

## Letter to the Editor: Students' Positive Coping Strategies From Disaster: A Narrative Analysis

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Dear Editor,

We appreciate a recent article in this journal that underscores the importance of qualitative research in healthcare [1]. In this letter, we highlight the significance of narrative analysis, a qualitative method that has infrequently been discussed, particularly in public health. This method is especially relevant when focusing on disadvantaged populations, with a specific emphasis on the increasing concern for youth, who are often seen as a vulnerable group during disasters.

In the Southern Leyte province of the Philippines, an unprecedented super typhoon served as a stark reminder of the realities of climate change. Super Typhoon Odette, also known internationally as Rai, reached extraordinary strength by the end of December 2021. The storm overwhelmed existing disaster protection measures, leaving people's bioethical responses as the last line of resilience in the face of property loss [2]. Unfortunately, only a handful of recent studies in Southern Leyte have addressed vulnerabilities and local actions [3]. The experiences of college students in the province during Super Typhoon Rai have not yet been explored. In our study, we examined the stress-coping mechanisms of college students whose lives were impacted by the typhoon. We believe this information could be valuable for preventative medicine and public health.

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The students provided informed consent to participate in the study. Our research employed qualitative methods, specifically narrative analysis, on a sample of twelve college students. This group represents more than half of the total number of municipalities in the province. Drawing upon Fusch and Ness [4]' assertion that a minimum of 6 participants can provide rich data in qualitative designs, we determined that saturation was achieved with 12 participants. This was based on the identification of common themes and coding, and the depth of responses. In our narrative analysis, our primary focus was to extract the central storyline of each participant to validate their coping mechanisms. A narrative analysis that delves into the specific vulnerabilities of individuals—in this case, coastal vulnerability—is instrumental in supporting phenomenological data [5]. The lead author conducted in-depth interviews in person from May 2022 to July 2022, while adhering to coronavirus disease 19 guidelines. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated from Cebuano to English. The inclusion criteria for the study were students living in towns or residential areas where Super Typhoon Rai made landfall, who were willing and available to participate during the data collection period.

Super Typhoon Rai caused a staggering US\$794 million in total damages, making it one of the most costly typhoons in Philippine history. Southern Leyte alone reported US\$364 million in damages to marine resources, public buildings, and educational facilities. The participants' responses are summarized below: (1) Facing the loss of her property and income, Casey considered leaving school to assist her soon-to-retire father. However, encouraged by her relatives, she overcame the difficulties and decided to continue her studies. (2) For Sandra, her family's safety was a profound source of strength and, in her

words, the “medicine for my trauma.” (3) Lola’s narrative focused on gratitude and her will to live. The safety of her family, even as they were “used to” stressful circumstances, showcased their resilience. (4) Remy adopted a strategy of deliberate relaxation. Days spent crying at her neighbor’s house provided an opportunity to reflect on her predicament. (5) Jesse’s approach to the situation was goal-oriented. After separation from her family, she sought them out and found solace in their embraces. (6) As a youth leader, Beatrice coped by turning to prayer and encouraged others to compose pleas for aid. She also coordinated regular community clean-up operations while awaiting further assistance. (7) Van’s approach mirrored Beatrice’s as he prepared himself and waited for support from both public and private organizations. (8) Ace championed faith in the process, urging others to resist negative influences and to “go with the flow.” His struggle was a testament to his fight for survival. (9) Ziggy depended on relief goods, which he considered as evidence of God’s providence. He viewed his survival as a “living testimony” of divine assistance. (10) Stan, having lost a friend during the evacuation, found himself caught in a cycle of overthinking until he managed to distract himself with various activities. He also found a means to make money by reselling salvaged roofs and lumber. (11) Therese engaged in proactive pursuits such as reading inspirational material and attending church services, all while aiding with home repairs. (12) Rachelle recognized that her trauma lingered, especially during strong wind triggers, but she continually managed to overcome it by not dwelling on the incidents. As the youngest sibling, she expressed her love by caring for her younger cousins.

These laconic narrations serve as evidence of the positive impact of preventative medicine and public health, demonstrating adaptive coping behaviors. However, there is still much to be investigated regarding the intricate connections this study has to personal histories, government disaster prevention policies, and its influence on the education sector. We advocate for additional studies on psychosocial support that address such a complex phenomenon. New patterns of youth re-

silience for mental health in areas not prone to super typhoons can be discerned from this case. Despite the Philippines being known for frequent typhoons, we have thus far presented new insights into youth mental resilience that arise from specific vulnerabilities within a unique geographic location or province hit by an unprecedented super typhoon. Future research could delve into these specific responses in various contexts, given that personal histories are too complex to be generalized in a single study.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest associated with the material presented in this paper.

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