

# Secondary School Students in Foster Homes: A Phenomenology of Academic Struggles

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**Abstract:** *The main objective of this phenomenological investigation was to document the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of the students in foster homes. The study was conducted in Tambongon National High School, Municipality of Pantukan, Division of Compostela Valley among students who were living in their foster homes for the school year 2015-2016. The usefulness of this study is highly relevant to the struggles and success of students from foster homes. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the fourteen students who have shared that in their foster homes, they experienced insecurity and have self-doubt, misery and isolation, psychological challenges, and their academic concerns are not well attended since they cannot study on time. Findings suggest that the participants' coping mechanisms on their academic struggles were the support system, inspiration of the parents, the drive and determination, being positive and belief in the Divine Providence. Their insights include having persistence and perseverance, the guiding values and principles, dreams and aspirations and their realizations and appreciation and forgiveness. The real identity of the participants and the data were kept confidential for ethical consideration.*

**Keywords:** educational management, foster homes, phenomenology, qualitative research, secondary school students, Philippines

## 1. Introduction

Education basically starts at home whose parents are the first teachers. However, students in foster homes were not originated from intact families to experience such freedom and opportunities in their lives. Apparently, statistical data of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services of 2008 shows that every year more than 500,000 children are placed in foster homes. While, these students living in foster homes can be with their relatives or non relatives. In turn, when these children are removed from their own homes, they experience frequent movement from one home to another. Thus, every new home had new environment and new community, in which these children need to suit themselves every time this occur (Allen, 2012; Caldwell, 2013; Indyk, 2015).

Moreover, the America's youngest outcasts (Bassuk, De Candia, Beach, & Bernard, 2011) reported that students in foster care score 16–20 percent and below their peers in state standardized testing. Whereas, below 60 percent of these students finish high school. Consequently, after high school graduation, there are only 3 percent have interest in attending post-secondary education. Indeed, there are also to 42 percent of the children do not start school immediately after entering foster homes for the reason of missing records and other irregularities with the previous institutions they have attended. Hence, research shows that children in foster homes are results of poor social outcomes, high delinquency rates, high teen birth rates, and lower earnings (Bruskas, 2008; Doyles, 2007; Lee, 2015; Simms, Dubowitz, & Szilagy, 2000).

Filipino people were known of placing great value on the family which plays a vital role in the Filipino culture. The state itself recognized family as the foundation of the nation as stated 1987 Philippine Constitution. Article II, Section 12

of the constitution states that: "The State recognizes the sanctity of family life and shall protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. Wherein, economic revolutions convey new social modification as the concept of the conventional family continues to be altered and conceived. Globalization has produced international employment opportunities for migrant workers, especially females, as increasing numbers of Filipinos are sacrificing themselves to work abroad to support their families back home (Asis, 2006; Baliao & Parcon, 2011; Coloma, 2012; Macapagal et al., 2013).

The family's vital function was modified when a husband and wife are detached for long time. The wife chose to work abroad leaving her children behind and jeopardized the function of the father. Herewith, Filipino students have the same adverse effects to the children around the world when their families were not intact and they ended up under the care of a foster families whether with relatives or with close family friends (Barberos, Gozalo, & Padayogdog, 2016; Reyes, 2009).

I have read various studies about foster children, but none of them dealt with an investigation particularly in qualitative phenomenological approach just like the study that I have undertaken. Therefore, this fills in the research gap, and of social relevance considering the contribution it provided to the beneficiaries of the study. This study hopes to help the secondary school students in foster homes cope the stress that they have experienced and open the mind of the school administrators to address the problems of these students in their academic struggles.

I am a teacher and a mother at the same time. Being a secondary school teacher, I am not responsible only of imparting knowledge to my students, but I also embrace the

care of their behavior, emotion and values. As a teacher and a mother, I observed that there are students who are in struggle of their academic undertakings and are sometimes observed lonely. I tried to ask one and answered me that she has no parents to attend to her school needs. The scenario has motivated me to offer this study.

This study hopes to help the secondary school students in foster homes cope the stress that they have experienced and open the mind of the school administrators to address the problems of these students in their academic struggles. This study also helps to strengthen the relationship between homeless students with their working mother. Lastly, for the secondary school students in foster homes to understand and treasure the effort of their mother.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to document the stories or experiences of children in foster homes in Tambongon National High School, Tambongon, Compostela Valley Province for the school year 2015-2016. The study also dealt deeper on their coping mechanism, and insights of the children in foster homes and how they dealt with their academic endeavor. The participants of this phenomenological study were the secondary students who were living with their relative, grandparents and close family friends, whom their biological parent entrusted them without proper arrangement and guardianship. They were the children of an OFW, single parent due to teenage pregnancy or early marriage, dead marital spouse, broken, separated and divorce families.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study are the following:

- 1) What are the experiences of secondary school students in foster homes?
- 2) How do students in foster homes cope with their academic struggles?
- 3) What are the insights of the secondary school students in foster homes?

### **Theoretical Lens**

The study of students in foster homes was basically anchored on Bowlby's Attachment Theory. This theory sheds light on the importance of the relationships between parents and child. Basically, students in foster homes experience disruption in their parental attachment even in their younger age. In fact, psychological research stresses that this primary relationship could lead to a higher incidence of juvenile delinquency, emotional difficulties and antisocial behavior. As a result, these students in foster homes, who were removed from their biological home and experience frequent movement from one home to another, is generally associated with numerous disruptions in attachment relationships. Hence, these losses and lack of permanence weaken a child's attempt to form a secure attachment with a primary caregiver. Furthermore, disruptions in attachment relationships can lead to Reactive Attachment Disorder of Infancy or Early

Childhood (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), a disorder in which the child exhibits severe disturbances in relationships with caregivers.

Consequently, the theory of containment introduced by Reckless can concur to the theory of attachment in studying the students in foster homes. Since adolescents in foster homes experience parental disruption, they are subject to criminal behaviors (Bowlby, 1969) as a result of their unguided moments. Whereas, it was hypothesized that they can be protected from crime if properly socialized by their parents and peers, and control their selves, that is what containment theory mean. To Reckless, these structural factors around the individual served to contain the youth against delinquency and crime (Bernard, 2016; Kempf-Leonard & Morris, 2012).

To protect further these students, the policy makers augmented republic acts for the safety of these children. In the Convention on the Rights of Children together with Universal Declaration of Human Rights, children as humans have equal rights as adults do and received equal protection of the law from any form of violence and discrimination. However, although they were given the rights, these students suffer from poverty, homelessness, abuse, neglect, preventable diseases, unequal access to education and justice systems that do not recognize their special needs (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005; Government of the Philippines, 2007; Lamberte, 2002; Manasan, 2002; Wessells, 2009).

Henceforth, the child protection policy addresses the special needs of these students. Their rights include proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions that are harmful to their development (Yacat, 2011). Nonetheless, the Department of Education (DepEd), in partnership with stakeholders, will guarantee that all schools are beneficial to the education of students. DepEd has adopted the policy to provide special protection to students who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances which affect their normal development and over which they have no control, and to assist the concerned agencies in their rehabilitation.

Beside from protection they have received, this study shows that students who were affected by the disruption of the parental attachment should be helped to enhance their personality and become a good and productive citizen of the community. The Self-Efficacy Theory of Bandura could be used by these students in foster homes as a motivating factor to see life in its positive side. Certainly, their self-esteem should be boosted for them to attain capabilities to manage and perform probable conditions. Definitely, self-efficacy is what an individual believes he or she can accomplish using his or her skills under certain circumstances, thus, self-efficacy functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Lunenburg, 2011; Nevid, 2009; Van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2002).

Another theory which integrates homeless that have experience by the students in foster homes is in the theory on Evolving Schemas which forms the mental structures that will function as guides to making decisions and shaping their future. The evolving schemas of homeless children need to assimilate and accommodate to new experiences to influence healthy

outcomes. It will not be enough to wait until these homeless children are disturbed adolescents and adults and then focus on conditions that are comorbid with homelessness. Therapy for homeless persons, aimed at personality problems, substance abuse, and social adjustment problems. They conceptualize this as a form of schema therapy (Crane, 2016; Graziano, 2013; Griffiore, Phenice, & Miller, 2012; McPhee & Poli, 2001; Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003).

Since the students in foster home performed poorly in school as studies show, the Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1992) is probably the most influential contemporary theory with implications for academic motivation. In this theory, the students are strongly motivated by good performance. It incorporates behavior modification in the sense that it emphasizes the idea that learners are strongly motivated by the pleasant outcome of being able to feel good about themselves. An important assumption of this theory is that people will interpret their environment in such a way as to maintain a positive self-image. That is, they will attribute their successes or failures to factors that will enable them to feel as good as possible about themselves. In general, this means that when learners succeed at an academic task, they are likely to want to attribute this success to their own efforts or abilities; but when they fail, they will want to attribute their failure to factors over which they have no control, such as bad teaching or bad luck (Amato, 2010; Bandy & Moore, 2008; Caldwell, 2013; Sklar, 2014).

I have chosen these theories for they are related to the concept of my study, since this deals on how the children in foster homes dealt with their academic struggles without parents around them and their insights as well. This explains that safeguarding the physical safety of these children is not enough to say that they are secured. Though, solutions are not easy but it is important also to address the mental health needs of young children in foster care.

Foster home is a terrifying place for children, even if the family whom one came from is a chaotic one. Foster children have no power over their lives, which can cause continual insecurity. They do not know how long they would stay and where they would be going the next month or the next year. Thus, their strong belief to God has given them the strength to survive and continue to live with their foster family. Amidst the world being turned upside down, the children in the foster homes spear their life believing on the miracle that God would shower to them the guidance to succeed (Lee, 2012; Allen, 2008; Bandy & Moore, 2008; Ball et al., 2005; Yamaguchi, Strawser & Higgins, 1997).

In such a way, they preserved and never gave up on their situation. They never lose hope and continue moving on so not to stay miserable. Kids in foster homes are just like any other child that one knows. The only difference is they suffer trauma and loss through no fault of their own. They have dreams and unique potential as children and seek for some opportunities. What makes them unique also is their demonstration of resilience and perseverance to be responsible and contributing members in the society (Barr, 2008; Geen, 2013; Henslin, 2004).

Hence, being humble, patient, staying focused and having faith in God is their guiding values and principles (Bandy & Moore, 2008). Mizerek and Hinz (2004) stress that the children in

foster homes survived because they left on their own with the initiative to work for stability with principles of good values. Their dreams and aspirations in life are to finish their studies so their parents will be proud of them. Moreover, Milne et al. (2006) explicated that these children often survive through being self-reliant to support their ambitions and dreams in life. This has given them pride in their independence. At the end, they realized the difficulties growing up without their parents beside them. The life in foster homes can be extra ordinarily challenging and deceptive to kids and teens and separated from families are great disturbance. This is an indication that parents should have a close tight with the children (Berns, 2013; Lee, 2012).

Besides, children open their hearts in giving gratitude to their foster parents and forgiveness to their parents which conceives to the statement of Yamaguchi, Strawser and Higgins (1997) that some children are lucky to stay and work with families who care about them. It is adequate that amidst the situation, their foster families have poured in the love which is left empty by their parents. This would lead the children to forget the heavy experience they have in their original homes. Of course, single parents, as well as adoptive parents, foster parents, and other parents who do not have a link through genetics or pregnancy to their children can also develop positive relationships and strong attachments with their children (Golombok et al., 2006).

For the biological parents before they make decisions in leaving and entrusting their children under the care of their relatives or friends they should consider the emotional and psychological needs of their children. When it is essential for the child to experience an attachment disruption, it is necessary to maximize the possibility of children to experience sensitive and responsive care with the alternative caregivers (American Psychological Association, 2015; American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000; American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

### **Significance of the Study**

The usefulness of this study is highly relevant to the struggle and success of students from foster homes. It is beneficial to the informants themselves as they were able to share their respective issues on the secondary school students in foster homes. This study would somehow give them the chance to pour out their sentiments and share even their success stories. Other students of the same background could likewise consider this research as an advantage for the reason that they could relate more to the situation. Definitely, this study could be taken as a reflection instrument which would help them move forward and be courageous to face the challenges in life. The results of this study could be an inspiration to those who were undergoing problems and difficulties with their own families. Based on the findings of the study, it could formulate results which would be the bases for future research particularly on children's behavioral and academic concerns. The recommendations on different strategies to be presented would help address the problem of children who are under the care of their relatives.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined for better understanding:

- **Academic Struggles.** This refers to the experiences of the students as they go into schooling without their real mothers and fathers attending to their needs (Lawrence, Carlson & Egeland, 2006).
- **Care givers.** This refers to the persons who care for the children with or without legal custody (Bromfield & Osborn, 2007).
- **Foster Homes.** It refers to the families that are still able to take relative children into their homes informally but they are not eligible to receive foster care payments and do not have service systems set up to meet nonmonetary needs (Testa & Cohen, 2010).
- **Attachment Theory.** The theory on biological relationship and attachment of mother and child (McLeod, 2007).

### Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This phenomenological study was delimited to discovering the views and experiences of homeless students in their academic struggles. The data of this study were limited only to the responses and experiences of the student participants who were identified under the care of their relatives since their parents are not around. Thus, this study was confined to the results of the in-depth interviews of students in foster homes.

There were limitations in the study as the data and results were gathered from the interviews and observations used to generalize the whole population. This study was conducted with fourteen students, living in foster homes under the care of their relatives, and who were studying in Tambongon National High School. There are approximately 800 students enrolled in school year 2015-2016. Therefore, this is a tiny proportion of the population of students in foster homes, taken from a relatively small geographic location that cannot be said to be representative of Compostela Valley Division, or Davao Region as a whole.

The groups are highly unrepresentative of students in foster homes as a whole. Furthermore, it cannot be said to be generalized. However, though there were no observed differences between the children in these groups, it cannot be said that this constitutes strong evidence of their similarity, especially because only fourteen students interviewed were in the care of a relative informally (Messing, 2006; Silverman, 2005).

### Organization of the Study

This study was organized and arranged in an order, which can easily be identified and comprehended by the readers. Below are the comprehensive presentation and discussion of the organization of the study.

Chapter 1 is the inclusive presentation of the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical lens, significance of the study, definition of terms, delimitations and limitations of the study, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 includes readings on the concepts, ideas and insights coming from various sources of previous and present

studies conducted by different researchers and authors with regards to the secondary school students in foster homes.

Chapter 3 presents and discusses the method and procedures in preparing to conduct the study, in collecting data, in organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data. Herewith are the research design which guided the researcher in the quest to solve problems under study, role of researcher, research participants, data collection, and analysis, trustworthiness and credibility, and ethical consideration.

Chapter 4 reveals the generated themes in tabular forms, detail reflecting the general, typical and variant answers of the participants. Also, it presents summary of the responses of the in-depth interview and the focus-group discussion.

Chapter 5 presents discussion and summary of the key findings, implication for practice, implication for future research and the concluding remarks that speaks to the essence of the study and its inspiration for the researcher.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents a review of works related to the topic. In order to ensure effective review of the literature, the chapter therefore was organized under the following; Conceptualization of: Quality Life in Foster Homes, Children and their Foster Homes, and Social Issues and Students Academic Attainment.

### Quality of Life in Foster Homes

Living in a foster home is somewhat frustrating on both children and foster parents. Children transferred from their own home and were placed in foster home is a terrible and a traumatic experience for any child. For the children, foster home is a scary place. Hence, they came from a muddled family they can still be shocked with the present situation. Health, behavioral, and emotional problems can be traced throughout their lives. Likewise, the child who is not grown with love, particularly those who grow with such troubled family usually boasts a developmental problem. Therefore, emotional or psychological problems occur because they grow up in a constant state of fear which lost trust, autonomy and social competence (Lee, 2015; Caldwell, 2013; McMillan, 2010; Frerer, Sosenko & Henke, 2013; Testa & Cohen, 2010; Barbour, Barbour, & Scully, 2008; Fagan, 2007; Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2002).

In the twenty-first century, foster system faces serious challenges with social problems and issues in the society with its increasing number of child and family poverty, unemployment, homelessness, AIDS victims, substance abuse, broken families and violence. These have negative effects on families with great impact on the child's well-being the same as with child welfare (Vinokur, Holtan & Valentine, 2009; Conway & Hutson, 2007; Chimpungu and Bent-Goodley, 2002). Whereas, the 2008 U.S. Conference of Mayors' Study pointed unemployment, poverty and lack of affordable housing were the common causes for homelessness (Iaccino, 2014; Fagan, 2007).



Contrary to the recent report on the Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR) by 2015, one a single night of this year, 564,708 people were experiencing homelessness in across the country. This is based on the Part 1, which was released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Overall homelessness has decreased by 11.4 percent since 2010, when the Administration set ambitious goals to end veteran and chronic homelessness in five years and family and youth homelessness in 10 years. Though, it is always hope to see large decreases from year to year, from 2014 to 2015, overall homelessness remained mostly unchanged, decreasing by just 2 percent (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016; Doran, 2015; Henry et al., 2015).

The Republic Act 10165 as Foster Care Act of 2012 was established for the foster care program in the Philippines but the Filipino ways of living arrangement still observed. A study was conducted in its locality, traditional families were apparent as a result. Raising children outside formal foster care system without legal custody of the caregivers were prevalent. There were no statistical data to support regarding the legality of the kinship care families but rationally relatives do not care about legal custody. Other families saw that the process is somewhat troublesome and they cannot afford. It was expected that the children will return to their biological parent (Foster Care Association of Philippines, Inc., 2015; Yangco, 2015; McGeown, 2011; UNICEF, 2010; Study of Child Poverty and Disparities, 2009; PBS.Org, 2009).

For the foster parents, to be a legal guardian for the relative children they brought up only makes gap between their family ties which filed is against the biological parents who entrusted their children under their care. (Lee, 2015; Testa & Cohen, 2010; McHugh, 2009). But, these procedures are usually extensive and perceptively difficult for those who were involved. Thus, the court must arrive to a conclusion with regards to the suitability of the parents and the welfare of the child. The entire process and its conclusion would lead the family relationships into a chaotic situation, rather than reinforcing them (Testa & Cohen, 2010; McHugh, 2009).

Children in living in their relative face many challenges with regards to their well-beings which usually came up with lack of legal relationship with their caregivers (Berrick, Barth, & Needell, 2015; Goodman, 2009; Chipungu & Bend-Goodley, 2002). Hence, to have no legal guardian can hamper their privilege to avail government assistance intended for the children in foster homes which include financial assistance, housing program, medical care, health benefits, and educational assistance (Farmer & Moyers, 2008; Casey Family Programs, 2007; Bromfield & Osborn, 2007).

### **Parental Roles of Foster Parents**

Studies have shown that children who have loving and sensitive foster parents adjust better to childcare and school setting than children who don't. Being warm and caring towards your children sends them good messages, builds your relationship and helps your children develop (Lee,

2012; Magaña & Myers-Wall, 2013; McLeod, 2007; Kidd & Kral, 2002). Childcare advocates recognized the children's securities when they were with their relatives. This facilitates strong emotional attachments, strengthening children's sense of belongingness and self-esteem, have constant links with their family culture and family members and hampering their trauma with strangers. Looking after the child's welfare, agencies prioritized relatives for potential care givers with those children who cannot live with their biological parents (Goldberg & Carlson, 2014; Craft, 2015).

Consequently, Simms, Dubowitz, & Szilagyi (2000) accentuated that because these children have suffered significant emotional stress during critical periods of early brain development and personality formation, the support they require is reparative as well as preventive (Seefeldt, 2010; Sklar 2004). Whereas, keeping children within their extended family may reduce the stigma and trauma of separation from parents and family.

In view of that, parents before leaving their children must have a living arrangement in which a relative or another person who is emotionally close to the child must take on primary responsibility for raising their children. For this reason, children placed with relatives remain more connected to their biological parents, extended families, communities than putting them in unfamiliar foster families (Chipanungu & Bent-Goodley, 2002).

Furthermore, relatives often served as alternative or supplementary caregivers when biological parents were unable to care for their children. Henceforth, child welfare agencies increasingly consider relatives as the first placement choice when foster care is needed and a relative is available to provide a safe home (de Guzman, 2014; Pecora & Pecora, 2008; Wittmer & Petersen, 2006).

The most difficult aspect of foster life is parenting, most demanding jobs a person can presume (Ayoub, Valloton, & Mastergeorge, 2011). Relationship in a foster home as a gift relationship, the foster parents' willingness to look after their relatives is motivated by factors other than self-interest (Farmer & Moyers, 2008). Relative caregivers are more likely to be single, poorer, older, and have less formal education than non-relative foster parents (Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, 2009).

Dunne and Kettler (2007) believed that due to the conflicting development stages, it is easy for the foster families to handle young children than those adolescent. In addition, the Family Rights Group (2007) stated that it is more advantage when there was a prior connection between the child and the potential care givers. However, in this scenario, the relatives were more preferable. Children have difficulties in their adjustment period were those children from divorce family background, they respond negatively because the family condition inflict confusion with the psychological stability of these children (American Psychological Association, 2015; Gold, 2011; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen & Sekino, 2004).

There are tips on strengthening relationships between the child and the foster parents. In the early stage, foster parents should teach the child about their faith and beliefs. They should tell them what they believe and why. They must give time for the child to ask questions and they must answer them honestly. Foster parents should reinforce their teachings often. In doing this, it is a one way to strengthen the relationship between foster parents and children (McClure, 2016; Testa, 2013; Jerve, 2008).

Children need to belong and live in families. They need caring and sensitive adults in their lives. Parents were usually the first people a child learns to trust. Parents and families were the most important people in children's lives. As a childcare provider, they are important, too. If children have strong and supportive families, they probably will have a strong relationship with their foster parents as well (Craft, 2015; Goldberg & Carlson, 2014).

To sum, foster parents as caregivers are often required to provide love and securities for children in their care that their biological parents cannot provide, with fewer resources, greater stressors, and limited preparation. This research suggests that foster homes policies and practices should give full attention to the many loopholes with traditional care giving which is still practice until today.

#### ***Social-Parental Issues and the Coping Mechanisms of Students***

A study conducted by Burchinal, et al. (2002) showed that children's academic achievement is affected by several parental factors. Parent's struggles, their daily difficulties and stress levels can have cascading effects on children. School readiness mentioned by Dotterer, Iruka & Pungello (2012) is one of the parents' attributions in providing quality home environment and involving literacy activities with their children. If parents engage their children in positive discussions about education, they can facilitate successful transition to school (McWayne et al., 2004).

Most leading social issues as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, AIDS victims, substance abuse, broken families and violence are reasons for children's detrimental development. Other reasons were disability, death or prolonged illness of parents; rejection by parents; and family breakdown causing abandon, cruelty and maltreatment of children (Hunt, Waterhouse & Lutman, 2008; Dunne & Kettler, 2007). Children were sent to residential facilities for education purposes. It said that these could have negative effects on both biological and foster and with great impact on the child's well-being the same as with child welfare (Duffield, 2013; Family Rights Group, 2007; Dacanay, 2006; Chimpungu and Bent-Goodley, 2002).

**Poverty.** In most countries, poverty was an obvious reason for children entering alternative care. There would be a direct or indirect impact of poverty to family functioning, parent-child interactions and most of all was children's development. Education was limited to those families living in a poverty line. When families were secluded and with economic and emotional instability, there is a higher threat of negative child health and behavioral effect. When all these

threat came together, family care giving is threatened. This could depressingly affect children's verbal communication, thinking, and social-emotional development. Assessment must be done such as solid support, social acquaintances, and improved communication skills, and programs, these would help balance the threats (Dacanay, 2006; Chimpungu and Bent-Goodley, 2002; Family Rights Group, 2007; Farmer & Moyers, 2008).

**Homelessness.** National Law Center 2007 reports on Homelessness and Poverty, approximately 1.35 million children together with 3.5 million people become homeless each year. Despite of the number persistently homeless found in of Hartford, Connecticut or Waco, Texas. Most of the population was temporarily homeless (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009; Wilder Research Center, 2003; US Conference of Mayors Study, 2008).

There were 1.2 million homeless students during the 2011-12 academic year, from preschool all the way through high school. That's up 10% from last year and 72% from the start of the recession, according to the most recent data available from the National Center for Homeless Education, which is funded by the Department of Education (Facts about the Effects of Child Homelessness Horizon for Homeless Children, 2015; Bassuk & Geller, 2006;). Homeless students were often on their own by the time they reached secondary school age. Administrators frequently referred to these older homeless students as unaccompanied youth. Unaccompanied youth may have more struggles than homeless students living with their foster families, and many dropped from high school (Ellis, 2013; Family Housing Fund, 2009; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009; US Conference of Mayors Study, 2008; Wilder Research Center, 2003).

It was noticed that almost 12% of homeless children were not enrolled in school and up to 45% did not attend school regularly and their poor attendance was a significant indicator for dropping out, thus, resulting to a poor academic achievement (American Psychological Association, 2015; Yamaguchi, Strawser & Higgins, 2001). Research indicates that 43% of homeless students repeat, another 25% were placed in special education, and 50% were failing academically. Other data revealed that only one-third of homeless students read at grade level compared more than half of their of those same age level (Rescorla, Parker, & Stolley, 2008; Bassuk & Rubin, 2007).

Even in college, homelessness was still a problem and this getting higher every year. Duffield (2001) specified that 58,158 college applicants indicated that they were homeless on federal financial aid forms from 53,705 in the previous year. And that number was probable understated as well, since several families did not realize they fall into this category or don't want to admit to it. Nuclear form of families was given a primary attention in formulating school policies which can cause barriers for the relative's families specifically those who have no legal guardianship. In several states, school did not require children to have a legal guardian in order enroll but for the purpose of validity, they

should have residency restrictions (Bassuk & Geller, 2006; Geen, 2013; Oswald, Heil & Goldbeck, 2009; Money, Olive and Smith, 2009).

However, others still require the caregivers to present documents to show the legality of being their foster parents to these children (Farmer & Moyers, 2008). They required these foster parents for the security of the school and the children as well. Thus, requiring proof of legal custody or guardianship will also help the children being raised informally (Farmer & Moyers, 2008). These districts require this proof to prevent families from shopping for a particular school and arranging for children to live in that district during the school week or school year solely in order to attend that school. In addition to preventing abuses of the system, requiring proof of legal custody or guardianship also has the effect of preventing children who are being raised informally by relative caregivers from attending school (Ellis, 2013; American Psychological Association, 2015).

As school come within reach of foster parents to promote successful modification and determination by engaging children in joint school activities together and sharing exciting conversations about educational topics supported with the idea that being homeless which affects students in so many ways varying by the circumstances and age of the child. Children age seven to twelve were much better at expressing emotions and accepting parentage breakage, but adolescents often distrust their parents, rely on outside help and support for encouragement, and may manifest social and academic problems (McWayne et al., 2004; Mizerek & Hinz, 2004; Jones-Hardin, 2004; Fields and Fields, 2008; Miranda, 2006).

Affectionate, responsive, and approachable care giving provides the foundation for healthy brain development and increases the probability for success in school. Foster families can employ in everyday learning activities, even with very young children, and help them develop lifelong inspiration, perseverance, and be keen on learning (McLeod, 2007; Dunst et al. 2006).

**Parents' Separation or Divorce.** This hamper learning by distracting dynamic study patterns as children were forced to move between residences, and by growing apprehension and dejection in both parents and children. Moreover, by the fact that children whose parents were separated had lower rates of graduation from high school and college and also completed fewer college course (McLeod, 2007; Cui, Donnellan & Conger, 2007; DeGenova, 2007; Foulkes-Jamison, 2013).

Repeated relocation of these children emerged to play a large role in their poorer performance, regardless of family background. It was of great positive effect to the children in foster homes when their foster parents were concerned for school attainment, volunteering at school, and involvement in the child's school work (Leon & Sprengler, 2014; Lee, 2012; Burton, 2012; Tronick & Beeghly 2011; Jerve, 2008; Golombok et al., 2006).

Children who witness the separation of their parents suffer psychological stability. Instantly upon the breakup of their

families, children experience feedback varying from annoyance, panic, and depression to longing, anxious, rejection, incompatible loyalties, lowered assurance heightened anxiety and loneliness, more depressed moods, more suicidal thoughts, and even more attempts to commit suicide (ChildFocus, 2014; Brophyll-Herb et al., 2009; Chiang 2008; Cox & Fafchamps, 2007).

**Single-Parent.** Absence of father answered the address of one-parent families. The mother who had left behind to attend the needs of the children had to work double time to patch up the pit of financial stability left by the father. The mother becomes the instant breadwinner. She tends to work day and night leaving her children to the care of the grandparents, relatives and friends. *Single-parent or unwed mother had a hard time coping up the responsibilities of establishing a family. This included the nurturance of the children especially during their childhood.* Bowlby claimed that mothering is almost useless if delayed until 12 months there is a critical period (Goldberg & Carlson, 2014; Mooney, Oliver & Smith, 2009; McLanahan, 2008; McLeod, 2007; Miranda, 2006).

Having one parent deprives the students of economic, parental, and community resources, and in turn undermines future chances of success. Low income is probably the most important factor in the lower achievement of children from single parent homes. Single parenthood can bring added pressure and stress to the job of raising children. With no one to share day-to-day responsibilities or decision-making, single parents must provide greater support for their children while they themselves may feel alone (Goldberg & Carlson, 2014; Sklar, 2014; Thompson, 2014; Woodward, 2015; Berns, 2013; Milne et al., 2006).

Social support was one of the greatest protective factors against parental stress, depression, and low self-efficacy (sense of competence). This leads to positive parent outcomes such as feeling capable as a parent, positive ways of understanding children's temperament and development, and overall parenting satisfaction (Simpson & Rholes, 2008; Testa, 2013; Toro, Dworsky & Flower 2007). Advocacy groups said continuing economic struggles were causing more students to end up with foster families. It means they were staying temporarily with someone else or living with their relatives because they have nowhere to live, (CNNMoney, 2013; Allen, 2012; Lee, 2012; Amato, 2010; Bandy & Moore, 2008; Cheng, 2008; DeGenova, 2007; Cameron, 2007).

Subsequently, when these children attended secondary school, they were often hesitant and secluded; usually feel out-of-the-way and detached from school. To the point that in the school they were always ashamed and estranged from their classmates in other ways. Comparably, these homeless students were apt to have lower confidence and higher levels of apprehension than their peers. It was prevailing that they felt rejected, have a low self-respect, and estranged. The teachers need to make effort that lead the students into a life which is big, full, inspiring and satisfying. In such a way they were motivated with the values, needs, desires and want as other students do inside the classroom (Barberos, Gozalo, &



Padayogdog, 2016; Leon & Sprengler, 2014; Allen, 2012; Doyle, 2007; Miranda, 2006; Yamaguchi, Strawser, & Higgins, 2001).

Moreover, being homeless affects students in so many ways, varying by the circumstances and age of the child. British study reports that fatal abuse of children of all ages occurs three times more frequently in foster families than in intact married families. Recent study shows that depression, poor social skills and negative behaviors like anger and aggression all occur more commonly in children who have spent time in the foster-care system. Sometimes foster children also have a higher rate of growth abnormalities and a larger number of health problems than children not in foster care, but they might not differ from children who remained with impoverished biological families (Sklar, 2014; Lee, 2012; McMillan, 2010; Lawrence, Carlson & Egeland, 2006; Jones-Harden, 2004). In summing up, studies point out that 30 percent of foster children have severe emotional or behavioral issues that make family life challenging.

Filipino family is the basis of social associations and individuality. The interest of the family is valued over that of the individual, although cultural values emphasize that the well-being of the family would contribute to the happiness and interests of the individual (Macapagal et al., 2013; Coloma, 2012; Baliao & Parcon, 2011; Arguillas & Williams, 2010). Obviously, the absolute innermost of family life and the significance of family loyalty, obligation, and interdependence are posed by every Filipino. These values are supported by a family structure and kinship ties that echo the multicultural Pilipino heritage. Not like other western countries, extended family in the Philippine society is the basic unit. Further, extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins may also live in the same house and assume vital roles (Macapagal et al, 2013; McKay, 2012; Coloma, 2012; Kagitcibasi, 2007).

For the reason of this remarkable blood relationship, parents have complexity of letting go of their children which results to having them stay for as long as they want. For this one way or another explains why grandparents are usually seen living with their children. Contrasting the way people grow old in the west where they are provided with outside home and care giving. Filipino old folks enjoy their lingering their lives inside their houses surrounded with children and grandchildren care them. Moreover, Filipinos keep strings attach with other relatives. They get acquainted with them form 2<sup>nd</sup> degree to the last they can name. As Filipino say, "not being able to know a relative is like turning their backs from where they come from" (McKay, 2012; Kagitcibasi, 2007; Zulueta, 2005; Zirpoli, 2008; Wagner, Spiker & Linn, 2002).

The mentioned readings, concepts, insights and ideas from the different authors have relevance to my investigation since they served as the springboard in the conceptualization of the study as to the formulation of the research questions, anchored theories, and in the support to the various procedures I did in gathering the responses of my participants. Moreover, the Review of Related Literature provided support to the results and findings of the study, and

finally, it will serve as the references for future study that maybe undertaken by other researchers.

### 3. Method

This phenomenological study documented the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of the secondary school students in foster homes. Presented in this chapter is the methodology used which includes the research design, role of the researcher, informants of the study, the method of data collection, data analysis and interpretation, trustworthiness, and credibility and its ethical considerations.

#### Research Design

The study utilized the qualitative phenomenological in design. It documented the stories of children in foster homes. It is qualitative phenomenological for it documented the children's academic struggles, coping mechanisms, and living in their foster homes. The finding of the phenomenological research is a description of the essential structure of the experience. It contributes to deeper understanding of lived experiences. This methodology is the most suitable for the exploratory study on the experiences of the children living in foster homes. Furthermore, described phenomenology is a low balancing, in dwelling, meditative philosophy that glories in the concentration of person world relationship and harmony life experiences.

The purpose of this at phenomenological approach agrees the idea of Lester (2009) is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. In the human understanding, this normally translates into gathering deep information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participants (Smith, 2013; Baac, 2008; Creswell, 2008; Patton, 2008).

Phenomenology is a research approach of investigation in which the researcher identifies the real meaning of human experiences about an occurrence as illustrated by participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2009; Willis, 2007). Groenewald (2004) also mentioned that the operational word in phenomenological research is to describe as precisely as possible the phenomenon, avoid doing from any advance framework, but lingering true to the facts. The phenomenologist is concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved (Patton, 2008; Rowan & Huston, 2007; Crotty, 2006; Husserl, 2005). Methods that can be used in phenomenological research are interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano, 2007).

Phenomenology finds meanings on how it appears and reaches at the heart through perception and indication on conscious acts of experience, leading to ideas, concepts judgments, and understandings. The experiential phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience. A phenomenological research



design provides an understanding of the themes and patterns portrayed by the study's participants. The participants in the study will be asked open-ended interview questions, such that their specific experiences can be identified (Creswell, 2013; Adams et al., 2007; Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2007; Creswell, Plano & Vicki, 2002).

Phenomenology seeks to describe basic lived experience. For the very nature of a phenomenon for that which make a something what it is. As a research method it is the study of essences. The essence of phenomenon is universal which can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon. Research using phenomenology seeks to uncover the meanings in our everyday existence. Its ultimate aim is the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are (Creswell, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Merriam, 2009; Rowan & Huston, 2007; Husserl, 2005).

Phenomenology is commonly understood in either of two ways: as a disciplinary field in philosophy or as a movement in the history of philosophy. The discipline of phenomenology may be defined primarily as the study of structures of experience, or consciousness. Literally, phenomenology is the study of phenomena: appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. This studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view. This field of philosophy is then to be distinguished from, and related to, the other main fields of philosophy: ontology (the study of being or what is), epistemology (the study of knowledge), logic (the study of valid reasoning), ethics (the study of right and wrong action), etc. Phenomenology as a social science analytical is a perspective or an orientation. It is often restricted to the characterization of sensory qualities of seeing, hearing, etc. what it is like to have sensations of various kinds. However, experience is normally much richer in content than mere sensation (Lester, 2009; Milne et al., 2006; Neuman, 2006; Husserl, 2005; Henslin, 2004; Harper 2000).

In addition, phenomenological qualitative type of research contains epistemological, ontological and methodological premises that elucidate it and termed as paradigm or an interpretative framework, a basic set of beliefs and guides actions (Groenewald, 2004). Interpretative framework is guided by the sets of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood. Hence, the study of Willis (2007) uses phenomenology as a research methods framework.

Phenomenology traditionally gave a much broader area, looking unto the significance of the human experience, particularly, the implication of the objects and other things including timeline which arise and come unto reality. Primarily, phenomenology focuses on the composition of a variety of experiences from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity. Husserl (2005) called it as intentionality a form of experience naturally involves the directedness of experience toward things in the world, the property of consciousness that it is a consciousness of or about

something. The discipline of phenomenology is defined by its domain of study, its methods, and its main results (Smith, 2013; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2013; Smith, 2009; Husserl, 2005; Stanford Encyclopedia, 2003; Pope & Mays, 2000).

In phenomenological study, the purpose of interviews is to make access to participant life experience. In conducting interview, the researcher will listen to learn from the participant who has the expertise of his own experience. In this view point, there is an interesting conversation between the participants and the interviewer leading in the discussion of a particular experience the participants willing to share (Adams et al, 2007; Neuman, 2006; DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004).

### **Role of the Researcher**

I took the roles of designing, interviewing, transcribing, verifying, reporting, thematizing, and analyzing. Upon choosing the topic, the actual interview was audio recorded and field notes were also employed to complement the recorded review. I also asked the assistance of a note taker, audio recorder/documenter and they were requested to assist me. The next thing done was transcribed the audio recordings after the interview is done. The transcription was done in verbatim fashion for an easy and a manageable way of scrutinizing and probing the content. Analyzing the data was the next step, where the data gathered were coded and each participant was assigned to a code and aliases were employed to hide their identities. The data were subjected to the data analyzed for the final analysis including the documents being gathered.

I am a teacher and a mother at the same time. As a teacher, I am not responsible only of imparting knowledge to my students, but I also embrace the care of their behavior, emotion and values. As a teachers and mother, I observed that there are students who are in struggle of their academic undertakings and are sometimes observed lonely. I tried to ask one and answered me that she has no parents to attend to her school needs. The scenario has motivated me to offer this study.

### **Research Participants**

In this phenomenological study, the participants were 14 secondary school students in foster homes who were studying in Tambongon National High School, Tambongon, Pantukan Compostela Valley in 2015-2016. I knew and have personal contact with my informants since I am one of their teachers.

I interviewed these 14 student informants on their life experiences in foster homes and how they dealt and coped up with their academic struggles. I recruited them as my informants through personal contact as suggested by Boyce & Neale (2006). Patton (2008) explained that the informants must feel comfortable so I asked my informants on what time and where can we have our interview so that they felt comfortable in sharing their life experience if they were the one to choose the time and place were set when and where the meeting must be done (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Lochmiller & Lester, 2016; Hancock, Ockleford, & Windbridge, 2007).

Creswell (2013) stressed that in determining the place to conduct the interview, find, if possible, a quiet location free from distraction (Husserl, 2005; Pope, 2000; Baac, 2008). Ascertain if the physical setting lends itself to audiotaping, a necessity, in accurately recording information (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windbridge, 2007).

The participants were recruited through personal contact with the interviewer. In qualitative research, the informants should be well informed of the interview to be done (Boyce & Neale, 2006), the time and place were set when and where the meeting to be done (Lochmiller & Lester, 2016; Patton, 2008; Creswell, 2013) and the interviewer's preferred the place (Boyce & Neale, 2006) and time that the informants suggested to their own convenience (Lochmiller & Lester, 2016; Hancock, Ockleford, & Windbridge, 2009).

In the interview, I made sure that the ambiance was suited for the discussion so that the participants would feel at ease in giving their responses. To ensure the confidentiality, I ensured that informed consent form was given to them and they agreed on the ground of the interview. This was to establish the rapport between the interviewer and the participants (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Groenewald, 2004; DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004).

My informants were the students who were staying with their relatives or close family friends because their biological parents were not around to attend their daily needs. They could be from divorce or separated parents, single-parent due to teenage pregnancy, death of marital partner, and whatever causes that they ended up living in a foster home (Smith, 2013; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) and the parents who have the custody went to work locally or abroad to surpass the financial instability of their family (Berns, 2013). These children who have left behind experienced difficulties in dealing with their foster parents (Berns, 2013).

My 14 secondary school student participants, seven for the in-depth interview and another seven for the focus group discussion, who were purposively selected by me and my colleagues, gave a brief introduction below to give few details on how and why they were in foster homes. Numbers one to seven are the participants in the in-depth interview and numbers eight to fourteen are the participants in the focus group discussion.

Participant 1 preferred to be called Ara Mae. She was with her grandparents when she was 3 months old. Her parents were separated before she was born. Her mother brought her home, to her parents and went back to Cebu and now married to another. Ara Mae did not know her father since birth and seldom see her mother. She had known her grandparents to be her parents from the start.

Participant 2 wanted to be known as Zynne. Three years ago, she and her father were forced to leave her mother because of some conflict. Her mother was left with her parents in Sulu. She cannot stay with her father in one roof, so, she was forced to stay with her uncle and auntie, which she did not like.

Participant 3 was Shazmeen of her own choice. She lived with her grandmother when she was still 6 months old. She loves her grandmother because her grandmother treated her as her own daughter. She felt awkward to live with her father and stepmother. She was not comfortable staying with his father new found family.

Participant 4 was Solenn. He liked lady's name because he behaved like a lady, a gay. Solenn was 18 years old but still in junior high school particularly in Grade 10. He stayed with his grandmother together with his aunties in the house. His mother went abroad after they separated with his father. They were all left under the care of his grandmother.

His grandmother cannot accept the situation, always brought the issue to them as children. Solenn, though mature to understand the situation, was affected. He got sick frequently and stopped his schooling.

Participant 5, Bella. She was still five months old when her mother left her father. Her father needed to work, so, she was left to her grandmother. She said she liked her grandmother and thankful because she treated her nice. She was treated like her child.

Participant 6 got her name as Ara Shane. She was hopping from one foster home to another. When her father died, her mother became hopeless. She was 8 years old and still in grade two. Her mother cannot take care all of them while having work. So, her mother brought her to her grandmother together with her younger siblings. She needed to stop schooling to care the younger ones and it took 2 years to go back to school.

She did not like the way her grandmother treated her. She felt maltreated so she left and went to her auntie. Her auntie was so busy and was not able to attend her needs even in her schooling. As such, she did not like the husband of her auntie especially the way he looked at her, for her safety, she run again to her other auntie. She felt safe, but her cousins did not like her to be in their house. She fitted herself to become part of the family.

Participant 7 preferred to be called Lilay. When she was 2 years old, she and her elder brother were left under the care of her grandfather. Her mother went abroad to work. She was transferred from one school to another for four times due to some circumstances. She was an achiever student and loved sports. She was active in joining curricular and extracurricular activities with the support of her mother. She wanted her mother to be proud of her. She longed that their mother would be home with them.

Participant 8 used a pseudonym Geinel. She is fifteen years old and on Grade nine level. She started staying with her grandparents when she was ten years old. She said that her mother got pregnant during her teens and now went abroad to sustain her needs. She was happy staying with her grandparents and got higher grades in her schooling.

Participant 9 liked to be named Joy. She was fifteen years old and attended Grade nine. She was nine years old when

left under the care of her auntie because they were busy in their work and they didn't have time to take care of her. She was sad staying with her auntie but she was doing well in her studies.

Participant 10 was Cristine. She was seventeen years old. She was still three years old when her parents separated and was left to her grandmother. She was grade ten and struggling with her studies. She had a hard time doing her school work.

Participant 11 was referred to be called Kathryn. She was sixteen years old and started living with her uncle and auntie when she was still two years old. Her father had another woman and her mother raised her alone. So, her mother needs to work as an OFW and left Kathryn to her sister.

Participant 12 liked her pseudonym Siesiekie which sounds like a cartoon character. She was a fifteen years old and grade 10 student. She started living with her grandmother when her mother left her father. She was doing fine with her studies. She was happy though her parents were not with her.

Participant 13 was Marian. She was a sixteen years old and a grade 10 student. She was living with her grandmother when her mother went abroad to work. She was happy to be with her parents than her grandmother. She was not doing fine with her school work because she used to have her mother helping her.

Participant 14 wanted to use Danielle as his pseudonym. Danielle was fourteen years old and a grade 10 student. He was left to his auntie and uncle when he was still nine years old. At time his parents separated, her mother went abroad and left Danielle to her sister. He was happy with his auntie and uncle but missed his mother which made him sad. He studied hard to make his parents proud of him.

I employed the purposive sampling method for it involved only students who were living in foster homes. Purposive sampling was widely used and popular in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Purposive sampling is the most effective technique when one needs to study a certain family background with knowledgeable experts within participant's selection is highly relevant for this research as people are constantly looked upon for knowledge and information. Choosing the purposive sample is fundamental to the quality of data gathered (Neuman, 2006; Patton, 2008; Palinkas et al., 2015).

### **Data Collection**

I ensured that the steps to gather data were done properly so that lesser barriers in the analysis and interpretation were observed. I made sure that the persons I wanted to interview were available and that I could get a direct contact with some participants. The first thing I did was to ask the permission to conduct the study from the fourteen identified students under foster homes. The participants were informed through personal contact. Since they were children under the guidance of their foster parents, I also talked to their guardians and explained the purpose of my study.

Participants were given a chance to read the purpose of my study before the formal interview (Boyce & Neale, 2006). There are a variety of methods of data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). The most common methods in research are interviews and focus groups. Qualitative data collection methods involve providing information useful to understand the processes behind observed results and assess changes in people's perceptions (Smith, 2013). Moreover, it is necessary for a researcher to understand the nature of the research and the reason to conduct the study so it would be easier to introduce and request permission to the informants to conduct the study and involve them in the quest (Willis, 2007; Smith, 2013; Patton, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Going into the process of my study, I developed and established good rapport among my participants, for I was seeking a support and approval for my study to be possible. I deemed that these relationships are the fundamental to the logistics of setting up my study. To acquire permission to have access to my potential participants, I sought permission from the Schools Division Superintendent with a request letter. I also talked to the guidance Counselor for me to be given the favorable consideration on the conduct of my study.

Before the interview, I made sure that permission was already granted by the Schools Division Superintendent of Compostela Valley permitting me to undergo the study. The informed consent of the key informants was a good measure also to signal the start of the data collection. Target participants were also identified in advance so I can start making positive relationships with these women involved. I deemed that these relationships are the fundamental to the logistics of setting up my study. This constant communication created an ambience of understanding not only between me and the school but also with my student participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

After all the necessary requisites had been facilitated, it is essential that I had a personal appearance with the school authorities and foster parents of the children to formally give them my identity and my purpose of conducting the study. To make personal commitment to protect the identities of the people involved with whom I have to interact. Confidentiality of information has to be maintained to ensure that particular individuals can never be linked to the data the schools have provided (Mack et al., 2005).

Further, participants were all oriented that the interview was recorded and each of them was given a copy of the interview. Then, I assured that the process was in a manner sensitive to individuals. Creswell (2008) emphasized that phenomenological study involves the widest array of data collection as the researcher attempts to build an in-depth picture of the case.

As a result, the question and answer sessions went well dealing with the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of secondary school students in foster ho. The numerous outlines and devices that I applied during the conduct of the interviews furnished my participants



supplemental awareness and judgment about their participation in my study. Everything that transpired during the course of conversation was put into record through audio recording which provided the precision of the data collected. The recorded audios were copied out word for word to confirm the reliability and integrity of the interview (Creswell, 2012; Holloway, 2008; Harper, 2000).

### Data Analysis

Categorization of information was the next move after the data were collected (Merriam, 2009). The purpose was to identify any patterns representing concepts the participants represented during the data collection phase. Thorne (2000) mentioned that data analysis is the most complex and mysterious of all of the phases of a qualitative project, and the one that receives the least thoughtful discussion in the literature.

This study made use of the thematic analysis in analyzing the collected and gathered data. The objective was to identify any patterns representing concepts the participants represented during the data collection phase. Data were then organized into logical categories that summarized and brought meaning to the manuscript of notes. Specific codes were developed allowing me to categorize the responses into the above-mentioned construct, while identifying emergent themes (Silverman, 2005).

Thematic analysis as stated by Boyatzis (1998) and Rouston (2001) as a method of analyzing and reporting the pattern of themes with the data. Thematic analysis is flexible and what researchers do with the themes once they uncover them differ based on the intentions of the research and the process of analysis. Many researchers use thematic analysis as a way of getting close to their data and developing some deeper appreciation of the content (Silverman, 2005; Streubert, 2000; Boyatzis, 1998).

This theory requires the researcher to look into a more involvement and interpretation of the case. Thematic analysis involves focusing on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, which is the theme. Mack et al. (2005) added that thematic analysis is considered as the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research following the concept of Boyatzis (1998).

Moreover, I followed the steps such as familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes and constructing the report. To transcribe is a beginning of the analysis process. To analyze means to separate something into parts or elements (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is a process that involves making meaning of information that the researcher has obtained (Merriam, 2009).

To familiarize the data, I listened to the recorded interview of my participants and transcribed them so that it would be easier for me to code the data after. I read the data several times to familiarize the responses and to identify easily the common answers given by my participants. Then, I grouped the common answers and found out several themes, which I

narrowed down into just few ones. I employed the data reduction which means deleting the unnecessary data and modifying them into useful material for the study so that the readers can understand it. In this study, I sorted out, organized voluminous qualitative data for me to be able to merge and categorize the data easily. To display the data in an orderly and organized way, data display was used. Data display is an organization of data showing them through matrices, charts, and graphs that enable the reader to draw out their ends (Boyatzis, 1998).

### Trustworthiness

I addressed trustworthiness of my study by utilizing the different strategies to meet the four issues of trustworthiness that demand attention: credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability as mentioned by Shenton (2004). Trustworthiness is the quality achieved in the study if the data collected is applicable and consistent. Trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased maintaining high credibility and objectivity (Suter, 2006; Gay & Airasians, 2003; Richards & Schwartz, 2002).

To address credibility, I employed the following techniques: First, I made an early securitization of the profile and background of my participants with the culture of the participants before the data collection. This was achieved during the preliminary visits with the schools where these participants studied. Letters were sent to the head of the schools stating the purpose of the study. Only those who met the requirements were included in the list. Third is to apply the triangulation method where observation, focus group discussions and individual interviews were utilized. Then I applied the different techniques to ensure that the participants honestly gave the information needed for the study. It is very important that the researcher developed a good relationship with my student participants so that they would not get apprehensive in giving accurate information. This was following the concept of Shenton (2004) saying that these methods are useful to saturate data.

Furthermore, dependability is an assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same result. Thus, the research design may be viewed as a "prototype model". It is supported by Streubert (2000) that dependability is a criterion used to measure trustworthiness in qualitative research. Dependability is met through securing credibility of the findings.

Transferability implies the totality of the findings and results of the study to other settings, situations, populations, and circumstances. This is the quality we have been calling "external validity" in our use of the setting in to research design. Transferability in the naturalistic researcher maintains that no true generalization is really possible; all observations are defined by the specific contexts in which they occur (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Crotty, 2006; Shenton, 2004).

**Ethical Consideration**

To establish ethical considerations, I followed the ethical steps as suggested by Boyatziz (1998) such as respect for persons, beneficence, justice, consent and confidentiality. Ethics has become a cornerstone for conducting effective and meaningful research (Drew, 2007; Ellis, 2007).

The participants of my study were individuals who were under my protection, so I should develop trust among us. As stressed by Neuman (2006) in writing a research, the researcher must take into account the various ethical issues, concerns, dilemmas and conflicts that arise during the process. Ethics defines what is or are not legitimate to do or what moral research procedure involves. It is often a balance between two values; the pursuit of scientific knowledge and the rights of those being studied (Boydell, 2007; Shenton, 2004; Richards, & Schwartz, 2002).

Respect for persons is an obligation of the researcher not to exploit the weakness of the participants. To establish respect for persons, I asked permission from the Schools Division Superintendent Compostela Valley for me to be able to proceed to my study. The participants were also given an informed consent so that their willingness to get involved in the study was sought.

To establish beneficence, I asked the convenient time of the student participants for the in-depth interview and their preferred place where they can freely express their thoughts about the study (Ellis, 2007). Each of them was given the informed consent before the set date and time of the in-depth interview. Beneficence as mentioned by Creswell (2012) requires a commitment of minimizing the risks of the participants rather maximizing the profits that are due to them.

To establish confidentiality, I ensured that the true identities of the participants were hidden. The video tapes, encoded transcripts, notes and other materials were destroyed after the data were analyzed. This step has been suggested by van der Westhuizen (2002) stating that privacy with respect to information that the key informants disclosed during participation in the study will be protected within the limits of the law. In the study, to protect the identity and anonymity of my participants, I used numbers instead their names during the interview and in the transcription (Shenton, 2004; Ellis, 2007).

Participants of the qualitative research must be given due credits for all their contributions. To establish justice, I made sure that the participants did not spend any amount for I acknowledged their contribution to complete my study. The participants were provided snacks and accommodated properly.

**4. Results**

This chapter presents the, experiences of teachers in areas with unstable peace and order, their coping mechanisms and their insights. Their responses were taken from the In-depth interview and Focused Group Discussion that I conducted

from the seven key informants and seven participants anchored on the three basic questions I raised:

- 1) What are the experiences of high school students in foster homes?
- 2) What are the coping mechanisms of students in foster homes?
- 3) What are the insights shared by the students in foster homes?

This chapter is divided into three parts: Part 1 is the participants' data from which the qualitative data were collated. Part 2 is the analysis procedures and the steps in the categorization of the emergent themes from the result of the in-depth interview and FGD questions under each research problem and Part 3 is the summary of responses.

**Participants In-Depth Interview**

There were seven informants in my focus group discussion, five are females and two are males. The informants ages from 14- 18 years of age, 3 of them are currently in the ninth grade and 4 are in the tenth grade. These informants differ in ages as to when they started in foster home. The details are shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Profile of Informants in In-Depth Interview**

Participant	Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Grade Level	Age Started in Foster Home
D1	Ara Mae	14	F	G-9	3 mos. old
D2	Zynne	15	F	G-9	12 yr old
D3	Shazmeen	14	F	G-9	6 mos. Old
D4	Solenn	18	M	G-10	12 yr old
D5	Bella	15	F	G-10	5 mos. old
D6	Ara Shane	16	M	G-10	8 yr old
D7	Lilay	16	F	G-10	2 yr old

**Focus Group Discussion**

The focus group discussion comprises of seven informants who vary in profiles. 6 of which are females and 1 is male. There ages range from 15- 17 years of age. 2 of these informants are in the ninth grade already and 5 of which are currently in the tenth grade. These informants differ in ages as to when they started in foster home. The details are shown in table 2.

**Table 2: Profile of Informants in In-Depth Interview**

Participant	Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Grade Level	Age Started in Foster Home
G1	Geinel	15	F	G-9	10 yr old
G2	Joy	15	F	G-9	9 yr old
G3	Cristine	17	F	G-10	3 yr old
G4	Kathryn	16	F	G-10	2 yr old
G5	Siesiekie	15	F	G-10	7 yr old
G6	Marian	16	F	G-10	8 yr old
G7	Danielle	15	M	G-10	9yr old

**Categorization of Data**

In categorizing the data, the first step was to group the responses of the participants and identified the common answers in order to come up with the essential themes. These data were arranged and organized based on the common or general concepts presented by the participants. Regroupings were done to reduce the essential themes and the main themes into fewer items. The process finally generated five essential themes. Table 3, 4 and 5 shows data of each theme. These important phrases emerged from the transcripts and comments which were

identified as thematic statements. They were organized to come up with the essential theme.

In categorizing the data, the first step was to group the responses of the participants and identified the common answers in order to come up with the essential themes. These data were arranged and organized based on the common or general concepts presented by the participants. Regroupings were done as to 50% are considered general themes, 25-50% and less 25% are variant answers. The second step as data display presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5. The important phrases that emerged from the transcripts and comments were identified as thematic statements. They were organized to come up with the essential theme.

**Research Question no.1: What are the experiences of high school in foster homes?**

The following are the accounts of the experiences as narrated by the participants during the conduct of in-depth interview and focused group discussion:

**Insecurity and Self-Doubt.** One of the experiences of the secondary students in foster homes is the feeling of insecurities and self – doubt. They were jealous of their classmates with parents during activities. They also were envious of their cousins since their parents are with them. Also they feel ashamed of their situation and even they are treated well by their foster parents, the students still prefer to be with their parents.

Children who witness the separation of their parents suffer psychological stability. Immediately upon the breakup of their families, children experience reactions ranging from anger, fear, and sadness to yearning, worry, rejection, conflicting loyalties, anger, lowered self-confidence, heightened anxiety and loneliness, more depressed moods, more suicidal thoughts, and even more attempts to commit suicide (Simpson & Rholes, 2008; Fagan and Cohen, 2012).

Mizerek and Hinz (2004) supported with the idea that being homeless affects students in so many ways, varying by the circumstances and age of the child. Children ages seven to twelve are much better at expressing emotions and accepting parentage breakage, but often distrust their parents, rely on outside help and support for encouragement, and may manifest social and academic problems.

**Table 3:** Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences

Magaña & Myers-Walls (2013) said that children must live in families. The children you work with live part of their lives in childcare, too. They need caring and sensitive adults in their lives. Parents are usually the first people a child learns to trust. Parents and families are the most important people in children’s lives. As a childcare provider, you are important, too. If children have strong and supportive families, they probably will have a strong relationship with you as well.

Siesiekie mentioned that:  
*I am comfortable where I stay now, but it’s different when your parents are around.*

Marian also added:  
*I miss my parents so much. It’s really different when your parents are taking care of you.*

Geinel also added:  
*I’m comfortable with my nanay and tatay because they are not other people to me. But, I’m shy and envious sometimes if my cousins are there. They are happy because their families are intact.*

**Table 3:** Themes and Core Ideas on the Experiences

Essential Themes	Frequency of Responses	Thematic Statements
Insecurity and Self-doubt	Typical	Jealous of classmates/other students during activities requiring parent’s presence
		Envious of cousins
		Ashamed of situation
		Prefer to be with parents even if treated well
	Variant	Often nagged by foster relative, bad-mouthed
		Strict foster relative want me to keep working at home; not allowed to relax Moving several times from one relative to another
Misery and Isolation	Typical	Unhappy/uncomfortable in foster home
		I am on my own; no one there for me- foster parents busy or uncaring
		All alone; no one else to turn to when I have problems
		Lack of care and attention
	Variant	Just cry in secret when I am maltreated
		I miss my parents’ care and attention especially when I get scolded
		Always teased of my mother’s past; pregnancy out of wedlock
		Cousins bully and quarrel with me for no reason at all
		They are nasty to me especially if my mother cannot send money.
Psychological Challenged	Variant	Separation of mother and father even before birth
		Displacement due to father’s offense and wrongdoing
		Father left us for another family
		Mother went abroad to work
		Mother passed away
		Unkind relatives
		Auntie’s husband was lascivious and lewd.
Academic Concerns	General	No time or little time to work on projects at home; so much work to do
		Able to study only after completing all the work at home
	Typical	Have to divide time for work at home and study
		Sometimes I am not allowed to join in school activities
		Parents not around during homeroom meetings
	Variant	Other people attend school activities instead of my parents i.e. teacher, other parents
		Had to enroll in alternative learning system (ALS)
		Do not have all my school needs; they seldom provide



		Had to stop schooling for a while
Adaptation	Typical	Happy/comfortable with foster parents
		They took care of me and my needs; fully supportive of me
		Was treated like own child
		I am already used to not having my parents around
	Variant	Aunties help me with my assignments
		Parents keep in touch even if they are away

*Misery and Isolation.* Staying in the foster home leads the secondary students to feel the misery and isolation. They were unhappy, for they work on their own since their foster parents are busy too. They lack attention and care and no one is with them when they have problems.

Joy mentioned that:

*My parents left me to my auntie because they are busy in their work and they don't have time to take care of me.*

*I am always sad because my parents are far from me and cannot be avoided that I miss their presence, especially when scolded my aunt.*

Geinel also added:

*It was really hard to me. My mother was not there, my number I supporter especially, during exam she reviewed me. My aunt also has no time for me. I do not know why.*

Danielle also added:

*I'm sad because nobody helps me with my project and assignments.*

*Psychological Challenges.* One of the sad experiences raised of the participants is having the psychological challenges brought about by the separation of mother and father, the displacement due to father's offense and wrong doing; parents who left to work abroad, death of mother and unkind relatives.

Ara Mae mentioned that:

*Because my mother and my father separated before I was born. Currently, my mother lives in Cebu. Ever since I didn't see my father nor I didn't know his name.*

*When I was two years old my mother brought me to my grandmother and grandfather's place.*

Solenn added:

*Because my mother went abroad they were separated with my father. My father has another family too.*

*Sometimes when... scolded. they reminded of my father's fault. But it is fine, ma'am. It can handle it.*

Zynne also added:

*When my aunt found me sitting to relax, she scolded me for she wanted me to work always.*

Ara Shane also added:

*When I was there with Mama Memie . . she didn't take care, I don't know, she was busy, she has a lot of work.*

*That's why I planned to transfer to my Aunt. However, her husband was so disrespectful. Then, her children where naughty, spoiled and hurt me. When I retaliated, , my Auntie conceded them. She has a bad mouth, always angry. When, she didn't see me for a while, she got angry.*

*Academic Concerns.* The academic concerns divulged by the participants include having no time to work on projects at home; having time only to study when household chores were done and that they to manage time for study and work.

Zynne added:

*Sometimes, ma'am I cannot do my project. Because I have plenty of work in the house. I cannot even participate in the class, I am always absent minded. Because I was thinking when to move out from there. I just carry it through my friends or my cousins.*

Danielle also added:

*I'm jealous to my classmates, every time there's a meeting they have their parents and I don't have.*

*Adaptation.* Despite living with their foster homes, the participants still feel happy and comfortable with their foster parents for they supported them and treated them like a child. Besides, they were already used of having no parents around. Shazmeen pointed out that:

*Almost all of my aunts, ma'am. They helped me with my assignments.*

Solenn added:

*It's hard because they were not there. Example when there is meeting for the parent, my aunts the one who came or the friends of the grandmother.*

### **Research Question #2 How do the students in foster homes cope with their academic Struggles?**

The issue on how the students in foster homes cope with their academic struggle was also raised to the participants. Their answers are narrated below:

*Support System.* The participants expressed mechanisms on coping with their academic struggles. One of which is having a support system from their classmates and friends and assistance of their teachers in school.

Ara Shane cited that:

*My happy moment was, when I was with my friends. Then, they helped me. I went to church, with my friends.*

Kathryn also added:

*Me, sometimes only because my auntie and uncle were having work especially when there is meeting or programs, especially recognition, but my teacher escorts me sometimes.*

Shazmeen also shared that:

*I'm like her daughter. She treated like her daughter.*

**Table 4:** Themes and Core Ideas on How Students in Foster Homes Cope with Academic Struggles

Essential Themes	Frequency of Responses	Thematic Statements		
Support System	Typical	Help of classmates and friends Assistance of teachers		
	Variant	I express thankfulness to relatives for taking care of me Communicate constantly with my parents even while away		
Inspiration	Typical	I recall the sacrifices of my mother Bear in mind mother's words and promise that someday we will be together		
	Variant	I think about my siblings; that I need to help them.		
Drive and Determination	Typical	Working hard; studying hard Doing well in my studies Behaving well so that relatives/foster parents will like and tolerate me Just go on despite the difficulty		
		Variant	Trying to understand foster parents when they nag me Show/prove to them that I can stand on my own two feet Telling myself I will rise above this situation	
	Positivity	Variant	I just smile Make the most out of the situation Make adjustments to lifestyle Positive thinking I accepted my situation Tried not to lose hope I keep hoping that our family will be complete and united someday	
Belief in Divine Providence			Variant	Praying for God's providence and mercy Faith in God

Solenn added that:

*"...Supportive sila sa akoo, ma'am." (CVSSFHPAS\_D4)*  
 (They were supportive to me, ma'am.)

*Inspiration.* The lived inspiration of the students is also considered a strong factor for them to cope with their academic journey. They thought of the sacrifices of their mother, as well as their promise to be together again in the future.

Ara Mae mentioned that:

*"Ang akong pagpuyo karon maoy akong inspiration para makahuman ko ug eskwela" (CVSSFHPAS\_D1)*

(Being a foster child is my inspiration to motivate myself to finish my study.)

Joy also added:

*"Sa akin po ay iniisip ko na lamang na dapat makapagtapos nakami... nangako po sila sa akin na makapagtapos po ako sa pag-aaral para makapagsasama ang mga magulang. Dahil nangako po sila sa akin na makapagtapos na ako ng*

*pag-aaral ay magsasama na kami sa isang bahay" (CVSSFHPAS\_G2)*

(For me also I always think that we should finish. They promised me that I should finish my studies so that I will be with my parents. Because they promised me that if I'm finished my studies we will be together in one house.)

*Drive and Determination.* The drive and determination of the students to do well in school, work hard, tolerance of the situation inside their foster house and moving on despite the situation have kept the students still on their academic track.

Solenn mentioned that:

*Even their parent is not around, ma'am, even they are away from them, they should do their best in their studies because it is only for their own good. Their mother and father are away for their own good.*

Joy also added:

*My advice to the students like me is they should trust themselves and don't lost hope in their life. Because if there's life there's hope.*

Kathryn also added:

*My advice to the students like me is whatever trial that comes and should fight, be positive and be brave in times of challenges in their life.*

Marian also added:

*My advice to them is they study hard and don't lose hope because time will come they can face the trials in their life.*

*Positivity.* Having positive attitude has helped the student's cope with their academic struggles. For them to smile, to make the most out of the situation, to accept reality and to continue hoping that family to be reunited someday has given them the strength to survive.

Bella mentioned that:

*There are plenty, ma'am. Example, ma'am, my hope is that my mother and father will be reconciled.*

Shazmeen added:

*I advice them not to surrender no matter what. Just continue, don't lose hope.*

Siesiekie also added:

*Me, just be positive, have faith to God. I hope that I will be with my mother and father soon.*

*Belief in Divine Providence.* The students bluntly expressed that their belief and faith in God and prayers have made them strong to cope their academic struggles.

Marian:

Lilay:

*I think they must study hard and also they must think of their foster parents. Because they are taking care of them and also they need to pray so that they have the guidance.*

Danielle:

*I pray that my parents have peace and we will reunited as family.*

McClure, Robin (2016) gave tips on strengthening parent-child relationships that in the early stage parents should teach their children about their faith and beliefs. They should tell them what they believe and why. They must give time for the children to ask questions and they must answer them honestly. Parents should reinforce their teachings often. In doing this, it is a one way to strengthen the relationship between parents and children.

### Research Question #3: Insights of Students in Foster Homes

The insights of the students in foster homes are clearly shared by them also when they were asked about it. Their narrations are presented below:

*Persistence and Perseverance.* Majority of the students expressed that despite their situation; they never gave up and lose hope. They also mentioned that one should think positive and show bravery in facing life's challenges.

*Guiding Values and Principles.* The participants also shared that one should be humble and patient, pray for guidance, have faith and be good to relatives who take care of them.

Danielle mentioned that:

*My advice to them is be humble.*

*Dreams and Aspiration.* The participants hope to finish their studies so that their parents be proud of them and to have a couple family in the future.

Lilay mentioned that:

*My hopes is I want my parents to be happy, to make them wealthy. Not to suffer anymore.*

*Realizations.* In their situations, the students realized that it's hard to grow without parents. They also shared that parents should not leave their children and value their family.

McClure (2016) stressed that children must know that they are your priority in life. Children can observe excessive stress and notice when they feel you are not paying attention to them. Sometimes, part of the parenthood is not worrying about the small stuff and enjoying your children your children. They grow up so fast, and every day is special. Take advantage of your precious time together while you have it.

Ara Mae expressed that:

*My advice to the students like me is to think positively. My advice to the parents is not to leave their children. And the people in the foster home shall take care, love and treat them like your own daughter.*

**Table 5: Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of Secondary Students in Foster Homes**

Essentials Themes	Frequency of Responses	Thematic Statements
Persistence and Perseverance	General	Do not give up; don't lose hope.
	Variant	Keep on fighting and struggling despite the brokenness.
		Move on; do not stay miserable.
		Always think positive in the midst of misery.
		Be brave in facing life's challenges.
		If there's life, there's hope.
Guiding Values and Principles	Variant	Find ways to rise above the situation.
		Stay focused; do not be absent-minded.
		Pray for guidance.
		Be humble and patient.
		Have faith in God.
		Be good and be kind.
Dreams and Aspirations	Typical	Behave well so that relatives in foster homes will like and tolerate them.
	Variant	Finishing the studies will make my parents proud of me.
		Being with my mother is my ultimate desire.
Realizations	Typical	To have my father, mother and me under one roof is my biggest dream.
		It is so hard to grow up without parents. Parents should not leave their children.
	Variant	Parents should value and give importance to their child/children.
		People in foster homes should treat foster children like own.
		Parents are also sacrificing for us.
Appreciation and Forgiveness	Typical	Foster children like me should use their situation as a motivation to survive.
		Be thankful (to foster parents/relatives for taking care of you).
	Variant	Be more understanding of your foster parents/relatives.
		Forgive people who have done you wrong.

Solemn added

*I wish they take care of their child, support them truly, should not leave the child. Even they went abroad, they continue their support of their children. Thanks to them, they supported me.*

Joy also added:

*My advice to my parents that don't leave your children to your relatives only. Because it hard to live without their true parents, nobody truly love you, then, they scolded you.*

*Appreciation and Forgiveness.* Feeling the gratitude to their foster parents, the students stressed that they should be thankful to them and forgive the people who have done wrong to them.

Geinel mentioned that:

*They treat being their granddaughter, I felt their love. But I miss the love of my mother.*

Marian also added:

*It's ok, they love me and they give my needs. My advice to my mother is she will forgive my father for all the wrong that he had done to her.*



## 5. Discussion

This chapter presents the discussion of the results of the study which the main findings are summarized and the original research question addressed, the implications are explored, and the conclusions and the practice for future research which are anchored on the emerged themes of the investigation.

The objective of this phenomenological was to document the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of the students in foster homes through an in-depth interview and Focused Group Discussion shared their experiences, coping mechanisms and insights.

### Experiences of the Students in Foster Homes

In the conduct of in-depth Interview and focused group discussion, I found out the various emotions, sincerity, honesty and hopes of the students in foster homes. Their honesty in sharing their experiences have led to coming up with the remarkable themes in my investigation.

**Insecurity and Self Doubt:** The participants emotionally shared that living in another family made them jealous with their classmates, especially during situations when parents are needed. They felt ashamed of their situation and envious with their cousins with complete family. The result concurs to the statement of Lee (2015) stressing that foster home is a scary place for children, even if the family whom one came from is a chaotic one. Foster children have no control over their lives, which can cause continual insecurity on the lives of the children. They do not know how long they would stay and where they would be going the next month or the next year.

**Misery and Isolation.** Unhappy, uncomfortable, sad and alone were the statements expressed by children in the foster homes. They felt alone and cried for the love of their parents. The finding is parallel to the concept of Lee (2015) that children in foster homes develop emotional and psychological problems and challenging behavior. They feel alone in the difficult situations and hard times they experienced into.

Many homeless and poor housed mothers have experienced severe physical abuse by a childhood caretaker, childhood molestation, and severe violence by a male partner. In fact, fleeing an abusive partner is the single most common reason for family homelessness (Wilder Research Center, 2003).

**Psychological Challenges.** The reasons why they were left in the other family have affected so much the participants as they mentioned the separation of their parents, unkind relatives and father's wrongdoing. From the child perspective, the foster home experience can be emotionally traumatic, and it is associated with detrimental development outcomes and lower educational achievement with long-term effects. (Chipungu and Bent-Goodley, 2002). Researchers estimate that 30% to 80% of children in foster homes exhibit emotional and/or behavioral problems, either from their experiences before entering foster home or from the foster home experience itself (Chipungu and Bent-Goodley, 2002).

In the article entitled "*Learn About the Issues: The Facts about Foster Care*", it is mentioned that children who are in the foster

homes are children who experienced poverty, neglect due crisis of parenting. This has caused much of stress, and psychological problems as they children grow.

**Academic Concerns.** The children in foster homes disclosed that their academic struggle which include having no time to study, and has to divide time on work and study. This leads them to struggle in their academic performance. The result jibes with the finding of Frerer, Sosenko & Henke (2013) that children in foster homes were more than three times as likely to receive an –in school suspension, and nearly six times as likely to receive an out of school suspension as the average Connecticut student. Thus, children in foster homes are placed at greater risk in their education struggle.

**Adaptation.** Accepting their situation, the children in foster homes revealed that they have no choice but to accept and adapt to their situation. Furthermore, they also felt that they were taken cared by their foster parents. The finding is parallel to statement of Ball et al. (2005) that some children in the foster homes are fortunate to have foster parents who love and supportive like their own children. This will somewhat ease the discomfort and neglect that the children feel as they stay in the house where no parents are around. In addition, (Chipungu and Bent-Goodley, 2002) described that although placement in foster homes caused severe disruption because of the need to blend into new neighborhoods, schools, and families and to make new friends, the children described their lives and circumstances positively.

### How Students in Foster Homes Cope with Academic Struggles

**Support System.** To survive, the participants expressed that they were being helped by their friends and teachers. These are the people who motivated them to move on. The idea is supported by Leon & Sprengler (2014). stressing that the teacher's role as second mother of the children in the foster home is indispensable for they will place as the supporter to the academic struggles of the students. Thus, the students should be make aware that they are being accepted by the school that they in.

**Inspiration.** The inspiration embraced by the children in foster homes like their cherished love and care given by their parents, before they were left by them have reminded the students to move on as they recalled the sacrifices of their parents. The result concurs to the idea of Geen (2013) that despite the scars of the children in the foster homes, their hope and inspiration for a better future still lingers since their parents inculcated in them the idea of togetherness when the situation allows.

**Drive and Determination.** Despite their situation, the participants unveiled that they still do their best to study and behave well in their foster homes. There, they just go on despite the challenges and difficulty they faced. The responses of the children concurs to the concept of Foulkes-Jamison (2013) emphasizing that the experience of the children in fosters has continued to shape them to press hard and think of life that is positive and with nurturing support from the family. The determination to survive against the emotional distress and upheaval has been believed as a strong drive for the children in foster home to surpass their situation.

**Positivity.** The students also shared that for them to appease the sadness they just accepted their situation with a smile and never lose hope that someday they would have a complete and reunited family. The result is parallel to the statement of *McGeown (2011)* that children in foster homes have stories to tell. How they survive and become successful is the outcome of being positive about life. The help of the adoptive parents has become a pivotal motivation to succeed to find pride, positivism and self-esteem.

**Belief in Divine Providence.** The students expressed that the strong belief of the students to God has given them the strength to survive and continue with their life with their foster family. The result conforms to the idea of *Yamaguchi, Strawser and Higgs (2001)* that amidst the world being turned upside down, the children in the foster homes spend their life believing on the miracle that God would shower to them the guidance to succeed.

#### **Insights of Secondary Students in Foster Homes**

**Persistence and Perseverance.** The students also articulated that they preserved and never gave up on their situation. They never lose hope and continue moving on so not to stay miserable. The result jibes with the concept of *Henslin (2004)* that kids in foster homes are just like any other child that one knows. The only difference is they suffer trauma and loss through no fault of their own. They have dreams and unique potential as children and seek for some opportunities. What makes them peculiar also is their demonstration of resilience and perseverance to be responsible and contributing members in the society.

**Guiding Values and Principles.** Being humble patient, staying focused and having faith in God is articulated by the participants on their guiding values and principles. The result is parallel to the idea of *Mizerek and Hinz (2004)* that often the children in foster homes survived because they left on their own with the initiative to work for stability with principles of good Values.

**Dreams and Aspirations.** To finish their studies so parents will be proud of them is being aspired for by the students in foster homes when they were asked about their dreams and aspirations in life. The result jives with the idea of *Milne et al. (2006)* that children in foster homes often survive through being self-reliant to support their ambitions and dreams in life. This has given them pride in their independence.

**Realizations.** The students in foster homes realized the difficulty growing up within their parents beside them. They also shared that parents showed not love to their children. The finding is in line with the concept of *Berns (2013)* that life in foster care can be extra-ordinarily challenging and deceptive kids and teens. Separated from families, there is an indication that disturbed. This is an indication that parents should have a close tight with the children.

**Appreciation and Forgiveness.** Giving gratitude to their foster parents and forgiveness to their parents was expressed by the students emotionally as they shared their insights. The result conceives to the statement of *Yamaguchi, Strawser & Higgs (2001)* that some children are lucky to stay and work with

families who care about them. It is adequate that amidst the situation, their foster families have poured in the love which is left by their parents. This would lead the children to forget the heavy experience they have in their original homes.

## **6. Implications to Educational Practice**

The themes generated from this study include insecurity and self-doubt, misery and isolation and psychological challenges. These suggest that the children in foster homes unhappy and felt alone despite the presence of their foster parents. This provides challenge to the Department of Social Welfare and Development may augment their support to the children who are homeless ones. Republic Act No. 9231 was passed, which amends R.A. No. 7610 by embodying the State policy to provide special protection to children from all forms of abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation and discrimination, and conditions prejudicial to their development.

The themes academic concerns and adaptation signify that the children in foster homes have difficulty in coping with the lessons in school. However, they are able to adapt to their situation in the foster homes. The result suggests that teachers may make a consistent follow-up of the students' academic progress in order to extend help to these students. This supports to the statement of *National Center on Family Homelessness (2009)* that about 12% of homeless children are not enrolled in school and up to 45% do not attend school regularly (*Duffield, 2001*). This is a cause for concern because poor attendance is a significant predictor of dropping out of school (*Christenson et al., 2000*).

Overall, the academic achievement of homeless students is poor. Research indicates that 43% of homeless students repeat a grade, 25% are placed in special education, and 50% are failing academically (*Bassuk et al., 2011*). Other data reveal that only one-third of homeless students read at grade level compared to more than half of their same-aged.

In coping with their academic journey, the themes generated include support system, inspiration, drive and determination, positivity and belief in Divine Providence. These results suggest that the children in foster homes are able to survive since there are people who support them and with the inner strength that these students have. This suggests that students in foster homes be more exposed to social activities for them to be able to feel that they are not alone in the situation. This supports to the statement of *Yangco (2015)* that Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) are required to be organized in all elementary and secondary schools to provide a forum for the discussion of problems and their solutions, relating to the total school programmes, and for insuring the full cooperation of parents in the efficient implementation of such programmes.

Persistence and perseverance, guiding values and principles, realizations and appreciation and forgiveness are the insights shared by the children. This means that the children in the foster homes possess values that made them survive in their situation. This suggests that the integration of values in the

teaching learning process so that students will be able to enhance the virtues taught to them.

This is parallel to the idea of Eyrich, Pollio, & North, (2003) citing that helping children establish self-confidence and instill a sense of self-worth from a young age is primary for serving them to fight their difficulties later in life. Still, teenage years are full of doubt and teens' self-confidence can be easily influenced so even most positive teens need parental encouragement from time to time. To help teenagers improve their self-esteem during adolescence, and also strengthen and sustain an affirmative relationship, parents should take advantage of the following few pieces of advice.

## 7. Implication for Future Research

The study that I had undertaken engaged only 7 key informants for my In-Depth Interview and 7 for the Focus-Group Discussion. Therefore, their responses could not be generalized to all children under foster homes in all settings. It is commendable then that the study be undertaken in another locale, bearing the same purpose in order to validate or determine the uniqueness of the certain group of participants in the same situation.

Furthermore, another phenomenological study may be done but it would tackle on the stories of the parents who left their children under the care of their relatives for some reasons, in order to solicit their feelings and perspectives a parents.

In the issue of children of single parents Henslin (2004) in his writings on Child Rearing stressed that they are less successful because children need many positive influence from their parents in order to succeed, such intellectual stimulation, good education, and a hard work ethic. Having a close relationship with parents and other adults who care and provide positive influences helps them stay on track in order to succeed, such as intellectual stimulation, good education, and a hard work ethic. This care is harder for children of single mothers to receive.

Parent as teacher is one evidence-based home visiting model designed to expand parental knowledge of child development and encourage positive parent-child relationships. Parent educators deepen parents' sense of competence by observing by observing parent-child interactions and commenting on parents' responsiveness and sensitivity to their child's behavior (Allen, 2012; Bandy & Moore, 2008; Barrs, 2008; Wagner, Spiker & Linn, 2002).

Children who participated in PAT scored higher on standardized tests of intelligence and social development than those who didn't (Pfannenstiel, Lambson & Yarnell, 1996). Parents liked the educators' family focus, and found them to be concerned about the entire family. Educators worked to tailor the program based on each parent's feedback (Barberos, Gozalo & Padayogdog, 2016; Woolfolk & Unger, 2009; Barbour, Barbour & Scully, 2008).

Further research may be done also that would re-interview the informants to validate their insights and thoughts whether

they have changed over a period of time. Finally, in order to hear also the voices of the foster parents of the learners, a study may be done that would solicit also their struggles as foster parents.

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