

Underneath the “Titanium” Self of the Filipino Urban Poor Community or Organizational Volunteer Elder Leaders

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ABSTRACT

Poor Filipino older persons face many life challenges rooted in their limited resources, inadequate government laws, policies, and programs for their welfare and health needs, socio-cultural changes, and aging, and are perceived as dependent and vulnerable. However, Filipino urban poor community or organizational volunteer elderly leaders spent most of their lives in their advocacies helping the poor and the needy, which may show a different picture of Filipino aging— the thriving urban poor older persons. Thus, the study explored the coping and thriving of this case group, as they faced the challenges of their dual roles while advancing advocacy. The study followed a qualitative-narrative research method (specifically, Clandinin and Connelly's narrative method) and Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology). Eight participants were drawn through snowball, criterion, and purposive samplings and underwent interview sessions guided by open-ended interview guide questions validated by experts. Data analysis followed a four-stage process blending the structural principles of Clandinin and Connelly's narrative inquiry and Sikolohiyang Pilipino and layered with family theories and human thriving. Six (6) themes about coping and thriving of the Filipino urban poor organizational or community volunteer elderly leaders and two (2) resonant threads were identified: (1) thriving occurs when both inner resources and external resources contribute to the person's well-being; and (2) the “differentiated self”, “societal emotional process”, “kapwa”, and “pakikipagkapwa” in thriving and adversity. Thus, the titanium (“hindi magigiba”) self is based on the psychosocial variables (inner resources and external resources) of the Filipino urban poor volunteer organizational or community elder leaders, a thriving manifesting well-being.

Keywords: Coping and Thriving, Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology), Spirituality, *Kapwa* (shared identity), *Pakikipagkapwa*, Differentiated Self, and Societal Emotional Process

1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has a growing population of older persons, and this sector will increase by 10% by 2030, making the country an aging society (Pazzibugan, 2022). It is a common reality in the country that older persons face various forms of difficulties and limitations. They face economic difficulty (Saguil et al., 2023; Carandang et al., 2019; Cruz, 2019; Marquez, 2019), declining health (Felipe-Dimog et al., 2024; Cruz & Saito, 2019; Natividad, 2019), and inadequate government services and programs for older persons (Saguil et al., 2023; Natividad, 2019; Carandang et al., 2019). Even the families of these older persons are affected by their life circumstances, since family members are interdependent, and the Philippine society or their community influences them (Bowen, 2024; Cruz, 2019). Almost fifty percent (49%) of Filipino older persons and their families are caught in an intergenerational cycle of systemic poverty (Cruz, 2019), which they struggle with, but reflect their lives of dependency on external support for their needs. Living a lifetime of stress because of constantly facing the many limitations and challenges of being poor and the challenges of aging could negatively affect well-being. However, the Filipino urban poor community or organizational volunteer elder leaders may show a different picture of Filipino aging.

In these Filipino urban poor elder leaders' lifetime of productive engagements, they have shown coping and thriving as they lived dual roles as leaders in their communities and/or organizations and as spouses and parents in their families. Coping is the ever-changing thoughts and actions an individual have to adjust to the external and internal issues in a stressful experience (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984 cited in Scribner et al., 2020), while thriving is an enhanced state manifested by well-being and performance or development and success facilitated by psychosocial variables – inner resources or personal enablers (called forms of coping) and external resources or contextual enablers (the sources of support, social agents, and attachment and trust to source of support) – experienced as a whole or in specific life situations (Brown et al., 2017). Inner resources, or personal enablers, include knowledge and learning, motivation, a positive perspective, a proactive personality, spirituality and religion, and psychological resilience.

Foreign literature implicitly reflected that older persons facing the challenges of poverty or aging coped with their inner resources or personal enablers and external resources or contextual enablers, or thrived. The Israeli older persons' way of dealing with their existential concern about death and the American low-income older persons of Minnesota's way of coping with the

challenges they faced in aging, such as limited physical mobility, depression, isolation, and fear of dying alone implicitly reflected tapping their inner resources (such as proactive behaviors, learning things that give them happiness, optimistic perspectives, and resilience) (Russo-Netzer & Littman-Obadia, 2019; Finlay et al., 2018). Further, a sense of life's meaning, connectedness, and belonging among Israeli older persons was rooted in their spirituality (Russo-Netzer & Littman-Obadia, 2019). For the American low-income older persons, available external resources, such as government environmental structures and services, support from families, friends, community, and retail staffs, helped them maintain their physical activities and socialization that contributed to their well-being (Finlay et al., 2018).

Local literature also implicitly reflected Filipino urban older persons' ways of coping with challenges they faced during the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods, which were related to their inner resources or personal enablers and external resources or contextual enablers, implicitly reflecting their thriving. Studies of Marawi City and Koronadal City urban poor implicitly revealed coping with the limitations of the pandemic and lockdowns with their inner resources, specifically, knowledge and learning about the COVID-19 virus, how to protect themselves, and financial concerns, proactive behaviors (such as finding ways and implementing ways on how to deal with their financial concerns), and motivated by their desire to do their family roles and responsibilities (Hutba et al., 2023; Sadang et al., 2021). The Filipino urban poor during the pre-pandemic period faced the challenges brought about by the Philippine government's and their families' inadequacy in meeting their needs with inner resources, specifically, gaining knowledge on medicinal plants to help them with their health concerns while economical for them, and proactive behavior, such as finding economical ways to help them manage their health concerns (Carandang et al., 2019). The Filipino older persons' other inner resources, such as optimistic views were grounded in their spirituality and belief about God (Carandang et al., 2019; Hutba et al., 2023; Sadang et al., 2021).

Neither foreign nor local studies explicitly focused on how volunteer leaders coped with and thrived in their leadership roles. Challenges faced by foreign volunteer leaders lie in the size of the staff and in the people of the community organization. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the community-based organization, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights Los Angeles (CHILRA), was trusted by the Government to distribute cash relief to the people. However, their communication system and staff were insufficient to accommodate the great number of people claiming cash relief. The director coped with the challenge by tapping external resources, specifically support from other community-based organizations, by collaborating with them (Kim & Chun, 2024). The InnerCHANGE leader trainers coped with the challenge of helping their apprentices overcome self-doubt in becoming successful change-makers and instruments of flourishing communities through spirituality and religiosity (Kabongo, 2019). They anchored

on the Bible for inspirational experiences of ordinary people, who contributed to changing the lives of people in communities.

Local literature revealed how organizational leaders coped with the challenges they faced in their advocacy. Alliance of People's Organizations Along Manggahan Floodway (APOAMF) coped with their concern about fighting for their settlements by tapping inner resources, specifically, psychological resilience, such as courage to fight for their rights and perseverance to wait for their electoral candidate who could support their advocacy to win the election. Interfaith leaders of Pagadian City coped with the challenges of promoting solidarity and peace by tapping inner resources, such as optimistic perspective (specifically, keeping a positive mindset), religion (praying), motivation, and psychological resilience (specifically, acceptance, respect, consistency, and understanding) (Ledesma et al., 2025).

Filipino urban poor community or organizational volunteer and productive elderly leaders experienced challenges in their family lives in their lifetime of productive engagement, such as gender bias, financial problems and poverty, work-life balance, and intergenerational roles and relationships. However, neither foreign nor local literature focused on this specific group of older persons or on how they thrived in their family life while performing their leadership roles. The Philippines, known for being a patriarchal society, still had traces of the gender divide rooted in reproductive functions, which put a burden on females. In the Philippine Being NGO report, not all women and girls attended school and graduated (Laguilles-Timog et al., 2020; Education Network Philippines cited in Laguilles-Timog et al., 2020). However, when these women successfully graduated, they were still tied to their reproductive roles of caregiving and household chores, as reflected in the social reality in which more women than men were unemployed (Cruz & Cruz, 2019). Further, men were still the breadwinners, and women's domain remained the home, which further put women at a disadvantage in life, as they would experience financial insecurity and health care insecurity (Saguil et al., 2023; Carandang et al., 2019; Cruz, 2019; Cruz & Cabaraban, 2019). Employed women also had work-life balance concerns that may have led them to leave paid work, making life more difficult for their families (Cruz & Cabaraban, 2019; Cabaraban et al., 2019; Laguna, 2019). Others achieved work-life balance by drawing strength from the purpose of their work and its economic benefits (Derayunan et al., 2022) or tapping their inner resources or personal enablers as ways of coping.

Limitations of systemic poverty faced by older persons and their families posed a challenge for them, which they dealt with throughout their lives. Older persons were caught in a cycle of intergenerational systemic poverty within their families, and implicitly dealt with this with their inner resources and external resources or contextual enablers, specifically, working in their lifetime to support themselves and their families as they engaged in the informal employment sector in their aging years, relying on their pensions (for less than half of them), and receiving

financial, material, and emotional support from their children (for a high proportion of them) (Felipe-Dimog et al., 2024; Saguil et al., 2023; Bandoles, 2022; Carandang et al., 2019; Cruz, 2019; Marquez, 2019).

Thus, poor Filipino older persons face many challenges and limitations, reflecting their dependence, as they and their families are affected by social, cultural, economic, and political issues of the country, and yet the Filipino urban poor community or organizational volunteers and productive elderly leaders may show a different picture of Filipino aging—one of coping and thriving. However, this specific group of Filipino older persons and exploring their lived experiences of coping and thriving as productive people and leaders in their lifetime have been understudied. Thus, specifically, the goal of the research study is to generate an understanding of how Filipino urban poor organizational or community elderly volunteer leaders narrate their coping and thriving in the face of socio-economic challenges and personal changes throughout their lifetime of productive engagements. The research study will address the question:

1. How do these Filipino urban poor organizational or community elderly volunteer leaders construct the narrative of coping and thriving in their dual roles within their family and as leaders advancing their organizational advocacies?

It will also address the sub-questions:

- a. What narrative elements do they emphasize as facilitating their continuous productive engagement?
- b. What do they describe as threatening their ability to sustain their productive engagements and well-being?

The ability to cope and thrive is related to well-being, which may contribute to longevity and slow down the decline in physical and cognitive health, making the research study meaningful for poor Filipino older persons, who face various stressful challenges of poverty and aging. Thus, this study is relevant to mental health professionals, people in the government and non-government organizations involved in policy and program development for urban poor older persons and their leaders, institutions involved in the care of urban poor older persons, and academicians.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Desig.: The research employed qualitative-narrative research method, specifically the narrative inquiry of Clandinin and Connely and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Filipino Psychology). Because the study focused on the stories of lived experiences of coping and thriving of urban poor Filipino older person organizational or community volunteer and productive leaders in their

dual roles as leaders in their communities or organizations and family roles (as spouse and parent) as they faced the challenges or concerns in their leadership, advocacies, and limited resources. The narratives were within their social, cultural, and temporal context (Baudin & Chavez, 2025) as these followed the *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, such as temporality, personal and social (interaction), and place (situation) in a continuity (past, present, and future) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Results were viewed through the lens of Bowen's Family System Theory, Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, Brown and colleagues' thriving concept, and Enriquez's *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*. *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* also provided cultural sensitivity in data gathering.

Participants and Sampling Techniques: The study involved eight (8) urban poor Filipino older person organizational or community volunteer leader participants (specifically, 4 women and 4 men above 65 years old) residing in the National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines. For Patton (2002), there is no rule governing sample size in qualitative inquiry, but the decision on sample size may depend on specific points significant to the study.

Further, four (4) participants reside in Quezon City, two (2) in Caloocan, one (1) in Navotas, and one (1) in Manila. Among these participants, five (5) were Church leaders and three (3) were organizational leaders (Non-Government Organization and union leaders). The youngest participant was a 66-year-old male older person and the oldest was a 80-year-old female older person.

Participants were located through snowball sampling. They were evaluated for participation through criterion sampling. Positive sampling was also used as the participants were intentionally selected based on twelve (12) criteria of participant selection, and for their rich experiences of coping and thriving as Filipino urban poor community or organizational volunteer leaders in their lifetime.

Data Collection: Data collection was shaped by qualitative research method, the narrative inquiry method of Clandinin and Connelly, and *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* as a research method. Data were gathered through a semi-structured interview using a researcher-constructed interview guide questionnaire with a conversational Tagalog translation, which was evaluated by experts in the field. Participants, who passed the twelve (12) criteria for research inclusion, referred by key informants in the academe and non-government organizations (NGOs), and signed the consent form agreeing to participate in the research study, participated in a face-to-face interview between October and December 2025.

The interview was conducted in sensitivity to the participants' preferences and convenience to deal with the ethics of convenience and privacy, and to cater to their convenience, accessibility,

and comfort preferences. Participants were asked for permission to record the interview and take notes, and they were informed of their ethical rights as participants (e.g., right to withdraw from the current study if they feel uncomfortable, to refuse to answer questions they feel uncomfortable with, etc.) before the interview started.

During the interview, when the participant willingly and out of volition, continued to share their experience, even when showing emotion of pain from recall, the researcher, who received training in counseling, provided psychological first aid. The interview sessions were held in places where the participants felt comfortable and lasted two to three hours. Each participant was thanked after every interview, and a token of appreciation or gratitude (a gift card) was given to them after the data collection process. But this was done in sensitivity to their culture through *pakikiramdam* (shared inner perception). Refusal to accept the token was respected and honored.

Each participant was informed to validate and approve the interview transcription before using the data to write their biography by sending the material through courier or key informants. They were also informed of a follow-up interview to clarify what they said during the interview.

A biography was written for each participant and sent to them for validation. A biography is a field text (data) that follows the *three-dimensional inquiry space*, which is temporal, personal and social (interaction), and place (situation) in sequence (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The biography contains the study results, which were included as the basis for the analysis. Participants were protected by assigning them pseudonyms, and names in the story (e.g., people, organizations, etc.) were redacted.

Data analysis: The data analysis followed an integrated, four-stage process that blends the structural principles of Clandinin and Connelly's Narrative Inquiry with the interpretive framework of Enriquez's Sikolohiyang Pilipino (SP), subsequently layered with specific family theories and literature:

Stage 1 –Initial Immersion and Transcription involved reading and rereading of all interview material to feel the participant's stories, rhythm, and emotional tone. Interview segments relevant to the general research questions were partially transcribed, accurately capturing the original language (e.g., conversational Tagalog) and retaining nuanced indigenous terms to maintain cultural fidelity.

Stage 2 –Narrative Reconstruction and Theming used the core concept of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. In a process called re-storying, the researcher created a coherent narrative summary for each participant, viewing the story through the lenses of Continuity (temporal flow), Interaction (personal and social relationships), and Situation (the physical and

socioeconomic context, particularly the "urban poor" setting). After individual stories or biographies were completed, the researcher conducted a second pass to identify resonant threads—the deeper, cross-cutting themes and narrative patterns that span all participants' stories and directly address the research questions.

Stage 3 –Cultural Interpretation through Sikolohiyang Pilipino. As an ongoing reflexive process, this step applies the indigenous Filipino psychological concepts as the primary interpretive lens for analyzing the emergent resonant threads. The researcher consciously used key Filipino values in illuminating how these cultural scripts shaped the participants' narratives of coping and thriving in their dual roles as leaders and as part of their families in their lifetime of productive engagement.

Stage 4 –Systemic and Resilience Analysis, which used the two-family theories—Murray Bowen's Family Systems Theory and Walsh's Family Resilience Theory—to analyze and frame leadership, family, and thriving in the face of adversity in their lifetime of productive engagements.

III. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The results identified six (6) themes about coping and thriving of the Filipino urban poor organizational or community volunteer elderly leaders in their dual roles as leaders advancing their communities' or organizations' advocacy. These were namely: (1) urban area as home and place of advocacy, and a place that staged their coping and thriving in their leadership role and family life; (2) managing and thriving in the face of challenges in family life while an active leader in community or organization; (3) successfully balancing dual roles (leadership role and family role) while active in community or organization in their lifetime; (4) managing and successfully overcoming challenges in leadership roles in the community or organization in lifetime of productive activities and engagements; (5) individual thriving as family and community/organization resilience and vice versa; and (6) thriving in old age. The narratives revealed coping and thriving of the participants as leaders throughout time, as parents raising their children and their spouse relationships throughout their married life, and as aging individuals in their community or organization and family.

Two (2) resonant threads were identified that mainly incorporated *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, Bowen's Family Systems Theory, Walsh's Family Resilience Theory, and the Thriving concept of Brown and colleagues.

Resonant Thread A. Thriving Occurs When Both Inner Resources and External Resources Contribute to the Person's Well-being

Participants faced the challenges in their family life, in balancing their leadership roles and family roles, in their leadership roles, and in their current health with their inner resources or personal enablers (which were their coping) and external resources or contextual enablers (which were their sources of support) that made them have a well-being (cognitively, physically, psycho-emotionally, financially, socially, and spiritually) after they successfully overcame their challenges (Brown et al., 2017). Their inner resources helped them cope with the challenges they faced in their dual roles when they were raising their children, in their married life, within their span of leadership roles, and now that they are aging, as they faced a life of limitations because of being poor while supporting the advocacy of their communities or organization.

Their various inner resources were proactive personality (such as saving money for daughter's allowance, working hard to earn for their families, dividing time, seeking medical check-ups, physical exercise, preparing for birth and raising a child, avoiding stress for good health, adjusting thoughts, processing thoughts of people to help them understand, asserting and articulating position and knowledge on the issue, etc.), positive perspective (such as believe change can happen, true to one's values, *"totoo ako"* [I am real], etc.), motivation (such as promise to the Lord, gender perspective on shared roles of spouses in child rearing, belief that *"love for the community has to start from loving the family as a Church"*, belief that *"nasa pagsisikap ang pagpapabuti ng buhay"* [improving life lies on being industrious], belief on family as priority before leadership roles, belief that *"walang tutulong sa iyo kung hindi ka, kami kumilos mismo as a sector"* [no one will help you, if you or we will not act as a sector], etc.), religion (such as Ecclesiastes- *"lahat ng bagay ay may kanya kanyang panahon"* [there is a time for everything], and constant prayer), spirituality (such as beliefs like *"naglilingkod kay Lord"* [serving the Lord], *"si Lord lang kasama ko"* [my only companion is the Lord], *"nothing is impossible with God"*, *"malakas ang loob ko dahil nakasandal kay Lord* [I am courageous because I lean on the Lord], *si Lord ang nagbibigay at nagpapalit ng lahat* [the Lord gives and replaces everything]", etc.), psychological resilience (such as perseverance, courage- *"hindi natatakot, tuloy-tuloy sa pakikibaka"* [not afraid, fight continuously]), commitment- *"pangangatwanaan ang spiritualidad pagiging lyko* [determined to embody the spirituality of being a lyko], etc.), and knowledge and learning (such as *"nagninilay"* [reflection], seminars, trainings, recollection, evaluation, mentorship, recollection, criticisms, etc.).

The inner resources alone could not help participants thrive and attain well-being after facing the challenges posed by the limitations of being poor without external resources, as they assumed their dual roles. Help from family members (siblings, spouse, daughter, son, relatives) and people outside the family (such as housemaid, clergy and other people in the Church community, organization, and friends), which were their external resources or contextual enablers, significantly matched their inner resources that enabled them to attain positive emotions (such as

happiness, contentment, and pride) from attaining their aspirations (such as their children gaining college degree and becoming professionals, having financially independent children, sustaining the needs of the family or baby, becoming a teacher, serving God, fulfilling mission as a lyko, etc.).

In their aging years, their aspirations for good health and continuous productive engagements could not be attained only by having inner resources (such as spiritual belief about God who determines their longevity, prayerful, adjusting their lifestyle, etc.), but also external resources (such as government provisions for affordable and discounted medical services like massage, doctor's fee in surgical procedures, etc., government programs that boost their capacity to manage their developmental changes like regular counseling, seminars on mental health, well-being, positivity, and nutrition, professionally guided interaction and learning among older persons, affordable and discounted healthy food products sensitive to the geriatric conditions and in maintaining good health of older persons, and physical structures and environment conducive for maintaining or improving physical health of older persons).

However, the external resources that the participants were receiving depended on their local government, law provisions on Senior Citizen discounts and tax exemption, national pension (for most participants), and business products that support their health, such as herbal supplements and products, healthy products (for few participants), such as low sugar food products, milk, and cooking oil, health professional related services such as massage and acupuncture (for one participant), which for most participants were inadequate in meeting their needs to keep them productively active in their aging years. Because the manufactured healthy food and certain professional health services were not included in the list of discounted products and services under the Senior Citizens Act, and not all older persons (including most participants) were covered by their local government's programs and services for the Senior Citizens in their place.

Further, they tapped their organizations to support their needs by having organizational goals and programs, such as facilitating older persons' interactive activities for learning and support emotionally and structurally by creating and lobbying policies that structurally support the needs of the older persons to maintain and regain their health to keep their productive engagements, and adjusting magna carta to cater to the needs of older persons, to help them structuralized the support they needed to keep them active and productively engaged in their aging years. However, not all participants attained full and successful results of their strivings to attain their aspirations for their children. Although they had the psychosocial variables (inner resources or personal enablers and external resources or contextual enablers) to successfully attain their aspirations for their children, the personality of their children, poor communication, and weakness of their parenting were hindrances in attaining their goal of having all their children graduate from college and become financially independent throughout their lives.

Two participants' beliefs on marital fidelity and prioritizing the family above the organization were motivational beliefs from their parents and one of their inner resources. The family belief system, such as these beliefs on marital relationship and family and the values underneath these beliefs (such as fidelity, loyalty, and responsibility), helped them keep their family and relationships intact, and strengthened their families in the face of the adversity of being poor and the challenges of being leaders in their community or organization (Walsh, 2023). Because of these beliefs, they had a lifetime of union with their spouses and kept their family.

Resonant Thread B. The "Differentiated Self", "Societal Emotional Process", "Kapwa", and "Pakikipagkapwa" in Thriving and Adversity

The participants' thriving in their dual roles as leaders in their community or organization and spouse or parent in their families as they faced challenges of living a life of limitations for being poor reflected differentiated self, societal emotional process, "*kapwa*" (shared identity), and "*pakikipagkapwa*" (treating other individuals as fellow human beings or *kapwa*).

The values, beliefs, and leadership styles as inner resources or participants' coping were influenced by their grandparents, parents, and relatives, but they did not accept or follow these unconsciously, manifesting their differentiated self. For Bowen (2024), an individual with differentiated self is one who acts based on clear and well-thought-out beliefs and principles. The participants, who have government official family members, saw the effectiveness of the leadership styles and the leadership values of their family members, allowed themselves to be influenced by their family member's leadership styles and values, and brought this influence into their leadership roles. The participants also brought with them, as ways of coping with the challenges of family life (such as rearing their children, generating financial means to support the education of their children and other financial needs of the family, and meeting the daily needs of their children when they were rearing them) and leadership roles (such as meeting their responsibilities in their community or organization as leaders, and advancing their advocacy through their organization), the values of "*responsibilidad*" (responsibility), "*pagtitiis*" (perseverance), fair, and "*hindi natatakot*" (courage). Because they have seen the significance of these in their family life and leadership roles. Further, beliefs on marital fidelity and prioritizing the family above the organization were beliefs of their parents that they found good and reasonable. Thus, they embraced the beliefs and used them as a guide in their family life and leadership roles.

Spirituality and faith anchored on God and religion were not mere inner resources or coping. But these were the roots of the participants' motivational beliefs that successfully helped them surpass the challenges they faced in their dual roles as leaders (such as dealing with difficult people in their community or organization, and dangers in their exercise of leadership roles in

their communities or organizations) and part of the family, which contributed to their well-being (specifically, psychoemotionally, socially, economically, spiritually, and cognitively). Spirituality as central in coping of older persons was also revealed in foreign and local studies (Russo-Netzer & Littman-Obadia, 2019; Hutba et al., 2023; Sadang et al., 2021; Carandang et al., 2019). Further, their Church communities and their support group were influential in developing their spirituality and faith through mentorship, training, seminars, encounter activities, recollections, and reflections. Their growth and development as individuals, leaders, and part of the family were influenced by their Church community. Communities have a positive influence on their members, and their members have a positive influence on their family, community, and society as reflected in Bowen's concept of the societal emotional process (Bowen, 2024).

The community of the Church leaders had a good influence on them, and this influence was manifested in their relationship with their spouse (such as being persevering and forgiving to an erring spouse who was in an extra-marital affair in the past and observing fidelity with their wives), family relationship (reflected in a belief that *"love for the community has to start from loving the family as a Church"*), and leadership (such as their motivational beliefs as source of their strength to keep on participating in the advocacy of their communities as they binded themselves by it like *naglilingkod kay Lord [serving the Lord], si Lord lang kasama ko [my only companion is the Lord], "lahat ng bagay ay may kanya kanyang panahon" [here is a time for everything], "nothing is impossible with God" "si Lord ang nagbibigay at nagpapalit ng lahat" [the Lord gives and replaces everything]*). Families and people in their communities and society were benefiting from their advocacy for the urban poor, justice, urban poor youth spirituality, environment, and social change, which identified with the advocacy of their Church communities.

The participants' thriving manifested the Filipino core values of *"kapwa"* and the value where this belongs, which is *"pakikipagkapwa"*. Ordained clergy and people in the Church community, and the organization that provided financial support to the education of the participants' children and to the Catechetical teacher training of a participant, friends who were helping a participant overcome a huge financial debt, people in the community who provided a free heart surgical operation to a participant, a trustworthy housemaid who provided help to a participant in rearing her children while she was busy with the Church leadership activities and work, close people in the community or organization who extended help in rearing children, and Senior Citizens that allowed them to share their experiences in aging and draw ways to help themselves in their needs in aging and keep them active and productively engaged were external supports (or external resources or contextual enablers) of the participants in successfully overcoming the challenges of childrearing, financially supporting the education of their children and and personal desire to be

a teacher. These external resources or support were accorded to them for being “*hindi ibang tao*” (one of us). Their sources of support were “*nakikisangkot*” (getting involved) and “*nakikiisa*” (being one with) with them and their families in their family concerns and individual aspirations, because they were “*hindi ibang tao*”. This manifested a relationship based on the Filipino value of “*pakikipagkapwa*” (treating other individuals as fellow human beings or *kapwa*) and Filipino core value of “*kapwa*”. “*Pakikisangkot*” and “*pakikiisa*” are relationships of people who are in the category of “*kapwa*”, which is “*hindi ibang tao*” (Enriquez, 1978, 1994 cited in Pepua & Marcelino, 2000; Enriquez, 1990, 1992 cited in Yacat, 2013). It also manifested a “*pakikipagkapwa*” between them and the sources of their support, as the participants were treated as fellow human beings by the people who were sources of support (Enriquez, 1978, 1994 cited in Pepua & Marcelino, 2000).

Further, the participants’ inner resources manifested their Filipino core value of “*kapwa*” and “*pakikipagkapwa*” that spanned their Filipino surface values and societal values. Participants who employed assertive confrontation when correcting others for the abusive treatment received, assertiveness and articulated position and knowledge on the issue, and “*hindi natatakot makibaka sa kalsada*” (not afraid to join street rallies) in their leadership roles related to others based on their Filipino confrontative surface values such as “*lakas ng loob*” (resentment or guts) and “*pakikibaka*” (resistance) (Enriquez, 1990, 1992 cited in Yacat, 2013). The “*utang na loob*” (gratitude) that few participants had for their organization or community for the great help they received for their families, when they needed it, and the belief of “*walang tutulong sa iyo kung hindi ka, kami kumilos mismo as a sector*” (no one will help you, if you or we will not act as a sector), encouraging support and unity for advocacy (for another participant) were rooted in their Filipino accommodative surface values, “*utang na loob*” (gratitude or solidarity) and “*pakikisama*” (companionship or esteem) (Enriquez, 1990, 1992 cited in Yacat, 2013).

The Church participants’ spiritual beliefs (such as “*si Lord ang nagbibigay at nagpapalit ng lahat*” [the Lord gives and replaces everything]) that served as motivation for them in keeping on in their advocacy and leadership, although they and their families were also facing the challenges and limitations of being poor, encouraged “*pakikisama*” or continuous support and participation in the advocacy of the community or organization. A participant who was motivated to keep the advocacy for women and the informal workers sector by the members of their organization who were looking up to her as someone strong in carrying and leading their sector to a better life was relating to the members based on societal values of “*karangalan*” (dignity) and “*katarungan*” (justice). As a leader of this sector, she recognized that workers in the informal sector are also people who have dignity as human beings, entitled to certain workers’ rights, like those workers in the formal sector, and just laws that would protect the sector of workers she represented. Further, all these inner resources of the participants not only

manifest surface and societal Filipino values, but even “*kapwa*”, as they have seen themselves as not different from others, and “*pakikipagkapwa*” as they treated others with dignity (Enriquez, 1978 cited in Yacat, 2013) and expected this relationship to be reciprocated.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the coping and thriving of Filipino urban poor organizational or community elderly volunteer leaders in their dual roles as leaders and family roles in the face of socio-economic challenges and personal changes throughout their lifetime of productive engagements. Family theories, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, and thriving were lenses used to understand these elder leaders' coping and thriving. The *titanium* self (“*hindi magigiba*”) is based on the psychosocial variables (inner resources and external resources) of the Filipino urban poor volunteer organizational or community elder leaders. They thrived as they manifested well-being and success by overcoming challenges in their dual roles as leaders in their organization or community, advancing their own and the group’s advocacy, and in their families amid the difficulties and limitations they faced from being poor, enabled by their inner resources or personal enablers and external resources or contextual enablers. Their inner resources were what helped them cope with the challenges of their dual roles. Their thriving reflected differentiated self, societal emotional process, “*kapwa*”, and “*pakikipagkapwa*”. Inner resources and external resources were equally significant in their continuous productive engagement and well-being, which become a barrier to their continuous active and productive engagements when inadequate or lacking.

LIMITATIONS

The following are the limitations of the study; (1) Participants may have a bias in recall, which may lead to inaccurate or incomplete recall of specific events, emotions, or timelines; (2) Participants may have a social desirability bias, where they may have presented their experiences, struggles, and coping mechanisms in a more favorable or heroic light; and (3) Interviews were done once, and four participants were followed up through social media messaging and calls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Future Research: This research could follow an ethnographic way of qualitative research and be participated in by three generations of the family of urban poor, rural poor, or indigenous poor elder leaders, which could strengthen the quality of data gathered. Further, a deeper study on coping, family resilience, and thriving among indigenous, urban, and rural productive people with geriatric illnesses could provide knowledge to older persons, who are suffering from geriatric diseases, and their families. This knowledge could become a strength and support for

this population, as knowledge of the successful thriving of older persons in the challenges posed by aging could help them extend their health span and longevity, and help their families become effective support to their healthy and active aging.

Future Actions: Based on the findings of the research, policies and programs in the workplace, barangay, and city would target to strengthen the internal resources or personal enablers of the middle-aged adults and older persons in keeping their well-being, by providing the external resources or contextual enablers appropriate to help them thrive in their families, work, health, or aging. The productivity of adults could be sustained with the appropriate external resources provided by their workplace, barangay, communities, and local government.

Family and individual counseling of older persons may incorporate coping and thriving as protective factors for them and their families. This may strengthen them and keep their well-being and productivity for personal and social benefits.

PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE PAPER

There is no study on coping and thriving among older persons that employed *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* and narrative inquiry of Clendenin and Connelly as research methods and analysis, and family theories (specifically, Bowen's Family Systems' Theory and Walsh's Family Resilience Theory) and Brown and colleagues' thriving concept as theoretical lenses. Conversely, exploring the coping and thriving of productively engaged Filipino urban poor community or organizational volunteer elder leaders in the face of poverty and adversity by examining their lived experiences as productive people and leaders in their lifetime will contribute to the literature on aging and aging Filipino older persons. This would further contribute to the field of counseling, Psychology, and Gerontology, as well as institutions serving Filipino older persons and people involved in program and policy development for productively engaged Filipino urban poor older persons.

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