



Background of Self-Harm in Filipino Adolescents of an Ilocano Community

Jean Alecs Banaticla¹, Ian Aldwin Atijera¹, Marian Feliz Calica^{1*}, Raphaella Ericka Concepcion¹, Clayton Jay Yllera¹, Bennedict Sagun¹, Raven Rose Lacuata¹, Fernando Oringo²

¹Student Researchers, Lorma Colleges Special Science High

School ² Research Adviser, Lorma Colleges Special Science High

School *Corresponding Author: mariancalica@gmail.com

Abstract: In the midst of a Filipino teenager's eyes lie unspoken insights engulfed by a vacuum – that's the secret behind self-harm. Blades intentionally slashed on their own bodies hold more meaning than what the plain sight could see, for the truth's usually secluded behind scars. Self-injury had been a huge factor in order to cope with the emotional distress. With this, the researchers aimed to answer the following questions: a.) 1.) What causes self-mutilation among high school students as apprehended by the school guidance counsellors? 2.) How do the following state holders affect self-mutilation? 3.) What is the aftermath of self-mutilation? This descriptive study utilized a semi-structured interview which was conducted among the high school guidance counsellors of schools ranging from Bacnotan, San Juan, La Union to City of San Fernando, La Union. The researchers identified the main influence that caused the Filipino adolescents to deliberately self-harm. Results indicated that Filipino teens perceived self-mutilation as a representation of their uniqueness and identity. While the matter fails to be addressed properly by the social order, this subject should be taken seriously due to the fact that it sways a large impact in regards to our generation's society. As a recommendation, the researchers came up with an action plan in collaboration with the guidance counsellors of the community and family which involved the initiation of campaigns exposing the dark truth behind self-harm, including the act of opening up to each other's experiences, stories, and organizing interactive undertakings to build foundation and familiarity amongst Filipino adolescents.

Key Words: Self-Injury, Self-Mutilation, Filipino adolescents, Youth, Suicide

1. INTRODUCTION

Emotions are considered important elements among human beings as these are the different feelings one would undergo to which are usually triggered by situational events. Essential as these may seem, these are actually hard to control; if not, uncontrollable in nature, leading to common cases of impulsive reactions. Youths are

known for making worse decisions than adults, due to the fact that their brains aren't moulded to their fullest state yet, causing themselves to self-mutilate that make them angry or upset. As they grow, they have yet to understand the sudden changes that these individuals have to go through especially during their pubescent age where they are easily influenced and fascinated by what they



see around them. This fact would then lead to the idea of their increasing exposure to the internet, specifically on the well-known social media sites such as Facebook, Tumblr, WeHeartIt, Instagram, and open to public forum sites such as 4chan, reddit, SomethingAwful, and many more, where the compiled, mixed, and summarized views of society are welcomed and accessed by vast users around the globe. These views, however, are mixed as these sources came from different races with varying ideals. In light of these facts, their thoughts would then get warped as most of these even contradict each other, yet they still aim to meet these expectations while identifying insecurities towards their own selves.

School, family, partners in peers and distress, these are four of the common problems of the Filipino youth. Problems in school like bullying, difficulty in making friends, and failing grades; problems in the family like lack of parent's attention, lack of communication to each other and financial problems; problems

with your partners like lack of communication and attention, sexual problems, and other problems such as dishonesty and cheating; and lastly, distress which is an extreme anxiety or pain which leads poor behaviors (Richardson et al., 2006).

Blinded by one's desires of a "self" that every type society would accept, two possible outcomes would then commence; One probability of changing every aspect of them to meet their specific aspirations, and the other one where they would discover their insecurities in comparison to other people's features, characteristics, and even their abilities. Disorders, histories, and even their errors regarding their lifestyle - these are but a few of the youth's common personal complications that activate their unstable thoughts and emotions to trigger their anxious state as they recognize these as abnormalities that they would wish to eliminate. The tendency to seek for "normality" would then increase for the purpose of wanting to be socially acknowledged in today's generation of community; with "normality" meaning, "being able to blend in with the crowd while avoiding the notion of receiving negative criticism from the majority."

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study focuses entirely on the profile of Self-Harm in Filipino Youth. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following queries:

- 1.) What causes self-mutilation among high school students as apprehended by the school guidance counsellors?
- 2.) How do the following state holders affect self-mutilation?
- 3.) What is the aftermath of self-mutilation?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study was fixed as a Qualitative or Descriptive type of research. Qualitative Research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative

2.2 Population and Sources of Data

Ten guidance counselors from different schools were interviewed for this study. Guidance counselors in the high school department of Lord of Zion Divine School, Lorma Colleges Special Science High School, Cicosat College,

2.3 Instrumentation and Data Collection

An in-depth face to face meeting using oral questions with the respondents was carried out. The questions asked were formulated based on the self-injury background researched beforehand. Since the study was set as a Qualitative research, a semi-structured interview was then commenced. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity

2.4 Tools for Data Analysis

The statements extracted from the open-ended questions were interpreted by the researchers. Voice-recorded answers from the face to face

research. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem (Wyse, 2011). The researchers, though capable of implementing a Mixed research to determine the exact rates, agreed on a Qualitative type of research since what their main goal was to study the background of self-harm in Filipino adolescents where the factors and the reasons were discussed.

Saint John Bosco College, Christ the King College, Gifted Learning Center, San Juan National High School (SJNHS), La Union National High School (LUNHS), Bacnotan National High School (BNHS), and Sta. Veronica College.

for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further (Evaluation Toolbox,2011). This approach then resulted to the researchers and the respondents to had properly discussed and interacted about the topic at hand to gather the necessary information needed. Unlike a structured questionnaire, Semi-structured interviews are used to understand how interventions work and how they could be improved (Evaluation Toolbox, 2011).

interview were transcribed, encoded, and translated when necessary, for the purpose of documentation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Self-Mutilation

Self-mutilation, basing it from the response of the guidance counsellors, had been identified as an act of hurting or injuring oneself. It is

done physically and intentionally. As justified by the guidance counsellor of SJNHS:

Self-injury because it has something to do with yourself, right? Injured, in the sense that you're hurting yourself.

3.2 Behaviour

It was said by the interviewed high school counsellors that there are signs or behavioural changes that could be observed to those who self-harm. These changes could be seen in their body movements, daily activities, and social relationship.

As justified by the guidance counsellor of SJNHS:

So, the manifestations, one of the manifestations is the tendency for him/her to be alone or he/she is not sociable.

3.3 Factors

Every individual who self-harm has different reasons for committing the act, but the interviewees stated that the major factors are emotional difficulties. That could be justified by what the guidance counsellor of Cicosat Colleges said:

Depression, frustration, anxiety, parenting style, social factor, family problems, failing relationships, and self-depression

3.4 Intervention Programs

Self-mutilators are people who need extra help and guidance from family and friends. Even professional help is encouraged,

as what the guidance counsellor of Cicosat Colleges had suggested:

Effective guidance program, continuous guidance, proper evaluation, and counselling

3.5 End Result

The chance of leading self-injury to suicide is very high. The interviewees agree to that statement, an example is drawn from

SJNHS:

Those students or individuals who self-injure or self-mutilate are those with high risk to become the subject of suicide.

4. Conclusions

With all the information gathered, the researchers concluded that self-mutilation is no joke nor a fictional story but rather a serious issue in the society that fails to be

centred. This taboo has to be known and taken seriously. As the world progresses, different problems in the society arise, and one of them is self-harm. Even adolescents nowadays have a higher exposure to stress, bullying and other emotional problems at an



early age and due to impulse thinking they tend to release their emotional state through physical injury. As viewed by psychologists, self-injury is a temporary solution to problems that would open or cause more problems. Self-injury causes more problems for it would do nothing to the problems at hand. It might give you an escape but you could never runaway to unsolved problems and the consequences that may come along. This is also serious because self-harm has been common to adolescents for

the reason that they think harming themselves could help them feel better.

The researchers suggest conducting symposiums, awareness campaigns, and collaborations of guidance counsellor to community and to, the basic unit of community, family. The said actions would help guide who does and does not harm themselves, control the self-injurers, address what is self-mutilation, and make people aware that self-mutilation is real and being practiced by people mostly by the youth. In collaboration, the family would play a big role because, based on the interviewees, it is one of main factors and triggers them to do the act. Their support would be valued greatly by the self-mutilators.

5. Acknowledgements

Foremost, the researchers would like to thank the Lord Almighty for giving them the wisdom and patience to finish the study.

The researchers would also like to thank the schools that helped them with their study. The researchers' friends, who kindly took the time and assisted them with their study, would also like to be acknowledged.

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Presented at the DLSU Research Congress 2016
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
March 7-9, 2016

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