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**SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE:
THEIR EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, AND COPING
MECHANISMS**

A Thesis Presented to
the Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies
and Teacher Education Research
Philippine Normal University
Taft Avenue, Manila

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education
with Specilization in Child Study

by

Cheryl Dedase-Cañezal
April 2017

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Abstract

Name	:	Cheryl A. Dedase-Canezal
Title	:	Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Their Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms
Key Concepts	:	Sexual Abuse, Experiences, Challenges, Coping Mechanisms
Degree	:	Master of Arts in Education
Specialization	:	Child Study
Advisers	:	Prof. Teresita T. Rungduin, Ph.D., RP Prof. Priscila B. Dizon, Ed.D

This research is a phenomenological study which explored the lives of teenagers and young adults who are survivors of sexual abuse. In-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of 10 teenagers and young adults, 16-22 years old, who were once sheltered from one year and 6 months to almost six years.

On their being temporarily sheltered at the Shelter, the respondents were grateful for the educational support provided inside. Their esteem was boosted when trusted by the staff, a privilege only few residents are able to experience. They developed positive affect by having good friends and being closed with some staff. It was also inside that some of them developed self-help and livelihood skills which they can use in earning a living once discharged from the Shelter.

On the other hand, they also experienced challenges inside. They worried over the situation of their family outside, especially when it comes to having food to eat everyday. They also faced negative affect, hypocrisy, and unfairness which resulted in conflict; adjustment and limitations particularly on time, food, and space; and the challenge to retract the case. To manage and survive the challenges inside, they learned to avoid problems by keeping themselves busy, getting involved in same-sex relationship, establishing positive relationship with others whom they could turn to in times of troubles, and enriching their faith in God on whom they put their trust.

When reintegrated, the respondents experienced mixed affect when discharged; they felt happy and sad at the same time. They also lacked contentment and became uncertain about their future. Though they acquired freedom from being discharged, they developed poor self-concept. In their reintegration, the respondents had not become exempted from the challenges of life. They underwent an adjustment process. Moreover, due to financial constraints, they were unable to pursue education. They also experienced lack of positive relationship with the members of the family. In addition, they developed hypervigilance in dealing with others especially men, and had apprehensions regarding meeting again their perpetrator. Worst of all is that one respondent engaged in prostitution.

To manage and survive the challenges when reintegrated, the respondents had hold on to their faith in God which, according to them, was enriched when they were in the Shelter. They also had a support system to lean on. Furthermore, they reframed their perspective, kept dreaming and striving to succeed, exhibited assertiveness, became decisive, executed self-

control, and used employable skills to survive and become a better person despite the sexual abuse perpetrated against them.

The conclusions arrived at in this study are the following: the respondents validated the benefits of staying inside the Shelter; though they received intervention from the Shelter, they still had a hard time in their reintegration; the family, especially the mother, plays a significant role in guiding the survivors; support system is quite important for the survivors; effects of the sexual abuse are still manifesting; preparation on the survivors and their family is quite important during reintegration; poverty gives the respondents a hard time; and the coping mechanisms of the survivors played significantly in surviving life's challenges.

This study recommends the following: Institutions that cater to sexual abuse should strengthen their therapeutic program because the respondents, according to them, benefited from it; Strengthening the involvement of the Local Social Work and Development Office (LSWDO) in monitoring the survivors once reintegrated is necessary; The LGU through the LSWDO, POs, and NGOs who are advocates in addressing sexual abuse should consider conceptualizing intervention plans for the family of the survivors, particularly family therapy, to address the issues that seem to be prevalent even after the temporary shelter of the survivors; There should be a gradual reintegration process of the survivors to prepare them thoroughly; and, Further studies that will determine the effects of incest cases on the family as a whole, and the appropriate intervention programs for the government and other advocates to implement are encouraged.

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Prologue

To work at the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has been my dream since I was young, so when the opportunity to work at the Department had knocked, I grabbed it without any hesitation. It is truly life changing to deal with the sexually abused survivors. In the past, I heard and saw their stories only on the radio and television, but when I entered the Shelter, it became a gateway for me to realize the reality of life. Indeed, life sometimes strikes quite hard upon some people. It made me ask myself this question: If I were in their shoes, would I survive like they did?

I remember the first month of working in the Shelter, vicarious trauma hit me. I could not eat and sleep well. I developed hypervigilance and became paranoid that those I encountered would do me wrong. Worse, even in my dreams, the stories of our clients haunted me! I was indeed overwhelmed with the first interviews that I had with our sexually abused survivors. My mind could not contain how these clients, particularly at their young age, were raped by people of their own flesh and blood not only once but countless times for long years. Fortunately, I was able to survive and adjust to the nature of my vocation.

In my more than five (5) years in the Shelter, I could say that all the possible ways that can be done to bring back the normal living of these survivors are being executed by the Shelter. However, the effects of the abuse on these young people are truly unfathomable. One day you see them alright; the next day or week, they are not. Indeed, the challenge of a worker specifically in the Shelter is truly high.

When the most awaited time comes for the sexually abused survivors to be reintegrated with their respective family or guardian, the psychological service conducts an exit interview

with them. Farewell is given, and hopes and silent prayers are uttered for them. Thus, when it had been finalized that I would be studying our former clients for my thesis, excitement overwhelmed me. At last, I would meet and interview them again. I had been wondering how they were living outside. Although some of my respondents are my friends in the social networking sites, and I get to be updated about some of their whatabouts, for some of them, I really did not have any idea as to what happened to them after being reintegrated with their family or guardian. I had been hoping that all their dreams which they were carrying when they got out of the Shelter are being fulfilled. All of them wanted a new beginning, a new season which is different from the life they once had before entering the Shelter, a life that was defined by chaos.

Chapter I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, which the Philippines was one of the first countries to ratify, advocates to safeguard and address the best interest of the children. Specifically, the decision points state that children should be given right to life; right to develop all aspects of their being — mental, spiritual, physical, emotional/psychological; right that protect them from war, abuse, and exploitation; and right that ensures their access to information, to venues for expressing their thoughts and opinions, and to consultation especially regarding the matters that directly involve them, whether at the level of the family, school, church, or the larger community (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

In the United States, more than 700,000 children are abused annually. Based on the most recent year of national data, an estimated 702,000 children (unique incidents) were victims of abuse and neglect in 2014, and an estimated 1,564 children died due to them. In 2015, Children's Advocacy Centers around the country served more than 300,000 child victims of abuse, providing victim advocacy and support to these children and their families. In addition, the Child Protection Services protect nearly 3 million children. Forty-seven states reported that approximately 2.9 million children received preventative services from child protective services agencies. Based on the data, the youngest children were most vulnerable to maltreatment, the most common form of which is neglect. Children in the first year of their life had the highest rate of victimization of 24.4 per 1,000 children in the national population of the same age. Of

the children who experienced maltreatment or abuse, nearly 80% suffered neglect; 18% suffered physical abuse; and 9% suffered sexual abuse. (Some children are polyvictimized—they have suffered more than one form of maltreatment.) About four out of five abusers are the victims' parents. A parent of the child victim was the perpetrator in 78% of substantiated cases of child maltreatment (nationalchildrensalliance.org).

In the Philippines, as many as 2,147 cases of child abuse were reported to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in the first quarter of 2016, more than one-fourth of which was of a sexual nature. The figure was nearly half of the total 4,374 child abuse cases reported in the entire year of 2015, according to the Policy Development and Planning Bureau of the DSWD. In the first three months of 2016, most of the children were victims of sexual abuse, with 539 cases; followed by neglect, with 514 cases; abandonment, with 487 cases; sexual exploitation, 233 cases, and trafficking, 214 cases. There were 83 cases of physical abuse and maltreatment, 47 cases of illegal recruitment, and 13 cases of child labor (newsinfo.inquirer.net).

To address the problems faced by the government regarding rape cases, RA 8505, otherwise known as the Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act of 1998, was passed into law. It is an act providing assistance and protection for rape victims, establishing for the purpose a rape crisis center in every province and city, authorizing the appropriation of funds thereof and for other purposes. It mandated the DSWD to provide support services to rape victims and their families such as residential service and community-based service and to establish linkage with the academe and all NGOs for the necessary support services to rape victims/survivors and their families.

In the National Capital Region, the Shelter where I work in is a residential care facility being run by the DSWD. This is where the sexually abused and exploited children in conflict with the law (CICL) girls aged 7 to 17 are temporarily sheltered for protective custody, case management, and therapeutic interventions. The institution has a manual of operations that is centered on carrying out distinguished functions to address the needs of the clients it caters. Once the residents are cleared with their cases or threats in the community are proven non-existent, they are provided with positive parenting capability assessment for reintegration and assessed by the Rehabilitation Team of distinguished services in the Shelter in preparation for their moving out. Discharge afterwards is facilitated.

Survivors of sexual abuse who had been once temporarily sheltered and then discharged are seen in social networking sites pregnant or already have a child out of wedlock. Some ran away from their guardian because they could not live harmoniously with them. It is a big question, therefore, as to what happened or is happening to these girls considering the fact that some of them are still minor in age. It is a question if these survivors of abuse have a better life after the discharge.

This research then aimed to seek the experiences, challenges faced, coping mechanisms, and stories of moving on of the survivors of abuse who had been once in the custody of the Shelter. How are their thoughts shaped by the abuse? What did they experience in the Shelter? What did they experience in their reintegration? How do they live now? Are they living as they wanted and hoped to be? What challenges do they experience in their reintegration? How do they face hardships along the way?

Justly, the survivors of sexual abuse constantly need love, care, protection, understanding, guidance, and the right to become productive citizens of the country. However, the question is, do they get the attention and support of those around them, of the state, and of the concerned entities who are supposed to help these individuals? The study endeavored to document the voices of the sexual abuse survivors so that they can be better understood and given appropriate support.

Conceptual Framework

This research was conceptualized based on the following studies that gave direction to this paper:

It is said that one of the most important functions of the family is to provide protection and support to its members; more specifically, to the children, as they are its weakest and most vulnerable members. The parents are supposed to provide not only for the child's physical needs but also for his/her emotional and psychological needs (Taniajura, 2000).

In our society, the mother is the primary caregiver. She is supposed to stay home and provide her children personalized care. However, because of economic realities, both parents now than earlier generations have to work harder to support their families. This situation brings the mother outside of the home because she has to join the labor force to augment the family's income. As a result, the care of the young children is passed on to other family members or relatives. In Taniajura's (2000) study, it was revealed that it is often the mother's absence from the home that became opportunities for the perpetrators to take advantage of the children. Another element that is worth noting is the passivity of the mothers in cases of incest. Some

children reported that despite them disclosing the abuse, their mothers did not do anything about it. The mothers merely told the children to either keep quiet about it or just stay away from their fathers. Other studies reported that mothers of incest victims tend to be overdependent, unassertive, and with low self-esteem. They care more for their personal protection and sustenance than for the protection of their children (Kroeger, 1996, as cited in Taniajura, 2000).

The mothers who are supposed to be the main source of emotional support in the family seem to be oblivious to the plight of their children. A study claims that although many mothers deny knowledge of the incest, studies suggest that most mother had some kind of knowledge of what was occurring. Because they were afraid the father might abandon the family, they did not confront the abuse (Cohen, 1993, as cited in Taniajura, 2000). Also, women with low self-esteem who do not believe in themselves are less able to confront offensive behavior of their husbands. They easily give up their power and may not be able to stop violent or destructive behaviors against them or their children (Taniajura, 2000).

The trends of sexual abuse seemed based on the demographic profile of the respondents of a study which support the findings of other studies done here in the Philippines and in the U.S. Data like the average age of the victims, the mean age of the child at the onset of abuse, the number of times the child is abused, and the duration of abuse are consistent with the results of other studies (Jackson and Nuttall, 1997, as cited in Taniajura, 2000). Some of the trends found similar are: reported case of sexual abuse generally occur in the lower socio-economic class; the most frequent abusers of the children are their father and stepfathers; majority of the sexual abuse cases involved persons who had close interactions with the victims as members of the same family, household, or neighborhood; sexual abuse by a family member continued longer

than abuse by non-relatives; repeated abuse occur more when there is a close relationship between the victim and the perpetrator; the more close the relationship is, the longer it takes for the abuse to be disclosed; and incest constitutes the highest number of child sexual abuse cases (Taniajura, 2000).

Finkelhor and Browne (1985) developed a comprehensive model for understanding the trauma of sexual abuse and its short- and long-term effects. According to the model, the emotional and mental orientation of a child in his/her world is disturbed by the event of sexual abuse. The Traumagenics model is process-oriented rather than event-oriented, conceptualizing sexual abuse as an ongoing, dynamic process in the child. The four (4) dynamics present with the sexual abuse are: (1) **Traumatic Sexualization**, wherein the child's sexuality is changed and shaped by the event of sexual abuse; (2) **Betrayal**, which can be felt by the child regarding both the perpetrator who has destroyed her trust or the mother or other adult who was not protective; (3) **Powerlessness**, that the child is unable to exert his will and get what he wants (not to be abused) and feels the threat of harm with no ability to alter the situation; and (4) **Stigmatization**, which the child incorporates the self-perception that she is bad, guilty, and responsible for the abuse. In this study, this is to note that the Shelter uses this model to address the dynamics of sexual abuse. It serves as a guide to creating therapeutic activities that will be beneficial to the clients admitted in the Shelter.

Given the terrible situation in our country, the corresponding move in the direction of a comprehensive and collaborative approach on child sexual abuse prevention was laid down in R.A. No. 9231, an act providing for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor and affording stronger protection for the working child, amending R.A. No. 7610 otherwise known

as the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination (Family Code of the Philippines, 2001; ILO, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, 2007). Article 11, Sec. 4 - Formulation of the Program – states, "There shall be a comprehensive program to be formulated by the Department of Justice and the Department of Social Welfare and Development in coordination with other agencies and private sectors concerned, within one year from the effectivity of this Act to protect children against prostitution and other sexual abuse; child trafficking, obscene publication and indecent shows; and acts of abuse; and circumstances which endanger child survival and normal development" (Family Code of the Philippines, 2001, p.76).

Furthermore, in response to this public Act, GOs and NGOs protecting the welfare of children were established in many regions of the country. For instance, the PGH-CPU was established in 1997, women's and children's as well as legal desks in various LGUs were created, and a few church- and school-based prevention programs became operational (especially through the efforts of the Child Protection Network and the Center for Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse) (Dehn, 2011).

It is said that given the emotional distress of the victims as reflected in their negative outlook in life, professional help is required for the reconstruction of their normal selves. With the negative effects of incest, the individual self functioning of abused children needs to be enhanced to optimize their potential as human beings. (Molina, as cited in Sobrichtea, 2001).

With the incapability of the respondents' families to address the effects and challenges that sexual abuse has brought to the survivors, who usually belong to the low economic status (Jackson & Nuttall, 1997, as cited in Taniajura, 2000) and did not reach high education to give

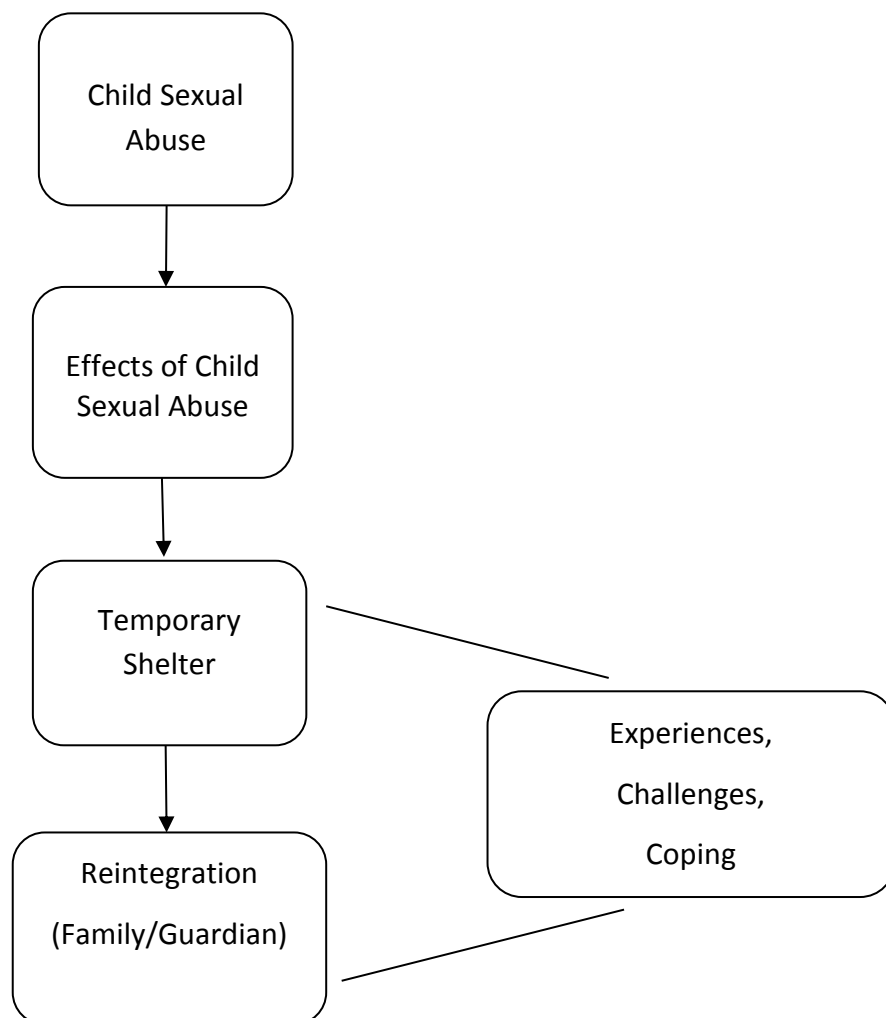
financial support to therapy, and given the fact that incest cases do have its own challenges on its respective families (weak, unsupportive mother – Taniajura, 2000), this is then where the temporary shelters catering to sexual abuse come in. The survivor of abuse or one's family seeks the assistance of the government or other helping organizations for protection, therapy, and assistance of the case. In the case of incest, mostly, concerned relatives or citizens are the ones who refer the survivors.

According to Guerrero (2002), a Shelter plays a vital role for the recovery of its resident abused children. Through its specifically designed programs and activities, the children will learn how to overcome and cope with their negative experiences. Treatment programs do not necessarily erase the memories of abuse in the minds of the victims. Instead, it should be a means to help a victim express his/her thoughts about the abuse to others as well as for the acceptance of the abuse as part of one's experience. In addition, for the treatment program to be successful, its mechanics and goals should be easily grasped or understood by its focus group. Its effectiveness can be determined through the level of awareness and participation of the participants as well as their individual responses which can be observed in the changes and improvements in their individual behaviors after a series of treatments.

In the study of Dehn (2011) which involved 26 sexual abuse survivors, all the survivors were recipients of assistance from various individuals and organizations in the entire process of child sexual abuse. The individuals are members of the immediate and extended family, neighbors/friends/classmates, community service providers, and strangers. The support organizations encompass 76 government as well as non-government organizations. For their safety, healing, and recovery, a multitude of measures were provided for the survivors and their

families during and after the child sexual abuse. Undoubtedly, the survivors of child sexual abuse were assisted in this very traumatic part of their lives. However, Dehn (2011) concluded that the impact of child sexual abuse is widespread and deep-seated. The survivors and the family alone cannot cope with the enormous effects of sexual abuse. Although the survivors and their families received valuable support from various organizations and institutions, the study showed that long term psychological effects of sexual abuse are prevalent.

Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of the Study



The purpose of this study is to show that the phenomenon of child sexual abuse has enormous effects on the victim-survivor, may it be short- or long-term ones. Effects of the abuse are indeed uncontrollable and life changing not only to the survivors themselves but also to their family. In the presence of the challenges that child sexual abuse bring, especially incest cases wherein conflicts within the family arise, the need for the survivors to be protected and ensure that the case will be filed, referral to temporary shelter catering to such cases should be facilitated.

The Shelter provides protective custody, case management, and rehabilitation. The Shelter being a government facility, neither the survivor nor their family produces a single cent as payment for the services. From an unstructured environment outside the Shelter to a structured one inside and having the survivors taken away from their families, this study would like to present the unique experiences that the survivors have inside the facility, the challenges they face, and how they manage to cope with these challenges.

When the survivors and their receiving families or guardians are assessed to be prepared for reintegration, mainstreaming is facilitated. Thus, this study would like to present as well the experiences, challenges encountered, and the coping mechanisms used by the survivors, having received from the Shelter the distinguished programs for the survivors of sexual abuse and brought back to an unstructured environment, when reintegrated.

Statement of the Purpose

This study aimed to attain the following objectives:

1. To describe the sexually abused survivors' experiences in the Shelter and when they were reintegrated;
2. To determine the challenges faced by the survivors of abuse while inside the Shelter and when they were reintegrated; and
3. To determine how these survivors of abuse cope with the challenges encountered while inside the Shelter and when they were reintegrated.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will provide information about survivors of sexual abuse, particularly on their experiences, challenges faced, and coping mechanisms used. Through this study, it is hoped that the sexually abused survivors will be understood and supported accordingly.

For the significant others of the survivors, this study aimed for them to better understand the dynamics of surviving sexual abuse, so they would know how to appropriately relate with and give the survivors the necessary help. The study is also for the staff and caregivers of survivors, particularly in temporary shelters, for them to have a broader view regarding survivors of sexual abuse so as to know how to deal with them better and how to address their issues and concerns while being under their care.

For government agencies like the DSWD that cater to cases of sexual abuse, the findings of this study will help them create, sustain, or improve programs to better address and serve cases of child sexual abuse for empowerment and preparation of the survivors for reintegration in the community. Furthermore, for Local Government Units (LGUs) down to the barangay level,

it is hoped that this study will make them closely monitor, ensure the safety, and provide the necessary need and help for sexually abused survivors in the community.

To other organizations like the People Organization, non-government organizations, and the like, the results of this study may make them realize better the importance of their aid to the government especially on sustaining assistance (financial, counseling, scholarships, etc.) for the survivors once they go back to the care of their respective families or guardians. May they realize the need to do more if they see the call.

To the educational sector, may this study make them aware that there could be a number of victims of abuse in the school unrecognized; thus, victimization is not addressed. May the educators be discerning by being knowledgeable on the dynamics of abuse so they would know how to handle the victims and the situation, may it be through informing the victim's family, reporting to the authority, making referrals, etc.

Moreover, for future researchers, this study may encourage them to conduct related studies, filling the gaps in this research like studying the readiness of the receiving family or guardian upon the reintegration of the survivors and the effectiveness of the programs of temporary shelter for sexually abused survivors. They may also use the information provided by this study in their own investigations, particularly those on the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanism of the survivors of sexual abuse.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study focused on 10 former client-survivors of sexual abuse of the Shelter discharged for a maximum of four years. The participants were selected based on the span of

stay of the researcher at the Shelter and on their availability for interview. They were survivors under follow up within the areas of Metro Manila and other nearby provinces. Clients discharged to distant provinces were excluded in the study.

The length of reintegration of the former clients in the community since their discharge from the Shelter was disregarded since their accessibility and availability were hard and conflicting. Furthermore, for the same reason, age of the subjects was likewise not given much consideration in the selection of the participants. Also, for some circumstantial reasons, some of them were discharged at or above age 18. Thus, it was expected that the age of the participants may exceed the minority level (that is, below 18 years of age).

The study sought to conduct a follow up of the sexually abused survivors in terms of their experiences, challenges, and coping. There is a lack of studies involving respondents sheltered in an agency such as the DSWD or the like for protective custody and/or rehabilitation before reintegrating the survivors with their respective families or guardians, and particularly focusing on their experiences, challenges, and coping. The study, however, did not focus on abuse recall and analysis of the respondents' feelings toward the abuse and its perpetrator.

Definition of Terms

Challenges. These are the trials, hardships, and problems that the participants faced during their temporary placement in the Shelter and after they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community.

Child Sexual Abuse. It is the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct. It

includes molestation and prostitution of, or incestuous relations with children (RA 7610, 1994).

Community. This is the place where the participants lived after their temporary shelter.

Coping Mechanism. These are the ways employed by the survivors to deal with or survive the challenges they encountered during their temporary placement in the Shelter and after they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community. These ways can be good, positive, healthy, and constructive, or on the other hand, can be negative, unhealthy or dangerous.

Discharge. This is a process that is being facilitated once the client in the Shelter is ready for reintegration with his/her family or guardian after his/her temporary shelter.

Experiences. This is the personal encounter in the different circumstances that the survivors had during their temporary placement in the Shelter and after they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community.

- It excludes the challenges that the survivors faced during their temporary placement in the Shelter and after they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community.

Reintegration. This is the process wherein the clients of the Shelter are brought back to their respective families to live again with them or be a new part or member of the family, if they will be reintegrated with their relatives or guardian.

Survivors. They are former victims of sexual abuse who were the participants of this study. In this study, the term is sometimes used interchangeably with “former clients”, “residents” or “respondents”.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents the related literature and researches related to the study. As much as the researcher would like to include only recent studies, old researches seen to significantly contribute to the study as well were also cited.

What causes abuse? Some sociologists and anthropologists contend that the underlying cause or root of abuse lies on cultural orientation or worldwide views that are based on patriarchy (UP Center for Women Studies, 1996). Under a patriarchal system, the male exercise of power over women and children is tolerated, if not allowed. This exercise of male power and domination always results in violence or abuse against women and children. The patriarchal family structure has a power imbalance where no one can challenge the man as the head of the family. This often leaves the children unprotected. As heads of households, these men believe very strongly that women and children should be subordinate to men. Also, they have a sense of ownership over their children and view them as property. The pervasiveness of a world view based on patriarchal values may very well lead to some social acceptance or a greater tolerance for sexual abuse in a society.

A study states that one of the greatest causes of poverty in the world is the lie that men and women are unequal. Men are superior, and women are viewed as property and object for sexual gratification. To some, a woman's only value is to conceive children (Miller, as cited in Taniajura, 2000). In patriarchy, men's dominance over women and children often leads to violence and abuse of them. Kroeger, as cited in Taniajura, 2000 stated that it appears "incest

was not found in families where there was not a hierarchy (one parent above or below in power, authority, and decision-making), and the father and the mother worked together as a team in parenting the children.”

According to Dehn (2011), child sexual abuse is primarily a crime committed by a known person to the child. Also, in the studies of Sugue-Castillo, PGH-CPU, and Ramos Dehn, it was shown that an overwhelming percentage of the survivors knew their perpetrators (91% to 92%; Dehn’s study, 85%). Merely four offenders were not known to the children who belonged to the non-incest group. Thus, child sexual abuse is basically an offense committed by perpetrators who know their victims (Ketring & Feinauer, 2000). Furthermore, Hinson, Koverola & Morahan (2002) cited several studies which indicated that not only identity but also the relationship of the perpetrator adversely affects long-term adjustment to child sexual abuse. In Dehn’s (2011) study, half of the survivors were abused by their relatives.

Children have certain physical characteristics compared to an adult which make the former at a higher risk of being sexually abused. First, children have smaller bodies, and defending themselves during an assault poses a greater challenge than for adults. In some cases, precisely this trait of the perspective victim is attractive to the offender. Second, there are perpetrators (pedophiles) who are attracted to young victims. Therefore, the physical traits of a child make him/her more vulnerable to sexual abuse (Dehn, 2011).

It is said that how a victim responds to the sexual abuse depends on who the perpetrator is. When sexual abuse occurs within the family, the child may feel anger, jealousy, shame of other family members, or be afraid the family will break up if the secret is told. The fear of disclosing the abuse is caused by the fear of consequences for the family, harbor I guess vengeful

and angry feeling toward both parents, and bringing disloyalty and disruption to the family (APA, 1998, as cited in Dy, 2008). Thus, intrafamilial sexual abuse or incest is expected to be the least reported case and the one that requires considerable amount of time before it can be disclosed.

An awful thing about sexual abuse is that it encompasses all kinds of abuses. A child who is sexually abused may also experience physical, emotional, psychological, and verbal abuse. Taniajura (2000) cited Robert Ackerman's notion that physical and sexual abuse cannot exist independently of emotional abuse. By definition, physical and sexual abuse entail emotional abuse as well. These kinds of abuses can leave the victim severely traumatized and emotionally damaged. Furthermore, how the victims view about the future life is somehow wrecked by the physical and emotional devastation they suffered from the abuse. Oftentimes, victims regard themselves as shattered, dirty, and useless after the sexual abuse especially when the perpetrator is someone known to the victim, like in the case of incest (McClendon cited in Dy, 2008).

Child sexual abuse is devastating and traumatic. It is a serious social issue which affects all sectors of the society. It destroys the lives of our young children who, in the words of Atty. Eric Mallonga, legal counsel of Bantay Bata 163, "are not just the future of our society but are the present of our society" (Mallonga, 2008).

Effects and Challenges of Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Just as there is no easy formula to predict who will sexually abuse a child or which child will be abused, the effect of child sexual abuse on victims is unpredictable and difficult to

categorize. There is a long list of possible symptoms and reported reactions, but every child is different. The reaction to child sexual abuse varies widely depending on the person, his/her upbringing and background as well as the actual circumstances of the child sexual abuse (Klein, 2010). Other factors include a person's ability to manage negative emotions and to adapt to situations (Asher cited in Klein, 2010). The degree in which a child expresses his/her emotional harm depends on the child's history of communication, the current developmental level, and the nature of the sexual abuse (Finkelhor cited in Klein, 2010).

Short-Term Effects

Short-term effects may be more researched and better understood because children reach medical, psychiatric, or social services faster than adults voluntarily seek help (Gomez-Schwartz, Horowitz, & Cardelli cited in Klein, 2010). Adult survivors of child sexual abuse could also be receiving professional help for reasons other than child sexual abuse, so the information could be skewed. Children are usually taken to see professionals soon after child sexual abuse incidents due to the discovery of the abuse or because they are demonstrating behavioral problems (Gomez-Schwartz et al. cited in Klein, 2010). Every person can respond differently psychologically, emotionally, and physically no matter what interaction takes place with their abuser. Because there is no set list of standard symptoms, there is an enormous breadth of feelings, defense mechanisms, coping techniques, and psychological struggles that may occur and no simple way to treat the victim.

The emotional and psychological symptoms are sometimes hard to notice because they can be extremely subtle, but it is easier to recognize the physical signs of sexual abuse. Klein (2010) cited Kempe and Kempe study that suggest some clues of child sexual abuse to look for

are the following: weight loss/gain, abdominal pain, vomiting, and urinary tract infections. The physical signs are usually easier to notice, but they can also be mistaken for an illness or normal ailments instead of sexual abuse. It is important to connect the dots of many signs; behavioral, physical, and emotional, before concluding if a child has been sexual abused.

Victims of child sexual abuse experience a whirlwind of emotions immediately after the abuse, which can be carried through adulthood depending on how those feelings are expressed (Klein, 2010). The most common emotions that children feel after a child sexual abuse incident are fear and anxiety (Hunter, 2010). There is fear of the consequences of revealing the abuse and also about being punished for participating in the abuse (Walsh Fortier, & DiLillo, 2010). The anxiety is influenced by many things, such as the reactions from parents and loved ones, confusion about whether they made the right choice to reveal the secret, and involuntarily “reliving” the abuse because of the need to repeat the story to other people of authority (Putnam, 2009).

Another factor that influences the child is the ruined idea of secrecy. The child, by exposing the abuse, broke a secret—a behavior that is frowned upon in the society. The bond that is created by the secret is destroyed, and there is a learned association that secrets are hurtful and destructive things. A secret creates trust, confidence, closeness, loyalty, and affection between the secret holders, but all of that is ruined when the secret is sexual abuse (Cameron, 2000). Based on her study, Cameron (2000) believes that any sexual contact by a caretaker breaks the trust of a child, so it does not matter how “serious” the abuse is; it will still have a significant impact.

However, penetration is probably the worst offense because it can make the child feel unsafe in his/her own body. There is also a long list of emotions that have been reported by child sexual abuse survivors, but there is no determined timeline for when the survivor will experience the emotions because each survivor copes differently (Gomez-Shwartz, et al., 1990, as cited in Klein, 2010). One person may feel anger toward their abuser immediately after the abuse as a child, while another person will experience the anger as an adult.

Klein (2010) cited other emotions that researchers believe follow child sexual abuse which are betrayal, anger, sadness, hopelessness, and confusion. There are some specific behavioral symptoms that occur in the different childhood age groups. In the pre-school age, (Goodwin cited in Klein, 2010) found that behavioral changes include nightmares, compulsive masturbation, loss of toilet training, frequent bathing, crying without provocation, and regressive behavior like finger sucking.

As children grow older, the symptoms do not necessarily change, but others are added to the list. School age children develop additional behaviors like insomnia, school failure, truancy, and running away from home (Kempe & Kempe cited in Klein, 2010). Behaviors of children become increasingly socially unacceptable once they reach adolescence. Behaviors such as petty crimes, drug use, and promiscuity are prevalent in the adolescent age group and can continue into adulthood (Asher, 1988, as cited in Klein, 2010).

A very extreme behavior that might start is prostitution, but it is not as common as the others. Prostitution is an occasional outcome, especially after running away from home, because child sexual abuse victims learn to dissociate from what is happening to their bodies (Gelinas, 1983, as cited in Klein, 2010). The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

(2008) also stated that some sexually abused children become child abusers or prostitutes, or have other serious problems when they reach adulthood. Children at all ages can exhibit the behaviors. Although this withdrawal can be a healthy strategy for kids, if there is too much, it can create a sense of numbing or detachment from reality, which can bring about psychological distress in the long run (Fortier et al., 2009). Trauma cannot be avoided forever in order for a person to heal.

Some of the symptoms that manifest during the short-term period can be categorized as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Since child sexual abuse is a traumatic event for any victim, PTSD symptoms would be a logical response. PTSD is a disorder that first gained mainstream attention in connection with the soldiers returning from the Vietnam War, but now it is expanded far beyond war veterans. It is a disorder that may begin as a result of any traumatic event (Putnam, 2010).

Briere (cited in Klein, 2010) claims that survivors of sexual abuse are prone to displaying PTSD related symptoms. It makes sense for survivors to show symptoms of PTSD because sexual abuse is a highly traumatic experience. Symptoms may include anxiety, sleep disturbances, nightmares, and psychosomatic complaints (Putnam, 2009). One study (Kiser et al., cited in Klein, 2010) concluded that nine out of 10 children between the ages of two and six who were molested showed signs of PTSD. Children display PTSD symptoms differently than adults. For example, children experience more nightmares instead of the dissociative flashbacks that adult survivors often show (Koverola & Foy cited in Klein, 2010).

Children, for the most part, are haunted by child sexual abuse and must find a way to escape the trauma in their minds. The most general symptoms that children display are

flashbacks of the trauma, avoiding activities suggestive of the trauma, and an intensification of symptoms on exposure to events similar to the abuse (Putnam, 2009). One of two key symptoms of PTSD, dissociation, occurs more frequently in adults, but it can also be a sign in children. Dissociation most often manifests itself in the form of forgetfulness, excessive fantasizing, sleep walking, imaginary friends, and trancelike states (Putnam, 2009). The second essential symptom of PTSD is avoidance. Children may show avoidant coping by avoiding any situation or stimuli associated with the trauma (American Psychological Association DSM-IV, 2000).

Children may want to make conscious attempts to avoid anything that will remind them of the abuse. This sometimes results in children not joining activities they had previously enjoyed (Jackson & March cited in Klein, 2010). Other behavioral changes may take place as well, such as reenacting the traumatic play and hyper-alertness. Traumatic play, according to Jackson and March (cited in Klein, 2010), is the repetitive acting out of the specific theme of the trauma. Usually, when the child reenacts the abuse, the victim becomes more empowered and is able to stop or hurt the abuser (LaFontaine cited in Klein, 2010). Hyper-alertness is physiological arousal and may show sleep disturbances, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and aggression (Putnam, 2009).

Not all professionals and researchers agree that victims of child sexual abuse will experience PTSD; some (e.g., Finkelhor, 1990) believe diagnosing child sexual abuse victims with PTSD is not a good way to conceptualize the events and symptoms that children face after the trauma (Putnam, 2009). Child sexual abuse is a unique experience, and PTSD symptoms may be too generalized. Hudson and Ward (2001) believe that for a diagnosis of child sexual

abuse, one must take into account the onset of the abuse, its development, and maintenance of the relationship.

Dehn's (2011) study cited the short-term consequences of sexual abuse which she classified as having less than two years of recovery as: fear, hyperactive mind, recurring thoughts/intrusive thoughts/flashbacks, nightmares, fear of being alone, sleep disturbances, loss of trust, fear of darkness, numbing and blank stares (for anxiety-related); loss of appetite, low self-confidence, low self-esteem, decreased energy, withdrawal, hurt, guilt and sadness (for depression-related); blaming, aggression towards others and anger (for aggression); anger towards men, distorted image of men, fear of men and fear of intimate relationship with men; running away (for behavioral problems), and sexual orientation confusion and desiring sex (for sexuality problems).

Long-Term Effects

Child sexual abuse has many long-term effects that can negatively affect victims' entire lives. Psychological impairment from child sexual abuse is very common and may reveal itself in different forms depending on the life of the survivor. Fortier et al. (2009) explained that long-term difficulties include depression, anxiety disorders, personality and eating disorders, and substance use disorders. Among young adults, victims have a higher risk of dangerous sexual behavior and higher rates of college drop outs (Fortier et al., 2009). If a child withdrew from social interactions too much after child sexual abuse, there could be potentially more psychological harm as an adult because he/she did not face the reality of the trauma and still has issues to work through (Asher cited in Klein, 2010). One way adults may cope with child sexual abuse is to attempt to avoid the memory of the past by using all available sources as distractions.

Klein (2010) stated that one way child sexual abuse affects adults is through the kind of relationships survivors have with loved ones. Some victims suffer sexually in their adult lives because of the trauma and negative connotation associated with sexual activity. Symptoms include frigidity, vaginismus (involuntary spasm of vaginal muscle that closes the vagina), inability to tolerate sexual arousal, and flashbacks (Finkelhor & Browne cited in Klein, 2010). It is difficult to develop a positive perception of sex after being negatively exposed to it at a young age.

Adults who impose sexual behavior on children use a gentle vocabulary to describe their criminal acts (Cameron, 2000). For example, when the abuser refers to fondling as cuddling, all positive behaviors to show affection are distorted. A key factor in changing a survivor's perception of a sexual experience is to allow them to willingly give consent to any sexual activity, which is the power of choice that was taken away from child sexual abuse victims (Haines cited in Klein, 2010). Sexual activity is often associated with suffering and manipulation instead of pleasure, so as an adult, one's interest in sex may be minimal, which is frustrating for the survivor and his/her partner (Haines cited in Klein, 2010). There is a significant decrease in trust and intimacy and dissatisfaction in marital relationships (DiLillo, 2001). There is a risk of sexual functioning problems that range from low sexual desire and arousal to an inability to tolerate touch or to experience orgasm. Also, higher levels of negative sexual affect, lower levels of perceived emotional support from partners, and feelings of betrayal, powerlessness, and stigmatization in relationships are possible problems as well (Hodges & Myers, 2010). Clearly, child sexual abuse takes a toll on one's happiness and interpersonal relationships in adulthood.

Engel (1991) mentions that child sexual abuse robs its victims of their innocence, their trust, and self-esteem. The long-term effects of sexual abuse as enumerated by Bass and Davies (1994), Engel (1991), and Reinert (1997) clearly indicate the extent to which every aspect of the survivor's life can be affected. Some of the effects of sexual abuse are: (a) Psychological problems: damaged self-esteem and self-image; feelings of being stupid, a failure, or a loser; feeling ugly inside; feelings of worthlessness and helplessness; etc. (b) Emotional problems: extreme fear or phobias; chronic depression; sleep disturbances; mood swings; intense anger and rage; addictions; obsessive-compulsive behaviors; eating disorders; etc. (c) Physical problems: migraine headaches; unexplained vaginal or anal pain; frequent bladder and vaginal infections; skin disorders; high pain tolerance; etc. (d) Sexual problems: loss of sexual desire; sexual dysfunction; sexual addiction or aberration; promiscuity; guilt about sexual pleasure; deep hatred of body and its sexual responses; sexual revictimization; problems with sexual identity; etc. (e) Relationship problems: difficulty trusting self and others; involvement with abusive people; fear of commitment; self-imposed isolation; too much clinging or neediness; lack of sympathy for others; difficulty with physical affection; a tendency to help others at own expense; difficulty with authority figures; a tendency to become abusive toward others; difficulty expressing desires; etc.

Other studies state that due to the assaultive nature of the event and the social stigma attached to it, child sexual abuse produces devastating and long-lasting psychological symptoms and difficulties in the victim. Fears, trauma, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), nightmares, behavior problems, sexualized behaviors, and poor self-esteem occurred most frequently (Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993). Feelings of depression, shame, anger, guilt, and a

sense of permanent damage are commonly reported by children who were sexually abused (Mordeno et al., 2003; Putnam, 2003). Adolescents who have been sexually abused show a high rate of poor impulse control and self-destructive and suicidal behaviors. Posttraumatic stress disorder and dissociative disorders are common in adults who have been sexually abused as children (Kaplan & Sadock, 2007).

In the local study, Dehn (2011) stated that the long-term effects of sexual abuse, those having more than two years of recovery, are: fear, hyperactive mind, recurring/intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, blank stares, panic-like sensations, loss of trust, memory problems, avoidance of people and places and dissociative feelings (for anxiety-related); anger (anger in general), blaming, suicidal ideation, guilt and sadness (for depression); anger towards men, distorted image of men, fear of men and fear of intimate relationships with men (distorted images or impaired relationship with men); running away (behavior problem); and sexual orientation confusion (sexuality-related). It is important to mention at this point that there are several long term effects which should be further addressed.

Coping Mechanisms

Morrow and Smith (1995), in their study, stated that being sexually abused produced confusing and intense emotions in the child victims. Lacking the cognitive skills to process overwhelming feelings of grief, pain, and rage, these children developed strategies to keep from being overwhelmed. These strategies were: (a) reducing the intensity of troubling feelings; (b) avoiding or escaping feelings; (c) exchanging the overwhelming feelings for other, less threatening ones; (d) discharging or releasing feelings; (e) not knowing or remembering experiences that generated threatening feelings; and (f) dividing overwhelming feelings into

manageable parts: managing helplessness, powerlessness, and lack of control. In addition to developing strategies to keep from being overwhelmed by emotions, participants developed strategies for managing powerlessness in the face of their abuse. Six categories of survival and coping strategies were used to manage helplessness, powerlessness, and lack of control: (a) creating resistance strategies; (b) reframing abuse to create an illusion of control or power; (c) attempting to master the trauma; (d) attempting to control other areas of life besides the abuse; (e) seeking confirmation of evidence from others; and (f) rejecting power.

Fortier, et al. (2009) stated that the short term reaction that children exhibit after the abuse is a behavior called avoidant coping (Fortier et al., 2009). Avoidant coping strategies involve emotional and behavioral disengagement because facing the trauma is too difficult to experience, which is a healthy coping strategy immediately after a traumatic event but could be detrimental if it continues for a long time (Kleber & Brown, 1992, as cited in Klein, 2010). Some children might start spending more time alone to try to avoid anything that will trigger traumatic memories, and others might feel self-blame for what happened (Fortier et al., 2009). In some instances, silence may create isolation and suffering, but it also may spare the child from additional traumatic effects of parental and community reactions to the abuse (Finkelhor & Browne, 1988, as cited in Klein, 2010).

Klein (2010) cited Briere's study that found a higher incidence of alcohol and substance addiction among victims of child sexual abuse than among their non-victimized counterparts. Substance and alcohol abuse is a form of escaping reality and avoiding problems. If the reality of the abuse is too traumatizing to confront, adult survivors use more extreme measures to avoid their problems than child victims.

Chaffin, Whersy, and Dykman (1997) made a study of the coping strategies of 84 sexually abused children aged 7 to 12 and examined the relationships between the abused children's coping strategies and child-reported abuse related symptoms, parent-reported behavioral symptoms, and teacher-reported behavioral symptoms. The coping strategies were listed under four categories and were labeled avoidant coping, internalized coping, angry coping, and active social coping. Each coping strategy was found to be associated with a unique set of abuse characteristics, abuse-related social environment, and symptoms. Avoidant coping was found to be related to fewer behavioral problems. Internalized coping was found to be associated with increased guilt and PTSD hyperarousal symptoms. Angry coping was found to be associated with a wide range of behavioral and emotional problems, and active social coping was the only strategy found to be unrelated to symptoms but neither was it associated with measured benefits.

In a study done in the country to survivors who were once sheltered, the tracer study of Hugo (2010) on discharged sexually abused girls from the Laura Vicuna Center revealed that the respondents were able to adjust and bring back the normalcy of their life after rehabilitation at the center, and they always experienced the power of the Divine Intervention, proving that the respondents really valued the spiritual aspect of their life. On the other hand, the respondents could not control some of the negative feelings they experienced especially during moments of flashback of their traumatic experience. For the participants, the peers were one of their support system. True, the peer group may provide support and security, but the peer group could also introduce them to vices. It was also found out that the participants were always able to cope with their problems. Their inner strengths, support given by the family and friends, and faith in God

helped the girls to courageously face all the trials they encountered outside the Shelter and regain their self-esteem.

Villaflor (1996) cited that the coping mechanisms used by the girls considered adaptive are working as domestic helpers, staying outdoors and doing farming work, staying with a teacher, telling neighbors, returning back to grandparents, and listening to the radio. The coping mechanisms she classified as maladaptive are crying, staying out to loiter around, studying in their own rooms, isolating one's self and attempting suicide, manifesting negative behaviors like becoming stubborn, rebellious, and disrespectful.

Also, Tulipat (1994) made use of the small group discussions of 18 women victim-survivors in her study to examine the nature and effects of incest abuse. The women in the group made use of the following behaviors as their coping strategies: running away to end the abuse which often occur before the beginning of repeated victimization; avoiding intimacy; using humor; splitting; relying on religion or engaging in politics or activism; becoming overachievers; rationalizing the behavior of the abuser —“*dahil lasing*” (being drunk or intoxicated); becoming a workaholic; being angry all the time; and sleeping.

According to Banaag (1997), in the general field of child development, there was a recent shift in focus from environmental factors to resiliency and environmental protective factors that enable children to not only survive the hardships they face but also to grow because of them. This new paradigm is called resilience, defined as the ability to withstand, recover, and even grow from negative experiences.s

Wolff (1995) “underscores the usefulness of the concept of resiliency for research and practice in at least three ways. First, notions of resiliency and vulnerability, of risk and

protective factors highlight the complexity of psychiatric disorders and their causes. It stresses the need to go beyond simple associations between antecedents and consequences, and to look at exceptions rather than the expected outcome. Second, the discovery of why some children caught up in adversity nevertheless do well helps us to identify previously undetected possibilities for preventive action. Third, the idea of resilience keeps hope alive in clinical practice; however, much the odds against a good outcome, many children escape their ill fate.”

Wolff points out, “resilience is an enduring aspect of a person. Genetic and constitutionally based qualities both determined, and are in turn modified by, life experiences. Good intelligence, easy adaptability, social temperament, and an appealing appearance attract positive responses in others, which in turn contribute to an inner sense of self-worth, competence, and sense of self-efficacy that have been consistently related with resiliency. Thus, the importance of the environment in fostering resilience cannot be overstressed. The adversities associated with poverty and unemployment are great and quite susceptible to intergenerational transmission. These adversaries contribute to domestic violence, maternal depression, parental discord, coercive and non-vigilant parenting, and child abuse.”

Research in the field identified some critical factors associated with the resilience of some children (Banaag, 1997). These factors include external supports and resources available to a child (for example, family, school, and community institutions), personal strengths that the child develops (like self-esteem, a capacity for self-monitoring, spirituality, and altruism), and social interpersonal skills the child acquires (such as conflict resolution and communication skills). In relation to the external supports and resources to a child, some studies posed that it is more of attachment style which acts as a buffer in times of stress. A child who has developed a

secure attachment or emotional bond with a caretaker would be expected to show a more positive adjustment to a trauma than a child who has an insecure attachment, except in incest cases where the breach of trust is experienced within the family (Kendall-Tackett, K.A., et al. cited in Dehn, 2011).

Furthermore, “resilience, the ability to bounce back, is dependent on several factors present in the life of a child, mother, or family member. These include both internal characteristics and external supports such as: supportive and caring relationships; love and trust in relationships; role models that encourage, reassure, and strengthen; ability to make positive plans and carry them out; positive self-attribution of strengths and abilities; communication skills; assertiveness skills; emotion regulation skills; problem-solving skills; communication skills; empathy for the feelings of others; self-knowledge; flexibility; achievement motivation; persistence; hopefulness; optimism; and spirituality. Resilience is enhanced if mothers, Child Protective Services, and others involved in the care of a sexually abused child focus on assets and strengths. Short-term and long-term damaging effects of sexual abuse are reduced if the focus does not remain on the child's problems and deficits but instead on the child's empowerment to utilize internal and external resources. This same principle can be applied to mothers of sexually abused children. Rather than focusing on barriers and deficits, a strengths analysis will determine assets in mothers that can contribute toward increasing resilience” (www.mosac.net).

Still on resilience, Calder (2001) “describes seven aspects of resilience that can be assessed and developed in a sexually abused child: (1) Insight — Children are able to see what is wrong and name the problem; (2) Independence — Children are able to gain distance from the

abuse and abusive family dynamic. In a young child, this may be accomplished through dissociation or fantasy; (3) Initiative — Children may try to manage the sexual abuse by being decisive in attempting to protect themselves (ex: sleeping with sibling); (4) Relationships — Children may search for supportive people outside their families such as teacher, counselor, or a friend's parent; (5) Morality — children may maintain a sense of compassion for others and attempt to help them; (6) Creativity — helps to relieve the pain and is therapeutic. Play and art forms (ex: drawing, painting, music) can be therapeutic; (7) Humor — helps to relieve pain and releases endorphins that elevate the mood.”

In particular, Werner’s (1995) study identified protective factors that are linked to successful adaptation to high risk situations. Among these were: 1) temperamental characteristics that allowed the children to elicit positive reactions from others, thus facilitating positive relationships; 2) skills and values that allowed efficient use of their abilities and talents; 3) care-giving skills of the parents that fostered competence and self-esteem in the children; 4) adult support; and 5) opportunities for major life transitions.

In addition, Himelein and McElrath (1996) explained cognitive strategies of resilient child sexual abuse survivors. Analysis was focused on the comparison between highly adjusted women and poorly adjusted women. The analysis revealed that four coping strategies used by resilient women are disclosing and discussing child sexual abuse, minimization, positive reframing, and refusing to dwell on the experience. The said study recognizes that cognitive coping strategies are important in the adjustment of the survivors.

Related Local Studies' Recommendations on the Sheltered Survivors and their Families

Dy (2008) mentioned that most shelters, including the Bantay Bata Center, prepare the sheltered children to be reintegrated with their families. In this regard, the shelter should provide a series of gender-sensitive training, counseling, and orientation not just to the victims but also to their families. That way, the shelter will be able to ensure the safety of the children when they are reintegrated with their families. A shelter should not exist as if it is a single entity which does not have linkages with other institutions in the society. The prevention of abuse could be carried out through partnership and coordination with the local government units in the city. Furthermore, she pointed out that it is not adequate to treat only the children who are sheltered in the Bantay Bata Center as individuals who are isolated from their families. They will be reintegrated once again with their respective families as soon as the legal cases are settled. Thus, the families should be given enough briefing and a series of counseling sessions to ensure that the child's life would not be endangered again (Dy, 2008).

Considering the conclusion of Dehn (2011) that the effects of child sexual abuse are widespread and deep-seated, the survivors and family alone cannot cope with the enormous impact of child sexual abuse. Although the survivors and their families received valuable support from various organizations and institutions, the study showed that long term psychological effects (*fear, hyperactive mind, recurring/intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, blank stares, panic-like sensations, loss of trust, memory problems, avoidance of people and places and dissociative feelings (for anxiety-related); anger (anger in general), blaming, suicidal ideation, guilt and sadness (for depression); anger towards men, distorted image of men, fear of men and fear of intimate relationships with men (distorted images or impaired relationship with*

men); *running away (behavior problem)*; and *sexual orientation confusion (sexuality-related)* – (see pages 29 and 30 of this said study) of child sexual abuse are prevalent. Environmental buffers in our society should be conscious of this reality. Thus, a mechanism of addressing these issues should be provided for further healing and recovery of survivors of child sexual abuse, including their families. Possible correctional and preventive approaches may include provision of family therapy for the survivors and their families, and alternative parenting seminars.

Dy's (2008) study is then an eye opener for the shelters catering to temporary custody of survivors of abuse in giving interventions not just to the survivors but to the receiving family or guardians as well. Moreover, Dehn (2011) agrees that there is a need for a continuous assistance by giving family therapy and alternative parenting seminars to whom the survivors will be discharged.

The Shelter, being a DSWD-run facility, has its standards on providing all the necessary programs when it comes to protective custody, case management, and rehabilitation needed by the survivors, and in ensuring that the latter would be in better hands by assessing first the receiving family or guardian. The assessment is being done through the help of the local government unit where the survivor will be reintegrated. It assesses the capability of the receiving family or guardian in terms of their capacity to give a normal living by providing safety and emotional and financial support to the survivors without any threat of access to or connivance with the perpetrator or anyone supporting them and that the survivors would not be victimized again. Furthermore, both or either the Shelter and/or the Local Social Development Unit should give an orientation or parenting capability seminar to the receiving family or guardian.

On the part of the government and the shelters that provide temporary shelter for the survivors of sexual abuse, a conscious effort to trace, study, and assess the gaps on the effectiveness of the interventions being given to the survivors and their receiving family or guardian should be focused on. This is not to leave loopholes once reintegration of the survivors with their respective families or guardians comes. If these things would not be addressed, the efforts given to the survivors and families will surely be in vain and result in defeated intervention.

Synthesis

Although it was truly hard to look for a number of particular related literature and studies, abroad or local, focused on the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of sexual abuse survivors who underwent temporary shelter, this study tried to gather related literature and study believed to significantly serve the purpose of this study.

The findings of the reviewed related studies gave information on the vastness of the effects and challenges that sexual abuse brings to the survivors. The effects are classified into short- and long-term ones. Also, the findings coincided with the theoretical concepts of the impacts of sexual abuse.

Coping, indeed, plays a vital role when it comes to overcoming challenges the survivors face, may it be brought about by sexual abuse or not. Noteworthy is the concept of resilience. This is not just about surviving the hardships or traumatic incidents one may experience, which in this study is about being a survivor of sexual abuse, but this is all about growing and becoming a better person as a result of the said event.

Another important thing is to look into the recommendations of local studies on survivors of sexual abuse and their families. The highlights that they have made regarding the provision of interventions not just to survivors but also to their families, and not only when the survivors are inside the temporary shelter but even after their reintegration, should be given high considerations.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter gives background information on how the researcher conducted the study, from the research design to the participants and sampling method, data gathering procedure, and instruments used.

Research Design

This study used the phenomenological approach. The approach is used to “illuminate the specific and to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human sphere, this normally translates into gathering ‘deep’ information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation, and representing them from the perspective of the research participant(s). Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore at challenging structural or normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enabling it to be used as the basis for practical theory, allows it to inform, support or challenge policy and action” (Lester, 1999).

Instruments Used

The use of in-depth interview served as the main material for this research. By using this material for study, a deeper and qualitative understanding of the phenomenon of survivors of sexual abuse was attained. The in-depth interview tool was semi-structured and spontaneous, but

follow-up questions were facilitated in order to clarify or ask for details from the respondents as necessary. A list of questions then was prepared to maximize the interview process.

Participants of the Study

This study had 10 respondents with ages ranging from 16 to 22 who were former clients of the Shelter and survivors of sexual abuse, discharged to their respective families or identified guardians in the community. The Shelter caters to children 7-17 years of age. In this study, however, the variable age was disregarded since some respondents were discharged at age 18 or older for circumstantial reasons.

Selection Criteria

The researcher chose the purposive sampling to identify the primary participants. The target respondents were drawn from the list of discharged clients of the identified shelter. The researcher asked permission from the Center Head to get the information needed from the logbook of discharged clients and through their respective social workers who handled the respondents' cases. The details as to whom and where the participants had been reintegrated and their contact number were checked first. For the target participants who could not be contacted by means of the information they left in the Shelter upon their discharge, the assistance of the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO) who assisted them in the community was sought. The participants were reached through their mobile numbers the social workers of the Shelter have and through the available contacts of the LSWDO who know where they reside and can be found. Those who live within Metro Manila and nearby provinces were selected, so they would be easily reached.

In addition, social networkings like Facebook and e-mail became the easiest way to reach the subjects. The former clients have a Facebook group in which the researcher is a member; thus, interaction with them was already existing even before the conduct of this study. Because the discharged survivors do have contact with the other survivors, they became of help as well to trace other possible participants as some target respondents were difficult to trace. Therefore, snowball sampling was also used. Snowball sampling is a method of expanding the sample by asking one informant or participant to recommend others for interviewing (Babbie, 1995; Crabtree & Miller, 1992).

Ethical Considerations

The target respondents whom the researcher had contact with through mobile phones and social networking were oriented about the study and were asked if they would agree to be a part of it by being the subjects. Some were visited at home and were personally asked for their consent to be involved in the study. The moment these target participants agreed, their availability for and preference of location of the interview were identified. Before the conduct of the interview, the respondents' consent for the use of the voice recorder to accurately capture the sharing was sought. Fortunately, all of them agreed. The respondents were then assured that the confidentiality of the information they would share will be safeguarded and will be used only for the purpose of the study. They also signed a consent form (Appendix D). Also, for the protection of the participants, the use of code names (names of precious stones) in lieu of their given name was implemented in this study.

Data Gathering Procedure

Individual meeting was preferred because almost all of the respondents wanted to speak with the researcher privately and did not want others to hear what they would like to share. They were met once; some, twice if time seemed insufficient to finish the interview. The interview meetings with the 10 respondents were very spontaneous because of the fact that the researcher personally knew them, being former clients of the Shelter where the researcher works. Some of them were interviewed where they presently live while some were met and interviewed in their friend's house for the reason that the their house is too small, or there was no place for privacy inside the house.

The interview started with “*kumustahan*” or asking the present condition of the respondents. All of them verbalized that they were glad to see the researcher again and that they missed the Shelter so much. The researcher had no personal interaction with some of them after they had been reintegrated with their respective families or guardians while with some, texting through the cellular phone or chatting in social networking happene to be ongoing since reintegration.

They lively shared their experiences after their reintegration and were very enthusiastic when sharing their experiences during their temporary stay in the Shelter. It was obvious from their sharing and the expressions on their faces how thankful they were for the good things they had learned inside the Shelter and for how it helped them to become better individuals. Most of them were grateful that through the Shelter, they were able to continue their studies and finish high school, and developed a good relationship with their co-clients which they were able to

maintain even after the reintegration in the community. Some of them were smiling and laughing at themselves while reminiscing how it was to live in the Shelter. They were also observed to be proud of themselves as they reflected on how they endured living away from their families.

However, the smile on their faces faded when challenges and trials became the topic. The bitterness, sadness, and hardship of the respondents were brought forth. Without hesitation, they unveiled what they had been through. Problems with regards to their families and guardians when they were reintegrated were shared. It seemed a great loss for some respondents that they were not able to continue their studies, especially college. On the other hand, the courage on their faces was seen when asked how they dealt with the challenges they had faced. Most of them said that they survived through the faith they have in the Almighty God. The relief on their faces was only brought back when asked about their hopes and dreams.

Clarifications with the respondents through social networking was also made to fill the gaps in the interview, and the residents were very accommodating to answer the follow-up queries. However, there was one whose mobile number became unreachable which hindered some further queries.

The Shelter's Social Milieu

The Shelter is an institution where the victim-survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation and children-in-conflict-with-the-law (CICL) girls aged seven to 17 are temporarily sheltered for protective custody, case management, and therapeutic interventions. Once clients are through with their case or no existing threat in the community is observed, they undergo positive

parenting capability assessment for reintegration assessed by the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO), and the distinguished services in the Shelter for their preparation for reintegration. Then, discharge is facilitated. Ideally, the presence of LSWDO personnel is needed in the conduct of the discharge conferences at the Shelter.

The Shelter offers programs of services, as follows: *Social Service* that is composed of social workers who manage the cases of the clients; *Homelife Service* by houseparents (HP) who take care and oversee the clients in the dormitory 24/7; *Educational Service* thru the Department of Education that provides primary to secondary education; *Productivity/Livelihood* that offers distinguished skill trainings; *Psychological Service* which facilitates different therapeutic activities and sessions with the clients; *Health and Nutrition* that is composed of a doctor, nurses, and a nutritionist/dietician; *Security Service* that secures the safety of the clients, staff, and the Shelter's facility; and *Religious* which are religious activities provided by the volunteer affiliated groups.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed according to the following: the perspectives of the respondents while they were still inside the Shelter and after reintegration with their respective families or guardians; the challenges that the respondents faced; and the internal and external coping mechanisms of the respondents.

The themes identified and their description were listed, and the findings were presented in tabular form. Each theme was presented with the subjects' responses and studies and/or researches that support or explain the respondents' claims. Most of the themes were identified

through the commonality of experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms shared by the participants.

Chapter IV

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of sexually abused survivors while they were still inside the temporary shelter and when they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians. The respondents' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms are presented in themes that best describe their experiences.

I. The Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms of Sexually Abused Survivors while Inside the Temporary Shelter

The experiences of sexually abused survivors refer to the personal encounters in the different circumstances the survivors had during their temporary placement at the Shelter and after they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community. The challenges are the hardships, trials, and problems that the respondents encountered inside. Coping, on the other hand, are ways on how the respondents managed their challenges.

From the in-depth interviews with the sexually abused survivors, there were five identified themes on the distinguished experiences they had inside the Shelter. The themes with regards to the experiences are presented in Table I (*page 53*). With regards to the challenges faced by the respondents while inside the Shelter, there were five identified themes, and these are presented in Table II (*page 63*). Then, for the different coping that the respondents shared, four themes emerged, and they are presented in Table III (*page 71*).

A. The experiences of the respondents while inside the Shelter

This section presents the themes generated from the responses of the sexually abused survivors on their shared experiences when they were inside the Shelter. Indeed, living in the Shelter was a new thing for the respondents because they were separated from their families and lived with more than two hundred other girls from different walks of life.

The experiences that the respondents had while inside the Shelter:

- ***Grateful to the educational support provided by the Shelter***

Inside the compound of the Shelter is an annex school under the Department of Education, a tie-up school in providing quality education to those temporarily sheltered in it. It has complete primary and secondary education. It has high school classes in the morning while in the afternoon are the elementary classes. It has eight registered teachers.

Out of the 10 respondents, nine of them were very much thankful that because of the Shelter, they were able to continue their studies. Respondents Agate and Amethyst shared that they are indeed grateful that they were able to finish high school in the Shelter. They both thought that their mothers would not be able to do anything for them to finish high school once they were discharged.

Also, Ruby (21) stated, *“Isa sa mga magandang nangyari sa akin sa loob ng Shelter ay natapos ko ang high school ko sa loob na kapag nasa labas po ako eh baka di ko po natapos kasi nagtatrabaho nga po ako”* [One of the wonderful things that happened to me in the Shelter is that I was able to finish my high school there. I would not be able to do so if I were outside the

Shelter because of work.]. Ruby worked as a household helper and was not able to continue her studies in high school before she was temporarily sheltered. She started working at a young age because her father could not support them, and she had no one to turn to.

The same was shared by Emerald (20), “*Dahil sa Shelter kaya ako nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral.*” [It was because of the Shelter that I was able to finish my studies.]. She values education so much, and she did not know what could have happened to her after the abuse if she was not sheltered in the Shelter.

One resident was already a graduate of high school before entering the Shelter, so she enrolled instead in the productivity training of the Shelter due to absence of tertiary level programs inside.

According to Finkelhor and Browne (1985) on their Traumagenics Model, one of the effects of abuse on the victims is powerlessness. This results in the child feeling he/she has no control over his/her life, and it seems everything is shattered. However, as they regain themselves, beginning to be standing up again and picking up the pieces of themselves, self-control gradually sprouts.

One of the programs of the Shelter, which is educational service, seems to have a great impact on the respondents. Educational service aims to make the clients, while inside the Shelter, continue their studies. Through continuous education, the respondents will not lose hope that they can still attain their dream to finish schooling even though they are inside the Shelter. Their hope and aspirations were one of the major keys for them to stand still and continue to fight their battle

- ***Became a trustee of the staff***

With the residents having different backgrounds, it is absolutely hard to easily give the staff's trust on them. A lot of the residents inside grew up in the streets, and so they are cunning and manipulative. Moreso, many of the residents have the history of betraying the staff, may it be stealing stuff or money of the staff, using the name of the staff for their personal gain, etc.. Therefore, the residents have a little hard time to fully get their trust. When one gets it, he/she seems to be one step ahead of others.

Being the eldest in their dorm, Pearl became the trustee of their houseparents. When the houseparents needed to go out of the dorm, they entrusted the residents to her. Sometimes she was given the rights as well on how to manage other children. She really became of great help to her houseparents in leading her co-residents. Pearl shared, "*Eh hindi ba, Tita, pinakikinggan po talaga ako doon ng mga bata. Kapag sobrang ingay at sumigaw na ako ng "tumigil kayo!" eh talagang tatahimik po silang lahat.*" [The clients there really listened to me. If there was a noise, and I shouted "Quiet!" they really would keep quiet.].

In addition, Amethyst (19) voiced out, "*Pinakamaganda kong karanasan sa Shelter ay iyong mga sitwasyon na pinagkakatiwalaan ako ng mga staff*" [The most beautiful experience I had in the Shelter is when I was trusted by the staff.]. Amethyst was one of the residents who was trained on basic computer. Because she gained the trust of other staff, specifically that of the social workers, they often asked her to encode some reports of the residents, even the confidential ones. The staff believed that Amethyst would never dare betraying them by divulging what she knew about others.

Respondent Emerald (20) claimed, "*Sa mga empleyado po ay talagang masaya. Lalo na po sa mga houseparents. Kasi talagang pinagkakatiwalaan nila ako doon ng husto na hindi lahat*

ng bata ay may pribilehiyo.” [I really had fun with the staff, especially with the houseparents. There, they trusted me fully, a privilege not all clients enjoy.]. Emerald was assigned as a dish staff, the one that prepares the food of the staff. This task is very delicate, and only those trusted are being assigned in this area. This is for the reason that residents who are in conflict with the staff could put poison or other harmful things in the food to be served for the latter. That is why once a resident is assigned on this task, it means that the staff trusts her.

Sexual abuse encompasses all kinds of abuses. A child who is sexually abused may also experience physical, emotional, psychological, and verbal abuse. Somers (1992) cited Robert Ackerman’s notion that physical and sexual abuse cannot exist independently of emotional abuse. By definition, physical and sexual abuse entail emotional abuse as well. These kinds of abuses can leave the victim severely traumatized and emotionally damaged.

Having the feeling of brokenness brought about by the abuse, it is indeed of great value for the respondents that there are still people who have trust in them; their capability, their personhood as a whole. This way, they regained self-confidence that was once crushed by the abuse.

- ***Developed positive affect***

Most of the newly admitted girls in the Shelter do have difficulty accepting that they will temporarily live inside. This is normal as they will be away from their family and will not be able to live the life they used to have. Eventually, as the days pass by, they will come to adjust to the life inside and enjoy it.

When asked what they can say about their temporary stay in the Shelter, eight out of 10 answered that they became happy inside. Respondent Jade (18) shared, “*Masaya po kasi dahil*

doon ko po naranasang maging malaya. Hindi katulad noong kasama pa namin si papa na para po akong nakakulong. Halos lahat naman po doon (Shelter) ay masaya.” [I was happy because in the Shelter, I experienced freedom. Unlike the time when we were still with our father, I felt imprisoned. In the Shelter, almost everything was fun.]. She added that she took advantage of staying inside and explored what it could offer her.

Respondent Hyacinth (18) stated, *“Mas masaya pa nga po ang buhay sa loob ng Shelter kaysa dito [komunidad]. Doon, wala kang kasamaang magagawa. Dito sa labas, halos lahat andito.”* [Life in the Shelter is happier compared here (community). In the Shelter, you will not do any bad thing, but here (community), everything is here.]. She clarified that all vices are just at hand when you are in the community. However, in the Shelter, there are rules and regulations. They were encouraged to do what is right, and it made her feel good about herself.

Respondent Emerald (20), a survivor of incest, commented, *“Siyempre masaya po kasi parang doon (Shelter) po ako nagkaroon ng kakampi. Kasi nga ang buong pamilya ko ay hindi sang-ayon na kinasuhan ko si papa. Kaya sa Shelter ko po naramdaman ang suporta at hindi ako nag-iisa.”* [Of course, I was happy there (Shelter) because it was in that place that I found support. My whole family did not agree to my filing of the case against my father. It was in the Shelter that I felt the support and that I was not alone].

Carnelian (17) said, *“Masaya po kasi madami akong natutunan. Masasabi kong ang Shelter ang nakapagpabago sa akin.”* [I was happy because I learned many things. I could say that it is the Shelter that changed me.]. The latter is a self-confessed “*pasaway*”, but in the Shelter, she was able to realize her mistakes and gradually changed her ways for the better. She added that inside the Shelter, *“Natuto po akong magtimpi sa mga nakasanayan kong mga bisyo*

sa labas (komunidad) katulad ng alak at sigarilyo.” [I learned to control the vices I used to engage in outside (community) like drinking and smoking.].

Carandang (1996) cited that the world outside is difficult, burdensome, tiring, and overwhelming. Consistent with a passive, helpless stance, these children also tend to see the world as confusing and chaotic, full of hardship that is impossible to overcome.

Though living away from the family is one of the clients’ primary struggles, especially during the process of adjustment period when they were newly admitted in the Shelter, they survived and became happy inside.

Staying inside the Shelter was living freely from the pressures — pressures from the family to withdraw the case, freedom from the gossips of the community, and the like. They were sheltered from the overwhelming feeling of the environment where the abuse took place and where some people hold back to give their support and be at their side. While being temporary sheltered, they became free to think about what is best for them and what they really want for their lives. Also, most of them, particularly those with incest cases, were able to get support which they did not get when they were with their families outside.

- ***Developed self-help skills***

There were several things the respondents had learned during their temporary shelter and were thankful of. One of these is doing household chores. According to Respondent Hyacinth (18), when asked what she has learned in the Shelter, “*Matuto sa gawaing bahay katulad ng maglaba, maglinis ng bahay. Kasi po dati eh ang mama ko po ang lahat ng gumagawa sa mga gawaing bahay at umuuwi lang po ako para kumain.*” [To learn household chores like washing

clothes and cleaning the house. In the past, my mother did all these things while I did nothing but eat.].

There were four respondents who shared that it was through the Shelter that they learned to do the chores. Among them is Sapphire (16) who commented, “*Natuto po akong gumawa ng mga gawaing bahay.*” [I have learned to do household chores.]. Like Hyacinth, Sapphire also confessed that when she was not yet sheltered, she was very dependent on her mother when it comes to household chores.

The program of the Shelter is holistic in approach. Homelife service is in charge of teaching and training the girls inside to be adept when it comes to household chores. Through this, responsibility, skills, and diligence are being developed. Every client does have an assignment everyday. They have to make sure the whole surrounding is clean, green, and fresh. Also, they have to wash their own clothes, which many clients just learned inside the Shelter. Furthermore, they are taught to be independent. They do not have to rely on others when it comes to household tasks. These four respondents, although they grew up in families of low economic status, depended heavily on their families, especially on their mothers, when it comes to household tasks. This is then one of the hardest part when they were separated from their families because they were on their own, and they had to learn basic and survival skills.

- ***Learned or acquired productivity skills***

One of the programs of the Shelter is the productivity skills training. It offers basic computer, sewing, baking, cosmetology, and skating. The residents inside the Shelter who are pursuing primary or secondary education spend half of the day in DepEd school and the other

half, at the productivity training. The program is offered for a year in two semesters. At the end of each semester, graduation is conducted. Also, the school's Technology and Home Economics (TLE) subject is translated to these skills training. The clients' grade in the productivity training is where their TLE grade is being derived. Furthermore, high school graduates admitted in the Shelter benefit from these training. They could get two skills training in one semester as they are not studying in a regular school. It could be one training in the morning and one in the afternoon.

The four respondents truly appreciated the skills they were able to acquire inside the Shelter. According to Sapphire (16), *"Ang mga skills ang pinaka-naibang sa akin ng Shelter, kasi ang pagkakaibigan ay naandyan lang yan eh."* [It is the skills that I consider to be the greatest contribution of the Shelter. Friendship, which I also earned there, can be found anywhere.]. In the Shelter, she shared that she had learned Basic Computer and Sewing. With her not studying and wanting to earn so she could help her adoptive family, she can attest to the opportunities the learned skills gave her. There were job openings near them as assistant sewer. The sad thing, though, is that she is still a minor which bars her from getting accepted for a job.

Tagle-Dela Cruz (1999) identified issues among sexually abuse survivors. Some of these are: idea that they have been damaged by the abuse; thereby, their person and future are destroyed; feelings of isolation, worthlessness, hopelessness, and powerlessness; and lowering of self-esteem and development of poor self-concept.

One of the benefits of the productivity training inside the Shelter is that the abovementioned issues of sexually abuse survivors are addressed. Through the abilities and skills that the clients have acquired, they are able to see themselves as arising and overcoming

from the abuse they experienced. They come to discover that it is not yet the end of their lives but that there are still more to come, that they have strengths and potentials to flourish.

The experiences that the respondents had while inside the Shelter:

The experiences that the respondents had while they were still inside the Shelter were: grateful for the educational support provided; gained the trust of the staff; developed positive affect; developed self-help skills; and, acquired productivity/livelihood skills.

Table 1: The themes and the descriptions of the experiences of the respondents while inside the Shelter

Theme	Description
Grateful for the educational support provided	The respondents were able to continue their studies inside the Shelter, and many of them were able to finish high school.
Became trustee of the staff	To some of the respondents, having the trust of the staff was indeed a great thing. It boosted their self-esteem.
Developed positive affect	The respondents became happy during their stay inside the Shelter.
Developed self-help skills	The respondents who did not know household chores were able to learn them inside through the tasks assigned to them.
Acquired productivity/livelihood skills	Through the productivity skills training offered in the Shelter, the respondents were able to learn some skills. When they were reintegrated, they saw them as a potential to be used.

The themes generated on the experiences of the respondents when they were temporary sheltered showed that most of them could not help but be thankful for what they had been through. Although the respondents did not expect that they would be placed in a temporary shelter, they were able to taste and see its benefits. Most of them expressed positive things about

the Shelter, like how it helped them and made them to become a better person. This includes being able to continue their studies inside, and most of them they were able to graduate in high school. They also developed productivity and self-help skills that made them feel good about themselves. This really gave them hope to continue their dreams despite the negative things that the abuse brought to their lives. The respondents even shared that if they were in the community, they would not have the same opportunity.

B. The challenges faced by the sexually abused survivors while inside the Shelter

The challenges of the sexually abused survivors refer to the hardships, trials, and problems encountered while they were inside the temporary shelter. From the in-depth interview with the sexually abused survivors, there were five themes identified. The themes with regards to the challenges they faced are presented in Table II, which easily gives an overview on the unique and commonality of the challenges that became prevalent as the respondents faced life inside the temporary shelter.

The challenges that the respondents faced inside the Shelter:

- ***Apprehension over the situation of their family outside***

The fact that most of the cases of the respondents were incest in nature, it also means that some of them had challenges when it comes to their relationship with their families outside.

With regards to the respondents whose mothers took the side of their fathers who happened to be their perpetrators, visits from them was an issue since the Shelter is very strict in not allowing visitation from those who are in connivance with the perpetrators. The Shelter makes the

residents identify other supportive relatives with whom they can have contact with and who can visit them.

Respondent Agate (16) said, “*Si Mama eh napakabihira pa pong dumalaw. Siyempre, iisipin mo pa po kung ano ang nangyayari sa kanila sa labas.*” [My mother rarely visited me. Of course, you get to worry about what is happening to them outside.]. Having no visits from their mothers or even a call from them or from their relatives gave them a hard time. They kept thinking about their family outside, wondering how they were living, and worrying if they were able to eat and were in good condition.

Although most of them did not care about their fathers anymore, yet they still cared about their mothers and siblings. Despite the fact that most of the mothers opted to take the side of their husbands, the respondents could not deny that they missed their mothers so much and that they longed for them.

When asked about her experience inside the Shelter, respondent Amethyst (21) also shared, “*Mahirap kasi wala ang pamilya mo at palagi mo silang naiisip.*” [It is hard because you do not have your family with you, and you always think of them.]. Amethyst truly appreciated the help that the Shelter gave, and she wished that her family would also experience what she had. She knew how hard life is outside the Shelter, particularly in meeting one’s basic needs. Everything was provided to her in the Shelter while her family outside would still have to vend at the sidewalk just to eat.

This theme gives a clear picture that although the respondents experienced betrayal from their mothers by taking the side of their father-perpetrator (Finkelhor and Browne, 1988), yet it is undeniable that their mother still plays an important role in their emotional stability, that sexual

abuse experienced by the survivors cannot simply throw the bond that they have with their families, especially with their mothers. The respondents still cared for their mothers and family members despite the betrayal.

- ***Faced negative affects***

The respondents acknowledged that inside the Shelter they became happy. On the other hand, they could not deny that longingness and sadness hit them many times as well.

Respondent Ruby (21) shared, “*Ang masasabi ko lang na pangit na karanasan ay pag nabuburyong ako kasi naaalala ko ang pamilya ko sa labas.*” [The only bad experience I had is when I get bored because I remembered my family outside.]. Although the respondent’s mother and some family members were on the side of her father-perpetrator, she could not totally be angray at them and forget them. It really affected her when she came to miss them. When “buryong” strikes her, it makes her desire to go home and be with the family, even if it means not pursuing her case anymore. Oftentimes, this is the primary reason why the residents of the Shelter could not readily go home.

“Buryong” is an institutional word that entails mixture of longingness and sadness, which specifically is directed towards their family outside. “Buryong” stikes when they have nothing to do inside the Shelter, like when they are not in school or productivity training, when they are done with their daily task in the dorm, or when they are not with friends. This is the time when usually they are all alone by themselves, just lying down on their own beds as their minds began to wander. More often than not, they thought about their family outside and the times that they were still together.

Agate (16) stated, “*Ang number one kalaban mo sa loob eh ang lungkot dahil malayo ka nga po sa pamilya mo.*” [The primary battle you have inside is sadness because you are far from your family.]. The respondent is quite closed with her mother, and it indeed gave her a hard time when she was sheltered. This was the very first time that she was separated from her. Although at times she gets angry with her for being back in a relationship with her perpetrator-stepfather as relayed to her by her social worker, she could not deny to herself that she was missing her so much and wishing that the two of them were together.

The respondents, though most of them were blamed by their family members for the breakup and shame of the family, could not remain angry with them forever.

The worst thing that could happen to the full-of-longings and sad residents is to resort to maladaptive coping like what Beryl (18) did. She shared, “*Ang isang bad record pong nagawa ko sa loob ng (Shelter) ay mag solvent (mixture of alcohol and juice) kasama ng mga kaibigan ko. Nagawa po namin iyon sa sobrang buryong*” [The sole bad record that I have done inside the Shelter is taking solvent with my friends. We resorted to that because of “buryong”].

Being confined at the Shelter, it is indeed understable that longingness and sadness will manifest given the fact that they are away from the people and environment they grew up with/in. Moreover, the survivors of sexual abuse do have emotional disturbances, particularly depression (Mordeno et al, 2003; Putnam, 2003).

- ***Faced hypocrisy and unfairness which resulted in conflict***

Most of the respondents were truly grateful that, inside the Shelter, they found good relationships with the staff and their co-clients. Some of them shared, though, that some staff

and co-residents were hypocrite. They also said that some staff were unfair and practiced favoritism. This resulted in conflict.

Respondent Amythest (21) shared, “*Pero may ibang staff na ang pa-palstik. Naramdam mo na na andiyan lang sila kasi trabaho nila iyon. May favoritism din.*” [But some staffs were not true. You can feel that they were just there because it is their job. They practised favoritism too.]. Amythest is a type of a person who would really disclose herself to someone if she would feel one’s sincerity. She added that she would really not dare share herself once she feels that someone does not really care for her. This is the very reason why she had only very few close staff. She could not even identify one houseparent. She did not like them because they have ‘favorites’. They felt that many were not sincere.

Respondent Agate (16) expressed, “*Pero siyempre po di maiiwasan na may mga plastik din at okey lang sila sa iyo pag may kailangan sila.*” [Of course, there are people who are not true; they are only good to you when they need something from you.]. Agate was referring to her co-clients who would just remember her if they need a favor from her. There were times it resulted in a fight as she confronted them. Because of this treatment, she practiced hypocrisy as well in her relationship with others.

Respondent Ruby (21) said, “*Minsan lang sumasama ang loob ko sa Social Worker ko kasi minsan feeling ko may paborito siya eh. Pero pagdating sa akin eh parang di niya ako gusto.*” [At times, I get disappointed with with my Social Worker because I feel she is playing favoritism. She seemed not to like me.]. She shared that sometimes when she would approach her social worker to ask about her family or case, the latter would get irritated. With other

residents, she treats them well. She was hurt by this, and it made her avoid her social worker as much as she could, approaching her only when the need arises.

Most of the staff who played favoritism was identified by the respondents to be the houseparents, who served as their guardians inside the dormitory. Respondents Ruby (21) and Jade (18) stated, *“Sana wala ng favoritism ang ibang mga houseparents. Kasi sa iba't-ibang mga kaibigan ko sa ibat-ibang dorm eh yun ang kino-complain nila eh.”* [The houseparents should not play favoritism. This is the same complaint of some of my friends in the other dormitories.]. They shared that some houseparents favored some clients closed to them. They seldom saw the mistakes or violations of their “favorites” while they always noticed even the smallest misbehavior of the other residents. This led the residents to have misunderstanding because other view their co-residents as untouchable.

Furthermore, Sapphire (16) shared, *“May staff na madaling pakisamahan at may hindi, may totoo at may hindi. May favoritism din sila. Kasi kung deserving ka maging favorite e kailangan mo talagang pagtranbahuhan iyon eh.”* [There are staffs whom are and are not easy to deal with; some are sincere while other not. They also had favoritism. If you want to be their favorite, you have to work hard for it.] She added that one has to follow everything that they would tell him/her. Of course, one has to be good, not giving the staff any headache.

According to Dela Cruz (1999), one of the effects of abuse is withdrawal from others. For the survivors of abuse to whom trust is an issue, they are truly quite susceptible to block people when they discern hypocrisy and insincerity. To those betrayed, it is definitely hard to gain their trust, most especially if others would not show genuine, helping, and healthy relationship.

Considering the revelations of the residents discussed above, it is imperative that the Shelter should establish a genuine, caring, and consistent environment wherein the residents will feel safe and regain themselves through genuine and trusting relationship.

- ***Faced adjustment and limitations***

From an unstructured life to a structured one, indeed, the respondents had a hard time adjusting when they entered the Shelter. One of the challenges they faced is the limitations imposed on many things brought by the structured lifestyle inside. These include limited time, limited food, space, and so forth.

Unlike life outside the Shelter wherein they could be wherever they wanted to be, in the Shelter, Ruby (21) shared, “*Siyempre sa Shelter parang doon lang ang buhay mo sa apat na sulok ng compound*” [Of course, inside the Shelter, your life just revolves around the four corners of the compound.]. The respondent could not do something about the situation, and she had no choice but to live within the premises of the Shelter. Sometimes, it made her wish having not lived in the said place.

Respondent Jade (18) pointed out, “*Sa loob kasi ng Shelter eh parang nakakasawa kasi paulit-ulit lang ang ginagawa at parang doon lang umiikot ang mundo mo, tapos pare-parehong tao lang ang makikita mo*” [It was a tiring thing in the Shelter because everything is routinary, and your world just revolves around it. Everyday, you see the same faces.]. Though thankful that she was sheltered, she could not help being irritated with the thought of it at times.

Sapphire (16) shared, “*Sa Shelter lahat eh limitado. May limit ang pakikipagkwentuhan, pagtulog, pagkain; lahat ng kilos mo limitado*” [In the Shelter, everything is limited. There is a

limit in conversing with others, with the food; all you do is limited.]. This is what she commented on when asked about what is not so good inside the Shelter. For a person who would often run away from her family when things seemed not alright, it really annoyed her that she could no longer do it in the Shelter especially at times when the situations inside were not good.

Respondent Pearl (22) explained, “*Lahat naman po ng pangit eh sa umpisa nararanasan. Kasi nga po talagang mag-aadjust ka sa mga gusto mong bagay eh di mo nakukuha. Kasi nga po sa labas eh nasanay ka na makuha ang gusto mo. Halimbawa sa pagkain, doon (Shelter) eh may oras lang ng pagkain samantalang dito sa labas kahit anong oras*” [At first, all things experienced seem negative as you have to adjust to the fact that inside the shelter, you can not get all the things you want. Unlike before, outside, you are able to get what you want. For example, in the Shelter, there is a time allotted for eating while here outside you can eat anytime.]. Faye stated that though she had a hard time at first, she was able to gradually adjust especially on eating. She was indeed able to regulate her eating habits.

From being in a life that is unstructured to being placed in a structured environment, adjustment and limitation are definitely experienced. This is to note that the Shelter is strict when it come to rules and regulations, and it all starts from the moment the survivors wake up until the time at night for them to sleep.

- ***The challenge to retract the case***

One of the challenges that the respondents had inside the Shelter is the temptation to withdraw the case. This is particularly true to incest cases, especially when the respondents remember that their father, despite being their perpetrator, is still their father.

Resident Cernelia (17) stated, “*Noong nasa Shelter pa ako, dumarating sa point na gustong-gusto ko nang iatras ang kaso ko laban kay Papa. Naisip ko kasi na total tatlong beses lang naman niya ako nahipuan at wala namang nangyari. At siguro naman nagbago na siya kasi ilang taon na siya sa kulungan*” [When I was still in the Shelter, there was a time I came to the point of withdrawing the case against my father. I tried to rationalize by thinking that he touched me maliciously only thrice and nothing else happened anyway. I was thinking that, perhaps, after years in jail, he might have been a changed man.]

Unfortunately, while Cernelia favored retracting her case, her elder sister, Pearl (22), wanted to push it and was strongly not in favor of what she would like to do. Pearl also shared to her social worker her mother’s attempt to persuade her not to continue the case. This made their mother then banned from any call to speak with her daughters in the Shelter, even through phone patch; their mother is an OFW.

Some of the respondents, like Ruby (21), Sapphire (16), and Agate (16), at times would like to retract their cases due to homesickness. They wanted to be with their family outside and could no longer wait for another year to get out of the Shelter. The court hearings that they had were taking long, and they only had a couple of it in a year. As for the case of Ruby, his perpetrator was able to escape, and so her case was archived and not moving. She really felt bad about it.

On incest cases, as mentioned in the study of Taniajura (2000, one of the prevalent challenges of the survivors is that the mother oftentimes is at the side of her husband instead of supporting her child. Also, the seemingly not natural way of living of the sexually abused

survivors inside a structured shelter is another battle that makes them to be tempted to trade justice for freedom outside.

The challenges that the respondents encountered while inside the Shelter:

The challenges that the respondents encountered while they were inside the Shelter were: having apprehension over the situation of the family outside; facing negative affect; facing hypocrisy and unfairness which resulted in conflict; experiencing adjustment and limitation; and, the having a dilemma on retracting the case.

Table II: The themes and the description of the challenges that the respondents had inside the Shelter

Theme	Description
• Apprehension over the situation of the family outside	The respondents inside the Shelter kept on worrying about their family outside. This happens at times that they were not visited, and they heard nothing about them.
• Faced longingness and sadness	Though the respondents became undeniably happy inside the Shelter, they could not deny that longingness and sadness at times struck. These were the times when they missed their family outside.
• Faced hypocrisy and unfairness which resulted in conflict.	Some of the respondents were able to meet individuals who are not genuine, both staff and co-residents. Also, they got annoyed with staff, mostly houseparents, for favoring some residents over others.
• Experienced adjustment and limitation	From an unstructured environment outside to a structured living inside the Shelter, they truly faced adjustment and limitation.
• The challenge to retract the case	When the respondents felt homesick, they were tempted to withdraw the case. Moreso, in some of the incest cases, the mother persuaded their children not to continue the case.

The themes that were generated from the challenges that the respondents had while they were inside the temporary shelter showed the hardships, trials, and problems that they had encountered. Although it is undeniable that they experienced good things and benefits while staying inside, the respondents also struggled. From an unstructured environment to a structured life inside the Shelter, it was hard for them to adapt. Furthermore, being away from their family, especially from their mothers, affected them so much that caused them negative affects. Also, the respondents seemed to be moved by the unfairness, especially by the favoritism of the staff, and the insincerity both by the staff and other residents.

C. The coping mechanisms of the sexually abused survivors while inside the shelter

The coping mechanisms of sexually abused survivors refer to the ways of the survivors in dealing with or surviving the challenges they encountered during their temporary placement in the Shelter. These ways are good, positive, healthy, and constructive on one hand and on the other, negative, unhealthy, or dangerous. From the in-depth interview with the sexually abused survivors, four themes were identified as to how they coped with the situations they had faced.

The coping that the respondents had while inside the Shelter:

- ***Avoidance through Keeping Oneself Busy***

Being away from their family and confined in the four corners of the residential care facility, the respondents looked for something to keep them busy. Furthermore, intrusive thoughts and flashbacks of abuse happened even if they did not want to think about it any longer.

According to Amethyst (19), *“Malaking tulong din po, Tita, na maraming activities sa loob ng Shelter. Mula pagmulat mo ng mata ay may pwede kang gawin na maaari mong pagkaabalahan. May school, pwede kang maglaro kahit iyong mga larong pambata, may assignment sa dorm, pwede kang magbasa ng mga libro sa psych, at marami pang iba”* [It was a big help that there were many activities inside the Shelter. From the time you wake up, there are a lot of things that you can do. There are: school, games you can play even those that are for little ones, assigned tasks inside the dorm, books on psychology, and more].

Out of the 10 respondents, nine of them focused on studying in the school run by the Department of Education inside the compound of the Shelter. According to Agate (16), *“Ang pag-aaral po sa loob ng Shelter ang ginawa kong paraan para libangin ang sarili ko at huwag isip ng isip kung kailan ba ako uuwi. Lalo na kapag nakikita mo ang iba na nadidischarge tapos ikaw naandoon ka pa din! Tapos si Mama pa di man lang dumalaw sa akin! Kaya talagang nakakaburyong! At mas nakakapraning lalo na pabigla-bigla, biglang sasagi na lang sa isip mo ang pang-aabusong nangyari sa iyo .”* [Focusing on studies is what I did inside the Shelter to keep myself busy and avoid thinking about my discharge. It was really hard especially when I see that other residents were discharged while I wasn't, when I think of my mother who does not visit me, when boredom and loneliness hit me! It was even more devastating when memories of the abuse suddenly flood my mind.].

Respondent Pearl, who was a high school graduate when she entered the Shelter, enrolled in the productivity training offered by the Shelter. She also entered baking and computer classes to keep herself busy. According to her, it was hard to do nothing everyday. *“Ako kasi, Tita, di ba nga graduate na ako ng high school nang pumasok ako ng Shelter, kaya wala akong*

pinagkakaabalahan. Kaya para malibang ako at huwag akong isip ng isip, lalo na tungkol sa kaso ko eh pumasok ako ng productivity at nagpaka-busy ako sa pagtulong sa mga Houseparents sa loob ng dorm. Kasi lagi ko na lang pong naaalala noon iyong ginawa sa aking ni Papa eh. Kaya kailangan mo po talagang gumawa ng paraan” [I entered the Shelter already a graduate from high school, and it left me with nothing to do inside. Therefore, to keep myself busy and from thinking too much about my case, I joined the training on productivity and focused myself in helping our houseparents inside the dorm. During that time, I always remembered what my father did to me. So, I really had to do something about it].

Dehn (2011) identified recurring/intrusive thoughts and flashbacks as one of the effects of child sexual abuse, despite survivors wanting to get rid of it from their memory. In addition, there are other concerns that caused the respondents problems: these came from their family outside or the struggles that they encountered inside the Shelter. Therefore, to avoid dwelling on these things, they kept themselves busy. They looked for something to focus on.

- ***Established Positive Relationship with Others***

To live in the Shelter is to have a very large family. There are more than two hundred residents inside and in every dormitory, there are 30 to 60 girls. Everyday, you meet the same faces of people, so imagine if you will be sheltered for a year or so. This is then the very reason why most of the residents found and developed good relationships inside.

According to respondent Jade (18), *“Marami po akong mga naging kaibigan sa loob (Shelter) na parang mga kapatid ko na din. Kami-kami ang nagdadamay sa oras ng pangangailangan.”* [I had many friends inside (Shelter) who became like siblings to me. We helped each other in times of need.], and Ruby (21) said, *“Maganda naman po ang naging*

relasyon ko sa mga kapwa ko kliyente. Doon po ako nakahanap ng mga tunay na kaibigan na alam kong totoo po sa akin.” [I had a good relationship with my co-clients. Inside the Shelter I have found genuine friends that I know are true to me.]. The latter is a self-confessed “*mataray*”, and she knows that there are only a few who like her. She is also not a friendly person, so she really chooses whom to befriend and interact with. Like Jade, Ruby was able to have friends inside the Shelter who are still her friends after her discharge.

Respondent Sapphire(16) commented, “*Sa Shelter eh sandalan kami doon. Nakakakuha ako ng lakas ng loob. Makakakuha ka sa kanila ng advice especially sa mga nakaranas na doon.*” [In the Shelter, we supported each other there. I get my strength from them. You can get advice especially from those who already have experiences.]. Sapphire gave importance to the relationships that she had inside the Shelter, especially because of the fact that she looked at them as her support system. Beryl (18) added, “*Doon (Shelter) din po ako nakakita ng totoong kaibigan. Kahit na hanggang dito sa labas eh kaibigan mo pa rin,*” [In the Shelter, I found true friends. Even here outside, they are still your friends.]. Both of them shared that one of the first things they did after their discharge is to locate and contact their friends who were already in the community with their families as well.

Three respondents expressed gratefulness for the good relationship they were able to build with the staff of the Shelter. Respondent Pearl (22) said, “*Isa sa mga pinakamagandang nangyari sa akin ay ang mga staff eh hindi po nila ako tinuring na iba.*” [One of the most wonderful things that happened to me is that the staff treated me like a family].

From within the dormitories to the four corners of the compound, an atmosphere of a family where love, care, belongingness, trust, unity, and support for each other is one of the main

goals of the Shelter's programs. The residents are taught to treat each other with love, respect, and fairness. For the staff members, the Shelter facilitates training for their personal and professional growth. Through this, the staff grow on their respective profession and become equipped in handling properly and efficiently the clients on their temporary shelter. Furthermore, the distinguished services are able to create programs that strengthen the relationships of the clients while inside the facility.

According to the study of Carandang (1996), the first world views of sexually abused street respondents is that the world is very sad, cruel, not nourishing, and rejecting. Most of them see the world as made up of wicked, uncaring, insensitive people, such as cruel and rejecting mothers and abusive men who abandon, oppress, and victimize children. The organization seems to be in the right track then in trying to provide an environment that seemingly feels like home.

- ***Faith/Relationship with God in Facing Life's Problems***

The residents in the Shelter, especially the sexually abused survivors, came to have a different perspective of who God is when the abuse was perpetrated to them. They felt the absence of God in their lives.

One of the programs of the Shelter is reconnecting the residents to the Creator. There were different religious groups who regularly visit the Shelter and have been partners in redirecting the distorted thoughts of the survivors about God.

Thus, respondent Beryl (18) really appreciated how the Shelter brought her nearer to God. She expressed, “*Si God, kasi siya ang takbuhan ko. Sa Shelter ko din ito natutunan; sa mga bible studies, sa focolare, sa lighthouse. Dati po hindi ako ganoon kalapit sa Diyos. Pero nang pumasok po ako ng Shelter ay napalapit po talaga ako sa Kanya*” [God is my refuge. It is in the Shelter where I learned this through the bible studies, in Focolare, in Lighthouse. Before, I was not that near to God, but when I entered the Shelter, I became really near to Him.].

Respondent Carnelian (17) stated, “*Ang pagtitiwala sa Diyos, iyon ang natutunan ko sa Shelter, na kahit ano ang problemang dumating sa iyo eh magpray ka lang at si God ang gagawa ng way para maayos ang problema mo. Sa kanya po tayo unang-unang lumapit.*” [I have learned in the Shelter to trust God. That whatever problem comes our path, all we have to do is pray because it is God who will make a way to resolve it. It is God whom we should seek first.]. She believes in the power of God who is able to rescue her in times of need. She added that although she has friends, she knows their limitations as human being. She knows that they could not help her with all her burdens and that it is only God who is able to do that.

Ruby shared, “*Pananamplata sa Diyos. Ito din po pala ang isang natutunan ko sa Shelter, kasi doon lang din po ulit ako nagkaroon ng time na mapalapit sa Diyos*” [Faith in God. This is also one thing that I have learned in the Shelter; it was only there where I came to have time with God].

With the distinguished challenges that the respondents had encountered inside the Shelter, they were truly thankful that they had learned that there is God who is with them through out their fight. As Christians, Filipinos believe that at the end of the humanity’s limitation, there is God who is able to work things out in every situation, no matter how hard things and

circumstances are. This is the reason why it becomes easy for the Shelter to refocus and re-unite the sexual abuse survivors to God whose presence was questioned during the times that the respondents were being abused. After the the respondents' temporary shelter, they were able to experience God who is never blind to their circumstances but is always there to guide, care, and give hope.

It is said that another personal factor to conquer the abuse and get better through it is said to be resilience. Resilience is the ability to adapt well when faced with trauma or other adverse circumstances. The word *resilience* is a physics term related to strain, elasticity, and recovery. A human being has the ability to adapt to change and, like a rubber band stretched and strained, can bounce back to his or her original shape. And spirituality is one of the identified resilient factor (www.mosac.net).

- ***Involvement in Same-Sex Relationship***

In the few years of stay inside the Shelter, some of the respondents disclosed that they came to have same-sex relationship with other residents inside. Whenever they were lonely and had problems, they wanted someone to be committed, like that of a partner, being at their side to alleviate the pain. Some of them shared that it was just sort of a “pastime” or a “trip” to add color to their lives inside.

Respondent Hyacinth shared that she had no negative behavior inside the Shelter except being involved in a same-sex relationship. She stated, “*Nakipagrelasyon po ako doon sa ibang kliyente lalo na kapag buryong na buryong ka na*” [I got involved in a same-sex relationship,

especially during that time I got really bored.]. She also shared that sometimes, it was easier to deal with other girls being in the same sex and knowing what will make both happy.

Respondent Beryl (18) also shared that she had a same-sex relationship with one of her dorm mates. According to her, it was because of boredom why she indulged in such a relationship. This happened when her son was discharged to her mother. She missed him so much and felt lost when he was discharged. When her son was still with her inside the Shelter, she had been busy taking good care of him to have girlfriends. Outside the facility and even before the abuse, though, she admitted having a girlfriend.

Other respondents also shared that they experienced being involved in a girl-to-girl relationship in the Shelter. Such relationship is not allowed by the Shelter, and so those who are in a relationship kept it a secret. Most of them stated that it was because of boredom and loneliness that made them get involved in such a relationship.

According to Dehn (2011), one of the symptoms that the victims of sexual abuse show is sexuality-related behavior. It should be recalled that the respondents shared that being involved in a girl-to-girl relationship was just a “pastime” and that they did it just inside the Shelter. However, one of them, Hyacinth, continued to have a same-sex relationship even during the time reintegration.

The coping mechanisms that the respondents had while inside the Shelter:

The coping mechanisms that the respondents had while inside the Shelter were: Avoidance through keeping oneself busy; Established positive relationship with others; Faith in/Enhanced relationship with God; and, Involvement in same-sex relationship.

Table III: The themes and the descriptions of the residents on coping inside the Shelter

Theme	Description
Avoidance through keeping oneself busy	Most of the respondents identified avoidance through keeping oneself busy as their coping. Intrusive thoughts and flashbacks of the sexual abuse perpetrated against the respondents oftentimes hit them. Also, with the other challenges that they encountered inside the Shelter, they had to keep themselves busy to avoid dwelling on them.
Established positive relationship	Although the respondents came from different walks of life, they were able to find true and meaningful relationships with their co-residents and the staff. This way, they have come to have a support system when troubles hit them inside the Shelter.
Faith/enhanced relationship in God	With the number of challenges they faced inside the Shelter, faith in God is one of the things that made them survived inside.
Involvement in same-sex relationship	Out of boredom and loneliness, the respondents indulged in a girl-to-girl relationship.

The themes that were generated from the coping mechanisms that the respondents employed while they were inside the temporary shelter show how they dealt with their challenges in order to survive. Relationships, both with the Creator and the staff and their co-residents, seemed to play a significant role in their coping. Having someone to call and lean on was very crucial for the respondents, considering the fact that they were away from their families. This is then the reason why they placed great value on developing significant relationships. When negative affects and thoughts (e.g., boredom, loneliness, flashbacks of abuse, etc.) struck the respondents, they usually did something kept them busy and not linger on negativity.

II. The Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms of the Respondents when Reintegrated with their Respective Families or Guardians

The experiences of the sexually abused survivors refer to the different circumstances that the respondents had when they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians. The challenges are the hardships, trials, and problems that the respondents faced when they were reintegrated while coping are ways on how the respondents managed their challenges when they were reintegrated.

From the in-depth interviews with the sexually abused survivors, there were five identified themes on the distinguished experiences they had when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians. The themes with regards to these experiences are presented in Table IV (*page 83*). With regards to the challenges faced by the respondents when reintegrated, there were seven identified themes, and these are presented in Table V, (*page 103*). On the different coping mechanisms that the respondents employed when reintegrated, eight themes were identified and presented in Table VI (*page 120*).

A. The experiences of the respondents when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community

This section presents the themes generated from the responses of the sexually abused survivors on their shared experiences when they were reintegrated with their family or guardian in the community.

The experiences that the respondents had when reintegrated:

- *Mixed affect when discharged from the Shelter*

According to the respondents, they were at the same time happy and sad the moment they were discharged. Though to go out of the Shelter was one of their deepest desires, they could not help to be sad during that moment.

There were eight residents who had the same answer. According to respondent Jade (18), *“Masaya na malungkot. Masaya kasi gustung-gusto ko na din pong makasama kahit sandali si Mama sa labas at makag-aral po ako ng accounting sa College. Malungkot din po kasi siyempre ilang taon din po ako sa Shelter at marami din po akong maiiwan na mga kaibigan at mga naging ka-close ko na mga Houseparents.”* [Happy and, at the same time, sad. Happy, because I really wanted to be with my mother again even for a little while and to study accounting in college. Sad, because aside from the fact that I stayed long in the Shelter, I would also be leaving many friends and houseparents I got close to.]. Her mother is an OFW, and she wanted to spend time with her even for a short while before her mother leaves again for abroad.

Hyacinth (18) shared, *“Masaya na malungkot. Masaya kasi makikita mo na pamilya mo pero malungkot kasi maiiwan mo na ang mga ka-close mo doon [Shelter].”* [Happy and, at the same time, sad. Happy, because finally, you will see your family again. Sad, because you will leave those who are close to you.]. In addition, respondent Agate (16) answered, *“Masaya na malungkot. Kasi maiiwan ko na ang mga kaibigan ko doon at kayo na naging close ko na. Pero siyempre po masaya ako kasi ang pinaka-aantay kong discharge ay nangyari na. Siyempre po sa isang bata sa loob eh wala kaming hinahangad kundi ang makalabas at makasama namin ang pamilya namin sa labas”* [Happy and, at the same time, sad. This is because I would be leaving my friends there and those I got close to. On the other hand, I was so happy because the

discharge that I had been waiting for finally arrived. Indeed, every client in the Shelter desires nothing but to be discharged and be with their family outside].

Former resident Amethyst (19) who was sheltered for more than six years replied, *“Magkahalong lungkot at saya. Malungkot ako kasi maiiwan ko ng ang mga kaibigan ko at ang mga staff na hindi na iba sa akin. Saka alam ko din na once lumabas na ako ng Shelter ay hindi na ako muling magkakaroon ng pagkakataon na mapatira ulit dito. Masaya naman po ako kasi makakasama ko na ang Mama ko sa labas.”* [A combination of joy and sadness. Sadness, because I would be leaving my friends there and the staff who are dear to me. Also, I knew that once I am out of the Shelter, I will no longer have a chance to live there. But then I was happy because I will be with my mother.].

The bond and relationships that the respondents had created and experienced inside the Shelter were truly very meaningful for them. In their temporary stay in the Shelter, they were able to have a family, and the Shelter somehow became a comfort zone for them. Their lives evolved within the four corners of it for years. On the other hand, the excitement and joy to be with their family outside which is, according to one respondent, the very desire of all the clients of Shelter, won over sadness. They could not hide the happiness it brought.

- ***Lack of Contentment***

All of the ten (10) respondents shared that they are not yet content with their life. They do have many dreams that are yet to fulfill.

Almost all of the residents expressed strong desire to continue their studies. Pearl (22) stated, *“Hindi pa po ako kuntento. Kasi nga hindi po ako nakakapag-aral. Naaawa na nga po*

ako sa sarili ko eh. Wala man lang akong stock knowledge eh. Parang naubos na! [laughed]” [I am not yet contented. It is because I am not able to go to school. I pity myself. I do not even have stock knowledge. It seems I have exhausted them all.].

Respondent Jade (18) commented, *“Hindi pa po kasi hindi ko pa natutupad ang mga pangarap ko na makapagtapos ng pag-aaral at matulungan ang pamilya ko.”* [Not yet, because my dreams to study and help my family are not yet fulfilled.]. She believes that it is only through education that she could reach her dreams. She wants to be a professional accountant someday and go abroad. She wants to earn well and help her siblings finish their studies as well. She does not want to burden her mother with her siblings’ educational needs; she wants to be in charge of it. This is the reason why she is eager to finish college. She also desires for her mother to stop working as an OFW. She aspires for her mother to take rest and support her once she is already working. She wants to payback all the sacrifices that her mother has done for the family.

Respondent Carnelian (17) commented, *“Makukuntento po ako kapag nakasama ko na ang mga magulang ko- sina mama at papa. Wala na po akong mahihiling pa. Siguro mababago din ang relasyon ko sa mga kapatid ko kapag dumating sina mama at papa. Kasi yun lang naman ang pinakamimithi ko - na makasama ang mga magulang ko. Sinasabi ko nga po na pag matanda na sila ay hindi ko po sila iiwan. Aalagaan ko po sila.”* [I will only be contented if I have my parents with me- my mother and father. If that happens, I will not ask for more. Maybe, if my parents were here, my relationship with my siblings would also change. That is the only thing that I really want to have, to live with them. When they are old, I will never leave them. I will take care of them.].

For Beryl who is a single mother, contentment is truly far from her present situation. Beryl (18) said, *“Hanggat hindi ko nabibigay sa anak ang magandang buhay, ang pangangailangan ng anak ko, ay hindi ako makukuntento. Iyong tipong sa isang hiling niya lang ay mabibigay ko. Gusto ko na pagsusumikapan ko ang ibibigay ko sa kanya.”* [Not until I am able to give my son a good life and provide all his needs, I will never be contented. I want that everything I give him will come from my hard work]. She treats her son as a gem. Though her son is a product of the abuse done to her, she does not see him as a misfortune. MJ, her son, is the very one who directs her to dream high and be a successful person someday. He drives her to strive hard and dwell on where she is now.

Furthermore, the problems that the respondents had faced- family problems, being not able to continue their studies, financial problems, and so forth, contributed to the burdens that they already had. If contentment seems hard to be achieved by normally functioning individuals, then what more for those who have suffered traumatic events like sexual abuse? Indeed, with the multiple issues and concerns these survivors have, contentment seems a far away reality.

- ***Acquired Freedom***

When residents are temporarily sheltered, the freedom that they enjoy outside is one of the first things regulated in them through the rules and regulations. There is a definite time for everything, from the moment they wake up to sleeping time. For the residents living inside for a year or so, freedom is one of the things they regain when they are discharged.

When the respondents were asked about the difference between living inside and out of the Shelter, seven (7) of them replied that living outside is living with freedom. Respondent Ruby (21) stated, *“Siyempre sa Shelter, parang doon lang ang buhay mo sa apat na sulok ng*

compound. Pero dito sa labas [komunidad] eh malayang-malaya ka. Bahala ka sa buhay mo kung ano ang gusto mong gawin.” [Of course, in the Shelter, your life just exists in the four corners of the compound while here outside you are very free. You can do whatever you want.].

Carnelian (17) said, *“Sa Shelter po ay naandoon ka lang sa loob ng compound samantalang dito (komunidad) eh talagang malaya ka.”* [In the Shelter, you are just inside the compound while here (community), you are truly free.]. She expressed that she became truly free outside the Shelter when she was reintegrated. Yet, she was completely aware that this freedom had caused her life struggles. It brought her back to her vices.

“Sa loob po ng Shelter ay nandoon ang mga rules and regulations at hindi ka po talaga gagawa ng mali kasi alam mong may sanctions kapag lumabag ka. Parang sa lahat ng oras ay nasa tama ka. Pero dito po sa labas ay masyado kang malaya. Malaya kang gawin ang lahat ng gusto mo. Kahit magpakademonyo ka ay walang makakapigil sa’yo. Iyon nga lang po eh mapapahamak ka talaga,” commented by Amethyst (19) [In the Shelter, there are rules and regulations you will not dare break as there are sanctions. Thus, you seem to do things right all the time. Here outside, you are very free. You are free to do all that you want. Even if you do evil things, nobody can stop you, but it will surely cause you harm.]. The Shelter implements behavior modifications and reinforcements to positive and negative behaviors of the clients inside. This is to discourage negative behaviors and encourage good ones.

Freedom and self-will are very significant to us. We are born having a brain of our own, which makes us capable to decide what is best for us. Nobody wants to be controlled by anyone or anything. Before the temporary shelter of some clients, their life was controlled by the circumstance of abuse, by the perpetrator, by their family in the case of respondents of incest

cases, and other intervening factors. When the sexually abused survivors had to be temporarily sheltered, they experience another issue which is lack of freedom due to rules and regulations inside. However, it is clear to everyone that the Shelter exists for the rehabilitation and recovery of the individuals admitted in it.

When the respondents were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community, it was but natural for them to enjoy the freedom that is already in their hands. Living in the community again, there are no rules and regulations they have to follow. They are on their own. Unfortunately, for some respondents who had no parental guidance and presence, the freedom they had was used in a negative way like indulging in vices. On the other hand, some knew the value of freedom- that if you would use it negatively, destruction will be your end.

From the in-depth interviews with the respondents regarding being free in living outside the Shelter, it was deduced that they became hungry and thirsty for freedom. The good thing is that they were also conscious of the positive things of being bounded by the rules and regulations of the Shelter. It kept them on the right path, as some of them attested. They were definitely aware that they now have freedom which they can enjoy in a responsible manner.

- ***Uncertainty about the future***

One of the challenges that the respondents faced is having uncertainty about the future. This may be attributed to the lack of support for them, especially from their family, and to the absence of resources that they can use in life.

When asked about their fears or worries, six (6) the respondents answered that they are anxious about the future. Respondent Hyacinth (18) shared, “*Nag-aalala po ako sa kung ano po ang mangyayari sa buhay ko. Mahirap po kasi ang wala kang pamilya na maasahan.*” [I worry

over what might happen to my life. It is hard when you have no family to depend on.]. After she left Mindanao where her father/perpetrator is living, she has been living on her own and does not get any support from her family, especially from her mother. When asked how she sees the future, she said she perceives it to be dark. *“Madilim. Hindi ko po kasi alam kung paano malalagpasan ang mga pagsubok kasi ang nanay ko ay hindi naman suporta sa akin at mas higit pang binibigyang halaga ang asawa niya (patungkol sa kanyang tatay/kalaban)!”* [Dark. I do not know how to overcome the trials because my mother does not support me and values her husband more [pertaining to her father/perpetrator].

Ruby (21) commented, *“Nag-aalala kung magiging maganda po ba ang kinabukasan ko at ng mga kapatid ko. Kung makakapag-aral po ba ako. Naiisip ko din po ang kaso ko kung uusad pa ba at makikita ko pa ang kalaban ko. Para kasing gusto ko na pong mabigyan ng katarungan ang ginawang pang-aabuso sa akin.”* [Worrying if I and my siblings would have a good future, if I could still go to school. I also worry that my case will not prosper and that of seeing my perpetrator again. I really want to see justice.]. She also added, *“Mahirap kasi walang kasiguraduhan. Wala po kasi akong masasabing makakapitan ko sa ano mang oras. Ang tatay ko naman kasi walang silbi! Feeling ko nga eh ulila na talaga ako sa magulang eh! Hindi ko naman maramdaman si tatay!”* [It is hard. There is no certainty. I have no one to depend on. My father is actually useless! I feel as if I am an orphan! I cannot feel his existence!]. She is annoyed with her father because, according to her, he does not seem to do anything for the family. Though he is just vending cigarettes and candies, he seems contented already. He does not even desire to rent a house for himself and his two children so they would no longer depend on his sister.

However, not all the respondents worried about their future or about what will happen in the coming days. Respondent Jade (18) confidently said, “*Wala na. Feeling ko kayang-kaya ko na pong harapin ang bukas kahit mag-isa lang ako. Hindi na po ako katulad ng dati na parang ang hina-hina. Ngayon po ay iba na ako. At iyon po ay dahil sa tulong ng Shelter*” [Nothing. I feel that I can face the future even if I am alone. I am no longer weak like before. I am now different, and it is because of the Shelter’s help.]. Sapphire (16) articulated, “*Maganda (patungkol sa hinaharap). Kasi alam kong may mga taong sumusuporta sa akin.*” [Beautiful, (pertaining to the future) because I know that I have others supporting me.]. She shared that her adoptive family and *ninang* are always there for her.

Nobody can tell what tomorrow may bring. Therefore, being uncertain about the future is a very natural thing. One can say that he/she can control him/herself, but nobody will dare say that he/she can manipulate the situations and the environment where he/she exists.

The good thing is when the clients were temporarily sheltered, they were given help. Their case of sexual abuse was supported and fought by the Shelter. They were fed, given therapeutic interventions, they were believed in and was given hope. However, the Shelter is not designed to cater the survivors for the rest of their lives. Reintegration has to come and be processed for the survivors to have normal life again in the community.

Unfortunately, not all the respondents had a good story about reintegration. They did not get the support they needed to overcome what was ahead of them. According to Morrow and Smith (1995), one of the contributors that greatly impact the ability of a child to survive child sexual abuse without destructive negative consequences is the external support that value the

child and establishes expectations that contribute to the child's development of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism.

The absence of support, especially from the family, weakened the perceptions of the respondents about a good life in the future. Although the respondents acknowledged the empowerment that the Shelter gave them, they were weakened by the inadequacy of familial support during their reintegration.

- ***Developed Poor Self-Concept***

There were wonderful things that the respondents shared about their life after the discharge; however, there were also things which they felt had worsened when they were reintegrated in the community. Three (3) of the respondents expressed this.

Respondent Carnelian (17) shared, *“Pero dito po sa labas eh parang nasira ang buhay ko dahil nga po sa barkada, sa pagca-clan. Natuto ako ng kung anu-anong bisyo, nag-boyfriend. Samantalang sa loob ng Shelter eh matino ako doon, nag-aaral. Dito po parang wala ng magandang nangyayari sa buhay ko.”* [But here outside, it seems that my life was ruined because of peers and being involved in a gang/clan. I learned different vices, had a boyfriend. In the Shelter, I was good there; I was studying. Here, it seems nothing good is happening in my life.]. The sadness in her face was noted while she was sharing the difference of her life in and out of the Shelter. When asked what the clan is all about, she answered that it is a group formed by cell phone users. Through sending messages to their clan, she is able to express what she feels and want to say without hesitation.

While Pearl (22) said, *“Sa karakter eh parang napakalaki ng pagbabago ko. Sa pagmumura pa nga lang eh. Ang lutong-lutong ko ng magmura ngayon! Samantalang sa Shelter*

eh modelo ako” [I have changed a lot in character; I curse a lot now. I am even very good at it. In the Shelter, I was a model there]. Then she added, “*Feeling ko naging worst ako ngayon kasi parang ang layo-layo ko na kay God. Hindi na nga po ako nakakasimba, hindi na ako nagbabasa ng bible. Mabait pa din naman ako pero parang anlaki ng kaibahan ng dating ako noong nasa Shelter ako sa ngayon.*” [I feel I got worst now because it seems I am far away from God. I do not go to church anymore nor read the bible. I am still good, but it seems there is a big difference between who I was in the Shelter and who I am now.].

Pearl even shared that she wishes to be who she was while in the Shelter, but she does not know where to start. She explained that life outside the Shelter and with her family is a difficult one. In tending the needs of her siblings, she forgets herself at times. In the Shelter, she only have to think for herself and her younger sibling. Also, her relationship with her siblings is not good.

Similar to the issues on having uncertainties about the future and living with freedom, the bad feelings and experiences the respondents had after the discharge can be attributed to the lack of support and guidance from their family. Respondent Hyacinth has a mother whose support is given to her father/perpetrator rather than to her. Likewise, siblings Carnelian and Pearl have a mother who is an OFW and consequently does not have direct supervision over them. Added to this is the fact that both of them do not have a good relationship with their siblings they are living with. According to De Castro, et al., the family and other biological relations are probably the most important sources of support towards a child’s recovery. However, as a result of strong demands to provide for the needs of the family, whether impoverished or middle class, they are

confronted with day to day economic problems and concerns. This is to add the fact that the 20% of the 40% of respondents who expressed feeling of being worse had mothers who are OFWs.

Although the respondents underwent therapy inside the Shelter, the perspective of being used and dirty were not easily overcome. It was stated that how the victims view their future life is somehow wrecked by the physical and emotional devastation they suffered from the abuse. Oftentimes, victims regard themselves as shattered, dirty, and useless after the sexual abuse, especially when the perpetrator is someone known to the victim, like in the case of incest. (McClendon, 1991, as cited in Dy, 2008).

The role of the mother and the members of the family are indeed very significant. Because of the mother's inattentiveness, may it be physically or emotionally, it became a factor to the respondents' being off track with their lives when they were reintegrated in the community.

The experiences that the respondents had when reintegrated with the family or guardian:

The experiences that the respondents had when reintegrated with their family or guardian were: mixed affect when discharged from the Shelter; lack of contentment; acquired freedom; uncertainty about the future; and, developed poor self-concept.

Table IV: The themes and description of the respondents' experiences when reintegrated in the community

Theme	Description
• Mixed affect when discharged from the Shelter	Although to be discharged is the dream of almost all of the clients in MH, yet because of the positive relationships the respondents were able to build, it became very hard for them to leave.
• Lack of contentment	The respondents were not contented yet. They had many dreams that are yet to come true, and they would do everything to accomplish them.
• Acquired freedom	When the respondents were reintegrated, they experienced freedom. There was no rule or authority that they had to consider except themselves.
• Uncertainty about the future	With the several problems that the respondents had faced when reintegrated, the future seemed ambiguous for them.
• Developed poor self-concept	Some respondents who thought of themselves to be astray felt worse about themselves. Some felt being bad and got involved in vices while one indulged herself in prostitution

The themes that were generated from the experiences of the respondents when they were reintegrated in the community show how they were when faced with discharge. Most of the respondents were both happy and sad to leave which only signifies the attachment they had developed inside the Shelter. Also, from the structured environment inside the Shelter back to the unstructured lifestyle outside, it was noted how some of the respondents indulged in the freedom they had. Unfortunately, some of them did it without thinking of the consequences it may bring.

Most of the respondents who expected a better life with their family or guardian outside got disappointed. The poverty that they had left when they were sheltered was still the same when they returned. Having financial constraints caused the residents to be uncertain about the

future and to develop uncertainty. This is especially true to those who were about to enter college but were not able to pursue education. Furthermore, having no strict and consistent guidance from the family or guardian caused the respondents to live without restrictions that led them to be astrayed and develop poor self-concept.

B. The challenges faced by the sexually abused survivors when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians

The challenges of the sexually abused survivors refer to the hardships, trials, and problems encountered when they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardian in the community. Also, the effects of the temporary shelter on the respondents as they went back to the mainstream were considered. The respondents' inner being was unveiled, and the pains, disappointments, and brokenness were brought into light.

From the in-depth interview with the sexually abused survivors, there were seven (7) themes identified. The themes with regards to the challenges they faced or are facing are presented in Table V (page 103), which easily gives an overview on the commonality and unique challenges that became prevalent as the respondents faced life in the community.

The challenges that the respondents faced when reintegrated:

- ***Adjustment process in the community***

In terms of length of stay in the Shelter, one out of the 10 respondents had almost six (6) years inside the Shelter, the longest stay. The rest had only more than a year. It was expected then that adjustment during reintegration or integration in the community would happen

considering the number of years being in the Shelter. In addition, some of them were discharged not to their parents but to relatives, especially the incest cases, whose mothers still take the side of the father-perpetrator.

Among the ten (10) respondents, eight (8) or 80% of them divulged that they really struggled at some point after the discharge. Respondent Ruby (21) shared, *“Nakakailang po kasi hindi naman namin bahay iyon at nakitira lang ako. Ako po ay pansamantalang nakatira sa amon ng tita ko na pinakiusapan lang niyang doon muna ako. Sa dati pong presidente ng Rotary na intsik. Kasi nga po ang tita ko ay stay-in na tagaluto doon”* [I was not at ease because the house was not our own. I stayed for a while with my aunt’s employer whom my aunt requested to temporarily take me in. He is a former president of a rotary, a Chinese. My aunt is an stay-in cook there.]. Ruby shared that she felt she always had to watch out every little thing she does and that she had no freedom. Although her aunt’s employers was good to her, she still had to help in the household chores.

Pearl (22) said, *“Para po kaming mga taong galing ng bundok kasi dito sa labas eh iba-iba ang mga makakasalamuha mo. Kasi hindi ba po mahigit two years din kami sa loob ng Shelter. Tapos noong lumabas po kami ay talagang kulang ang isang taon na may nakilala akong kapitbahay. Kasi dati pag lumalabas ako eh derecho lang ang tingin kasi nahihiya po ako eh”* [We looked like people who came from the mountain because there are a lot of people whom you will encounter out here. We spent more than two years in the Shelter, and when we were discharged, it was almost a year before I got to know a neighbor. Before, when I went out of the house, I just looked straight ahead because I was ashamed.].

Pearl (22) also added, “ *Nag-start lang po ako na magkaroon ng social life ng magbantay ako sa tindahan diyan sa me labasan. Medyo ilag po kasi ako lalo na sa mga kalalakihan. Lalo na pag iba ang aura eh ilag na po talaga ako. Nasanay na po kasi ako sa Shelter na puros babae ang mga kasalamuha ko* ” [I only started having a social life when I got to be employed in a store near our house. I was not at ease, particularly with men and especially when they have a different aura. I don’t get near them. I became used in the Shelter where I encountered only women].

Respondent Amethyst (19) stated, “*Dahil nga po nakapag home-visit na ako sa bahay kaya alam ko na ang uuwian ko. Masyadong masikip ang bahay para sa aming apat at maraming tambay sa labas. Pero siyempre kahit papaano nag-adjust po ako kasi antagal kong hindi nakasama sina mama. Tapos iba pa ang buhay sa Shelter at sa labas. Doon solo ko ang higaan ko malaya akong nakakagalaw. Samantalang sa bahay ay sobrang sikip. Di nga po ako nakakatulog eh kasi parang hindi ako makahinga. Nakakatulog lang ako kapag umaga na at wala ng tao sa bahay*” [Because I was able to do home-visits, I already knew where I will be discharged. The house is too small for the four of us in the family, and there are lots of bystanders outside. Of course, adjustment was necessary as I had lived long years without them. Life inside the Shelter and outside are very different. In the Shelter, I had my own bed, and I can freely move around. Here, the house is so small. I cannot even sleep; I cannot breathe. Sleep only comes to me in the morning when nobody is around the house.].

Sapphire (16) shared, “*Medyo nakakailang kasi talagang tinititigan ako ng lahat ng tao. Naninibago sila sa akin kasi mataba at dalaga na daw ako. Ibang-ibang na daw ako ngayon kumpara sa dati.*” [It was a bit awkward because people were staring at me. They said I looked different, being fat and grown up. They added that I am far different from what I was before].

Being temporarily sheltered wherein the clients had lived far away from their families and communities indeed has an effect on the respondents. This was specially realized when they were reintegrated. From the four corners of the compound of the Shelter with limited interactions with the survivors' co-clients and staff inside, they are now back in the outside and real world. Indeed, adjustment is part of the natural process.

- ***Encountered financial constraints***

One of the prevalent things that many people is struggling with is financial difficulty. Poverty is everywhere, and it has a huge impact on how a person lives and how he/she responds to the circumstances he/she is facing. So do the nine (9) respondents who shared to be living in financial constraints.

Respondent Ruby (21) realized the hardship of life being back in the mainstream. She verbalized, *“Mahirap po pala ang buhay dito sa labas. Noong nasa loob (Shelter) pa ako eh masyado akong atat umuwi pero noong asa labas na ako eh doon ko napatunayan na mas masarap pa palang mabuhay sa loob. Doon wala kang problema. Hindi mo iisipin ang tutulugan mo, ang kakainin, tapos safe ka pa. May mga guard na nagbabantay sa Shelter at may mga staff pa na nakatingin sa mga kliyente.”* [I have realized that life is hard here outside. When I was inside (Shelter), I was very impatient to be discharged, but when I was already here outside, I have proven that life in the Shelter is better. There you have no problem. You will not worry over where you will sleep, your food, and your safety. There are guards who secure the Shelter, and there are staff who look over you].

According to Ruby, if she would be asked, she will choose to live inside (Shelter). But the thing is, she wants to study college outside the Shelter, be with her siblings, and be able to

help them someday. She also added, *“Halos apat buwan pa lang po ako dito sa Tita ko. Nagtitiis-tiis nga po ako eh kasi syempre wala naman kaming mapuntahang tatlong magkakapatid pati na ang Papa ko. Pero kapag nakaipon na po ako at nagkaroon ako ng magandang kita eh lilipat po kami ng matitirhan”* [I’ve stayed here with my aunt for only four months. I am trying to bear things because I know that I, my two siblings, and my father have no one to turn to. When the time comes that I already have savings and a good source of income, we will look for a house.]. She recognized that, as of the moment, she can do nothing but depend on the sibling of her father. She is determined, however, to work harder so that her own family does not have to live like they do now.

“Iba sana kung nandito si Mama kaya lang siyempre iba din po kasi may pinansiyal kaming pangangailangan. Kasi si Mama lang ang source of income namin. Lalo na si Papa eh malaki ang budget. Minsan nga sabi ko eh sige magtrabaho lang kayo ng magtrabaho para kay Papa. Dapat sana eh para na sa amin pero ibibigay pa kay Papa,” shared by Pearl (22) [It would have been different if my mother were here, but we have financial needs. She is only our source of living. What is unfair is she allocates a big budget for my father, which could have been given to us children. I expressed this sentiment to my mother, about her working hard not for us but for our father.]. She really wished for her OFW mother to be with them here in the Philippines. However, she knew that it would not be that easy as the family depends on their mother. The other thing is, she could not understand why her mother had to give all the needs of her father (perpetrator) who is in jail, which consumes a big portion of her mother’s remittances.

The only respondent who did not have financial struggle is Jade. She is well-supported by her mother who is also an OFW. This is also the very reason why she was able to study college in a private school after her discharge.

Before the admission of the respondents in the Shelter, the lives of the sexually abused survivors were already in poverty. Forty percent (40%) of them had mothers who were too busy working to support the family, 30% had mothers who are OFWs, 10% were working as household helper, 10% as cigarette vendor, and 10% were living with a relative. To look at it in a deeper way, it can be said that poverty is a factor to the abuse. In this study, 70% were incest cases, in which the mothers were absentees due to overseas work or being busy in working outside the house.

When the residents were admitted and temporary sheltered, everything was provided. When they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardian, they lived again in a life in which everything must be worked hard for to meet their basic needs. The sad thing is, the life that they had before entering Shelter is still the life that they have to live with after the discharge. They still had to struggle financially.

- ***Inability to pursue education***

Out of the ten (10) respondents, eight (8) or 80% of them were not able to continue their schooling. Mostly, it is due to financial constraints. When they were actually asked what their dream is, the typical answer gathered was to be able to continue their studies. Unfortunately, this is not happening.

Respondent Pearl (22) shared, “*Wala pa po akong napapatunayan. Kasi nga po hindi ko magawa ang gusto ko na makapag-aral. Parang naaawa nga po ako sa sarili ko eh. Kasi napag-iinwanan na ako ng mga pinsan ko sa Marikina. Lahat nag-aaral at ang kuya ko na pinsan ko eh nagtatrabaho na ngayon. Parang nakakainggit lang*” [I have nothing to prove yet. I cannot study as I wanted to. I pity myself. I am being left behind by my cousins in Marikina. All are studying, and my older cousin is already working. I am envious.].

Pearl added that the money which her mother is sending from abroad is actually not enough to support them. This is because the big part of the share goes to the allowance of her father who is in jail. “*Tapos kinakapos po kami kasi nga si papa eh binabudgetan pa din sa kulungan. Siya nga ang taong nakakulong na masarap ang buhay eh. May alalay pa nga yon eh!*” [Then we get short of budget because our father in jail is still included. He is the man in jail who has a very good life. He even has a bodyguard!].

Ruby (21) also verbalized her desire and struggle to continue her studies, “*Pangarap ko pong makapag-aral at mapag-aral ko din ang aking mga kapatid. Minsan parang gusto kong bumalik sa Tita ko sa Quezon City kasi gusto akong papag-aralin ng amo niya doon eh. Pero gusto ko kasing mag-aral ng kaunti lang ang tumutulong sa akin eh. Mas gusto ko pong mag working student. Mahirap ho kasi ang madaming tumutulong kasi marami kang pinagkakautangan ng loob*” [It is my dream to study and help my siblings to study as well. Sometimes I think of going back to my aunt in QC because her employer wants to send me to school. However, I wanted to study with only few people supporting me. I like to be a working student. It is hard if there are a lot of people helping you because that means you owe many as well.].

Some respondents envied those who were discharged and were able to study. Emerald (20) said when asked about her dream, “*Siyempre unang-una po ay makapag-aral ako. Feeling ko naiiinggit po ako kapag nababalitaan ko na nag-aaral ang ibang bata na nakalabas na* (other co-residents who had been reintegrated with their family or guardian in the community as well)” [Of course, I wanted to study. I actually felt envy when I heard that my former co-clients were studying]. She even added, “*Medyo mahirap kasi katulad po ngayon parang hindi sigurado na makapag-aral ako. Medyo may problema po kasi sa pinansyal sina tito eh at hindi na rin naooopen ni tita iyong tungkol sa pag-aaral ko. Nahihiya naman po ako na magtanong*” [It is a little hard because it seems that I would not be able to go to school. My uncle and aunt have a financial problem, and my aunt does not anymore talk about my schooling. I am also shy to ask about it.].

Respondent Agate (16) commented, “*Gusto ko pong makapagtapos ng pag-aaral, magkaroon ng magandang trabaho at yumaman. Kung may college lang po sana sa Shelter eh kahit doon na lang po sana ako ulit. Mas okey pa po doon kaysa nandito ako sa labas na parang wala namang nangyayari sa buhay ko*” [I want to finish my studies, have a good work, and become rich. If only there is a college in the Shelter, I prefer to stay there again. It is much better there. Here, nothing seems to happen to me]. Nevertheless, she understands that she could never go back to the Shelter again and that she really has to face her life outside. She is sad, though, that she lacks the opportunity to go to college.

Agate (16) even added, “*Wala naman po akong ibang inaasahan eh. Ang nanay ko eh parang wala namang parangarap iyon para sa akin eh. Ang tatay ko din sa kalsada na din natutulog at nagda-drugs pa yata ngayon. Mga kuya ko naman eh walang pakialam na sa akin*”

[I do not have anyone to lean on. My mother seems to have no dream for me. My father now sleeps on the street and looks like he is using drugs again. My brothers also do not care about me!].

Due to financial constraints, one of the greatest dreams of the respondents which is to be able to continue their studies could not be pushed through. Most of the survivors were struggling in meeting their basic needs; therefore, to study, especially in college, will be an additional burden. It can be remembered that 90% of the respondents were thankful that they were able to continue their studies when admitted in Shelter, which to some would not have been possible if they were still outside of the shelter after the sexual abuse perpetrated to them. This gives clear indication how important education is to the respondents and how it makes them sad and discouraged now that they are not studying after their reintegration.

Upon pre-discharge conference wherein a client's rehabilitation and preparedness are assessed so that discharge can be facilitated, the Rehabilitation Team Meeting (RTM) is conducted with the presence of Local Social Work and Development Office (LSWDO). The LSWDO social worker is the one who assesses the family or guardian of the client identified for the reintegration. Also, the social worker will be laying down the plans for the client and his/her family on areas which are assessed to be needing assistance. These may include scholarship grants for the clients and livelihood and financial assistance for the receiving family or guardian for the purposes of augmenting the needs of the family as a whole. Unfortunately, not all LGUs have this kind of assistance.

Here in the Philippines, it is very common to hear parents inculcating in their children the line *"Mag-aral kang mabuti anak dahil iyan lang ang kayamanang maipapamana namin sa iyo."*

Kayamanang hindi mananakaw” [Study hard because that is the only treasure that we can leave to you, a treasure that can never be taken away from you.]. The question is, what if the parents or the family can not afford to send their children to school? Should not the state and other organizations take the move to help?

Based on the in-depth interview data, continuing their education in the Shelter became therapeutic for the respondents because it gave them hope in reaching their dreams despite the abuse that happened to them. They believed that they can still be the persons they wanted to be because they were able to develop and enrich themselves. Unfortunately, 80% of the respondents have stopped schooling due to financial reason. According to the respondents, it resulted in belittling themselves. It even demotivated them to see that there is still a bright future awaiting them.

- ***Lacked positive relationship with the family members***

Out of ten (10) respondents, eight (8) claimed that they have no good relationship with their family members. Six (6) of them were discharged to their family while the remaining four, to their relatives. Among the four (4) who were discharged to the relatives, three (3) of them came to live again with their respective families. Of the eight (8) respondents, six (6) of them were struggling with their parents and two (2) with their siblings.

Everybody thought that once they were discharged from the Shelter, life would be better with their family or relatives than before. Prior to the discharge, they were assured of promises of a good life. However, what these eight respondents faced were mere disappointments.

Respondent Pearl (22) shared, *“Ang mga kapatid ko eh katulong ang tingin sa akin. Mabait lang ang mga iyan kapag may kailangan. Pero lahat ng nagagawa kong pabor sa kanila ay hindi man lang nila maappreciate. ‘Yan si ____ at ____, hindi ako ginagalang ng mga yan bilang ate nila! Kung sagut-sagutin nila ako parang sila ang nagpapakain sa akin. Pero ako ang hirap na hirap dito sa bahay. Ako lang ang gumagawa.”* [My siblings see me as a maid. They are just good to me if they need me, but they actually do not appreciate all the favors that I have been doing for them. ____ and ____ do not respect me as their older sister! When they talk back to me, it is as if they were the ones who feed me when in fact I am the one doing everything here in the house. I am all alone doing everything.]. Sometimes she wanted to leave their house and live with their relatives in Marikina whom she thought treats her better. However, she is reminded about the responsibility her mother gave her which is overseeing and taking good care of her siblings; she could not do anything but stay in their house.

The case of Agate (16) was also disappointing, according to her. She shared, *“Nakakainis, Tita, si Mama. Hanggang ngayon hindi pa din niya ako maipaglaban at hindi pa din niya ako kayang buhayin. Noong umalis kami sa ate ko ay itinira ba naman ako sa kaibigan niya na ang asawa eh anak ng perpetrator ko! At nalaman ko pa na sila pa din hanggang ngayon ng kalaban ko at palagi niya pa akong inaaway na kasalanan ko daw po kung bakit nangyari ang lahat (abuse incidents). Na hindi daw po ako naging maingat sa sarili ko at hindi na daw po ako naawa dun (perpetrator) eh matanda na ‘yun!”* [My mother is irritating, tita. Until now, she cannot fight for me and still cannot support me. When we left my older sister’s house, she made me stay with her friend whose husband is my perpetrator’s son! Then I found out that my mother is still in a relationship with my perpetrator, and she always blames for the

abuse. She said that I did not take care of myself and that I did not take pity on my perpetrator who is already old!].

The two who were discharged to their relatives were forcibly taken back by their mothers and brought to their father who happened to be their perpetrators. They could not believe that their mothers could do such thing to them. Though they knew that they still have connection with their fathers, they could not comprehend how their mothers could do such things, bringing them to where their perpetrators live or have free access for them to meet.

On the other hand, the other two respondents shared that they are happy where they are now. Respondent Jade (18) shared, *“Okey naman po dito. Tahimik at wala naman po akong problema. At close ko naman po ang tita at tito ko dito, pati po mga pinsan ko. Nagtutulungan po kami sa mga gawaing bahay at namamasyal din kapag may time.”* [It is alright here. It is peaceful, I and I do not have a problem. I am close to my aunt, uncle, and my cousins. We help each other with household chores, and we go out when we have time]. Jade was discharged to her maternal aunt in the province. She shared that when she was still a kid, she sometimes took her vacations with them, so they are truly close to her. She also added that her cousins do not really know that she was sexually abused by her father. It was only her aunt and her husband who know about it. This is, according to her, to avoid conflict and lessen the chance for the story to be spilled out to others.

While respondent Sapphire (16) commented, *“Masaya po ako siyempre kasi alam mo naman, Tita, na araw-araw sa Shelter eh discharge talaga ang pinapangarap ko. Kasi nga po gusto kong makasama ang pamilya ko at makabawi sa kanila. At ang tingin sa akin ng ibang tao ngayon dito ay hindi na katulad ng dati. Dati tingin sa akin eh para akong kalapating mababa*

ang lipad, umagang-umaga pa lang eh ako na ang pinagti-tsismisan. Pero ngayon eh parang proud na proud na sila sa akin, na ibang-iba na ako. Feeling ko love na love na nila ako” [Of course, I am happy, Tita. You knew that in the Shelter, it was everyday that I desired to be discharged to be with my family and make things up with them. Now, people here think of me differently. Before, they looked at me as prostituted girl. They used to talk about me even early in the morning. Now, they seem to be very proud of me, seeing the changes in me. I feel that they love me already.].

From the in-depth interview with the respondents, especially with those of incest cases, it was revealed that the conflict within the family still continues and never ceases. Indeed, the abuse case in a family member perpetrated by another family member has long lasting effect. Blaming of the brokenness of the family can still be ascribed to the survivor.

The respondents, although they wanted to fight for their rights and desired to receive justice for the abuse inflicted on them, gave their families (but to most cases, besides the perpetrator) a chance to live with them again. However, things did not happen the way they wanted them to be. This is because the issues within the family are not yet resolved, and the survivors had a hard time dealing with the matter. It even gave them deeper wounds. They found out that nothing had changed. Their mothers were still taking the side of their perpetrators, and some of them are still blamed for the break up of the family.

In this study, 70% of the sexual abuse were incest cases, and among this, 50% of the cases had mothers taking the side of the perpetrators who happened to be the respondents' father or stepfather. In this case, the thorough follow-up of the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO) is absolutely vital. From this 50%, 20% of them were forcibly taken back by

their mothers, 20% lived with their siblings because the mothers are OFWs, and the 10% stopped her connection with the perpetrator.

It is ideal that therapy or processing the family of incest cases must also be done by the LSWDO. This should be conducted while the clients are still in the custody of the Shelter. Incest cases are a familial issue, and everyone in the family should be given intervention to address the underlying issues. Though the survivors are given therapeutic interventions once sheltered in an institution, when they are reintegrated with their family, the situation will not be different because the family is still at lost as to how to appropriately deal the issues inside the family brought about by the abuse. The tendency is that the clients, once reintegrated, become overwhelmed again with the unresolved conflict within the family, especially if the mother still condemns them and favors the perpetrator-abuser.

- ***Developed hypervigilance in dealing with others, especially with men***

One of the effects of sexual abuse to the survivors is seen in their interpersonal relationship, especially in dealing with men. Five (5) of the respondents openly shared their hypervigilance in dealing with men.

According to Ruby (21), *“Iyon nga lang po minsan hindi talaga maiiwasan na maging paranoid. Na titingnan mo, lalo na ang mga lalaki na makakasalamuha mo na para bang may gagawin silang hindi maganda sa iyo. Tapos po napakasuplada ko talaga sa mga lalaki. Sa huli ko nga pong trabaho eh kahit na po iyong supervisor namin pag nadidikitan o nahahawakan ako ng kaunti eh nasisigawan ko talaga.”* [Sometimes I cannot help being paranoid. I am always vigilant, especially with men. I easily assumed they will do something bad to me. This is why I

snob men. In my last job, there were instances that I shouted at my supervisor when he gets near me or lightly touches me.]. Ruby added, *“Ang pagiging suplada ko po ang gusto kong baguhin sa akin at pagiging paranoid sa ibang tao lalo na sa mga lalaki. Na para bang may gagawin sila palaging hindi maganda sa akin”* [Being indifferent is the thing that I really want to be changed in me, including my being paranoid of others, especially of men whom I always think will do something bad to me.].

According to Carandang (1996), one of the perceptions and feelings of being sexually abused is having fear and mistrust of men. With the trauma that the respondents had, indeed it is not that easy to accept and forget the abuse and embrace what is present. The issue of betrayal (Finkelhor and Browne, 1985) is one of the dynamics of abuse, especially to abuse cases wherein the father, brother, or stepfather, who was supposed to love, care, guide, and protect the survivor, unmercifully abused him/her.

As what Respondent Emerald (20) shared, *“Natatakot nga akong lumabas-labas dyan kasi po di ko kilala ang mga tao. Siyempre po nag-iingat ako kasi ayoko na ulit mangyaring maabuso po ulit ako.”* [I am afraid to go out of the house; I don’t know the people out there. I certainly take precautions now because I do not want to be abused again.]. She added that she rarely goes out of the house alone, and when she does it, it is either to go to the church or to the market. Oftentimes, she is with her aunt or the latter’s saleslady.

Though the respondents were processed when they were inside the Shelter through the distinguished activities conducted by the staff and other professional partners, still, it is not that easy for them to give their trust again. They were used to the safe environment in the Shelter, so they really had to adjust in the community where they have to face all kinds of people. With the

traumatic effects they had experienced (being away from the family, having low self-esteem, the feeling of brokenness and hopelessness, and so forth) because of the abuse, they became too protective of themselves. Seemingly, they do not want to re-experience the same situation. Truly, in order to win their trust, it must be proven to them first that one is worthy of it.

- ***Experienced apprehension towards the perpetrator***

One thing that the respondents were most anxious of or worry about is facing again the person who brought them to a very difficult trial; five (5) of them were abused by their biological father. Out of ten (10) respondents, seven (7) or 70% of them experienced anxiety or worry while three (3) of them already came to have contact with their perpetrators.

It is true that the world is very small and not all of the respondents' perpetrators are imprisoned. Therefore, a chance to meet them again is very possible. When asked what she would feel or do if she will meet again her perpetrator, respondent Emerald (20) whose perpetrator is her father replied, "*Di ko po alam. Kasi di ko alam kong ano ang gagawin sa akin ng papa ko eh. Kung sasaktan niya ba ako o ano. Pero matatakot at kakabahan ako tiyak.*" [I do not know. I do not know what my father can do to me. He will hurt me again. For sure, I will be afraid and nervous.]. Emerald is indeed not comfortable with the thought especially that her family still takes the side of her father.

Agate (16) said, "*Hindi ko po alam. Pero parang natatakot po ako sa pwedeng mangyari. Baka kasi saktan niya ako kasi kinasuhan ko po siya. Pero may time tita na nakita ko po siya isang beses. Hindi ko po alam kung nakita rin po niya ako. Sobrang takot po ang naramdaman ko at dali-dali po akong umalis sa lugar na 'yun. Natakot po ako na magtama ang mga mata namin at baka kung ano ang gawin niya sa akin.*" [I do not know, but I am afraid of

what might happen. He might hurt me because I filed a case against him. There was a time I saw him; I wasn't sure, though, if he saw me as well. I was very afraid then. I rushed to leave the place. I was afraid our eyes would meet because I did not know what he could do to me.].The respondent's case was dismissed, and her mother is still in a relationship with her perpetrator who happened to be his stepfather.

On the other hand, there were respondents who already had a chance to face their perpetrators, like in the case of respondent Pearl. She commented, "*Naiinis po ako kapag gusto akong isama nina mama sa pagdalaw kay papa (perpetrator). Pero nitong nakaraan lang na pinakiusapan ako na pumunta sa hearing eh doon ko lang ulit siya nakita at naramdaman ko po ang awa sa tatay ko. Kasi sobrang payat na siya, mukha siyang tingting. Bumalik po kasi ang TB niya eh. Pero hindi ko pa po siya napapatawad.*" [I am irritated whenever my mother asks me to go with them visiting our father. But this last hearing, I was asked to attend it and that was the time that I saw my father again and felt pity towards him. He is now very thin; he seems like a broomstick. His TB came back. But I have not forgiven him yet]. She further shared that she cannot take to live with her father again in one roof. She knows that she would not be at ease with the thought.

Pearl's sister Carnelian, however, has been visiting their father after their discharge. Though Carnelian also experienced acts of lasciviousness from their father, it was easy for her to forgive him. Carnelian (17) imparted, "*Naaawa po ako kay papa kapag nakakaharap ko siya kasi po bumalik ang sakit niya at ang payat-payat na po niya. Ok na po ako. Napatawad ko na po si papa kasi inisip ko po na tatay ko pa rin siya. Pero minsan eh bumabalik pa din po ang mga ginawa niya sa akin. Pero nawawala din po.*" [I pity my father (perpetrator) whenever I see

him. He is afflicted again with his disease, and he is very thin now. I am already okay. I have already forgiven him; he is still my father. There are times, however, that flashbacks of the abuse come to my mind, but they easily disappear.]. For Carnelian, she is willing to forget the past and forgive her father in order for their family to be reunited and for her father to be free.

Resident Jade (18), on the other hand, is very much confident about herself. *“Kahit po halimbawa makaharap ko na si Papa sa korte ay hindi na po ako matatakot. Wala na po ako noon. Saka wala din naman po siyang pwedeng gawin sa akin sa korte dahil hawak po siya ng mga pulis, kaya alam ko pong safe pa rin po ako.”* [If I have to face my father again, in court for instance, I will not be afraid. I do not have that anymore. Besides, he can not do anything to me in court because he is being held by the policemen, so I know that I will be safe.]. She also added that it never crossed her mind to live again in one roof with him because for her, he is no longer a part of her life.

Hinson, Koverola, and Morahan (2002) indicated that not only identity but also the relationship of the perpetrator adversely affect long-term adjustment to child sexual abuse. If the sexually abused survivors have fear and mistrust of men in general, how much more of the men who abused them? Though the temporary shelter made the respondents stronger and learned to fight for themselves, yet, to the 70% of the respondents, conquering and taking out the anxiety or worry from within themselves is a different issue. The hardships that they faced during and even after the abuse were really difficult and could not just be erased by the temporary shelter they had.

- ***Engagement in prostitution***

Respondent Hyacinth was taken by her mother from her maternal aunt in Cavite where she was actually reintegrated. According to her, the plan was that once she is discharged, her mother would then take her. Hyacinth said that she cannot blame her maternal aunt because she knew there was a threat coming from her father (her perpetrator). From Cavite, her mother brought her to Mindanao where her father was hiding. She was so shocked, and she did everything to be away from them. Hence, her mother gave her money to go back to Manila. In Manila, she had no one to turn to, so she indulged into prostitution.

According to Hyacinth (18), *“Dito po sa labas nagawa ko nang ibenta ang sarili ko. Kasi wala na po talaga akong makapitan eh. Alam ko pong hindi tama ang ginagawa ko pero wala na akong iba pang matatakbuhan. Sinubukan kong maghanap ng matinong trabaho pero wala namang nangyari. Ewan ko, tita, ito yata ang kapalaran ko. Saka naisip ko din naman na nakuha na naman ni papa ang virginity ko eh. So ano pa ang pahahalagahan ko? Binaboy na naman niya ako eh, di lubos-lubusin ko na..Nagkakapera pa ako.”* [Here outside, I was forced to go into prostitution because I had no one to lean on. I know it is wrong, but I had no one to turn to. I tried to apply for decent jobs, but nothing happened. I do not know, Tita, maybe this is my fate. Besides, I thought, my father already took my virginity. What else shall I value? He already ruined me. At least in prostitution, I gain money].

Prostitution is an occasional outcome, especially after running away from home, because child sexual abuse victims learn to dissociate from what is happening to their bodies (Gelinas, 1983, as cited in Klein, 2010). This is what absolutely happened to Hyacinth. The “dirty” feeling that she has towards her body makes her dissociate from herself all the way to prostitution.

The challenges that the respondents encountered when they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians:

The challenges that the respondents encountered when they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians were: adjustment process in the community; encountered financial constraints; inability to pursue education; lacked positive relationship with the family members; developed hypervigilance; experiencing apprehension regarding the perpetrator; and engagement in prostitution.

Table V: The themes and description of the respondents' challenges when reintegrated in the community

Theme	Description
Adjustment process in the community	Because of the years that the respondents were sheltered securely in the Shelter, adjustment had to take place when they were reintegrated.
Encountered financial constraints	One of the major problems of the respondents was financial difficulties. The status of their family or guardian was not stable to support them.
Inability to pursue education	Because of financial constraints, many of the respondents were not able to continue their education. Some were forced to work to survive.
Lacked positive relationship with the family members	Some respondents of incest cases were persuaded to withdraw the case and to some, they felt being not understood.
Developed hypervigilance	Some respondents could not help being paranoid about other people especially men whom they think would do bad things to them. Also, they were very cautious to meet their perpetrator.
Experiencing apprehension regarding the perpetrator	Many of the respondents expressed anxiety or worry over facing their perpetrators because of fear of being abused again by them or of not knowing what these men could do to them given the fact that they were the reason for the imprisonment of the perpetrators.
Engagement in Prostitution	One respondent resorted to prostituting herself because, according to her, she no longer has virginity to protect.

The themes that were generated from the challenges that the respondents encountered show the hardships, trials, and problems they encountered when they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardian in the community. Primarily, the respondents faced adjustment. Along with this is the in-conflict relationship that they had with their family or guardian, some of whom were still on the side of their perpetrators. Also, the respondents seemed not to get the support from them, especially in pursuing their studies, which affected and caused them troubles.

Living back in the mainstream means exposure again to abuse or possible encounter with their perpetrators, most especially for those whose abusers are not yet imprisoned. Because of it, they developed hypervigilance with others and apprehension to meet again their perpetrators. The challenges the respondents had, indeed, gave them a hard time outside, which to one respondent, made her indulge in prostitution.

C. The coping mechanisms of the sexually abused survivors when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians

The coping mechanisms of the sexually abused survivors are the ways of the survivors in order to deal with or survive the challenges they encountered after they were reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community. These ways are good, positive, healthy, and constructive on one hand while on the other, are negative, unhealthy, or dangerous. From the in-depth interview with the sexually abused survivors, there were eight themes identified on how they coped with the situations they had faced.

The coping mechanisms that the respondents have:

- ***Faith/Relationship with God in Facing Life's Problems***

If there is one thing that all of the respondents is thankful with being Sheltered is the fact that inside the Shelter they were able to get to know God more and enhanced their relationship with Him. And this is then is what they consider as one of their best weapons that enable them to survive life's challenges when they were reintegrated.

All the 10 respondents shared that faith in God played a very vital role in overcoming all the hardships in their life outside the Shelter. According to respondent Ruby (21), *“Tiwala sa Diyos. Iyon po ang masasabi kong pinaka-nagbibigay sa akin ng lakas ngayon. Sa Kanya (God) po talaga ako sumasandal. Ito din po pala ang isang natutunan ko sa Shelter, kasi doon lang din po ulit ako nagkaroon ng time na mapalapit sa Diyos”* [Faith in God. I can say that it is what strengthens me now. It is unto Him (God) whom I lean. This is also one thing that I have learned in the Shelter; it was only there where I came to have time with God].

After the sexual abuse that had happened to Ruby, she thought her life would completely turn into mess. At first, she questioned God for the very hard trials she was facing, but when she was temporarily sheltered, she realized and believed that God allows everything to happen for a reason. She even added when asked how she is, *“Hindi masaya. Masalimuot. Pero alam kong makakaya ko ito basta andiyan lang ang Lord. Alam ko pong hindi Niya ako pababayaan at may reason kung bakit Niya hinayaang mangyari sa aking ang lahat.”* [Unhappy. Hard. I know, though, that I can bear all these as long as God is with me. I know that He will take care of me, and He has His reasons why He let all these happened to me.].

Beryl (18) shared, *“Every Sunday ay kasama ko po tloga si MJ sa church. At saka hindi porke nakaranas ka ng ganito (sexual abuse) ay hindi ka na makakabangon. Hindi naman sayo ibibigay ito ni God kung hindi mo kakayanin. Kaya iyan binigay para may matutunan.”* [Every Sunday, I and MJ go to church. Besides, it does not mean that if you have experienced this (sexual abuse), you could no longer rise up. It will never be given to you by God if you could not bear it. The reason why it is given is for you to learn something.]. Faith in God is for her one of

the best things that she had learned inside the Shelter. It is to God whom she leans on and she knows that in God's perfect time she will be able to get what she wanted.

In Hugo's (2010) study, the respondents (who were survivors of sexual abuse and were temporarily sheltered at Laura Vicuna) were able to adjust and bring back the normalcy of their life after rehabilitation in the Shelter, and they always experienced the power of the Divine Intervention. This proved that the respondents really valued the spiritual aspect of their life. They revealed that their painful traumatic experience was really hard to forget, but they were able to manage themselves positively.

Though the respondents in this study could not say that their lives are already brought back to the normal situation the way it was before the sexual abuse, they attested to the help of the faith they profess and its power working in them. Thus, this study partly confirms the findings of Hugo (2010).

- ***Leaning on to Support System***

Life is indeed full of trials, and having someone you can turn to when life gets tough, backing you up and making you strong, is certainly a blessing. Like everybody, the ten (10) respondents were able to identify support system that enabled them to keep going. These support systems were identified as: 40%, close relatives; 20%, family; 20%, staff of Shelter; 10%, lesbian girlfriend; and 10%, friend.

Respondent Hyacinth (17) said that her life seems to have no direction, and she is very thankful to her girlfriend (which later she confessed as her "*syota*") who upholds her and leads her to God. "*Si Princess po inaakay niya ako sa Iglesia ni Cristo. Kaya ayun po tuwing Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, at Linggo, samba-samba po ako.*" [Princess led me to Iglesia ni

Cristo church. Every Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, I attend the worship service]. She is very grateful of Princess' presence in her life. She considers her as the light of her life. Now that she sells her body in the prostitution just to survive, her girlfriend is the one whom she can lean on and pushes her not to forget God despite all the miseries that are happening to her.

Respondent Beryl (18) narrated that her maternal aunt seems to support her more than her biological mother. She commented, "*Sa totoo lang mas nararamdaman ko pa siyang (maternal aunt) magulang kaysa kay Mama. Lahat po kasi ng gusto ko, pati ni MJ (son) eh nasusunod. Si Mama kasi kung ano ang gusto ko eh gusto niyang pagsumikapan ko.*" [The truth is, I see my aunt more of a parent to me than my biological mother. With her, all that I and MJ (son) want is given. As for my mother, she wants me to work hard for everything that I want]. Although she was discharged to her mother, it was actually her maternal aunt who supported her emotionally and financially. She felt helpless especially right after her discharge. She had nothing to turn to, and her mother was not that supportive of her needs and of her son. This is the reason why she will be forever thankful to her aunt.

Amethyst, who was sheltered for more than six (6) years, developed strong bond with the staff there. When asked about the people who are always at her back, Amethyst (19) proudly said "*Ang mga staff ng Shelter na nandiyan pa din para sa akin.*" [The staff of the Shelter who are still there for me.]. She added that even now that she is reintegrated in the community, when she has problems, she readily sends the staff member closest to her a text message. She considers this staff a family. Also, she admitted that she does not have a good relationship with her mother and that she has no relatives to really call on for help. Sometimes, she gets shy always seeking

help from the Shelter's staff, but she has no choice particularly after her discharge when she had to adapt to almost everything.

According to Morrow and Smith (1995), one caring person in the child's life who shows compassion and understanding to the child and external support that values the child and establishes expectations that contribute to the child's development of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism are contributors that greatly impact the ability of a child to survive child sexual abuse without destructive negative consequences.

Surviving sexual abuse is truly a no-easy thing to face alone. Although the respondents were given therapeutic interventions by the Shelter, it does not mean that once they are reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community, they will be free from problems. These survivors still need caring individuals to back them up as they continue to face life. Aside from the day-to-day battles they face, including provision for their basic needs, they (70% of the survivors of incest case) also experience struggles in terms of relationship with their family and relatives. There are also 30% with ongoing cases. Out of this 30%, 20% of them have perpetrators who are still at large, and the 10% whose perpetrator is the father is now thinking of filing a case against him.

- ***Dreaming and striving to succeed***

Family plays a very essential role in the survivors' lives. As for the respondents, some of them had their biological father as their perpetrator. Yet, it did not take away the love and the identity that they have as a member of their respective families. No matter how deep the wound

is caused by their family, they still serve as the respondents' strength, giving them hope and dreams to succeed.

Out of ten (10) respondents, eight (8) of them expressed that their family is one of the primary reason why they are still standing and fighting life's trials. When asked what gives them hope, respondent Jade (18) replied, "*Si mama po na nagsusumikap para sa kinabukasan namin. Kaya ginagawa ko po ang lahat ng pagsisikap kasi ayaw ko pong sayangin ang pagpapagod niya sa ibang bansa*" [My mother who does everything for our future. This is the reason why I am doing all that I can, so her effort in working abroad will not be wasted]. She values all the sacrifices that her mother is doing. She indeed appreciates the latter. Although at times she longs for her mother's presence, when she remembers that what she is doing is for their best, every negative thought disappears.

When asked if she is thinking of having a family of her own in the future, Jade (18) answered, "*Oo naman po! Pero tutulungan ko muna sina mama at ang mga kapatid ko. Gusto ko muna maging maayos ang buhay namin, pati ako. Kasi ayokong maranasan nila ang naranasan ko na sobrang hirap. Gusto ko naandyan na ang lahat para sa kanila*" [Yes, of course! But I want to help first my mother and siblings. I want our lives to be better because I do not want them to experience the hardship that I had been through. I want everything to be there readily available to them].

Respondent Amethyst (19) shared how she desires to finish her studies so that she can help her family. When asked regarding her dream, Amethyst answered, "*Makapagtapos po ng pag-aaral at makagtrabaho ng maayos. Ang makapag-abroad at yumaman. Alam kong makukuha ko yun kung magsusumikap at magtitiyaga po ako. At gusto ko pong makatulong kina*

mama at mga kapatid ko. Kahit naman po kasi hindi kami magkasundo noon pa man ng mama ko ay gusto ko pa din siyang tulungan at siya ang isa sa pinakarason kung bakit gusto kong magsumikap sa buhay” [To finish my studies, have a good job, to work abroad, and be wealthy. I know that I can get it if I will work hard and endure. I want to help my mother and my siblings. Even though I and my mother are not in a good relationship since the abuse, I still desire to help her. She is actually one of the main reasons why I want to work hard].

Although it is undeniable that one of the most painful experiences of most respondents (70% incest cases) occurred within the context of the family, yet, family is family. Family members serve as the inspiration and hope that make these survivors of abuse continue with life. They never stop dreaming - dreams that are not just for themselves but for the betterment of their families.

- ***Reframing ones perspective***

Truly, life is not a bed of roses and according to others, it is full of thorns. Therefore, reframing ones perspective by remaining strong in life and keeping positive outlook is one of the best ways to conquer the hardships of life, such as sexual abuse, poverty, familial conflict, and the like,.

Eight (8) or 80% of the respondents shared that being and/or remaining strong is one of the keys to endure and be a victor in life's demands. Ruby (21) answered, “*Nagsusumikap na lumaban sa buhay. Kasi wala naman pong magandang mangyayari sa amin kung papatay-patay ako. Siyempre po gusto ko pang matupad ang mga pangarap ko.*” [I am fighting hard with life. Nothing good will happen if I will not do something. Of course, I want to reach my dreams.]. This is what respondent Ruby shared when asked how she is at present. For her who has many

dreams and no one to depend on, she knows that she ought to be strong to be able to fight the hardships of life.

Respondent Amethyst (19), when asked how she is at present, replied, “*Nagpupumilit makasurvive. Nagsusumikap po ako sa kung ano ang magagawa ko para malagpasan ko kung nasaan man ako sa ngayon. Kasi wala naman po akong maaasahang iba eh, lalo na ang walang kwenta kong nanay!*” [I am trying hard to survive. I am doing everything I can to press on where I am now. It is because I have no one to depend on, not even my worthless mother!]. She added, “*Mahirap po ang buhay dito sa labas pero kailangan mong harapin. Hindi naman kasi pwedeng sa Shelter ka tumira hanggang sa pag tanda mo. Kaya kailangan mong magpakatatag.*” [Life is hard here outside, but you have to face it. You cannot stay in the Shelter until your old age, so you really have to be strong.]. Her mother has a very small stand of cigarettes and candies near a park, and this is their only means of living. What annoys Amethyst is that her mother just spends her money in gumbling (majhong) and to her lesbian girlfriend. Oftentimes, their (children) needs are neglected.

Beryl (18) boldly disclosed, “*Kung papipiliin ako sa kung naranasan ko o hindi ang napagdaanan ko eh pipiliin ko pa din po ang buhay ko ngayon kasi ang dami kong natutunan eh. Nagiging matatag ako, masikap.*” [If I were to choose between experiencing or not what I had been through, I would still choose my life now because I have learned a lot. I became strong, diligent.]. She talked about the sexual abuse done to her which made her who she is now. She could not even believe that she could survive the rape case which bore her a son. Though everything was quite hard to bear everything, yet, whenever she remembers how she became a better person, she cannot help but be grateful about it.

Himelein and McElrath (1996) explained cognitive strategies of resilient child sexual abuse survivors. Analysis was focused on the comparison between highly adjusted women and poorly adjusted women. And one of the four coping strategies used by resilient women is positive reframing. This study recognizes that cognitive coping strategies are important in the adjustment of the survivors.

Everybody has his/her own battle to conquer in life, but what makes it sometimes extra difficult is when you experience trials that seem to be extra ordinary. Being sexually abused and traumatized from it is not experienced by all. Therefore, sexual abuse survivors need extra mile of strength and endurance to win the battle. The good thing about the respondents of this study is that they are able to reframe the challenges that come their way by remaining firm and seeing the good things on the negative things that happened to them. The fact that they are still alive, unlike some people who faced battles and opted to give up by committing suicide, proves that these survivors are truly conquerors.

- ***Exhibited assertiveness***

Among the 10 respondents, 8 or 80% of them expressed that they are now able to fight for themselves and their rights as individuals. There was a time in their lives that the abuse made them powerless and helpless, but now that they have regained themselves, they will fight for what they think is right.

Respondent Emerald (20) shared, “*Natuto po akong ipaglaban ang sarili ko. Kasi dati mahina ako eh. Hindi ako lumalaban. Ngayon kahit sina mama eh sinasagot ko, lalo na pag sinasabi nilang iurong ko ang kaso kay papa.*” [I have learned to fight for myself. I used to be weak and submissive. Now, even with my mother, I fight back especially when they tell me to

withdraw the case against my father]. She expressed that she learned in the Shelter about the rights of children. Now that she is outside the Shelter, she knows that she does not have to give up her rights in getting the justice she deserves. She will never allow the sacrifices of many years she had in the Shelter to be in vain. She is willing to continue the fight even without the support of her family.

Agate (16) also said, *“Mas naging matured po ako. Mas lumawak ang isip ko. Tapos ngayon marunong na po akong lumaban kapag alam kong tama ako. Si mama nga eh sinasagot ko na lalo na pag sinasabi niyang dahil daw sa Shelter kaya natuto akong sumagot-sagot. Siyempre po pinagtatangol ko ang Shelter. Siya nga itong mali eh at ang Shelter ang kumupkop sa akin sa panahong kampi siya sa kalaban ko. Mas pinili niya pa ang lalaki niya kaysa sa anak niya. Nakakainis kaya siya!”* [I became more matured. My perspective broadened. Now, I know how to fight for my rights, even if it means fighting with my mother. She says that it is because of the Shelter that I learned to be disrespectful, fighting with her. Of course, I defend the Shelter. It is actually she who is wrong. The Shelter was the one who took care of me during those times she abandoned me and took the side of my opponent. She chose her man over her daughter. She is really irritating!].

Agate remembered the first weeks of her admission in the Shelter. Her mother was not allowed to visit as she took the side of the perpetrator. It was hard for Agate to accept that her mother had left her at the very tough time in her life. From then on, she managed to live having only the Shelter at her side. Now that she is living again with her mother, times are still hard especially when her mother would say that she was wrong to have listened in the Shelter in

pursuing the case against her stepfather. Agate, however, will never let her mother put down the Shelter, the very one that gave her refuge and unwavering support.

While respondent Carnelian (17) stated, *“Doon (Shelter) ko nalaman na may karapatan din pala akong magsalita, hindi naman po iyong pabalang, kundi yung nasa tama ka lang.”* [It was in the Shelter that I learned that I also have the right to speak, so long as it is done in a respectful manner.]. The orientation of the Shelter about children’s rights indeed opened her consciousness into what she should fight for. According to her, these days, she does not easily accept what others would like to throw on her. Once she sees that her rights as an individual are being trampled on, she defends herself.

Finkelhor and Browne (1988), Dela Cruz (1999), Morrow and Smith (1995), and Long & Jackson (1993) attested that powerlessness, helplessness, and lack of control are dynamics and effects of sexual abuse. Because the respondents were empowered, they now fight for themselves. The Shelter gives orientation on human rights from which the respondents learned their rights as individuals. Prior to their stay inside, they just followed and obeyed to be silent about the abuse and just forget about it; in the Shelter, they learned to speak what they feel and what is on their minds.

Part of the therapeutic activities of the clients inside the Shelter are the sessions conducted by the Psychological and Social Services. The feelings and thoughts of the clients about the abuse that happened are processed in order for them not to be imprisoned by the past. Also, the clients are prepared for their appearance in court. These things then seemed to help the respondents to be able to stand on their own and gain power to protect and fight for their lives.

- ***Decisiveness to move on from the sexual abuse***

what happens to our life depends on the choices that we make. This is the reason why 70% of the respondents opted to move on from the abuse perpetrated on them. The remaining percentage had a hard time forgetting the past.

According to Jade (18), *“Masasabi ko pong naka-move on na ako. Asa 90% na akong okey. Ang 10% na natitira ay iyong minsang napapanaginipan ko pa kasi si papa na nagmamakaawa siya. Iyon po na parang bumabalik siya (abuse) minsan. Masasabi ko pong napatawad ko na si papa pero ang ginawa niyang pang-aabuso at pambubugbog sa akin ay hindi pa po.”* [I could say that I have already moved on. I am 90% okay. The remaining 10% is about my dreams where I see my father begging. That is the time that it (abuse) comes back. I could say that I have already forgiven him but not the sexual and physical abuse he did to me.]. The respondent shared that she wanted to pursue the case against his father because she wanted him to feel how he ruined her life and and that of her siblings. *“Gusto kong maramdaman niya ang sakit na naramdaman namin ng mga kapatid ko.”* [I want him to feel the pain that my siblings and I have suffered because of him].

Respondent Ruby (21) shared, *“Masasabi ko pong naka move on na ako kasi wala naman pong mangyayari kung patuloy kong hahayaang maapektuhan ako ng nangyari eh. Matatatalo lang ako. Pero minsan kapag bumabalik ang nakaraan eh nabubuhay po ang galit sa puso ko”* [I can say that I have moved on already because nothing will happen if I will let the past continue to affect me. I will only lose. Sometimes, however, when the past comes back, hatred becomes alive in me]. When asked what she does when the memory of the sexual abuse comes back, she answered, *“Iyon po, nagagalit ako. Pero hindi na po ako nagpapaapekto*

katulad ng dati. Ngayon po eh iniisip ko na lang na hindi naman maibabalik ang nakaraan at hindi rin makakatulong kung hindi ako mag-mo move on.” [I get angry, but I do not let myself be affected like I used to. I just remind myself that the past can never be brought back, and it will not help me if I do not move on.].

For respondent Beryl (18), it was easier to start a new life. She gave in to settle with her perpetrator for the amount of PHP 50,000.00. While in the Shelter, she really wanted to pursue the case, but when she was reintegrated, she realized that she had to be practical. Also, she considered her paternal aunt who is the wife of her perpetrator. She respects her and still thinks of the times in the past when she could turn to her in times of need. Beryl added, *“Medyo nawala ang galit ko sa tatay ni MJ (son), kasi noong nagkita kami sa korte eh nilalambing niya si MJ. Parang napakita niya ang pagiging tatay niya kay MJ. Tapos ang reaksiyon ni MJ eh parang matagal na silang magkakilala.*” [My anger with the father of MJ (son) was alleviated that time we met in the courthouse where he was very sweet with MJ. He appeared to be very fatherly to MJ, and MJ was reacting as if they have known each other for a long time.]. She gave PHP 40,000.00 as downpayment for the place where she, her mother, and older brother are staying. When she thinks that they are now no longer burdened with house rent, it gives her a little peace that the payment of her perpetrator who bore her a son was not put in vain.

Himelein and McElrath (1996) examined cognitive coping strategies of resilient child sexual abuse survivors. Among the four coping strategies used by resilient women, they identified refusing to dwell on the experience as one. This study recognizes that cognitive coping strategies are important in the adjustment of the survivors. Similar to the participants in Himelein and Mc Elrath’s study, the respondents of this study also chose to forget the past and

did not let the abuse imprison them, so they can live a normal life again. They understood the power of choice and positive perspective about one's life. The past can never be brought back, but they do have the opportunity to overcome it by moving forward to what lies ahead. They tell themselves that it is not yet the end of their life, but it is merely a part of their history.

- ***Developed self-control***

Self-control is truly hard to do, especially when you are at the verge of your emotions or when you really want something to materialize. Among the ten (10) respondents, there were 3 or 30% of them who shared how they manifest self-control.

When asked what she thinks she has in order to survive life's hardship, respondent Pearl (22) replied, "*May kontrol ako sa sarili. Kahit nga nagagalit na po ako ay kontrolado ko pa din ang bibig ko. Kasi ayokong magsasalita ng masakit sa iyo pero magso-sorry din ako mayamaya.*" [I have self-control. Even if I am angry, I am still in control of my mouth. I do not want to say hurtful words, but when I do I would say sorry after.]. In addition, she stated, "*Bakit mo pa hihintaying may pagsisihan ka sa huli kung sa umpisa pa lang eh pwede mo ng iwasan?*" [Why do you have to let yourself be sorry at the end if you can avoid it in the first place?]. She shared that she tries so hard not to do something she will regret later. At times, though, she is tempted to be rude or fight back especially if her siblings do or say unbearable and painful things to her. Still, she is able to control herself.

Respondent Amethyst (19) shared, "*Natuto akong magpakatatag, mag-isip ng tama at hindi magpadala sa emosyon.*" [I learned to be strong, to weight things right, and not be swayed by emotion.]. She said that with all the hardships she had experienced, she learned to use mind over heart. She knows that nothing good will happen if she will let herself become emotional.

When followed up about what she wants others to learn from her, she answered, “*Huwag papadala sa emosyon.*” [Do not be swayed by emotion]. She believed that being emotional can easily ruin her especially now that she has several problems in the family and in sustaining her studies. Therefore, keeping a positive mindset that she can surpass all the trials and being emotionally strong are the primary keys which she knows could make her conquer life battles.

Sapphire (16) commented that part of what she learned in the Shelter is controlling herself, which she was able to continuously practice in her reintegration. She relayed that inside the Shelter, she became conscious of controlling her temper and inobedience, traits she had before her temporary shelter. She realized its positive impact on her; she became likeable and even commended by the staff. Now that she is with her family, she tries her best to manifest self-control, so her family would see the positive changes in her.

According to Morrow and Smith (1996), in addition to developing strategies to keep from being overwhelmed by emotions, survivors develop strategies for managing powerlessness in the face of their abuse. Six categories of survival and coping strategies were used to manage helplessness, powerlessness, and lack of control: (a) creating resistance strategies; (b) reframing abuse to create an illusion of control or power; (c) attempting to master the trauma; (d) attempting to control other areas of life besides the abuse; (e) seeking confirmation of evidence from others; and (f) rejecting power.

Indeed, self-control is one significant thing in order for the survivors of sexual abuse to not be overwhelmed by the situations they face. The respondents in this study realized that there is a consequence, good or bad, for every action they take. They knew that they can not make use of their bad experience (sexual abuse) to justify things they do and say.

- ***Using employable skills to survive***

In order for the respondents to survive and meet their basic needs, 50% of them worked to earn. They did not have someone to depend on, and some of them saw that there is a need for them to act and look for a job because their parents or guardian cannot sustain the needs of the family.

Respondent Ruby (21) was reintegrated with her paternal aunt, a cook in a well-off family, because her father was not positively assessed to receive him due to financial incapability. The father is a cigarette vendor and just earn very small. Unfortunately, the respondent expressed that she and her paternal aunt could not live well together because the latter is perfectionist and always had negative comments about her. So, she left her custody and lived with her friend and former co-resident in the Shelter. Ruby shared, *“Napapasok ako sa isang dating staff ng Shelter ng mahigit isang taon. Naging tagapag-alaga ako ng bata doon”* [I worked for a former staff of the Shelter for more than a year. I was a baby-sitter there]. However, work became hard to her. She shared, *“Kaya lang noong naglayas ang isang katulong eh naging mabigat na ang naging trabaho ko kasi ako na ang lahat. Pero dinagdagan naman po nila ang sahod ko. Kaya lang po eh nahirapan talaga ko kaya nagpaalam po ako. Tapos ayon nagtrabaho na ako ng four months sa last kong pinasukan na pabrika ng mga kandila”* [But when the other maid ran away, my job got difficult because I had to do all the work. They increased my salary, though. However, it became so hard to me that I quit. Then I worked in a factory of candles. That was my last job.]. According to her, she worked because she wanted to provide for her needs, and she also wanted to help her siblings, one of whom is in high school.

Her father is a cigarette vendor, and according to the respondent, he seems already content with life and does not push himself harder for the family to have a better life.

Respondent Beryl (18) shared how she and her son survived. She expressed, “*Diskarte. Kung may mga nagpapabenta ng mga gamit eh ako po ang nagbebenta. Kilala po kasi ako dito kaya medyo mabilis lang ang pagbenta*” [Resourcefulness. I sell things for other people who wants things to be sold. Because I am known here, I can easily sell them]. Her commission depends on the amount of the items. For her, it is already a big help to augment their budget for their basic needs. Then she added, “*Minsan may nagpapatawag sa akin na magpakulay ng buhok na natutunan ko sa Shelter, ayon may pera na po.*” [Sometimes, I am called to dye hair, something I learned in the Shelter. I then earn].

Poverty is indeed one of the factors why the respondents could not continue their studies. Some of the respondents have mothers working abroad, and they themselves have to look for a job in order to sustain themselves and help their families. The good thing with the respondents is that they do not let poverty cripple them. They look for ways in order to continue living no matter how hard it is. The contributing resilience of these survivors such as positive self-attribution of strengths and skills, flexibility, persistence, and optimism were used (www.mosac.net). Truly, they become empowered, and they utilized internal resources instead on focusing on what they do not have.

The coping mechanisms that the respondents had when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians:

The coping mechanisms that the respondents had when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians were: having faithin /relationship with God; leaning on to support system; reframing one's perspective; dreaming and striving to succeed; exhibiting assertiveness; decisiveness to move on from the sexual abuse; executing self-control; and using employable skills to survive.

Table VI: The themes and description of the respondents' coping mechanisms when reintegrated in the community

Theme	Description
• Faith/ relationship with God	All of the respondents shared that it is because of God that they were able to survive life's trials.
• Leaning on to support system	The respondents admitted that it is because of the people behind them that helped them go through difficulties in life.
• Dreaming and striving to succeed	The respondents dream and strive to be successful to help their family. The latter is the very one that pushes them not to give up.
• Reframing one's perspective	The respondents expressed that they ought to be strong in facing battles because nothing will happen if they will be weak.
• Exhibiting assertiveness	The respondents are now able to assert their rights and able to express themselves to be heard.
• Decisiveness to move on from the sexual abuse	The respondents opted to move on from the sexual abuse perpetrated against them because it will do no good carrying it their whole life.
• Executing self-control	Self-control was very important to some of the respondents in order to avoid trouble and not be faced with difficult circumstances.
• Using employable skills to survive	The respondents made a way and used their skills and abilities to survive life.

The themes that were generated from the coping mechanisms that the respondents had when they were reintegrated with their family or guardian show how they dealt with their challenges in order to survive. If inside the Shelter the respondents were able to identify

enhanced relationship with God and positive relationship with significant others, this is the same when they went back to the mainstream. They truly recognized how these relationships helped them inside, and so most of them made sure to apply it again outside. The respondents also developed strategies on how to cope and survive distinguished challenges. The empowerment of the respondents seemed to play a very important role in being positive in life despite the hardships they faced. Reframing their thoughts and feelings, redirecting them to pursue their dreams, and using their strengths seemed to be their wonderful weapons to continue.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

I. The Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms of the Respondents when they were still Inside the Shelter

A. The experiences of the respondents while they were still inside the Shelter:

1. *Grateful for the educational support provided.* The Shelter is in partnership with Jose Fabella Memorial School-Annex. It offers primary and secondary education where clients of the Shelter are able to continue their studies. It gives them hope and reason to stay inside the Shelter. Out of the 10 respondents, there were nine who pursued schooling, and some of them even graduated inside.
2. *Became trustee of the staff.* With the residents having different backgrounds, it is absolutely hard for the staff to trust them. A lot of the residents grew up in the streets, and so they are cunning and manipulative. Therefore, for the survivors, it was truly a great thing to be trusted by the staff. Their self-esteem was elevated. It helped them to gradually build the confidence that they had lost due to the sexual abuse perpetrated against them.
3. *Developed positive affect.* Missing the family was one of the toughest struggles of the clients inside the Shelter. Yet, the residents could not deny the fact that there were also many things in the Shelter that made them happy. Because of the Shelter, some

- of them experienced freedom from the abuse, found family and support, learned positive things, and became disciplined persons who were able to live without vices.
4. *Developed self-help skills.* Although all the respondents were from low income families, almost half of them shared that they did not learn at home household chores. According to them, it was their mothers who were in charge of all the chores in the house. It was in the Shelter that they got to learn about them. In the Shelter, the tasks are on rotation, and all clients are assigned a particular chore.
 5. *Acquired productivity/livelihood skills.* One of the services of the Shelter is the conduct of productivity training. Skills training on basic computer, baking, sewing, and cosmetology are being offered. The respondents truly appreciated how the training developed their skills which they could use to earn a living.

B. The challenges of the respondents when they were still inside the Shelter:

1. *Apprehension on the situation of the family outside.* The respondents inside the Shelter kept on worrying about their family outside. This happened at times that they were not visited, and they heard nothing from them. Knowing the battle of addressing the basic needs outside, the respondents knew that their families do not have a well-provided life like them inside the Shelter.
2. *Faced negative affect.* Though the respondents became undeniably happy inside the Shelter, yet they could not deny that longingness and sadness at times strike. These were times they missed their family outside. According to the respondents, this was one of the hardest part of life inside the Shelter.

3. *Faced hypocrisy and unfairness.* Some of the respondents were able to meet individuals who are not genuine, both staff and co-residents. This made them avoid to have a close relationship with them. Also, they got annoyed with staff, mostly houseparents, for favoring some residents over others. This causes trouble among the residents.
4. *Experienced adjustment and limitation.* From an unstructured environment outside to a structured living inside the Shelter, they truly faced adjustment and limitation. These include limited time, limited food, limited space to move, etc.
5. *The challenge to retract the case.* There were moments when the respondents experienced homesickness, and they were tempted to withdraw the case. More often than not, it is the case that takes them longer inside the Shelter. Moreso, in some of the incest cases, the mothers persuade their children not to continue the case against their father or step-father.

C. The coping mechanisms of the respondents when they were still inside the Shelter:

1. *Avoidance through keeping oneself busy.* Most of the respondents identified avoidance through keeping themselves busy as their coping. Intrusive thoughts and flashbacks of the sexual abuse perpetrated against them oftentimes hit them, and adding to this were some challenges they encountered inside the Shelter. To avoid dwelling on these things, they kept themselves busy by indulging on studying, enrolling in productivity training, attending activities, and the like.
2. *Established positive relationship with others.* The clients inside the Shelter came from different walks of life, and they were expectedly raised differently. However, because

everyone had to live with each other especially those in the same dormitory, they had no option but to learn how to mingle and adjust. Moreover, since all of them were far away from their family, they needed one another to survive the longing. Inside the Shelter, they developed the feeling of togetherness especially considering the fact that their cases were similar.

3. *Enhanced faith in/relationship with God.* Half of the respondents revealed that prior to their admission to the Shelter, they did not give value on faith in God. They did not have time for it, minding their own lives. However, when they entered the Shelter and were able to attend the regular religious activities, they realized the significance of God in one's life.
4. *Involvement in same-sex relationship.* Out of boredom and loneliness, some of the respondents indulged in a girl-to-girl relationship. They consider this as a "pastime" to get rid of the negative thoughts and feelings they have. A respondent revealed she began to have same-sex relationship inside, and when she was discharged, she continued to have the same kind of relationship with another girl.

II. The Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms of the Respondents when they were Reintegrated with their Respective Families or Guardians

A. The Experiences of the respondents when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians

1. *Have mixed affect when discharged from the Shelter.* According to the respondents, all clients inside the Shelter long to be reintegrated with their family or guardian in the community. They were truly happy when their discharge came. On the other hand, they also felt sadness in leaving their co-residents and staff members they got close to.
2. *Lack of contentment.* All the 10 respondents shared that they are not yet content with what they are at present. They shared the desire to continue their studies, their intent to alleviate the hardships of their families from poverty, their wish for their families to live together, and many more. They said that they can never be content without these things.
3. *Acquired freedom outside the Shelter.* The respondents did not deny that they felt like being imprisoned inside. This is because they lived only within the compound of the Shelter, and they could not go out like they used to do in the community. They also cited the rules and regulations which everyone had to follow. Outside Marilac Hills, they were free to do whatever pleased them.
4. *Uncertainty about the future.* The respondents felt anxiety over the possible things that might happen to them. Some of them worried if they would survive the trials of life, if they could still study, over feeling of helplessness, and so on. They were uncertain of what the future might bring.
5. *Developed poor self-concept.* Some of the respondents felt worse when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community. They indulged in

prostitution and vices, set aside their values, and so on. They felt they were far different from who they were inside the Shelter.

B. The challenges of the respondents when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians

1. *Adjustment process in the community where they were discharged.* In terms of length of stay in Marillac Hills, one out of the 10 respondents had almost six years inside the Shelter, the longest stay. The rest had only more than a year. In addition, some of them were discharged not to their parents but to relatives, especially the incest cases whose mothers still take the side of the father-perpetrator. Furthermore, the respondents were so used to living in the four corners of the Shelter that when they got out, a wide and wild world is another thing that they had to adjust to.
2. *Financial constraints.* Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents shared that they had a hard time when it comes to finances after being discharged from the Shelter. Life was really tough after, and they really struggled. Some of them realized that they were too eager to leave the Shelter only to realize that they had a better life inside. In the community, they struggled to survive, sustaining their basic needs. Moreover, they could not continue their studies due to financial constraint.
3. *Inability to pursue education.* Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents were not able to continue their education after they were reintegrated. Of the 80%, 60% were in the tertiary level and could not afford to enroll in college while 20% were in the secondary level whose school records from the Jose Fabella Memorial School inside

the Shelter was not immediately facilitated for transfer in the community where they were reintegrated.

4. *Lacked positive relationship with the family members.* Everybody thought that once they are discharged from the Shelter, life would be better with their family or relatives than before. Prior to the discharge, they were assured of a good life. However, what most of these respondents faced were disappointments.

Most of the cases were incest in nature. Upon reintegration with their family or relatives, some of the respondents found out that their mothers were still in favor of their biological father or stepfather who happened to be their perpetrator. Based on the in-depth interview with the respondents, it was deduced that the conflict within the family is still unresolved, most especially for incest cases.

5. *Developed hypervigilance in dealing with others especially with men.* The trauma that the respondents experienced is not simple. To be temporarily sheltered in the Shelter is no guarantee that a survivor would be healed from all the effects of abuse. Living in the Shelter seemed to be a comfort zone for these survivors, so when they were reintegrated in the community and came to deal with different people whom they did not know, they thought that others might do something wrong again to them inflicted them. Thus, they tried protecting themselves too much.
6. *Experienced apprehension regarding the perpetrator.* One of the anxious thoughts that the respondents had is to face again their perpetrators whom they considered are the ones responsible for their very difficult trials; 50% of them were abused by their biological father. The respondents knew that the world is small, and the chance to

meet their perpetrators is very possible. Seventy percent (70%) of the cases perpetrators were not in jail, some cases were dismissed, and some really did not undergo trial because the perpetrators had ran away and hidden. The fear, therefore, that these perpetrators might look for and do them harm is indeed not a simple thing.

7. *Engaged in prostitution.* One respondent resorted to prostitute herself because she perceived herself already 'dirty', being sexually abused before by her father. In prostitution, when someone uses her body, she will gain money which she could use and enjoy.

C. The coping mechanisms of the respondents when reintegrated with their respective families or guardians

1. *Having faith in god in facing life's problems.* All the respondents were thankful that when they were reintegrated, they still carry faith in God which they learned and enriched in the Shelter. Some shared that even though they could no longer go to church, they do not forget to pray.
2. *Leaning on strong support system.* All of the respondents admitted that life is quite tough, and everybody needs someone to lean on. Although some of them had conflicts with family members or relatives, they still had other people whom they could count on in times of need.
3. *Dreaming and striving to succeed.* Despite the fact that the family brought them anguish, especially for incest cases, the respondents did not stop caring for and dreaming big to help their families. They acknowledged the hurt, especially when they found out that their mothers still take the side of their perpetrators. Moreover,

for some respondents, their mothers and siblings were their sources of inspiration and hope to continue life and aim for a bright future.

4. *Reframing one's Perspective.* For the respondents who experienced sexual abuse, not mentioning other battles in life like poverty, familial conflict, and the like, being and/or remaining strong is one of the best ways to conquer the struggles of life. They knew that nothing would happen in their life if they easily give up. Moreover, their dreams kept them going.
5. *Exhibiting assertiveness.* Among the respondents, 80% of them expressed that they are now able to fight for themselves and assert their rights as an individual. There was a time in their life that the abuse made them powerless and helpless, but now that they have regained themselves, they will fight for what they think is right.
6. *Being decisive to move on from the sexual abuse.* Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents opted to move on with their lives despite the abuse while others had a hard time forgetting what happened. Some chose not to be imprisoned by the abuse because they knew that the past could not be changed anymore.
7. *Executing self-control.* Self-control is truly hard to do, especially when you are at the verge of your emotions or when you really want something to materialize. This may be the reason why only 30% of the respondents confessed possessing this trait. These respondents knew the significance of mind over emotions. They realized the trouble that an action might bring if they will not think of its consequences.
8. *Using employable skills to survive.* In order for the respondents to survive and meet their basic needs, 50% of them worked to earn. These respondents did not have

someone to depend on. Some of them saw the need for them to act and look for a job because their parents or guardian could not sustain the needs of the family through their meager income.

Conclusions

In the light of the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made:

1. *The respondents who were temporarily sheltered validated the benefits of the experience in staying inside.* The respondents were grateful that in the Shelter, they were able to continue their studies, learned to mingle and adjust with other residents, found and developed good relationship, became happy inside, and got to know God more. Though at first they resisted to be sheltered because they would live away from their families, they came to realize that it was for their best interest why they had to be temporarily sheltered in the Shelter.
2. *The survivors, though they underwent therapeutic program and received help from the Shelter when they were temporary sheltered in it, had a hard time in their reintegration primarily because of the relational conflict they had with the receiving family or guardian.* Almost all of the respondents were quite happy and excited to go home because they would be living again with their respective families or guardians. From the Shelter, they brought all the learnings they gained with the hope that they would be continuing their dreams with their loved ones outside. The sad part, however, is that many of them had a hard time in dealing and living with the people

they were reintegrated, may it be their family or guardian. It had caused them so much burden that some indulged in prostitution, wild life, and running away.

3. *The family members, particularly the mothers, play a very significant role in the guidance of the survivors during reintegration.* In some of the incest cases, the mother was still found to be taking the side of the father-perpetrator and blaming the survivor for the abuse. Hence, the sexual abuse survivors' need to feel safe was not met which made them resort to running away and committing unmindful decisions, bringing them to dangerous situations. Furthermore, the mothers who work outside the home or the country, without close monitoring of their children, leave the survivors again in risky circumstances.
4. *The support system is quite important for the survivors to start again and continue with their lives despite the sexual abuse.* Most of the respondents admitted that they did not have a good relationship with their families or guardians whom they were discharged to. Fortunately, there were people whom they could still run to when life was tough. For some, they had relatives, friends, and staff of the Shelter who lent their hands when they were in need. Truly, it is very comforting and encouraging for the respondents that there are people who back them up and give them reason to continue fighting despite overwhelming circumstances.
5. *Effects of sexual abuse are still manifesting.* Most of the respondents chose to move on from the sexual abuse perpetrated against them though there were times it haunted them. They were anxious or worried over the fact that there is a possibility for them to meet again their perpetrators. They shared that they do not know what to do once

faced with these abusers, and so, to most of them, they do not want to meet their perpetrators anymore. Also, the abuse still affects their interpersonal relationship with others especially with men. They are very cautious in dealing with them for fear that sexual abuse might happen again.

6. *Preparation of the survivors and the receiving family or guardian for reintegration is quite important.* The respondents were, no doubt, very happy and excited to be and live again with their respective families or guardians. Considering that most of the cases are incest (70%), adjustment of both the respondents and the receiving families or guardians is necessary. It is a fact that the two parties were separated for years, and things like perceptions, attitude, values, and others might have changed. Also, the respondents may not be very familiar with the guardians to whom they may be reintegrated. Therefore, adjustment is really an issue; when not dealt, it becomes a factor to respondents leaving the custody.
7. *Poverty or financial constraint gives the survivors a hard time.* All the respondents belonged to families of low economic status. For them, it is like a tie that disables them to fly and reach their dreams. Most of them were not able to continue their studies in college because their family or guardian could not support them financially. They struggled in meeting even their daily basic needs. For some of the respondents, their mothers had to work abroad just to sustain the needs of the family, sacrificing being away from them. Truly, poverty gives them a hard time.
8. *The coping mechanisms of the respondents played significantly in surviving life's challenges.* The respondents had faced common problems and hardships, and they

were able to survive them through the coping mechanisms they employed. They used what they had learned inside the Shelter to survive and become a better person despite the sexual abuse perpetrated against them. They perceived that they do not have to be imprisoned by their past, and they have to face the present to succeed in the future.

Recommendations

In the light of the aforementioned findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommended:

1. *For institutions like DSWD-NCR, to strengthen their therapeutic program so the survivors would be prepared and empowered once they are reintegrated with their family or guardian.* It is always best to look into the needs of the clients temporarily sheltered in the facility in order to address their issues and concerns brought about by the abuse perpetrated against them. The respondents proved that the therapeutic program of DSWD gave them benefits and empowered them. Thus, other shelters and institutions catering to survivors of abuse might consider the program of the Department in handling their clients.
2. *To strengthen the involvement of the Local Social Work and Development Office (LSWDO) in monitoring the survivors once reintegrated with their respective families or guardians in the community.* The Local Government Unit, particularly the LSWDO, must monitor and ensure the safety, well-being, and development of the clients being reintegrated in the community. This is in view of the fact that some of the respondents no longer lived where they were reintegrated and were taken by the

mothers and brought to a place where the risk of seeing and even living again with their fathers who happened to be their perpetrators is present. This can be viewed as weak monitoring. Also, most of the respondents were not able to continue their studies. Therefore, no assistance especially on education was given.

3. *For the LGU through the Local Social Welfare and Development Office, people, and non-government organizations who are advocates of addressing sexual abuse, to consider conceptualizing intervention plans for the family of the survivors like a family therapy.* Through this study, the long-lasting effect of the abuse on the family as a whole was made very evident, particularly to incest cases. The family is divided, and most of the mothers still take the side of the perpetrators who happened to be the survivors' fathers or stepfathers. Furthermore, some siblings of the survivors seem to be on the side of the perpetrators as well. These give the survivors a hard time with their reintegration because the issue of abuse is not yet dealt within the family. Thus, it brings nothing but trouble to everybody.
4. *Gradual reintegration of the survivors to their receiving family or guardian, so they would be completely prepared once reintegrated.* Because adjustment is truly an important issue which can be considered a factor to respondents leaving the custody of people to whom they are discharged, gradual reintegration is proposed. This can be done by making the identified residents for discharge to try living with the identified persons for their reintegration twice before they are totally reintegrated. The shelter/institution could facilitate it through a trial-discharge where the clients stay in the community twice for two weeks, then go back to the shelter/institution and

let them evaluate their short stay with their receiving family or guardian. In this case, both the clients and the receiving family or guardian will be gradually prepared. Also, the arising problems during the trial period can be identified and addressed prior to the residents' total discharge to the community.

5. *Further studies that will address some observed gaps in this study.* Researches that will look into the effects of incest cases on the family as a whole and the intervention programs that the government or other advocates could give in order to address this alarming familial issue are encouraged.

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Appendices

Appendix A:

Respondents' Profile:

Respondent	Age When Admitted in the Shelter	Age When Discharged from the Shelter	Case	Perpetrator
Jade	15 y/o	17 y/o & 4 mos.	Sexual Abuse-Rape	Biological Father
Hyacinth	15 y/o	16 y/o & 8 mos.	Sexual Abuse-Rape	Biological Father
Ruby	16 y/o & 9 mos.	19 y/o	Sexual Abuse-Rape	Employer
Emerald	15 y/o & 6 mos.	19 y/o	Sexual Abuse-Acts of Lasciviousness	Biological Father
Pearl	17 y/o	19 y/o & 5 mos	Sexual Abuse-Acts of Lasciviousness	Biological Father
Carnelian	13 y/o & 6 mos	15 y/o	Sexual Abuse-Acts of Lasciviousness	Biological Father
Sapphire	13 y/o & 6 mos	16 y/o	Sexual Abuse-Rape	Acquaintance
Beryl	16 y/o	17 y/o	Sexual Abuse-Rape	Uncle
Agate	13 y/o & 5 mos	16 y/o & 8 mos.	Sexual Abuse-Acts of Lasciviousness	Stepfather
Amethyst	12 y/o & 4 mos.	18 y/o	Sexual Abuse-Rape	Foreigner

Appendix B:

Flow of Semi-structured Narrative Interview (Filipino Version)

➤ Paunang mga Katanungan:

- Kumusta ka ngayon?
- Kanino ka nadischarge?
- Sa ngayon, kanino ka nakapisan?
- Gaano ka na katagal sa lugar na ito?
- Anu-ano ang iyong pinagkakaabalahan?

1. Pananaw ng mga nakaligtas sa pang-aabuso

Patungkol sa Pansamantalang Pamamalagi sa Shelter:

- Ano ang masasabi mo tungkol sa iyong pansamantalang pamamalagi sa Shelter?
- Ano ang iyong magagandang karanasan doon? Ang mga pangit?
- Kumusta ang iyong pakikitungo sa iba? Kapwa bata at staff?
- Ano sa palagay mo ang naidulot sa iyo ng pansamantalang pamamalagi sa Shelter?

Ang Pagbabalik sa Komunidad:

- Ano ang naramdaman mo sa iyong paglabas ng Shelter?
- Paano mo ipapaliwanag ang iyong naramdaman ng ikaw ay nasa komunidad na?
- Paano mo maikukumpara ang buhay dito sa community kaysa sa loob ng Shelter?
- Paano mo nakikita ang iyong sarili sa ngayon?
- Ano ang iyong pangarap sa buhay? Paano mo makakamit ito?
- Ano ang nagbibigay sa iyo ng pag-asa?
- Paano mo nakikita ang bukas o hinaharap?

2. Patungkol sa mga problemang kinaharap ng mga kalahok ng bumalik sa kanya-kanyang pamilya o tagapag-alaga

- Anu-ano ang iyong mga kinaharap na problema nang ikaw ay na-discharge?
- Ano ang pinakamabigat mong naging problema? Bakit?
- May takot o alalahanin ka bang nararamdaman sa ngayon? Ano ito?

3. Ang mga coping mechanisms ng mga kalahok

- Paano ka nakikitungo sa iyong mga kasamahan sa bahay? Sa ibang tao?
- Paano nakaapekto ang pang-aabusong nangyari sa iyo noong nakaraan kung sino ka ngayon?
- Masasabi mo bang naka move-on ka na sa nangyaring pang-aabuso sa iyo? Paano mo nasabi?
- Ano sa palagay mo ang iyong mararamdaman kapag nakaharap mo ang umabuso sa iyo?
- Paano mo hinarap o hinaharap ang iyong mga problema?
- Kung sakaling may magtangka ulit sa iyong mang-abuso, ano ang gagawin mo?
- Sinu-sino ang mga taong sumusuporta sa iyo?
- Ano ang nagbibigay sa iyo ng pag-asa?

Appendix C:

Flow of Semi-structured Narrative Interview (English Version)

➤ Preliminary questions:

- How are you now?
- To whom were you discharged?
- Where do you live now?
- How long have you been living here?
- What have you been doing lately?

4. The perceptions of those survivor of abuse

Towards the temporary shelter in the Shelter:

- What can you say about your temporary shelter in the Shelter?
- What are your beautiful experiences inside the Shelter? The negative ones?
- How was your relationship with others? With other co-clients and Staff?
- What do you think is the impact on you of your temporary shelter?

Living back to the mainstream:

- How did you feel when you were discharged?
- How could you explain your feelings when you were already in the community?
- How can you differentiate the life inside the Shelter and the life in the community?
- How do you perceive yourself now?
- What is your dream? How can you attain it?
- What gives you hope?
- How do you perceive yourself in the future?

2. To determine the challenges they experienced as they live back in the mainstream.

- What are the challenges you faced when you were discharged?
- What is the toughest one? Why?
- Are you anxious of something? What is it?

5. To determine the coping strategies which the survivors of abuse have

- How do you deal with those whom you are living with? With others?
- How did the abuse affect who you are now?
- Could you say that you have moved on already from the abuse? How do you say so?
- What do you think would you feel once faced with your perpetrator?
- How did or do you face your challenges?
- If someone would try to abuse you again, how would you react?
- Who are your support system?
- What gives you hope?

Appendix D:

Philippine Normal University
Taft Avenue, Manila

Title of the Study: Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Their Experiences, Challenges,
and Coping Mechanisms

CONSENT FORM

Ako si _____ at _____ na taong gulang. Ako ay kasalukuyang nakatira sa _____. Bilang isang dating residente ng Shelter, ako ay pumapayag na makibahagi sa pananaliksik o “thesis” na pinamagatang “Survivors of Sexual Abuse: Their Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Mechanisms” na isinasagawa ni **Ms. Cheryl A. Dedase** bilang bahagi ng kanyang pag-aaral sa *Master’s program*. Malaya kong ibabahagi ang aking mga karanasan at nalalaman na makakatulong sa pag-aaral na ito.

Pangalan at Lagda sa Ibabaw

Petsa: _____

Appendix E:

The In-Depth Interview with the Respondents

The Life of Jade

Jade grew up in a province while her mother was working abroad. Her father was working as a security guard in their school then. She is the oldest among the brood of three. And because her mother was not always around, she took over the role of the first. She was the one who cooked their meal, washed the family's clothes, in-charge in household chores and overseeing her siblings.

According to her, when she was in grade one and her mother was not yet an OFW, she remembers her family as a happy one. She, her sister next to her and her parents religiously went to church every Sunday and then after they lunched out. Her father was a good one and she had no problem on him.

The troubles started when she was in grade two and her mother began working abroad. Her father frequently beat her and her sister who is three years younger than her. Jade shared that it was almost everyday that she received physical maltreatment from him. Furthermore, she and her sister were not able to eat regularly because her father did not buy food or provide for their basic needs. Though she knew that her mother regularly sent money for their needs yet she did not have a courage to ask her father about it. As the eldest, she learned to ask for food in their neighborhood when her paternal grandparents did not give them something to eat. Then sometimes she did household chores to others after school so she could bring home food and she and her sibling has something to eat.

Jade experienced physical, emotional and verbal abuse from her father. But for her, the most painful and unforgiving is the sexual abuse done to her that started when she was in grade two. At first, she was forced to an oral sex and then followed by acts of lasciviousness. She was in grade five when penetration or insertion of her father's penis to her vagina occurred. This happened almost every night in which according to Jade he was either drunk or intoxicated with drugs. She and her sibling often saw their father smelling something like a foil and then after the eyes of the latter became smoky. All of these was not disclosed to her mother whenever the latter took vacation every two years because her father threatened to kill Jade and her two siblings once she disclosed the matter. Moreover, her father became always on guard when her mother is with them. He made sure that she will not have any opportunity to reveal anything. Therefore her mother thought that everything was well in her family. Jade believes that her paternal grandparents knew and even saw all the abuses done to her and her two siblings but they chose to favor their son and say nothing negative about it.

Jade was fifteen years old when the disclosure of the sexual abuse and maltreatment to and her siblings was made. It was the time when she could no longer bear what her father was doing to her and her siblings. Aside from the almost everyday physical and sexual abuse being perpetrated to her, her two other siblings were beaten so hard one day that made her decide to text her maternal aunt in Manila to get them in the province. After which disclosure of the abuses was done to her maternal aunt and so Jade and her younger sibling were brought to the police and then they were referred to Shelter for protective custody and case management. Her mother hurriedly went back to the Philippines when what happened reached her and gave her full support to her children.

In the Shelter, Jade shared that she became free and truly happy. She has learned so many things in the center, especially her rights as a child. She was able to continue her studies and finished her secondary in the shelter. She has found good friends inside and felt the love and care of the staffs. Moreover, her case was also filed in the province while they are under the care of DSWD-Shelter. She added that she became dependent in the Shelter because no one controlled her.

After two years in Shelter, she and her younger siblings were reintegrated in her maternal aunt in region six while her father was already in jail. Their youngest brother who was then six years old was also with them. She and her two other siblings continued their studies. She entered college in the second semester because it was already in the middle of the first semester when she went out of the center. Jade shared that she has no problem when it comes to her maternal aunt and the latter's family because they are close to them. There were two times that they took vacation in them and they found them to be very supportive and caring to them as relatives.

Jade wanted to finish her studies so she could be with her mother and two siblings. She desires her mother to just take a rest her in the Philippines while she would like to use her future profession as accountant abroad. She really appreciated all the sacrifices of her mother that is why she dreams to pay her back by taking over in sending her two younger siblings until they finish their schooling and in sustaining the needs of the family. In the case of her father, she could say that she already forgiven him but she could not forget all that he has done to her and her family. She wants him to pay for every single pain that she experienced from him. And she is not afraid to face him again, especially now that she could stand in life alone. At present, she is

filled with courage, hope, aspiration and faith which is far from the Jade before who was weak, hopeless and broken. And she would say that Shelter has a big part of who is now.

The Life of Hyacinth

Hyacinth is an eighteen year old young lady and the second among the brood of five. She is now with her live-in partner who is twenty year old lesbian. She is looking for a work, a decent one. She could say that life is truly a hard one outside Shelter. Without her girlfriend, she does not know where to go because other than her she has no one to turn to. It is truly hard to live without a family to back you up.

Hyacinth is a survivor of sexual abuse perpetrated by her biological father. She was thirteen years old when it started by touching her private body parts until penetration occurred. She disclosed the abuse to her mother but she did not believe her. This was the reason why she often ran away from home and just lived with her classmates and friends. But her father would always look for her and bring her home. Then she was threatened that something bad will go on to happen to her, her mother and siblings. This made her stay at home although it was a very hard one. But there was this one time that she ran away and took refuge on her maternal aunt in Bulacan. The latter was the one who helped her filing a case against her father. Then after, Hyacinth was referred to Shelter for protective study and case management.

In the center, she experienced difficulty at first. She came to miss her mother and siblings too much and she was not used to living in a four-corner compound. But gradually, she was able to embrace the life inside. Her relationship to God was re-established and became nearer to Him by means of the distinguished activities. Hope was developed again on her and she had learned to be strong and never give up. She had found good friends inside and learned to

value them. She was grateful that eventhough her mother and siblings were not by her side in times of this toughest fight of her life yet she had support system in the Shelter whom she could learn on when self-pitty and sadness ate her. It was as well in the center where she felt love. Unlike at home where her mother always compared her to her eldest sister and she was being tagged as hard-headed. She never experienced being praised or bragged to others by her mother. And it hurt her so much.

Another good thing that she is thankful with the Shelter is that she was able to graduate in high school. She also discovered that she could be free from vices which she learned from her friends outside. On the otherhand, it hurt her so much that she does not know the whereabouts of her mother and siblings. They left their place in Dasmarinas after her father hid when the latter found that there was a filed case against him. It was only her maternal aunt that helped her who took time to visit her in the center once in a while. When after two years her father was still at large (hiding), an assessment was already facilitated to her aunt in Bulacan. This is primarily because she was already through with her high school and her aunt promised to send her in college. When the assessment turned into positive, she was discharged to her aunt then.

Unfortunately after a couple of days, her mother showed up in her aunt's residence getting her. She discovered there that prior to her discharged the two already had plan that her mother will take her. For this reason, her mother and aunt signed an agreement in Local Social Worker and Development Office of Bulacan for the transfer of custody. Her mother will be taking over for Hyacinth's welfare instead of her Aunt where she was discharged. Although she hated her aunt but when she learned that her father threatened to kill her aunt if the latter will not cooperate, she understood her.

After two days, her mother brought her in the hometown of her father in Mindanao. To her surprise, her three other younger siblings were there with her father. She could not believe it. In the house, she was always inside her room and she did not keep her hostility towards her father. She even kept a knife under her pillow once her father would attempt to do something wrong again. Because she could not keep being disgusted in front of her family, she was transferred in the care of her paternal grandmother. But because they did not have good relationship at all, after how many months the custody on her was handed in to her paternal aunt, who was then in conflict with her father. She was grateful then because at last she found an ally. All of her paternal relatives in Mindanao believed that she just made up a story against her father and there was no sexual abuse really happened.

Hyacinth felt safe in the care of her aunt because because the latter's husband is a policeman. She felt protected by them. She found a work as a saleslady and saved so she could return to Manila. But not long enough, her mother gave her a ticket back to Manila for the fear that Hyacinth sought the assistance of her policeman uncle to revive the case against her father. Therefore having no enough money, she returned to Manila alone. At first, she lived with the sister of her mother in Dasmarinas because their house near the place was already sold by her mother. She managed to look for a job so she could give something to her aunt. She was able to work as a saleslady twice but it seemed her luck was not on them. Her income was not even enough to sustain her basic needs and so she could not give something to her aunt.

On Hyacinth's helplessness, a friend of her convinced her for sexual exploitation. At first, she hesitated because she knew it is wrong. But when she imagined her situation and the fact that she has no virginity to protect on because her father already took it, she decided to enter

prostitution. She just forgets about morality and focused on the easy and big money that she earns. She is just dreaming that someday she could get to have a decent job which she can be proud of. Though she does not want to stay in this kind of job yet she has nothing to live for the moment. For the darkness where she is in at present, one thing that she is thankful is that she has Princess that serves as her light. Through her lesbian girlfriend, she could still hope and think positive that someday everything would fall to its right places.

The Life of Ruby

Ruby remembers her childhood in region 5 as a happy one. Her mother was a plain housewife while her father was a “pugon” maker. She is the eldest among the brood of four. Although their life was a little tough yet her family lived harmoniously. On the otherhand, things changed when she was on her fifth grade. Her father became irresponsible by no longer providing for the needs of the family. He just spent his income in alcohol and began beating his wife hard. Ruby also experienced sleeping in their neighbor’s house when his father was under the influence of liquor because the latter became abusive. Although they wanted to find the reason of her father's changes yet nobody dared to ask him what was going on.

The same year her mother passed away. Ruby believed that it was because of he father’s maltreatment. Her life and her siblings became tougher then. When she reached her first year high school, it only took her one week to go to school and then she was forced to stop because her father could no longer sustain her allowance. Her anger with her father grew that when the latter opted to go home in his province in region six, Ruby chose to stay. Moreover besides from the fear of physical maltreatment on her, she also experienced sexual abuse from her father’s

cousin wherein her private body parts were touched. This happened when they took vacation one time in region six. She hesitated to disclose it for the fear of not being believed in.

She was fourteen years old when her father and three siblings left. Then she came to live with their neighbor, named Lei. Because the latter and her husband had no children, she was then treated as their own. She felt the love and attention that her father later on deprived her of. She was given everything she needed and was even sent to private school. In Lei's custody, she did not experience doing household chores because they had a household helper. However, Ruby was on her third year when she became troublesome. She became disobedient and learned to fight back on her custodian. At this point, the latter told her that they could no longer sustain her studies due to financial constraint so she had to stop. On the otherhand, she knew that the decision was caused by her hardheadedness which according to her she did not know how it started.

She was sixteen years old when she left the custody of Lei and decided to live with her maternal aunt who was a barangay captain in the place near them. In her aunt's custody, she had learned to be responsible and performed all household work. She was not resentful but became grateful because her aunt was good to her. Nevertheless when an opportunity to work in Manila came, she grabbed it and left her aunt's custody after two months.

She came to work as a household helper in an Indian national whose wife was a Filipina. Unfortunately, a little later she was raped by him for two times. She feared for her life because he threatened to kill her. But because she could not bear it anymore and she feared for her life, she asked for help in her friend who was a neighbor's helper like her. After they reported the incident in the police station and a blotter was made, she was referred then to Shelter for

protective custody and case management. When her employer learned that she would like to file a case against him, he fled and was declared at large (hiding).

Ruby thought that everything was a mess and she could no longer feel any hope because of the sexual abuse happened to her. Trust seemed hard to find and she felt so broken and unclean. Nevertheless inside the Shelter, she became happy because she was able to finish her high school. She knew that if she would be outside she would not be able to graduate because she was prioritizing on earning money. And most especially, she felt safe inside the shelter which for her is the most important of all. She was free from any worry that her perpetrator could find and kill her. She learned as well on how to deal with other residents and how to be brave and strong. Moreover, it was in the place where she came to know God because she was not used to going church since she was young. Hope then was developed and she started to dream again for a successful future. Also, she found true friendship in Shelter in which even after discharged is still her friend outside.

After more than four years of being temporary sheltered in Shelter, Ruby was discharged to her paternal aunt who was a house helper in Fairview. The latter's employer said that they are willing to send her in college. On the otherhand, because she did not want too many people helping her and she desired to be independent so she refused the offer. After sometime, it became unbearable on her the perfectionism of her aunt so she decided to leave her guardianship and opted to stay for a while with her bestfriend whom she found in Shelter. When she learned that a staff of the Shelter was looking for a baby-sitter, she applied and was accepted. She was working well in the job for more than a year. But the time came that the house helper of their employer departed without notice, so all the tasks left fell on her. Although she was given salary increase

yet she was not able to bear all the load. So she resigned and lived with her paternal aunt in Caloocan where her father and two siblings reside.

After a short while, she applied in a candle factory in Valenzuela and was accepted. But after 6 months, her contract ended and was not renewed. Now she is looking for a job so she could help her family and contribute to her aunt in their daily needs. She is annoyed with her father who seemed to have no dreams for his children. This is the reason why she is would like to work hard and earn good so she could and her siblings could continue their studies. Although her third sibling is being sent by her aunt on her third year, yet Ruby believes that there is no guarantee that her sister will be able to send in college. Life outside the Shelter is truly tough. You have to work hard in everything so you could stay alive.

With her case, she could say that she has moved-on already on the rape case happened to her. Although at times she could not help to be angry with her perpetrator when she remembers it, yet she does not want to dwell on the past. And even if she thirsts for justice yet she could do nothing about it that her perpetrator is still hiding. So she opted to leave behind all the bad things that happened to her. Anyway, she shared that she would not be a strong and courageous woman as she is now without all the trials that she passed through. And she will continue to stand still because there a lot of things that are yet to come and on her list, there are still unfulfilled dreams she wishes to achieve.

The Life of Emerald

Emerald grew up in Manila with her whole family. She is the second child in the brood of four. Her parents are both street vendor. She could say that their economic status was tough and

to add that her father was often drunk and usually in fight with her mother. After her class, Emerald came to help her mother in selling candies and cigarettes in the street. Though she did not dream to be like this yet she had no choice but to help them. Their family was too focused on earning money that they already forgotten to take leisure and enjoy the company of each other.

She was fifteen years of age when her father sexually abused her by touching her private body parts (acts of lasciviousness) for two times. She told her mother about what happened but the latter did not believe on her. Therefore she had no choice then but to run away and turn to her maternal aunt for help for the fear of her life. Her father threatened her that he will kill her and her mother once she disclose the abuse. Her maternal aunt accompanied her to a police station and then Emerald was referred to Shelter for protective custody and case management.

When admitted in the center, Emerald had a hard time in dealing with other residents. All she wanted was to be alone and she did not want to connect with others. She had a hard time trusting others because the very father whom she trusted and the mother whom she thought could be her refuge betrayed her. All the more, she questioned God for letting all the troubles she and her family were facing. But after how many weeks of adjustment, she was able to gradually accept that she had to temporarily live the nature of Shelter. She came to open herself with others and became close with the staffs, especially with the houseparents. She had found caring persons who backed her up and given her love and support which her family withheld from her.

In Shelter, she started to rebuild herself and grabbed what the center can offer. She was able to continue her third year and was able to finish her high school inside. She also enrolled in the productivity skills training in which she was able to graduate dressmaking/sewing and basic computer literacy. She was able to improve her cooking skills as well when she was assigned as

dish staff, wherein she was the one cooking the viand of their houseparents assigned in their dorm. She became one of the leaders of the dorm and her communication improved. Moreover, she developed her relationship with God through the distinguished religious activities and the anticipated mass every Saturday.

Although she was able to file a case, her father was declared at large or hiding. Because she was already in the majority age and really wanted to study college outside, was assessed to be ready for reintegration and had a maternal grandfather to take custody on her, she was then reintegrated in the community. The night of her reintegration with her paternal grandfather in Novaliches her mother showed-up and took her to Pasay where she found her siblings living as well. She was then very anxious that her monitoring LGU social worker might find out that she left the custody of her grandfather but her mother told her that it will never reached the knowledge of the social worker. And because she missed her mother and siblings, she gave in and lived with them.

Emerald thought that her mother and siblings already believed in her that she was truly abused by her father and they were already on her side. But on her one week of stay, she heard nothing from them but blame why she filed a case against him. Which in the end always resulted for her to fight back on them. When she learned that her father still has connection with her family and that he regularly visits them in the house where she is currently in, she decided to run away. With the small amount of money she had, she went to her maternal aunt in Isabela who was not in good terms of her mother because of the latter's allegiance on the husband despite of the sexual abuse it had done to Emerald. However after a short while, she transferred to her maternal uncle in Caloocan because the latter gave a promise that he will send her to college.

While waiting for her to enter college, she served as a saleslady in the store of her uncle. She is grateful because her uncle and his wife are kind to her. She is also fortunate that they have no children so she does not feel that she is just a burden to them. She came to interact with several kinds of people in the store and found herself sometimes indifferent, especially with men. She cannot help to think that there are a lot of people who cannot be trusted that is why she is very cautious in dealing with them. When going out, her uncle does not want her alone that is why she is always with someone. She understands that they are overprotective for her own good. Furthermore, she too is afraid to go out alone because she is anxious to meet her father and mother. She does not know what her father can do to her.

Emerald is trying her best not to lose hope. Although sometimes it weakens her that nothing happens to her because she is not studying. When she hears about a former co-client from the Shelter that is able to enter tertiary, she feels envious. It has been more than a year since she lived with her uncle yet her schooling seemed still impossible, especially now that the couple has financial problem. Also, she is shy to open it up with them. What she does is to really hold on to God that she could still reach her dream in entering and finishing her college. Another battle that she faces is not losing the anxiety of facing the outside world. Sometimes she is thinking of looking a job to save for her education yet whenever she thinks that the sexual abuse done to her might happen again, it makes her back-out. Moreover, she could not be freed from the fact that her parents are surely looking for her. So at the moment, she could do nothing but wait on what will going to happen next.

The Life of Pearl

Pearl is the second child in the brood of four. Her father was a painter while she grew up having her mother being an OFW. Because her mother was always out of the country, she became close with her maternal aunt whose house was just near them in Pasig. She was always an honor student and was trying hard to be a good daughter because she did not want to waste the sacrifices that her mother was doing abroad. She was not that close with her siblings because they were always fighting. On the otherhand, she was always at the house of her aunt and became closer with her cousins instead.

She was in grade five when her father began sexually abusing her by touching the private parts of her body (acts of lasciviousness). The abuse was always done when she was asleep but there were times wherein she was also awake. She hated her father so much because eventhough the latter was not drunk the abuse was still perpetrated. Not a month that passed without her experiencing the sexual abuse. She kept the matter to herself for a while because she did not know what to do. After a year of the abuse, her grades in school was indeed affected. She was no longer performing well in the school, profane and vulgar words were often heard in her and then sometimes she was noted staring blankly.

After a year of the abuse, the acts of lasciviousness became more frequent. She decided then to disclose the abuse to her mother when the latter took vacation in the country. Her mother became angry about the abuse but in the end the first decided to keep the matter within their family to save the reputation of the family. Her mother talked to her father not to commit the abuse again for the peace of the family. Also, her mother begged Pearl to forget everything. Although she wanted justice but she gave in to the plea of her mother and tried to set aside all the negative memories caused by her father. Pearl told herself that she would like to forget

everything yet it became so hard for her. Whenever she remembered the abuse, she came to hate her father again. Once she knew that her father was in the house, she went to her aunt and slept there. Never that she had peace and became at ease whenever she saw her father. When the father who was a painter had a work and did not go home for a week or so, that was the time that she stayed at home.

A year after her mother's vacation and settlement of the issue, her father began to sexually abuse her again. She warned him that she will divulge it to her mother and to the police but her father threatened to kill her. She had no choice then but to keep silent and made her aunt's home as her refuge. Her aunt and family were not aware of the matter. Though they asked her what was the matter because she seemed to wanting to stay at their house more often than before, she just reasoned that she could no get along with her siblings. When she asked her mother for her to stay in the custody of her aunt, she was not allowed because her mother wanted the family intact and she could see nothing wrong in the family. So Pearl could do nothing but to sacrifice. Besides from the fact that she did not want her mother to worry, she also feared for her life.

Pearl suffered from age 11 to 17 in the hands of her father. Although there was no penetration committed, yet it changed her life. She could no longer see the very active and jolly Pearl before. She did not know until when she was supposed to keep the abuse when she learned the her youngest sister, who was then thirteen years old, was also abused by her father. This was the turning point of her life that she revealed the abuse to her maternal aunt and asked her assistance to file a case against her father. After she had given statement in Pasig police station,

she and sister, Carnelian, were referred to DSWD-Shelter for protective custody and case management.

In Shelter, it was hard at first for Pearl because adjustment is indeed inescapable. But gradually she was able to adapt in the environment. Because she already graduated in high school when admitted, she became busy with the skills training offered in baking which she became the best baker. In the dormitory, she became a trustee of her houseparents. She was an “ate” in the dorm wherein she was always of help with her co-residents who have problems. She added that it was in the center where she discovered her talents, like dancing, speaking in the crowd and entertaining visitors. She became very busy in helping out her houseparents in dealing with the challenging clients and so her leadership potential was truly developed.

Though she became so closed with the other residents, yet she and her young sister, Carnelian, were always in conflict. When the latter was bored in the center, she was the one being always blamed of their shelter. Also Carnelian already wanted to withdraw the case against their father because she already wanted to be discharged. Her mother who was allegedly in the side of the father was closely monitored when she visited her children upon her vacation in the country. Pearl shared that this was the time when her mother begged them to retract. Nevertheless, she was very decisive in continuing the case. She came to appreciate DSWD more for the support and concern given to her which her mother was hesitant to give.

After a year and four months of stay in the Shelter, Pearl and Carnelian were transferred to the adjacent center, DSWD-Haven for Women, because Pearl was already in the majority age. Haven for Women caters abused, trafficked victim-survivor and in need women ages 18 and above. The transfer gave Pearl a hard time because she will be leaving the staff and co-residents

who were so dear to her. Fortunately, like in Shelter, she was able to adjust well in Haven for Women. She also got the trust and confidence of the staff and co-clients similarly from her former center.

After ten months in Haven for Women, Pearl and Carnelian were discharged in her eldest sister who has a foreigner husband and a one year old daughter. Her sister's husband was working abroad so the two survivors of abuse and their only brother who is the third among the four children became under the custody of the eldest. Like before, their mother sent money every month for the allowance of the family. What made Pearl annoyed was that her father in jail had still allowance that consumed bigger portion of their mother's remittances. Her mother reasoned that her father's tuberculosis came back and needed financial sustenance. When her mother took vacation in the country she was asked to come with the family to visit their father in jail. She was very annoyed with the matter but she could not refuse her mother's request. It became very awkward on her part when she did it. She felt absurd visiting her father whom she herself brought him to jail.

The discharge in the community made Pearl to adjust again. From Pasig they transferred to Rizal near their paternal relatives in whom she is not close. She was used to interact with only girls and women in the two centers of DSWD where she came from for more than two years. She seemed having come from the mountains because she quite aloof at first. It last for a year for her to know their neighborhood who did not know that she and her sister were sexually abused by their biological father. After the adjustment, she met new friends in the place. She could not say that because of abuse she come to have a problem dealing with men because she has boy friends whom she has good relationship with.

After a year of discharge, Pearl withdrew her case against her father because she pitied his situation who was now having a hard time on his disease. Also, she did not want her mother to worry about him inside the jail. Carnelian on the otherhand, already withdrew the case earlier than her. She was not able to retract as early as possible because wanted justice before. But now she just aimed peace for the whole family. She now could bear seeing her father in an hour but she has not forgiven him yet and she could not live again in one roof with him. She believed that once her father is released he will live with his sibling.

Her father is no longer her problem now because she wanted to move on from the sexual abuse happened to her. What weakens her is that she is not studying college. She envies her cousins in Pasig whose some are already working and others are taking up their courses. She feels that her self-esteem is so low because nothing happens to her. She seems imprisoned in taking care of her two younger siblings and in fixing the house they are living. And more often than not they are not in good terms of her brother and sisters because of the money that her mother is sending. They were annoyed when she was the one budgeting the money so she gave the responsibility to her younger brother for the sake of peace. Furthermore, she feels that she is just their maid which effort is never appreciated. If not just for her mother who asked her to look for her two younger siblings, she would choose to live in Pasig with her maternal aunt. Before her mother asked her to, she was able to work as a saleslady and assistant in a computer shop after her discharge in DSWD.

Another thing that makes her sad is that she feels already far away from God. She does not pray anymore and profane and vulgar words now come out of her mouth. She seems worst and not the Pearl anymore who once a role model inside Shelter. What he prays now to God is

for her to come back to Him and be able to study. She never loses hope that someday her dreams will still be fulfilled. Once given an opportunity, she will really study. She wishes to have a good job so her mother would no longer sacrifice working as an OFW. She would like to offer her success to her mother who serves as her strength.

The Life of Carnelian

Carnelian is seventeen years old and the youngest in the brood of four. She is the sister of Pearl who is also a respondent of this study. Unlike her sister, she is the kind who takes everything light. She could say that since she has no mother taking care of her neither then that she cares about what is happening on her. She is not the type that listens to her siblings. For her, her parents are the only one who have the right to reprimand her.

She was eleven years old when her father started the acts of lasciviousness on her. She kept the matter to herself since she knew that nothing will also happen to her like her older sister, Pearl. She knew that her mother will also settle the issue. But when she turned thirteen, it became unbearable on her part what her father was doing so she disclosed the abuse to her sister Pearl. That was the time then that the latter sought the help of their maternal aunt near them and they went to police station to file a case. Thus, referral to DSWD-Shelter was made by PNP.

Carnelian could not believe that her disclosure will bring them in a government shelter. She got mad at her sister who decided to go to police and file a case against their father. At first, she truly had a hard time in the Shelter. She could no longer go to malls and other places outside, meet her friends and gratify her smoking and drinking habits. But when she had adjusted in the center, she came to appreciate Shelter. She was able to live without cigarette and liquor, learned

her rights as a child and on how to open up what she feels. She developed good relationships with her co-clients and found true friendship inside. She also experienced being cared by the staff especially with the houseparents who have direct supervision on them twenty-four hours a day. She felt their concern and she was delighted because she grew up not closed with her parents. The feeling was a little strange on her. She also learned household chores because of the tasks assigned to her in the dorm. Moreover, she was able to adapt within the limitations set by the center, particularly when it comes to time.

But despite of the good things that happened to her in the Shelter, she could not escape boredom. During these points, she blamed her older sister why they were inside the center. She was also annoyed with her because their houseparents trusted her so much that made her envious. When the two of them were compared by others, she felt always a loser. She was thinking that is it because her ate was abused for a longer time than her so she had all the credits and sympathy. This happened even when they transferred to Haven for Women. Although she came to like more the second center because it is not that strict there since almost all of the clients are already in the majority age.

Even when they were reintegrated in the community, she thought she brought the irritation and envy with her ate Pearl. She always gained the attention and approval of other people. This is why she is not close with her. She on the otherhand, became wild and independent. She became a leader in a clan/group of cellphone users wherein from time to time they meet and have happy time. They usually have drinking session or at times they just hang out in one of the member's house chatting all day night. Carnelian found her friends in the clan as her refuge. She

feels that they are the only ones that listen and care for her. In them she is able to share what she thinks and feels. They accept her for who she is.

Carnelian admitted that she became worst and her life seems ruined though. It was not long after the discharge when she met her boyfriend now. And she already gave her virginity to him when she was fifteen. She is aware of the negative consequences of her actions. But she does not care anymore. Furthermore she does not listen to her siblings whenever they reprimand her, particularly in going home late. There were many times that she ran away from home because she could not contain their strictness. She does not obey them and always fight back in them. Just because she is not studying it gives them all the right to confine her in the house. She dropped fourth year high school for two times. First she was bored early on and second because she was not able to get her form 137 in Jose Fabella Memorial School-Annex. Sometimes, she wanted to be admitted in the Shelter again so she could finish her high school. She knew that once she is in the center she would be disciplined again in studying.

Carnelian dreams for her parents to be with them. She needs them and feels envious to those children who have their parents guiding them. This is the very reason why she forgave her father and became decisive in withdrawing her case against him although her ate Pearl always opposed it. She always thinks that no matter what, he is still her father and it will never change. So when the memory of abuse comes back and sometimes it still hurts, she just thinks that her father might have been changed from the more than three years of his detention. All the more, his tuberculosis came back and so he badly needed to go home so he would be taken care of by his family.

Carnelian said that once her parents are already beside her, she will indeed change for them. She is just waiting for them. She asked their mother to stay in the country because her eldest sister and brother are already working who could be of help in the family's financial needs. But her mother did not agree since she is the breadwinner of the family. The eldest has a family on her own and Carnelian's brother is just earning below the minimum wage since he is mere high school graduate. Therefore from what is happening, that their parents are not yet with them, she will remain independent and wild. She will do what she wanted and no one can stop her.

She is aware that she is rebelling because of what is happening to her family. It is only God who sees how she cries at night when she is alone because she wanted to have a complete family. It is God whom she really runs into. Although she has a boyfriend and clan friends, yet she could not pour her heart out to them like she does to God. She could say that her faith on God is the very thing that rescues her from all the problems and pain she is bearing. This is the very thing that she appreciates and thankful in the Shelter. It is in that place that she learned on how to get closer to God.

The Life of Sapphire

Sapphire is sixteen years old and the youngest daughter in the brood of four. She was just a week old when her biological mother left her in the couple whom she considers now as her parents. She grew up hearing their neighbors telling her who is her biological mother. Nevertheless young as she was, she could not comprehend the matter. The ironic thing after she was given to her adoptive parents is that the said mother of her was renting in the apartment just

beside their house. She could even remember that she was close to her and was always welcomed in her house. When she was in grade three or four, her biological mother left their place and left her a letter telling that she is Sapphire's real mother. That was the time then that things gradually sank on her who she really is and she started to become hardheaded.

Looking at her adoptive parents, she could say nothing wrong towards them. Never that she felt that she is mere adopted. Although her adoptive father works in carpentry and her mother is a laundry woman, they have always given their best to her. She is actually spoiled to them. Even to her four older siblings, she did not feel that she is an outcast in the family. She knew that she became good to them too. But this was not until her biological mother left and disclosed who she really is. She felt she was betrayed by her adoptive parents and was abandoned by her biological mother with a reason unknown to her.

After she graduated in elementary, she began running away from home. Sometimes she slept over her friends just to get rid from her over protective family. It was also the time when she got to know her perpetrator named Ben. The latter was a 49-year old single man and a known drug pusher and user in their place. At first, they were just friends but then later on Ben asked payment for all the financial support he has given to Sapphire. That was through sex. The man was the one sustaining the needs of the latter especially when she was hiding from her family. Sometimes Sapphire was even living with Ben in his house.

The same year, there was a client of Shelter, named Kaye, who absconded from the center and became friend of Sapphire. Because Kaye was a former drug user, she became friend of Ben who gave her free marijuana for use. When the policemen and social worker of Shelter sought Kaye, they found her in Ben's house. They also found drug paraphernalia in the place and

so the authority filed a case against the latter. Moreover when the social worker of Shelter learned that Sapphire was a girlfriend of Ben, she was also brought in Shelter along with Kaye. This is due to the reason that Sapphire was just thirteen years old then and so child abuse in relation to R.A 7610 was filed.

Sapphire was truly disgusted of her admission in Shelter. Never in her mind that it entered that she would have to stay in a center. She ran away from her family whom she felt a prisoner and then she will be sheltered in the four corners of the Shelter. She was very vocal that she did not like the center. At first, she had a hard time in dealing with different kinds of clients and she was not used to household chores too. She did not want to be reprimanded as well whenever she did something wrong. It made her easily flared up. However as the days went by, she learned to appreciate the center. She began to grab the opportunities it has been offering.

In Shelter, she has learned to get along with the residents and staff and found meaningful friendships there. Basic skills in the house became a part of her daily routine and most importantly, productivity trainings like sewing, basic computer literacy and baking were experienced by her. She had learned to trust others, control herself, have hope and push herself to explore. She was also grateful that she was able to continue her studies inside. This became a big part on her because she began to dream again for herself and her family. For her, Shelter is not just a rehabilitation but a realization center. She had realized how she had taken for granted the family who loved and cared for her since the very beginning. And how she wasted the time of rebelling instead of being thankful that she is blessed to be adopted by her parents.

Sapphire's sexual abuse case against Ben was dismissed. One of the reasons is that the court favored the testimony of Ben that he did not rape Sapphire because they were in a

relationship. Although Sapphire was disappointed yet she decided to accept it and live again a new life with her family. When she was reintegrated with her adoptive family, she was not able to immediately continue her studies because she was not able to complete the requirements in the school where she will be transferred. She decided then to take a review in Alternative Learning System (ALS) so she could catch up. While waiting for the exam, she decided to look for a job so she could save money and not be a burden to her family. She became a helper in a canteen but for a couple of months she already resigned because her salary was just enough for her transportation allowance. Then she became interested in becoming a helper in a sewing shop. On the otherhand because she was still a minor, she was not accepted.

The community that once looked down on her and labelled her as a prostituted young girl came to celebrate when they saw her. They seemed happy on the changes in her. She is no longer the seemingly addict Sapphire which they used to know. Nevertheless, she is a healthy and vibrant young woman. And the family that is still overprotective on her, she understands them now. Although life outside Shelter is freedom yet she is very delicate in using this so she would not be led astray again. Usually, she is just inside the house. Although she has a boyfriend now for two months, yet she is not that serious with him. Their relationship is open in her family but they are not allowed to date outside. Therefore their meeting place is just inside their house. Now his boyfriend is in Zambales working. He is just eighteen years old so she knows that he is not yet ready for a very serious relationship.

Sapphire's dream is to really finish her studies. She wanted to pay back with all the good things that her family has done to her. She does not mind anymore if she will meet or not her biological mother. What is important to her now is her present family. Although at times she

feels anxious to meet again Ben now that he is already in the community as well, yet when she remembers how she is being protected by her family and the godmother who is the barangay captain in their area, everything fades.

The Life of Beryl

Beryl is eighteen years old and the second child in the brood of two. She was just a child when her parents separated. Her mother is a manicurist and her father is an OFW. Her parents have already family on their own. When her father was still in the country, sometimes she stayed with him and his family. But because she had a hard time dealing with her stepmother, oftentimes she did not stay with them that long. When her father got a job abroad, she remained in the custody of her mother who has a live-in partner too and has a five-year son on the latter. Her older brother who is seven years older than her usually stayed with his friends because he was not favor of their mother having an affair.

Her father could no longer support them because he has also children on his live-in partner. This is the reason why when the husband of her maternal aunt asked her to stay with them, Beryl grabbed it. Her aunt just gave birth on their second child and the first was just two years old then. They needed a helper in taking care of their children. Beryl grabbed the opportunity since her aunt's house was near her school. She was already graduating so she would like to do everything she could to finish her fourth year. Because she was just halfday in school, she spent the rest of her time taking care of the oldest child of the couple. In return, they gave her allowance and she used it for her daily needs in her schooling.

She encountered no problem in the couple's custody at first. But after a couple of weeks, she began feeling that her uncle was touching her private parts in the middle of the night. She was always pretending to be asleep because she was afraid of what might happen if she would react. She was sleeping at the third floor of the couple's residence which the room had no lock while the family of her aunt stayed at the second floor. She knew that her uncle was a drug user-pusher but she could not believe that he could do such abuse to her because she is a self-confessed *tomboy*. Not long after her uncle's acts of lasciviousness to her when he fully penetrated her. She was sexually abused by him every other day which in all occasions she pretended to be asleep. After the incident and her perpetrator would go down the floor, it was the time that she would cry. According to Beryl, after the third sexual penetration she already disclosed the matter to her maternal aunt. Unfortunately, her aunt did not react on it nor did nothing about it.

She was no longer at peace then. She did not want to see her uncle anymore so she made sure that when he went home to eat and rest after driving his tricycle, she would confine herself to her room at the third floor. However when the interval of night came, she could not escape his abuse. Beryl's menstruation was irregular. But on the third month that she had no menses still and the shape of her body was gradually changing, she became worried then. Although she used to wear loose shirts and pants, yet she knew what was happening in her body. On her fifth month of stay on her maternal aunt, and she already found out that she was more than three months pregnant was the time that she revealed the exploitation to her mother through text. Immediately, they went to camp Crame to file a case. They did not sought the assistance in the PNP near the area because her uncle's brother is a police there.

When the abuse was filed and it reached the knowledge of her perpetrator's family, the latter's brother who is a policeman offered for an amicable settlement. The policeman would like to take custody on Beryl and would sustain her financial and education needs while she is pregnant. Nevertheless, she and her family rejected the offer. When her perpetrator was able to bail, they asked the assistance of camp crame to give them protection. This preceded for Beryl to be referred to Shelter. She had a hard time at first in the center but she had no choice because she knew that her life was at stake. Being with the different kinds of children was no easy. She was also used to hang out with her friends which in the Shelter she had to stay inside the compound. Also, the rules and regulations were definitely hard to follow if you were used to a free life like her.

Gradually, she was able to adjust in the center. Because she was about four-month pregnant and her transfer documents was not immediately processed on her former school, she was not able to continue her fourth year in Jose Fabella Memorial School. Nevertheless, she was not deprived of the regular activities in the center. The arts and crafts sessions that was being offered by foreigner volunteers once a week became one of her favorites. In this way, she could reveal her artistic side. She really appreciated as well developing good relationships inside. Her closest friends in Shelter are still her best buddies even outside the center.

When MJ, his son to her perpetrator, turned seven months, Shelter, Beryl and the latter's family decided for MJ to be reintegrated first to Beryl's mother so she could continue her last year in high school in Jose Fabella Memorial School-Annex. It gave her a hard time because she did not want her son to be far from her yet she knew that it was the best thing to do at the moment. Although she begot MJ through the abuse, yet never that she thought of her son as a

misfortune. On the otherhand, it is by means of him that she regained strength and came to stand again despite of what happened. She has many plans for the two of them and she will do everything to succeed. Therefore, she let go of MJ so she could focus on her studies. She knew that education is the best way to achieve her dreams.

Beryl was one year and seven months in Shelter when she was reintegrated with her mother. This was after she finished her high school. When the assesement made by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) turned to be positive and there was no threat in the community for her, the discharge then was facilitated. Nevertheless right after her discharge, her perpetrator's family sought her for settlement. And because life is indeed hard, Beryl chose to be practical. She accepted the fifty-thousand offer of her perpetrator so she could also live a peaceful life. She did not want to live hiding from her perpetrator and his family. MJ's father also signed in an agreement that he will support his son by giving three thousand pesos monthly. Her maternal uncle let them stay in his third floor's house in exchange of forty thousand pesos. Therefore it became a big ease on Beryl's family that they are no longer renting a house.

When Beryl was discharged, there were times that she and her mother were not in good terms. It was her one maternal aunt near their house that became her refuge. She became a saleslady on her aunt's sari-sari store and in return, the latter was the one sustaining her needs and MJ's since her perpetrator could not give regular allowance. Beryl shared that her aunt became more of a mother to her than her biological mother. She could not feel the support of the latter. She wanted Beryl to try hard on her own to get what she wanted. But her aunt supported her by giving what she needed since she did not have anything yet to start up. After a month or

two of adjustment in the community, Beryl began exposing herself again. She sought her old friends for anything to earn. So she became her friends' seller of their things and they give them a percent of the profit. She also grabbed the one hundred pesos a day payment of selling barb-q everyday from six evening onwards. And when somebody is in need of someone to dye their hair, she is being called. Through these things she is able to sustain herself and her son.

Beryl is not content of who she is now but she knows that she has to live her life. She dreams to study interior designing or work in air force. However, her opportunity to study is not yet knocking. It is truly hard that she has to look for any job just to address that needs of her son and herself. But she will not stop dreaming to get better so she could not just feed MJ but most especially to give what is the best for him. Every Sunday she does not forget to go to church with MJ. Although at first MJ did not want to be baptized by Catholic church because he does not have a recognized father. She still had to give the church a copy of her sworn statement regarding the abuse so her son would be baptized. For her, she believes that faith in God is the very thing that could make her survive life's battle. This is also one very important thing that she learned in Shelter. She knows that it is God who backs her up.

The Life of Agate

Agate is sixteen years old and the youngest among the brood of three on her parents and still has four siblings on the maternal side. Her mother came to have many affairs before her father that caused her children. And Agate's parents came to separate as well when she was in grade six. It was the decision of her mother when her father became a very irresponsible man and just consumed himself in different vices. Moreso, his father went back to drugs that even made

his life miserable. Though she did not want the separation yet with the daily fighting that happened in their house, she could do nothing but accepted it. When her parents separated and came to have different partners, oftentimes Agate was in the custody of her mother than her father. The latter's live-in partner was kind that made her lived with them once in a while.

At first, Agate had a civil relationship with her stepfather. The man was already fifty-nine years old and was being supported financially by his children. They were just three in the house of her stepfather. Her mother looked for a stay-out household job so at night she got home. Agate was studying her first year and when she arrived home, she went directly to the only room where the three of them sleep. Sometimes her stepfather was outside the house and at times he was watching TV in their living room. She locked it when her stepfather was inside and her mother was still at work. But there was these two incidents that he perpetrated acts of lasciviousness on her. The first time was when she was not able to lock their room and she fell asleep after school. The other one was at the middle of the night when the three of them were sleeping in the room.

In first abuse, she did not disclose the matter to her mother because she did not know what might happen. She was also afraid what he could do though he said nothing but left suddenly when she was awakened. But on the second time, she already disclosed it to her mother because she was afraid already if it would lead to penetration. She believed that she was careful and did not flirt nor dressed improperly so her stepfather would have reason to abuse her.

Her mother sought the assistance of her employer who worked in a known TV network. Agate was also helped to file a case and asked assistance to DSWD since her mother is incapable to protect her. She was then sheltered in Shelter and her mother was advised by her employer to stay-in because she was nowhere to turn to. In the center, Agate had a hard time at first. There

were many clients whom she had to deal with. She was not used to being away from her mother as well. But as the days passed by, she was able to gradually adapt in the center. And what she appreciated most is that she was able to continue her second year high school. Also she learned basic computer and cosmetology. For her, this is the most rewarding in staying in the Shelter. She no longer needed her mother to support her because everything was free, even her basic needs. She also found good friends inside and learned to mingle with others accordingly.

After how many months of stay in the center, Agate was asked by her mother to withdraw the case against her stepfather. She could not believe what she heard and interrogated her mother if she already reconciled with him. Her mother could not deny it and said that her perpetrator did not mean what he did and felt sorry from what happened. Agate was so disappointed with her mother that she told her social worker in the Shelter about it. Because of this, her mother was not allowed to visit Agate for the time that she was still in the side of her live-in partner. Agate asked her social worker to tell her father regarding the matter and if he could visit her in the center. Her father just visited her once and her two brothers twice when she was sheltered. After a short while her father visited her and encouraged her to continue the case. On the otherhand, she was told by her father that he could not visit often because his earning as pedicab driver was not even enough to support his basic needs.

She missed her mother so much yet she took hold of herself because because of annoyance on her. She just focused herself in studies and other activities in the center. While being alone, she had learned to be independent, be strong, sacrifice and widened her mind. When she was more than a year in the center, her mother visited and said she already broke-up with her

live-in partner to support her daughter. She was again permitted to visit her but in the presence of Agate's social worker. Agate felt glad about it.

Agate was about two years in the center when the case against her stepfather was dismissed. She was badly hurt about the matter but could do nothing about it. But because both of her parents cannot support her, she was not then reintegrated immediately. She waited patiently in the Shelter and just thought that staying longer would make her finish fourth year. After graduating in high school, an assessment to her maternal half-sister was facilitated and turned out positive.

Although her sister was a plain housewife but because her husband has a good job to support the family, it made them qualified. The couple had two little children so she helped in tending them while her mother was working in Caloocan as stay-in house helper and just visited her in Rizal every othe week. Agate was no actually closed with her sister and so she had a hard time dealing with her. She was strict and indifferent oftentimes. This is the reason why after a month of custody of her, she asked her her mother to take her. besides the original plan is that her mother and two brothers will rent a house for the four of them after a short while of her stay with her half-sister. But because the three could not yet sustain it, it did not materialize.

Agate's mother left her in the custody of her friend whose husband is her perpetrator's son while the first continued her work as a househelper in Caloocan. She was so annoyed with her but she had no one to turn to. It took her two weeks with them and she was very thankful that nothing bad had happened to her. She was always inside the room when the son of her perpetrator was inside the house. Also, she managed to dine as early as possible so they would not meet. Agate did not experience any indifference or any attempt of revenge from him but

because she was quite uneasy, she asked her mother for her to stay with her former stepmother. Although the latter and her father already separated but because she developed a good relationship with her before, she was accepted by her and lived with her for almost a month.

The after, she asked her mother is the latter could beg to her employer if she could stay with her in the house and she will just help in the household chores. Her employer permitted and so she stayed with her mother and helped her in anything in exchange of her stay. Agate found the situation hard but she could do nothing about it. She was just sixteen years old and cannot find a job suited for her age. She felt helpless. Moreover, the worst thing for her was when she found out that her mother was still in a relationship with her perpetrator. They met and went to church every Sunday while was left in her mother's employer.

Whenever she confronts her mother, the latter would always bring back her so called hardheadedness in continuing the case that made her perpetrator stayed in jail for more than two years before it was dismissed. And that her mother could not just left her perpetrator because he was the one who saved them when she and Agate's father separated. Then her mother would attack her and DSWD for for polluting her mind. When this happened, she always fought back and defend the department that became her refuge in the times that nobody supported her in the case. She hated her mother so much because until now she is still the same. She cannot be depended on. Agate resent because she is not asking to be sent in college though she wanted it badly because she understands the situation. But what is disappointing is that she cannot rent even for a small room for the two of them.

Lately, her mother decided to send her to her half-brother in Bicol. It added to her annoyance because she was mere seven years old when she met this brother of her and many

years had already been passed. He is working as a waiter in a resort there in the province and promised to help her enter as a waitress where he works. Agate knew that it is again another adjustment, especially that her brother has already family on his own.

When Agate encounters a problem, she always remembers Shelter. Besides missing her mother when she was still inside, she had no other problem. Everything was provided by the government and she was not worrying of anything. Unlike now that she is already discharged, she felt hopeless and helpless. She seems a squater who has no home to stay. If only Shelter has a college, she would definitely plead to stay there to pursue her dream. Because outside the center, nothing happens to her. She feels a mess. But she is trying very hard to perceive her situation as mere challenge. She knew that nobody could help her but just herself. She never stops dreaming that someday her mother will still change and prioritize her. And that she could still study in college. When she gets eighteen years old, she will really find a decent work so she could save for her studies. She desires to be of help to her mother and father and give them a good life. Although they are not perfect parents but still they love them so much.

The Life of Amythest

Amythest is a nineteen year old young lady. She is the eldest in the brood of three in which all of them do have different fathers. Aside from the hurtful thing that she was not able to meet her father, what makes her resent is that on her birth certificate, her father's name is X. For her, it much better to have it blank than how it made up. She feels as if she came from nowhere to deserve X on the father portion.

Amythest grew up living in the street with her mother and two siblings. They slept over in a park where in the morning they have a small post selling cigarettes and candies. There were also times that her mother left them on their relatives which most of the times she would not pay any visit on them. It was in this circumstance when she was sexually abused by the cousin of her mother and penetration occurred. When her mother visited them, she disclosed to her what happened that made the latter decide to leave the place. This was not the first time that Amythest was molested. She was five years of age when her stepfather sexually abused her. Although there was no penetration yet it marked fear on her. This was the reason why the two separated.

After class, Amythest was the one tending their small stall in the park. She was eight years old when she met Simon, a foreigner investor. He was walking at the park and asked for a direction to her. After that when Simon was in the country for business trip, he usually brought groceries to them and he would give them money. There was also a time when he brought Amythest and her family in a mall for shopping. Amythest was age twelve when Simon offered them to stay with him in his condominium while he was in the country. Her mother readily agreed on the matter. For the two weeks that they lived with Simon, Amythest could say that they experienced a well-off living. Simon often gave her mother large amount of money and it was almost everyday that they went out to shop or eat. Nevertheless, during these times sexual abuse was already happening. In Simon's condo there were two beds on it; one for her mother and two siblings and the other one was for her and Simon. The foreigner was the one suggested for Amythest to share his bed since the other bed was fully occupied. It was during the nights when Simon would molest her. She did not reveal this thing to her mother because young as she

was, she already felt that this was the payment of Simon's generosity to them. She also believed that her mother knew what was happening but just kept silent.

When Simon said that in a couple of days he was leaving, her mother asked her if she was being abused by him. When she said yes, she was brought by her mother to a police station and they filed a case against the foreigner. Because Amythest's family was poor and Simon was influential, she was referred to Shelter for protective custody and case management. It was very hard for Amythest to live away from her family but came to gradually accept the matter. It was just a short while when she learned from her Social Worker in Shelter that her mother agreed for settlement with Simon in the amount of one million pesos. Her mother already received half of it and once the case was withdrawn the other half will be followed. Because of this, her mother was no longer allowed to visit her in the center. And because her two siblings were still young, they too could not come to visit her. Her relatives are also poor so they were not able to show up too to give their support. It was only the staff and Amythest's co-clients inside Shelter who became her support system.

In the Shelter, she had learned to be more independent, less emotional, became strong and to always think what is right. She also learned to deal well with her peers inside. It was also through the center where she developed skills like computer education and cosmetology. There she became encoder of the staffs and she really felt great about it because she was being trusted. She was also the only one assigned in operating the sound system in the central lawn or main activity area once the center has activities. It made her feel very important because it seemed that the program could not start without calling her first.

Amythest's case was truly a battle. With the fact that Amythest's perpetrator was very influential, oftentimes her lawyer would petition to change branch because of the allegation that Simon was paying the judge. For this reason, the case prolonged. Amythest was already sixteen years of age when her mother pled to DSWD for her to visit her daughter. At first she was not permitted because she became a witness for Simon that no sexual abuse really happened and Amythest was just lying. But because Amythest missed her mother so much, she requested her to be allowed. The visit was facilitated in the presence of Amythest's handling Social Worker so no unnecessary thing might happen.

Amythest was nineteen years old when she was discharged with her mother. This was after the dismissal of the sexual abuse case that she filed against Simon and the assessment of her mother in the community turned out positive. When the department already made sure that Simon already left the country, Amythest was then discharged in a summer time. There was an NGO partner of DSWD that gave scholarship grant to Amythest and a volunteer of Shelter who committed to give her two thousand pesos allowance every month as she entered the school year in college. Her mother also promised to support her through the income of their small stall in the park. The half million that she first received from Simon went to nothing and she was not given the other half because she was not able to do something so Amythest could withdraw the case from the very start.

Before Amythest was discharged in the custody of her mother, she was first visited in the area for ocular and came to look for a boarding house once the school year started. She already agreed to go home because she already wanted to be with her family although she saw that the rental house of her mother was too small for the four of them. The only good thing was that she

was familiar with the place because it was near the street where they used to sleep way back then. When she was finally discharged, Amythest thought that her mother already changed. Nevertheless, she was too wrong. It was almost everyday that her mother would bring back the past, especially that she listened to DSWD in pursuing the case against the foreigner that caused for her not to received the other half million pesos. According to her mother DSWD poisoned her that made Amythest to always fight back and defend the department. For her, it was DSWD who did not give up on her and fought for her rights until the end. It was actually her mother who was a useless one and thought nothing but money.

It lasted only a week of stay with her family when she decided to contact her Social Worker in the Shelter for her immediate transfer in the dorm where she supposed to stay while studying. Her Social Worker agreed because of her situation and with the reason that the school year was about to start in a week time. The idea for Amythest to stay in the dorm was facilitated in order for her to focus on her studies. When she transferred, living alone became a hard one for her. She was used to living in the center in which there are many people whom she could approach to ask help from. But now, she is all alone. She cannot depend on her mother and she is also ashamed to share with her close staff in Shelter. She knew that she is no longer their responsibility. This is the reason why she is tasting cigarette and liquor again. It becomes her outlet whenever she has no one to turn to.

Aside from her mother whom she already accepted to never change, financial constraint became one of her hardest battle. There is a total difference in living inside the Shelter and then the outside world. In the center, everything was already there and you do not have to do anything to meet your basic needs. You have nutritious food, toiletries, beddings and you could live even

without a single centavo. On the otherhand outside, you will surely die without money. Also, the volunteer of the Shelter who committed to give her two thousand pesos allowance every month is often out of the country. Therefore there were times wherein she could not receive financial support from her. She got no support as well from her mother who seemed does not care at all. Fortunately there are staffs from the Shelter who helped her in times of needs. Although she is shy when they give her financial assistance at times yet she knew she has no choice but accept it. Furthermore, her boardmates usually give her food. In this way she is able to survive.

When it comes to her studies, she finds it difficult. Sometimes she wanted to give up but when she remembers those people who trust in her, it pushes her to continue and strive more. She dreams to finish her studies and be able to work abroad. She believes that it is easier to earn money outside the country. She desires to give a good life to her family, especially to her mother. Although she is always in conflict with her yet she cannot deny the fact that she is still her mother and that she loves her. She wants to give the best on her.

She would say that she had already moved-on from the past sexual abuses perpetrated by different men. She no longer thinks of it. She knows that nothing good will happen if she will continue to dwell in the past. If there is one thing that she had learned in life, it is to use your head over emotion. To always thinks what is the right thing to do and to think the consequences of every decision. And she knows that if there is one thing that she could best do, it is to forget all the negative things that happened in the past and face the present and future with hope. She believes that she has a lot of challenges but she will never stop to fight because nothing good will going to happen if she will cease.

