

Capturing the Cry of Flood Victim Students: An Exploration of their Experience and Resilience through Photovoice

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Abstract

Floods greatly impact individuals, especially vulnerable students, affecting them psychologically, socially, and academically. This study explored the experiences of student flood victims and uncover their resilience through the innovative methodology of photo voice. Two participants who were selected through snowball purposive sampling. Data were collected through photos and interviews. The themes emerged from the experiences of students who have been affected by floods were having unstable emotions, undergoing academic strain, and wanting to be heard. Also, the themes emerged from the flood-affected students' perception and coping mechanisms with the challenges they face in the aftermath were seeking for support and using of varied coping mechanisms. This study shed light on the psychosocial effects of flooding on student victims, highlighting their resilience in the face of adversity. Flood – affected students resiliently seek support for their needs, employ diverse coping mechanisms, and desire recognition from authorities and institutions amidst emotional instability, academic obstacles, and the impact of significant losses caused by floods. School administration and LGU officials collaborate to establish a dedicated disaster risk and reduction management office to provide prompt response and assistance to flood-affected students. Additionally, it is important to implement emotional support programs, prioritize the allocation of academic resources and support, and actively promote student engagement.

Keywords: participatory research, photovoice appreciative inquiry, flood victims, students, resilience, experiences

1. Introduction

Floods, the most common type of natural disaster, are often caused by prolonged periods of heavy rain, quick snowmelt, or storm surges from tropical cyclones or tsunamis in coastal areas (Mensah & Ahadzie, 2020). These floods have significant impacts on many cities, leading to various difficulties and challenges (Mensah & Ahadzie, 2020). Among those affected, a large fraction of students living in flood-affected areas exhibit symptoms of depression, experiencing feelings of nervousness, sadness, and fear (Bobachan & Fernades, 2019). Attendance and learning performance among students are also moderately affected by these circumstances (Bobachan & Fernades, 2019). It is crucial, therefore, to understand the lived experiences of student flood victims.

Natural disasters, such as floods, have negative psychological effects on the victims, including the evacuation process and financial losses (Golitaleb et al., 2022). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a common psychological impact experienced by flood victims, necessitating effective and supportive measures to address their needs (Golitaleb et al., 2022). Anxiety and sadness are also prevalent among individuals affected by floods (Ramachandran & George, 2021). The prevalence of PTSD in disaster victims ranges from 23% to 60%, significantly higher than the 3.5% prevalence rate advised by the American Psychiatric Association for the adult population in the United States (Park & Bae, 2022).

Flash floods result in specific stressful and depressive symptoms, including worry, overthinking, and trauma, among flood victims (Akhir et al., 2021). The social and economic losses experienced by communities contribute to mental instability, leading to conditions like PTSD, anxiety, and despair (Makwana, 2019). Moreover, flooding has a lasting detrimental impact on mental health, persisting for at least a year after the event (Asim et al., 2022). It is important to

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address these issues by providing psychological counseling to residents in rural areas affected by devastating floods, reducing anxiety and feelings of helplessness (Ao et al., 2020).

Research conducted three years after the Garut flash flood found that 20% of teenagers had PTSD, while 80% of adolescent victims did not (Mahfuzhah et al., 2021). When people are exposed to calamities, they may sustain injuries and experience nervousness, powerlessness, and extreme fear (Park & Bae, 2022). They are also more prone to psychological distress as a result of witnessing death and injuries (Park & Bae, 2022).

Understanding flood-related behaviors is crucial in developing effective strategies to mitigate the impact of floods on people's safety and livelihoods (Hamilton et al., 2020). Assistance provided to flood victims should extend beyond addressing their emotional, physical, and economic burdens (Ogunbode et al., 2019). Floods cause significant economic damage, numerous deaths, and a range of adverse effects, indicating that human behavior plays a vital role in flood mortality (Diakakis, 2020).

Many flood victims experience a loss of self-efficacy, expressing fear and powerlessness in preparing for flood risks (Fothergill et al., 2021). Some lack strong self-efficacy traits, doubting their ability to improve their circumstances and feeling disheartened about their future (Akhir et al., 2021). It is evident that catastrophes have a particularly negative impact on psychosocially fragile communities (Sehra, 2021).

In flood-affected areas, inadequate access to safe drinking water poses significant threats such as cholera, typhoid, and other waterborne infections (Sarkar, 2022). Diarrhea is the primary waterborne disease associated with flood catastrophes (Louw et al., 2019). Managing menstrual hygiene needs during floods presents cultural and practical challenges for women and teenage girls, including the lack of facilities for menstrual waste disposal and separate toilets (Bhattacharjee, 2019).

However, some flood victims exhibit faithfulness, optimism, and perseverance. Some Christian flood victims creatively use their religious faith and confidence in God as coping mechanisms to survive and rebuild their lives (Ballano, 2022). Others are able to manage their sadness and adjust to their new surroundings, dealing with the loss and difficulties brought on by the disaster (Akhir et al., 2021). Some even persist in establishing businesses to support their post-disaster recovery (Akhir et al., 2021). Social assistance plays a crucial role in the resilience of flood victims, as they benefit from material support, relationship-based support, informational support, and emotional support (Akhir et al., 2021). Older victims often handle disaster conditions relatively well, reporting fewer negative emotional consequences compared to younger victims (Huerta & Horton, 2019).

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative research approach, specifically employing a participatory action research design facilitated by photovoice methodology. Photovoice is arts-based qualitative research (Delgado, 2015). It is also a participatory action research (Wang et al., 2004). Participatory action research is a powerful method aimed at improving the quality of life within organizations, communities, and families. It is also utilized in the educational system and its institutions to empower individuals (Creswell, 2012). Moreover, it is an empowering methodology that allows individuals to reflect upon the strengths and concerns of their community (Kuratani & Lai, 2011). Photovoice, as a methodology, serves three primary objectives. Firstly, it seeks to document and reflect upon the strengths and challenges of a community. Secondly, it encourages community dialogue on critical issues. Lastly, it establishes a context that empowers participants to influence decision-makers (Wang & Burris, 1997). Thus, photovoice was used to capture the cry of flood victim students and explore their experiences and resilience.

2.2. Research Setting

The study was conducted at a non-sectarian institution located in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. This particular university has been granted "Autonomous Status" by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for the 2019 academic year, highlighting its commitment to providing quality education. The university offers a diverse range of academic programs, encompassing 29 different fields of study, including graduate school and basic education. Notably, the College of Education, Criminology, and Information Technology programs have been recognized as Centers of Development within the university. Furthermore, the university has received prestigious accolades such as the "Most Number of Accredited Programs in Region X" by the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities

Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA) for two consecutive years. Additionally, it has received an excellent rating from DNV for its ISO 9001:2015 accreditation, further highlighting its dedication to maintaining high standards of quality education.

As a result of its reputation for quality education, the university attracts a diverse student population, not only from Misamis Occidental but also from neighboring provinces. Consequently, many students enrolled in the university have experienced the devastating floods that occurred from the third week of December 2022 to the first week of January 2023.

2.3. Respondents of the Study

The study participants consisted of 2 students from Misamis University, selected using a snowball purposive sampling method. Initially, there were ten participants who decided to participate in the photovoice study. However, following the orientation session where they learned about the photovoice method, they opted to withdraw their participation. The selection of participants was based on specific criteria, including: (1) enrollment at Misamis University for the academic year 2022-2023, (2) being a victim of the flood that occurred between December 2022 and January 2023, which included those who were evacuees or experienced property loss, and (3) willingness to participate in the study. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researchers ensured that all the aforementioned criteria were fully met.

2.4. Instruments

The researcher used three researcher-made questions, which were asked to the flood victim students. The students then answered the questions through capturing photos that will describe their answers for each question. Once the photos were ready, the researchers asked questions to the participants following the SHOWED framework. This study relied on photographs as the primary source of data. Furthermore, six in-depth interviews were conducted to support triangulation using the SHOWED framework, which was initially developed by Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988) and later adapted by Wang et al., (1998). The interview guide consisted of the following questions: “What do you see here?”, “What’s really happening here?”, “How does this relate to our lives?”, “Why does this problem or strength exist?”, “How can we be empowered?”, and “What can we do about this?”. In addition to interviews, observation was another data source, which involved in-depth interviews, analytical notes, and reflections after various activities. To facilitate easier referencing in the findings and discussion section, the data was organized and assigned acronyms.

2.5. Data Collection

To collect the necessary information, the researcher secured authorization from the Dean of the College of Education to carry out the study. Subsequently, the researcher sought consent from the director of the department of student affairs and services office. Once approval was obtained from the student affairs office, the participants were given a consent letter by the researcher, which explained the significance of the study. Using the photovoice procedures described by Wang et al. (1998), data was collected the following sections provide descriptions of each step. To reinforce the study, certain components from Rosario et al. (2016), model were also included. They are made up of picture essays and in-depth interviews. To enhance the information regarding the lived experiences of students who were flood victims, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews. The researchers also utilized photo essay to organize the photo exhibit, sort the photographs into categories, and provide a space where the participants could share their photographs and the stories associated with each one.

Preliminaries. According to Wang et al. (1998), there are several important aspects to consider in the preliminary stages of a photovoice study. The first aspect is contextualizing the problem. In this study, the focus is on investigating the actual experiences of students who have encountered flooding. The second component involves stating the objectives of the study. The objective was to explore the personal narratives of students who have experienced flooding and identify the factors that have influenced their quality of life in the aftermath of the incident. The third step is selecting the location and obtaining administrative approval. In this case, a study proposal was presented, outlining the research objectives, methods, stages of the photovoice process, ethical considerations, and the participant permission form. The component of the preliminary stages involves selecting the participants, which was discussed in the previous section. This step takes into account the chosen methodology for the study. Finally, the last phase of the preliminary stages is obtaining verbal and written consent from the participants, ensuring that they understand and agree to participate in the study.

Implementation method and data analysis. The initial step of the photovoice process is crucial as it involves executing the procedure and analyzing the data. Each subsection of this step is explained in detail. The study was built upon the work of two contributor groups. The primary group consisted of Wang and colleagues (1998), who developed the photovoice model. Additionally, Rosario and colleagues (2016) made further improvements to the photovoice model, which were incorporated into this study.

- a) Orientation regarding the concept and the methodology of photovoice
- b) Photography training
- c) Theming
- d) Time for taking pictures
- e) Critical reflection and dialogue

Dissemination of findings. To disseminate the findings of this study, the primary method utilized was a photo exhibit. This exhibit was organized during the Research Festival Day, where all the experiences of the students who were flood victims were presented. The photo exhibit was accessible to both students and faculty members at the university, allowing them to engage with the displayed content.

Advocating policy. The target audience for the third phase of the photovoice, which is promoting policy, is the representatives of the academic divisions of the institution. In order to reach decision-makers, the second component involves informing them of the study's important details and procedures, as they had already received the research proposal. The purpose of the photo exhibit was to utilize photovoice as a means to influence decision-makers' perspectives on how to effectively support flood victims.

2.6. Ethical Considerations

In order to uphold ethical norms, the researcher used the guidelines from the Helsinki Declaration (2001). All participants were informed of the objectives and significance of the study by the researcher. The study's participants gave their informed consent and consented to have their interview statements recorded. The student participants were given the assurance that their identities would not be disclosed at any stage during the study as the researcher upheld the concept of information confidentiality. In a separate folder, all participant-related papers were preserved in a safe file. Every participant would have the option to revoke their involvement at any moment. The researcher may have moved the interview to the next when the student lost interest in going on. Respect was always shown towards the participants. They were assured that their comments would have no impact on their condition and that all of their comments would be kept strictly confidential.

In conducting this study, the researcher ensured that ethical considerations and provisions of the Republic Act No. 10173, known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012", was strictly observed in the data gathering, in data analysis, and in the dissemination of the research findings to protect the dignity and the anonymity of the participants and their organization.

2.7. Data Analysis

To support data analysis, the study followed the phases of photovoice. It is a fairly new technique for fostering an environment conducive to growth where participants shared their experiences while utilizing images.

- a) Orientation regarding the concept and the methodology of photovoice. The participants gained knowledge about photovoice and when it may be applied to a research project.
- b) Photography training. The participating students were then taught how to shoot images while taking into account crucial factors like proper lighting and the positioning of the picture's main components.
- c) Theming. The researchers read through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes.
- d) Time for taking pictures. The participants documented both their good and unfavorable experiences with the flash flood in as many photographs as they wanted.
- e) Critical reflection and dialogue. After one picture, the participants started to present the stories behind each one of them. To facilitate the dialogue and their critical reflection, they used the Storytelling SHOWED framework developed by Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988) and adapted by Wang et al. (1998). Through this framework, the participants presented the stories behind their pictures by responding to the next questions: What do you See

here? What’s really Happening here? How does this relate to Our lives? Why does this problem or strength exist? How can we be Empowered? What can we Do about this? The same procedure was also followed for the second set of photos.

The participants took part in an in-depth interview after sharing their experiences about the images. The approach employed by Rosario et al. (2016) was followed in order to add this step. The participants got the chance to elaborate on their experiences during the flashflood that happened last December – January 2022.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Experiences of Students Who Have Been Affected by Floods

These themes emerged from the experiences of students who have been affected by floods. The themes include having unstable emotions, undergoing academic strain, and wanting to be heard.

3.2. Having Unstable Emotions

Flood victims often experience a range of unstable emotions in the aftermath of a devastating flood. When floods occur, they bring about immense physical and emotional upheaval, leaving individuals and communities grappling with the aftermath. Participant 1 presented this issue as follows, “The picture of a wilted flower can be connected to the feeling of hopelessness by evoking a sense of despair, sadness, and a lack of optimism. Just as a wilted flower droops and loses its vitality, it represents a state of diminished hope and a sense of defeat. The answers of the participants support this:



“During the flood, I found a parallel in the wilting flower, which serves as a poignant symbol of hopelessness. It reflects the depths of despair we reached, leading us to question whether we would ever find the strength to rise again.” (P1)

“The wilted flower relates to my experience during the flood, as this symbolizes hopelessness, where we even got to the point where we question ourselves if will we ever have a chance to stand up again?” (P1)

“Amidst the flood, I discovered a resemblance between the withering flower and our experiences. The wilted blossom acts as a powerful representation of hopelessness, mirroring the depths of despair we endured. It compelled us to ponder if we would ever muster the resilience to stand tall once more.” (P1)

Furthermore, the student flood victims have also experienced the feeling of isolation and disconnection. It is a common experience among individuals facing various circumstances, such as relocation, social exclusion, or emotional distress. Participant 1 presented this issue as follows, “We can establish a connection between the picture of a sunlit sea and the emotions of isolation and disconnection by contrasting the external beauty of the scene with the internal feelings experienced by an individual. Although a sunny day by the sea typically brings about a sense of calmness and vastness, it can also emphasize a deep sense of being isolated and disconnected from others”. These were mentioned by Participant 1:



“How the sea and sky meet relate to my experience during the flood, as this symbolizes serenity and tranquility, however, it also symbolizes isolation and disconnection from the crowd. Because on the aftermath of the flood, we evacuated far from the bodies of water, in which leaving our home soaked and muddy.” (P1)

“The photo isn't always about positivity but rather signifies isolation and disconnection from one's true life. Thus, the photo represents the social well-being aspect of the experience.” (P1)

“The photograph doesn't solely convey positivity; instead, it embodies a sense of isolation and detachment from one's authentic life. As a result, the photo symbolizes the social dimension of well-being within the overall experience.” (P1)

In addition, student flood victims have also experienced the feeling of sadness in the aftermath of flood. The feeling of sadness among flood victims is a natural response to the significant losses they have endured. Participants 1 and 2 presented this issue as follows, “An ear as a symbol of listening and understanding. The act of listening to someone's problems or emotions can often be associated with empathy and compassion, which are often related to feelings of sadness”. Moreover, “Wilting flowers signify the passing of time and the inevitable end of things. They serve as a reminder that everything has its season, and eventually, all things must come to an end. This association with impermanence can evoke a sense of sadness or nostalgia for what was once vibrant and alive”. These were mentioned by Participant 1 & 2:

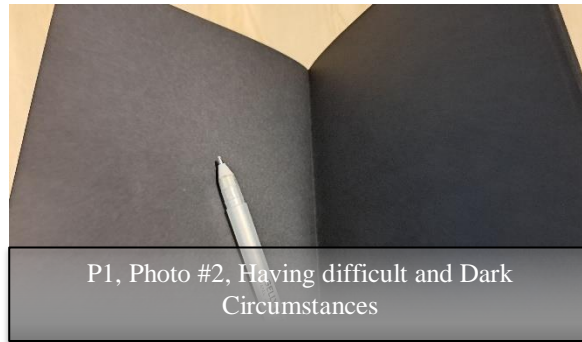


“This photo gives me a feeling of sadness, anger, and disappointment because I can relate to the feeling of being ignored.” (P2)

“First is sadness and loss, a wilted flower can evoke a sense of sadness and loss, as it is a reminder of the passing of time and the fleeting nature of beauty. It can be a reminder of the impermanence of life and the inevitability of change.” (P1)

Additionally, flood victims often find themselves in difficult and dark circumstances as they navigate the aftermath of a devastating flood. Participant 1 presented this issue as follows, “Notebooks are often used as a medium for self-expression, where thoughts, emotions, and experiences are documented. The color black can represent the deep,

complex, and sometimes painful emotions associated with difficult circumstances. The white ballpen, on the other hand, can be seen as a tool to express those emotions and navigate through the darkness by finding clarity or understanding. The impact of a flood extends far beyond physical damage, affecting every aspect of individuals' lives and communities. These were mentioned by Participant 1:



“The pairing of black paper and a white pen can be interpreted as a metaphor for the plight of flood victims. The black paper symbolizes the challenging and somber conditions individuals may face in the aftermath of a flood.” (P1)

“The combination of black paper and white pen can be seen as a metaphor for the situation of being a victim of a flood. The black paper represents the difficult and dark circumstances that a person may find themselves in after experiencing a flood.” (P1)

The mental health of the people may suffer significantly as a result of natural disasters (Garske et al., 2021). Residents in the more severely affected area perceived higher risks and had more negative emotions, but also their place dependence was more severely damaged (Zheng et al., 2019). Floods often result in the loss of homes, possessions, and even loved ones. The sudden and overwhelming nature of such losses can lead to feelings of grief, sadness, and anger. The displacement from familiar surroundings and the uncertainty of the future can contribute to feelings of anxiety, fear, and instability.

To solve this problem, ensuring access to mental health services is vital. Communities should have mental health professionals available who are experienced in dealing with post-disaster emotional distress. These professionals can offer counseling, therapy, and other evidence-based interventions to help individuals cope with their emotions and navigate the challenges they face.

3.3. Undergoing Academic Strain

Flood victims often experience a sense of giving up on their studies in the aftermath of a devastating flood. Participant 1 presented this issue as follows, “The sight of a damaged musical piece can signify a loss of motivation and enthusiasm for studying. It can represent a point where the passion or drive to continue learning and practicing fades away. The damage to the musical piece may symbolize a loss of interest or the feeling that progress is unattainable, leading to the inclination to give up”. The answers of the participants support this:



“The soggy and damaged appearance of the music piece relates to my experience during the flood, as this was symbolizing the learnings, I had in which it got almost washed out, because during the circumstance, there’s this one thing that came into my mind, and it was about stopping my studies. This is because I got so overwhelmed by the situation and don’t know what to do next.” (P1)

“I encountered a situation where my learning was almost erased due to the overwhelming circumstances that unfolded. It led me to contemplate stopping my studies as I felt inundated and unsure of what steps to take next.” (P1)

“The dampness and deteriorated condition of the music piece symbolize the similarity to my personal experience during the flood. It represents the lessons I learned that were almost washed away, as the circumstances made me contemplate stopping my studies. The overwhelming situation left me uncertain about the next steps to take.” (P1)

Furthermore, one of the most pressing challenges faced by student flood victims is the lack of essential resources that can hinder academic achievement. This scarcity of resources further hinders the recovery efforts and exacerbating the hardships experienced by those students who are affected. Participant 1 presented this issue as follows, “The damaged musical piece represents the consequences of inadequate funding for education in schools. It represents a lack of financial resources allocated to maintain academic success or provide necessary resources to impede progress and achievements in school. The answers of the participants support this:

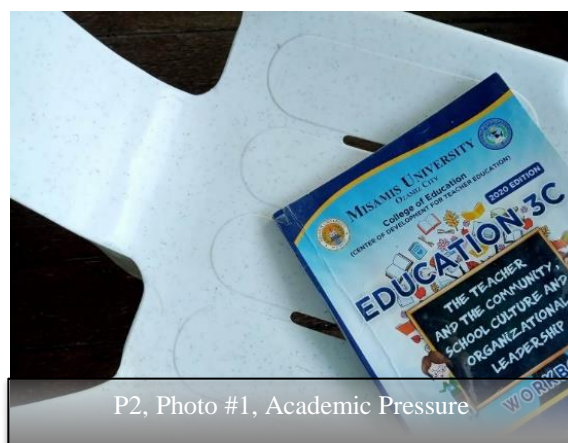


“The photo represents the experience in terms of the academic aspect. The damaged book of musical pieces symbolizes the limitation or lack of resources, which could be a hindrance to academic success. It suggests that limited resources could impede one’s ability to learn and excel academically.” (P1)

“The impaired musical book serves as a representation of limited resources, indicating how they can hinder academic achievement. It implies that a scarcity of resources may pose obstacles to learning and academic excellence.” (P1)

“The photograph embodies the academic experience, particularly highlighting the aspect of limited resources. The deteriorated musical book symbolizes the constraints or insufficiency of resources that can impede progress and achievement in academics.” (P1)

Additionally, student flood victims were also pressured in academic during the time of the flood. Participant 2 presented this issue as follows, “The book on the chair can signify the mental and emotional strain that comes with academic pressure. It serves as a visual representation of the demanding nature of studying, preparing for exams, and meeting deadlines that were not met due to the flood. It represents the burden and stress that students often experience as they strive to meet academic standards and achieve success. The answers of the participants support this:



“During the aftermath of the flood, I could not stop thinking of the requirements and assignments that were due. Overthinking about the future made me feel afraid and nervous. So as my parents were busy cleaning up piles of muddy chairs, I was busy answering my workbook.” (P2)

“The story behind this photo is that the workbook reminds me of the academic pressure that I was going through during the time of the flood. The workbook depicts the academic pressure that I was going through, since I had to catch up with some deadlines. It shows that despite being a flood victim, I still could not help but think of my responsibilities as a college student.” (P2)

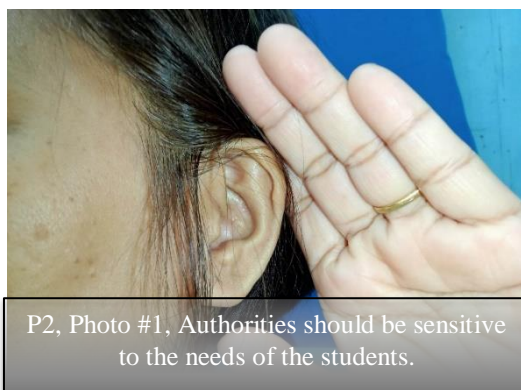
“In the aftermath of the flood, thoughts of pending requirements and assignments constantly occupied my mind. The overwhelming anticipation of the future evoked fear and anxiety within me. While my parents were occupied with the task of cleaning up mud-covered chairs, I found myself engrossed in completing my workbook.” (P2)

Academic strain may be a target for health programs that aim to avoid teenage mental health issues (Stearé et al., 2023). Among all adverse life experiences, academic pressure was the best predictor of PTSD symptoms in teens (Zheng et al., 2019). Recognizing the relationship between academic strain and teenage mental health concerns, health programs can prioritize initiatives that foster a supportive academic environment, promote stress management techniques, and provide resources to help adolescents cope effectively with the pressures of school.

By that, schools and educational institutions should implement flexible policies to accommodate the needs of flood victim students. This can include extensions on deadlines, rescheduling exams, or providing additional support through tutoring or study groups. These accommodations can help ease the academic pressure and create a more manageable environment for students to continue their education.

3.4. Wanting to be Heard

Authorities should be sensitive to the needs of the students. Flood victims, who have experienced the devastating consequences brought by flood, yearn for their stories and concerns to be heard. Participant 2 presented this issue as follows, “The photo represents the importance of active listening by authorities to understand and respond to the needs of students. Just as an ear is a sensory organ for receiving sound, authorities should attentively listen to the concerns, challenges, and suggestions of students. This connection highlights the need for open communication and empathetic listening to foster a supportive educational environment”. They seek a platform where their struggles, losses, and resilience can be acknowledged, understood, and addressed. The answers of the participants support this:



“One potential solution is to take heed to the voice of the students, especially those who are experiencing unprecedented crisis. We should realize the fact that the youth are capable of doing greater things because they belong to a large percentage of the population.” (P2)

“They should be given the chance to freely share what they’ve been through because their circumstances are relevant in improving a better community.” (P2)

“I believe that the authorities should be more sensitive to the needs of students, especially during calamities. Authorities should lend their ears and listen to the cries of the flood victims. They should not be too focused on their gains, but they should always consider the welfare of the lives they are handling. I suggest that authorities should have a reserved action plan to cater the needs of students who are affected by the calamity. It is very much advisable for authorities to be quick in taking action to avoid confusion and distress on the students’ part.” (P2)

In addition, the students also want to highlight the importance of active listening and providing space for individuals to express themselves effectively. The answer of participant supports this:

“To make a meaningful impact, individuals and groups should hear each other out. Everyone should be given the chance to be heard and to listen.” (P2)

“Having an unsupportive and negligent community can be a source of obstacle that needs to be acted upon. Being distrustful towards the authorities can also be a hindrance to empowering and strengthening others.” (P2)

“In order to create a significant influence, it is important for individuals and groups to actively engage in listening and granting each other the opportunity to express themselves. Allowing everyone to be heard and promoting attentive listening is crucial.” (P2)

Emergency response and recovery are managed domestically in the event of a disaster, based on local priorities and policy decisions. Local governments decide how to rebuild or whether to do so. In addition to or in rivalry with local governments, higher governmental entities like states and provinces may implement their own disaster recovery procedures and policies. Therefore, the function of higher authorities can have significant effects on the formulation and execution of policy (Crow & Albright, 2019).

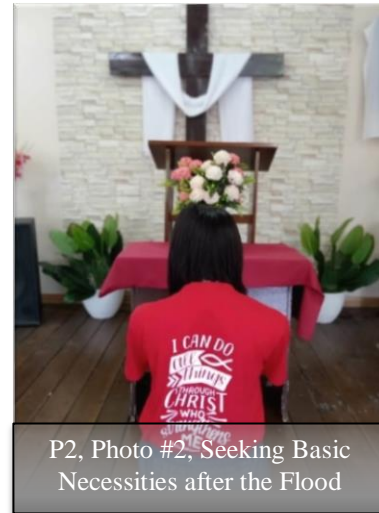
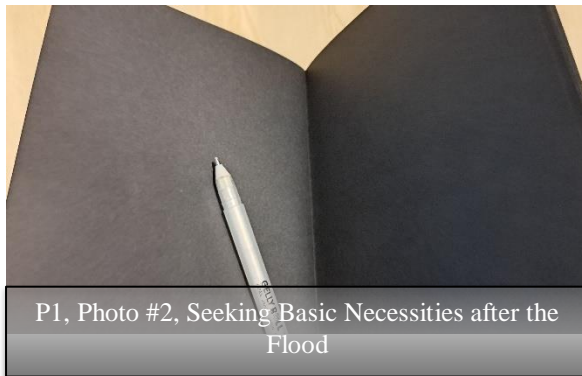
By that, by listening to the voices of flood victim students, government authorities can identify gaps and shortcomings in existing policies and regulations. This feedback can be used to refine and improve policies related to disaster response, education, and social welfare, ensuring that future flood victims receive better support and assistance.

3.5. Flood Victim Students Perception and Coping Mechanisms with the Challenges they Face in the Aftermath of a Flood

These themes emerged from the flood victim students’ perception and coping mechanisms with the challenges they face in the aftermath of a flood. The themes include seeking for support and using of varied coping mechanisms.

3.6. Seeking for Support

One of the main challenges of the student flood victims is lack of resources, both in terms of financial and physiological needs. The participants address this issue as follows, “The image of a black notebook and a white pen can symbolize the importance of seeking basic necessities after a flood. Just as the black notebook represents the aftermath of a disaster, the white pen represents the hope and determination to seek out essential resources.” Moreover, “Just as the girl is in a humble position, praying before the cross, it signifies her reliance on a higher power to provide for her basic necessities. This image portrays the belief that through prayer and seeking spiritual strength, one can find the inner resolve and guidance to overcome challenges and seek the resources needed for survival”. The answers of the participants support this:

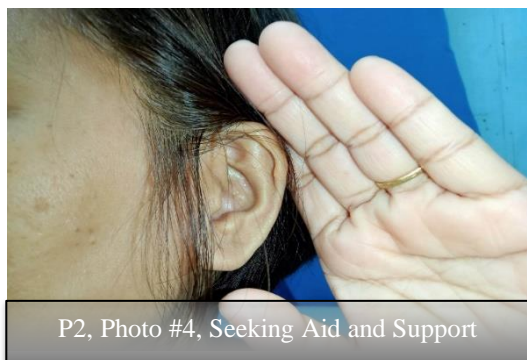


“Community centers and churches can provide temporary shelter and basic necessities such as food and clothing to those who have been displaced by flooding.” (P1)

“For people who have been affected by flooding, local groups and institutions can offer short-term accommodations as well as essentials like clothing and groceries.” (P2)

“During the time of the flood, there was no electricity, no signal, and we could not communicate with our loved ones that much.” (P2)

Furthermore, the participants emphasized their needs of aid and support in the aftermath of flood. They are seeking aid and support. Participants presented this issue as follows, “The picture of an ear can be connected to seeking aid and support by highlighting the importance of effective communication and active listening when reaching out for help. Just as an ear is receptive to sound and can perceive even the faintest whispers, it symbolizes the willingness to listen and understand the needs and struggles of others”. In addition, “The picture of a wilted flower can be connected to seeking aid and support by conveying the vulnerability and need for nourishment that arises during challenging times. Just as a wilted flower is in need of care and revitalization, it represents an individual who is going through a difficult period and requires assistance”. The answers of the participants support this:



“I think this problem exists because some authorities cannot take fast action, since they rely and wait on a higher authority. As a result, they compromise the safety of their students and become insensitive to their urgent needs.” (P2)

“In the third photo, there is this mental health and well-being, where a wilted flower can also be interpreted as a symbol of sadness, grief, or depression. The importance of mental health and well-being, and the need for individuals and society to provide support and resources for those who are struggling, is a crucial issue.” (P1)

“One of the main challenges is limited resources, both in terms of funding and personnel. It can be difficult to implement large-scale community engagement programs or mental health resources without adequate resources and support.” (P1)

Moreover, flood victims, having experienced the devastation and loss caused by floods, often find themselves in a state of vulnerability and despair. Separated from their homes and communities, they yearn for the love and support of their families, who are often their primary source of comfort and security. Participant 1 presented this issue as follows, “The picture of a wilted flower can be connected to the longing for love and belonging by evoking a sense of longing, vulnerability, and the need for connection. Just as a wilted flower droops and loses its vibrancy, it represents an individual who may feel emotionally drained, disconnected, or lacking in love and a sense of belonging. The image captures the yearning for warmth, acceptance, and a deep connection with others”. Moreover, “The picture of a departmental T-shirt can be connected to love and belonging by representing a sense of unity, camaraderie, and shared identity within a group. Wearing a departmental T-shirt signifies being part of a specific community or organization where individuals come together based on shared interests, goals, or affiliations”. The answers of the participants support this:



“A wilted flower can be seen as a metaphor for the challenges and setbacks that individuals and communities face. Like a wilted flower, people and communities can feel drained of energy and life due to various factors such as stress, illness, or difficult circumstances. To address this issue, individuals can take steps to care for themselves and others. This includes seeking support from friends, family, or mental health professionals.” (P1)

“One potential root cause of the sense of belonging and purpose is socialization. The way that individuals are socialized can impact their sense of belonging and purpose. For example, if an individual grows up in a family or community that values connection and community involvement, they may be more likely to develop a strong sense of belonging and purpose. Similarly, if an individual grows up in an environment that emphasizes individualism and self-reliance, they may be less likely to develop a sense of belonging and purpose.” (P1)

Additionally, flood victim students may cope with the challenges they face in a way that contributes to their resilience. For example, they may seek out social support from friends, family, and other supportive individuals, engage in self-care activities like exercise and meditation, and engage in meaningful activities like volunteering or participating in a hobby. (P1)

Families afflicted by flooding that are lacking in essentials are under a great deal of psychological stress (Rehan et al., 2023). In the aftermath of a flood, people may experience trauma, loss, and emotional distress. By providing basic necessities, relief organizations and communities show their support and care, which can help alleviate anxiety and distress, providing some sense of normalcy and stability in a difficult time.

To address this issue, during a flood, government employees, particularly those involved in disaster response and relief efforts, are expected to play an active role in helping and supporting individuals affected by the disaster. The government has a duty to allocate resources, mobilize personnel, and coordinate relief efforts to provide timely and effective assistance to flood victims. This should highlight the importance of government agencies and workers in ensuring the well-being and safety of citizens during times of natural disasters.

3.7. Using Varied of Coping Mechanism

An individual's effort or approach serves as their coping mechanism to adjust to changing circumstances and react to situations that put their bodily, psychological, social, and spiritual wellbeing at danger (Farhan et al., 2022). One of the lived experiences encountered by student flood victims in navigating the aftermath of the flood is finding effective coping mechanisms to address the trauma they have experienced. The participant said that “This picture really made me think about how we can face difficult times by connecting with God through prayer and deepening our faith by studying His teachings. It reminded me that dealing with life's challenges isn't just about being strong, resilient, and determined. It's also important to continually seek strength from the Lord through prayer.” They took positive steps to help them navigate challenges and work towards a more inclusive resilience. The coping mechanisms mentioned by the participants include believing in God. The answers of the participants support this:



“People in my community perceive prayer as a way of nourishing their spiritual life. One admirable thing about our community is its strong belief system. This is important so that when storms rage in our lives, we are rest assured that God is the source of our strength.” (P2)

“This photo gave me a perception on how we can cope with challenges by communing with God through prayer and strengthening our faith through His Word.” (P2)

“We should recognize that coping with life's challenges should not only be addressed through empowerment, resilience, and perseverance. However, we should also build our strength in the Lord constantly through prayer.” (P2)

Students also use arts and instruments in coping with trauma. Participant 1 presented this as “This photo (piano and guitar) symbolizes for those people who might not be aware of how helpful art can be for their well-being, and they might struggle to find the right resources or support to explore their creativity as a way to cope with challenges.” These were mentioned by Participant 1.

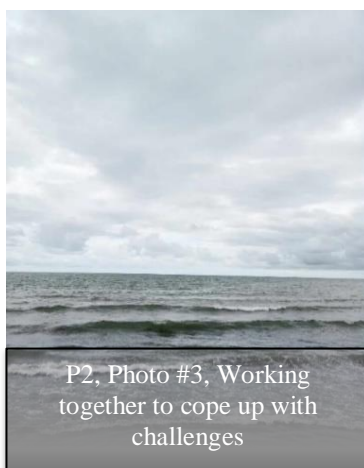


“One potential challenge is the lack of awareness or understanding of the importance of creative outlets in coping with trauma. Many people may not realize the therapeutic benefits of art and may not know where to access resources or support for utilizing creative outlets in their coping process.” (P1)

“There’s this two of my favorite instruments, which is the organ keyboard and the ukulele. These two helps me vent out my emotions.” (P1)

“Similarly, in the second photo, which are two of my favorite instruments. So, these two helped me in venting out my emotions, and these two are also my passion and hobby which symbolizes a sense of purpose.” (P1)

In addition, student flood victims also despite the limitations of the medium, they also come together to create something positive out of a difficult situation. According to the participants, “The picture of the sea can serve as a metaphor for collaboration and community working together towards a shared objective. Just like the sea is made up of countless individual drops of water that come together to form a vast body, a community is composed of diverse individuals who can unite their efforts for a common goal.” They are working together to cope up with challenges. The answers of the participants support this:



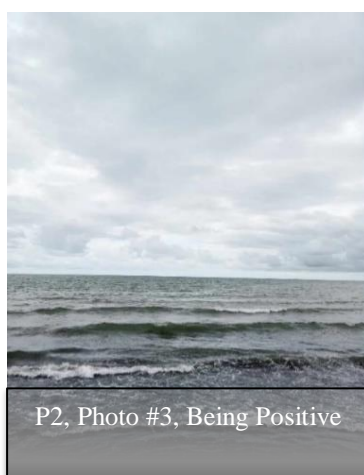
“I felt the bayanihan spirit in our neighborhood. We, in the community, helped each other get through the trials in every way that we can. Other than that, our church was privileged to donate to other victims as well.” (P2)

“Collaboration and communication are key components of working together towards a common goal. One way to begin is by identifying a shared vision and setting achievable goals. This can involve bringing together diverse perspectives and engaging in open and respectful dialogue. By

working together, individuals and groups can share their knowledge and resources, which can lead to more effective problem-solving and a greater likelihood of success.” (P1)

“Engaging ourselves in bayanihan programs can help build on this strength. Filipinos are known for helping one another without expecting any reward in return. Thus, we give aid voluntarily because of the compassion inside each of us.” (P2)

Student also stayed being positive and see their lived experiences with optimism. Participant 2 address this as “The image of a sea about to rain can symbolize finding positivity and hope in life despite facing adversities. The picture encourages us to embrace the storms and view them as opportunities for growth, trusting that even in the midst of adversity, there is a potential for positivity and renewal.” Persevering in difficult times is one of their coping strategies in the aftermath of flood. These were mentioned by Participant 2.



“This photo connects with our own life experiences by emphasizing that we need not to focus our tomorrows on what we see around and before us. It means that we should never dwell on the negative side of the calamity. Our experiences from the flood will stay with us as a life lesson, however, our recovery from it will stay with us forever. Through this we understand that our purpose in life is to learn from various experiences and to build ourselves to becoming better individuals.” (P2)

“I learned that seeing things on another perspective and thinking of ways to give a helping hand, made me resilient in facing the storms of life. After all those challenges, we are no longer victims but victors.” (P2)

“During the aftermath of the flood, the sea was also affected as it’s water near the shore became brown as well. However, I took this photo because I was happy to see the water clear again and I was filled with hope.” (P2)

People who are impacted by a tragedy need to cope mechanisms as tools for resolving any problems that may occur. Disaster victims use a dynamic approach to problem-solving and self-control to manage anything that can put them in risk (Farhan et al., 2022). To survive in the midst of a natural disaster, one approach to satisfy fundamental human needs is to offer aid to other individuals. Thus, people impacted by a tragedy require coping mechanisms as tools for resolving problems that may arise. This implies that when individuals experience a tragedy, they are likely to face various challenges and difficulties. Therefore, it is important for them to have effective coping mechanisms in place to address these issues and find solutions.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. Summary

Studying students who have been affected by floods is essential for providing the right support, fostering their well-being, and helping them become more resilient in the face of future flood events. This research focused on understanding the experiences of students who have been affected by floods in terms of their academic, social and emotional well-being. As well as their perceptions coping mechanisms with the challenges they face in the aftermath of a flood. The study utilized a photovoice approach, involving selected participants who had experienced flooding between December 2022 and January 2023. The participants used photographs and the Storytelling (SHOWED) framework, originally developed by Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988) and adapted by Wang et al. (1998), to express their experiences. The gathered data was analyzed using HyperResearch, a statistical software.

4.2. Findings

The following were the key findings of the study:

- a. Flood-affected students experienced a wide range of unstable emotions, faced significant academic challenges, and had a strong desire to have their voices heard.
- b. Flood-affected students actively sought support to cope with the challenges they faced and employed a variety of coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges they encountered.

4.3. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

- a. The traumatic nature of floods contributes to emotional instability, leading to feelings of hopelessness, sadness, isolation, and disconnection. Additionally, the disruption caused by the floods creates obstacles in their academic pursuits, leaving students overwhelmed and uncertain about how to continue their studies. Moreover, the students long for authorities and institutions to recognize and appreciate their voices.
- b. Flood-affected students proactively seek support for financial and physiological needs, acknowledging the importance of assistance following significant losses. They also exhibit resilience by employing diverse coping mechanisms such as seeking emotional support, engaging in creative activities, drawing strength from spirituality, and finding solace in nature.

4.4. Recommendations

Based on the finding and conclusions, it is recommended that:

- a. School administration and LGU officials establish collaborative partnerships with local community organizations, non-profit groups, and NGOs that specialize in disaster response and recovery. These partnerships can enhance the availability of resources, financial support, and specialized services to meet the unique needs of flood-affected students. Coordinated efforts will ensure a comprehensive and holistic approach to supporting these students.
- b. Guidance counselor establishes comprehensive emotional support programs that provide counseling services, mental health awareness initiatives, and peer support networks.
- c. School administration, in coordination with LGU officials, prioritizes providing additional academic resources and support to help flood-affected students overcome their academic challenges. This may include offering remedial classes, flexible learning options, and access to educational materials and technologies. Additionally, implementing measures to address learning gaps and provide academic guidance can help students regain their academic momentum.
- d. Creating platforms like Facebook page for students to express their concerns, ideas, and experiences can be achieved through regular student forums, town hall meetings, and advisory committees. It is essential to ensure that their voices are heard and taken into consideration in decision-making processes that directly impact their well-being.
- e. School administration and LGU officials invest in capacity building and training programs for teachers, school staff, and community members. These programs can focus on developing skills in trauma-informed approaches,

providing psychological first aid, and fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for flood-affected students.

- f. Future research could be undertaken to extend the study in different context or with diverse populations to validate the findings and broaden the understanding of flood-affected students' experiences and resilience.

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