



## The Adjustment Experiences of Formerly Institutionalized Filipino Young Adults: A Case Study

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### **Abstract**

There have been a large number of studies done about street children, however; little research has been conducted to explore the question about what happens to the lives of these children after leaving the institution that has become their home. Hence, the overall goal of this study is to explore the adjustment experiences faced by the Filipino young adults who were formerly under the custody of a social institution and to describe their lives after leaving the shelters that they have treated as homes for several years through a qualitative approach. Through the descriptive method, vivid reports regarding the study were provided to explore the causes of the given phenomenon. It also discussed the lives of these children before entering an institution and their lives inside the institution. Data was collected through in- depth interviews with five young adults who stayed inside an institution for more than three years. Results revealed that all informants experienced a great deal of changes leaving the institution but they still managed to adjust fairly on their lives with their new environment.

**Keywords:** *Street Children; Institution; Adjustment; Young Adult; Custody; Experiences; Changes; Coping Process*

### **Introduction**

Today, the world accepts the phenomenon of street children. It is defined as any boy or girl who has reached adulthood and regularly seen wandering the streets which has become his or her regular dwelling and/or sources of livelihood. They are considered as improperly protected and administered by responsible adults.

The recent studies made by the United Nations (Exploitation of Children - A Worldwide Outrage, 2000) stated that there are over 150 million children living on the streets all over the world today. The case of these children is global, alarming and escalating. Their presence is a familiar sight in any countries and cities in the world today.

On a national case, Philippines also struggle with the problem of children living on the streets (Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities: The Case of the Philippines, 2009). The country has reached 1.5 million and continues to grow in number. Making us one of the drastically contributor to the high number of the present case. Metro Manila and the National Capital Region (NCR) have of highly visible number of street children with more or less than a 30,000 count. On a nationwide scale, there are 250,000 street children in the streets of major urban places. They are also said to be under the threat of prostitution and pornography (Novales, 2012).

Homelessness denies various children rights that are stated in the Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which asserts that the government should recognize that children should be living on a place where there is an adequate physical living condition to enhance children's development, i.e., physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social (Kanth, n.d.).

Consequently, spending hours on the street increases these children's exposure to various street hazards and equally increases the chances of being picked up by authorities for vagrancy (Berezina, 2014). These children can be very vulnerable to arrest and sent to jail when caught just roaming around or much more when they involve themselves in petty crimes or street brawl. Most of these children are being rescued from living a life on the streets, and there are a lot of institutions with the task or aim to help these children in the streets.

Here in the Philippines, the government has given the task of looking into the welfare of these children to the Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD).

The Department of Social Welfare and Development is the department who oversee that children's rights are upheld and protected. As a vulnerable human being, children need protection and care, and the DSWD works on ensuring these children are living a good life most especially if their family does not want them anymore (Organizational Structure, 2015). And under DSWD, there are organizations that help watch over for the well-being of these children on the streets. The DSWD also handles and approves every non- government organization established for the same purpose and intent of helping these children out of the streets.

That being said, the main purpose of this study is to explore the adjustment experiences faced by the Filipino young adults who were formerly under the custody of a social institution through a qualitative approach. It also aimed to know what happens with these children's lives after being rescued on the streets.

Through the descriptive method, the contexts of this study include detailed descriptions of young adult's experiences that will be used to derive to a more comprehensive and complete depiction of the general phenomenon. It also discussed the lives of these children before entering an institution and their lives inside the institution. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with five young adults who stayed inside an institution for more than three years. Results revealed that all informants experienced a great deal of changes leaving the institution but they still managed to adjust fairly on their lives with their new environment. Also, there has been no specific coping process that they have undergone they just found the need to blend in.

There have been a large number of studies done about street children, however; little research has been conducted to explore the question about what happens to the lives of these children after leaving the institution that has become their home. After extensive research about the lives of the children on the streets, the researchers deem it important to know the importance of these children's adjustments to the life after being rescued. Moreover, their lives do not stop after going out of the rescue center. Studying this topic is worth pursuing since it offers a new analysis on the life of street children. Also, this study

could be beneficial to civil society and private organizations helping street children since this study would give them better understanding of these children's state and a hindsight on what needs to be done to help them for further improvement on their policies.

## **Method**

In this study, Filipino young adults' experiences, life adjustments and other important information were gathered through qualitative research approach. According to Wiersma (2000), it describes phenomena in words instead of numbers or measures for a thorough comprehension of human behavior and its governing reason. A qualitative approach is also appropriate for the study since one cannot measure nor count a phenomenon. This method of research has been very helpful in exploring the scope of the present study. With the use of this approach, the ideas had been further studied and the participants' point of view were interpreted which was essential for an absolute understanding of their experiences. Also, it has enabled the researchers to ask more questions that was necessary to support their study and for the informants to respond to greater details.

The research study was descriptive in nature, using the descriptive approach to conduct this study by describing sets of data. "Descriptive research is a study that can obtain facts about existing conditions or detach significant relationships between current phenomena" (Garcia, 2005). By this, the data has been collected and presented without changing the environment of the information the researchers have. Also, through this research approach, the research aimed to describe and interpret the current and past condition of the children who were previously under the protection of an institution, foundation, or a shelter to accurately present their state. The researchers made sure that the data that has been gathered by the researchers can be easily accessed especially in the process of communicating the information as well as generating it as per Myers (2002).

The research used the form of case study approach to gather information. Woodside (2010) defines the case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The case study method provides an in-depth understanding of a given phenomenon. This study with a case study approach wished to highlight a careful representation of the phenomena from the outlook of those who have experienced such phenomenon. Moreover, the researchers intended to focus on the constructive meaning of reality from this study. The "phenomena" in the study is the "first-hand experience" of the selected key informants.

An in-depth interview was used in generating significant qualitative data from the key informants. According to Seidman (2013) the motive of using intensive interview is not to test research postulates, and not to evaluate but to express and describe an experience. Through in-depth interview, the research obtained as many data needed from the informants without going far from the topic of this study. Having a sensitive research topic, the researchers asked each question in a very accommodating tone and respective manner for them to feel comfortable and respond honestly to interviewers without any hesitation.

The interview guide used was validated by some experts to ensure that it only includes appropriate and relevant questions that are significant to meet the goals and objectives of the study. Each set of questions were categorized accordingly to meet the needs of the study and is intended to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee to provide more focus compared to conversational approach.

For participants and the selection technique, non-probability sampling technique has been employed. According to Kumar (2005), this technique does not permit generalization but are valuable for studying particular groups of people.

Taking into consideration the time constraint, scope and limitation of the present study, a total number of five young adults has been the participants in this study. These informants have been under the protection of a social institution, have stayed there for a minimum of three years and have left the institution for number of years. All the participants have been selected according to the researcher's subjectivity on finding the participants who are capable of supplying enough information to the study.

Furthermore, recorders and written field notes were utilized during the actual in-depth interviews to systematically and conveniently record and document the significant responses of the informants. For the purpose of analysis, the actual recordings of the interview were transcribed. The researchers also maximized the given time to develop and expand ideas during the process of transcription and at the same time, took down notes for potential themes for analysis and interpretation

## **Results**

The obtained findings of the study which are anchored with the research objectives are presented in narrative or textual and thematic forms: (I) True Colors: Profile of the Participants; (II) The Concrete Jungle: Life as a Street Child; (III) Survival of the Fittest: Street Children Survival Techniques and Experiences: A. Challenges and Difficulties B. Abusive and Dangerous Environment C. Social Groups D. The Thinking Species: Realizations and Hope; (IV) Roofed Lives: Informants' Lives inside the Shelter:

A. Fish inside the Fish Tank: Facilities and Culture inside the Shelter; (V) The 360 Degree Turn: Leaving the Shelter and Starting a New Life, A Psychosocial Approach: A. Social Behavior and Interaction B. Emotion, Thinking and Orientation of the Future C. Environmental Changes D. Coping Process. Verbatim quotes from the informants of the study are labeled in terms of their given name, age, and whether they are HIV positive or not.

### **True Colors: Profile of the Participants**

Participants needed on this study are young adults. The researchers of the study made sure that the range of the informant's age is from eighteen years of age up to thirty years of age. Joyce who is now thirty years old, is the oldest among the informants while Paolo who is twenty four years of age is the youngest. The rest, are twenty five years old who is Dominic, twenty six years old Elaine and twenty eight years old Maria.

Based on the demographic profile of the informants, the three of them came from the province. Maria was born and raised in Sorsogon, Bicol, Elaine came from Leyte before living here in Manila and Paolo who was born in Dumaguete City while Joyce and Dominic was born in Manila and Caloocan respectively.

When it comes to the relationship of the informants that were gathered by the researchers, among them, only Maria is married. While only Elaine is in a relationship right now and Joyce, Dominic and Paolo are all single.

After knowing about their family background, the researchers noticed that they have the same family background having then described it as "broken", "I'm not close with my family", "noisy". Based on their story, the researchers noticed all of them had a rough start in life.

## The Concrete Jungle: Life as a Street Child

During their stay in the street the informants experienced important aspects of street life that is amusing and also alarming at the same time, these are: Survival Techniques, Challenges and Difficulties, Survival, Abusive and Dangerous Environment.

### Survival Techniques

Kaitlyn Van Baarle (n.d.) made a study about the begging patterns and techniques used by child beggars in Ghana and according to her study. Begging is the most used mode of income for child beggars. It is the easiest way to earn money or even food. Baarle added that child beggars learned how to use their vulnerability to affect the adults emotionally and give them what they want. Child begging is dominant here in the Philippines, four of the informants stated that they used to beg in order to earn money or food.

Filipino street children do different jobs to earn money, such as: barking, washing and watching cars, vending, collecting garbage that can be sell in junk shops and the worst of all, prostitution (Sagip or Huli, 2008).

*"We do begging. Every morning we roam anywhere to look for food that we can eat for dinner."*  
(Maria, 28)

*"I used to beg and sell junks to earn money for my food while others are peddling anything"*  
(Elaine, 26)

*"I did sell junk and begging. Sometime some people call us to help them carry things or do something."* (Dominic, 25)

*"Sometimes we look for food. We asked for left-overs in eateries, and we do it as a group."* (Paolo, 24)

According to the research done by Bacos (2005), they have described the children of the streets to show creativity, ingenuity, and innovativeness characterizes the means by which they devise ways of earning. Exacting pity from people is a skill they use to full advantage whenever the situation calls for it. Some examples were bringing their little sibling, appearing sick and helpless out to appeal to people's emotions and get the passersby to help them.

### Challenges and Difficulties

According to Bacos (2005), they appear in groups also known as "gangs", they protect certain areas they prefer as their territory for their hangouts or place for their lucrative activities. Invasion of territory sometimes ends in a chaotic street brawl.

*"When the night bites, we have to return in our places or else others will occupy it."* (Elaine, 26)

*"Sometime there are people who asked us to moved and sometimes they hurt us to force us to move away"* (Maria, 28)

*"... I think when policemen hurt us just to have ourselves moved."* (Dominic, 25)

The natural factors sometimes made it harder for these unsheltered juveniles to live on the street.

Imagine the life of these children during storms, typhoons or during the scorching heat of summer. It must be really hard for them to cope with these challenges

*"It is difficult, especially during rainy season or bad weather, it made our living much harder"*  
(Paolo, 24)

Because they don't have a home to call as their own most of their day time they spent on just roaming around and do their lucrative work on the side. Maria said

*"I just keep on walking every morning to look for food for dinner"* (Maria, 28)

*"Most of the time it's difficult especially when you have nothing to eat, when you don't have a shelter, you're just everywhere."* (Paolo, 24)

For the informants food is their everyday priority and every time they find nothing it is a really difficult situation for them.

*"Sometimes I wonder if we can survive. We are foodless, we're lucky if we find something on the trash."* (Maria, 28)

*"It was difficult, I was starving. You can't have food if you don't beg"* and Paolo shared *"Most of the time it's challenging especially if you have nothing to eat"*. (Elaine, 26)

Another problem prominent among street children is about the misuse of solvent. But according to Senate Majority Leader Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., those children who sniff glue are actually trying to ease their hunger and not just for the high that it can cause.

*"It was difficult because everyday you have to think where will you get your next meal. There are moments where you will just sleep all day to ease your hunger. I used to sniff solvent with my friends to forget that I haven't eaten anything in three days. It was tiring to ask yourself everyday why I'm still living."* (Dominic, 25)

### **Abusive and Dangerous Environment**

The street is a really dangerous environment. They are vulnerable to any danger like skin cancer-causing sunlight, rain, and air pollution. In addition, they are also exposed to risk of road accidents, street dangers and authority harassment. (Rialp, n.d.). These children range in age from zero to below eighteen years old or older who are unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination or because of a physical or intellectual disability (Ours to Protect and Nurture: The Care of Children Needing Special Protection, DLSU-Social Development Research Center, 2001).

*"Every morning in Quezon Memorial Circle, you will meet someone there who will maliciously insult you because they can really notice that I'm a street dweller with my clothes and bag. That's why they will insult and sometimes someone will approach you if you want to work as a domestic helper, that's dangerous right?"* (Joyce, 30)

*"there's a lot (bad experiences).when someone tries to dismiss us sometimes they use violence just to drove us away...Then there are people who will say that we are filthy, gross and scary. It hurts sometimes and you just have to cry."* (Maria, 28)



*"I think when policemen hurt us to make us leave... then they will avoid you and disgusted us"*  
(Dominic, 25)

*"More often we fail to find food, sometimes our luck is too bad. Then they will say foul things on us in the eatery where we beg for food. They cursed us"* (Paolo, 24)

Young and innocent as they are, street children are particularly vulnerable to being used by adults to become victims of money swindling, theft of money, or of physical abuse (Rialp, n.d.). In instances of cruelty, street children develop a fear within themselves. Fear of disclosure of mistreatment they suffered at the hands of adults and even authorities whom they trust for security. Given the nature of their engagements, Bacos and company (2005), stated that these street children can be child laborers.

The misused of solvent is a real danger to anyone's health, addiction to this substance is fatal for human especially for children, for it may cause permanent damage to their brain, nervous system, and kidney. (Manila Standard, December 22, 2001).

*"I used to sniff solvent with my friends to forget that I haven't eaten anything in three days."*  
(Dominic, 25)

### **Social Groups**

It is really hard to live alone, especially when you are surrounded by people and the urge to socialize is everywhere. Street children find strength from peer group (Bacos, et. al, 2008). They appear in groups and they protect certain areas they prefer as their territory for their hangouts or place for their lucrative activities. To be strong is essential for street children to survive in the street, and they appear tougher when they're with their group.

*"Those street dweller beside the sidewalk going MRT. There are adults and minors. They were there so I accompanied them (Maria, 28). She also shared that despite of their struggles as a street dweller "I think I can consider as one of my happiest moment is when we eat together, thought our situation is difficult, especially with all other kids around us" (Maria, 28)*

*"There's one family there (in Lacson street, ManilMay isang pamilya doon na lagi kong kasa-kasama. I don't know if they're still there, I haven't heard anything from them. They don't have any child and they became my parent figure" (Elaine, 26)*

*"I think our companionship is about our mutual concern for each other" (Dominic, 25)*

### **The Thinking Species: Realizations and Hope**

Despite of their forlorn living condition and the negativity around them, our young informant still manage to keep their hopeful soul. There is still fire within their spirit that demands for a better future and a life of comfort different from the street.

Maybe the street is a harsh environment for their younger selves but truth is it taught them positive things and made them realized value of things. When the informants of this study are asked about their realization and dreams during their street lives there are similarities within their answers, and it is the idea of family and education.

*"I met some Jehovah's missionaries and they read bible for me then after that my point of view changed 360 degrees. So I decided to return home, just like that." (Joyce, 30)*

*“My only dream before was to return back to the province. I really don’t like it here in Manila and that’s all I think about. (Maria, 28)*

*“I think about being with my family again, to return to domaguete.” (Paolo, 24).*

*“I think about schooling, we are is near the university so I wish I could also study like the students I encounter” (Elaine, 26).*

*“I think to be in school again, for me that’s my only escape from being a street dweller” (Dominic, 25)*

There are number of reasons why children live on the streets. The presence of the street children can be a result of economic, social and political factors (Shukla, 2005) but in this study the primary reason why they end up on the street has something to do with their family issues. The common reason children end up on the streets is they have run away from home to flee instability or physical, mental, emotional and psychological abuse (Ennew, et.al. 2003). For **Joyce** her poor family made her ran away multiple times. **Maria** and **Paolo** also came from poverty so they tried to have a decent job in Manila. **Elaine** used to have a relationship issue with her parent that is why she ran away. **Dominic** was abandoned back then and there’s no one wants to take responsibility of him.

Their lives on the street were purely a series of difficulties and challenges. Most of the time they do begging to survive their sad situation though in the study “A Situationer of Street Children in the Philippines” (2003), a street child is ashamed of begging but left with no choice but to do it to survive.

Aside from begging they also do other lucrative works like selling junk and accepting jobs from adults. (Rialp, n.d.). They don’t have a permanent space on the street that is why some of them experienced being abused just to be moved away. **Dominic** experienced the alarming malpractice of sniffing glue, he said the he do it to ease his hunger. The street made them encounter different type of people, some helps them with their live and some caused them danger.

Street is not always miserable, there’s still a place for joy and happiness and the informants found it within the company of other street dweller.

Though their experience is something that may break them, it is amusing that they considered the street as their training ground. It taught them how to be strong and a survivor.

### **Roofed Lives: Informants’ Lives inside the Shelter**

Life inside the shelter may be different for our informants. They may need to prepare psychologically and socially. The psychosocial approach translates the idea of species’ adaptation to the individual level. Individual’s encounter is a necessary developmental struggle between their own traits and capacities and the requirements and demands of the environment (Clay, 1959).

Throughout life, various social and psychological issues are dealt with which produce an impact on the mental/emotional well being of an individual. And entering an institution has made drastic changes to our informant’s lives. A lot of adjustments should be made.



*“Everyone follows the rules. With time, everything is scheduled inside. From the time you wake up until you sleep again is scheduled, and you don’t even have enough time to think because you have*

*a lot of things to do. And you just don’t study there, you also have to do the household chores.”*  
(Joyce, 30)

*“in the street we are free to do whatever we want but inside the convent every action is calculated. It’s hard to get along with people inside but you have to.”* (Maria, 28)

*“Inside I learned to obey the rules, to be spiritual and to socialize with different people. I just learn to do it everyday because I used to it”* (Elaine, 26)

Fear on living life back on the streets forced **Dominic** to get used to the life inside the shelter *“Inside I learned how to toned down my unnecessary street attitude, I became aloof. I have to follow them because if I don’t I’m afraid they will send me back to the street”* (Domini, 25)

Living inside the shelter has changed how **Paolo** takes care of himself and he has found the care he has been looking for inside and made the adjustment easier: *“Inside really took care of myself, I had time for myself. I met people there that really helped me and concern about my welfare. At first it was hard to get along with the changes but I get used to it even those thing they do like my conversations with social workers. It turned out to be a fun experience for me.”* (Paolo, 24)

Psychosocial adjustment of street children as a main variable to be tested is important to measure children’s ability to adjust themselves to street life both socially and psychologically, the degree of psychosocial adjustment of street children after being institutionalized, and whether institutional care can lead to better results in dealing with the problem of street children or that other on the street-solutions have to be sought. For them the shelter isn’t perfect but it can still provide them the comfort that they never experienced on the street. The major adjustments that they have encountered inside were the rules, according to the lady informants almost everything they do inside the convent has allotted time.

Though the shelter provides them with their needs, there is still part of them that is left unfulfilled. They still crave for the company of a real family; blood is thicker than water as they say.

### **The 360 Degree Turn: Leaving the Shelter and Starting a New Life, A Psychosocial Approach**

Social and psychological issues are dealt with which produce an impact on the mental/emotional well being of an individual (Mckinney, 1986). Theoretically, if these issues are dealt with positively, in a healthy, supportive, nourishing environment, they result in a well-adjusted individual (Clay, 1959). On the other hand, if these issues are not adequately handled or dealt with in a negative, unsupportive, impoverished environment, the mental/emotional well being of the individual is compromised (Leeper, *n.d.*) that may lead to an adjustment disorder that according to Horwitz (2011), if a person is experiencing significant stress and because of that stress, develops some psychological symptoms that are greater than what might be expected. Therefore, many factors influence these issues and how they are experienced, which in turn determines the resulting level of psychosocial adjustment.

The informants of this study have experienced a great deal of changes leaving the institution that they have treated as homes for a few years. On this part of this study we will present their psychosocial adjustments.

## Stranger versus Strangers: Adjustment to Social Change

### Social Behavior and Interaction

Erikson (1992) stated in his study that social interaction is dependent on the amount of everyday contact that occurs. He further explained that if there are no natural occasions for contact, then, social contacts do not develop.

As per Gudykunst's an increase in our need for group inclusion when interacting with strangers will produce an increase in our anxiety.

*"... I got irritated and more sensitive with people around me." (Elaine, 26)*

*"Everything is different outside compared to when I enter the convent. I always need someone to accompany every time I go out. It was so noisy outside, there's too much people, dust and pollution. It was so different from the convent. I used to be in a quiet place and there's few of us inside. I felt so new with mingling with other people." (Elaine, 26)*

*"I felt like I became more timid when I got out... I found it hard to interact with other people, I don't speak if you don't talk to me" (Dominic, 25)*

Though his experience may not necessarily have considered as a bad thing, he felt uneasy about the thought of maintaining good relationships. **Dominic** also explained that after leaving the shelter,

*"Like everything is so new for me because we are not allowed to watch television back there in the shelter. Before I used to rule the street, now I became more silent. I became unfamiliar with people around me and things they do because I used to be on one place and now I have to socialized with my uncle's family" (Dominic, 25)*

*"I felt so new with those people around me because inside the convent everybody knows each other. There's too much people outside doing a lot of different thing." (Maria, 28)*

There are also people that respond to their interactions positively. These are the people that consider that meeting strangers can actually be a good thing and an opportunity to build friendship and relationship.

*"...it was difficult for me to adjust especially to other people because now I get to introduce to more of them" (Paolo, 24)*

He enjoyed the opportunity of meeting other people apart from the group he has been used to when he was still inside the shelter even though he found it difficult at first.

*"Before I don't really care about other people. I used to believed that even if I have a fewer friends as long as they were true I'm happy with that. Now, I really enjoy being surrounded with a lot of friends and a lot of people I can talk to. I think I got used to a community without being a loner" (Joyce, 30)*

Though challenging as it may seem the other hand, it was life changing for her that she enjoyed working on groups.

## Changing Patterns of Life

### Emotion, Thinking and Orientation of the Future

Psychological system refers to those mental processes central to a person's ability to make meaning of experiences and take action. Emotion, memory, perception, motivation, thinking, reasoning, language, symbolic activities, and one's orientation to the future are examples of psychological processes. When these processes are integrated, they provide the resources for processing information, solving problem, and navigating reality (McKinney, 1986).

After leaving their respective institutions, children that have been released from a shelter can experience on their everyday activity. Since while they are inside, they are used to follow certain rules and regulations and have no choice but to obey. While when they are out of an institution's protection, they have the freedom to choose on what they want to do.

*"Of course I was very happy because first of all I'm free. Secondly, I graduated, I have my own diploma and it was euphoric" (Joyce, 30)*

*"I became more emotionally aware because I have nothing to defend myself against the world. Especially the fact that I'm an undergrad made me tough with the way I speak, like I'm always in a fight. But when I graduated my understanding became broader, you're braver but on a right way" (Joyce, 30)*

*"I was happy and sad at the same time because I leave the life that I used to inside. Then I wasn't sure if there someone or something I can return to outside" (Elaine, 26)*

*"I'm happy because finally I will leave with my family but I'm a bit scared on how it will be outside. I'm not sure about what will I do outside or where will I start." (Paolo, 24)*

*"I was nervous because I don't know how will I start after my release from the convent" (Maria, 28)*

### Stranger in a Strange Land: Adjustment to Environmental Change

#### Environmental Changes

Having been confined to the same place for three to seven years has made the informants adjust to their physical environment. From the physical environment down to their daily routine, even changes for themselves.

*"I noticed that I became unfamiliar with my environment. I even stare at people eating fishballs (a type of street food), I stare on people crossing the street, I became cautious about what happening around me. I just focusing on what is happening outside" (Joyce, 30)*

*"Yes, everything was so new and I find it funny staring at people. It just felt different, commuter's fare is different, I once paid a small amount and the driver got mad. He asked why I was not informed when it's all over the news. Well, we do not have television inside and I just came from released. Of course I didn't argued about it because I actually understand him." (Joyce, 30)*

*"With the thing I need to do, because I lacked with time. I was shocked with the noise of vehicles and people because I used to be with few people." (Maria, 28)*

*"I can hardly recognize the outside world after my 5 years stay inside the convent" (Elaine, 26)*

*"The place is so new for me especially now that I can explore, because before I used to stay at one place" (Dominic, 25)*

*"I found it hard to adjust because I don't know where to start" (Paolo, 24)*

### **Coping Process**

It is stated that psychosocial adjustment is normally reached through the interaction between the child and the institution (whether the institution is the family, social welfare institutions, peer groups, or others) in which the child acquires the basic skills and help needed to establish and maintain his/her psychosocial adjustment towards himself/ herself and to the surrounding environment (Seaton, 2009).

*"...you will learn how to deal with difficult personalities. Then you will also learn how to follow rules. I was never friendly until I entered the convent, because inside you can't play all by yourself." (Joyce, 30)*

*"We set our expectations that the life outside is different. When we were released it felt like sending us in an open sea without knowing how to swim. I already expected that that's why I don't really feel so different outside. (Joyce, 30)*

As for the rest, all they did was to keep up with the changes on their life.

*"I just got used to it because if I don't my life would not move on" (Elaine, 26)*

*"It was really difficult at first but you really have to get socialize." (Paolo, 24)*

*"I just got used to it. I keep in mind that I need to get along with this new environment. Whenever I feel overwhelmed with things I encounter, I just close my eyes and take a deep breath." (Maria, 28)*

**Dominic** also convinced himself that he should be the one to adjust. *"You will just get used to it. You have to change with you want to get along with these changes. You have to go with the flow because you need to." (Dominic, 25)*

After the interview, the study shows that all the informants have the same life experiences as well as their coping capabilities and that there is significance on having the same experiences such as what our five respondents have in common.

It is also clear that these informants became mindful after leaving their shelter. Langer (1989), states that mindfulness involves creating new categories, an openness to new information and being aware of strangers' perspectives. Mindfulness is essential for effective communication and one needs to develop mindful ways of learning about strangers. Langer (1997) concludes that this should involve: openness to "novelty", awareness of distinctions, being sensitive to different contexts, an awareness of multiple perspectives and an orientation to the present.

By doing this, the informants realized that change is inevitable and they need to be the one to adjust in order to continue their lives. Also, it can be said that there is no sure or easy way to provide a

person with information or skills which will allow him to cope with life and a changed life style he has not yet experienced. The job of coping with and living is in the hands of the person.

Living life along the street also has a great impact on the young adult's lives. And, having discussed the informant's psychosocial adjustment on their lives after leaving their respective homes, we conclude that people like them need a group of support where they can get their strength from and be able to cope up with the changes they have to go through.

## **Discussion**

People grow up being told that there is nothing constant in this world but change, and what one can only do is to cope with the changes and continue living their life. In every change, it is human nature that people need to adjust to any situation. Psychology defines adjustment as a change in personality, or personal performance about the realized requirement for modification to correspond to unforeseen circumstances (Babu, et. al., 2007). And human experiences vary in a lot of ways and the changes that human experiences in their lives require a lot of adjustments from an individual.

According to Erik Erikson, a child learns through cognition as they grow older and experience life (Newman, 2015). And cognition is defined as the process of organizing and making meaning of an experience. Learning, as any permanent change in behavior, or behavior potential is produced by experience. And through experience, one learns how to adapt to changes. Though in Psychology, it is argued that learning can never be measured nor observed (Seaton, 2009).

Erik Erikson wrote that human life as the *experience* is produced by the interaction and modification of three major systems: the biological system, the psychological system and the societal system (Newman, 2015).

Learning through experience helps a person adjust to any situation and Psychology defines that psychological adjustment is as having a positive mental health (Seaton, 2009) and social adjustment is defined as achieving a balance in an individual's social capability.

The informants played a significant role to achieve the goals of the study. Their unique and distinctive cases provided different and unique depiction and understanding of the general phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of the study. The number of informants only consisted of five young adults who came from different institutions.

The Narrative Paradigm introduced by Walter Fisher served as the framework for the researchers to support this study. The narrators for this study have been the young adults who were formerly under the protection of an institution since they are the major subjects of this phenomenological study. The researchers have based the stories they have shared from their experiences inside and outside of the institution. The researchers have used the stories narrated by the informants to accomplish the objectives and goal of the study. The task of interpreting the stories by the researchers has been based on understanding and evaluating the messages conveyed on each stories.

Moreover, the study has been derived from a thematic framework based on the gathered data on which it provides a reliable context for data interpretation. The interview guide was validated by some experts to ensure that it only includes appropriate and relevant questions that are significant to the central research issue. Many of the themes shown from the study are similar to some reported studies undertaken in other settings.

Results from this study revealed that reasons why these children ended up in the streets vary with each other. These young adults either ran away from their home while others have no choice but to live in the streets. They came from low income families and are facing personal issues that led them to their emotional and internal motivation why they are on the streets.

They also found life on the street difficult and dangerous. For the informants, street is the major setting for their childhood, they have experience different situation that is unusual for a normal child who lived with their family. Their open environment made them witnessed and experience happenings that may make or break them.

The dangerous environment of street is also their source of life, with their resourceful mind the street became the provider for their needs. It's like a bird feeding inside the mouth of a crocodile. Despite of this sad reality, their usual environment acts like their training ground. At their very young age, they learned how to be independent and developed their survival ability in time of difficulties.

According to Shahina Parveen (2014), a child between the ages of five to 18 years old wander around in the poor part of a city carries responsibility that otherwise belongs to their parents. They're doing any possible way to make some money in order to survive or to feed their families. 25% of these children are said to live on the streets. To live on the street they have different practices to keep meet their need. They used to beg for money and scavenge for food to survive their life. They also do petty jobs as their mode of income, they used to follow command from adults and in exchange he received money from.

Living on the streets might be difficult for a child, but for the informants of the study, the street has served as a training ground. They have learned to survive over the challenges they have faced on the street that mold them to be strong and to aim better in life.

Despite the fact that they were far away from their families, the shelters they have stayed has taken care of them. Though they still long for the love of their families inside the shelters.

All of the informants stated that they have experienced better life condition inside the institution compared to their lives on the street. The only problem for some of them found while living inside the convent are the rules because they were forced to follow every single one of them. Examples are the time to accomplish every activity from wake up time to lights off. According to them the existing rules inside the convent are very strict like every activity that they doing are timed. The convent funded their college degree inside the institution. Also, the facilities especially the rest room are not enough for all of the children inside the institution.

Though the informants had a rough start living their lives when they left their respective institutions, they have managed to adjust fairly on their lives with their new environment physically, socially and psychologically with the help of the shelters. There has been no specific coping process that they have undergone they just found the need to blend in.

The adjustments experienced by the key informants after leaving the shelter also vary with each other. For some, staying inside the convent had helped her to interact with other people. They became comfortable while being surrounded by other people and they also enjoys conversing with them.

However, according to one of the informants, adjusting after being released in the shelter wasn't easy. Other adjustment they experienced was to their new environment. They feel new and unfamiliar to their surroundings. They are also not used to the idea that they are now free to go to different places and



be with someone that they didn't know. Being in a new environment also means that their daily routine has been changed. The informants have succeed to cope up with those changes by just going with the flow, and they continue with their lives while convincing themselves that they will be used to it in time.

The lives of the informants on this study have been changed for the better. Even though they have to experience difficulties in order to have reached the person they have become now. Joyce is now successful on her career as a customer service associate, having had the opportunity to finish her studies inside the convent. Maria had also finished her studies inside the convent and she is now a successful teacher. Although it was hard for Elaine, she was still able to manage everything with the help of people she's with. Paolo and Dominic have also jobs that they help them to provide with their needs. Overall, it was clear that the shelters they've gone to and their families have helped them to adjust and survive in the outside world.

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