Allen and Johnson (2011) note the portion of training most practitioners skip is the portion teaching child behavior management skills to the caretaker, grandparents. Residing in the subtheme of restricting regulations, one of the most effective ways of childcare is by setting house rules. The familial relationships ought to develop and become relevant for going through the practices of upholding obedience and discipline. New forms of family structure are emerging where grandparents are confronted with unconventional caregiving situations (Orb & Davey, 2005). Learning to deal with the consequences of their actions made independence worthwhile.

The findings of the previous research studies remained consistent with this paper, grandchildren expressed how they overcame the struggle to fully take on their conditions at heart. Grandparents' need for recognition as parents was also voiced in response to their contribution to the children's well-being (Orb & Davey, 2005).

## Progressing Stages

Adjusting from the care of parents to grandparents is a great challenge that requires discipline and respect. These may come easier to those of a more mature age; however, what comes of this when children are placed into this situation is a different discussion. This study has categorized the adapting process into progressive stages that act as a measure to understand where the relationship of the child and grandparent stand.

The findings of this study show that the respondents established their bond with each other through communication and gradually developed bonds that grew stronger over the time spent together. Over the past three decades, researchers have studied families from a strengths-based perspective. Around the world, researchers have found that families are amazingly similar. The similarities point to a set of qualities that describe the characteristics of strong families. These qualities are showing appreciation and affection, commitment, positive communication, enjoyable times together, spiritual well-being, and the ability to manage stress and crisis effectively (John DeFrain & Sylvia M. Asay (2007). Therefore establishing a strong bond and relationship albeit with barriers in between.

Although there was a gap in generation present, a portion of the chosen respondents were able to overcome the struggle with ease. The results show that this was mostly overcome by the willingness of the grandchild to teach the grandparents of the modern trends and platforms. Additionally, the willingness and initiative of the grandparents to learn and use technology as a means of communication and a way of bonding with their

grandchild served as a key factor in overcoming the generation gap. One of the key motivations for elderly individuals to use IT products is the opportunity to interact with other family members (Tsai T-H, Chang H-T, Ho Y-L (2016).

Findings show that although the grandparents had been able to provide for their emotional and physical needs, the absence of their parents had still made a noticeable difference and change in their lives. Children have a different level of acceptance or tolerance of the situation depending on their “cognitive development” (Carandang, 2007). Young children only see migration as a form of abandonment of their parents; while adolescents may either be receptive or resentful (Reyes, 2008). While a portion of the respondents did not consider their parents’ absence as a problem because their grandparents fulfilled the role, the other portion of respondents would say otherwise. The latter respondents were able to manage the absence by keeping themselves busy, communicating to their grandparents, resilience, and at most times not paying the problem any thought.

### **Enlightening Guidance**

Enlightening guidance plays a key factor in a child's development. It serves as a backbone in developing a child's character by gradually providing significant knowledge, through on-hand learning experiences, that would further on define and aid them in their growing years. As discussed by Smith and Segal (2018), though raising your grandchildren could be a troublesome occurrence, it also is a rewarding experience that helps both grandparent and grandchild develop a closer relationship with each other.

Passing down generations worth of wisdom and knowledge empowers the succeeding line to live a life with certain ease. The continuation of existing family legacies is not an easy task as not all information, such as virtues and values, are not taught but come across. Sharing greater information at a younger age bestows the child with a pre conceptual idea of an event and idea, whether it may be negative or positive, that the child might encounter throughout their life. However the process of teaching a conceptual notion is not easy, in spite of that, the bond created between the grandparent and grandchild for the duration are life-changing and precious moments in a child's existence.

As reported by Simpson (2020), grandchildren and grandparents having a healthy relationship can result in the child having a safe space with them. It also allows them to receive unconditional love and guidance that can have a positive effect on the child. By providing wisdom to their grandchild, grandparents are able to leave lessons that will serve to be helpful in the future part of the grandchild's life. They are able to apply all the life lessons and wisdom that has been passed onto them and be able to use it in their daily lives.

### **5. Conclusion**

In these trying times the deep-rooted tradition of relatives participating in the raising of the young has become unavoidable. Nevertheless, leaving one's parent's warm embrace at a young age is not easy, especially when it is to a foreign place. Thus, it is important to understand the lived experiences of Filipino grandchildren living under the care of their grandparents situated in the Philippines. The rapidly increasing number of grandparents caring for their grandchildren has gained the attention of research, policy and practice since 1990 (Tang et al., 2016). However, little research has focused on Filipino grandchildren and their experiences. This study aims to illuminate the experiences of grandchildren as well as enlighten grandparents

and grandchildren about the stages that may be undertaken and the factors that can help them understand, develop and improve their grandparent-grandchild relationship.

This phenomenological research discusses the lived experience of Filipino grandchildren situated in the Philippines. This study shows the stages undergone by the grandchildren as they grew under the care of their grandparents. With the verbalization of their responses, related to their experiences, four prominent occurrences were illuminated, marking the stages in their journey. The first being **deepening relations** wherein grandparents and grandchildren start reforging and strengthening their bond, utilizing the innate connection or familial bond that ties them. However, despite this, trials in life cannot be avoided, thus struggles or **challenging ordeals** are inevitable. The methods used by the elderly to parent their grandchildren are old-fashioned, furthermore, grandparents can be over caring and protective, thus they tend to appear strict in the eyes of their grandchildren which thereby results in the arising of conflicts. Nevertheless, when there is struggle there is growth and with the overcoming of the trials their story continues. Grandparents and grandchildren reach the **progressing stages** wherein they unite and open up to each other, facing and solving the challenges of the past. Lastly, as the children are raised under their grandparents' wing they receive several **enlightening guidance** that helps them adjust and grow. Regardless of the generation gap or the different teaching approaches used by each family, the goal of growing a child to be a better person with a better future remains the same.

Notably, households vary drastically and in the context of the study, children, in specific circumstances do not experience growth and nurturing under parental care. In such cases grandparents stand as placeholders for typical parental guidance, which becomes a common foothold for familial structures for many households in the Philippine setting. The study examines this set-up that determines the social, psychological, emotional, and developmental trajectory of children as they enter a world by diving thoroughly on the lived experiences of those who fit the parameter to create a clear paradigm of such familial structures. This broadens the understanding of grandparent care towards children, promulgating enlightenment and changes to make such settings better for the development of children by ascertaining that there is sufficient upkeep that meets their needs for the betterment of the overall progression of their lives.

This study was limited due to complications between the researchers as one of which had to leave the study a year into the process. This limitation had caused delays in the development of the study and left heavier workloads on the remaining researchers. Additionally, the study was limited due to the multiple changes in mentorship of the research. In the short span of a year, the study had been overseen and mentored under three different advisers and teachers. The difference in mentorship led to multiple changes in the study. Regarding the respondents, the study had encountered multiple limitations in the set parameters for the respondents. While all of the respondents had spent the set amount of years with their grandparents, a certain portion of the respondents had spent the set amount of years at different ages. Furthermore, there were no set parameters for the reason behind the respondents being placed under the care of their grandparents, causing multiple differences in their responses.

The researchers advise future researchers to use this study as an introduction to the wide-ranging Filipino cultural tradition of strong and close familial ties, specifically in the sector of raising children through extended family. Additionally, the researchers also recommend diversifying the respondent profile by locale, and age. As this study focuses mainly on respondents residing in Luzon, either expanding to different islands and areas in the country, or, internationally through overseas Filipino workers, would further give insight into the Filipino cultural tradition of familial bond ties as a whole. Generational differences and experiences can

be tracked as well as differed by the age of individuals. While the study observes and showcases the lived experiences of early teens and young adults, extending the age range to an older demographic would be ideal to trace and compare historical and modern changes to Filipino culture. This may umbrella certain factors that influence the upbringing culture such as social and economic statuses. At the time of the creation of this study, the surge of the global health crisis, Covid-19, arose. The researchers recommend conducting further analysis on how the pandemic impacts the Filipino culture of grandparents raising their grandchild/children, catering towards the lived experiences of Filipino grandparents.

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