RESILIENCE, INDEPENDENCE, AND STRUGGLE: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM BROKEN FAMILIES

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Abstract

This study explored, portrayed, and understood the impact of broken families on the academic performance of college students from different levels and programs within the College of Education at Jose Rizal Memorial State University-Main Campus, Dapitan City, Philippines. Specifically, the study focused on college students who have experienced at least six years of living in broken families. Six participants from different majors within the College of Education were selected using the Snowball Sampling technique to participate in the study. This study provided a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals in broken families. The research highlighted the detrimental effects of parental neglect, which contributed to feelings of abandonment and significantly impacted the emotional well-being of these students. Living in a broken family presented constant challenges as individuals endured pain, trauma, and other mental issues due to their family situation. The mental and physical toll of these experiences was overwhelming, making every aspect of life difficult for them. Furthermore, financial constraints became an additional burden as they often needed to work after school to meet their basic needs, particularly educational expenses. These emotional struggles might have resulted in behavioral problems that hindered their socialization. The findings emphasized the importance of a holistic and compassionate approach to supporting students from broken families. Educational institutions and communities must prioritize addressing these young individuals' emotional, financial, and social needs. Creating welcoming and supportive environments that recognized and addressed their unique circumstances and strengths was crucial in helping them reach their full potential and become the best versions of themselves. By offering comprehensive support, we could empower these students to overcome obstacles and thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

Keywords: *broken family, College of Education, college students, phenomenology, resilience, struggle, independence.*

Introduction

The home impacts the children to the earliest feasible point in their development when their minds are sensitive. It gives the children their first impression, which could last their lives. The child frequently places the most importance on their parents, siblings, and the things in their immediate environment, which have the power to either improve or worsen their sense of self-worth and development. The entire family struggles to deal with the situation when a family separates, but children frequently suffer the most. Concerns

over the consequences of a broken home on children are valid ones. Children's ability to advance in life is based on the stability of their families. The influence of broken families on children's behavior development as they become old leads to negative behavior like aggressiveness, dishonesty, stealing, and cursing becoming more prevalent.

The family's foundation, the smallest social unit, comprises the marriage, the parents, and the children. Everyone yearns for a place to call home and a family that is in good physical and mental health. Generally, married parents and kids are seen as making up a whole family. However, that is only sometimes the case. Thus, broken families are not uncommon; they are familiar and often encountered around us (Saikia, 2017). While family members may be apart from one another due to factors like job loss, unemployment stress, or financial difficulties, these alone may not constitute a shattered family. Because of misunderstandings, mistreatment, denial, and other issues, there should be issues in families; in fact, this is how broken families form. Due to the absence of a divorce law— alongside the Vatican, the Philippines is the only country where divorce is prohibited—the incidence of split families resulting from null marriage is rising there. As reported by Abalos (2017), in the 1960s, there were already 28,988 Filipino men and 52,187 Filipino women who were divorced or separated. The amount was intensely raised by 2010, with 330,253 men and 565,802 women. Factors in the report included growing up in urban poverty or in what is generally referred to as low urban living conditions without marriage, religion, or ethnicity.

Moreover, educational attainment also contributed to these factors in the Philippines. The effects of family breakdown on children include difficulties in school, stress, early engagement in sexual activities, feeling insecure and afraid of the future, depression, and the fear of being abandoned. The forms of family breakdown identified during the study include death and separation.

As the fundamental societal unit, the family has also undergone significant modifications. Its nature has been impacted, functions have altered, and structure has changed. In today's society, there are increasing annulment, desertion, and separation cases. Family disagreements among members are getting worse. There is an unusually high number of disputes between parents and their kids. Households that have divorced or separated parents are considered broken families. The family may become disintegrated due to the passing of one or both parents, a parent's protracted illness, insanity, desertion, or divorce. A youngster from a turbulent home is more likely to develop emotional disorders or antisocial behavior as an adult. Even though there are many research studies on broken families, and their objectives tend to be more focused on a child's development, there is still a lack of information in the documents about how broken families affect a teen's decisions, life choices, and the impact on different types of individual purposes and the influences of the family situation on their lives.

With the scenario above in view, the researcher prompted to conduct this study on the students living in a broken family in Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) Main Campus, specifically the students from the College of Education, to give information to help craft programs to mitigate the negative effects of broken family to students. On the other hand, researchers have their observations on their participants. Based on what they have observed, college students from broken families often showed a range of emotional challenges, including lower self-esteem, mixed emotions, increased stress levels as well as their socialization with other people. However, they also possess a strong mentality and

coping mechanism that everything cannot hinder their future success. Researchers are more interested in observing and monitoring their participants' lived experiences because some researchers can also relate to their situations. Within the JRMSU-Main Campus, specifically in the College of Education, they are also concerned regarding such situations and express care by creating a supportive environment that addresses these unique needs that could contribute to the student's overall well-being. Despite their challenges, they have support systems that they can lean on.

Research Method

In this study, the descriptive phenomenological approach of the qualitative research method was utilized to explore the lived experiences of students living in a broken family. This approach allowed participants to describe their experiences, notions, and perceptions in great detail and gave researchers a more thorough comprehension of the phenomenon. Additionally, it allowed the interviewer to examine and probe the participants' nonverbal indications of communication. Thus, a phenomenological study was intended to objectively and impartially comprehend the essence and meaning of participants' experiences in particular situations.

This study focused on Jose Rizal Memorial State University-Main Campus students, particularly in the College of Education, who came from broken families and faced difficulties in their studies. The goal was to investigate the factors contributing to these challenges and address the specific needs of these students. The research was conducted in Dapitan City, Zamboanga Del Norte, specifically at the College of Education Building. The chosen location provided a conducive environment for participants to share their experiences freely. The participants six participants were 19- to 21-year-old cisgender and transgender students from lower- and middle-class families who had firsthand experience living in broken families until the present. These participants were chosen using snowball sampling and were enrolled in the second semester of the 2022-2023 Academic Year at Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) Main Campus.

The data were analyzed using the qualitative method of data analysis described by Colaizzi (1978) as cited in Praveena and Sasikumar (2022), where data collection and analysis were conducted interactively. Colaizzi's approach employed for data analysis provided detailed and sequential steps that increased the reliability and dependability of the results. In the first step of the analysis, the researchers scrutinized the participants' responses and the contextual information of the data after it was transcribed. Subsequently, they identified and extracted significant clauses and phrases from the data. Relevant data about the research questions were carefully evaluated to identify crucial information. The researchers then organized the identified connotations into themes based on an initial draft. A comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon was developed using all the information generated in the previous phase. The researchers condensed the detailed descriptions into a concise summary, identifying the basic structure of the phenomena. Finally, the researchers returned the fundamental structure statements to the participants to verify if they accurately reflected their experiences. Based on the participants' feedback, the researchers made any necessary modifications to the earlier steps in the analysis.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Participants were given a detailed consent letter addressing risks, confidentiality, and termination

procedures. Respect for participant information, vulnerability, and sensitivity were prioritized. Data protection and privacy were upheld, with a specific timeframe for the secure disposal of research materials. In order to protect their privacy, participants were assigned pseudonyms such as Sarah, Michelle, Sophia, Jacob, Anna, and Olivia.

Results and Discussions

In this chapter, we presented the results and findings from the interview process and subsequent data analysis. The study was guided by the Structural Functionalism theory (Parsons as cited in Ormerod, 2019), Conflict Theory (Dahrendorf, 2019), and phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty & Smith, 1962). These theoretical perspectives provided valuable insights and direction to the researchers in interpreting and understanding the study's findings.

The participants in this study consisted of six (6) students, as shown in Table 1, who were enrolled in the second semester of the 2022-2023 Academic Year at Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU) - Main Campus, specifically in the College of Education (CED). Snowball sampling was employed to select participants who had personal experiences living with a broken family and were willing to share their journey.

Table 1

Brief Description of the Participants

Participant	Brief Description
Sarah	A cisgender 20-year-old student, she comes from a family with a monthly income of 15,000. She has been living in a broken family since the age of 17 and has been enduring this situation for almost six years now. Currently, she resides with her father and siblings.
Michelle	A cisgender 20-year-old working student, she earns 5,000 per month. She has experienced living in a broken family since birth, as her aunt adopted her and still lives with them.
Sophia	A cisgender 19-year-old student, she comes from a family with a monthly income of 40,000. She has lived in a broken family since she was nine months old and resides with her mother.
Jacob	A transgender 21-year-old student, he comes from a family with a monthly income of 12,000. He has been living in a broken family for eight years and counting, receiving financial support from his mother while residing with his father's family.
Anna	A cisgender 21-year-old student, she comes from a family with a monthly income of 5,000. She has experienced living in a broken family twice and has been enduring this situation for seven years and counting. Currently, she resides with her mother, siblings, and grandparents.
Olivia	A cisgender 21-year-old working student, she earns 8,000 per month and receives a 4 thousand monthly allowance from her mother. She has been living in a broken family since she was eight months old and has been residing with her grandmother for almost 20 years.

The analysis revealed four (4) main themes and nine (9) subthemes that captured students' experiences living with a broken family. (1) The first theme was "Resilience and Growth in Challenging Circumstances," the resilience and growth capture the participants' ability to withstand and overcome challenging circumstances, leading to personal development and a positive transformation. (2) The second theme was "Struggle and Emotional Turmoil in Challenging Circumstances," which encapsulates the participants' experiences of facing adversity and undergoing intense emotional challenges in difficult circumstances. (3) The third theme was "Wanting," which reflects their desire for parental love, care, and attention, along with expectations they may have. Lastly, (4) The fourth theme was "Indifference," their acceptance, positive outlook, and a sense of being unaffected or emotionally detached.

Table 2

Codes, Subordinate Themes, and Themes

Codes	Subthemes	Themes
Endure	Determination and Courage	Resilience and Growth in Challenging Circumstances
Conquer		
Brave		
Focus		
Loved	Positive Experience and Autonomy	
Supported		
Filled with Gratitude		
Treated Fairly		
Appreciative and Grateful		
Independent	Self-Improvement and Realization	
Self-Protection		
Self-Reliance		
Empowered		
Matured		
Self-Growth		
Acclimated to the Situation		
Complete Change		
Sudden Change		
Adjustment		
Awareness		
Being Cautious		
No one can depend on alone		
Difficult		
Painful		

Codes	Subthemes	Themes
Challenges	Adversity and Lack of Communication/Understanding	Struggle and Emotional Turmoil in Challenging Circumstances
Hardships		
Troubled		
Trials and Tribulations		
Problems/Difficulties		
Intolerable		
Tough		
Shortcoming/Lapses		
Living Unpeacefully		
Mistreat		
Disconnected		
Sorrowful	Negative Emotions and Mental Strain	
Brokenhearted		
Undeserving		
Discomfort		
Very Painful		
Resentment		
Affected Emotionally		
Mentally Unstable		
Trauma		
Mood Problem		
Mentally Taxing		
Financial Constraints	Financial Challenge and Uncertainty	
Financially Unstable		
Despise	Condemnation, Doubt, and Non-Acceptance	
Grievance		
Blaming		
Hatred		
Anger		
Grudge		
Uncertain		
Questioning		
Wonder		
Curious		
Trust Issues		
Confuse		
Unacceptable		
Pretending to be Okay		
Diverting Attention/disregard		
Crying		
Shamefaced		
Jealousy		
Acceptance		

Codes	Subthemes	Themes
Positive Outlook	Wanting	Wanting
Longing for Parent's Love and Care		
Yearning for Parents' Care		
Longing for Parents		
Expectations		
No Regrets	Indifference	Indifference
Emotionless		
Nonchalant		
Carefree		
Not Affected		
Uncaring		
Indifferent		

Theme 1: Resilience and Growth in Challenging Circumstances

This theme encompasses the experiences of college students from broken families who exhibited Determination and Courage, Positive Experience and Autonomy, and Self-Improvement and Realization. Despite adversity, they demonstrated determination and courage and sought positive experiences. They also developed a sense of independence, relying on their strength and adaptability. Ultimately, these resilient individuals underwent a transformative process, embracing their circumstances and growing positively despite the challenges they encountered within their families. This theme highlights the participants' ability to maintain a positive outlook and experience personal development despite facing adversity.

Resilience and growth in challenging circumstances have been widely explored in the literature, shedding light on the human capacity to overcome adversity and thrive in difficult situations. Adolescents who come from broken homes are expected to increase their Resilience because it is essential to keep getting up despite facing challenging problems by increasing self-esteem and paying attention to self-esteem, namely strength, meaningfulness, virtue, and ability, and then applying it to individual life. The higher the self-esteem of an individual, the higher the Resilience he/she will have (Mayfani et al., 2022).

The significance of determination and courage as essential qualities in resilient individuals was highlighted, emphasizing their proactive and persistent nature in approaching challenges and their ability to seek out positive experiences and employ adaptive coping strategies. These characteristics played a crucial role in their resilience and capacity to navigate adversity successfully. Resilient individuals demonstrated a proactive and persistent approach to challenges, exhibiting a willingness to exert effort and persevere even in the face of obstacles. Moreover, they actively sought positive experiences and engaged in adaptive coping strategies, contributing to their effective navigation of adversity (Masten, 2008).

Subthemes 1.1: Determination and Courage

This subtheme encapsulates the participants' resilience, perseverance, and courage in adversity from growing up in broken families. Despite their difficulties, these college students demonstrated a strong determination to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. They exhibited bravery and resilience in confronting challenges within and outside their familial context while fostering a mindset of doing whatever it takes to succeed. With this strong sense of determination, this experience was expressed by Jacob and Sarah.

"I know I can do it I even survive my life alone"– Jacob
"Like I will really focus myself on studying"– Sarah

This is supported by the study of Masten and Cicchetti (2010), which found that children who experienced adversity, such as family disruptions, could develop resilience and exhibit determination in their pursuit of success. Research by Werner and Smith (1992) suggested that individuals who have experienced family disruptions often demonstrate higher motivation and determination to succeed in various domains of life.

With their challenges, they also built the mentality to do what it takes. For instance, Michelle said, "But then I realize that I can do it right. I can do it. Whatever I want alone without my father and my mother." Furthermore, Anna and Jacob also showed courage.

"But, despite the struggles we encountered we are still strong to fight against the pain." – Anna.

"To be honest, there is positive (effect) in my behavior because to be honest, I am not strong like this compared to before." - Jacob.

The participants' experiences are related to the study by Patterson et al. (2010), where it was found that children from broken families often develop a heightened sense of courage and adaptability from navigating challenging family circumstances. Research by Amato and Keith (1991) suggests that individuals who have experienced parental divorce often develop increased assertiveness and courage in dealing with life's challenges.

Subtheme 1.2: Positive Experience and Autonomy

This subtheme delves into the positive experiences and autonomy college students from broken families reported. Despite their challenges, these individuals expressed feelings of love, support, gratitude, fairness, and appreciation for the positive aspects of their family relationships. Additionally, they developed a sense of independence, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance in response to their broken family backgrounds. These resilient college students exhibited traits such as being independent, self-protective, empowered, and mature, reflecting their ability to navigate their circumstances with autonomy and strength. With this positive mindset, they can overcome trials despite their difficulty. In one instance, Anna said, "Because it feels like when I wake up, I am the youngest of us with my siblings (in her grandparents). Because I've been with them ever since I was born." Moreover, Michelle, Olivia, and Sophia also showed positive experiences.

"It's okay at least they don't leave me behind." – Sophia

"It's different, it's like I am so lucky with my aunt because they give want you want, what her children have, I also have."– Michelle

*"That's how they treat me as fair as their child." *– Michelle

"Well, I am happy. Being in a broken family has not affected my socialization in our environment or our society because I am a very grateful that my grandmother raised me with love, with communication that is intact, and my grandmother's discipline is like it is very complete because of what I do at home, so I should also take it outside so I am very grateful and I am really happy that I was allowed to experience that I am not alone or introverted."– Olivia.

These experiences of the participants in broken families are supported by Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (2000), who found that children from broken families can still experience positive emotions, such as love and support, even amid family transitions. Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) suggest that some individuals who grow up in broken families develop a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation for the positive aspects of their family relationships, which could contribute to their overall well-being.

Out of six respondents, three stated that through their experience of having a broken family and being separated from their parents, they became more self-efficient and independent. Moreover, Michelle stated, *"I am an independent woman right now because I can survive even with no parents beside me, even if I know there is something wrong."* On the other hand, Sarah and Jacob express their confidence in autonomy.

*"The important to me is it will not affect my studies no matter what the two of them do (her parents fight)." *– Sarah.

"I can do it without them, uhm, that is okay. I can be a better person without them; I can live. Without them, I don't need their hugs, their advice, because I know. Even though I do not have my parents with me, I have many friends who make me happy. I have my aunt, who talks to me now and then. I just enjoy my life like duh! I do not care about them anymore."– Michelle.

"...Even though I do not have family, through this organization, I feel empowered" -Jacob

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The study of Amato and Sobolewski (2001) shows that children from broken families often learn to be more self-reliant and autonomous due to the need to navigate their own lives independently. Hetherington, et al. (1992) suggest that individuals from broken families often develop a strong sense of independence and self-protection as a result of their experiences, allowing them to tackle challenges and make decisions autonomously.

Subtheme 1.3: Self-Improvement and Realization

This subtheme encompasses self-improvement and realization among college students from broken families. These resilient individuals demonstrated a commitment to personal growth and development, adapting and making significant changes to acclimate to their circumstances. They recognized that their family situations affected their physical and mental improvement. Furthermore, the subtheme of realization highlights their self-awareness and caution regarding relying on others. These college students realized they could not solely depend on others and developed a strong sense of independence. Their

realizations stemmed from their life situations, which ultimately led them to embrace and cultivate their own independence. For instance, Michelle, Sarah, and Jacob shared that they endure bad experiences, but these experiences make them independent in life amidst life situations. These are their experiences:

> *"I can do it without them, uhm, that's okay. I can be a better person without them, I can live. Without them, I don't need their hugs, their advice, because I know. Even though I don't have Mom and Dad, I have a lot of friends that make me happy. I have my aunt who's there for me. I just enjoy my life like duh! I don't care about them anymore."*– Michelle.
>
> *"The time goes by; we have adapted to the fact that mom is not here."* – Sarah.
>
> *"Life is normal and then, once your family is broken, there is change, that everything will change…It will change like you are used to being together. Mean, it is not at all, but you are used to being with your mom, and then you're with Dad and then suddenly they're gone and everything has changed."* - Jacob.
>
> *"The usual things that your mother was there and clean (the house), your mother is in your house and take care of you, they are the usual things that you do every day, are you suddenly it changed."* – Jacob

The participants' experiences were related to the study by Amato, Meyers, and Emery (2009), which suggests that children from broken families often demonstrate the ability to adapt and adjust to their circumstances, leading to positive outcomes in their personal and academic lives. A study by Masten (2001) found that individuals who have experienced family disruptions often exhibit resilience and engage in self-improvement strategies to overcome the challenges associated with their broken family backgrounds.

Also, three participants shared their experiences coping with the situations they faced and coming up with life realizations that make them more decisive in life. These are what they have shared:

> *"So far, from my experiences, I know that the broken family is not good."*– Jacob
>
> *"It's probably for me; I do not want a husband like my dad, hahaha, that is all. (laughter)"* – Sophia
>
> *"I have no one to be there for me."*– Olivia
>
> *"I said to myself that I am alone; I really don't have a family like I am alone"*– Jacob

The participants' experiences are related to the study by Amato and Cheadle (2005), which suggested that individuals who had experienced parental divorce or family disruptions often become cautious about relying on others and develop a sense of self-sufficiency. On the contrary, Lebow et al. (2012) argue that broken families may develop a greater appreciation for the importance of interdependence and support in relationships. It suggested that the experience of a broken family can foster a deeper understanding of the need for reliance on others, leading to a more cautious and intentional approach to building and maintaining relationships.

Theme 2: Struggle and Emotional Turmoil in Challenging Circumstances

This theme delves into the struggles experienced by college students from broken families, encompassing challenges such as a lack of communication and understanding,

negative emotions, mental strain, and financial difficulties. It also explores their experiences of harboring negative feelings and emotions towards their family situation, including despise, grievance, blaming, hatred, anger, and grudges. Additionally, this theme highlights the uncertainty and non-acceptance that college students from broken families grapple with in various aspects of their lives. They experience feelings of doubt and struggle to accept their family situation fully.

Subtheme 2.1: Adversity and Lack of Communication/Understanding

This sub-theme focuses on the adversity and lack of communication/understanding experienced by college students from broken families. These individuals face difficult and challenging experiences that can be painful, troublesome, and intolerable, leading to trials and tribulations. For instance, five participants shared and portrayed the tough experiences they endured. They had different experiences in their family, such as difficulty coping with the situation and moving on, traumatic experiences, etc. These are their statements regarding their experiences:

*"*In the past, it's quite difficult because, of course, we do not have a mother that time." – Sarah.

*"*Then they also know about the situation that Mom cheated, they even know on our mom's birthday (laughter) it's a bit painful because we all discovered that she cheated." – Sarah.

"*There is a lot of challenges."* – Michelle
.

*"I ha*ve come through a lot of difficulties and challenges. If they have a hard time, I also have a hard time if they are tired. I am also tired if they are not okay. I am not okay, even worse – Jacob.

*"*Until we actually saw mom and dad fighting in the act, my older brother just fought back and punched dad. Then, in the morning, until that they used weapon to fight against each other." - Anna

*"*That is where my struggles in life started…I also have carried my biggest problem in my life." – Jacob
.

"It is not easy to move on in a situation like that."– Anna

*"*Well, frankly speaking, it is difficult."– Olivia

*"*Well, there is a big factor: lapses. We cannot say it is perfect, so there are always lapses. I cannot say how great it is, but because there are lapses, like everything, there are lapses, so it is not enough; I understand why it went like this, there are lapses or gaps."– Olivia.

The participants' experiences are related to the study by Wallerstein and Lewis (2004), who showed that children from broken families often encounter significant difficulties and challenges in various aspects of their lives, including emotional well-being and academic success. These challenges can be overwhelming and impact their overall development. A study by Amato and Keith (1991) found that individuals from broken families often face hardships and struggles due to the disruption of their family systems, leading to negative consequences on their well-being and adjustment.

Moreover, the lack of communication and understanding within their families becomes a significant hurdle for these college students, resulting in strained and unsupportive family dynamics. They may experience mistreatment and disconnection within their family, further exacerbating the challenges they face. For instance, Sarah said *"*The two of them are the same, and dad, they always fight... We get involved in their fight because it seems like our father's anger will be poured out on us". Furthermore, Sarah also stated that *the "*Time comes that it has been a while since she did not call us-like it was like those months that our communication was cut off."

According to research by Hetherington and Kelly (2002), children from broken families often face challenges in communication and understanding within their family systems, leading to strained relationships and a lack of emotional support. A study by Amato and Booth (1997) suggests that the breakdown of communication and understanding within a broken family can contribute to increased conflict and negative interactions among family members.

Subtheme 2.2: Negative Emotions and Mental Strain

This subtheme explores the emotional and psychological challenges college students from broken families face. These individuals experience negative emotions such as sorrow, brokenheartedness, feelings of undeservingness, discomfort, and resentment due to their family circumstances. These emotional struggles are closely intertwined with the mental strain they encounter. College students from broken families may experience mental instability, trauma, and mood problems and find their overall experiences mentally taxing. The combination of negative emotions and psychological challenges further underscores the difficulties these individuals face as they navigate their lives and strive for personal growth and well-being. Anna, Olivia, Jacob, and Sarah relayed messages pertaining to how their emotional being was affected due to their family situation, and these are the messages.

*"*It is painful to think that we came back because our youngest died." – Anna.

*"*Like your name will be called and you will be given a ribbon by your mom or dad, but that never happened to me, so for me, it's one of the saddest parts, like I don't have any parents to support me for my achievement. They are there, but we can't do anything because they are not there for me. So don't force it because that's reality."– Olivia.

*"*I can say don't deserve this, I don't deserve this and I even said one time to my dad, don't you think I am looking for parents, no its you dreaming for children." – Jacob.

*"*We grew up that I was able to see, we ran away to the huts and slept there. Because that means we can't handle it anymore with mom and dad."– Anna

*"*It is very painful that your family end up like that." – Jacob

*"*I was angry with my mother because of no communication, even if it's their birthday, they forget it (pertaining to her siblings"– Sarah

*"*Because I am a very open person. I understand the things that happened; it is like there is nothing more, nothing less, but there are times when I feel like I am having a breakdown, thinking about my family situation, but only sometimes." – Olivia.

The experiences of the participants are related to the study by Wallerstein and Lewis (2004), who indicated that children from broken families often experience negative emotions such as sadness, anger, and resentment as a result of the disruptions and changes in their family systems. A study by Amato and Keith (1991) suggested that individuals from broken families may struggle with emotional well-being and experience distressing emotions due to the challenges associated with their family backgrounds.

Three participants precisely expressed how they suffer and manage their mental issues, such as depression, trauma, mood swings, etc., which are crucial to their mental health. These are their experiences:

"Because during that time I was depressed because of our situation, I do not know how to feel, the important to me, I am just breathing, I am going to school"– Sarah

"No, maybe I am traumatized. I do not like that my future family will be broken, that is all." – Sophia

"Sometimes when my mother has a problem, my mood changes, and everyone around me is affected by my behavior."– Sophia

"On my side, it is painful to think about why we are in this position." – Anna

According to a study by Amato and Cheadle (2005), individuals from broken families were at higher risk for mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, due to the strain associated with their family backgrounds. Research by Masten et al. (2005) suggested that children from broken families experienced higher levels of psychological distress and exhibited symptoms of trauma as a result of the disruptions in their family systems.

Subtheme 2.3: Financial Challenge and Uncertainty

The subtheme of financial challenge sheds light on the economic difficulties faced by college students from broken families. These individuals often encounter financial constraints and experience instability in their financial situations. They may struggle to meet their basic needs, face limited resources, or have inconsistent income, adding stress and uncertainty to their lives. Two participants clearly relayed their experiences regarding how their financial status affected their situation, being in a broken family. For instance, Jacob said, *"The lack of financial support from the father causes you to have a hard time at school because you don't have money."* Furthermore, Sophia also said, *"Mostly I'm good with my mom, as long as I'm with my mom mostly financial problems."*

The experiences of the participants are related to the study by McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), who indicated that children from broken families are more likely to experience poverty and financial instability compared to those from intact families. These financial challenges had a wide-ranging effect on their well-being and opportunities for academic success. A study by Amato, et al. (2009) suggested that financial strain resulting from family disruptions contributed to additional stressors for individuals from broken families, further impacting their social and emotional well-being.

Subtheme 2.4: Condemnation, Doubt, and Non-Acceptance

These subthemes collectively explore the complex emotional landscape experienced by participants from broken families, including condemnation, doubt, and

non-acceptance. These subthemes collectively illustrate the profound emotional impact of growing up in a broken family. Participants experience condemnation, doubt, and non-acceptance, which shape their perceptions, emotions, and overall outlook on life. Understanding these subthemes provides insight into the complex journey individuals from broken families face as they navigate their past, present, and future.

The subtheme of condemnation delves into the intense and negative emotions participants harbor towards their family members and the circumstances that led to the fragmentation of their family. Participants may experience despise, grievance, blaming, hatred, and anger and hold grudges as a response to their broken family. These emotions run deep and reflect the complexity of their feelings towards their family situation. These powerful emotions reflected a profound negative evaluation and judgment of their overall family situation and its impact on their lives. For instance, Sarah mentioned:

"There is a lot of hatred, like our twins, like for example when neighbor asks "how is your mother" and they say "we do not care whether she would come back" you know both of them have the same attitude." In addition, Sophia stated, "For me, it's just me because I hate him. I put a hatred as if it's theirs something... I really don't like him; I really hate him." Furthermore, Michelle, Jacob, and Anna express their hatred towards their parents.

"Like if only my mom and Dad were there, I wouldn't be able to experience this."
- Michelle
"As I grow up, I see more the factors or reasons why they separated, that's when I hate them, I'm angry with my dad, I am so angry with my dad that I even talk back to them" - Jacob.
"Is it because they broke up? That is why they cannot blame me. I have this strange feeling of anger... a little hatred" - Anna.

The experiences of the participants were related to the study by Wallerstein and Blakeslee (2003), which suggested that children from broken families developed feelings of anger and resentment towards their parents or the circumstances that led to the family breakdown. These negative emotions persisted into adulthood and impacted their well-being. A study by Amato and Sobolewski (2001) found that individuals from broken families experienced a sense of blame towards their parents or themselves, leading to feelings of anger and grudges. This condemnation can influence their attitudes and behaviors in various aspects of their lives. A study by Amato and Sobolewski (2001) found that individuals from broken families experienced a sense of blame towards their parents or themselves, leading to feelings of anger and grudges. This condemnation influenced their attitudes and behaviors in various aspects of their lives.

The subtheme of doubt focuses on the participants' uncertainty and lack of confidence in various areas of their lives stemming from growing up in a broken family. They may question their abilities, prospects, relationships, and personal identity due to their instability and challenges. Doubt becomes a significant factor influencing their self-perception and decision-making processes. They questioned their abilities, decisions, and prospects. For instance, Jacob stated*:*

*"*I wonder what my life would be like if they weren't separated…Why didn't they fight even this time that the only reason is that debt where they should have been

paid it, they are capable of resolving it… But the negative part of the changes that I have encountered is trust—I lost trust."

In addition, Anna, Michelle, and Sarah feel doubt). Furthermore, Anna and Michelle also showed a feeling of doubt.

"What can we do when they did not choose us? All we need is a happy family." – Anna.

"Could it be that am I also happy-because it seems that there is a part of me that is jealous of your cousin."– Michelle

"Of course, they are little people, so they are still confused; they think that there is nothing, that mom just left (her mom has been sent away) and maybe she will come back"– Sarah.

Taking further, the study of Amato and Keith (1991) indicated that children from broken families experienced self-doubt and lower self-esteem due to the disruptions and challenges they faced. This uncertainty impacted their overall personal development and decision-making processes. Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) suggested that individuals from broken families were more likely to question their worth and abilities, leading to doubts about their future and goals.

The subtheme of non-acceptance highlights the participants' struggle to accept and fully accept their family situation. They may resist or deny the reality of their broken family, feeling a sense of not fitting into societal norms and expectations. Non-acceptance is a barrier to embracing their circumstances and moving forward. In one instance, Anna said:

But it is hard to accept that your situation is like that. Because of course we have to look for parents that we can be close to... It seems like nothing happened, but deep inside, I am the only one who blames myself for nothing happened; I do not belong to that thing. I am a complete family, and I should always be happy. No, it is like I am wearing a mask to hide what's really inside of me... But that's just looking for fun to make you forget for a while."

Moreover, Jacob and Michelle expressed their feelings of non-acceptance.

"I mean, my mom and dad's separation bothered me, because I cried for almost a month so that's like, I'll be quiet for a while, and then I will start crying again" – Jacob.

"It is really hard for me, especially financially, because yes, I grew up with my auntie, but there are times when I am too shy to keep asking for money. Because for me, I put a gap even though she is my auntie, for her it's okay I put a gap in it."– Michelle.

This is supported by the research of Amato, Kane, and James (2011), who found that children from broken families struggled with accepting and adapting to the changes in their family structure. This non-acceptance contributed to feelings of confusion and identity challenges. Amato and Sobolewski (2001) suggested that individuals from broken

families experienced a sense of not fully belonging due to societal stigmatization and the perception of their family structure as deviating from the norm.

Theme 3: Wanting

This theme explored the desires and longings experienced by college students from broken families. It encompassed their feelings of jealousy, acceptance, positive outlook, longing for parental love and care, yearning for parents' care, longing for parents, and expectations.

Subtheme: Wanting

The subtheme of wanting to be focused on the participants' desires and aspirations related to their family situation. They experienced jealousy towards individuals with intact families while seeking acceptance and maintaining a positive outlook despite their circumstances. Additionally, they long for parental love and care, yearn for their parents' presence, and have expectations for their family relationships. In an Instance, Olivia stated, *"Especially if I saw a family that will gather, the kids together their parents, that completely has father, mother, and then children. So, on my part, the jealousy is there… Because I am a very open person. I understand things that it's like nothing more, nothing less...for me is acceptance. What is the reality, is the reality so accept it. So, what is going on, that is it, accept it... We cannot do anything, we can't return the time because of course, we'll leave differently. We can't force my mother or father to live together just for their child's sake, which makes me so accepting. That is why it has a way; most importantly, I can advise myself."* Sophia said, *"Actually, it is just my opinion because a broken family is difficult for others, but for me it's okay."* Furthermore, Anna also mentioned *"I didn't see, but if that's the reason, maybe it is okay than seeing my parents who are no longer happy together."*

These participants' experiences are related to the study by Tarroja (2010), who found that children from broken families also experienced family situations such as jealousy, acceptance, and a positive outlook despite their circumstances.

Theme 4: Indifference

This theme explored the experiences of college students from broken families who are indifferent to their family situation. It encompassed their lack of regrets, emotional detachment, nonchalant attitude, carefree demeanor, unaffected, uncaring, and indifference towards their broken family.

Subtheme: Indifference

The subtheme of indifference focused on the participants' lack of emotional investment and concern towards their family situation. They exhibited a nonchalant attitude, carefree demeanor, and an overall sense of being unaffected and uncaring about their broken family. For instance, Anna said, *"We can't blame our parents for our situation."* In addition, Michelle and Sophia showed their positive experience regarding

their family situation. Also, Michelle said, *"Last year, when I was in my 2nd year, she asked about me, but it feels like she's not my mom. It's like she's just plastic, but I don't feel like she's really my mom."* and lastly, Sophia supported this, and mentioned that "I'm really chill to the situation, I'm not a party goer either... I'm also addicted to movies. If there's a problem, I only eat food...that's why it's probably nothing if it's only the effect."

These experiences of the participants are related to the study by Amato and Keith (1991), who suggested that individuals from broken families developed a sense of emotional detachment as a coping mechanism to deal with the challenges and disruptions they have experienced. This indifference can be a defense mechanism to protect themselves from further emotional distress. A study by Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) found that some individuals from broken families displayed a carefree and nonchalant attitude towards their family situation, as they had adapted to the circumstances and focused on their personal growth and well-being. According to a study by Hetherington and Kelly (2002), some individuals from broken families may exhibit an indifferent and uncaring demeanor towards their family situation, possibly due to resilience and the ability to separate themselves emotionally from the family dynamics.

Description of the Participant's Experiences

The participants exhibited a range of experiences that were characterized by different themes. Participants experienced Resilience and Growth in Challenging Circumstances, where they displayed a lively and enthusiastic approach toward their experiences, expressing a strong desire for self-reliance and autonomy. They emphasized their need for freedom and the ability to make decisions and act independently, striving for personal growth and self-fulfillment. A significant aspect of the participants' experiences was that, despite facing various challenges, they consistently maintained an optimistic mindset. They focused on the positive aspects of their experiences, approached them with a constructive perspective, and found opportunities for growth and learning.

However, not all experiences were characterized by positivity. The theme of struggle and emotional turmoil in challenging circumstances emerged as participants encountered obstacles and difficulties. They faced various challenges that tested their resilience and determination. Despite the hardships, participants demonstrated a strong commitment to overcoming these obstacles and persevering toward their goals. In some instances, participants experienced condemnation towards their parents. They expressed anger and hatred as the condemnation created additional barriers to their progress. Many expressed feelings of ambiguity and doubt, grappling with a lack of clarity from the situation they experienced. The uncertainty created a sense of unease and insecurity, making it challenging for participants to accept and navigate their circumstances, leading to a lack of confidence. Participants expressed a desire or longing for something different from their experiences. They felt incompleteness or unfulfilled needs, driving them to seek further growth and fulfillment of love and care from their parents. Lastly, some participants exhibited indifference towards their experiences. They displayed a lack of interest, apathy, or detachment, suggesting a disengaged or disinterested attitude. This indifference may have been influenced by various factors, such as disillusionment or a perceived lack of relationship and communication with their parents. These themes shed light on the diverse range of emotions, attitudes, and challenges individuals encounter in their journeys.

Conclusions

The findings emphasized the importance of a holistic and compassionate approach to supporting students from broken families. Educational institutions and communities needed to prioritize addressing these young individuals' emotional, financial, and social needs. Creating welcoming and supportive environments that recognized and addressed their unique circumstances and strengths is crucial in helping them reach their full potential and become the best versions of themselves. By offering comprehensive support, it could empower these students to overcome obstacles and thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

Based on the summary of findings and conclusions derived, the researchers formulated the following recommendations:

1. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) may consider expanding its social welfare programs and enhancing support services to better cater to the needs of vulnerable families experiencing separation or breakdown. This may involve developing special financial assistance programs for college students from broken families and establishing targeted welfare programs. By implementing these enhancements, the DSWD may effectively fulfill its mandate and provide comprehensive support to distressed students.

2. The Department of Health (DOH) may collaborate with mental health professionals to integrate mental health services into primary care settings. This may include increasing access to mental health support, raising public awareness of healthcare services to address the concerns of individuals' mental health, and launching public education campaigns. By taking these steps, the DOH may ensure that individuals, specifically students facing broken families, receive the necessary emotional support and medical care they require.

3. The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) may implement a wider employment program for students from broken families. Additionally, the DOLE may offer support services, provide information on labor rights, facilitate job placement and vocational training, and enforce compliance with labor laws to address the financial needs of broken households. These improvements empower individuals, especially those impacted by family dissolution, to find work, build their careers, and attain financial security.

4. Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may expand the range of services offered to the public by allocating funds and other resources to family-beneficial social welfare initiatives. This may involve housing developments, healthcare services, education, and financial support programs. Additionally, it may include the development of laws and policies about social welfare, healthcare, education, and other issues affecting families. NGOs may bridge service delivery gaps left by the government by providing a wide array of services, including livelihood initiatives, counseling, community development programs, disaster assistance, and strengthening and empowering individuals from broken families. NGOs may shape policies and programs by advocating for family welfare programs, raising awareness of family-related issues, gathering resources, and engaging in meaningful conversations with government organizations.

5. Local community organizations may establish support groups specifically tailored for individuals going through separation or broken relationships. These groups may provide a sense of community, emotional support, and an opportunity to connect with others who have experienced similar challenges. Local community organizations may also organize outreach initiatives that offer financial and emotional support to needy families, such as providing food, clothing, temporary housing, or other necessities. Additionally, they may offer parenting classes, gatherings, or seminars to help parents navigate the complexities of co-parenting after separation. These programs may offer guidance on nurturing children's well-being during and after separation, effective parenting techniques, and communication skills.

6. The church may provide guidance, consolation, and spiritual counseling to individuals and families who are shattered or separated. Churches can serve as safe spaces where people can express their emotions, seek guidance, and find solace. Additionally, churches may offer family life education programs and workshops that provide valuable guidance, skills, and resources to strengthen family bonds, enhance communication, and navigate the challenges of brokenness or separation.

7. The Jose Rizal Memorial State University may consider implementing the following enhanced and rearranged recommendations to support students from broken families:

   a. Provide Counselling services: The institution may offer access to school counselors or mental health professionals who may conduct individual or group counseling sessions. These dedicated professionals can assist students in navigating their emotions, coping with challenges, and developing resilience. Additionally, they can create a safe and supportive environment where students can freely express their feelings and concerns.

   b. Prioritize financial aid programs and scholarships: The university may prioritize students from broken families when considering eligibility for financial aid programs and scholarships. By allocating resources specifically for these students, the university may help alleviate their financial burdens and ensure equal access to education. Scholarships should take into account their personal circumstances, resilience, and determination, in addition to their academic achievements.

   c. Foster partnerships with external organizations: By collaborating with local businesses, foundations, and community organizations, the university may establish scholarships or sponsorship programs tailored to students from broken families. These partnerships may provide financial support, mentorship opportunities, or internships that enhance students' educational and career prospects.

   d. Provide need-based support: Developing a comprehensive system to assess the financial needs of students from broken families may be crucial. This system may consider household income, the number of dependents, and additional financial responsibilities. Using this information, the university may tailor financial support programs and resources that effectively address their needs. Waive or reduce application fees: To alleviate the financial burden

on students from broken families during admission, the university may consider waiving or reducing application fees. This gesture may foster equal opportunities for these students to access higher education.

    e. Adopt a holistic admission approach: Embracing a holistic admission process that considers the unique circumstances of students from broken families may be beneficial. By looking beyond academic achievements and considering factors such as personal essays, recommendation letters, and interviews, the university may evaluate the students' determination, resilience, and potential for success. This approach may help identify students with different educational opportunities but demonstrate the drive to overcome challenges and succeed.

8. Conducting separate studies may validate the findings presented in this research. Given the limited amount of published research and literature on the lived experiences of students from broken families in the Philippines, additional studies may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of these experiences. Such studies may support the development of appropriate interventions and policies to address the specific needs of students in broken families and promote their well-being.

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