

PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION VIA SELF-COMPASSION  
AMONG SELECT FILIPINO BIBLE COLLEGE STUDENTS:  
A GROUNDED THEORY

BY

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PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION VIA SELF-COMPASSION AMONG SELECT  
FILIPINO BIBLE COLLEGE STUDENTS: A GROUNDED THEORY

AS PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

In Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1978), the role of emotions has not received proper recognition. This study was aimed at exploring the connection between emotions and perspective transformation through the construct of self-compassion, an emotion-focused coping strategy. Self-compassion may be helpful when facing unpleasant experiences because it leads to positive emotional responses. Since its introduction by Neff in 2003, self-compassion has gained wide attention and has been applied in many settings. Studies have shown that the self-soothing mechanism of extending compassion to oneself enables individuals to overcome hurdles, recover from painful setbacks, and gain a positive outlook in life. Specifically, this study sought to address whether self-compassion has any reflection on perspective transformation of adult learners. Using a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach, data was analyzed through constant comparison and the resulting outcome was the Theoretical Model of Recovering the Valued Self grounded in the lived experiences of select Filipino Bible college students from the National Capital and Calabarzon Regions in the Philippines. The findings showed that emotionally charged trigger events contributed to transforming perspectives especially in increasing awareness and understanding of the self or the Filipino concept of *loob* thereby expanding Mezirow's theory.

## CERTIFICATION OF PROOFREADING

I, Phoenicia S. Datu, certify that this dissertation has undergone proofreading and editing by Rev. Dr. William Vermillion, an authorized proofreader of the Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary.



February 28, 2023

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Signature of Researcher

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Date



February 28, 2023

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February 28, 2023

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## ACRONYMS

APNTS	Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GT	Grounded Theory
GTM	Grounded Theory Methodology
IHMC	Institute for Human and Machine Cognition
NCR	National Capital Region
PCL-C	PTSD Checklist for Civilians
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SCS	Self-Compassion Scale

# **CHAPTER I**

## **THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction**

As I had been thinking about the direction of my dissertation, I came across a journal article on “self-compassion” by Kristin Neff (2003a), an Educational Psychology professor at the University of Texas. Neff defined self-compassion as a construct involving being kind and understanding toward oneself, and being non-judgmental toward imperfections, limitations, and failures in life. She differentiated it from self-esteem which always includes self-evaluation through social comparison.

Reading further about self-compassion, I found myself drawn to this new concept in psychology and I identified with the construct of self-compassion. My interest in the field of Psychology began in my senior year of high school and so I pursued it for my undergraduate study. I thought about the instances when I had been judgmental and critical of myself and the situations when I had treated myself with kindness and understanding. I also realized that when it came to my mistakes and errors, I was critical of myself. But when it came to other people’s mistakes and errors, I tended to be more compassionate toward them and gave them leeway. Looking back at my childhood, I kept trying to live up to the standards set by people and yet, often failing. In fact, I clearly remember a friend of mine saying that I tend to blame myself even when it is not my

fault. So, the more I read about self-compassion, the more I gained an understanding about my own thought and behavior patterns.

Being an ordained minister, I also realized that self-compassion may prove to be very useful to people involved in Christian service as well as to students preparing for it. I wanted to explore how this construct might influence pastors and students alike. I thought about how self-compassion might affect those who succeed and fail in their Christian service. I also asked myself how self-compassion can be reconciled with the Christian message we often hear about being selfless. And since I am in the academy, I decided to focus on self-compassion and how this affects students in theological institutions where the constant emphasis is to deny the self and follow Christ.

### **Background of the Problem**

Theological education students often complain about the mounting pressures they go through while pursuing their studies. Their pressures include attending to ministry responsibilities, working on course requirements, and preparing for exams on top of family or domestic concerns. These pressures lead to stress which affects their overall performance and academic standing. El-Ghoroury et al. (2012, 1-2) reported that these common challenges interfered with the optimal functioning of graduate students. Neely et al. (2009, 88) reported that college life was demanding and taxing on students' well-being because they are expected to handle academic responsibilities while balancing them with their social activities. Moreover, they were also expected to recover from disappointments when they failed. Australian theological education students who cited challenges like study and work-life balance, health, stress, work responsibilities, and family difficulties, were forced to discontinue their studies (Matthews 2018, 229-231).

These resonate with the experiences of students in the Bible college where I teach who express the same sentiments. When pressures come from all sides, it is easy to get side-tracked and discontinue with studies especially when the challenges are outside the control of theological institutions.

Regardless of the pressures and at times insurmountable challenges that students face, they initially resorted to various coping mechanisms. In the study by the Ateneo Research Group (Commission of Population and Development 2004), Filipino students coped with their problems by asking help from other people. The need to be connected surfaced in the study because they felt more comfortable sharing their problems with another person. The ‘mother’ is the person most often confided in, followed by female and male friends and classmates. Similar findings were reported by Lapeña et al. (2009, 259-260) who highlighted the “emotional management skills, certain values and attitudes” of Filipino adolescents in their study which included seeking help from family, friends, and other people, engaging in sports, music, and window shopping. Moreover, having a strong belief in one’s confidence, talents, skills, intelligence, reliance on God’s help, a positive outlook, and youthfulness helped them view these problems as opportunities for learning while holding on to their conviction that things will get better. These may be typical responses of students who experience many emotions while studying. These emotions can either be positive or negative, and they can be intense and frequent. Some of these emotions are brought into the classroom from life outside the school and affect learning.

In 2003, Neff introduced self-compassion as an important psychological factor in coping with difficulties, hardships, problems, and worries since it leads to a positive

emotional response. Neff (2003a, 86-90) defined self-compassion as caring and supporting oneself when suffering. It is a kind and compassionate mindset in the face of pain and suffering. Self-compassion has three dimensions: (a) self-kindness as opposed to self-judgment, (b) common humanity as opposed to isolation, and (c) mindfulness as opposed to overidentification. These three core dimensions are distinct from each other, but they interact to create a “compassionate frame of mind when encountering personal mistakes, perceived inadequacies, or various experiences of life difficulty” (Neff and Knox 2017, 1). Having self-compassion does not mean being self-centered. On the contrary, self-compassion enables an individual to see one’s pain and suffering as common to humankind and so one becomes less critical of oneself and treats oneself with kindness. Neff and Knox (2017, 2) added that self-compassion allows one to have an open-hearted stance in life whereby one acknowledges that people and the self, included, are worthy of kindness and compassion and pave the way for greater emotional resilience and psychological well-being.

During exit interviews with graduating students, I would ask about their entire experience in the Bible college. As academic dean, I would conduct one-on-one interviews with graduating students to get feedback on their college experiences as well as about the curriculum, content, delivery, methodology, etc. Many claimed it was difficult especially as they went further into their studies. Some said they almost gave up because they could not balance between academic demands, ministry responsibilities, and home life. There were some who were hard on themselves for not making the grade or for not giving their best. But what helped them bounce back from setbacks and disappointments was in knowing that they were not alone in their suffering because other

students faced the same challenges. This perspective sheds light on the importance of having a compassionate frame of mind (Neff and Knox 2017, 1). In being loving, gentle and understanding of oneself and by intentionally soothing and comforting oneself in times of distress, the negative emotions are held in check and a recognition of suffering as a shared experience with other individuals is felt (Neff and Knox 2017, 2). Terry, Leary, and Mehta (2013) explored the levels of self-compassion of undergraduate students and those with high levels fared well in their academics and experienced fewer feelings of homesickness during the first semester. In a similar study by Kyeong (2013, 899-902), students with higher self-compassion levels experienced less psychological distress when faced with academic pressure and social difficulties throughout their academic careers.

I compare the journey from suffering to self-compassion as the “road less travelled.” I allude to the poem, *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost (1874-1963). Not many take this road because the natural tendency is to be critical of the self wherein one judges or blames the self for not knowing any better, for not being good enough or for not being able to handle life’s challenges. Neff (2011, 16-17) suggested that we let go of these unrealistic expectations of perfection and stop condemning ourselves for our mistakes and failures to open the door for real compassion. This argument by Neff (2011) strengthens Wong’s (2011) viewpoint that an optimum level of functioning leads to favorable responses in hardships. When people transcend negative life experiences, it becomes a valuable resource for emotional strength and well-being. This aligns with the perspective offered by Neff and Davidson (2016, 5) who claimed that self-compassion contributes to an acceptance of suffering as natural to the human condition and therefore

one should expect them. Their research findings evinced how self-compassionate thinking and behaving releases positive feelings of love, kindness, and connectedness with other people. Therefore, self-compassion provides people with the needed emotional resources to endure negative and painful occurrences and allow them to recover and bounce back easily. In this way, self-compassion allows people to thrive and grow in the face of adversity.

Again, as I have said earlier, the crux of the matter is that responding to painful and disappointing life experiences with self-compassion is not the natural predisposition of human beings. Taylor et al. (2020, 2) reported that stressed students showed lower interest for physical activity and higher tendencies to become anxious, moody, and to engage in substance abuse when compared to less stressed students. Similarly, students transitioning from college to society who are emotionally exhausted due to academic demands coupled with cynicism and feelings of inefficiencies are unlikely to prepare for the future thereby resulting in non-performance (Lee and Lee 2020, 1). These studies underscore the inability of some students to handle negative life events in a healthy manner that promotes growth and development. Neely et al. (2009, 89, 92-95) observed that students were often hard on themselves when they failed to reach a goal they had put a high value on. They tended to be more unforgiving of their failures. When self-compassion was introduced in their study, the students were able to find alternative goals to reach when original goals were not met. The researchers concluded that the construct of self-compassion acts as a valuable resource in regulating emotional responses to non-accomplishment and in regulating goals which contribute to students' well-being. Being

able to find new pursuits when previous goal was unattainable or has lost its value was possible when students turned to self-compassionate behaviors.

Neff (2003b, 225) conceptualized self-compassion as a useful emotion regulation strategy wherein painful emotions are confronted by holding them in check and in careful awareness with kindness, understanding, and with a sense of common humanity. As such, Neff (2003a) theorized that self-compassion is a positive and growth-oriented approach in regulating emotions. Neff, Hsieh, and Dejitterat (2005, 278) supported this conceptualization as a helpful emotion-focused coping strategy since it helped students overcome adversities as opposed to avoiding them. This proves that emotion-focused coping strategies help in bringing awareness and in managing emotions resulting in greater psychological adjustment.

Since self-compassion regulates emotions so that negative life experiences are managed well, it may be instrumental in transforming perspectives. However, to establish the association between self-compassion and perspective transformation, it is necessary to investigate the role of emotions in transformative learning. Dirkx (2001, 64) strongly advocated for emotions to be given equal emphasis in adult learning because these have the power to hinder or motivate learning. Dirkx (2001) asserted that adult learning promotes a “rationalist doctrine” where the emphasis is on factual information and the use of reasoning and reflection to gain understanding from experience. Likewise, Taylor (2001, 218) also argued that transformative learning, as explained by Mezirow, is a process that is overly dependent on critical reflection and downplays the role of feelings as it sees transformation through the unconscious development of thoughts and actions. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007, 150, 152) echoed this finding of Taylor

(2001) wherein one of the major issues with Mezirow's theory is his "overreliance on rationality" as the basis for perspective transformation.

Ever since Mezirow defined his theory as a rational process (Mezirow 1991; Mezirow 2009) which transforms our worldview by reorienting our assumptions and expectations, he has been largely criticized for neglecting to address the role of emotions. For Dirkx (2001, 64), significant and meaningful learning is basically grounded in the emotional dimension combined with the imaginative aspects of learning. He argued that as adult learners, we need to move beyond merely thinking and reflecting since much of human experiences are emotionally charged. In short, Dirkx (2001, 65) argued that emotions give us a means for acquiring knowledge about ourselves because they enable us to make sense of the daily events of our lives. Thus, emotions are gateways to a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live in. Since adult education has placed more premium on reason and elevated it to a higher position, it has relegated emotions to the margins (Dirkx 2001, 67). In addition, Dirkx (2001, 68) claimed that the use of images and emotions in learning is powerful enough to convey meanings.

Sands and Tennant (2010, 114-115) emphasized the relevance of the affective dimension in their study of transformative learning within the context of suicide bereavement. They claimed that although it is important to process loss and grief by articulating and critically assessing the relationship with the deceased, cognitive processing cannot compare to the healing brought about by engaging the emotions since they helped the participants to develop a "better" sense of the self, to re-engage with daily life, and to make progress in healing proving that emotional processing is at the heart of transformative learning (Sands and Tennant 2010, 116). This and other research have not

only provided support that emotions can affect the processes of reason, but more importantly, emotions have been found to be essential and often, indispensable for rationality to occur (Taylor 2001, 218). Taylor (1998) reviewed related empirical studies in the field of adult education and his findings revealed that a transformative process is not just rationally driven and is not overly dependent on critical reflection since it relies significantly on the exploration and resolution of feelings. Following this line of argument, he proposed to reconsider and acknowledge the management of emotions and the changes in behavior following transformation (Taylor 1998, 34; 2001, 219; Cranton 2006, 53).

Hoggan, Malkki, and Finnegan (2017, 55) have a different opinion regarding this issue. They contend that Mezirow did not ignore emotions as some have claimed because he has mentioned emotions in his writings. On the other hand, Hoggan et al. (2017) also said that the critics of Mezirow are justified in the sense that the nature, role, and origins of emotions are not given due consideration, nor have they been explicitly stated. As a result, emotions have remained in a subordinate role in contrast to the extensive elaborations of the cognitive aspects of learning which have been given a higher premium. Merriam (2004, 66-67) recommended that Mezirow expanded his theory to make room for the affective and intuitive dimensions of learning to be on equal footing with the cognitive and rational aspects. It is very clear now that Mezirow failed to theorize emotion and always prioritized the importance of a more cognitive critical reflection and rational discourse deemed necessary for perspective transformation (Walker 2018, 2). Although Mezirow (2009, 95) stated that the criticism to his theory regarding the role of emotions is justified, he has persisted in standing by his original

notion on the primacy of reasoning. While Mezirow gave his nod of agreement for the expansion of his theory, he also left it to other researchers to do the job. So, a decade after Mezirow established his theory in the 80's and made it at the forefront of adult learning, Kokkos and Tsimboukli (2011, 482) made the same assertion as Dirkx (2001), Taylor (2001) and Merriam (2004). Recently, Dirkx and Espinoza (2017, 1) did not mince their words when they said that it would take another twenty years before the construct of emotions would become a major theme of research in adult learning. Nevertheless, Kokkos and Tsimboukli (2011, 482-484) continued to justify Mezirow's caution regarding the arena where emotions, imagination, and extra-rational discourses are involved. Although Mezirow acknowledged that there is an emotional component to adult learning, he raised issue with the limitations of educators who venture into the psychological aspect of learning because this is best left to those qualified to deal with them like psychotherapists and professional counselors.

Hoggan, Malkki, and Finnegan (2017, 61) summed this up by declaring, "despite the ongoing development, there still exist many facets of perspective transformation that are undertheorized." So, what is missing in these theorizations and studies is an explanation of whether emotional responses such as self-compassion may trigger perspective transformation. This will only be possible by exploring the role of emotions in the lived experiences of people who try to make sense of the unpleasant life circumstances by constructing and deconstructing meaning through their world views. Therefore, what appears to be lacking in the literature is qualitative research on how students make sense of unpleasant life experiences through the practice of self-compassion and if this results in transformation or a changed mindset or perspective. In

summary, self-compassion as an emotion-focused coping strategy needs to be explored among adult learners to identify the role it may have in changing an understanding of the self, beliefs, and behavior which are the three areas Mezirow identified in his theory (1991, 98).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Given the potential of self-compassion in transforming negative emotions into positive ones, it is plausible to postulate that this might contribute to transforming mindsets even in the face of unpleasant experiences. This research does not preclude but explores in what ways self-compassion affects perspective transformation. In addition, the lack of emphasis in Mezirow's transformative learning theory regarding the role emotions play in transforming perspectives or mindsets strengthened my belief in their significant function. Thus, the central problem of this study is, "Do Filipino Bible college students undergo perspective transformation when practicing self-compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences?"

### **Statement of Purpose**

Studies in self-compassion have increased through the years since it was introduced by Neff (2003a) due to its multiple positive benefits on adults' academic achievement, psychological health and well-being, mental health, optimism, and success.

On the other hand, the transformative learning theory of Mezirow (1978) has also been proven to be the most effective theory about adult learning and education. The theory seeks to explain the processes involved in how meaning is changed or shifted to make room for new ones instead of discarding prior meanings. Recently, however, Taylor and Cranton (2013, 37) have drawn attention to the failure of Mezirow to include the

emotional and affective dimensions of the theory. They also stated that emotions are significant to learning because they help learners focus, guide, and motivate them for action. Hence, Taylor and Cranton (2013) concluded that emotions are inherently linked to critical reflection and relying solely on cognitive reasoning will not suffice in determining what to think, attend, and inquire about. As such, research is needed to better understand how emotions contribute to the transformative learning of students when navigating negative life experiences (Taylor and Cranton 2013, 38).

Therefore, this qualitative study using Constructivist Grounded Theory study aims to understand whether self-compassion, an emotion-focused coping strategy in dealing with unpleasant life experiences, aids in transforming perspectives of selected Filipino Bible college students. It is hoped that the working theory that will be generated from this data will expand the current literature base of the transformative learning process. Finally, the findings of this qualitative study may be useful to educators in fostering transformation in learning environments.

### **Research Questions to be Answered**

The main Research Question of this study is “Do Filipino Bible college students undergo perspective transformation when practicing self-compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences?” Since the Constructivist Grounded Theory will be used for this research, I wanted to be open to multiple perspectives. In generating theory establishing the connection between perspective transformation and self-compassion, using these five Sub-Research Questions will help in achieving this.

#### **Sub-Research Question #1**

Who are the Filipino Bible college students in this study?

**Sub-Research Question #2**

How do Filipino Bible college students perceive self-compassion?

- a. Are they familiar with the term self-compassion?
- b. Is there an image or a word from their native language that best describes self-compassion?
- c. Would family upbringing have a connection with self-compassion?
- d. Would Christian spirituality have a connection with self-compassion?

**Sub-Research Question #3**

What unpleasant life experiences did Filipino Bible college students undergo during the pandemic?

**Sub-Research Question #4**

How did Filipino Bible college students respond to these unpleasant life experiences?

**Sub-Research Question #5**

How were Filipino Bible college students affected when they treated themselves with compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences?

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on several theories such as the following: transformative learning by Mezirow (1978), self-compassion by Neff (2003), and emotion regulation by Gross (1998). A detailed discussion of Mezirow's theory is found in Chapter II of this study under "Transformational Learning and Self-compassion," whereas the detailed discussion of Neff's theory is in the same chapter

under “Historical Background.” Gross’ theory may be found in this chapter under “Regulating Emotions, Unpleasant Experiences, and Self-compassion.”

I have referred to Mezirow’s work for the most part of this discussion although I also referred to Cranton who expanded his work. The transformative learning theory of Jack Mezirow (1978) states that significant learning in adults involves meaning-making that can lead to the transformation of our personality or worldview (1991, 98). This type of learning is developmental in that it involves a “movement toward more developmentally progressive meaning perspectives” (Mezirow 1991, 109). Mezirow (1991, 98-99) proposed a ten-step process which begins with a disorienting dilemma that triggers self-examination of one’s underlying assumptions, followed by sharing these thoughts with others through dialogues, which then leads to exploring new roles, relationships, and actions to trying on new roles and then finally “a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective.” This kind of perspective transformation according to Mezirow is the central process in transformational learning and it is

the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (Mezirow 1991, 98).

Essentially, learning becomes transformational when it results in “a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective” (Mezirow 1991, 92).

Transformative learning is through the process of perspective transformation that takes place when a person gains self-awareness, moves toward revising systems of beliefs, and identifies strategies and resources to integrate and implement the changes

(Mezirow 1991, 92). A perspective transformation is “a structural reorganization in the way that a person looks at oneself and one’s relationships” (Mezirow 1978, 6; 1991, 61; Cranton 2006, 21). As such, Mezirow’s theory provides insight into the mindset transformation process. Nisbet and Ross (1980) pointed out the pre-existence of such structures in the mind of the perceiver. The meanings, ideas, feelings, and concepts exist in the mind and not in the words of the communicator (Reddy 1979). Hence, for Mezirow (1991, 92), the transformation of mindsets or ways of perceiving is an essential process in adult development, and it entails three dimensions namely:

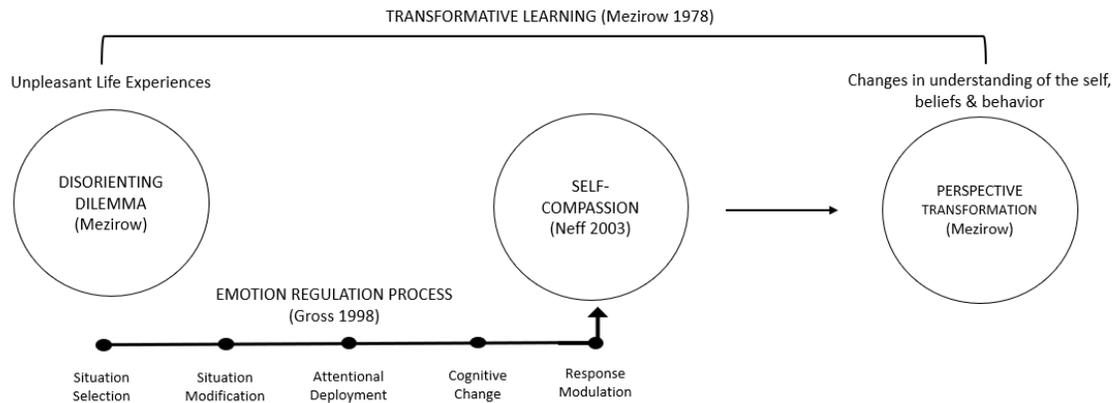
- (a) psychological dimension which pertains to an understanding of the self;
- (b) convictional dimension which involves a deep understanding of how one’s social relationships and culture have influenced one’s beliefs; and
- (c) behavioral dimension which leads to changes in lifestyle for taking action (Mezirow 1991, 95).

In this study, I am exploring how Filipino students’ perspectives are affected when they treat themselves with kindness and compassion when going through unpleasant life experiences. Using Mezirow’s theory, I want to find out if the students in this study experienced what he termed as perspective or mindset transformation in these same dimensions (in terms of self-understanding, beliefs, and behavior) when they navigated or dealt with unpleasant life experiences or disorienting dilemmas.

I chose Neff’s theory of self-compassion (2003) since it explains how various coping responses in the wake of unpleasant experiences are stimulated. For most of my discussion on self-compassion, I will refer to Neff’s body of work including her colleagues and others who have explored self-compassion under different settings.

Self-compassion, as an emotion-focused coping strategy, creates a level of mindfulness or self-awareness which leads one to respond emotionally by treating the self

with kindness instead of self-judgment, by identifying the negative experience as common to everyone instead of isolation and by being sensitive to one's pain and suffering instead of ruminating about negative thoughts (Neff 2003a, 91-92). In her seminal work, Neff (2003a, 86-87) defined self-compassion as the sensitivity of the self to one's suffering, the desire to relieve oneself of this suffering and be healed through kindness toward the self. It means being warm and understanding toward the self when one suffers, feels inadequate, or fails. Specifically, it involves a non-judgmental stance toward one's painful experiences so that one sees them as common to humanity. In addition, Neff (2003) claimed that self-compassion consists of three significant components namely: (a) self-kindness versus self-judgment; (b) common humanity versus isolation; and (c) mindfulness versus over-identification (Neff 2003a, 89-90). These three components work together and mutually interact to create a self-compassionate frame of mind when experiencing life difficulties, pain, or suffering (Neff 2003a; 2003b; 2009; 2011; Neff and Knox 2017). Thus, when one practices self-compassionate behaviors (as emotion regulated responses) in dealing with unpleasant life experiences (Mezirow's disorienting dilemmas), this may help bring about transformation as shown in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1 Theoretical Framework**

A case that illustrates how treating oneself with kindness and compassion helps in altering the impact of negative trigger events like grief and loss was presented by Reyes (2012, 85-86) who reported that self-compassion led to a positive emotional response that resulted in transformation as evidenced by an exemplar who, after practicing self-compassion, started to care for himself, honored the promise he kept, and extended compassion to another. Therefore, when the emotional response to negative experiences is one of self-compassion, the negative impact or effects of these experiences are weakened.

Neff (2003b, 225) has emphasized that “in many ways, self-compassion can be viewed as a useful emotional regulation strategy, in which painful or distressing feelings are not avoided but are instead held in awareness with kindness, understanding, and a sense of shared humanity.” In other words, self-compassion may be viewed as an emotion-focused coping strategy when faced by distressing circumstances such that one becomes sensitive to one’s distress and handles it with calmness and kindness toward the self and interprets events like these in a less dreadful manner.

How can self-compassion aid in transformation when dealing with a distressful situation? Wong and Yeung (2017, 1085) suggested that self-compassion might be helpful in setting off the meaning-making process by calming down negative emotions and providing a safe emotional environment so that people can be led to examine themselves and their distressing situation. Therefore, in this study, I will explore the role of self-compassion in the meaning-making process of students as they make sense of their unpleasant experiences.

For my research, the unpleasant life experiences of the participants are ideal situations for them to apply self-compassionate behaviors as a form of emotion regulation. The emotion regulation process model is included because it is relevant in explaining how people modulate their responses to emotionally charged events through self-compassion. Hence, self-compassion might attenuate or reduce the emotional impact of unpleasant life experiences so that participants may be challenged to examine their cognitive schemas and question their assumptions about the world. Schemas are mental structures or meaning perspectives that influence the way one experiences, feels, understands, makes judgements, and acts upon specific situations (Mezirow 1991, 39).

The emotion regulation theory was developed by psychologist James Gross (1998) and defined it as “goal directed processes that function to influence the intensity, duration, and type of emotion experienced” (Gross 2014, 6). Gross (1998, 275; 2014, 6) theorized emotion regulation as “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions.” As such, emotion regulation allows for flexibility in responding emotionally to any given situation. I chose Gross’s definition of emotion regulation and built his

modal model of emotion regulation into my theoretical framework to understand how one may arrive at a self-compassionate response (Figure 1 above). Gross' model of emotion regulation suggests that it occurs in sequence over time (Gross 2014, 5-6).

Gross's (2014, 8) emotion regulation process involves the following: (1) situation selection; (2) situation modification; (3) attentional deployment; (4) cognitive change; and (5) response modulation. Gross (1998, 283) explained that situation selection refers to approaching or avoiding certain people, places, or objects to regulate emotions. In other words, one selects which situations to seek out and which ones to avoid by weighing the benefits. For instance, a very shy person may avoid attending social situations which may provide short-term relief. In situation modification, one alters an existing situation to change its emotional impact (Gross 1998, 283). An example would be convincing the next-door neighbor to tone down the volume of music being played. Attentional deployment refers to directing attention within a given situation to influence one's emotions (Gross 2014, 10). Simply put, it is the allocation of attention to modify an emotional response. Allocating or changing emotional focus can be done either through distraction, concentration, or rumination or overthinking (Gross 1998, 284). Cognitive change refers to changing or modifying how one appraises or evaluates a situation to influence its emotional impact (Gross 2014, 10). Response modulation is engaging in a behavior to either down regulate or up regulate emotional responses. Deep breathing exercises are forms of response modulation to lessen the impact of negative emotions and modify the experience (Gross 1998, 285; 2014, 10).

According to Gross (1998, 274), an emotion-focused coping mechanism has the goal of decreasing the impact of negative emotional experiences. This is the reason why

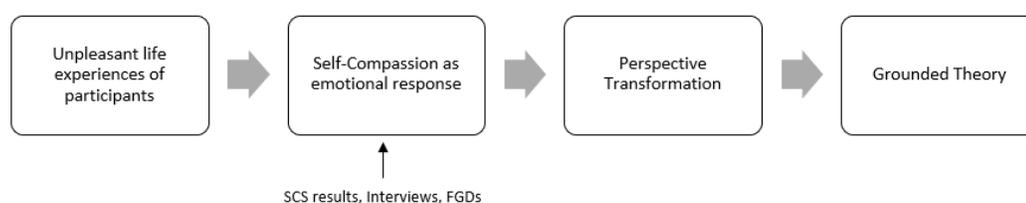
Neff (2011) asserted that instead of avoiding them, distressing situations are faced with kindness, understanding, and a sense of shared humanity. In this manner, negative emotions are transformed into positive ones making way for an objective awareness and evaluation of what is happening and seeking appropriate and effective ways of coping (Neff 2011, 17). Thus, being kind to oneself entails comforting the self actively which is one way of modulating emotions. Freeman (2016, 27-35) strongly argued that self-compassion helps in mitigating negative emotions in the emotional recovery of participants as they acknowledged that others also suffered the same challenges, recognized their personal distress, identified personal accountability, accepted that they were not accountable for the lapses of other people, and intentionally sought support.

My interest in applying Mezirow's (1991) developmental theory of transformative learning, Neff's self-compassion theory (2003), and Gross' (1998) emotion regulation theory helped in structuring the research questions of this study and in driving the method. Mezirow's theory is rooted in constructivism which maintains that learning is by constructing meaning when people make sense of their experience. My central research question centers on discovering the process of meaning-making which leads to transformation when faced with difficult circumstances. I will attempt to find out how meaning is restructured or constructed such that the self, worldview, and perspective of people become transformed. To generate a substantive theory connecting perspective transformation and emotions, unpleasant experiences will serve as disorienting dilemmas that have the potential of creating disruption and which may challenge the participants to work through their emotional responses with self-compassion. In managing and handling

these disorienting dilemmas by regulating their emotional responses through self-compassion, this might pave the way for the transformation of mindsets.

### Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework served as guide in exploring the connection between transformative learning and self-compassion. The diagram below (Figure 2) was the anticipated flow of data input and output.



**Figure 2 Conceptual Framework**

Prior to the interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), the students' self-compassion levels were measured using the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS). The SCS results, one-on-one interviews, and FGDs provided significant data in determining whether self-compassion plays a role in transforming perspectives and whether the resulting outcome provides a theoretical explanation for the mindset transformation of Filipino Bible college students when they dealt with unpleasant life experiences with self-compassion.

### Brief Description of Research Design

Qualitative research requires a solid commitment to the study and a substantial amount of time and resources. It entails rigorous practice and patience from data collection to analysis (Creswell and Poth 2018, 86). There are five different approaches to qualitative inquiry and the selection of the ideal approach entails an examination of the

focus of research or area of interest (Creswell and Poth 2018, 108). Although I wanted to describe a phenomenon, it became necessary to take the study further as I have mentioned earlier in the background of the problem. As such, this qualitative study utilizes the Grounded Theory Method to explain the relationship between perspective transformation and emotions through the construct of self-compassion since this is the ideal route to take in conceptualizing a theoretical model.

Glaser and Strauss (2006, 1-2) contended that Grounded Theory methodology is an excellent way to build theories because the theory resulting from the analysis is grounded in the data. According to Charmaz (2006), Grounded Theory is widely used and has become a popular qualitative research methodology across a wide range of disciplines and subject areas. In constructing a theory, the experiences of several people are explored according to their perception of the phenomenon. After this, an emerging theory may be constructed based on the data (Charmaz 2006, 10).

In this study, I have incorporated self-compassion as a significant dimension or factor that may aid in transforming the perspectives of Filipino Bible college students which may fill the gap in the literature base since this study will attempt to identify the crucial role of emotions in transforming views, attitudes and behavior of students preparing for the ministry.

The participants' self-compassion levels are measured using the Self-Compassion Scale or SCS (Neff 2003b). Their emotional wellbeing is measured using the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Checklist (PTSD). A discussion of these two instruments is found in Chapter III under the section heading "Instruments."

Due to the nature of this study, the researcher anticipates a sample of 12 students. The sample is drawn from a population of students enrolled in different Bible colleges in Manila. Using Grounded Theory, participants are randomly selected since a non-probability purposeful sampling technique was applied.

After completing the SCS and PTSD Checklist, the participants go through one-on-one interviews and join a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on a separate occasion. Data from the interviews and FGDs is coded and then categorized by grouping together similar instances having similar features or characteristics. Data is coded until saturation occurs or when no new concepts or categories emerge. More details about the research design of this study are provided in Chapter III.

### **Significance of the Study**

Self-compassion has several benefits with practical implications in different settings. Its significance and value to individuals and to whole organizations is too much to be overlooked or neglected. That said, this study may offer valuable grounded theory data showing that emotions may play an influential role in transforming the perspectives of students in the Philippines. The qualitative data from the research may illustrate how self-compassionate responses to unpleasant experiences may affect mindset transformation.

This study may contribute to and extend the current literature base on transformative learning by integrating the role of emotions in the process. Since transformative learning is the end goal of adult education, the role of emotions through the construct of self-compassion may be pivotal in transformation as learners deal with unpleasant experiences.

The participants' coping responses toward their unpleasant experiences may help this researcher and educators alike in gaining insights into how students can be assisted in modulating emotional reactions to reduce the impact of negative experiences. Such an understanding may inform educational practices about safe spaces for emotional expression.

Lastly, students' voices in this study may be powerful enough to contribute to identifying ministerial practices that support appropriate self-compassionate emotional responses to challenges commonly faced by pastors engaged in Christian service.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

This study assumes that unpleasant life experiences are disorienting dilemmas that trigger perspective transformation. The targeted participants also come from various stages of adulthood with varying degrees of cognitive competencies. Balswick, King, and Reimer posited that the development of cognitive abilities is gradual (2016, 191). Hence, it is assumed that those belonging to the emerging adult stage may not be as sophisticated in their thinking as compared to those who belong to the middle adulthood stage. Lastly, it is assumed that the resulting outcome will aid in the development of a Filipino theory establishing the connection between perspective transformative and emotions.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined to help the reader understand the context of each in this study.

*Emotion Regulation.* James Gross (2014, 6) defined emotion regulation as “shaping which emotions one has, when one has them, and how one experiences or expresses these emotions.”

*Pandemic.* The novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)–infected pneumonia (NCIP) or Covid-19 first occurred in Wuhan, Hubei Province of China in December 2019. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) characterized Covid-19 as a pandemic because 118,000 citizens from 114 countries have been infected with the virus.

*Perspective Transformation.* Mezirow as the “father” of transformative learning theory (Papastamatis and Panitsides 2014, 74) defined perspective transformation as “the process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better understood” (Mezirow 1991, 98). Transformation happens when a disorienting dilemma triggers critical reflection through examination, revision, and integration of new perspective resulting in a changed mindset or perspective. In this study, perspective transformation and mindset transformation will be used interchangeably.

*Self-Compassion.* As a form of emotion regulation, self-compassion is a feeling of compassion turned toward the self. It is compassion extended toward the self when suffering is inflicted by others, when it becomes too painful to bear or when it is because of one’s fault (Neff 2003a; 2003b; Neff and Knox 2017). Self-compassion also includes being open to and moved by one’s own suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding, non-judgmental attitude toward one’s inadequacies and failures, and recognizing that one’s own experience is part of the common experience of humankind (Neff 2003b, 224). Self-compassion consists of three

components: (a) self-kindness versus self-judgment, (b) common humanity versus isolation, and (c) mindfulness versus overidentification (Neff 2003a, 89).

*Unpleasant Life Experiences.* These are emotionally charged life experiences that cause one to feel problematic, anxious, and worried. Normally, these are negative experiences that produce pain and suffering. In this study, the unpleasant experiences are in the form of failure, disappointments, setbacks, problems, and difficulties experienced by the participants during the pandemic or Covid-19.

### **Scope, Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

The scope of the study covers the unpleasant life experiences of selected Filipino Bible college students during the pandemic. The study has identified the combined theoretical frameworks of Mezirow, Gross, and Neff as foundational to the study which was explained in detail in the introduction.

The study has also its limitations. First, the study is limited to the selected Filipino Bible college students, and so the gathered data may not necessarily be true of all Bible college students. Second, this study also identified the pandemic as the specific context wherein the respondents' stories of unpleasant life experiences were drawn. Hence the data will not cover other unpleasant experiences in another context. Thirdly, the study is limited in its focus in terms of the emotional aspect of perspective transformation.

Although perspective transformation is a cognitive theory, this study will not be dwelling on Bloom's taxonomy, nor will it embark on establishing any connection between these two theories. This is because this study seeks to bring to the surface the emotional aspect of perspective transformation. Lastly, this study will not discuss Cognitive Behavioral Therapy which is a form of psychological treatment for mental and emotional illnesses

because the study will be limited to exploring self-compassion as a form of regulating emotional responses.

I am aware that the intent of qualitative research is not to generalize findings (Creswell 2009, 192-193), but by adhering to ethical considerations, employing rigor in data collection and analysis, and observing strict measures in member checking and applying clear audit trail procedures, there is the assurance of validity of the research. The rigorous method of the Grounded Theory will surface findings that are trustworthy to the extent that they reflect validity and reliability which are hallmarks of good and sound research.

This study is delimited in its focus on whether the emotional aspect described as self-compassion leads to perspective transformation. This delimitation does not prescribe or argue that self-compassion alone may pave the way for critical reflection and self-examination which are essential processes involved in perspective transformation. The study does not negate the connectivity of the spiritual dimension to our emotions. Additionally, this study is also delimited to mindset transformation in adult learners due to the identified gap in the field.

### **Outline of the Dissertation**

Chapter II of this study is a comprehensive review of related literature on transformative learning, self-compassion, and emotion regulation. Chapter III is a discussion of the research methods and procedures and other specific details about how this study was performed. Chapter IV is the presentation of research findings and analysis of data including interpretations. Lastly, Chapter V is the summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations for future study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES**

#### **Overview**

This chapter is framed in such a way that it follows the flow of research questions I formulated for this study. As such, I will begin by introducing the construct of self-compassion first from its Christian perspective before tracing its roots in Eastern Buddhism. I will then discuss how individuals develop self-compassion as an inner resource, how it relates with emotion regulation, and how it has the potential of effecting change.

#### **Historical Background**

Before considering the Biblical and theological basis of self-compassion, it is necessary to define the broader concept of compassion. So, I am presenting the Christian concept of compassion followed by the Buddhist perspective. Both perspectives allude to suffering as the motive behind the concept. After this, I am presenting the Biblical foundation of self-compassion followed by a discussion of its application in Buddhism. Lastly, I included a discussion of the construct of self-compassion from a psychological perspective and how it is quantified or measured.

#### **Christian Concept of Compassion**

Etymologically, the term for “compassion” in Hebrew is “*racham*” which means “merciful.” The root of this term means “female womb” (Strong, Kohlenberger, and

Swanson 2001). So, using this literal meaning, the idea behind “compassionate” is the feeling a mother has toward her child (Comer 2017, 96). In the biblical account of the two mothers arguing about their babies before King Solomon, one of the mothers pleaded. The narrative described the situation in 1 Kings 3:26 (NIV), “The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, ‘Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!’” The Hebrew term for “deeply moved” is “*racham*” or “womb”, or “compassion.” This same Hebrew term is used in Psalm 103:13 (NIV), “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord [Yahweh] has compassion on those who fear him,” which depicts the heart of God for us, His children. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore, he will rise up to show you compassion” (Isa. 30:18, NIV). The reason why God will act is because He is a God of compassion. The psalmist also affirmed this attribute of God being compassionate, “But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Psa. 86:15, NIV).

God’s compassion signifies His motherly solidarity with us, His children, when we are in distress (Nouwen, McNeill, and Morrison 1982, 11). In other words, God identifies with us in our suffering. Therefore, suffering is not alien to God for He, Himself, suffers because of the people’s rejection of Him as Lord (Fretheim 1984). Being fully familiar with suffering as One who suffered much, God is sensitive to our suffering and does not look down on us with apathy or indifference. He suffers with those who are suffering (Fretheim 1984, 108). Since God suffers for the people, He is moved to act on our behalf because according to Exodus 3:7 (NIV): “The LORD said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their

slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.” Hence, God is wounded and is grieved by suffering though He is not overwhelmed by it, nor does He become bitter. Despite the people’s rejection of Him, He continues to love and desire our good (Purves 1989, 66).

Compassion and mercy are closely related in terms of meaning (Grudem 1994, 200; Gibson 2015, 8-9) and they depict the qualities of God which characterize His dealings with humankind as attested by Paul when he wrote Romans 9:15 (NIV), “For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” In the New Testament Greek, the verb “to have compassion” is *σπλαγχνίζομαι* (*splanchnizomai*) which means to have one’s deep inner core or bowels turned over (Strong, Kohlenberger, and Swanson 2001). It is referred to as a “gut-wrenching” experience (Purves 1989, 18) and a “deeply emotional yearning” (Gibson 2015, 9). Purves described God as “not the distant, autonomous, untouched deity of Greek philosophy but the passionate, affected, and fiercely loving covenantal God” (Purves 1989, 63). When God shows compassion though sinful humanity deserves judgment (Keener 2009, 118), He is proven righteous. This is how God exercises His sovereign wisdom and will in His choices. God’s righteousness is maintained and manifested in saving and in judging (Schreiner 1998, 523).

In effect, to have compassion for another is to be in solidarity with or to suffer with the one suffering (Purves 1989, 18). God also goes even further by bearing the sins of the world and halting whatever judgment sinners deserve. Instead of dealing with sinful people through the law, God graciously initiates a plan to redeem and save (Purves 1989, 67). In other words, compassion has come to be commonly understood as having

an awareness of another's suffering and being moved to alleviate that suffering as God has demonstrated to His people.

Evidently, the ministry of Jesus was characterized by compassion and the Gospel accounts provide clear evidence of this. When Jesus saw the leper, He was filled with compassion and so He reached out His hand and touched him (Mark 1:40-41, NIV). When Jesus saw the epileptic youth, the father pleaded with Jesus to have compassion on them (Mark 9:22, KJV). When Jesus saw the huge crowd, He had compassion on them for they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34, NIV). He had compassion on the people who had been following Him for three days and had nothing to eat (Mark 8:2, NIV). Two blind men cried out to Jesus and asked Him to restore their sight. Jesus had compassion on them, and He touched their eyes and healed them (Matthew 20:34, NIV). Jesus entered the town of Nain and when He saw the widow and her dead son, He had compassion on her. He touched the dead boy and raised him back to life (Luke 7:13, KJV). When Jesus taught the story of the good Samaritan who cared for the wounded man on the road to Jericho, Jesus explained that compassion is a humane neighborly response to suffering when we see it (Gibson 2015, 13). Thus, we can say that compassion is the very essence of the ministry of Jesus Christ, and He has called us to "go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37, KJV).

These biblical accounts tell us that compassion is an attribute of God which He shares with human beings. Theologians call this a communicable attribute (Grudem 1994, 200). As a communicable attribute shared with human beings, God expects us to imitate Him in our conduct toward other people (Eph. 4:32; 5:1) and this implies being compassionate toward those in distress (Grudem 1994, 201).

The English term ‘compassion’ comes from the two Latin words ‘com’ which means ‘together with’ and ‘pati’ meaning ‘to suffer.’ Taken together, it means ‘to suffer with’ or ‘to bear with’ (OED 2022). For Thomas Aquinas, the terms *miser cordia* which means ‘mercy’ was synonymous to *compassio* or compassion. *Miser cordia* signifies that someone’s heart is *miserum cor* (wretched) due to the wretchedness of another (Aquinas n.d., 2973). So, if one has a “wretched heart” which is caused by the wretchedness of another person, one “suffers with” that other person. In short, one has compassion for the person in the literal sense of *compassio* (Barad 2007, 12; Miner 2015, 73-74). Thus, mercy is the profound and heartfelt sympathy for the suffering of another, wherein we are moved to help if we can because compassion moves us to act (Aquinas n.d., 2973; Barad 2007, 12; Burnell 2009, 2).

Nouwen (1972, 45) emphasized in *The Wounded Healer*, that Christians demonstrate to the world they are the people of God when they are able “to make the compassion of God credible in the world.” Hence, in being compassionate or by showing compassion, we closely resemble our Creator who has compassion for our broken and suffering world. Nouwen, McNeill, and Morrison (1982) wrote this poignant description of compassion which presupposes a natural response to another’s pain or suffering.

Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human (Nouwen, McNeill, and Morrison 1982, 3-4).

Thus, the very heart of compassion reminds us to whom we belong and whom we reflect to others as we deal with our own pain and suffering.

## **Buddhist Concept of Compassion**

An interesting angle in the discussion of compassion is Thomas Aquinas' and the Dalai Lama's belief that charity and compassion are related terms (Barad 2007, 11). Although Aquinas wrote from his Christian beliefs and the Dalai Lama from his own Buddhist perspective, taking the Eastern and Western perspectives into consideration will deepen one's understanding of the virtue of compassion.

The Buddhist term for compassion is *karuna* (Kyabgon 2001, 28; Doud 2020, 92) which means "the heart that trembles in the face of suffering" (Feldman and Kuyken 2011, 144), "a heartfelt unity with all things and with the universe" (Doud 2020, 92) and as "the wish that others may be free from suffering and the causes of suffering" (Kyabgon 2001, 43-46). It is considered one of the noblest qualities of the human heart which implies the inevitability of suffering (Feldman and Kuyken 2011, 144). Early Buddhism meditation practice teaches that compassion can only be expressed in the real world when it is developed through meditation. So that when one sees the plight of those who suffer, one seeks to relieve them of their suffering (Kyabgon 2001, 27-28). On the contrary, Mahayana Buddhism teaches that compassion is not developed simply through meditation as suggested by the early Buddhist practice. The Mahayana Buddhism teaches that compassion is developed by immersing oneself in the place of the disadvantaged individual (Kyabgon 2001, 39; Barad 2007, 13). It is not enough to identify with those who are suffering because Mahayanists are taught to engage themselves with the world (Kyabgon 2001, 38-39). Hence, meditation and observing the spiritual practices are to be carried out in daily life resulting in a right mental attitude. This right mental attitude will

naturally express itself in how one interacts with the world, with other individuals, and with oneself through compassion (Kyabgon 2001, 39).

According to Aquinas (1225-1274), compassion is an internal emotion of the theological virtue of charity (Aquinas n.d., 2977). It is internal because compassion is felt from within the individual who is charitable. This makes charity as the source of compassion. As such, Aquinas, and the Dalai Lama both agree that the appropriate response to suffering is compassion as a charitable act (Aquinas n.d., 2979-2980; Dalai Lama 2002, 67; Barad 2007, 12-13). Furthermore, the Dalai Lama (1997, 64) believes that compassion goes beyond simply wishing for others to be free of their suffering because the virtue entails a commitment to, responsibility for, and respect towards other people. This implies that we are to help those who are suffering in concrete terms. Both Aquinas and the Dalai Lama hold that good intentions do not equate to compassion (Barad 2007, 13). Regarding this, the Dalai Lama (2002, 2) emphasized, “it [compassion] is the necessary business of every member of the human community.”

Thus, we can see that both the Christian and Buddhist perspectives of compassion involve suffering. Compassion, as we now understand from these faith traditions, is an emotional response to suffering when one sees it, and this is expressed through compassionate actions by seeking to relieve the person of his or her suffering.

### **Biblical and Theological Basis of Self-Compassion**

In this discussion are a few references to Christian views and biblical texts to establish the scriptural and theological basis of self-compassion. From the classical period, I highlighted St. Bernard of Clairvaux since his treatise is crucial to an understanding of self-compassion. Thomas Aquinas’ theological insights have been

highlighted as well. From the contemporary period, Wilhoit sheds light on self-compassion as a spiritual practice for our modern times.

The Christian concept of self-compassion can be understood through the lens of the Greatest Commandment of loving God and loving others as one loves the self (Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-27, NIV). The commandment to love God and others is exemplified by acting with compassion toward others. This also means having care and concern for the self that ought to manifest in how we treat other people. St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) expounded on this biblical injunction of loving God and loving others as thyself through his treatise, *On the Love of God* where he identified the four degrees of love (Bernard of Clairvaux 1884). St. Bernard was one of the great leaders in the history of the church who had a deep reverence for the Scriptures. Love was the dominating theme of his writings (Holmes 1980, 55). The first degree is the love of self for self's sake because we love ourselves for our own sake and cater to our needs first (Bernard of Clairvaux 1884, 20). This love for the self is carnal love and can be excessive when one lives only to gratify the self. This is held in check by the second degree of love of God for self's sake when we love God because He alone can meet our needs. According to St. Bernard (1884, 21), this is how we begin to love God for who He is and what He does for us. In the first degree of love, we love the self for our own sake or for our own good which is very selfish. In the second degree of love, we love God because we are recipients of His goodness and love. The third degree is love of God for God's sake. With this kind of filial love, we transcend the love of self to love of God because He is worthy to be loved and not because of what we can get from Him (Bernard of Clairvaux 1884, 22). The fourth degree of love is love of self only for God's sake. This

is mystical love and is possible when the self is in close union with God. As St. Bernard said, “O pure and holy love! Most sweet and blessed affection! O complete submission of a disinterested soul; most perfect in that there is no thought of self” (Bernard of Clairvaux 1884, 23). On this level, love returns to the self, but the motivation is different. We agree with God that ultimately, everything is for Him. And this fourth degree is the highest order of love which may be experienced momentarily but will eventually be experienced permanently when we are united with God eternally. This is perfect love of God when we no longer dwell on our needs (Bernard of Clairvaux 1884, 24).

Thomas Aquinas believed that compassion should be expressed to other human beings, and it therefore follows that it should be extended to oneself too (Aquinas n. d., 2974; Barad 2007, 26-27). According to Aquinas, “Now love of self is a good and right thing in itself: wherefore man is commanded to love his neighbor as himself” (Aquinas n.d., 2130). Without this love of the self, it would be difficult to love others and show compassion for them lest those lacking in self-love may compensate for this lack when helping others (Aquinas n.d., 2130). “Amid this competition, comparison, and insecurity about his own inherent goodness, it is very difficult for the insecure person to feel compassion for others” (Barad 2007, 27). To show compassion to another, a person must first love oneself. After all, we desire the good things for others that we also want for ourselves (Barad 2007, 27).

Since Aquinas equates self-compassion to love for oneself, Wilhoit (2019, 83-84) believed that self-compassion is the individual’s responsibility to oneself as God expects him or her. By respecting and recognizing his or her worth as a human being created in God’s image, by honoring one’s God-given gifts and uniqueness, and by responding with

empathy toward the self in the face of hardships, one is fulfilling this responsibility to God (Wilhoit 2019). In addition, to fully express compassion to oneself entails (1) an empathetic and caring word; (2) a physical action that quiets and comforts; (3) a recognition that what one is experiencing is common to humanity (Wilhoit 2019, 84). Furthermore, Wilhoit (2019) claimed that we must understand self-compassion as a means of opening ourselves to God's compassion. When the Christian expresses compassion toward oneself, it is an expression of one's appreciation for God, the source of all blessings for, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights" (James 1:17, NIV). Wilhoit (2019) also maintained that it is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that our hearts are transformed and conformed to Christ such that we can express compassion toward ourselves and others. Our newfound identity in Christ enables us to express compassion confidently. And because of God's comfort, we are motivated to be compassionate as "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" (2 Cor 1:3-4, NIV). Therefore, in practicing self-compassion, we open our hearts to receive from God the love He gives generously to all without finding fault (James 1:5, NIV).

Indeed, love and compassion are fundamental truths of Christianity, and Jesus giving of Himself and dying on the cross for our sakes is the best expression of these (Kalnins 2015, 44-45). In acknowledging that failures, inadequacies, and suffering are part of humanity's experience, our Christian theology also affirms that sin and suffering is a reality in this broken world. When we extend kindness to ourselves during times of suffering and disappointments, Christ extends understanding, mercy, and grace to us as

well. When we become mindful of our hurts and pain especially because of our sin, Christ comes to extend forgiveness and compassion, and Christ accepts all these and loves us still.

### **Buddhist Origins of Self-Compassion**

Neff herself has said that her self-compassion theory was inspired by Buddhist teachings and practices (Neff 2003a; 2003b). The roots of self-compassion could be traced back to the Tibetan Buddhist practice of medicine as far back as 4000 years ago (Zelikman 2015, 6-7). According to Zelikman (2015), Tibetan doctors examined and paid attention not only on the physical signs and symptoms of an illness but on the psychological aspect as well. They believed that suffering leads to ignorance which causes physical and mental illnesses, and that self-compassion helps to free the mind from suffering. So, to free the mind from suffering, Tibetan doctors trained the minds of their patients to contemplate and dwell on positive things and to avoid negative thoughts. Treatment begins by opening one's mind so that the healing process through self-compassion can take place. Furthermore, Zelikman (2015, 6-7) claimed that practicing self-compassion meditation helps in modifying behavior that is influenced by faulty thinking and understanding. Thus, through meditation, negative thoughts are changed to positive ones which lead to emotional health and compassionate behavior. The brain directs how one perceives things and so by practicing self-compassion, negativity which causes mental disorders, is reduced (Zelikman 2015).

Self-compassion in Eastern Buddhism dates back 2,500 years ago (Persinger 2012, 20; Neff and Knox 2017, 2). This branch of Buddhism teaches that suffering is a result of unfulfilled life circumstances and experiences. Kyabgon (2001, 26) wrote that

permanent happiness is through the Eightfold Noble Path which includes moral sensitivity, meditation, and concentration. By practicing moral sensitivity, one becomes a better individual who can overcome egocentric tendencies and be more compassionate and sensitive toward the needs of others (Kyabgon 2001, 26). This compassion is not only directed toward others in the face of suffering but is also given to oneself (Neff 2003b, 224; Ying 2009, 310; Neff and Dahm 2014, 3).

Included in the Eastern Buddhist philosophical thought is that self-compassion entails (a) extending kindness, patience, and understanding to oneself in times of pain and suffering; (b) recognizing that others also suffer and experience pain; and (c) not ignoring or ruminating about one's shortcomings (Neff 2003a, 89-90; 2003b, 224; Barnard and Curry 2012, 152). De Souza and Hutz (2016, 186) reported that Buddhist practitioners had the highest level of self-compassion ( $n=8$ ,  $M=3.32$ ,  $SD=0.84$ ) compared to Catholics ( $n=186$ ,  $M=3.18$ ,  $SD=0.73$ ), Spiritists ( $n=60$ ,  $M=3.18$ ,  $SD=0.69$ ), and Protestants ( $n=30$ ,  $M=3.09$ ,  $SD=0.74$ ).

Lindsay and Creswell (2014, 8) quoted the Dalai Lama who said, "If you don't love yourself, you cannot love others. You will not be able to love others. If you have no compassion for yourself, then you are not capable of developing compassion for others." Hence, compassion for others must begin with having compassion for the self, first and foremost. In short, "compassion and self-compassion should be seen as an oxygen mask which should be put on oneself before putting on the oxygen mask on others" (Egan et al. 2019, 226).

I do not expect that Buddhism will emerge from the data since participants of this current study are Christians. I presented the Buddhist roots of self-compassion to serve as

context for the development of Neff's theory which is anchored on Buddhist beliefs and practices such as mindfulness and its association with the concept of suffering.

### **Neff's Psychological Concept of Self-Compassion**

Neff developed the theory of self-compassion in 2003. Since then, research on self-compassion has grown over the years. There were about 27,400 articles and dissertations written about self-compassion from 2003 to 2022 (based on a Google Scholar search with "self-compassion" in the title). Neff is a Buddhist practitioner (Neff 2021, 250) and claimed that she became interested in Buddhism during her final year of graduate school. While doing her postdoctoral work she decided to conduct research on self-compassion, a central construct in Buddhist psychology since it had not yet been examined empirically. Since developing the construct in 2003, Neff has created a scale to measure self-compassion and has written several articles and books on this subject (Neff 2021, 307). In essence, self-compassion is about caring for and supporting oneself when going through suffering or pain. In her seminal work, Neff (2003a, 86-87; 2003b, 224), contended that the definition of self-compassion does not veer away from the general definition of compassion.

Given the numerous definitions of compassion from within the psychological and academic literature, one definition that captures the main components of the concept is by Halifax (2012) which includes a sensitivity or affective feeling of caring for one who is suffering, and a desire or motivation to relieve the suffering (Halifax 2012, 228).

This definition entails being open to and moved by the suffering of others, and the desire to relieve them of their suffering by extending patience, kindness, and non-judgmental

understanding toward them, and recognizing that all human beings are imperfect (Halifax 2012).

In the same token, Neff (2003a; 2003b) defined self-compassion as being open to and moved by one's own suffering, and a desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal the self with kindness (Neff 2003a, 87; 2003b, 224). To put it simply, self-compassion is "compassion turned toward the self by relating to the self with care and concern when suffering" (Neff and Dahm 2014, 4). For Neff, Rude, and Kirkpatrick (2007, 909), self-compassion is a significant human quality because it entails "kindness, equanimity, and feelings of inter-connectedness, helping individuals find hope and meaning" when facing hardships or going through suffering.

Being self-compassionate does not mean being selfish and insensitive to others' pain and suffering. It also does not imply putting the needs of the self while neglecting others (Neff 2003b, 224). On the contrary, Neff (2003a, 88; 2003b, 224) said that self-compassionate people recognize that everyone suffers and deserves to be treated with compassion and this includes the self. Self-compassion is different from self-pity because according to Neff (2003a, 87), the psychological construct of self-pity leads to isolation instead of experiencing feelings of connectedness. Nor does being self-compassionate mean passivity because one's inadequacies and failures are challenged and faced so that these become areas for growth.

Self-compassion also consists of three significant distinct components: (a) self-kindness versus self-judgment; (b) common humanity versus isolation; and (c) mindfulness versus over-identification (Neff 2003a, 90-91; 2011, 40-41). These three components work together to create a self-compassionate frame of mind especially when

experiencing negative emotions arising from unpleasant events or occurrences (Neff 2003a, 89-90; 2003b, 224; 2009, 212; Gilbert and Procter 2006, 358). Neff (2003a, 89) explained that though these three are separate and distinct from each other, they work together to impact one another. Moreover, what sets these three components in motion is a level of mindfulness or awareness of the self and others. This state of mindfulness creates a level of objectivity so that the self can experience self-kindness and feel a connection to the rest of humanity. Neff (2011, 73) defined mindfulness as “stopping to notice moments of suffering.” In other words, we recognize the moment when we are in pain and suffering. Kabat-Zinn (2003, 146) explained that mindfulness involves paying attention to and being fully aware of the present moment and withholding judgment. For Neff (2003b, 224; 2011, 77), mindfulness leads to an awareness of one’s thoughts and feelings as they arise, and these are brought to one’s consciousness instead of running away from them or suppressing them. Therefore, it results in a balanced state of mind which does not deny pain and suffering, nor does it ruminate or overthink about unpleasant events (Neff 2003a, 89-90; 2003b, 224; 2009, 212; Neff and Knox 2017, 1).

The three components of self-compassion are self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Self-kindness is treating oneself with kindness and refers to “the tendency to be caring and understanding of oneself instead of being critical or judgmental” (Neff 2009, 212). Instead of being hard on the self, self-kindness includes behavior such as “soothing” and “comforting” oneself when suffering or in pain (Neff 2003a; 2009, 212; Neff and McGehee 2010; Neff and Knox 2017). Being kind toward the self implies stopping the constant self-condemnation and self-judgment and accepting one’s failures and inadequacies instead (Neff 2011, 41). Neff and Dahm (2014, 5) added

that self-kindness implies a supportive and understanding attitude toward the self where the “inner dialogue” is one of gentleness and encouragement rather than harsh and belittling words. When outside circumstances become harder to bear, one soothes and comforts the self being moved by one’s own distress. In this manner, instead of feeling anxious and angry, one is calmer, more content, and more secure (Neff and Dahm 2014).

Secondly, common humanity is the acknowledgement that our lives are interconnected such that when we are in touch with ourselves, we recognize that feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction are shared by all people (Neff 2011, 57-58). This involves a recognition that everyone fails, commits mistakes, and does not always get it right all the time. We do not always get what we want, and we know and experience what it means to be disappointed with life. We have flaws and limitations, and these imperfections are shared with all people (Neff and Dahm 2014, 5). As a result, this leads to a healthy acceptance of one’s limitations and imperfections (Neff 2003a; Neff and McGehee 2010; 2017). When one is critical of one’s own mistakes, failures, and disappointments, one feels more isolated than connected with the rest of the world. For Neff and Davidson (2016, 4), if we frame these within the bigger and universal experience of humanity, we feel more connected than cut-off from the rest. In other words, a self-compassionate person refuses to become a recluse through isolation and does the opposite which is to recognize that pain and suffering is common to everyone.

Lastly, mindfulness is when we give ourselves compassion by stopping or pausing to notice moments of suffering that we are facing (Neff 2011, 73). It means being aware of one’s present circumstances in a balanced way so that one does not ruminate or over-identify with the negative aspects of personal circumstances (Neff 2003a, 87). It includes

being aware of the experience of the present moment in a clear and balanced way (Neff and Davidson 2016, 5). It means taking the time to recognize that one is in pain and is suffering (Neff 2011, 73). It is being mindful and keenly aware of the negative thoughts and emotions and approaching them with balance and equanimity (Neff and Dahm 204, 6). Being mindful implies being sensitive to what we are experiencing instead of denying or ruminating or overthinking (Neff 2003b, 224; 2009, 212). In short, it is being mindful of oneself and one's painful circumstances not by self-pity but through a healthy way of acknowledging one is going through some form of suffering and recognizing that it is not permanent.

### **Self-Compassion Scale: Measuring Self-Compassion Levels**

Being able to measure self-compassion adds to a better understanding of this psychological construct. Neff (2003b, 225-226) designed the scale to measure self-compassion using three separate and distinct subscales (self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation, and mindfulness versus over-identification) but with the intent of arriving at a total score by summing up the three subscale scores of the Self-Compassion Scale. The subscale scores represent how individuals emotionally respond to pain and suffering (with kindness or judgment), gauge their cognitive understanding of their circumstances (as part of the overall experience of human beings or as an isolated experience of the person), and shed light on the manner in which they pay attention to suffering (with mindfulness or overly identifying). The total score represents an individual's level of self-compassion (Neff 2003b, 226; 2015, 271; 2018, 201; Neff, Whittaker, and Karl 2017, 605; Neff et al. 2018, 642). In this study, I used the SCS to measure the levels of self-compassion among the participants. The

results were also used to determine whether the students' responses to the unpleasant experiences were descriptive of what self-compassion is based on Neff's conceptualization.

The scale has been proven to have strong psychometric properties and validity making it a distinctly different construct from self-esteem (Neff 2003b, 234; 2015, 271; Neff et al. 2021, 138). The internal consistency of the 26-item Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) is .92 (Neff 2003b, 232; Neff, Whittaker, and Karl 2017, 597). The scale has also been found to be reliable when used with adults and with adolescents as well (Neff and McGehee 2010). And as expected, the SCS proved to be a significant predictor of mental health and psychological well-being without being associated with narcissistic tendencies commonly found in self-esteem. Unlike self-esteem, which was found to be correlated with egoism, narcissism, and self-regulation failure, self-compassion was linked with healthy self-concept or image since it promotes awareness of the self's limitations without hiding them to gain social approval (Neff 2003b, 244).

The SCS is the most widely used scale in measuring self-compassion and has been repeatedly tested and proven effective (Neff et al. 2021, 136-138). However, other researchers have questioned the accuracy of the scale in measuring self-compassion. Brenner et al. (2017, 9) claimed that out of the 26 items, only 13 items appear to contribute to self-compassion and the remaining 13 appear to measure self-coldness. Neff, Whittaker, and Karl (2017, 603-605) and Neff (2015, 266) addressed this in their study using five models: one factor, two-factor, six-factor correlated, higher order correlated, and bi-factor among students, community adults, Buddhist mediators, and clinical samples. Results of their study showed that the SCS showed relatively good

psychometric properties and that using a total SCS score is still an accurate measure of total self-compassion across samples.

Muris and Petrocchi (2017, 279-280) held that the positive components measure self-compassion, but the negative components are problematic because they are characteristics associated with psychopathology more than uncompassionate behavior. In a more recent study, Muris and Otgaar (2020, 1475-1476) claimed that an overall score should not be used as a measure of self-compassion because the two sets of subscales are contradictory and unrelated. Neff (2016, 792; 2018, 200-201; 2020, 1901-1902) defended the use of a total SCS score by saying that self-compassion contains the three dimensions of self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness and that three components of self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification are necessary because these indicate lessened self-compassion. The six subscale scores correlate with each other such that when the three compassion subscale scores are high, it follows that the three non-compassion subscale scores are low. In other words, these two subscales work in tandem (Neff 2018, 200-201). Separating the positive and negative dimensions could not be established because there was so much overlap that it makes sense to use one total SCS score. Hence, all six factors form part of the compassionate frame of mind the SCS score can be taken as a general measure and not as separate scores representing compassionate and uncompassionate modes of responding (Neff et al. 2018, 9-10). So, for this study, the total SCS score was used in determining the level of self-compassion among the participants.

## **Regulating Emotions, Unpleasant Experiences, and Self-compassion**

How should individuals respond emotionally to unpleasant life experiences? How does one respond with self-compassion when faced by these dilemmas? These questions require an analysis of how regulating or modulating emotional responses affects the ways in which persons think and behave. But even more important is the fact that any discussion about emotion regulation presupposes an understanding of emotions.

### **Emotions and Emotion Regulation**

According to William James (1884, 189-190), emotions are response tendencies which manifest in bodily or physiological changes that follow directly after perceiving something significant. James' view of emotions as response tendencies implies that people may modulate or regulate their emotional response to anything perceived by the senses. It is this modulation that determines the final stage of the emotional response (Gross 1998, 272).

The importance of regulating emotions in general was given emphasis by Sigmund Freud (1936) who placed anxiety-regulation at the focal point of his psychodynamic theory of mental life (Gyurak, Gross, and Etkin 2011, 1). Other researchers in the stress and coping arena built upon his work by exploring the influence of cognitive and behavioral strategies aimed at managing the impact of external and internal demands that are considered stressful, taxing, or excessive (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, 25). Developmental researchers also recognized the significant relationship between emotion regulation abilities and adjustment and highlighted the association of self- and emotion-regulation and the social and emotional functioning in children (Campos, Campos, and Barrett, 1989; Posner and Rothbart 2000; Cole, Martin, and

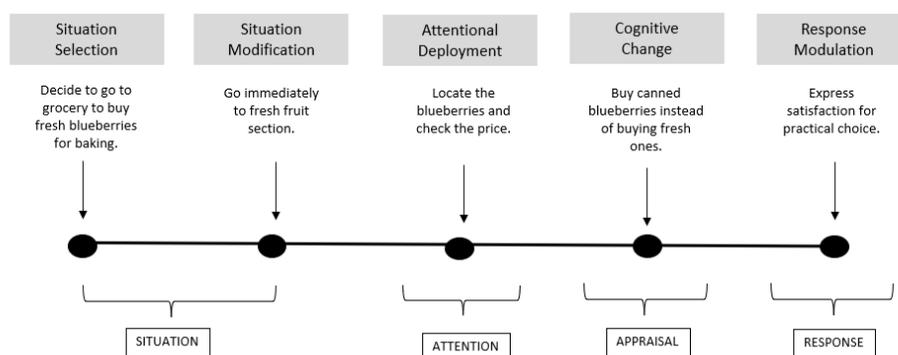
Dennis 2004). Emotion regulation studies throughout the lifespan have also been conducted for, in regards to, with infancy (Campos, Campos, and Barrett, 1989; Posner and Rothbart 2000), childhood (Eisenberg et al. 2000), adolescence (Lewis et al. 2006), and old age (Gross et al. 1997) which signify that in every stage and season of life, the regulation of emotions plays an important role. Ross Thompson (1994, 28), a developmental psychologist who focused on emotion regulation in young children claimed that when emotions are aroused and become more intensified, they become the goal in the emotion regulation process.

James Gross (2014, 6) defined emotion regulation as “shaping which emotions one has, when one has them, and how one experiences or expresses these emotions.” In my study, I used Gross’s definition of emotion regulation because it is aligned with my research focus. Gross (2014, 8) also stated that emotion regulation has three features. The first one refers to the goal of the emotion regulation process which pertains to what people want to accomplish. The second is the strategy which refers to the specific processes required to achieve that goal. Third, the consequence or outcome after using a particular strategy of emotion regulation. Taking all three core features together indicate that people most commonly desire to reduce or down-regulate the intensity or duration of the negative emotions whereas positive emotions are more desired and so are increased or up-regulated. However, Gross (2014, 9) expounded the theory further by saying that generally, people regulate emotions because they want to increase the pleasure, or reduce the pain, or be more objective, or to prescribe to social customs, or to cover up how they truly feel. Regardless of the goals people desire, they use different emotion-coping strategies to achieve them.

To analyze the processes involved in regulating emotions, Gross (2014, 9-10) pioneered a process model of emotion regulation which details five major points of focus: (1) situation selection, (2) situation modulation, (3) attention deployment, (4) cognitive change, and (5) response modulation. Gross' conceptualization of emotion regulation fits well with the goals of this study since I am interested in knowing how participants regulate their emotions such that their responses lead to a self-compassionate stance.

According to Gross (2014, 9-10), when we are faced with many choices, our response will be determined by which situations we select or choose to attend to and engage in (situation selection). While we are in the situation, we can choose to modify or modulate what happens (situation modulation). We can also selectively choose where to focus our attention (attention deployment) when still immersed in that situation. The meaning we ascribe to the situation can also be modulated and this entails how we choose to reframe our mind and our thinking (cognitive change). However, even after we have responded emotionally, our response can still be modulated (response modulation).

Figure 3 below illustrates the processes involved in emotion regulation.



**Figure 3 Emotion Regulation Process of James Gross**

### **Self-Compassion as a Regulated Emotional Response**

Self-compassion relies on the components of emotion regulation and requires that individuals experience and examine their negative emotions (Neff 2003a, 91-92; 2003b, 225). Recent research offers evidence that emotion regulation may be a significant aspect in self-compassion since it promotes mental health (Neff and Germer 2013, 40). Inwood and Ferrari (2018) found that self-compassion helped in down-regulating hyper levels of negative emotions especially those suffering from trauma thus, concluding that self-compassion aids in regulating emotional responses (Inwood and Ferrari 2018, 15-16).

Miyagawa, Niiya, and Taniguchi (2020) reported that people with high self-compassion were less likely to have wrong beliefs about failure. The study showed that self-compassion, as an emotional response to failures, is positively correlated with the belief that failures are learning opportunities and part of life. Self-compassion also weakened wrong beliefs about failures being unpleasant and so they must be avoided (Miyagawa, Niiya, and Taniguchi 2020, 2055). Thus, self-compassionate people perceived failures as opportunities for growth and by embracing suffering with kindness and warmth, they became more resilient in failures and more motivated to improve (Miyagawa, Niiya, and Taniguchi 2020, 2064).

Tiwari et al. (2020, 558) reported that self-compassion influenced positive emotions such as happiness, optimism, emotion regulation, and control. In return, these positive emotions produced behavior and thoughts associated with positive life goals. Likewise, self-compassion, as regulated emotional response, served as a buffer against negative emotions due to stressful events and encouraged individuals to improve personal weaknesses (Leary et al. 2007; Breines and Chen 2012). The construct also led to

positivity and acceptance of negative feedback and outcomes as it produced greater self-understanding and positive regard for others (Tiwari et al. 2020, 560). Self-compassion promoted self-kindness leading to health-promoting behaviors and in tempering the negative effects of setbacks and failures while attaining health goals (Sirois, Kitner, and Hirsch 2015, 7).

Being self-compassionate controls negative emotions thus, causing people to be more resilient in suffering and pain (Freeman 2016, 53-54). It also means that one is taking responsibility for one's psychological and emotional health and well-being (Neff 2003a, 92-94). According to Neff (2003b, 225), painful feelings are not avoided but are confronted with kindness and gentleness through self-compassion resulting in negative thoughts and emotions transformed into positive ones. In choosing where to focus one's attention, people respond emotionally in a healthy and positive way. Likewise, the study by Dupasquier et al. (2020, 4-5) yielded similar results among college-aged women who actively sought social support when facing distress. Self-compassion helped them to overcome shame and to open up to others about their circumstances. Ferguson et al. (2014, 210) reported that self-compassion helped in developing a positive frame of mind enabling people to view difficult experiences in a more positive light resulting in goal achievement.

Engaging in sports helps in developing confidence and promoting health. However, studies have also shown that female athletes suffer from emotional challenges concerning performance (Mosewich et al. 2013, 521-522). As a result, failure caused guilt and shame, decreased self-identity and achievement, and loss of motivation. Negative thoughts also resulted from not achieving goals, wasting opportunities, and

doubting oneself. The emotional pain experienced by young female athletes was explored by Sutherland et al. (2014) who claimed that constant emotional pain was associated with failure. Self-compassion helped the athletes view their personal suffering as a shared experience. As a result, they did not dwell much on their failures and accepted that there were aspects beyond their control. Isolation and comparison with others prevented the athletes from moving on from their failures (Sutherland et al. 2014, 509). Moreover, in stepping back and being calm instead of losing control, the female athletes were able to realize their own harsh and self-critical attitudes. By controlling and overcoming these negative attitudes and emotions, they were able to treat themselves with kindness finding increased motivation to train and work harder (Sutherland et al. 2014, 509).

In determining how to respond to stressful situations, Gross and John (2003, 61) suggested that re-evaluating emotionally charged situations changes the impact. This is a form of cognitive reappraisal carried out in the cognitive change phase of the emotion regulation process. This can be seen in the kindness response to the emotional toil of Covid-19 by most people. The novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)-infected pneumonia (NCIP) incidence occurred in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019. Findings suggested that human-to-human transmission occurred among close contacts since the middle of December 2019 (Li et al. 2020). In March 2020, there were 118,000 cases in 114 countries and 4,291 people have died from the virus during this time. Hence, the World Health Organization categorized Covid-19 as a pandemic (WHO 2020). Countries started lockdowns, and everything came to a halt. As a result, businesses, schools, stores, malls, including government offices and agencies ceased operations to limit human movement and stop the spread of the virus. Rigid measures were also

undertaken by governments to protect and provide for citizens. All over the world the pandemic took its toll on humankind, young and old alike.

The pandemic led to a considerable rise in adult mental health disorders not to mention the psychological effects on children and young people (Vallejo-Slocker, Fresnedo, and Vallejo 2020, 501). According to Gutierrez-Hernandez et al. (2021), about thirty percent of those surveyed and interviewed were above the normal levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. Students claimed they tended to become anxious, depressed, and stressed due to the uncertainty of their studies and future employment. Findings also showed that self-compassion lowered the levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. The authors suggested that self-compassion was likely helpful in reducing the impact of the pandemic on people's mental and emotional health and well-being since it served as a buffer against depression, anxiety, and stress (Gutierrez-Hernandez et al. 2021, 8-9).

In summary, studies mentioned above showed the importance of being compassionate to oneself especially in responding to challenging or difficult situations. Research has shown that being self-compassionate helps people deal with unpleasant circumstances by reducing the negative impact of emotionally charged situations leading to "a healthier way of relating to oneself" (Neff 2009, 211).

### **Development of Self-Compassion**

This section delves into how self-compassion is developed. According to studies I have read, self-compassion does not develop automatically simply because one performs compassionate acts. Neff (2011, 163) asserted that a person who is compassionate to others may not be self-compassionate. I am interested in finding out if students' self-

compassionate responses to unpleasant experiences are fostered by their family upbringing and Christian spirituality. In view of this, I have included studies exploring these factors.

### **Family Nurture and Self-Compassion**

The family is the most important factor in a child's development. The influence is very strong and foundational especially in the formation of attitudes, behavior, and the personality of the child. Family background seems to affect the development of self-compassion. Specifically, parental attitudes may influence its development (Neff 2011, 28).

Past research on parenting styles revealed correlations with self-compassion. Baumrind (1966) asserted that an authoritative parenting style is the most child adaptive. This style is high in demandingness and high in responsiveness resulting in independence and decision-making skills, while still maintaining an accurate view of the self. Parents who use this style explain punishments and rules that lead to reasonable responses to negative events (Baumrind 1966, 891-892). On the other hand, the authoritarian parenting style expects children to comply with the rules without any explanation and obedience is always demanded which may include inconsistent punishment. As a result, children do not know what to expect when they commit mistakes (Baumrind 1966, 890-891).

Eker and Kaya (2018, 49-56) examined the relationship between parental attitudes as perceived by the students, self-compassion, and compassionate love. The parental attitudes identified were democratic and authoritarian. Parents with democratic attitudes recognize the individuality of their children and are supportive of them thereby allowing for the development of an independent personality. Authoritarian parents expect a child

to obey and follow rules unconditionally. Democratic parenting style led to the development of the students' sensitivity toward themselves while those who perceived their parents as authoritarians exhibited low self-compassion (Eker and Kaya 2018, 54-56). Parents may need to be democratic in their attitude toward their children by recognizing their individuality, giving unconditional love and support, and encouraging children to develop a positive self-image which aids in the development of self-compassion.

Hall (2015, 15-17) also explored the effects of parenting style on self-compassion and compassion for others. The study examined which among four parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative/democratic, neglectful, and permissive) experienced by the research participants while growing up contributed to the development of self-compassion and compassion for others in later adulthood. What is worth noting are the results which showed that self-compassionate adults had mothers who were authoritative (democratic) and authoritarian. Having authoritarian mothers who were demanding and sometimes unreasonable contributed to the self-compassionate attitudes of some of the participants. Hall (2015, 15) explained that these individuals who have been exposed to unkind treatment while growing up may be empathetic of others and perhaps would not want other people to suffer the way they did which may account for the development of self-compassion. Although Hall's (2015) findings contradict the discoveries of Baumrind (1966) and Eker and Kaya's (2018), it only goes to show that parental upbringing has an impact on how children treat themselves and others later in life as adults.

In terms of parental behavior, Neff (2009, 213; 2011, 28) concluded that this may significantly contribute to the development of self-compassion in children. Also

supporting this view are Kelly and Dupasquier (2016) who reported that one's childhood experiences characterized by parental warmth led to the development of a soothing system which enables a child to control his or her emotions. This self-soothing system strengthens one's capacity to be self-compassionate and receive compassion from others (Kelly and Dupasquier 2016). Furthermore, results showed that students who had emotionally warm and caring parents showed a greater ability to be self-compassionate and to receive compassion. It seemed that warm and caring parents facilitated feelings of safeness, reassurance, and connectedness in the participants' adult relationships (Kelly and Dupasquier 2016, 160-161). The researchers also suggested that struggles with acceptance, reassurance, and connectedness in relationships may be due to parents who may not have been emotionally warm and caring. As such, individuals who did not experience warmth, nurture, and security while growing up tend to have difficulty in extending compassion to themselves and may be fearful of receiving compassion in return (Kelly and Dupasquier 2016). Similarly, Neff and McGehee (2010, 235-237) found that maternal support, harmonious family dynamics, and secure attachment all predicted higher self-compassion levels among adolescents and young adults.

Maternal support was found to be instrumental in self-compassion while maternal criticism was found to be associated with low self-compassion. According to Neff (2011, 28-29), criticisms from parents are often internalized by children and the effects of these negative words manifest in their adult life in terms of how they view themselves. Furthermore, while most studies on effects of criticisms deal with parental figures, any negative remark or words spoken by a significant figure in a child's life "can lead that child to experience inner demons later on in life" (Neff 2011, 29).

These studies show that the development of self-compassion may be attributed to the influence of the family. Specifically, parental nurture and the kind of family environment that is cultivated while growing up may have a significant influence in the development of self-compassionate attitudes and behaviors. This research will endeavor to find out whether this holds true for the participants of this study.

### **Christian Spirituality and Self-Compassion**

The participants of this study are Bible college students who are regularly exposed to teachings on being selfless and on putting the interests of others first before one's own. I wanted to investigate whether one's spirituality influences the development of compassion towards the self.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, James W. Fowler's paradigm still dominated the faith development studies. Fowler was a Methodist theologian who first formulated his theory in the 1960s and 1970s and who was influenced by well-known developmentalists like Erikson and Kohlberg and by the writings of Tillich and Niebuhr. It was in 1981 that Fowler published his findings in the book *Stages of Faith* which explained the foundation for his stage theory (Estep and Kim 2010, 165-166). Fowler (1981) posited in his seven stages of faith development that the beginning of self-awareness, of being attentive to one's consciousness, and of being self-reflective is characterized by gradual and challenging developmental processes. One starts out being dependent on other people by constantly interacting with them and with the world and one's sense of identity is contingent upon how one is perceived by others. Eventually, one begins to recognize differences and becomes more aware of oneself, others, and the world (Fowler 1987, 55). Faith development involves processes by which individuals

become more and more conscious or aware of themselves in relation to God and to one another as they progress in the developmental continuum. For adults in their twenties (young adulthood) up to their late thirties (adulthood), it is the stage of individuative-reflective faith. It is at this stage when these individuals critically examine their system of beliefs, values, and commitments. “This means that persons must undergo a sometimes painful disruption of their deeply held but unexamined world view or belief system” (Fowler 1987, 68). This includes acknowledging and dissecting previously held beliefs and questioning how they have come to be interpreted. The process brings “clarity, precision, and the sorting out of what is defensible from that what is not” (1987, 70). Sharon Daloz Parks, a student of Fowler, enhanced this fourth stage by saying that this is the critical stage wherein young adults engage in critical analysis of previous perspectives by probing questions and examining commitments in a desire to resolve fragmented views (Parks 1986). Other participants of this study are in this stage when they are capable of critically examining their faith beliefs and assumptions by reflecting on and questioning them. After having gained clarity of oneself and the boundaries of one’s faith beliefs and understanding, one progresses to the Conjunctive faith stage (Fowler 1987). At this stage, the individual rejoins that which was previously separated by acknowledging the tension and plurality of beliefs. The individual gains confidence and peace despite the paradoxes and mysteries of the faith (Fowler 1987, 72). It would be interesting to find out how the participants’ faith beliefs and understanding influence their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward themselves when dealing with unpleasant life experiences. It might be worth looking into whether their faith affects the exercise of self-compassionate practices.

The qualitative study by Patershuk (2013, 56-57) discovered that spirituality was foundational to the development of self-compassion. The participants viewed self-compassion as a resource that allowed them to let go of things they could not change and enhanced their personal growth by understanding the self and the world better. However, it was also found that the development of self-compassion was progressive in the sense that it continues to increase over time which seems to parallel Fowler's faith stage theory.

There is also evidence supporting that self-compassion is connected to a secure attachment to God. Homan's study (2014, 985) drew a connection between attachment to God, self-compassion, and mental health and findings revealed that God is viewed as the ultimate attachment figure who exudes compassion. In perceiving God as compassionate, participants claimed they were able to extend compassion to themselves.

The qualitative study by Kalnins (2015, 154) explored the role of the Christian faith in the development of self-compassion. All participants held the belief that God is the source of their self-compassion. The more they practiced self-compassionate behaviors, the more they deepened in their spirituality which includes a belief in the unconditional love of God and His power to transform people and use them despite their imperfections. Moreover, the participants believed that their self-compassion is a significant aspect of their relationship with God. If this is really the case, ministers can guide their congregation into accepting God's forgiveness, not being ashamed of acknowledging sins, imperfections, and failures and in seeking help within the community of faith for support since this might help in promoting kindness or compassion to the self (Brodar, Crosskey, and Thompson 2015, 241). Furthermore, their findings showed that individuals with low self-compassion were afraid of being rejected

by other people if they owned up to their sins and failures. As a result, it prevented them from confession and accountability. Those with high self-compassion levels acknowledged that everyone sins, and they were not ashamed of admitting their sins and seeking forgiveness (Brodar, Crosskey, and Thompson 2015, 238-240). It was therefore concluded by the researchers that self-compassionate individuals would thrive in Christian communities. More importantly, perceived forgiveness by God was also significantly lower among the participants who showed low self-compassion. Individuals with low self-compassion tended to look down on themselves and felt that they were not worthy of God's forgiveness. They tended to perceive themselves as "sinners" struggling to earn God's forgiveness (Brodar, Crosskey, and Thompson 2015). Furthermore, low self-compassion Christians tended to expect harsh judgment from God and doubted as to whether they have been truly forgiven for the mistakes they have made. The low self-compassion group also showed significantly lower perceived support from a Christian community because they have feelings of alienation or isolation and so, they refused members who tried to be supportive of them (Brodar, Crosskey, and Thompson 2015). On the other hand, Christians with high self-compassion acknowledged their imperfections yet still saw their worth and did not hold back when others extended kindness to them. These individuals showed a greater sense of common humanity and felt more connected with their faith communities (Brodar, Crosskey, and Thompson 2015).

Given the promising results of these studies in religious settings, it seems that spirituality may be a conducive environment for the development of self-compassion. Therefore, this study will also endeavor to uncover how spirituality affects self-compassion.

## **Transformational Learning and Self-Compassion**

In the preceding section I discussed how self-compassion is influenced by family upbringing and spirituality. In this section, I will discuss how self-compassion may facilitate change in one's personality and one's view of the world. However, this necessitates an explanation of Mezirow's transformative learning theory.

### **Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory**

I chose to anchor my study on Jack Mezirow's theory because it provides a clear elucidation of how learning is transformed. I am interested in exploring how Bible college students undergo perspective transformation and Mezirow's theory serves as an excellent reference and guide in determining how participants of this study interpret and make sense of unpleasant life experiences. Although I will be referring mostly to Mezirow's works, I will also refer to other experts who have written about Mezirow, expanded his theory, and critiqued his work.

Transformative learning theory (transformative and transformational are used interchangeably) became a very popular theory in the field of adult education. It has been highly acclaimed as promising because it provides a solid theoretical base for understanding the multi-faceted theory of adult learning. It is a very robust theoretical explanation of learning and, evidently, a great asset to research and scholarship in the field of adult of education (Hoggan, Malkki, and Finnegan 2017, 48-49). Since Mezirow first introduced transformative learning theory in 1978, it has helped to explain how adults make meaning of their life experiences and changed the way they perceive themselves and the world.

Mezirow's theory evolved from his study about the "unprecedented expansion in the number of women" who were going back to school (Mezirow and Taylor 2009, 19). Mezirow (1978, 2) investigated the phenomenon and identified the factors that facilitated or hindered the learning progress of women in these re-entry programs. Perspective transformation was identified as the central process occurring in the personal development of these women who attended the re-entry programs. In other words, the previous assumptions held by the women from which they constructed meanings were challenged by "life crises" or "disorienting dilemmas" and were transformed resulting in a new perspective (Mezirow 1978, 7-8, 11). As the name implies, transformational learning is about change or learning that produces change. For Mezirow (1991, 124), "The goal of adult education is to help adult learners become more critically reflective, participate more fully and freely in rational discourse and action, and advance developmentally by moving toward meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative of experience."

Hoggan (2016, 71) describes transformative learning as the "processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world." As regards these changes, Clark (1993, 47) explained that "Transformational learning produces more far-reaching changes in the learners than does learning in general, and that these changes have significant impact on learner's subsequent experiences. In short, transformational learning shapes people; they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognize."

Perhaps the definition of transformative learning set forth by O'Sullivan (2003) offers a more comprehensive explanation of Mezirow's intent. O'Sullivan (2003, 327)

claimed that transformative learning involves experiencing a paradigm shift in the basic presuppositions of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a change of one's consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters one's way of being in the world which entails an understanding of one's self, one's relationships with other humans and with the natural world, one's understanding of relations of power structures of class, race and gender, one's body awareness and aspirations of alternative approaches to living, and one's sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. O'Sullivan's definition is a well-defined elaboration of what transformation involves and what it looks like. The lasting changes will significantly impact on individuals such that they will never be the same afterward even if the transformation is gradual or sudden and whether it takes place in a formal environment or in daily life (Clark 1993, 47). This was also underscored by Chad (2020, 111) who pointed out that Mezirow was not only referring to learners coming to understand and evaluate how they interpret the world since transformation involves gaining greater autonomy of thought, a broader openness to others' perspectives, and a more expansive way of interpreting or making meaning of the world and our experiences.

The main components of Mezirow's theory are experience, critical reflection, reflexive discourse, and action (Mezirow 1991; Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007, 134). Also included in Mezirow's theory are what he called frames of reference where interpretations are made, and learning takes place (Mezirow 1991, 18). Frames of reference or sets of assumptions and expectations are examined and re-evaluated to make them more "inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow 1991, 92; 2009, 22).

Transformation happens when “problematic frames of reference” such as sets of fixed assumptions and expectations, meaning perspectives, and mindsets, are recognized as distorted, faulty, prejudiced, unexamined or unquestioned (Mezirow 1991, 18-19; Mezirow and Taylor 2009, 21-22; Cranton 2006, 23, 36; Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007, 132-133). Mezirow argued that transformative learning occurs when previously unexamined assimilated beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and emotional responses are called into question and become more explicit and are thoroughly examined (Papastamatis and Panitsides 2014, 74). Thus, when alternative perspectives are recognized and prior belief systems are revised, and when these alternative perspectives are integrated into one’s own, then learning becomes transformative (Cranton 2006, 24).

Problematic frames of reference have two dimensions: habits of the mind and points of view. Habits of the mind are assumptions or ways of seeing the world which function as filters by which we interpret the meaning of an experience. Points of view consist of views, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and value judgments (Cranton 2006, 24; Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007, 132-133). Mezirow said that assumptions and beliefs are acquired from childhood through socialization processes and are then reappraised in adulthood in response to trigger events or disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow 1991, 98). So, transformational learning through the process of perspective transformation takes place when a person gains self-awareness, moves toward revising systems of beliefs, and identifies strategies and resources to integrate and implement the changes because of disorienting dilemmas. This is not a one-time process but more of an ongoing one that includes ten steps beginning with a disorienting dilemma that sets in motion a self-examination, dialogue, exploration, and finally arriving at “a reintegration

into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective" (Mezirow 1991, 98-99; 2009, 94; Mezirow and Taylor 2009, 19). Specifically, the ten phases in the perspective transformation process are:

- 1) experiencing a disorienting dilemma;
- 2) undergoing self-examination;
- 3) conducting a critical assessment of prior assumptions and feeling a sense of isolation from traditional expectations;
- 4) relating discontent to the same experiences as others which means that the problem is shared;
- 5) exploring options for new ways of acting;
- 6) building competence and confidence in new roles;
- 7) planning a course of action;
- 8) acquiring the knowledge and skills to implement a new course of action;
- 9) trying out new roles and assessing them; and
- 10) reintegrating into society with the new perspective.

The trigger phenomenon is a significant "dramatic event" (Cranton 2006, 23), "a disruption of one's world view" (Sands and Tennant 2010, 100), and is "painful" thereby leading one to question firmly held beliefs and assumptions since it "threatens our very sense of self" (Mezirow 1991, 98). Once the process of transformative learning commences with a disorienting dilemma, this leads to self-examination through dialogue with others which then leads to a critical evaluation of internalized assumptions and finally arrives at a new meaning perspective (Sands and Tennant 2010, 100). In short, when a disorienting dilemma happens, one examines, questions, validates, and revises one's perspectives (Cranton 2006, 23). And in doing so, a change in consciousness ensues (Clark 1993, 54) and this includes changes in beliefs, attitudes, and emotional responses through reflection (Mezirow 1991, 98).

In lay terms, transformative learning claims that every person has a particular or set view of the world. Although not well articulated and examined, this view of the world

is based on assumptions acquired from one's upbringing, life experiences, education, and culture. Often, these assumptions and beliefs are not questioned and have become part of who they are. When questioned, there may be resistance because they cause tension and challenges the deeply ingrained assumptions and beliefs. Mezirow (1991) claimed that people have difficulty changing their views of the world because these are habitual ways of seeing and interpreting the world and it takes a powerful catalyst such as "disorienting dilemmas" to shake their world (Mezirow 1991, 98). Questioning is also indispensable for finding truth. This is also why Mezirow cautioned that it is not enough that one gains clarity and understanding. The mental illumination or enlightenment is not sufficient to result in transformation. What is required is a change in the way one thinks, and this takes emotional strength and courage to move forward and make the change (Mezirow 1991, 100). In other words, transformation involves integrating the new learning by revising old ways of seeing and believing leading to new ways of living due to a better understanding of the self and the world.

The transformation claimed by Mezirow seems to align with Fowler's individuated-reflective faith stage wherein full formal operations are involved because the ability for critical reflection has emerged (Fowler 1987). One realizes that perspectives and beliefs are vulnerable for change when acknowledging that others have differing views and beliefs. Kohlberg, as he expounds on Fowler's theory, explained that becoming consciously aware of one's traditionally held outlook arises from interactions and confrontations with various individuals or groups who have different belief systems and views or from experiences where these tightly held beliefs come into question due to crises situations (Kohlberg 1981, 329). From here, one progresses to the conjunctive faith

stage when one begins to include “others’ beliefs to form a broad and meaningful worldview; a worldview that is balanced and inclusive” (Fowler 1978, 81).

Thus, it may seem that Mezirow’s perspective transformation parallels Fowler’s fourth and fifth faith stages where transformation means developing a more inclusive worldview which takes into consideration the multiplicity of outlooks and beliefs. The participants’ ages range from emerging adulthood (20 to 26 years old) to adulthood (28 to 40 years old) to middle adulthood (41 to 54 years old). Again, it might be worth looking into whether the transformation of the participants is happening at these levels (learning and faith development) as they find their way through and find meaning in their unpleasant experiences during the pandemic.

### **Perspective Transformation, Self-Compassion, and the Filipino Concept of “Loob”**

Where, in the process of perspective transformation, does self-compassion become operative? Does self-compassion contribute to transformation in learning? To address these questions, I will identify the major premises of transformative learning theory and draw parallels with self-compassion to establish its potential contribution to transformation. Therefore, I will be referring mostly to Mezirow when it comes to transformative learning and to Neff for self-compassion. I used Mezirow and Neff for this section since they are the main proponents of these theories. Other studies I have mentioned here also referred to them as their source.

A critical theme in Mezirow’s theory is the powerful catalysts that shake the very foundations of what we believe about the world, and he called these “disorienting dilemmas” (Mezirow 1991, 98). They have the potential of changing perspectives because they challenge and contradict an established criterion. In like manner, self-

compassion is triggered by negative emotionally charged life experiences which propel individuals to examine and become aware of what they are going through. Neff (2003a, 87; 2003b, 224) referred to these experiences as invoking suffering and being aware that one is suffering moves one to relieve oneself of the suffering. Both theories identify a trigger event that sets transformation in motion and sets individuals onto a trajectory of questioning, reflection, and examination leading to becoming more aware and mindful. A good example is demonstrated by the participants of Binder et al. (2019, 5) who claimed that the process of change toward a more accepting and friendly way of treating themselves was rather slow. One participant referred to the experience as a “wake-up call” (Binder et al. 2019, 6) which prompted her to reflect and examine herself when she found the inner critic in her. Although this initially troubled her, she gave it more thought and evaluated herself by asking why she was hard on herself. This eventually led her to make plans on how to treat herself better. The study validated Mezirow’s (1991, 98) position regarding change in meaning perspective which comes after a deep reflection and is likely to include an understanding of the self that involves feelings of shame or guilt. Binder et al. (2019, 7) reported that self-compassion helped students accept painful and uncomfortable feelings about themselves. This also resonated with Mezirow’s premise that these challenges are often painful because they call into question deeply held values that threaten the self (Mezirow 1991, 98). The participants of Binder et al. (2019, 8) developed new ways of handling stress due to self-compassion without the guilt as it made them keenly aware when their bodies needed to take a break.

Mezirow (1991, 98, 117-118, 122) referred to a phase in perspective transformation where one recognizes the dilemma as a “shared” experience with others.

What one initially thought was a private dilemma or an “acute internal/external personal crisis” (Taylor 1998, 41) may turn out to be a shared consciousness or belief like the women who realized that their traditional stereotyping of themselves was a shared problem (Mezirow 1991, 118). Neff (2003a, 90-91) referred to this as the universality of experience or common humanity. We see that both proponents acknowledge a commonality of experience which have the potential of thrusting people into forming new ways of understanding their experiences. I assume that when individuals recognize that suffering is a shared experience with the rest, this will foster feelings of interconnectedness such that discontentment is not feared but welcomed because “others have negotiated a similar change” (Mezirow 1991, 99). When Neff, Hsieh, and Dejitterat (2005, 282) conducted a study among undergraduate students, their findings revealed that individuals with self-compassion persevered to accomplish goals despite failures because they attributed failing as a universal experience which means people fail one way or the other. Similarly, Chishima et al. (2018, 1912-1913) reported that when high self-compassionate students evaluated stressful events as less threatening and controllable by recognizing that these are part of humanity’s condition, they coped better in life despite encountering difficulties. In addition, Leary et al. (2007, 902) also reported that students recognized that failure, rejection, embarrassment are part of life and that it is normal for young people to go through them. They also realized that what they had gone through was no worse than what others have undergone or experienced in life and as a result, they fared better than their counterparts with low levels of self-compassion. In other words, self-compassion appeared to have influenced how students interpreted these negative events in ways that reduced their impact. This affirms self-compassion helps in reframing

mindsets which leads to what Mezirow described as “heightened awareness; personal power; capacity for action, reflection, or decision; and developmental progress or emancipation” (Mezirow 1991, 101).

Exploring new options, roles, relationships, and planning courses of action is an essential phase in perspective transformation. This recognizes stereotypical roles and relationships and taking action to overcome them (Mezirow 1978, 17; 1991, 99). Similarly, the main contribution of self-compassion (Neff 2003a, 91) is greater self-acceptance and understanding leading to an enhanced self-concept. In quite similar studies, Barnard and Curry (2012, 159-161) and Lee and Rosales (2020, 28) reported that members of the clergy who were emotionally exhausted from trying to please people and living up to their expectations started shedding off the messiah complex after taking on a self-compassionate stance. As a result, the pastors in the study had become more resilient in times of personal failure or disappointments and were able to redirect cognitive distortions (Lee and Rosales 2020) and overcome emotional exhaustion in ministry (Barnard and Curry 2012). Likewise, Long and Neff (2018) maintained that in many academic settings, students project a certain self-image for higher academic standing and greater social acceptability. So, when students want to portray this image and yet are afraid of people’s evaluations, they tend to inhibit themselves from class participation which affect their academic performance in return. However, students who were more kind to themselves did not care what other people thought of them and so they were more willing to shed off this self-image. As a result, they participated more in class, talked to their teachers, and sought help from others (Long and Neff 2018, 227-228).

Mezirow underscored a changed self-concept arising from critical self-reflection, and the change can be seen in the way one feels, understands, and acts (Mezirow 1991, 21-22, 110; 2009, 98, 103). With Filipino Bible college students as respondents of this study, there are Western concepts that do not fit the Filipino worldview. However, I argue that Mezirow's self-concept can compare or connect with the Filipino understanding of the self. Mezirow explained that people internalize beliefs, views, convictions, and attitudes of other people throughout the socialization process (Mezirow 1991, 81). Hence, the backdrop of transformation that Mezirow indicated is in the inner aspect or what he termed as self-concept which may correspond to the Filipino concepts of *loob* and *sarili*.

Mercado (1974) identified the Filipino concept of *loob* as the interior self such that when transformation happens in the *loob*, it is said to have taken place in the inner person reflected in the intellectual, volitional, emotional, and ethical aspects of life (Mercado 1974, 6). Miranda (1988) held the same view of *loob* which he referred to as the core or center of an individual. *Loob* is the spatial interior not visible to the naked eye and ultimately, *loob* refers to the symbolic human interior (Miranda 1988, 1).

Miranda (1988) also viewed the self as *sarili* which constitutes the identity of a conscious and unitary being. Furthermore, Miranda considered *sarili* as a reflexive concept wherein experiences are reflected toward the self, such as *pagpapahalaga sa sarili* which makes the self the recipient of the act of valuing (Miranda 1988, 25). *Sarili* becomes the subject of experience because *sarili* becomes conscious of what is happening to the self (Miranda 1988). *Sarili* possesses a personality which gives it identity and individuality and possesses a character in terms of internalized values,

attitudes, principles, and ideals (Miranda 1988, 29) and Mezirow's theory suggests that transformation in adults involves changes in the same domains (1991, 120). Adults want to make sense of their experiences to guide future actions. Thus, for Mezirow, self-improvement follows when the self-concept is transformed (1991, 21-22).

Encouraging others to be compassionate toward themselves is one way of increasing self-understanding that promotes a nonjudgmental and loving acceptance of oneself (Neff 2003a, 91). Grounded in humanistic psychology, self-compassion paves the way toward a healthy self and having a positive self-regard which is a central theme in Rogers' client-centered therapy (1961). So, one chooses to have an unconditionally caring emotional stance toward the self to be more self-aware, more open, and freer to change and improve. This was evident in the study of Breines and Chen (2012, 3-7) who investigated whether treating oneself with compassion after committing mistakes increased the motivation for self-improvement. They proposed that self-compassion will encourage people to confront their errors and flaws without being too critical of themselves or without making excuses. This was supported when participants showed improved performance after a moral transgression, a personal weakness, or a test failure by confronting their weaknesses through self-compassion. Thereafter, the students made amends to avoid failing again in their studies by increasing study time. Klinge and Van Vliet (2017, 9-10, 15-16) suggested that adolescents' avoidance of negative emotions may be viewed as self-compassionate behavior. Instead of using drugs or taking alcohol to combat stress, the participants focused on self-improvement through physical exercise and chose not to listen to negative judgments and opinions of others.

As one moves forward through the stages of transformation, one gains a sense of personal competence that helps him or her to be confident thus sustaining developmental efforts (Mezirow 1991, 96). Likewise, self-compassion boosted students' competence and lessened their fear of failure. As a result, they were more stable, calmer, no longer overly consumed by distress, and were freed from the negative effects of self-criticism and self-judgment (Neff, Hsieh, and Dejitterat 2005, 282-283). This somehow parallels the emancipatory potential of transformative learning where old meaning schemes give way to new and alternative perspectives in interpreting feelings and actions. The former ways of thinking and feeling are either replaced or reorganized to combine new insights thus enabling one to see and understand reality clearly and integrate it to one's experience (Mezirow 1991, 59). Freire held the same view regarding the emancipatory aspect of learning. For Freire (2005, 79), transformation was through what he termed consciousness raising. Critical consciousness arises by posing questions, analyzing, and social action. Through action and reflection, individuals learn to question how social structures have shaped and influenced how they think about themselves and the world (Freire 1974; 1999). Transformation is therefore geared toward helping individuals reflect on their views of the world and this supports Mezirow's transformation theory (1991) which asserts that social action must first begin with individual transformation.

The cognitive-rational approach of Mezirow in his transformational learning (1991; 2000) shares similar theoretical foundations with Freire. Both perspectives claim that adult education ought to lead to emancipation and empowerment (Freire 2005; Mezirow 1991). Secondly, both assume a constructivist approach to transformational

learning. In their own views, knowledge is not “out there” to be discovered but is created from interpretations and reinterpretations of new experiences (Mezirow 1996).

Piaget’s cognitive development theory significantly contributed the construct of equilibration in psychology and learning. Although his focus was on children’s intellectual development, Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) is still considered as the most influential cognitive development theorist (Berk 2018, 17). According to Piaget, human beings strive for organization in their thinking through specific psychological structures called schemes which are organized ways of making sense of experience (Bormanaki and Khoshhal 2017, 997; Berk 2018, 150). As people mature and develop in their thinking, new schemes are developed to accommodate these new experiences (Berk 2018, 150). When people make new meanings, these are always based on prior knowledge or what Piaget described as “previously formed schemas, tendencies of mind, and intellectual habits” (Piaget 1929, 13). Simply put, when existing schemas do not fit into the new experience, cognitive disequilibrium occurs resulting in some tension in thinking (Bormanaki and Khoshhal 2017, 999-1000). This is resolved when the child makes room and develops new schemas to accommodate the new experience to achieve cognitive equilibrium (Piaget 1950, 53-54).

To resolve the disequilibrium, we accommodate, or adjust, our schemes to provide a better fit for the new experience. If we are successful, we achieve cognitive equilibrium. Equilibration therefore is the dynamic process of moving between states of cognitive disequilibrium and equilibrium as we assimilate new experiences and accommodate schemes (Cook and Cook, 2005, 176).

Although Mezirow, Freire, and Piaget may employ different terminologies to identify changes in cognition, they speak of a tension that exists resulting in a series of changes. In the case of Piaget’s cognitive development theory, it is disequilibrium that

leads to the development of new mental schemes, while Mezirow's transformative learning theory begins with a disorienting dilemma that leads to a perspective transformation and the consciousness raising or conscientization that leads to liberation or emancipation for Freire. Thus, it may seem that Mezirow, Freire, and Piaget may have more in common.

In the search for meaning and self-integration, initial fears may be overcome. Once this is successfully negotiated, one is set free from non-rational thoughts and Mezirow (1991, 103) termed this "cognitive freedom." Neff (2011, 144) claimed that self-compassion potentially reframes mindsets and changes assumptions and beliefs even positing that if we value and care for ourselves, we will want to learn and grow, and change unhealthy thinking patterns and behavior. Since we value ourselves, we will also desire to make choices that will promote our overall well-being in the long term. A good reference is by Wagner, Schindler, and Reinhard (2017, 3-5) who hypothesized that when self-compassion is internalized by participants, they would perceive difficulties as desirable challenges in achieving learning goals. Their results showed that self-compassion helped college students optimize their learning by not avoiding difficulties since these were perceived as desirable learning strategies even when these increased their likelihood of failing. By reframing or reappraising perceived difficulties, the students were able to overcome them and turn them into growth opportunities (Wagner, Schindler, and Reinhard 2017).

The themes and dimensions of transformative learning parallel many aspects of self-compassion, and this may be indicative of the significant role of emotions in transformation through this psychological construct. After all, it is our emotions and

feelings that provide the impetus for critical reflection and serves as the material from which we reflect deeply (Taylor 1998, 57) which is fertile ground for transformation to take place. That said, encouraging the development of self-compassion should benefit individuals in gaining self-awareness and self-acceptance that is crucial for opening the self to new possibilities and opportunities.

### **Transformative Learning and Developmental Issues**

Another one of the criticisms to Mezirow's work was his failure to include the developmental stages in adult life (Tennant 1993). Although Mezirow himself claimed that his transformation theory implies a form of developmental progression in adulthood, it does not prescribe clearly defined stages. Instead, he emphasizes the development of reflective judgment in adults wherein they become better critical thinkers (Mezirow 1991, 91). This outcome aligns with the growth orientation of much of adult learning literature which implies the development of a mature self that is open to new people, situations, and experiences (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007, 148). Transformative learning is about instilling change in a person's frame of reference that has defined one's life world (Mezirow 1997, 5). Therefore, a transformed frame of reference is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience (1997, 5). In this sense, adults become more autonomous and responsible in their thinking.

The participants in this study are college students and are considered adults. Adulthood spans many years beginning from what Arnett (2000) has termed emerging adulthood from age 20 to 27. Adulthood continues from age 28 to 40, middle adulthood from age 41 to 60, while late adulthood is from 60 and older (Estep and Kim 2010, 212). The moral development of adults may be described as progressing. Kohlberg, who

designed the moral development theory, did not specify age ranges in his moral development theory. This is because for Kohlberg, a person's morality is based on one's moral reasoning and adults vary in this regard (Kohlberg 1981). Since the participants of this study are Bible college students, they may respond to situations by showing care and concern for other people and may be motivated to abide by established rules while expecting good behavior from others. This was described by Kohlberg as the conventional level of moral reasoning (Kohlberg 1981, 410). Other adult participants may also display postconventional moral reasoning in the sense that they may strive to honor commitments and agreements to avoid impartiality and be respectful of others (1981, 411-412). Having said this, it will be interesting to determine whether the participants of this study show the capacity for responsible and autonomous thinking based on sound moral reasoning. This may be gauged from their responses in terms of how they dealt with unpleasant experiences during the pandemic.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of current literature in self-compassion, emotion regulation, and transformative learning. Drawing on existing developmental theories and studies included in this chapter, the theoretical link between the emotional aspect of learning through self-compassion and perspective transformation may be extant and I hope to identify this link to provide an explanation how unpleasant life experiences are dealt with such that transformation takes place. The succeeding Chapter III will discuss the chosen methodology for this study.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

#### **Overview**

The study aims to understand how Filipino Bible college students experience transformation as they deal with unpleasant life experiences with self-compassion. It seeks to uncover the processes involved as the students find a way around and through these experiences and as they remain committed to their Christian faith and understanding. This chapter presents an overview of Grounded Theory with the constructivist view as the paradigm of the study. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part is the Research Methodology which discusses the decisions for a qualitative approach and the use of Constructivist Grounded Theory. The second part is about the Research Design which discusses the recruitment and selection of participants, instruments used, pilot study, data collection and recording, data analysis, and other matters pertaining to reflexivity, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. I referenced the work of Charmaz (2000) in my discussion of the Constructivist Grounded Theory method aside from Glaser and Strauss (1967) who developed the original Grounded Theory approach, as well as Strauss and Corbin (1998) who acknowledged the multiplicity of perspectives, and other advocates of qualitative research studies.

## **Research Methodology**

The purpose of this section is to introduce the methodology used for this qualitative Grounded Theory research. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the students' experiences while facing unpleasant and emotionally charged life events and in generating a working model or theory explaining how the students experienced transformation.

### **Rationale for Qualitative Approach**

When the goal of research is to explore a phenomenon by depending on an individual's personal experience, a qualitative method is appropriate. Qualitative research explores the lived experiences of people in their natural settings to gain insights and understanding (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 27; Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 1, 6-7; Creswell and Poth 2018, 35). This study ventures on qualitative research design although it also requires quantitative measures in terms of demographic data.

In qualitative research, the ultimate purpose of the study is to gain deeper insights using interviews, observations, and other techniques to gather pertinent data and analyze it by identifying concepts and relationships before drawing conclusions. Through qualitative research, one gains understanding how people make sense of their day-to-day experiences and interprets them (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 11; Merriam and Tisdell 2018, 15). Similarly, Mezirow (1991) maintained that people make meaning either by understanding or interpreting experience because it needs to make sense. Meanings are attributed to an experience using symbols, cues, and language through actions and interactions (Mezirow 1991, 18).

Since the purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences and perceptions of Bible college students, a qualitative approach was considered most appropriate in examining in-depth these experiences in self-compassion and perspective transformation. Moreover, the theory to be generated from the data will attempt to establish the link between these two concepts. Notably, there is a dearth of qualitative studies that focus on this phenomenon. Therefore, a qualitative approach using Grounded Theory Method was appropriate for the nature of this study.

### **Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology**

This qualitative study used the Grounded Theory Methodology or GTM to generate an explanation how students experience transformation in dealing with unpleasant experiences with self-compassion. Glaser and Strauss (2006, 1) introduced Grounded Theory in the 1960's as the "discovery of theory from data." This means theory is established inductively by analyzing data gleaned from a social phenomenon (Merriam and Tisdell 2018, 7). Glaser and Strauss (1967) felt that theories ought to emanate from the field from the experiences of individuals through the social processes involved in their actions and interactions (Creswell and Poth 2018, 134).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) co-authored *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* where they explained in detail how theory could be generated inductively from the data. This was a groundbreaking work which challenged the traditional quantitative and deductive method of doing research (Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019, 2). Hence, the methodology came to be known as Grounded Theory. This is a systematic research method that utilizes several flexible strategies for constructing theory by analyzing qualitative data (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 12-13). Grounded Theory

or GT uses an inductive process of constant comparative analysis to generate or construct a theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Glaser and Strauss 2006; Charmaz 2014). “Thus, grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants” (Creswell and Poth 2018, 133).

GTM is utilized when there is no existing theory to account for a phenomenon that a researcher is looking into (Merriam and Tisdell 2018, 17). Creswell and Poth (2018, 138) affirmed that Grounded Theory is “a good design to use when a theory is not available to explain or understand a process. The literature may have models available, but they were developed and tested on samples and populations other than those of interest to the qualitative researcher.” From my point of view, although there are existing models of adult transformational learning, they do not address the specific area of my interest. Moreover, an explanation is necessary to understand how people experienced the phenomenon I have studied, and the theory generated from the data provides a working framework that addressed this need.

In terms of theory generation, Glaser and Strauss (1967, 2-6) and Charmaz (2014) held that the process begins with inductive data, then to comparative analysis, which then involves collecting and analyzing simultaneous data, and using strategies to refine emerging analytic categories. In analyzing the data, the researcher keeps going back and forth through the data, making comparisons and further analysis for emerging themes. The researcher forms ideas and constructs hypotheses about the emerging themes and checks them against the data. Corbin and Strauss (2015, 47) claimed that theories are

developed or formed out of the narratives of the participants as they explain and try to make meaning out of their lived experiences.

When Glaser eventually left his teaching post in University of California San Francisco (UCSF) while Strauss continued teaching GT methods in the same university, it was only natural that Strauss would develop his own style as he continued to teach and work with his colleagues at the university (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 28). So, it became apparent that Glaser and Strauss differed regarding procedures involved in GT (Creswell and Poth 2018, 134). Both wrote independently with divergent viewpoints from hereon, most especially in applying the GT method (Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019, 2). It was at this point when Charmaz developed her own constructivist paradigm of GT, although Charmaz built on the original strategies of Glaser and Strauss. By introducing another perspective regarding GT procedures, it advanced the original work of Glaser and Strauss (Creswell and Poth 2018, 134).

Constructivist Grounded Theory by Charmaz (2014, 53) utilizes the same inductive method of observation, drawing conclusions out of which models, paradigms and theories evolve through the process of analyzing and comparing data and recognizing emerging thought patterns. Denzin and Lincoln (2015, 382) explained that Charmaz's GT basically uses systematic, inductive, and yet flexible principles for collecting and analyzing data and that any theory derived from the data offers an abstract theoretical understanding of what is studied. Furthermore, Charmaz (2014, 55) held that we can glean from the lives of both the researcher and the participants wherein the researcher assumes a reflexive posture toward the participants. Together with the participants, the researcher plays an active role in co-constructing meaning throughout the process of data

collection. Although the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting data and analyzing it, he or she also brings his or her context into the study. Hence, instead of avoiding this, the researcher can contribute his or her understanding and experience (Merriam and Tisdell 2018, 16-17).

The constructivist view asserts that reality is constructed by individuals as they experience it (Tuli 2010, 101). Constructivist Grounded Theory aims to “conceptualize the studied phenomenon to understand it in abstract terms, articulate theoretical claims, acknowledge subjectivity in theorizing, and offer an imaginative interpretation” (Charmaz 2006, 127). Moreso, human beings construct meanings about the world they live in through their historical and social interactions (Constantino 2008, 116-119; Creswell 2009, 8). This means context such as the socio-historical and cultural factors play a significant role in shaping transformation (Clark and Wilson 1991).

Transformative learning based on constructivist assumptions (Mezirow 1991, 11, 32; Cranton 2006, 23) also claims that meanings constructed are based on one’s experiences that originate from within oneself. This does not negate the presence of a world that is external to us. But what and how we make sense of the world is a result of our experiences and we validate these meaning perspectives through constant interaction and communication with others. In these interactions, an individual’s biographical history and cultural background influence and contribute to transformation (Taylor 2000). Freire’s system of thought acknowledges the natural, cultural, and historical reality in which one is immersed (Freire 1999). The world is an objective reality, but persons are capable of interacting with the world and effecting change instead of being mere spectators looking at the world from a distance (Freire 1974, 10-11; 2005, 38-39).

Therefore, reality is “something to be created by them” (Freire 2005, 39). Human beings are not to be passive but must participate in creating and intervening in reality in order to change it (Freire 1974, 4; 2005, 98-99). Furthermore, human beings who are aware of themselves and the world they are immersed in exist in continual dialogue because they are conscious beings. They are aware of their activity and the world in which they are situated (Freire 2005, 98-99) which makes them responsible agents in co-creating and constructing reality. I will strive to be sensitive and endeavor an open stance to the multiple perspectives, experiences, and social realities of the participants and use them as lenses through which interpretations from what is being studied may be made (Merriam and Tisdell 2018, 16; Creswell and Poth 2018, 60).

For these reasons, I chose GTM with a constructivist approach for this study. Since the constructivist perspective views the world as constructed, interpreted, and experienced by people through their social interactions with others and because knowledge is not acquired but is constructed or created, the participants of this study will help in developing this knowledge.

As researcher, I also maintain that knowledge is accessed through a detailed exploration of an individual’s lived experiences through social interaction, discourse, and dialogue. My role as researcher is to help participants of this study to discover and access this knowledge through dialogues, conversations, and interactions with them. Creswell and Poth (2018, 60) claimed that researchers recognize the influential factor of their background in interpreting the world and they “position themselves” in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences. Thus, researchers make an interpretation of their findings and how

these are shaped by their own experiences and background. They will be able to give life to the study because they have been immersed in the world of the participants. “The field worker who has observed closely in this social world has had, in a profound sense, to live there. He or she has been sufficiently immersed in this world to know it, and at the same time has retained enough detachment to think theoretically about what he or she has seen and lived through” (Glaser and Strauss 2006, 226).

Thus, using the interpretive lens of Charmaz (2006), this research will investigate and interpret social realities as the participants experienced it. This study will conceptualize how transformation occurred based on the participants’ lived experiences. It will also generate a working theory regarding the role and relationship of emotions in transformative learning based on the interpretation of the participants’ stories. Therefore, this study hopes to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on how students experience mindset transformation when dealing with unpleasant life experiences through self-compassionate behaviors.

### **Research Design**

Since this is a qualitative study, it focused on the participants’ descriptive and interpretive responses and explored the meanings held by each regarding his or her experiences of the perspective transformation process. As the researcher, I was the key instrument in collecting data via interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, in organizing data for analysis, and in constructing the working theory or model. This section discusses the selection of participants, choice of instruments, details of the pilot study, data collection and recording, data analysis, stages of coding, reflexivity, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations.

## **Selection of Subjects**

A nonprobability purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the participants for this study. Nonprobability sampling is a common qualitative research technique where the researchers utilize their judgment in selecting a sample. It is also purposive since the participants are chosen because they meet the predetermined criteria which was very relevant in addressing the aim of this study (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson 2006, 61; Saumure and Given 2008, 562).

Thus, the participants of this study met the following criteria for selection:

1. Must be an adult (emerging adulthood to middle adulthood); 20 to 55 years of age; males and females.
2. Must be currently enrolled in a Bible college, preferably belonging to the upper-class levels.
3. In good physical and mental health.
4. Able and willing to participate in the study and to articulate their experiences of self-compassion and transformation.

Participation in the study was voluntary. The researcher initially sought permission from school authorities to conduct the study (Appendix A). Once permission to conduct the study was given (Appendix B), the school authorities and administrators provided me with a list of names of students I could ask to participate. I introduced myself to the students and informed them that I was given permission to conduct my study at their school. After that, I gave them information about the study (Appendix C) and sought their permission to participate (Appendix D). I approached the students who expressed interest in taking part in the research after reading the information letter. The

participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study. They were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix E). Those interested were then given a link through Messenger to the online survey questionnaire (Appendix F). After filling in the online survey questionnaire, the participants sent me message thru Messenger to let me know they had accomplished the form. Using the demographic questionnaire (Appendix G), each participant was asked to provide a pseudonym to help maintain anonymity in responding to the instruments they will respond to. I assigned codes to the participants as they were presented in this study to further maintain anonymity and confidentiality of biographical data that may directly identify them and their institution. Prior to the recruitment of the participants, approval to conduct the study was sought from APNTS Institutional Review Board (Appendix J).

A total of twelve (12) Filipino Bible college students was specified for this study since this was in keeping with the ideal sample size of six to twelve suggested by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006, 78). Aside from this, I was also aware that theoretical sampling of individuals can contribute to building the opening and intermediate coding of the theory (Creswell and Poth 2018, 233). Hence, the original goal of this study was to interview at least 12 students from various Bible colleges in Manila. These Bible colleges are located in the National Capital and Calabarzon Regions. A detailed discussion of these institutions is in the succeeding section on “Research Locale.” Using theoretical sampling which allowed me to make the most out of available prospects to identify and develop concepts and their properties, dimensions, and relationships (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 146), this number was expanded to 18 after which theoretical saturation was reached. All in all, there were 12 females and six males whose ages range from 20-54.

The age range shows a wide gap. The reason for accepting participants who were already in the middle adulthood stage (41 to 55) was because there are students who enter the Bible college at a much later time in life after being immersed in the ministry for many years. They do not possess the necessary educational background because they may have pursued a secular degree from a liberal college but now want to be equipped theologically. In view of this, the study affirmed that adult learners “bring an intriguing reservoir of experience to the seminary venture” (Harkness 2022). By quoting their stories, this study has given them a voice in expressing their emotions and experiences enabling others to enter their world.

Selection of the 18 participants who were interviewed was done through nonprobability purposive sampling. These participants were also be asked to participate in focus group discussions after the one-on-one interviews were conducted. Demographic details of the participants are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 Demographic Details of Participants**

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Research Locale</b>
1	Female	31	Single	Third Year	College 2
2	Female	22	Single	Graduating	College 2
3	Male	22	Single	Third Year	College 4
4	Female	22	Single	Third Year	College 4
5	Male	22	Single	Third Year	College 4
6	Female	22	Single	Graduating	College 4
7	Female	26	Single	Third Year	College 4
8	Female	39	Married	Third Year	College 4
9	Female	35	Married	Third Year	College 4
10	Male	54	Married	Second Year	College 3
11	Female	54	Married	Second Year	College 3
12	Male	28	Married	Graduating	College 1
13	Male	23	Single	Graduating	College 4

14	Female	50	Married	Graduating	College 4
15	Female	25	Single	Third Year	College 1
16	Female	30	Single	Graduating	College 3
17	Female	20	Single	Second Year	College 2
18	Male	34	Married	Graduating	College 4
Average		31			

### Research Locale

The participants for this research were recruited from different Bible colleges in the National Capital Region (NCR) and Calabarzon Region (IV-A) (Appendix N). I inquired from the secretary of the Philippine Association of Bible and Theological Schools (PABATS) concerning colleges within Metro Manila. I was given a list of schools and contact persons and numbers. I wrote letters asking permission to conduct research (Appendix A) from three colleges situated in the NCR. However, this was expanded to include seven more colleges since there was a low participation response from the initial three. Hence, a total of 10 theological institutions were approached but I was able to secure permission to conduct my study from four Bible colleges located within Quezon City, Caloocan City, and Cainta, Rizal. I assigned code names specified below to maintain anonymity and confidentiality as per our agreement.

**Table 2 Research Locale**

Location	Code	Number of Students Selected by College	Number of Students Who Participated
East Kamias, Quezon City (KBS)	College 1	6	2
Caloocan City, Metro Manila (SACC)	College 2	4	3
Novaliches, Quezon City (IGSL)	College 3	6	3
Cainta, Rizal (PCL)	College 4	12	10
<b>Total sample (N)</b>			<b>18</b>

Permission to conduct research was sought before entering the field (Appendix A). Once permission was granted (Appendix B), I coordinated with the school authority whom I could approach to serve as participants of the study. The school authorities provided me a list of names and later introduced me to the students. From College 1, only two participated out of six students selected by the administrative officer. From College 2, three students out of four willingly participated. From College 3, only three students participated out of six students recommended by the program coordinator. And from College 4, 10 participated out of 12 students selected by the Dean.

### **Instruments**

For this study, the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2003b) was used (Appendix K) to measure the participants' self-compassion level. The SCS was the most appropriate instrument to be used in this study. Neff's Self-Compassion (2003) is an important component of my theoretical framework, and it made sense to include the tool she developed. The SCS is a reliable and valid tool to measure self-compassion (Williams et al. 2014). The SCS has also been translated into twenty-one languages (Self-compassion, 2023) and a Filipino translation has yet to be developed. I sought permission to use the instrument, and this was granted by the author (Appendix L). The instrument was incorporated in the online survey questionnaire developed using Google Form (Appendix F) and was administered before the interview.

The SCS is a 26-item questionnaire which includes the five-item Self-Kindness subscale (e.g. "I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain."), the five-item Self-Judgment subscale (e.g. "I am disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies."), the four-item Common Humanity subscale (e.g. "When things

are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.”), the four-item Isolation subscale (e.g. “When I think about my inadequacies it tends to make me feel more separate and cut-off from the rest of the world.”), the four-item Mindfulness subscale (e.g. “When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance.”), and the four-item Over-identification subscale (e.g. “When I’m feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong.”). Responses were given on a five-point scale from “Almost Never” to “Almost Always.” Subscale scores were computed by calculating the mean of subscale item responses (after reverse coding for the negative subscale items) to create an overall self-compassion score. The SCS has displayed good internal consistency reliability (.92) as well as good test-retest reliability ( $r = .93$ ) (Neff 2003b, 228-239). Additional background information on the development of SCS is discussed in Chapter II.

The participants were also asked to respond to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Checklist for Civilians (Appendix M) to gauge their emotional wellbeing. The PTSD Checklist for Civilians (PCL-C) is a self-report rating scale for assessing post-traumatic stress disorder although it is not used as a stand-alone tool in diagnosing PTSD (Weathers et al. 1993). The PCL-C is a 17-item measure designed to assess PTSD symptom severity. Respondents were presented with 17 specific symptoms of PTSD and asked to rate “how much you have been bothered by that problem in the last month” on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The PCL-C questionnaire was completed based on the most significant traumatic event for those who experienced multiple traumas. The PCL-C has excellent internal consistency in veterans, victims of motor vehicle accidents, and sexual assault survivors ( $\alpha > 0.94$ ) and excellent

test – retest reliability in veterans ( $r = 0.96$ ) (Weathers et al., 1993). Internal consistency for the PCL is excellent with  $\alpha = 0.90$  (Weathers et al., 1993). A cutoff score for a likely PTSD diagnosis of 45 was used as was recommended by the National Center for PTSD (Weathers et al., 1993). The PTSD Checklist for Civilians was made available online by its authors. The checklist was also incorporated in the online survey questionnaire using Google Form (Appendix F) and was administered before the interviews.

### **Data Collection and Recording**

Participants were asked to respond to a brief demographic questionnaire prior to the interview proper. I developed the online survey questionnaire using Google Forms and the link was provided to the students and sent through Messenger. In this manner, the students did not have any difficulty accessing the questionnaire and responding to it. The online survey questionnaire (Appendix F) included these sections: (1) title of the questionnaire; (2) introduction to the study; (3) consent form; (4) personal information; (5) confidentiality agreement; (6) PTSD Checklist; and (7) Self-compassion Scale. If a student refused to proceed to the next section, he or she could opt not to continue by not clicking the ‘Next’ button and their responses will not be recorded at all. The sections were presented one by one so that the participants will have ample time to read and respond before proceeding to the next section. Overall, the participants were able to answer the questionnaire within five minutes. I had time to review the demographic questionnaire accomplished by the participants for accuracy, clarification, if any, and for understanding before interviews were conducted.

The data for this research was generated through the interview method since it would best help in exploring the participants’ lived experiences of self-compassion in

transformative learning. Interviews play a central role in many qualitative studies especially because of the interactional nature which is key to the researcher's analysis (Potter and Hepburn 2005, 3). The demographic questionnaire was utilized to gather biographical facts and details about the participants. However, a more intensive interview was used as a way of generating data (Charmaz 2014, 135) using open-ended and non-judgmental questions intended to elicit views and opinions of the participants (Charmaz 2006, 26; Creswell 2009, 181). The intensive interview was a guided conversation between researcher and participants to explore their perspectives and experiences. It was meant to draw out from the participants their views about their experiences, how they experienced them, and what meanings they ascribed to them. Hence, the participants talked while the researcher-interviewer listened, encouraged, and learned as well (Charmaz 2014, 137).

Each participant was interviewed at least once between 30 to 60 minutes using a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix H). Charmaz (2006) posited that having interview guides with well-planned, open-ended questions and prompts gives confidence to the interviewer and enables interviewer to concentrate on what the interviewee is saying. "Paying attention to the participants' language, meanings, and lives is crucial" (Charmaz 2006, 32). Through the interview, the researcher finds a way to enter the participants' lives (Potter and Hepburn 2005, 17). Hermanowicz (2002, 484) claimed that great interviewers can 'hear' data. This implies that interviewers pay close attention to what the participants are saying by listening intently, following, and concentrating on what is being said and picking out clues for other questions to be asked (Charmaz 2006, 25-26). Interviews also included watching out for facial expressions and other body

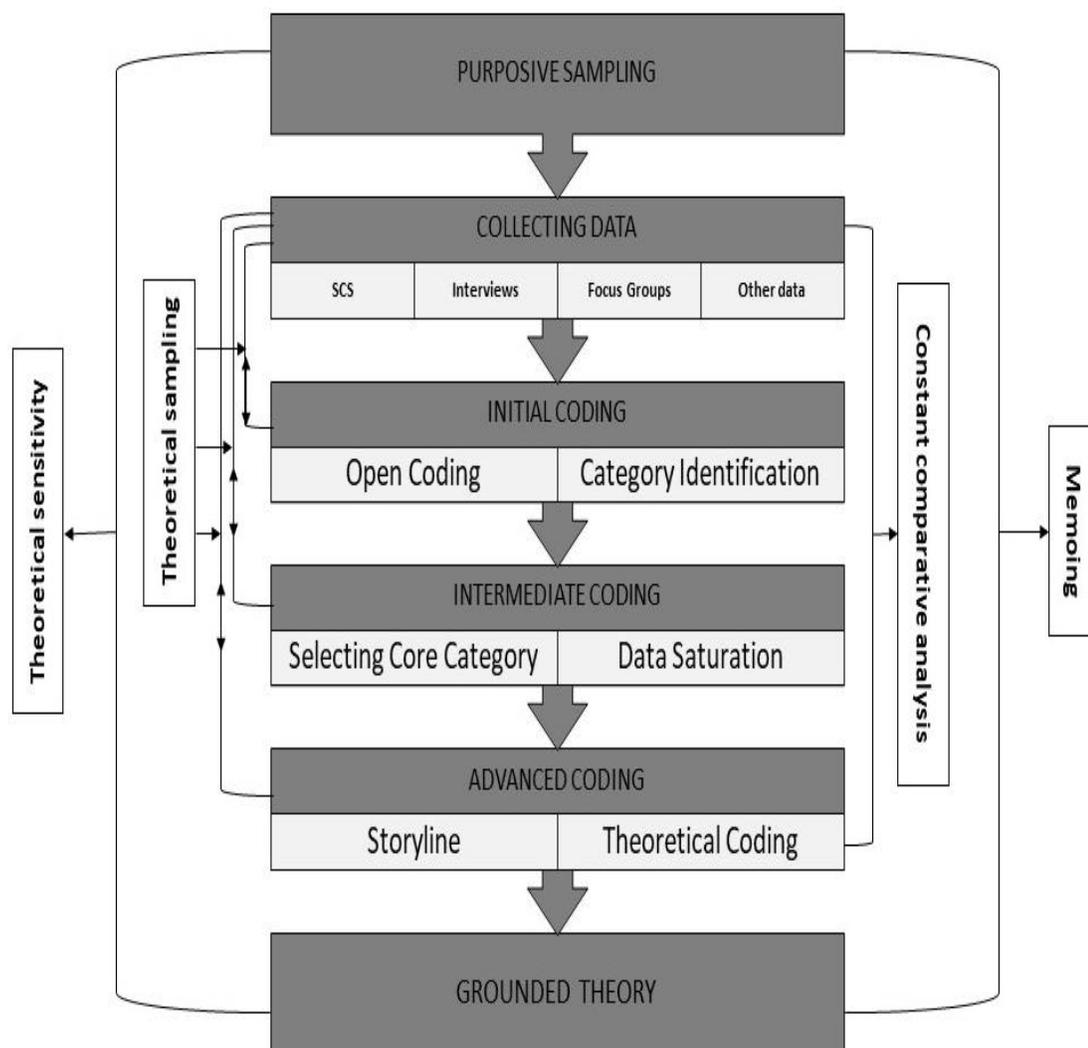
movements in addition to what is being spoken. In addition, asking meaningful questions and probing deeper helped in gaining understanding (Hermanowicz 2002, 484).

Alshenqeeti (2014, 44) stressed ethical considerations in interviewing by allowing participants to give their consent first before participating in the study. As such, interviews were conducted only with the express written permission or signed consent of the participants (Appendix D) and which they also indicated in the online survey questionnaire (Appendix F). Interviews were recorded via Zoom (audio and video) and Samsung voice recorder which I operated. Due to the ongoing pandemic and the restrictions on physical or face to face meetings, it became inevitable to conduct interviews through Zoom. Participants were informed that they could stop the interview at any time. They were also given the opportunity to ask questions about the research process or about the research.

In the focus group interviews, the group interaction that ensues through the sharing of experiences and stories becomes the data to be explored (Alshenqeeti 2014, 40). Furthermore, in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), five to ten people gather to voice their opinions and perspectives about a research topic in a non-threatening and comfortable manner. Interaction is based on a carefully planned series of discussion topics set up by the researcher who acts as the moderator. The FGD Guide included three questions which selected participants were asked to respond to (Appendix I). Participants were encouraged to talk to one another, ask questions, exchange stories and comment on one another's experiences and perspectives. In this way, the topic was expanded and elaborated by the participants themselves as they interacted with one another and discussed. The researcher acts as the moderator by initiating the discussion and exercises

control over what will be discussed but does not offer any viewpoints during the session (Ho 2006, 2-3). One criticism of FGDs is that not all participants may be actively involved in the discussion and interaction. While it is true that some participants would be quiet types, it is essential that body language be observed and recorded. In short, even quiet participants are not passive ones (Ho 2006, 6, 13). Although time-consuming, FGDs are suitable for investigating complicated behavior (Alshenqeeti 2014, 40). However, they provide insights in the formation of views and the reactions of other participants towards other people's views including the meanings attributed to them (Barbour and Schostak 2005, 41-42).

FGDs were conducted after individual interviews were completed with the eighteen participants of this study. Similarly, participation in the FGDs was voluntary. I explained the nature of the FGDs and acted as the moderator to initiate the discussion. The FGDs were also conducted and recorded through Zoom (audio and video) and Samsung voice recorder. Member checks were done through the FGDs to add credibility to this study. Likewise, permission to record was sought from the participants prior to recording. Figure 4 below illustrates how the flow of the research design was carried out. This diagram was adapted from Chun-Tie, Birks, and Francis (2019).



**Figure 4 Flow of Research Design adapted from Chun-Tie, Birks, and Francis**

The first phase of the data collection entailed answering the survey questionnaire through Google Forms. I sent the link to the students through Messenger, and they informed me as soon as they were done answering it. After the 18 students completed the questionnaire, I consolidated the students' demographic data and responses to the SCS questionnaire and PTSD Checklist using Excel. In interpreting the results of the SCS and PTSD Checklist, I used the scoring and interpretation guide provided by the authors of

these instruments (Appendix L). The results of these instruments are presented in Chapter IV under “Theoretical Sampling and Participants’ Demographics.”

The second phase of this research entailed interviewing the students. Prior to the interviews, I asked the students for their most convenient time since they had online classes on weekdays and ministries on weekends. Some were also employed part-time. When I received their confirmation, I sent the Zoom link to the students. After the interviews, I recorded my observations in my reflexive journal. I then proceeded in transcribing the interview. The third phase was the Focus Group Discussions which was composed of a mixed group of students from the different colleges. I presented my initial findings of the themes from the interviews and the students shared their reactions and insights. Again, observations from the FGD were recorded in the reflexive journal. The fourth phase involved observations during the students’ ministry times conducted in various locations and a separate observation at a church workers’ retreat where I had been asked to help coordinate. This retreat provided helpful insights regarding challenges faced by pastors and how they coped and managed. In between the data gathering activities, I started the coding process. The time frame of the data collection is recorded below (Table 3).

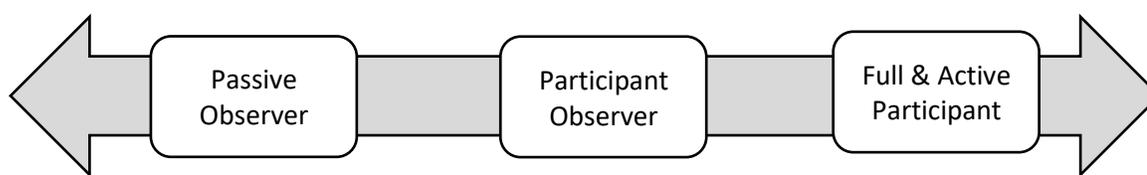
Table 3 Time Frame for Data Collection

Time line	Survey Question naire	Coding	Interview	Coding	FGDs	Coding	Observation	Coding	Member Checking
Mar-22	Pilot group	Initial coding 1st Cycle	Pilot group	Initial coding 2nd Cycle	Mixed group	Initial coding 3rd Cycle	College 3 (4.5 hrs.)	Intermediate coding	/
	College 1		College 1 College 3 College 4						
	College 3 College 3		College 3 College 4						
Apr-22	College 4				Pilot group		College 1/P12 (1.5 hrs.)		
May-22	College 4		College 3 College 4				College 3 (4 hrs.)		
Jun-22	College 2		College 2				Pilot group (2 hours) Retreat (4 days)		
Jul-22									
Aug-22									
Sep-22									
Oct-22									
Nov-22							College 2: P1-P2 (1.5 hrs.)		

Dec-22 – Jan 23									
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## Fieldwork and Observation

Fieldwork is research on some aspect of human behavior in its everyday context when the researcher enters the field of study or the social world of participants to observe human interaction in that context (Preissle and Grant 2004, 163). The researcher's role may be from a completely passive observer to a full participant as seen from the diagram below (Figure 5) which was adapted from Genkova (2020).



**Figure 5 Researcher's Role adapted from Genkova**

Raymond Gold (1958) proposed four participant observation roles namely the complete participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant, and the complete observer. Researchers who take a complete participant role do not reveal their research aims to those they are studying. Participant observation entails social participation to document or record the course of ongoing events. The researcher observes through participating in events. When the observer acts as participant, the observation times into the field are shorter to gather interviews with individuals in their own environments. The complete observer role requires no participation in social events. The researcher listens in on participants from some position where he or she is unnoticed by them (Gold 1958, 217-233). As researcher, my observations in the field involved

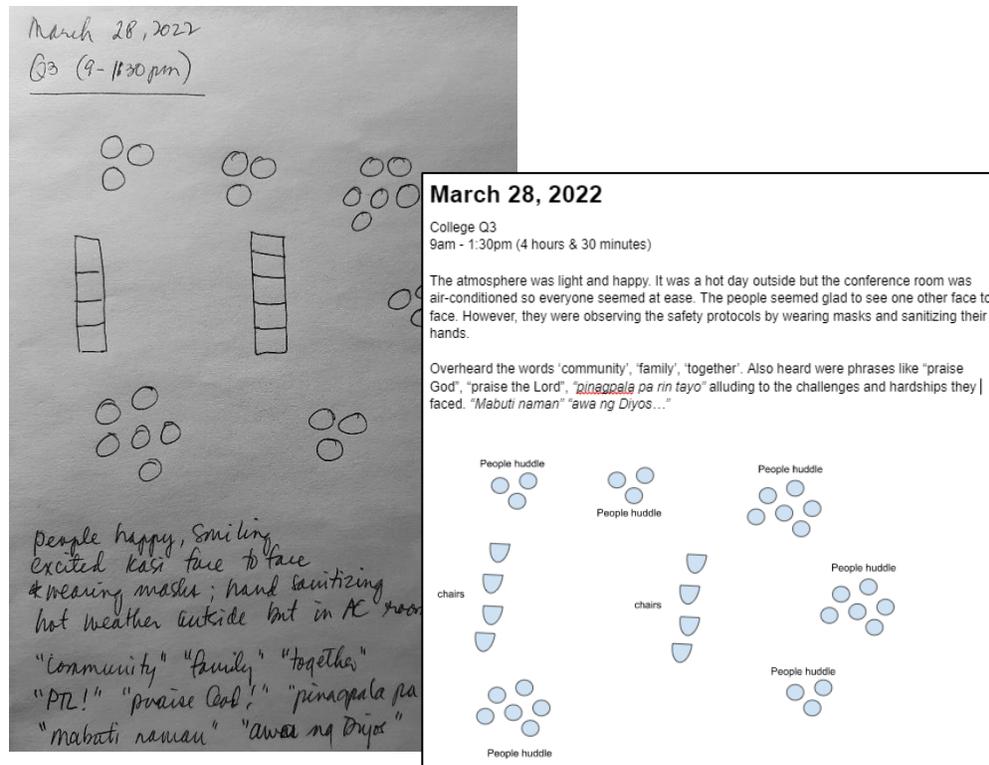
myself as complete observer and once as observer-participant and is summarized in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 Field Observation Hours**

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Location / Duration</b>
March 2022	Complete observer	College 3 / 4.5 hours
April 2022	Complete observer	College 1: P12 / 1.5 hours
May 2022	Complete observer	College 3 / 4 hours
June 2022	Complete observer	Pilot group / 2 hours
	Observer as participant	Retreat (Baguio) / 4 days
Nov 2022	Complete observer	College 2: P1 & P2 / 1.5 hours

The specific duration of participant observation also depends on the setting, activity, and population being studied so the researcher might spend time from about an hour to an afternoon, or a series of afternoons in a particular setting (Mack et al. 2005, 19). The researcher accomplishes field notes to record data and gather information on physical setting, participants, dialogues, activities, and behaviors. These notes should answer the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, and *how* (Genkova 2020).

Field notes may be written either during participant observation discreetly or following the activity. However, the notes should be elaborated or expanded after returning from the field (Mack et al. 2005). A sample field note I had written and then expanded in a word document is given below (Figure 6).



**Figure 6 Sample Field Note**

The field observations highlighted the impact of the pandemic on everyone since the physical gatherings always seemed to generate excitement. Even though people still wore masks and observed physical distancing, they felt some degree of freedom in being able to communicate in person. In my observations, it was not just the students who were happy and satisfied with the physical gatherings but the teachers and staff as well. I also noted the high-pitched voices of people as they talked and the amount of laughter and *kumustahan* or hellos exchanged. When I was a participant, the same happy and friendly atmosphere was noted. This was the first retreat since 2020 and everyone was glad to be spending time together. The sessions were lively, and the discussions were engaging. Similar sentiments were also expressed such as praising and thanking God for His protection of everyone. When it came to challenges in ministry, the problems and

hardships expressed bore many similarities to the findings of this study. These are presented in Chapter IV.

### **Data Analysis**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016, 200) recommended that researchers transcribe their own interviews to generate insights and get leads. Given the manageable sample size of this research, I personally transcribed the interviews, and this was helpful in generating more useful insights. I transcribed the interviews and FGDs using oTranscribe, a free web application tool for transcription. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Prior to encoding the responses in the SCS and in transcribing the interviews, all the participants were assigned codes by the researcher to keep track of the data. I also manually analyzed the interviews, focus-groups, and observations to familiarize myself with the data. In Grounded Theory approach, data analysis began as soon as the first two interviews were transcribed, and this was continued throughout the data collection process using an iterative procedure of constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006).

### **Stages of Coding**

The Constructivist Grounded Theory data analysis includes multiple, iterative phases of coding including initial, focused, and theoretical coding. For Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis (2019, 4), the use of initial, intermediate, and advanced are preferred which implies low, medium, and high levels of analyzing and conceptualizing data. These terms refer to the same levels of coding identified by constructivist grounded theorists mentioned earlier. I used the terms initial, intermediate, and advance by Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis for this study since the terms are somewhat self-explanatory.

Coding is the important link between collecting data and developing an emerging theory that explains the data (Charmaz 2006, 46; Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019, 4). Codes are constructed to label or name data (Charmaz 2006, 43). Coding allows the researcher to interact again with the participants as their statements are read and studied and their actions and behavior are paid attention to (Charmaz 2006, 47). It allows the researcher to question, sort, and summarize several pages of interviews, field observation notes, and other documents (Charmaz 2014, 237).

***Initial coding.*** The initial coding of data is the first step in analyzing the data in any GT study. This is done by breaking down the data for constant comparison and analysis (Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019, 4). In initial coding, the researcher remains open to exploring multiple theoretical possibilities from the data (Charmaz 2006, 47). The researcher is on the lookout for what the data may be saying and see gaps in it. This prompts the researcher to fill in the gaps by gathering additional data if necessary. The important thing to remember is that the codes must fit the data and not the other way around (Charmaz 2006, 48-49). Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis (2019, 5) suggested generating as many codes as possible from the data and choosing the right words is crucial. The initial coding of the interviews and FGDs yielded 978 coded segments.

According to Charmaz (2006, 50-53), initial coding implies a close reading of the data gathered. The initial coding phase involves naming word for word, line by line or incident to incident. In word for word coding, the researcher pays attention to every word, and their structure and flow since they affect what is being communicated by the participants. Line by line coding means labeling each line of the transcribed interviews using a few words to describe the data. Though this may be tedious, it is nevertheless

very useful as this helps the researcher to know what further kinds of data to collect. In short, this approach gives the researcher some leads to pursue. Examples of word for word and line by line coding are shown in Appendix P and Q respectively.

Incident to incident coding is done by comparing one incident with another. An incident is empirical data about the concrete behavioral descriptions of people's actions (Charmaz 2006, 53). These may be routine events but gaining insights from the ordinariness of these routine actions through comparison may yield even more valuable insights that would help in categorization (Charmaz 2014, 264). Glaser and Strauss (1967, 102) recommended that the constant comparative method is observed while coding incidents by comparing it with previous data already categorized. These constant comparisons of data give rise to the generation of properties of the category (Charmaz 2006, 105-106). An example of incident to incident coding can be found in Appendix R.

When doing initial coding, Glaser recommended using gerunds since they specify actions and processes that are closer and more descriptive of the data (Charmaz 2006, 49; Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019, 5). *In vivo* codes are special terms or words used by the participants and are used as codes to preserve the meanings of the experiences and perspectives shared (Charmaz 2006, 55).

***Intermediate coding.*** This is the second phase in coding after the initial coding process. The researcher makes decisions about the initial codes made which would be used in analyzing and categorizing data. At this point, the researcher continues to compare codes and data with each other (Charmaz 2006, 57-59; 2014, 283). Intermediate or focused coding means using the most significant or frequent earlier codes to sift through the large amounts of data available from interviews and observations. At this

stage, the researcher decides which initial codes make the most analytic sense to include and categorize the data (Charmaz 2006, 57-58). In other words, intermediate coding builds on initial coding by reviewing categories and identifying which ones can be listed under other existing categories that helps in refining the properties and dimensions of the developed categories (Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019, 5). Thus, the goal of intermediate or focused coding is to determine the adequacy and conceptual strength of initial codes (Charmaz 2014, 285). In this study, I undertook three cycles in the initial coding of the data. Hence, the initial 978 coded segments were narrowed down further when they were subjected to intermediate coding.

*Advanced coding.* According to Strauss and Corbin (1998, 143), this is the process of integrating and refining categories. The categories formed are integrated into theory after comparing codes formed in the initial and intermediate coding and relationships are found between codes or categories (Charmaz 2006, 63). Data from journals written by the researcher including memos are used when making constant comparative analysis. New codes that emerge are constantly compared to existing data to find out if new categories emerge and whether these categories will be significant and meaningful to the development of theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 153-154). Data is fractured in initial coding but in theoretical coding, they are woven together to generate theory (Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019, 6).

When no new themes or properties emerged from the data or transcribed interviews, theoretical saturation had been reached. According to Glaser and Strauss (2006, 61), saturation happens when no new or additional data is found by the researcher.

When the researcher sees the same categories repeatedly, then this leads to confidence that the study has reached saturation.

### **Constant Comparative Analysis**

Constant comparison is an important process in Grounded Theory to ensure that the data is thoroughly scrutinized. Glaser and Strauss (2006) stressed that through constant comparison, the researcher analyzes data to develop a grounded theory. The researcher constantly compares data, codes, themes, and categories to enhance one's understanding of the phenomenon. Hence, the constant comparison method helps in generating theory that is "integrated, consistent, plausible, and close to the data" (Glaser and Strauss 2006, 103). The researcher compares data with codes, codes with category, category with another category, and category with a concept (Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019, 4). This is done to identify similarities and differences and refine concepts (Bryant 2017; Charmaz 2006; Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis 2019). It involves an iterative process because the researcher will need to go back and forth when comparing. I used the constant comparative method from data collection up until the advanced coding stages to ensure the proper categorization of the codes generated. I used category as the umbrella term for each sub-research question. Under each category, emerging themes and sub-themes were used to classify and group similar codes and their properties and dimensions.

### **Presentation of Theory Through Storyline Technique**

When the researcher has spent sufficient time analyzing the data and has a sense of what is going on, the next practical thing to do is to write a few statements about the findings. The researcher begins articulating one's thoughts and insights and eventually "a

story emerges” (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 148). This is called the storyline technique. The storyline technique was not included in the seminal work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) but was presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998) in a later work where they defined story as the narrative describing the focal phenomenon of the study (Birks et al. 2009, 406). Thus, the storyline is the conceptualization of the story into a core category. In other words, the storyline is a tool used in integrating data in the process of analysis.

Australian researchers Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis (2019, 6) defined storyline as “a strategy for facilitating integration, construction, formulation, and presentation of research findings through the production of a coherent grounded theory.” In simpler terms, the storyline is the narrative presentation of the theory generated from the data which was analyzed. Aside from the storyline, diagrams are sometimes used as visual representations of concepts, categories, and relationships relevant to the theory (Birks et al. 2009, 413). These diagrams visually reinforce the storyline. Diagramming is helpful to the researcher because it forces him or her to be objective and work with concepts instead of the details of the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998, 153) cautioned against the use of several labels, lines, and arrows which may confuse readers and make it difficult for them to understand. In this study, I used the storyline technique in explaining the working theory generated. I also used a diagram alongside the storyline as a visual representation of the theoretical model. These were presented and discussed in depth in Chapter IV.

### **Researcher’s Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is about acknowledging the researcher’s role and position in the study because the researcher is a part of the research process. This includes the researcher’s prior experiences, assumptions, and beliefs which have the potential of influencing the

research process. Hence, reflexivity plays a key role in qualitative studies (Dowling 2008, 747). When a researcher is aware of the biases, values, and experiences he or she brings into the study, it is advisable to use reflexive methods to make sense of these insights and experiences and how these may influence the interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell and Poth 2018, 419). These are recorded in research diaries which are also called field notes, logbooks, memos, and journals (Altrichter and Holly 2005, 24-25). They are used to record daily observations in the field. They are written to describe and document events after they have taken place and may also include reflections and interpretations and notations on theory development as well as observations and reflections on methodologies used. Therefore, writing regularly after each interview to prevent one from being drowned in the “whirlpool of daily necessities” is a beneficial strategy (Altrichter and Holly 2005, 26).

Memoing is the process of writing, charting, recording, and detailing during the analytic phase of the research process (Charmaz 2006, 72). Writing memos throughout the research process keeps the researcher involved in the analysis by capturing one’s thoughts, reflecting on what one is learning, making comparisons and connections, and identifying questions and directions to pursue (Charmaz 2006, 72; Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 222). “Through conversing with yourself while memo-writing, new ideas and insights arise during the act of writing” (Charmaz 2006, 72). Constant memo-writing keeps the researcher involved in the data analysis. It gives the researcher a creative space to converse with oneself about the data, codes, ideas and to entertain questions as they arise (Charmaz 2014, 323).

Unpleasant life experiences are experienced by everyone, and our responses to these challenges may account for growth and transformation. Hence, as a student, I related with the participants of this study. I spent a significant amount of time reflecting on my own journey in self-compassion and transformation as a doctoral student through a journal or logbook. To process my thoughts and emotions, I wrote about my thoughts, insights, and reflections regarding my interactions with the participants after every interview and after the FGDs using a reflexive journal and integrated these with memos regarding my own perspectives and understandings. These journals were used in comparison with the memos. Since I utilized personal memos and journals, it made this study susceptible to biases. Hence, to avoid these biases and to maintain objectivity, I asked the help of a peer debriefer and I conducted member checks wherein participants reviewed and verified the information derived from the interviews.

### **Peer Debiefer**

Lincoln and Guba (1985, 308) defined peer debriefing as the “process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind.” For this study, I chose a Filipina Christian counselor to serve as peer debriefer (Appendix O). Given her background in counseling, she was able to provide guidance and helped me gain deeper insights into what was being communicated by the participants through their stories and experiences. For instance, she provided clarification into the underlying emotions in a participant’s narrative. The peer debriefer’s familiarity with the context and valuable insights helped me in uncovering underemphasized issues. She was also instrumental in maintaining objectivity by looking

at the data instead of relying on my understanding and interpretation. She provided a critical eye in the data interpretation and analysis which aided me in correcting errors and in achieving organization.

### **Member Checks**

Lincoln and Guba (1985, 314) emphasized that member checking is the key to a study's credibility. Through member checking, respondents can check the truthfulness and accuracy of the facts and the researcher's interpretations. It also provides them with an opportunity to volunteer additional information and provide clarification. Member checking was conducted from October to January 2023. This was done individually with the students by sending them the transcript of the interviews and they gave feedback. Others who preferred to meet was done so through Zoom. The students said that the transcripts were accurate including the interpretations of the researcher. They gave clarifications on their statements to provide additional context like P3 who said, "*Ganun effect sa katawan ko. Dahil siguro kinain ko talaga yung takot nung dalawang taon na yun na nasa chaotic stage ng pandemic* (That was the effect on my body. Maybe because I internalized the fears of those two years that we were in a chaotic stage of the pandemic)." They also gave their agreement and one even said, "*Lahat naman ok. Akong ako talaga yan. Until now ayun pa rin ang practice ko* (Everything is ok. That's really me. Until now that is still my practice)." Overall, the member checks enhanced the validity of this study.

### **Trustworthiness**

All research, whether quantitative or qualitative must concern itself with issues of validity and reliability. The validity and reliability of the research entails the exercise of

care from the time of its conceptualization to data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings. Being able to trust results adds credibility to the study (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 238). Toward this end goal, it is necessary to exercise rigor (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 261). For Lincoln and Guba (1985, 299), the trustworthiness and validity of any qualitative research is dependent on what the researcher sees and hears in his or her investigation of the phenomenon. Both claimed that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are important in establishing trustworthiness although the more widely used terms are internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 239).

A study is credible or has internal validity if it accurately describes and discusses the phenomenon in question (Given and Saumure 2008, 892). To ensure the internal validity of this study, I interviewed those who have experienced the phenomenon I planned on exploring. “Interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their [participants] observations and interviews” (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 243). But since, one can never capture an objective reality, one way to ensure internal validity is by triangulation, a process of combining two or more methods to best understand a phenomenon (2016, 244). Triangulation can be used in collecting and analyzing data as well as the sources of data (Rothbauer 2008, 892; Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 245). The methods for triangulation in this study included in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) was also used to measure self-compassion levels. The participants’ answers to the SCS were also used to compare their responses to the interview questions. I also conducted observations in various settings to gain more understanding of the phenomenon while ensuring

credibility. In using these methods, I gained insights and understanding about the phenomenon through the participants' stories. Conducting member checks by playing back to the participants the transcribed interviews is another way to ensure internal validity (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 246). I sought feedback from the participants by showing them the transcribed interviews so that they could validate whether I was able to capture the essence of what they expressed. Another way to ensure internal validity is by determining how long one needs to observe and how many people must be interviewed which is what saturation is all about (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 246). Hence, for my study, I employed this method until I found no new data that added to the understanding of the phenomenon. Reflexivity is another method to ensure internal validity and I gave a brief emphasis of this in an earlier discussion regarding my role and position as the researcher in the entire research process.

The reliability or consistency pertains to the replicability of the study. In other words, given the research findings, can the study be replicated? If the study were to be conducted by other researchers, it is expected to yield the same results (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 260). However, this is challenging because human behavior is never consistent. So, the more important issue here is whether the results generated are consistent with the data collected (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 261). Thus, if the findings are consistent with the data, then the study may be considered reliable and dependable. Methods on triangulation and reflexivity were the methods I used to maintain reliability or consistency for this study.

Transferability or the external validity of a study pertains to the extent to which findings may be applied in different settings (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 253). To do this,

the researcher needs to provide sufficient descriptive data to make transferability possible. Merriam and Tisdell asserted that there are good reasons for studying a particular situation due to its uniqueness (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 258-259).

Transferability of this study is possible although it is limited given the unique research focus among Bible college students within Manila. Aside from the particulars of the sample and their context, the instruments used, the interview protocols, and the procedures were specified and detailed. Providing adequate information concerning these would help readers determine to what extent their situations will match the context of the study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ensuring the validity and reliability of any research involves conducting the study in an ethical manner (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 237). Therefore, this study was designed with ethical considerations in my mind. As the main researcher, I gave top priority for the equal protection of all participants to minimize their exposure to risks and to maximize benefits to them. Ethics approval for this research was obtained from APNTS's Institutional Review Board (Appendix J). The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and their role through the Information for Potential Participants (Appendix C). They were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any point in time without penalty or prejudice to them. They were informed that they will use pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Data collected was stored in password protected computer files. They were also informed that all interviews and focus group discussions will only be recorded upon their consent. Audio and video files were saved through a secure external device. The participants were also informed that there will be minimal

risks and potential gains for them through their participation in this research such as gaining knowledge about self-compassion and how this inner resource could be accessed in line with their studies and other life challenges. During interviews, I was sensitive to the participants' emotional states to ensure that they were not harmed by the study. They were assured that the collected data will be strictly confidential and anonymous. Lastly, the participants were also informed that all recorded materials whether printed, audio-, or video-recorded will be deleted after five years from the completion of research activity to minimize any future risks related to confidentiality (PHD Dissertation Handbook 2021, 8).

### **Researcher's Self-care Plan**

I incorporated a self-care plan as far as my personal well-being was concerned. Just as the participants' mental health and well-being were ensured, it was necessary that I, as the researcher, observe the same. Table 5 below provides the specific details of the self-care plan that I observed as regards my physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

**Table 5 Researcher's Self-care Plan**

<b>Physical</b>	Getting sufficient sleep, watching food intake, daily walking
<b>Mental</b>	Reading, attending academic presentation/colloquium, conference, regularly communicating with co-workers
<b>Socio-emotional</b>	Accountability with academic superior, bonding with family, communicating through video calls, maintaining journal, attending church mental health summit
<b>Spiritual</b>	Bible reading and journaling, daily devotion, fasting and prayer, attending weekly chapel, participating in eucharist, attending retreat, communicating with spiritual mentor

### Pilot Test Results

A pilot test was conducted prior to actual research. The pilot study is useful in refining research methodologies, instruments, theoretical models, and frameworks, and in improving efficiency and quality of the main study (Malmqvist et al. 2019, 2). The selection of participants for this pilot study was through the nonprobability convenience sampling technique (Saumure and Given 2008, 562). The participants were selected through convenience sampling since they were accessible and easy to recruit (Saumure and Given 2008, 124).

The pilot study was the first step in this research project and was conducted on a smaller scale (In 2017, 601). The participants were selected students from different Bible colleges. The demographic data of the participants are presented below (Table 6).

**Table 6 Demographic data of Pilot Study Participants**

Pilot Study Participant (PSP)	Age	Gender (M=Male; F=Female)	Educational level	Status (M=Married; S=Single)	Self-compassion Score		PTSD Score	
					Mean	Category	Score	Possibility of PTSD
PSP1	46	M	Graduating	M	3.78	High SCS	42	Low Possibility of PTSD
PSP2	48	F	Graduating	M	3.23	Moderate SCS	40	Low Possibility of PTSD
PSP3	25	M	Third Year	S	2.70	Moderate SCS	36	Low Possibility of PTSD
PSP4	22	F	Second Year	S	2.91	Moderate SCS	46	Low Possibility of PTSD

PSP5	29	F	Graduating	S	3.5 4	High SCS	37	Low Possibili ty of PTSD
PSP6	29	M	Second Year	Single	2.3 7	Low SCS	60	Possibili ty of PTSD

The pilot study made it possible to test the instruments and gather feedback regarding their understandability. It provided an opportunity to ascertain the quality of the interview and FGD questions. By asking the participants whether the questions were relatable, engaging, and understandable, I gained insights into their perspectives. The responses of the participants helped me in understanding that the concept of self-compassion is new to them although they were able to describe it using similar terms like self-care and self-kindness. Since I wanted the participants to define and describe self-compassion on their own, I avoided using these similar terms when talking about self-compassion. By asking for a corresponding Tagalog term for self-compassion, the participants of the main study were assisted in elucidating the term based on their own understanding. When I asked them about their unpleasant experiences, the participants of the pilot study referred to the pandemic and it showed how impactful it was for them. So, the participants in the main study were directly asked about the pandemic and the challenges they faced. The interview should not inform participants of what the researcher wants to hear, which might not capture the whole experience. Instead, it should allow the interviewees to reflect on the experiences related to the interview topic (Kim 2011, 202). Thus, modifications were done to avoid researcher biases especially in terms of the transformation that I was exploring. As such, modifications were made in the guided interview protocol and is shown in Table 7 below.



Although the participants were college students proficient in oral English, their responses to the questions using our *lingua franca*, Tagalog, added depth to the stories and provided clarity and understanding to the researcher. Hence, the questions in the interview and FGD protocols were also translated in Tagalog for ease of communication.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the design and to discuss the research methods used in addressing the research questions. Based on the researcher's stance, the case was made for a constructivist approach which justified the use of Grounded Theory in exploring how transformation happened as the students dealt with unpleasant experiences with self-compassion. The procedures used for recruiting and selecting participants, data collection and analysis were also outlined (refer to Appendices). The succeeding Chapter IV will present the results of the study and the analysis of the data and Chapter V will discuss the research findings and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

#### **Overview**

The central research question of this study was: “Do Filipino Bible college students undergo perspective transformation when practicing self-compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences?” Realities are multiple in a constructivist view thus a multiplicity of perspectives arise (Charmaz 2014, 240). As such, auxiliary questions were used as follow-ups to be open to several possibilities. These questions were formulated to guide and answer the central research question and develop the theoretical model.

- Who are the Filipino Bible college students in this study?
- How do Filipino Bible college students perceive self-compassion?
- What unpleasant life experiences did Filipino Bible college students undergo during the pandemic?
- How did Filipino Bible college students respond to these unpleasant life experiences?
- How were Filipino Bible college students affected when they treated themselves with compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences?

These questions helped the researcher in the discovery of the Theoretical Model of Recovering the Valued Self that emerged from the data. Before articulating the model, I will explain the process I used to analyze responses from the overarching and auxiliary

questions to the emergence of the Theoretical Model of Recovering the Valued Self. Extracts from semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), observations, and memos have been included to provide meaningful evidence and coherence to the development of the theoretical model. The results are presented with verbatim quotes of the students to honor their unique voices and experiences of transformation.

### **Analytical Process**

The strength of any Grounded Theory (GT) study rests on its analytic power to theorize from constructed interpretations of reality (Charmaz 2014, 285). The study digs deep in the empirical data and connects analytic structures to reach an emergent theory (Charmaz 2014, 286). By constant comparison, one can arrive at a conceptual category from evidence and use the evidence to illustrate the concept leading to the discovery of theory (Glaser and Strauss 2008, 23).

This study being a constructivist GT aimed to understand multiple realities and how people construct them (Charmaz 2014, 231). The constructivist GT approach acknowledged the subjective role of the researcher in the process of both generating and analyzing the data (Charmaz 2006). Being a GT study, the resulting outcome was a working model or theory. The theory stated relationships between abstract concepts and aimed for either an explanation or understanding (Thornberg and Charmaz 2012, 41). In GT Methodology (GTM), theories endeavor to answer questions by accounting for what happened, how it happened, and why it happened (Charmaz 2014, 228). Grounded theorists account for *what* people do and links it with *how* they do it (Charmaz 2014) while Jack Katz (2002) took this further by suggesting that GTM seeks answers to *why*.

The answers to the *why* questions range from exploratory generalizations that explain causation to abstract understandings theorizing relationships between concepts (Charmaz 2014).

Interviews were subjected to initial coding which I did manually. The codes were validated through member checks. I also asked the peer debriefer to check the codes as well as the emerging theory. Her inputs helped in maintaining objectivity and avoiding bias. Labels were attached to segments of data to describe what was happening and enabled the sorting and constant comparison with other segments of data. Coding progressed through three stages: open, focused, and theoretical (Charmaz, 2006). Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis (2019, 4) used initial, intermediate, and advance coding which implies low, medium, and high levels of analyzing and conceptualizing data. These terms refer to the same levels of coding identified by Charmaz (2006). In this study, I used the terms initial, intermediate, and advance by Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis (2019) since the terms are self-explanatory.

When the researcher has spent sufficient time analyzing the data and has a sense of what is going on, the next practical thing to do is to write a few statements about the findings. These findings helped me in articulating my thoughts and insights (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 148) and in describing the focal phenomenon of the study (Birks et al. 2009, 406). Thus, the storyline was the conceptualization of the story into a theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined story as a ‘descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of the study’ and storyline as the ‘conceptualization of the story, the core category’ (1990, 116). The storyline aids in theoretical development and explanation

since theory generation is the outcome in any GT study (Glaser and Strauss 1967). What follows is the storyline of the theoretical model in this study.

### **Theoretical Sampling and Participants' Demographics**

This section addresses the first sub-research question: “Who are the Filipino Bible college students in this study?” In addressing this question, the theoretical sampling technique was used to enable me to select the participants “who will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions” (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 201). According to Creswell and Poth (2018, 223), theoretical sampling of individuals can contribute to building the opening and intermediate coding of the theory. The original goal of this study was to interview 12 students from various Bible colleges in Manila. Using theoretical sampling which allowed me, the researcher, to maximize prospects in identifying and developing concepts and their properties, dimensions, and relationships (Corbin and Strauss 2015, 146), this number was expanded to 18 after which theoretical saturation was reached. Thus, a total of 18 participants coming from different Bible schools within the National Capital Region (NCR) and Calabarzon Region (IV-A) contributed to the results of this study.

Theoretical saturation determines the final sample size in any research (Creswell and Poth 2018, 478) and it refers to the point in the interview process when no new data is obtained (Kvale 1996). Furthermore, Kvale (1996) stated that saturation may be reached with approximately 10 participants. In this study, saturation was reached by the 12<sup>th</sup> participant, but other students who signified interest to participate were accommodated and the number of participants who were interviewed grew to 18. Since

there was no new data emerging from the interviews, it was determined that saturation had been reached. To ensure heterogeneity of the participants, I included areas of diversity such as age, marital status, gender, and educational level. Participants who gave their consent were asked to use pseudonyms in responding to the questionnaires. To further maintain their confidentiality, I assigned code numbers to them, and the respondents are identified by this number in this study. Students were originally recruited from three colleges situated in the NCR. However, this was expanded to include seven more colleges since there was a low response rate from the initial three. Hence, a total of 10 theological institutions were approached but I was able to secure permission to conduct my study from four Bible colleges located within Quezon City, Caloocan City, and Cainta, Rizal. To maintain confidentiality as per the agreement with the institutions, instead of using the names of the colleges, they were assigned code names as seen in Table 8 below.

**Table 8 Code Names for Research Locales**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
East Kamias, Quezon City	College 1	2
Caloocan City, Metro Manila	College 2	3
Novaliches, Quezon City	College 3	3
Cainta, Rizal	College 4	10
<b>Total sample (N)</b>		<b>18</b>

The demographic data of the participants is summarized in Table 9 below.

**Table 9 Demographic Data of Students**

Participant #	Gender	Age	Status	Educational Level	Research Locale	Self-Compassion Score (SCS)		PTSD	
1	Female	31	Single	Third Year	College 2	4.06	High SC	37	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
2	Female	22	Single	Graduating	College 2	2.56	Moderate SC	37	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
3	Male	22	Single	Third Year	College 4	3.25	Moderate SC	35	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
4	Female	22	Single	Third Year	College 4	3.28	Moderate SC	39	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
5	Male	22	Single	Third Year	College 4	2.83	Moderate SC	35	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
6	Female	22	Single	Graduating	College 4	3.07	Moderate SC	28	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
7	Female	26	Single	Third Year	College 4	3.86	High SC	28	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
8	Female	39	Married	Third Year	College 4	3.79	High SC	25	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
9	Female	35	Married	Third Year	College 4	3.02	Moderate SC	32	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
10	Male	54	Married	Second Year	College 3	3.14	Moderate SC	32	Low Possibility of

									Developing PTSD
11	Female	54	Married	Second Year	College 3	3.56	High SC	40	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
12	Male	28	Married	Graduating	College 1	3.66	High SC	28	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
13	Male	23	Single	Graduating	College 4	3.57	High SC	51	Possible indicative of PTSD
14	Female	50	Married	Graduating	College 4	2.73	Moderate SC	48	Possible indicative of PTSD
15	Female	25	Single	Third Year	College 1	3.38	Moderate SC	40	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
16	Female	30	Single	Graduating	College 3	4.15	High SC	36	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
17	Female	20	Single	Second Year	College 2	3.52	High SC	42	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
18	Male	34	Married	Graduating	College 4	3.57	High SC	26	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
Average		31				3.39	Moderate SC	35	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD

The average age of the participants is 31 and this would be considered an emerging adult in the adulthood stage. The youngest participant is 20 years old while the oldest is 54.

To determine the self-compassion levels of the 18 participants, the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Neff (2003) was used. Table 9 above reflects the individual scores of each participant. Discussion on whether age, gender, civil status, and educational level has any connection on self-compassion is provided in the succeeding discussions.

### **Self-Compassion and Age**

Nine participants (50%) were 20 to 27 years old (emerging adult), six participants (33%) were 28 to 40 years old (adulthood) while three participants (17%) were between the ages of 41 to 59 (middle adulthood). The average self-compassion levels across the different age groups and life stages range from 3.14 which is moderate to 3.71 which indicates a high self-compassion level.

**Table 10 Self-Compassion and Age**

<b>Age / Lifespan Stage</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Self-Compassion Score</b>	
20 – 27 Emerging adulthood	9	50%	3.26	Moderate SC
28 – 40 Adulthood	6	33%	3.71	High SC
41 – 59 Middle adulthood	3	17%	3.14	Moderate SC
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

Research has shown that as people get older, they tend to become more self-compassionate (Neff and Vonk 2009; Neff and Pommier 2013; Zessin et al. 2015). However, other studies revealed findings that older adults have lower self-compassion

compared to younger ones (Bluth et al. 2017). Age was a mediating factor in the relationship with self-compassion and mental help-seeking among Filipino counselors which signified that older adults, possessing a breadth of life experience, tend to be more open to seeking help as compared to younger counselors (Aruta, Maria, and Mascarenhas 2022, 5). In this current study, this could not be validated due to the small sample size of each age group.

### **Self-Compassion and Gender**

In terms of gender, 12 participants (67%) were females while six (33%) were males.

**Table 11 Self-Compassion and Gender**

<b>Gender</b>		
<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>N</b>
6	12	<b>18</b>
33.33%	66.67%	<b>100.00%</b>
3.34 Moderate SCS	3.42 Moderate SCS	

Self-compassion in terms of gender have been examined in several studies and the results are quite inconsistent because it is unclear whether self-compassion is affected by gender differences (Neff 2003, 11). Yarnell et al. (2015) surveyed the literature on self-compassion from the time of its inception in 2003 up until 2014 and reported that most findings suggested that males had slightly higher levels of self-compassion than women. This finding may be associated with the fact that women tend to internalize negative emotions more than men and therefore tend to be more critical and harsher toward themselves (Leadbeater et al. 1999).

However, the study by Eisenberg and Lennon (1983, 124) showed otherwise. Their research showed that women tended to be more compassionate than men. The higher levels for women may be affected by gendered roles prescribed by society when it comes to providing care and nurture (Berenbaum, Ruble, and Martin 2008, 647-648). A study among 351 Filipinos showed that there were no significant gender differences in self-compassion (Umandap and Teh 2020, 230). This current study showed that women (SCS = 3.42) scored higher than men (SCS = 3.34). However, the difference between genders may not be so significant since the sample size is small.

### **Self-Compassion and Educational Level**

Of the 18 participants, three (17%) were in their sophomore year (SCS =3.41), eight (44%) were in their junior year (SCS = 3.43), and seven (39%) were nearing the completion of their studies or were graduating (SCS = 3.33).

**Table 12 Self-Compassion and Educational Level**

<b>Educational level</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Self-Compassion Score</b>	
First Year	0	0.00%	--	
Second Year	3	16.67%	3.41	Moderate SC
Third Year	8	44.44%	3.43	Moderate SC
Graduating	7	38.89%	3.33	Moderate SC
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

The results of this current study may not be significant because studies regarding self-compassion and academic standing and performance are yet to be conducted (Neff 2022).

### Self-Compassion and Civil Status

In terms of civil status, single participants who comprised 61% of the sample (11) had a slightly lower self-compassion level (3.35) compared to the 39% (7) who were married (3.41) although both signify moderate self-compassion levels.

**Table 13 Self-Compassion and Civil Status**

Civil Status	<i>N</i>	Percentage	Self-Compassion Score	
Single	11	61.11%	3.35	Moderate SC
Married	7	38.89%	3.41	Moderate SC
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

The results of this current study may not be significant because studies identifying the relationship between self-compassion and civil status have yet to be undertaken (Neff 2022).

### Self-Compassion and PTSD

The participants were also asked to respond to the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Checklist for Civilians (PCL). The PTSD Checklist (PCL) is a self-report rating scale for assessing post-traumatic stress disorder although it is not used as a stand-alone tool in diagnosing PTSD. The questionnaire consists of 17 items in which examinees are instructed to indicate how much they have been bothered by each symptom in the past month using a 5-point (1-5) scale and range from "Not at all" to "Extremely" (Weathers et al. 1993). A cutoff score for a likely PTSD diagnosis of 45 was used based on the recommendation by the National Center for PTSD (Weathers et al., 1993). Participants' PTSD scores are shown in Table 14 below.

**Table 14 Self-Compassion and PTSD**

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>SC Score</b>		<b>PTSD Score</b>	
1	4.06	High SC	37	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
2	2.56	Moderate SC	37	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
3	3.25	Moderate SC	35	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
4	3.28	Moderate SC	39	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
5	2.83	Moderate SC	35	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
6	3.07	Moderate SC	28	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
7	3.86	High SC	28	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
8	3.79	High SC	25	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
9	3.02	Moderate SC	32	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
10	3.14	Moderate SC	32	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
11	3.56	High SC	40	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
12	3.66	High SC	28	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
13	3.57	High SC	51	Possible indicative of PTSD
14	2.73	Moderate SC	48	Possible indicative of PTSD
15	3.38	Moderate SC	40	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
16	4.15	High SC	36	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
17	3.52	High SC	42	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD
18	3.57	High SC	26	Low Possibility of Developing PTSD

Most of the participants displayed low possibility of developing PTSD although two (P13 and P14) showed possible indications of PTSD. A cutoff score for a likely PTSD diagnosis of 45 was used based on the recommendation by the National Center for PTSD (Weathers et al., 1993). Hence, scores lower than 45 indicated a low possibility of developing PTSD. I consulted a counselor at the Alliance Graduate School regarding the cutoff score and she affirmed the interpretation of these scores. I also consulted another counselor at the Counseling Center of Asbury Theological Seminary regarding the interpretation and she gave a similar response. During the interviews and FGDs, none of the two participants who scored higher than 45 displayed any untoward behavior. They were very cooperative and responded to the questions in a casual manner which gave the impression that they were of sound mind and body.

P13 and P14 received high and moderate self-compassion levels respectively. Research has shown promising results when self-compassion is integrated in the treatment of PTSD such as the study by Hoffart, Oktedalen, and Langkaas (2015). Maheux and Price (2015, 627) suggested that self-compassion may protect against PTSD symptoms. However, in this research, the same conclusions could not be drawn since this current study was not aimed at establishing the association between self-compassion and PTSD. For this present study, the PTSD Checklist was administered to verify the mental and emotional wellbeing of the participants.

### **Category One: Filipino Students' Perceptions of Self-Compassion**

The second sub-research question of this study aims to identify perceptions and understandings of self-compassion among Bible college students. As I have stated earlier, in GT approach, data analysis began as soon as the first two interviews were transcribed,

and this was continued throughout the data collection process using an iterative procedure of constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006). I transcribed the interviews and FGDs. I also manually analyzed the interviews, focus-groups, and observations to become more familiar with the data. Thus, with each interview transcript, I began with the process of highlighting words, phrases, and statements from the transcripts of interviews and FGDs. I then proceeded with coding or labelling these highlighted words, phrases, and statements. Coding was the pivotal link between data collection and development of theory and was a significant part of the process in Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) to identify and describe what is happening in the data (Charmaz 2014, 113).

In addressing the central question of this study on how Filipino Bible college students experienced transformation when practicing self-compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences, it was necessary to ask the participants' familiarity with the concept of self-compassion. The purpose in asking this question was to explore the students' pre-understandings of self-compassion. Results showed that 16 (89%) expressed non-familiarity with the concept of self-compassion while two (11%) expressed familiarity with the concept (Table 15 below). This shows that the participants varied in their familiarity of the word self-compassion. The high percentage rate among those not familiar with the concept may be due to the fact that the term is in English. This was validated by the students through member checks. The participants claimed "*ngayon lang narinig* (It's only now that I have heard about it)," "*hindi masyado pamilyar* (not so familiar)," "*first time ko ma-encounter* (first time to encounter)," and "*naririnig pero hindi ko masyado alam* (Have heard but I don't know much about it)." Those who

claimed familiarity said, “*na-encounter ko na* (I have encountered it),” and “*narinig ko na rin naman* (I have heard about it).” Although they were not familiar with the English term, the students were able to describe or conceptualize self-compassion in Tagalog.

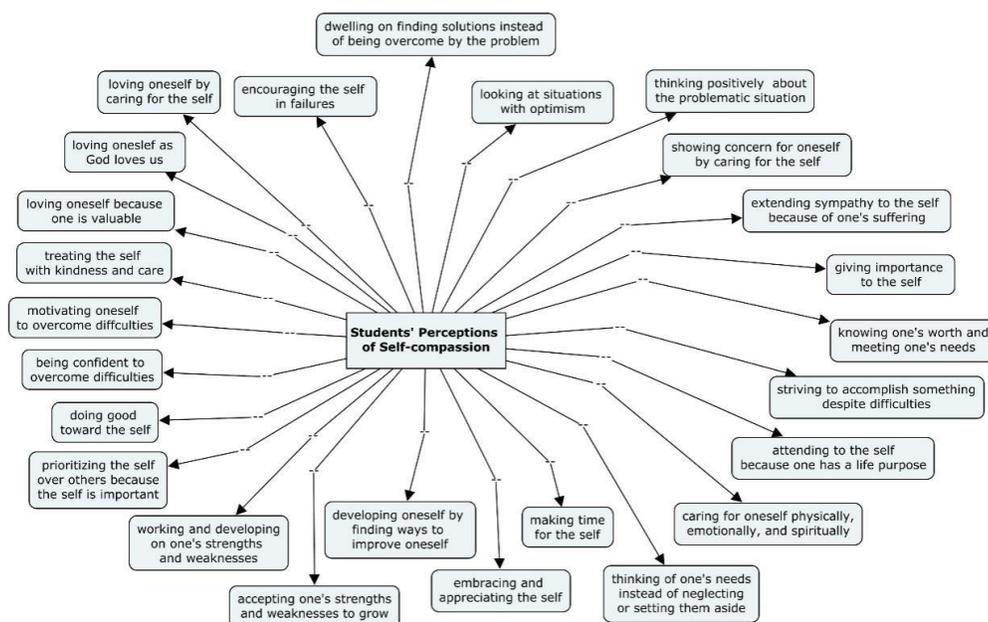
**Table 15 Familiarity with Self-Compassion**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total</b>
Familiarity with Self-compassion	2	16	18
Percentage	11.00%	88.88%	100.00%

Noteworthy in the participants’ responses was how they arrived at an understanding of self-compassion. Neff (2003, 86) and Neff and Germer (2017, 1) explained that to have a better understanding of what self-compassion means, it is helpful to consider first what it means to feel compassion for others as this is a concept that many are more familiar with. Furthermore, self-compassion does not deviate much from the definition of compassion in general (Neff 2003b). As such, when participants were asked how they would describe their perception of self-compassion, they immediately related it to the more familiar term of compassion. This was expressed by P1, P2, and P8 respectively who said, “*more on relatable sa compassion yung parang sa ibang tao* (I can relate it more with compassion that’s geared toward other people),” “*yung image is Jesus how he related to people . . . he had compassion* (The image is of Jesus how he related to people...he had compassion),” “*Pag sinabing self-compassion galing sa salitang compassion* (When you say self-compassion, it comes from the word compassion).” P12 also said “*Actually yung pag magkahiwalay sila, familiar ako* (Actually, if they are separate, I’m familiar with it).” From here, the participants described how they understood and perceived self-compassion. Apparently, the students

were not familiar with the English term self-compassion but possessed an understanding of the construct in Tagalog.

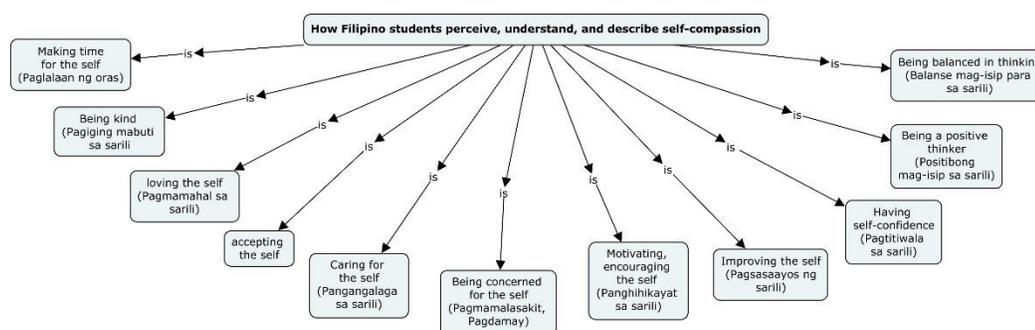
In the first cycle of coding, I assigned labels to segments of data to see what the participants were saying. These labels categorized, summarized, and accounted for each piece of data (Charmaz 2014, 111). Furthermore, in labeling, I analyzed the data by going through stories, incidents, statements, and observations (Charmaz 2014, 111). I went through the transcripts line by line and used gerunds in labeling or coding to capture the actions being described. In using gerunds, implied meanings and actions gave me directions on what to explore, what comparisons to make, and what relationships to pay attention to (2014, 121). During the initial coding of the participants' responses to this sub-research question, there were 169 coded segments from the interviews and FGDs. Upon close examination of the codes' properties and dimensions, they were categorized into 25 codes which are visualized in Figure 7 below using CmapTools.



**Figure 7 Initial coding into 25 coded segments of students' perceptions of self-compassion**

CmapTools is “a software environment developed at the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) that empowers users, individually or collaboratively, to represent their knowledge using concept maps, to share them with peers and colleagues, and to publish them” and is available for free use by educational and non-profit organizations (Cañas et al. 2004, 125). It was Dr. Pete Malvicini who introduced CmapTools to us in Critical Pedagogy (APNTS 2020).

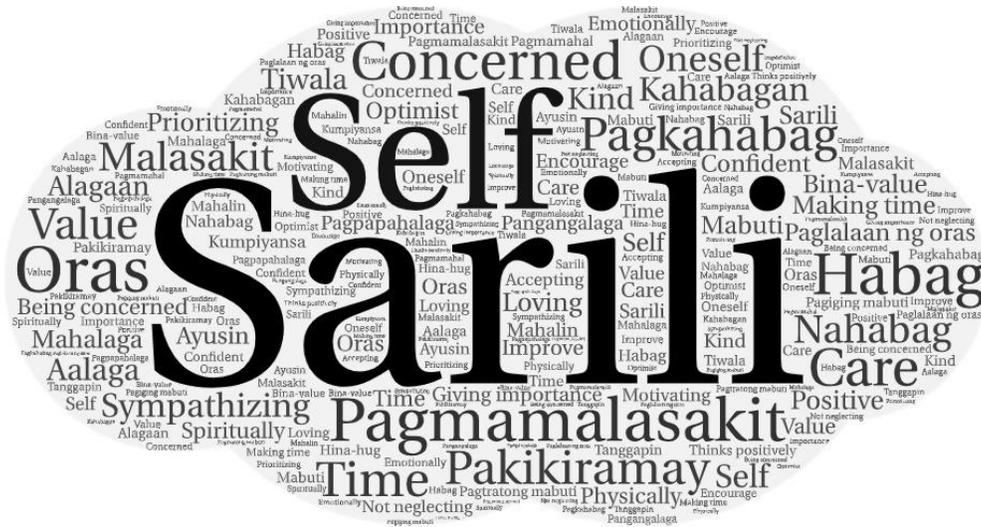
After further comparison, similar codes were put together in categories. In this second cycle of the coding phase, the codes that appeared more frequently and that possessed the same meanings were integrated. This implied making decisions as to which among the initial codes made the most analytic sense to categorize data and deciding what codes to label initial codes (Charmaz 2014, 138). Hence, in this second cycle of coding, the 25 initial codes were categorized into 11 codes as seen in Figure 8 below.



**Figure 8 Second Cycle of Coding of Students' Perceptions**

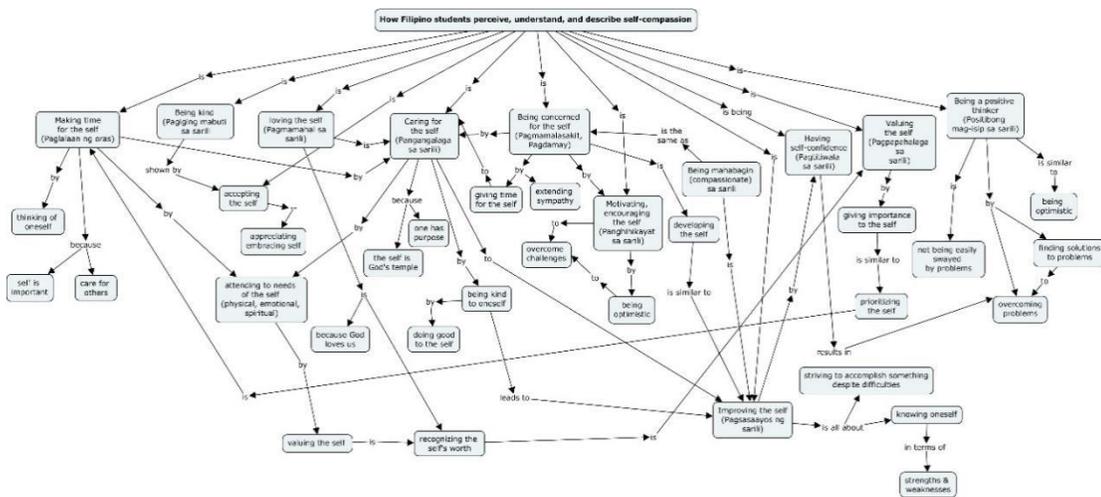
The word cloud below to portrays the key words that came out of the students’ perceptions of self-compassion (Figure 9). The words *sarili* or self are more prominent due to size when compared to the rest of the words. This is because the words *sarili* or self was repeatedly mentioned by the students during the interviews and FGDs. The students perceived self-compassion as compassion directed to the *sarili* or self and this

self-compassion is manifested in the different terms one can find surrounding *sarili* or self.



**Figure 9** Students Perceptions of Self-Compassion

The participants’ descriptions of self-compassion also revealed an interesting pattern. I typed the codes and connected them using CmapTools based on the relationships described by the students. The concept map shows that concepts were inter-related, and descriptions often overlapped as seen in Figure 10 below.



**Figure 10** Inter-related concepts of students' perceptions

The students' perception and description of the construct of self-compassion showed a typical Filipino worldview or way of seeing things which may be defined as "holistic or non-compartmentalized" and "wants all his faculties to be in harmony" (Siacor 2005, 89). Western mode of thinking tends to adopt an analytical style or reasoning wherein objects are broken down into their component elements (Nisbett et al. 2001). East Asian thinking, on the other hand, tends to adopt a holistic style of reasoning wherein various elements are held together in thought to grasp the "gestalt of the parts" (Kim 2002, 830). Secondly, people's social orientation affects the fundamental aspects of their reasoning (Robson 2017). Generally, people from collectivist societies tend to be holistic in their perspective and when dealing with problems, they focus more on the relationships and the context of the situation at hand. People from individualistic societies tend to focus on separate elements and consider situations as fixed and unchanging. Thus, Nisbett et al. (2001) posited that the differences between ancient East and West can be loosely grouped under the heading of analytic versus holistic orientation. An analytical perspective tends to focus on the attributes of an object by removing it from its context to assign its categories and using a set of standards about these categories to explain it (Nisbett et al. 2001, 293). Holistic thinking involves an orientation to the whole context or field paying special attention to relationships between a focal object and the field, and a preference for explaining things based on the relationships as illustrated by the interconnected meanings of the students' perspectives (Figure 10 above). Holistic approaches also rely on experience-based knowledge rather than on abstract logic (Nisbett et al. 2001, 293). This kind of holistic and experiential understanding was

observed in the way the participants responded to the second sub-research question of this study.

**P2:** “*Ang taong may habag sa sarili, nag-iingat siya. Kung ano sasabihin, nag-iisip ng mabuti* (A person who has compassion for the self, is cautious. When saying something, this person thinks carefully).”

**Interviewer:** “*Paano pa kaya mag-isip ang isang taong may self-compassion* (How else does a self-compassionate person think)?”

**P2:** “*Ang naisip ko . . . dahil itong problema ko, ganito kaliit itong problema ko, parang yun yung lagi kong naiisip. Bakit hindi ko ba kakayanin ito na pagdaanan itong mga ito? Para sakin, tignan muna nila yung dinadanas ng iba. Katulad ng sinasabi ko kanina na dinaranas ng ating mga magulang, mas malaki pa yun kesa sa mga kabataan ngayon eh. Kasi lately nung Sunday, nagkaroon kami ng youth fellowship, dun nakita ko din na ang dami palang problema ng kabataan. Pero kung iisipin talaga natin na may iba pang problema ang mundo, wasak po talaga ang mga problema natin ngayon. Yun ngayon na iniisip natin na napakabigat ng dinaranas natin, may mga tao na mas mabigat ang karanasan kaysa satin kaya ang dapat natin gawin ngayon ay tignan ang mga sarili natin at take care of ourselves na hindi tayo katulad ng iba na masyadong nagseseryoso sa mga problema. I mean kailangan din naman nating seryosohin pero yun nga tignan din naman natin na yung problema na maliit na meron tayo ay meron pang mas malaki pa don . . . at mapalad tayo na hindi nya sa atin yon ibinigay* (I think . . . my problem is a small one, that’s how I always think. Why will I not be able to overcome this? For me, they just need to look at what others are experiencing first. Like what I said earlier, what our parents are experiencing are far greater than what the youth are experiencing today. Last Sunday, we had our youth fellowship and I saw that the youth have many problems. But if we think about the bigger problems of the world, all our problems might not matter at all. We think that what we are going through is tough but there are people who are going through tougher times compared to us and so we must look at ourselves and take care of ourselves so that we do not have to think that our problems are more serious. What I mean is we need to be serious about our problems, but we also need to see that our problems may be inconsequential because there are bigger problems, and we are blessed that these were not given to us).”

**Researcher:** “*Paano mo mailalarawan ang self-compassion sa Tagalog* (How will you describe self-compassion in Tagalog)?”

**P8:** “*Sa Tagalog, ang salitang malapit parang malasakit para sa sarili. In terms of compassion yun ang pinakamalapit na malasakit sa sarili* (In Tagalog, the nearest word seems to be showing concern for the self. In terms of compassion, that is the nearest word, concern for the self).”

**Researcher:** “*Paano naipapakita ng isang tao ang malasakit sa sarili* (How does a person show concern for oneself)?”

**P8:** “*Naipapakita ang malasakit sa sarili sa pamamagitan ng pag-aalaga sa sarili. Aalagaan ang sarili para maging maayos, para din ma-benefit yung sarili*

(We show concern for ourselves by taking care of ourselves. We take care of ourselves to be better so that we will benefit too).”

**P8:** “*Kung may problema at pagmamalasakitan niya ang kanyang sarili siguro yung mino-motivate ang sarili para ma-overcome ang pinagdadaanan niya. Kasi sabi ko nga maging optimistic, positive . . . para sa sarili . . . yun din ang makakatulong sa sarili para ma-overcome ang mga problems* (If there are problems and one shows concern for the self probably by motivating him/herself to overcome whatever he/she is going through. Because as I said, be optimistic, positive . . . for the self . . . these are what can help to overcome problems).”

**Researcher:** “*Ano ginagawa mo pag nahihirapan ka na o pag may problema ka* (What do you do when you are having a hard time already or when you have a problem)?”

**P11:** “*I treat myself with kindness.*”

**Researcher:** “*How do you treat yourself with kindness?*”

**P11:** “*I give myself packets of kindness...bumaba at bumili ng coffee . . . wag mag-isip, enjoy muna . . .*” (I give myself packets of kindness...go down and buy coffee...do not think, enjoy it first...).”

**Researcher:** “*What happens when you treat yourself with kindness when dealing with problems?*”

**P11:** “*When I treat myself with kindness during difficult times, I see myself growing in that area, acknowledging . . . pat on my back...more of courage, and accomplishment . . . kapantay yan ng accomplishment ng skill* (When I treat myself with kindness during difficult times, I see myself growing in that area, acknowledging . . . pat on my back . . . more of courage, and accomplishment . . . it’s the same as accomplishing a skill).”

**Researcher:** “*Paano mo mailalarawan ang self-compassion sa Tagalog* (How will you describe self-compassion in Tagalog)?”

**P10:** “*Sa Tagalog, pagmamahal sa sarili . . . wala ako other words for self-compassion* (In Tagalog, love for oneself . . . I have no other words for self-compassion).”

**Researcher:** “*How does a person show love for the self?*”

**P10:** “*Ipinakikita pagmamahal sa sarili sa pag-care. There are many ways. Lahat tayo care natin self natin, pag nagkasakit tayo, bili tayo gamot agad dahil care natin sarili. Pagkain...may konting pera tayo, gusto natin masasarap na pagkain. Kung ang iba magpa haircut. Yun ang pag intindi ko sa self-compassion* (We show love for the self by caring for ourselves. There are many ways. All of us care for ourselves when we get sick, we buy medicines because we care for ourselves. Food...if we have money, we buy delicious food. Others go for a haircut. That’s my understanding of what self-compassion is).”

**Researcher:** “*Paano mo mailalarawan ang self-compassion sa Tagalog* (How will you describe self-compassion in Tagalog)?”

**P7:** “*Ang self-compassion ay kapag bina-value mo yung sarili mo kapag pinahahalagahan ang sarili. Kapareho ng inuuna ang sarili. Yan ang self-*”

*compassion* (Self-compassion is when you value yourself. When you value yourself it's the same as putting yourself first. That's self-compassion)."

**P4:** "*Para sa akin, ang self-compassion parang care mo sa sarili mo. Kindness mo sa sarili mo* (For me, self-compassion is like caring for yourself. It is kindness toward yourself)."

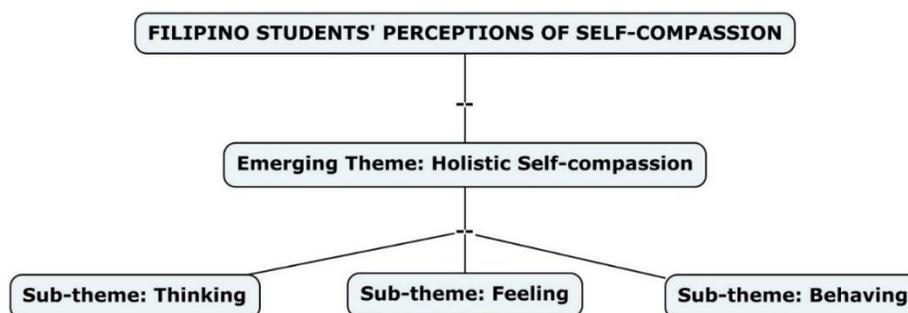
**P1:** "*Ang pagpapahalaga ko sa sarili ko, kailangan din ang physical like pagkain ng tama. Do something nice for yourself* (To value myself, the physical aspect is needed...like eating right. Doing something nice for yourself)."

**Researcher:** "*What comes to mind when you hear the word self-compassion? Is there a particular image or word in Tagalog?*"

**P2:** "*Siguro habag sa sarili mo kasi sa Bible parang yun din ang translation na nahabag ang Lord* (Probably compassion for oneself because in the bible, this is how it is translated when referring to the Lord having compassion)."

**P11:** "*Si Jesus at ako. Naka-akbay si Jesus. So yun yung self-compassion for me* (It's Jesus and me. Jesus has his arm around me. That's self-compassion for me)."

Thus, the students' perceptions reflected a "holistic" picture of a self-compassionate person evident in one's "thinking," "feeling," and "behaving." The relationship between the emerging theme and sub-themes is shown in Figure 11 below.



**Figure 11 Emerging Theme and Sub-themes of Students' Perceptions**

### **Emerging Theme: Holistic Self-Compassion**

As I have mentioned earlier, in the final coding cycle, the 11 codes were further narrowed down to three and then finally to a single code. After analyzing the properties and constantly comparing between the 3 codes and referring to the statements of the participants, the final code "holistic self-compassion" best captured the students'

perceptions as shown in Figure 10 above. Select Filipino Bible college students described a self-compassionate person as encompassing the three aspects of “thinking” (cognitive), “feeling” (affective), and “behaving” (behavioral). Aside from these three aspects, two other factors emerged that have a connection to the development of self-compassion, and these are spirituality and family upbringing. Hence, “holistic self-compassion” entails the cognitive, affective, behavioral, spiritual, and personal historical aspects of a self-compassionate person as perceived by the students.

Neff (2003a) did not explicitly conceptualize self-compassion using these three categories and treating them separately although it is evident that the construct comprises these dimensions. In her more recent book, *Fierce Self-Compassion*, Neff (2021) described self-compassion as

Kindness is the emotional attitude that allows us to comfort and soothe ourselves. Common humanity provides the wisdom to understand that we’re not alone, and to see that imperfection is part of the shared human experience. And mindfulness allows us to be present with our suffering, so that we can validate our difficult feelings without immediately trying to fix or change them (Neff 2021, 97).

Thus, we can deduce from her definition that self-compassion affects the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The students’ perception and understanding of self-compassion therefore resonated with the conceptualization of Neff. On the other hand, “holistic self-compassion” as described in this study agreed more with the students’ context. “Holistic self-compassion” as defined by the students also involved the kind of Asian holistic understanding whereby a self-compassionate person cannot be compartmentalized in “thinking,” “feeling,” and “behaving.” More specifically, this reflected a Filipino thinking which grasps wholes rather than by parts (Miranda 1988, 16). This was evident in the students’ descriptions of self-compassion such that a self-

compassionate person is the sum total of one's thinking, feeling, and behaving dimensions. This is why people who are high in self-compassion are optimistic in thinking manifesting in a positive state of being and proactive behaving (Akin 2014, 107).

The "holistic" nature of the students' perceptions of self-compassion also implied two other factors that contributed to self-compassionate "thinking," "feeling," and "behaving." Students referred to these factors in their personal historical narratives and they felt that these shaped their experiences of compassion which in turn, influenced their perceptions as well. These two factors were family and Christian spirituality which students claimed helped in the development of self-compassion. Although studies about the influence of Filipino parents on the self-compassion of children have yet to be explored, current research available have shown that parental attitudes may influence self-compassion (Neff 2011, 28). Research findings have uncovered contrasting views as regards the kind of parental upbringing that contributes to self-compassion (Neff 2009; 2011; Neff and McGehee 2010; Hall 2015; Kelly and Dupasquier 2016; Eker and Kaya 2018). Nevertheless, family dynamics strengthen the idea that the family plays a role in the development of self-compassion.

P14 developed balanced and independent thinking because of her negative childhood experiences. She said,

*“. . . after elementary nagpunta na ako sa Maynila. Siguro dun. Feeling ko nag-iisa ako kaya kailangan kong resolbahin ko mag-isa, hindi ako dumadaing kahit may masakit, kahit nagkakasakit ako. Hindi ako nagsasabi. Siguro dun ko sya nakuha yung processing sa sarili ako. Hindi ako dependent sa parents. Feeling ko ako lang mag-isa, dapat alam ko gagawin ko dito. Ako na yung gumagawa ng paraan (. . . after elementary, I went to Manila. Maybe it was at that time. I felt I was on my own that's why I need to resolve it on my own, I do not complain even when I am sick. I do not tell other people. Maybe that's how I developed*

processing things by myself. I was not dependent on my parents. I felt I was on my own, so I should know what to do. I must find ways).

For P8, she claimed that caring for herself was an important value that her mother taught her. “*Sinabi ng nanay ko na alagaan ko ang sarili ko. 'Wag mo hayaan na mapabayaan mo ang sarili mo'* (My mother told me to take care of myself. ‘Don’t neglect yourself’).”

This supports findings of Neff and McGehee (2010) who asserted that maternal support led to greater self-compassion, while maternal criticism correlated with less self-compassion. Temel and Atalay (2020, 2207) reported that warm and caring mothers influenced high self-compassion levels among adolescents. Moreover, individuals who reported being frequently criticized by their parents were more likely to have low self-compassion which increased their social anxiety (Yar et al. 2014, 33). This indicates that maternal roles do play a role in boosting or reducing self-compassionate attitudes and practices. For P12, “My family upbringing; my parents raised me properly; my parents were not harsh toward me; they were not hard on me. My parents were understanding toward me. They were supportive of me. They supported my decision to serve God full time in ministry.” For P16, family upbringing helped in developing self-compassion. She said, “My parents were very supportive. They treated me well and cared for me.”

The impact of Christian spirituality on P14’s thinking had taught her to rely on God when having problems.

*“Minsan pag may problema, may solusyon ito. Hindi pwedeng walang solusyon. Parang ganon . . . lagi iniisip na may solusyon ito. If malaki problema at wala pa ako nakikita solusyon, para hindi mag give up, I rely on the Lord na may solusyon si Lord dito* (Sometimes when I have a problem, there’s a solution to this. It’s not possible that there isn’t a solution. It’s like that . . . I always think that there is a solution. If the problem is big and I don’t see any solution, so that I won’t give up, I rely on the Lord for the solution).”

For P6, seeing things or looking at life in a positive light was *natutunan* (learned) from church's teachings, God's word, and prayer. Aside from learning how to care for the self through a parental figure, P8 emphasized that the church's teachings amplified the importance of this self-compassionate practice.

*“Bukod pa po don malaking tulong din yung sa bible study din namin before. Dun ko natutunan na mas lalong alagaan ang sarili . . . tinuturo ng aming pastors kung paano alagaan ang temple..kasi temple of God pala yung katawan natin. Yun ang una kung natutunan (Aside from that, our Bible study was a big help to me before. That's how I learned to care for the self . . . our pastors teach us how we can take care of our bodies because our bodies are temples of God).”*

Brodar, Crosskey, and Thompson (2015, 234) reported that “low self-compassion may be associated with a lack of perceived social support from a faith community. In particular, low self-compassion might be related to chronically viewing God and other members of one's Christian community as critical or unsupportive.” Although there is no present study available measuring the church's influence on self-compassionate practices (Brodar, Crosskey, and Thompson 2015, 240), it seemed that a supportive church may have contributed to high level of self-compassion like the case of P8 (SCS = 3.79 High) who attributed the development of self-compassion to her church's influence. P8 claimed,

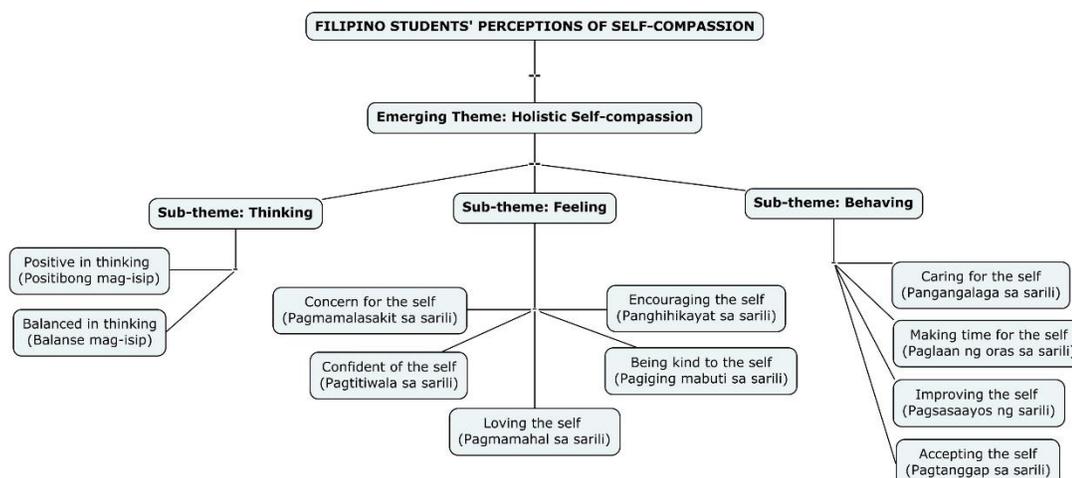
*“Isa sa natutunan ko sa salita ng Diyos is yung alagaan yung sarili, hindi lang palagi ang iba, dapat may time ang sarili natin . . . pano natin maaalagaan ang ibyang tao, yung sa ministry kung hindi inaalagaan ang sarili? Kailangan umpisahan mahal in ang sarili mo, alagaan ang sarili para ipakita sa iba (One of my learnings came from God's word about caring for the self, not always looking after others, there must be time for the self . . . how can we care for others, for the ministry if we don't care for ourselves? You need to start loving yourself, caring for yourself to show it to others).”*

P12 learned how to be kind to himself when he started discipling others, “They would easily catch how I treat myself; it's like setting an example to them.” Furthermore, he said, “setting a good example to disciples like managing time, caring for myself,

showing kindness to myself; showing that I accept myself are the things I want them to emulate and not the self-sacrifice, selfish motives.” P16 learned to care for herself in discipleship. This showed the importance of godly people in nurturing a self-compassionate attitude.

For P12, “I learned to love myself when I came to know Christ; I treated myself with kindness because I understood that pain and suffering are there to strengthen me . . . I learned to be self-compassionate in my spiritual journey.” He added that, “church teachings and the Bible school have given me a balanced perspective.”

The students’ perceptions in this study were derived from their experiences thereby making the code “holistic self-compassion” as a fitting theme for this sub-research question. Knowledge of compassion to oneself was gained by the students as they experienced what it meant to be kind, loving, and caring toward themselves. It also implies seeing parts as significant to the whole. The parts will only make sense when the relationships of these parts to the big picture is perceived. This is best explained in an earlier study by Abel and Hsu (1949) where European Americans and Chinese Americans were made to interpret Rorschach cards. The Chinese American participants gave “whole card responses” in which all aspects of the card were used in telling a whole narrative whereas European Americans focused only on a single object in the card in their responses. Likewise, the Filipino students in this study viewed self-compassion within the context of the whole person whose way of thinking influenced one’s feelings which informed how one behaved or conducted oneself in daily life. Figure 12 below illustrates the relationship among the emerging theme, sub-themes, and related concepts under this category.



**Figure 12 Emerging Theme of Holistic Self-compassion and Related Sub-themes**

### **Sub-theme: Thinking**

One dimension of “holistic self-compassion” is the sub-theme “thinking.” Based on the interviews and FGDs, there were 36 coded segments referring to the mental outlook of a person who has self-compassion. Hence, “thinking” embodies the mental outlook or mindset of a self-compassionate person. This mental outlook includes “positive in thinking” and “balanced in thinking.”

*Positive in thinking (Positibong mag-isip).* There were 23 coded segments from the interviews and FGDs about “thinking positively.” Thus, a self-compassionate person is a positive thinker or an optimist. P5 stated it this way, “*Pagiging positive thinker ay tingin ko na best example o ma-describe yung word na self-compassion (Being a positive thinker is the best example I can think of to describe the word self-compassion).*” He explained that “*Ang taong may self-compassion ay hindi madaling matangay ng problema nya. Parang yung attitude niya lagi sa problems ay positive po. Kakayanin nya, magiging okay ang lahat (A person with self-compassion is not easily swayed by*

problems. His/her attitude is always positive. He/she will overcome, and everything will be okay).”

P8 added, “*Ang isang taong may self-compassion ay optimistic. Positive mag-isip. Always does the best para sa sarili, doing good sa sarili and to others* (A person with self-compassion is optimistic. A positive thinker. The person always does the best for the self, doing good to oneself and to others).” Therefore, according to P8, when one thinks positively, one will be able to overcome the problematic situation and the outcome will be a positive one. “*Kung positibo tayo, mabilis natin ma-overcome ang problema natin kasi kapag sinasabi sa isip na positibo ang isang bagay, talagang mangyayari na magiging positibo din* (If we are optimistic, we will easily overcome any problem we have because when we have positive thoughts about something, positive things will surely come out of it).”

For P6, a positive thinker is,

“*Lagi siyang think positive, lagi siyang nag-iisip sa sarili niya ng positive thinking na kaya ko, kahit anong mangyari kaya ko. Kahit ano malalagpasan ko. Lagi po siyang think positive kapag meron siyang self-compassion. In any situation na darating sa kanya. Kasi laging kumbaga, laging nasa isip ko positive na lagi* (Always thinks positive, always thinks positively that one can do it, whatever happens, I can handle it. I will overcome anything. He/she always thinks positively if he/she has self-compassion. In any situation that comes to him/her. That’s because I always think positively).”

P14 summarized it by saying, “*Titignan niya sa brighter side* (He/She looks at the brighter side).” Lastly, based on the students’ responses, the self-compassionate person’s way of thinking will always reflect optimism by finding ways to surmount obstacles and challenges.

These descriptions by the students supported Neff and Dahm (2014, 11) who asserted that self-compassion is not based on positive judgments or evaluations since it is

a way of positively relating to oneself. People are compassionate toward themselves because they do not feel inferior to others. One does not have to feel better than others to feel good about oneself (Neff and Dahm 2014, 11-12). As such, self-compassionate people are less likely to ruminate (Neff 2003a).

***Balanced in thinking (Balanse mag-isip).*** This kind of thinking implies thinking carefully about the problem and weighing the matter before reacting and responding. The goal of a self-compassionate person is to strike a balance in one's thinking so that one does not react without processing and evaluating the matter. This was expressed by P2 who said, "*A person with self-compassion is tingin ko parang mas nag-iisip po sila kung paano sila gumawa bago yung mga desisyon nila* (A person with self-compassion in my view thinks first before making decisions)."

Furthermore, she also said, "*Kung may sasabihin...nag-iisip muna* (If they have something to say...they think first)." For P14, "*Hindi nagre-react, pino-process muna* (Does not react but processes it first)." The opposite of "balanced thinking" was described as "overthinking" by P14. To strive for balance in one's thinking, P9 said,

*"Sa mga problema at hamon ng buhay, para saakin mga pagsubok lang yon. Pagsubok lang na lahat tayo dumadaan. Yung laging inaano ko pag may problemang dadating lagi ko iniisip, lahat yon problema lang. Ma-overcome natin yon kapag nagtrust tayo kay Lord. Dati pag may problema parang katapusan na ng mundo* (Regarding problems and challenges in life, for me, these are trials only. Trials that all of us go through. That's how I always think when problems come, all of those are problems only. We will overcome them when we trust in God. Before when I have problems, I used to think it's the end of the world)."

P12 added, "*Yung isip niya ay it does happen for a reason kaya mas naiintindihan kung anong purpose* (His/her way of thinking is that it does happen for a reason that's why he/she understands the purpose)."

And because a self-compassionate person is balanced in his/her thinking, he/she is *kalmado* (calm), *hindi nagre-react agad* (does not react immediately), *nasa middle* (in the middle), and *nage-evaluate* (evaluates). The self-compassionate person engages in this kind of thinking *para tama ang pagtugon sa problem* (so that the response to the problem is correct), *iniisip ko siya ng malalim, paano ko siya iha-handle, paano ko siya haharapin* (I think about it deeply, how to handle it, how to face it), and “thinks wisely how to balance themselves to be more effective in ministry.”

Hence, by being calm, not reacting but thinking and evaluating things, painful thoughts and feelings are held in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them. In this manner, one extends compassion to oneself (Neff 2003a, 89).

#### **Sub-theme: Feeling**

“Holistic self-compassion” also entails the “feeling” dimension. The words “feel” (18 mentions) and the variations of the Tagalog word *ramdam* (12 mentions) were used by the participants to refer to the affective dimension of a self-compassionate person. “Feeling” depicts how a self-compassionate person feels toward the self. Thus, the self-compassionate person feels concern, love, kindness toward the self, knows how to motivate the self, and feels confident of the self.

*Being concerned or sympathetic toward the self (Pagmamalasakit, pagkahabag at pakikiramay sa sarili)*. This was mentioned 22 times by the participants. According to Neff and Germer (2017, 2), self-compassion is simply compassion directed inward. Just as when we can feel compassion for the suffering of others, we can extend compassion to the self when we are experiencing suffering, regardless of whether the suffering resulted from external circumstances or our own mistakes, failures, and personal inadequacies

(2017, 2). Thus, for some participants of this study, they defined self-compassion as *pagmamalasakit*, *pagkahabag*, and *pakikiramay sa sarili* which are Tagalog terms pertaining to being concerned for the self or being sympathetic toward the self. In the same manner, the University of the Philippines Diliman Psychosocial Services or UPD PsycServ (2022) described self-compassion as *pagmamalasakit sa sarili*. P8 defined self-compassion similarly. “*Sa Tagalog, ang salitang malapit parang malasakit para sa sarili. In terms of compassion yun ang pinakamalapit na malasakit sa sarili* (In Tagalog, the nearest word seems to be showing concern for the self. In terms of compassion, that is the nearest word, concern for the self).”

The term *pagmamalasakit* is rooted in *sakit* which refers to illness or pain. This illness or pain may be experienced due to a diseased body part or organ which requires medicinal treatments to relieve the pain (Javier 2010, 53). Pain may also be experienced as suffering as when one is enduring or *nagtitiis* and holding back or *nagtitimpi* (Javier 2010). The same idea was expressed by P1. “*Kapag exhausted na po ako, mare-realize ko po na kailangan ko ng mahabag sa sarili ko. Kailangan ko ng maawa sa sarili ko kasi medyo napapagod nako* (When I am exhausted, that’s when I realize that I need to be compassionate to myself. I need to be merciful toward myself because I am getting exhausted).” For P14, “*Sa Tagalog, ang self-compassion ay kahabagan. Hindi pwedeng awa* (In Tagalog, self-compassion is sympathy. It cannot be pity).” This also resonated with other participants who mentioned about being exhausted or *napapagod* as conditions for sympathizing with the self or being *mahabagin*. It should be noted that self-compassion is different from self-pity (Goldstein & Kornfield, 1987).

When people are immersed in their own suffering and pity themselves, they tend to become more disconnected to others and are unable to identify with the universal aspect of suffering which contradicts the common humanity component of self-compassion (Neff 2003b). Charmaz (2006) cited memos as a helpful tool for researchers in recording, detailing, and analyzing data. In a memo where I explored the connection of feeling burdened by the hardships during the pandemic and sympathizing with oneself, I wrote,

Merriam-Webster translates *habag* to compassion, mercy, pity, sympathy. The Tagalog term *kahabagan* means to have compassion, to have mercy, and to have pity. Another Tagalog equivalent of *kahabagan* is *makiramay* or *kaawaan*. Sympathy is extended to someone when going through some sort of suffering or pain. The Tagalog term *pakikiramay* means condoling with the one who is suffering. It is feeling one's pain and suffering. It is identifying with the person who suffers. It also means offering comfort or trying to ease the pain of the one suffering. The students expressed a growing tiredness as the days of the pandemic continued. They had mentioned about having to migrate studies and ministries online due to restrictions in physical meetings because of Covid-19. One participant expressed that his difficulty with his online studies was equipment (no laptop) and connectivity (internet) which were adding to his stress and exhaustion. Another student, P1, said that she had been thinking about not continuing with her studies. Another participant verbalized that because she studied online and worked from home, her bed had become a classroom on some days and an office on other days. This same bed was also where she rested and slept. "*Parang yung room ko hindi na niya alam kung church ba siya kasi dun ako nago-online ministry. Di na nya alam kung school ba siya kasi dun ako nagka-klase...yun pa...may isa pa siyang role, kasi nga bahay sya...kwarto ko nga siya* (Like my room that it does not know if it is a church because that is where I do ministry online. It does not know if it is a school because I also use it for my online classes...and one more...it has another role, because it's part of the house...it's my room)." Is the use of the room a metaphor for the disorientation and exhaustion that characterizes the current state of P1's mind at that time?

Researcher, September 20, 2022

Because one is exhausted, self-compassion is viewed as sympathizing with the self by commiserating with one's suffering due to hardships and difficulties. P5 said,

“*Kumbaga yung self-compassion, more about sympathy sa sarili kaya pakikiramay sa sarili* (In other words, self-compassion is more about sympathy for oneself).”

One shows *pagdamay sa sarili* or is condoling and being sympathetic to oneself by giving the self the opportunity or time to understand what one is going through. P14 clarified this by saying,

“...*parang bibigyan niya ang sarili niya ng time to cope sa pinagdadaanan niya na hindi naman mauuwi sa awa sa sarili but yung process of healing na maibibigay sa sarili niya para maka-cope up sa sitwasyon* (...like giving oneself the time to cope with what one is going through not ending in self-pity but as a process of healing that one gives to the self to cope with the situation).”

P14 compared sympathizing or condoling with oneself to the process of healing. This healing component of self-compassion was given emphasis by Neff and Germer (2017) that self-compassion involves being touched by one’s own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, but having the desire to alleviate one’s suffering and to heal oneself with kindness.

The sympathy for oneself or *pagmamalasakit, pagkahabag, and pakikiramay sa sarili* is the self-kindness dimension of self-compassion which is the tendency to be supportive and sympathetic toward the self when noticing personal shortcomings and is contrary to harsh self-judgment. In other words, having self-compassion means tolerating and understanding our mistakes and failures and recognizing that no one is perfect (Neff and Germer 2017, 3).

In these conceptualizations, self-compassion is related to suffering, hardships, and challenges such that when one is undergoing suffering or going through hardships, one condoles with the self through “*pagdamay sa sarili* (sympathizing with the self).” For Jocano (1989, 1997), *pakikiramay* is a way to express sympathy, to share in someone's

sorrows, and to show pity. Hence the behavior of *pagdamay* or *pakikiramay* in times of crisis is by going out of one's way to show concern. For Selmer and De Leon (2001, 131), *pakikiramay* encompasses the social conduct to condole, to express sympathy, to share someone's sorrows, and to show pity. As such, Filipinos are deemed to be compassionate people who are easily moved by other people's difficulties. As *pakikiramay* is the behavioral standard in times of crisis, one must go out of one's way to show concern, or otherwise risk being ostracized by significant others (Jocano, 1989, 1997). In addition, Maboloc (2021, 176) stated that *pakikiramay* entails compassion and sympathy to someone who is in a dire situation. Lim, Ranola, and Madrid (2022) discovered that *utang na loob* is an act of gratitude shown by reciprocating a deed. Although the researchers did not directly associate *utang na loob* to *pakikiramay*, their findings suggested that *utang na loob* may motivate an individual to express gratefulness through action (Lim, Ranola, and Madrid 2022, 5). In this current study, *pakikiramay sa sarili* is a way of showing sympathy by condoling with oneself because of one's suffering and may not be considered a reciprocal action because the object of *pagdamay* is the *sarili* or the self.

***Being confident of oneself (Pagitiwala o kumpiyansa sa sarili).*** Self-confidence is *tiwala sa sarili* and was mentioned 10 times by the participants in describing how a self-compassionate person feels about the self. Self-confidence, being an emotional component of one's personality, indicates a belief in one's own abilities to perform. Self-confidence is a person's belief in one's strengths and abilities and having the courage to use one's skills and values in accomplishing goals (White 2009). Bandura (1977, 193) claimed that "the strength of people's convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to

affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations.” Furthermore, he explained that people tend to avoid intimidating or threatening situations when they feel less confident in their ability to cope (Bandura 1977). Conversely, they involve themselves in activities when they feel more confident or have a strong belief in the ability to handle the situation (Bandura 1977, 194).

Eraydin and Karagozolu (2017, 48) noted a positive correlation between self-compassion and self-confidence among nursing students in Turkey and posited that high levels of self-compassion would mean high levels of self-confidence and vice versa. This supports participants’ understanding of self-compassion as having confidence in oneself. When participants were asked to describe how they perceived self-compassion in Tagalog, they referred to the quality of self-confidence or *tiwala* or *kumpiyansa sa sarili*. P4 claimed, “*Ang Tagalog na salita for self-compassion ay kumpiyansa sa sarili o confidence sa sarili* (The Tagalog word for self-compassion is confidence in the self).” In other words, a self-compassionate person knows his capabilities and is therefore, confident of him or herself. Having confidence in the self translates to being able to overcome anything as expressed by P6 who said,

*“Siguro pagkakaroon ng confidence...parang ganon. Tiwala sa sarili. Kung meron tayong tiwala sa sarili na kaya nating gawin lahat at kaya natin lagpasan, talagang malalampasan natin* (Probably having confidence...it’s like that. Confidence in oneself. If we have confidence in ourselves that we can do anything and that we can overcome anything, we will really overcome it).”

This is achieved by believing in one’s ability to handle a situation as P6 further emphasized,

*“Kung meron kang tiwala sa sarili mo, talagang inaangat mo yung sarili mo sa mga situation, na talagang kakayanin mo eh kasi sa sarili mo palang may tiwala ka na, na kaya mo matapos. Kayang lampasan ang problema, kahit malaki dahil sa tiwala sa sarili* (If you have confidence in yourself, you lift yourself in

situations, and then you will be able to overcome them because you are confident of yourself that you can achieve them. You will overcome the problem even if it's big because you are confident of yourself.”

On the contrary, when one lacks self-confidence, one tends to have a negative view of things as explained by P5. *“Pag wala kang tiwala sa sarili, laging negative tingin sa lahat, sa problems. Pinahihirapan mo lang sarili, mas lalu dinadagdagan ang problem (If you lack confidence in yourself, you always have a negative view of things, like problems. You only make it harder for yourself, you add more to the problem).”*

***Loving oneself (Pagmamahal sa sarili).*** Loving oneself or *pagmamahal sa sarili* emerged from the data nine times and participants referred to the self as the recipient of this love. According to Neff (2021, 98), “the element of kindness at the core of self-compassion takes on a loving quality when our need is to be with ourselves as we are.” It is not a surprise that participants also captured this dimension of self-compassion such as P13 who said, *“Pagmamahal sa sarili ang tingin ko na malapit sa Tagalog (I think loving oneself is nearest in [definition] Tagalog).”* Likewise, P10 suggested, *“Sa Tagalog, pagmamahal sa sarili...wala ako other words for self-compassion (In Tagalog, loving oneself...I can't think of other words for self-compassion).”*

And for P8, self-compassion begins by loving oneself, *“Kailangan umpisahan mahal in ang sarili mo (You need to begin with loving oneself).”* P8 exclaimed, *“Ay, temple of God pala ako! So dapat ayusin ko sarili ko, alagaan ko, mahal in ko yung sarili ko...mas lalu ko inaalagaan ang sarili ko dahil sa salita ng Diyos. Mas minamahal ko ang sarili ko (Oh, I am God's temple! Therefore, I need to take care of myself, love myself...I take care of myself even more because of God's word. I love myself more).”*

Aside from P8, P14 said, “...*dahil mahal mo ang sarili mo, hindi ko hahayaan ang sarili ko na malunod ng awa sa sarili* (...because you love yourself, you will not allow yourself to drown in pity).” While P11 emphasized that, “self-compassion is loving the self and caring for the self.”

“My understanding of the Tagalog *amor proprio* is self-love or self-pride within Filipino culture and signifies one's authority, place, and meaning in the community” (Bardwell-Jones 2021). As such, Bardwell-Jones alluded to *amor proprio* as synonymous to self-love. Frank Lynch who is well-known for his studies on Philippine values defined *amor proprio* as self-esteem that is manifested in sensitivity to personal affront or attack (Lynch 1962, 98). For Mercado it is also self-esteem and sensitivity to discourtesy (Mercado 1974, 97). However, Jocano (1997) provided a more elaborate definition wherein he said that,

*Amor proprio* is self-love or self-esteem. As a norm, it enjoins us to be sensitive to anything—a statement or an action—that threatens our self-respect or demeans our personal dignity. As one respondent has said: ‘We have to protect our sense of dignity as a person. Our self-pride must be preserved. We must not allow our self-worth to be undermined. We have to have our self-respect intact. That is the only thing worth fighting for’. Seen in this context, it is understandable why we Filipinos easily get emotionally upset when an act done or statement uttered tends to insult or demean our sense of self-esteem, even if the other person did not mean to or is simply being argumentative. The emotional pain resulting from this perceived or real insult is what activates, so to speak, our *amor proprio* into aggressive responses that often end in trouble (Jocano 1997, p. 78).

Based on these definitions, the *amor proprio* which is self-esteem or self-love is activated within the Filipino to preserve one’s honor and dignity. Hence, any personal affront is not tolerated because Filipinos want to defend their honor and dignity. This is why for Jocano (1997), when *amor proprio* is triggered, this may result in aggressive responses. In this current study, the *pagmamahal sa sarili* may not equate to *amor proprio*

when defined as self-esteem. Neff (2003a) made the distinction between self-compassion and self-esteem which refers to positive evaluations we have of ourselves when we make comparisons with other people. In contrast, self-compassion is not based on positive judgments or evaluations because it is a way of relating to ourselves (Neff 2003a, 85).

***Being kind toward the self (Pagiging mabuti sa sarili).*** The participants also pointed to kindness or *mabuting pagtrato sa sarili* as a quality of a self-compassionate person. This idea was shared by P8 and P2 who said that self-compassion is treating oneself with kindness. The self-kindness dimension of self-compassion implies extending kindness and understanding to the self instead of harsh judgment and self-criticism (Neff 2003, 89). Therefore, P12 defined self-compassion as, “*More on giving kindness sa sarili. Parang maging mabuti ka din sa pagtreat sa sarili mo. Whatever happens, kung ano man ang nangyayari, its ok. Hindi mo kailangan maging hard sa sarili* (More on giving kindness to the self. It’s like being kind in treating yourself. Whatever happens, it’s ok. You do not need to be hard on yourself).”

***Motivating the self (Panghihikayat sa sarili).*** Motivating another person may come easily for us. But this becomes difficult when it is the self who needs to be motivated. According to Neff and Tirch (2013, 86), “We’re deeply attached to our self-criticism, and at some level we probably think the pain is helpful.” We are accustomed to criticism and think that it is a good motivator to drive ourselves to succeed. However, this often backfires and leads to feelings of shame which also leads to inaction. Hence, Neff and Tirch (2013, 87) suggested that “If we truly want to be kind to ourselves and don’t want to suffer, we will do things to help us reach our full potential, such as taking on challenging new projects or learning new skills.” For the students in this study,

motivating the self or *ine-encourage ang sarili* which was cited nine times is another quality of a self-compassionate person. Thus, a self-compassionate person knows how to encourage oneself even in difficult situations.

Research has shown that self-compassionate people are less afraid of failure (Neff, Hsieh, and Dejjitterat, 2005) because they know self-criticism will not serve as an encouragement when they fail. In other words, self-compassionate people are more likely to pursue goals and re-engage in life (Neely et al. 2009). Thus, for P12, “*Yung self-compassionate persons... mino-motivate nila sarili nila kapag may failure* (Self-compassionate people...they are motivating themselves whenever there is a failure).” For P8 this means, “*mino-motivate ang sarili para ma-overcome ang pinagdadaanan niya* (motivating oneself to overcome whatever you are going through).”

Self-compassion gives us a safe space to acknowledge our weaknesses putting one in a better position to change oneself for the better (Neff and Dahm 2014, 13). When coping with a perceived academic failure, it was found that self-compassion was connected with the tendency to cope with one’s negative feelings by using the adaptive emotion-focused strategies of positive reinterpretation or growth and acceptance. Given that a failure situation cannot be reversed once it has taken place, it only makes sense to accept the situation with calmness, as much as possible, and then to see how one might learn and grow from the experience (Neff, Hsieh, and Dejjitterat 2005, 282). For P12 painful circumstances are opportunities to motivate or encourage oneself. He said that taking a step back to assess and think helps.

*“Nakakatulong kapag may pinagdadaanan na painful, aatras para makapag-isip. At the same time, namo-motivate to move forward. Ang term ko lagi doon it brings out the best in me. Yon ang lagi ko iniisip* (When one is going through something painful, it helps when you step back to think. At the same time, you

feel motivated to move forward. I call that bringing out the best in me. That's what I always think)."

It is also the element of common humanity which enables one to see suffering as a universal experience and therefore P12 said,

*"When I realize that other people go through similar painful experiences, I feel...it's a tie! Nare-realize ko na mas nagiging motivated ako. I feel motivated kasi hindi lang pala ako mag-isang dumadaan dito (When I realize that other people go through similar painful experiences, I feel...it's a tie! I realize that I get more motivated. I feel motivated because I am not the only one going through this)."*

In summary, a self-compassionate person is one who feels "concern", "love", and "kindness" for oneself and knows how to "motivate" oneself in the face of unpleasant life experiences and feels "confident of oneself." These qualities describe how a self-compassionate person feels about him/herself as perceived by the participants of this study.

### **Sub-theme: Behaving**

Lastly, "holistic self-compassion" entails the "behaving" aspect or one's way of living. Participants described a self-compassionate person in terms of how the person behaves or conducts him/herself. As such, the sub-theme "behaving" captured the essence of the behavior of a self-compassionate person. Therefore, a person with self-compassion shows in the way he/she cares, takes time, improves, and accepts the self.

*Caring for the self (Pangangalaga sa sarili).* Neff (2003a) conceptualized self-compassion as being kind to the self. But being kind to the self involves more than just putting an end to a critical attitude. This kindness also entails treating oneself with care and concern (Terry and Leary 2011, 352). The same idea was expressed by P2 who said,

*“Para sa akin...self-compassion parang care mo sa sarili mo (For me...self-compassion is like caring for yourself).”*

If people care about themselves and do not want to suffer, they will not harm themselves by indulging in activities that will damage them. Instead, they will do what they can to be healthy. Research has shown that self-compassion is associated with health-promoting behaviors such as reduced smoking, healthy diet, and exercise, seeking medical care, increased physical activity, safe sex, and less bedtime procrastination (Sirois et al. 2019; Wong et al. 2021). P11 claimed that *“I gave myself packets of kindness...bumaba at bumili ng coffee dun... maliit lang basta meron akong space keshodang P80.00 yan (I gave myself packets of kindness...I went down and bought coffee there...a small one and I didn’t care if it’s P80.00 for as long as I have [my own] space).”*

Caring for the self was also concretized by the participants by attending to the various needs of the self. For P18 this meant *“preparing myself mentally, physically, and spiritually.”* And because caring is important, one does not neglect the self like P12, *“Hindi mo dapat pabayaang ang sarili mo dahil meron kang mission, meron kang purpose, meron kang gagawin (You should not neglect yourself because you have a mission, you have a purpose, you have something to do).”*

Self-care strategies were also identified by the participants and were considered important. P3 said,

*“Tingin ko ang self-compassion ay pag-aalaga sa sarili... physical hygiene, tamang pagkain and sa tipong mga problems, binibigyan ng time ang sarili, ayusin ang pag-iisip para tama yung pagtugon sa problem. Sa spiritual, pagpalalim ng pananampalataya (I think self-compassion is caring for the self... physical hygiene, eating the right food and in terms of problems, it’s giving time*

for the self, sorting out one's thinking so that the response to problems is appropriate. In terms of spiritual aspect, it's about deepening the faith)."

***Making time for the self (Paglaan ng oras para sa sarili o inuuna ang sarili).***

Patsiopoulos and Buchanan (2011, 304) explored self-compassionate responses of counselors in the context of their work and making time for oneself was a common practice among them. Making time for themselves as a way of showing self-compassion and extending that compassion and ethical care to their clients was considered important. They described it as helpful in performing a task or in decision-making (Patsiopoulos and Buchanan 2011, 304). This was also verbalized by P5 who said, "*Dapat may time ang sarili natin...paano natin maaalagaan ang ibang tao, yung sa ministry kung hindi inaalagaan ang sarili* (We should have time for ourselves...how will we care for other people in the ministry if we do not care for ourselves)."

Making time for the self was also acknowledged by P17 who said, "*I give myself time kasi importante ang sarili* (I give myself time because the self is important)."

Making time for the self also enabled participants to think and reflect on themselves like P3,

*"Bago mag end of the day, tumatambay ako sa kapehan dito samin. Ginagamit ko yung time na yun para magreflect...kung ano ako ngayon, kung kaya ko pa bang pagsabay-sabayin. Sinasadya ko bigyan ng oras sarili ko. Aware ako kung kailangan ko bigyan ng oras ang sarili ko* (Before the end of the day, I hang out at the nearby coffee shop. I use that time to reflect... who I am today, if I can still manage to do things simultaneously. I intentionally make time for myself. I am aware when I need to make time for myself)."

Self-care plans may include activities that promote general well-being and P3 spoke about making time for himself because his overall health was affected as well as his productivity at work.

*“Pinili ko bigyan ng consistent time ang sarili kasi apektado na yung health ko. Apektado din yung ginagawa ko sa mga tasks na meron ako. Para mas maging productive, ang naisip ko alagaan sarili ko, reflection time sakin...para tama ang pagtugon ko sa bawat situation (I chose to give consistent time for myself because my health was already affected. Even the tasks given to me had been affected too. To be more productive, I thought of taking care of myself, having time for reflection so that my response in every situation will be appropriate).”*

P3 added that,

*“Binago ko po yung diet ko. Ang problems kasi laging nandyan eh. Sa pag-cope up sa ganung situation, lalu akong naging diligent, consistent sa pagbibigay ng time sa sarili, pag-aalaga sa sarili ko (I changed my diet. Problems will always be there. To cope with the situation, I became more diligent, consistent in making time for myself, in caring for myself).”*

P8 claimed that making time for oneself meant taking care of herself, *“Umpisa pa lang, binigyan ko na ng time ang sarili ko. Kahit na nung dalaga pa ako, at nung may asawa na ako. Parang may time ako sa sarili ko na dapat alagaan ko sarili ko (Ever since, I made time for myself. Even when I was still single and then when I got married. I must have time to take care of myself).”* P8 saw to it that she practiced self-care because ministry could be very demanding.

*“Binabalanse ko...mahirap talaga...lalu na sa church namin parang doble-doble ang trabaho mo sa ministry. Pag sa ministry focus lang ako sa ministry. Pero pag nakarating na sa bahay, doon naman yung time ko sa sarili ko...meron lang time na dapat i-pamper ko sarili ko (I strike a balance...it’s hard...even more so in our church where the ministry load is heavy. When in ministry, I focus on it. But when I get home, that’s where I make time for myself...I must make time to pamper myself).”*

Patsiopoulos and Buchanan (2011, 305) claimed that counselors who make time for self-care strike a healthy balance by implementing these strategies in their daily regimen which is what can be gleaned from P8’s responses.

One way by which P13 sets aside time for himself is,

*“Binibigyan ko ng panahon ang sarili ko... mag set ako ng 2 days for myself. Wala akong ibang iisipin kungdi sarili ko. Para magkaroon ako ng time*

*management, balak ko mag spend time with my family at mga friends, manood ng sine, bonding with them, maglalaro ng sports (I give myself time... I set 2 days for myself. I don't think of anything else but myself. To manage my time, I plan to spend some time with my family and friends, watch movies, bonding with them, playing sports)."*

***Improving oneself (Pagsasaayos ng sarili).*** Research has shown that self-compassion increases self-improvement motivation because it encourages people to confront their mistakes and weaknesses without harsh self-criticism or defensive self-enhancement (Breines and Chen 2012, 1). In four studies among 350 adults, Breines and Chen (2012) looked at how self-compassion motivates people to improve personal weaknesses and make amends for moral transgressions. The study findings showed that self-compassion provides a safe and non-judgmental context in confronting negative aspects of oneself and in striving to improve personal weaknesses (Breines and Chen 2012, 8). This resonated with P4 who compared self-compassion to a teacher evaluation. She said, "*Parang i-evaluate ang sarili na parang teacher. Hanapin mo ang areas for improvement (It's like evaluating the self like a teacher. You look for areas for improvement).*" In addition, she said, "*About sa self parang pag-improve sa sarili. Parang about sa weakness and strengths kung paano mo kakilala ang sarili (It's about the self, like improving oneself. It's about weaknesses and strengths, how well you know yourself).*"

This was similarly expressed by P11 who said that,

*"When I treat myself with kindness during difficult times, I see myself growing in that area, acknowledging, pat on my back. More of courage and accomplishment na kapantay yan ng accomplishment ng skill (When I treat myself with kindness during difficult times, I see myself growing in that area, acknowledging, pat on the back. More of courage and accomplishment that is like a skill accomplishment)."*

Hence, being self-compassionate toward oneself is akin to being able to accomplish

something in terms of achieving growth in the self. This is why P3 expressed that, “*Tingin ko ang self-compassion ay pag-alaga sa sarili, pag-improve sa sarili, sa mga circumstances or reality* (In my view, self-compassion is taking care of the self, improving oneself, in one’s circumstances or reality).”

P12 confidently said,

“*When I am disappointed, lagi akong nag mo-move on. Ang disappointment arise kapag hindi na-meet ang expectations, I give chances to myself, na sa susunod, kaya ko na siyang gawin. I give room for improvement* (When I am disappointed, I always move on. Disappointments arise when our expectations are not met. I give chances to myself, next time I will be able to do it. I give room for improvement).”

Other methods may undermine personal growth, but self-compassion is a more effective method of motivating change (Breines and Chen 2012, 8). As such, in treating oneself with kindness when confronting areas of weaknesses, one may be more inclined to seek self-improvement rather than be overcome by harsh self-criticism.

***Accepting oneself (Pagtanggap sa sarili).*** Unconditional self-acceptance involves an acknowledgement that one is a unique, complex, human being who is constantly changing and is imperfect (Dryden 2013, 109). Therefore, Dryden suggested that self-acceptance and self-compassion have similarities in the sense that both do not have the component of self-judgment. As such, this paves the way for an acknowledgment of one’s limitations or fallibility and treating oneself with kindness, compassion, and acceptance (Dryden 2013, 110-111).

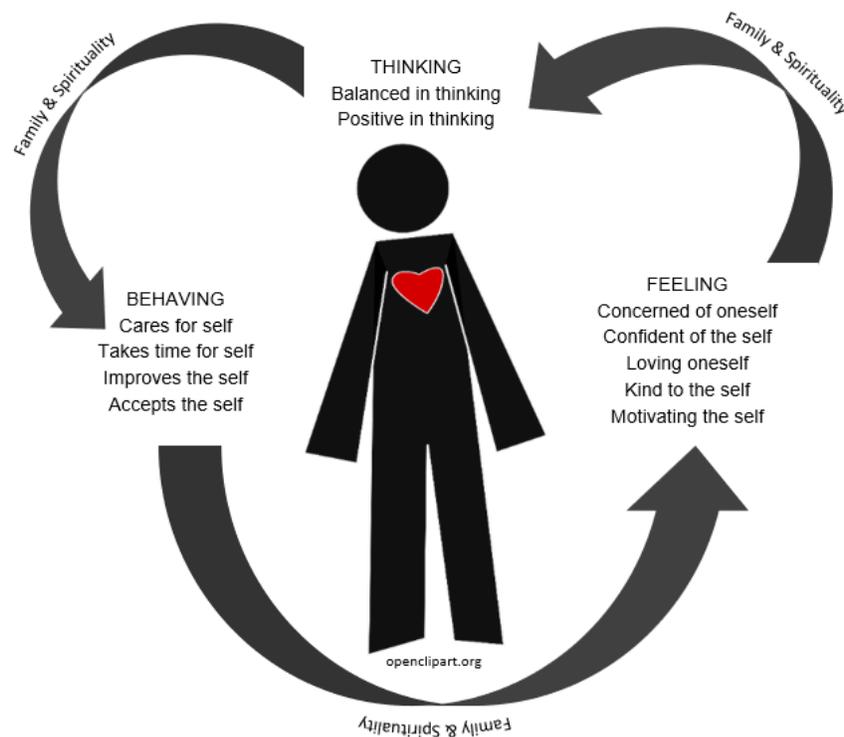
The psalmist wrote, “For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful I know that full well (Psalm 139:13-15, NIV). From Psalm 104:24, we know that the psalmist was grateful for the wisdom and care the Creator took in

creating, “How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures” (Psalm 104:24, NIV). These verses tell us that we are God’s workmanship reflecting his excellence and glory. The Apostle Paul wrote, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). This points out that we are to be transformed to be conformed in our character to our Maker. “Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness is the process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it takes on the character of the inner being of Jesus himself” (Willard 2012, 159). Yet with all our flaws, misgivings, and rebellion, the Lord treats us with compassion. “Holiness is the gift and demand of God. But when we fail to meet the demand, as we will again and again, we are cast back upon the mercy and compassion of God which is in Jesus Christ. God remains faithful even when we are not” (Purves 1989, 112).

Breines and Chen’s (2012, 8) findings showed that self-compassion helped students respond to failure in a way that facilitated growth and improvement without leading to a debilitating negative effect leading to an honest acceptance of one’s weaknesses. P12 expressed the desire to model a healthy self-acceptance. This self-accepting attitude does not condemn but rejoices in one’s mistakes and misgivings. He also expressed that,

*“Pinakikita ko na pagtrato sa sarili ko sa pagtanggap sa sarili ko, yun yung nais kong matutunan nila. They have their own strengths and weaknesses and yung weaknesses na yun ang dapat ginagamit na mas lala pang mag-grow at gumaling sa ginagawa (I show them how I treat myself in accepting myself, that’s what I want them to learn. They have their own strengths and weaknesses, and those weaknesses should be used to grow and excel in what they are doing).”*

In summary, the second query of this study sought to identify students' perceptions and understanding of self-compassion. For the students of this study, the self-compassionate Filipino embodied holism in thinking, feeling, and behaving influenced in part by family and spirituality. This resonated with Mercado (1972, 601) who described the Filipino who looks at himself as a self, as one who feels, as one who wills, as one who thinks, as one who acts: as a total whole - as a 'person,' conscious of his freedom, proud of his human dignity, and sensitive to the violation of these two (Mercado 1972, 601). Figure 13 below shows the students' portrayal of a self-compassionate person as perceived by them. This illustration shows a self-compassionate person who is non-compartmentalized in thinking, feeling, and behaving. The self-compassionate person thinks and feels consistently and is reflected in behavior that is in sync with one's thoughts and emotions. This compassion for the self is influenced in part by family as attested to by the participants who mentioned parental figures who were instrumental in the development of self-compassion and in part by their spirituality because their compassionate views toward the self was influenced by their Christian beliefs and understanding.

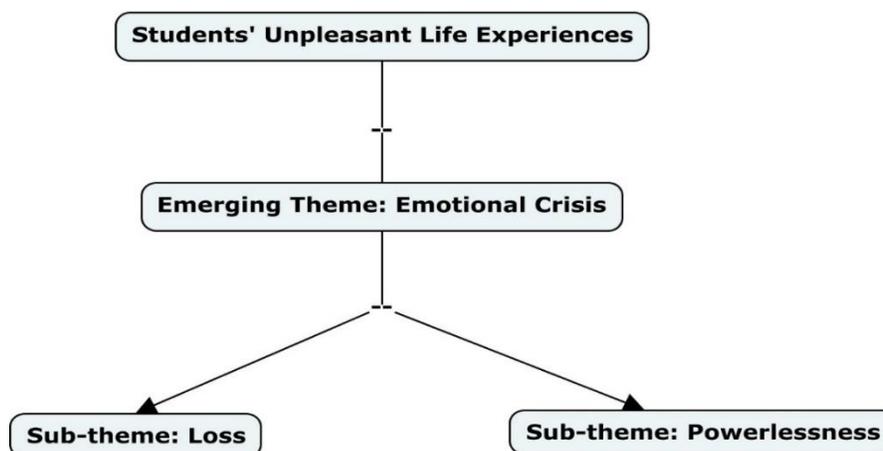


**Figure 13 Holistic Self-compassionate Person as Perceived by Students**

### **Category Two: Filipino Students' Unpleasant Life Experiences**

The third sub-research question of this study aims to bring to the surface the unpleasant life experiences that participants underwent during the pandemic. An analysis of the unpleasant life experiences of the students' responses revealed that they were impacted by Covid-19 which created problems and intensified the impact as well. Covid-19 was unprecedented, and the findings of this study have brought to the surface the emotional turmoil the students have had to face while dealing with the pandemic. Regardless of their age, gender, status, and educational attainment, it was clear that the students were affected by the pandemic and that they suffered equally. The students mentioned the effect of the pandemic on their families, work, ministries, and studies.

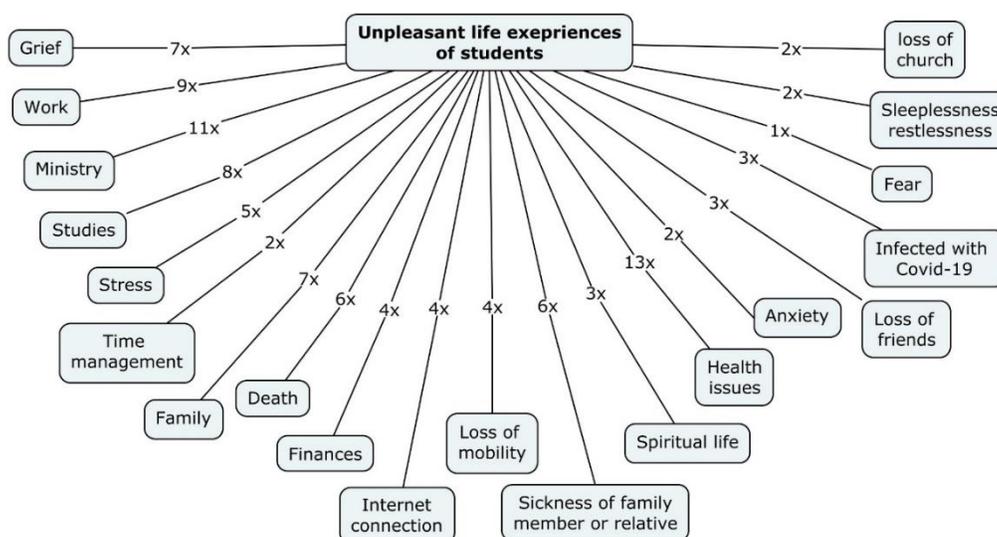
Evident in the stories shared by the students was the deep “emotional crisis” they underwent when Covid-19 struck in 2020 until the time of the interviews in 2022. Their experiences stemmed from “loss” and “powerlessness” over this crisis. Hence, Figure 14 below is the visualization of the impact of the “emotional crisis” on the students.



**Figure 14 Emotional Crisis as Emerging Theme and its Sub-themes**

#### **Emerging Theme: Emotional Crisis**

When participants were asked about the unpleasant life experiences they underwent during the pandemic, they mentioned several problems and challenges. The pandemic or Covid-19 was a significant experience for the students, and it set off a host of other problems and dilemmas for them and intensified their struggles bolstering varied emotional coping responses. The initial coding of interviews and FGDs resulted in 125 coded segments. These 125 segments were categorized into 20 codes as illustrated below (Figure 15).



**Figure 15 Coded Segments of Unpleasant Life Experiences**

In July 2022, the same problems were shared during a virtual prayer meeting in which I was a participant-observer. The physical prayer gatherings by regions were consolidated into a nationwide prayer time through Zoom due to restrictions on physical meetings. Since pastors and church workers had not totally resumed physical meetings and ministries, their problems and concerns also revolved around the pandemic. I observed that most of the pastors' concerns revolved around the ministry. Family concerns were secondary followed by personal concerns of pastors. Frequencies in Tables 16, 17 and 18 below summarize what these individual concerns are.

**Table 16 Ministry-related concerns of pastors**

Ministry related concerns	Number of mentions	%age
Co-ministers, volunteers, and members	34	47%
Organizational matters (building, systems, etc.)	14	19%
Programs and activities	10	14%
Spiritual growth of workers and members	8	11%
Finances and provisions	6	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 17 Family concerns of pastors**

<b>Family concerns</b>	<b>Number of mentions</b>	<b>%age</b>
Health and healing	12	71%
Employment	2	12%
Spiritual growth and maturity	2	12%
Finances and provisions	1	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 18 Personal concerns of pastors**

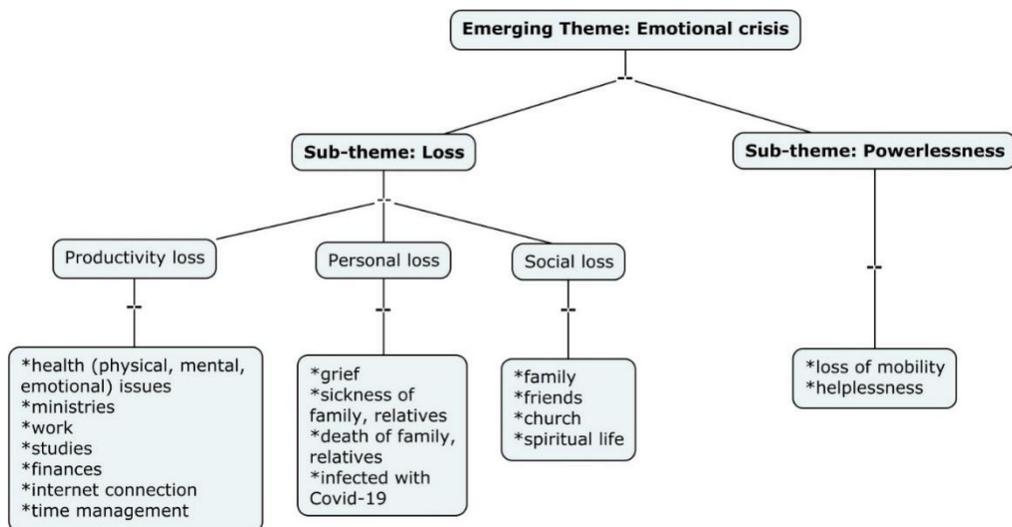
<b>Personal concerns</b>	<b>Number of mentions</b>	<b>%age</b>
Wisdom, diligence, comfort, spiritual growth	7	64%
Finances and provisions	2	18%
Health and healing	2	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

Restrictions have been slowly eased by the government in 2021, but the effects of the pandemic were still being felt by the students. The participants also described their unpleasant experiences as *madami* (several), *sabay-sabay* (simultaneous), *sobrang bigat* (too heavy), *complicated and overwhelming*, *halu-halo* (mixed), *pinakamabigat* (heaviest), *mahirap* (hard or difficult), and *parang katapusan na ng mundo* (like the end of the world).

In describing the impact of the pandemic, they used words such as *sobrang epekto* (too much effect or impact), *wala na akong makapitan* (I cannot hold onto anything anymore), *dumating sa point ng extreme anxiety dahil sa Covid* (reached a point of extreme anxiety due to Covid), *struggle on my part*, *times of gipit* (financial pressure), *natigil lahat, nahirapan lahat, nahinto lahat* (everything got stuck, everyone had a hard time, everything stopped), *naapektuhan kasi sobrang hirap* (was deeply affected because it was extremely hard), *apektado kami* (we were affected), *sobrang hirap* (extremely

hard), *struggle...hirap na hirap* (struggle...very hard), bad situation, and *maraming nalagas, maraming nakuha, maraming nangyari* (many left, many died, many things happened).

The range of emotions showed the helplessness of the students regardless of their demographic background which gave the semblance that something felt disordered in their lives because they were unable to think straight. Their stories were emotionally charged. During a field observation at one of the research locales, in college 3, a student used the term “crisis time” when he referred to the pandemic. Hence, it became obvious that students in this study were experiencing an “emotional crisis” which captured the essence of the unpleasant experiences brought about by the pandemic. In the second cycle of coding, the 20 initial codes were narrowed down to 4 codes namely “productivity loss,” “personal loss,” “social loss,” and “loss of control over circumstances.” These findings resonate with the study of Guinto and Inaldo (2021) among college students from Pangasinan State University which I have referenced in the succeeding discussion on “loss.” However, further analysis of these concepts revealed that they could be subsumed under “loss” and “powerlessness” which were the final sub-themes to the emerging theme of “emotional crisis” as illustrated in Figure 16 below.



**Figure 16 Emerging Theme of Emotional Crisis and Sub-themes**

The emotional toll on the students had reached a point where they were unable to function and adapt well. The pandemic disrupted many aspects of the students' lives, and these "losses" were happening at different levels which rendered them "powerless" over these unpleasant life experiences.

#### **Sub-theme: Loss**

The concept of "loss" is the fact or process of losing something or someone (OED n.d.). Loss may be due to several reasons. In general, loss occurs when someone or something of value is no longer accessible. Typically, loss is associated with death, but it can also be due to any type of separation resulting from an end of a relationship, retirement from service, unemployment, illness, and migration among others (Sabar 2000). Hence, loss basically means "any separation from a person, place, thing, or activity to which we have become attached and with which we find an important part of our identity and sense of self" (Sabar 2000, 152). In this study, "loss" or *nawala*, *nai-stop*, *namatay*, or *kinuha* were some Tagalog words used by the students when they

referred to losing something or someone. There were three kinds of “loss” shared by the students and these were categorized as (1) “productivity loss” (2) “personal loss” and (3) “social loss.”

**Productivity loss.** This refers to losing employment or the inability to find one, difficulty of adjusting to online ministries and cancellation of physical ministries, difficulty of online studies and discontinuing with studies, dealing with finances, instability of internet, inability to manage time, and experiencing health issues. Variations in terms of demographic data was not analyzed since the findings reflected that all participants suffered losses although these were of various kinds. These indicators are summarized in Table 19 below. The letter “x” stands for incidence and the numeral beside “x” stands for the number of incidences. For instance, P2’s health issues were fear and sleeplessness, and this was signified by “2x” while for P3, “3x” referred to “fear, stress, and sleeplessness.” P7’s “3x” referred to health, anxiety, and sleeplessness and P10’s “2x” referred to stress and Covid-19. Hence, “1x” stands for a single incidence under the designated code.

**Table 19 Indicators of Productivity Loss**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Health issues (Physical, emotional, mental)</b>	<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Studies</b>	<b>Finances</b>	<b>Internet</b>	<b>Time</b>
1	1x	1x	1x	1x	1x	1x	1x
2	2x	1x	1x	1x			
3	3x	1x	1x		1x		
4		1x	1x	1x			
5		1x	1x	1x	1x	1x	
6							

7	3x			1x			
8		1x					1x
9	1x	1x					
10	2x	1x	1x				
11			1x				
12							
13	1x			1x	1x	1x	
14	1x					1x	
15							
16		1x	1x				
17		1x		1x			
18		1x	1x	1x			
<b>Total</b>	<b>14x</b>	<b>11x</b>	<b>9x</b>	<b>8x</b>	<b>4x</b>	<b>4x</b>	<b>2x</b>

Loss of “health” is a related term to “productivity.” Thirteen students experienced physical (high uric acid), mental (sleeplessness/restlessness), and emotional (stress, anxiety, and fear) health problems that hampered their productivity. “Stress” emerged 5 times and this was descriptive of what the participants were going through like P3 who was suffering high acid levels due to stress:

*“Na-diagnose ako na mataas na uric acid kaya alam ko na malapit na ako ma-overwhelm ng problema ko. Nagka uric acid ako nung unang year na na-diagnose si papa. In relation with that...connected yung stress, diet ko...kaya magulo isip ko that time, chaotic (I was diagnosed with high uric acid that’s why I know I was near the point of being overwhelmed by my problems. I developed uric acid in the year when my father was diagnosed. In relation with that...there’s stress, my diet...that’s why I was confused in my thinking at that time, it was chaotic).”*

P13 also mentioned “stress” because of problems.

Lee (2020, 98) addressed the question how much thinking about Covid-19 could be considered too much and reported that persistent and distressing thought patterns are symptomatic of anxiety. For some students in this study, this was a reality like P7 who admitted, *“Hindi ako makatulog, 24 hours gumagana utak, umiiyak gabi-gabi (I could not sleep, my mind was running 24 hours, and I was crying every night).”*

Being fearful of the future was also mentioned and P6 expressed this by saying, “*Sabi ko 'Lord, ikaw na bahala kung anuman man yung mangyayari samin. Sa tatoo lang merong takot* (I said ‘Lord, it’s up to you whatever happens to us.’ In reality, there was really fear).”

Related to “productivity loss” was the cancellation of physical “ministries” and the transition to online which was mentioned by 11 participants (see Table 19 above). Ministries were shifted online since physical meetings in religious organizations were also halted due to the pandemic. As a result, students experienced hardship in doing “ministry” which received 11 mentions. P10 claimed, “*Walang ministry kasi hindi makalabas* (No ministry because I cannot go out).” P5 expressed disappointment also because, “*Hindi kami naging prepared, kumbaga nahinto lahat* (We were not prepared, everything was stopped).”

For P2, it was the difficulty of going outside and endangering others. “*Lagi kang nasa labas kung saan saan ka pumupunta, parang ang pinakamahirap talaga don yung makaka-catch ka talaga ng sakit o karamdaman kasi makakahawa ka rin sa ibang tao* (You are always going out, going everywhere, the hardest is to catch an illness because you might infect other people too).”

Loss of “work” was mentioned by 9 participants (Table 19 above). P4 shared, “*mahirap kumuha ng trabaho* (it is hard to get a job).” In a study among college students from Pangasinan State University by Guinto and Inaldo (2021, 35), financial problems were the major contributors of stress for these college students during the pandemic because many of their family members had lost their jobs. Consequently, “finances” became a problem (Table 19 above) such as P5 whose parents lost their jobs during the

pandemic. This meant that P5 might not be able to continue with his studies. P1 did not lose her job but finances became tight, and she said,

*“Kasi dahil pandemic, hindi naman yung tipong na-said, pero parang nung pandemic dahil nasa bahay ka, the more na nakikita mo yung pangangailangan sa luob ng bahay ninyo. Nakikita mo yung mga kulang. Ultimo rekadong paminta, magic sarap...makikita mo yung kulang. So pagdating sa finances din tapos kailangan mo ng pang-tuition fee, tapos you need to pay for the bills, the internet kasi you need it pang-online ganon (Because of the pandemic, it was not really like having nothing financially but, the pandemic, because you’re just at home, you see what the needs are. You see what’s lacking at home. Even pepper, seasoning... you will see what’s lacking. So, when it comes to finances also and then you must pay tuition, you need to pay the bills, the internet because you need it for online).”*

For P3, *“wala na pong pera (there was no more money)”*, while P13 said, *“Gusto ko sana mag-aral ng masteral, kaya lang kailangan ko ng financial support (I want to take masteral studies, but I need financial support).”*

The loss of educational opportunities or “studies” was mentioned by eight participants (Table 19 above). The pandemic led to the closure of physical classes since these were migrated to the digital platform and paved the way for online studies. Filipino students of the study by Tee et al (2020) reported greater psychological impact experiencing more depressive, anxiety, and stress symptoms compared to those who were employed. P10 claimed, *“I have to try it out...para marelieve yung stress tsaka tension sa inner self ko (I have to try it out...to relieve my stress and the tension in my inner self).”* For P3, his father’s illness and eventual death led to his poor health which brought him stress. P7 was more detailed,

*“Umiiyak ako sa gabi. 24 hours gumagana ang utak ko, hindi ako makatulog. Taong labas po kasi ako eh. Hindi ako sanay na nasa bahay. Dahil nung nagka pandemic, more on online. Nakikita ko na lang sila. Yun yung nagra-run sa utak ko (I would cry at night. My mind was running 24 hours, I could not sleep. That’s because I like the outdoors. I am not used to staying at home. Because of the pandemic, more online. I just see them. That’s what was running in my mind).*

She was referring to friends whom she could only talk to virtually or online.

Related to “work” and “studies” is “internet connection” because of its instability. Hence, the students found it difficult to connect and access their virtual classes, submit requirements, and apply for online jobs. This was verbalized by P5, “*Nahirapan mag-adjust sa pag-aaral kasi biglaan online at mahirap magpasa ng requirements* (I had difficulty adjusting to studying because of the abrupt online mode and the difficulty of submitting requirements).”

This was how P13 described it, “*Nahirapan ako sa pag-aaral dahil online...mahirap ang internet connection. Di makapag-aral ng maayos. Di makagawa ng mga tasks sa school* (I had difficulty with my online studies...internet connection was difficult. I could not study well. I could not do my tasks in school).”

Both P2 and P4 wanted to stop with their studies because of the difficulty navigating their virtual classes. The same findings surfaced in the study by Guinto and Inaldo (2021, 35) which reported that Filipino college students’ stress levels increased due to slow internet, difficulty in online learning, and in adjusting to virtual classes.

The students also expressed the inability to manage time during the pandemic. Hence, “time management” was also considered another obstacle to the students’ “productivity.” P1 expressed frustration about not being able to manage her time and thus, was not productive with her studies.

*“Yung time management because sa room ko po, I need to...parang yung room ko hindi na niya alam kung church ba siya kasi dun ako nago-online ministry, di na nya alam kung school ba siya kasi dun ako nagka-klase. Tapos at the same time hindi niya alam kung office sya kasi I need to work din. Yun pa...may isa pa siyang role, kasi nga bahay sya...kwarto ko nga siya. So parang naisip ko na isa yon sa naging challenging for me is yung time. Supposedly mas madami nga sana akong oras kasi hindi ako nagta-travel. Pero parang ang hirap niya hati-hatiin*

*because kahit yung oras ko parang na-confuse siya dun sa functions ko... bakit may time naman dahil nasa bahay lang naman pero bakit hindi ko maipasa-pasa mga requirements? Bakit hindi ko magawa on time? (Time management because in my room, I need to...it's like my room does not know if it's a church because that's where I go online to do ministry, it does not know if it's a school because that's where I do my studies. Then at the same time, it does not know if it's an office because that's where I work too. There's another... it has another role because it's our house... so it's my room. So, it made me think that [time management] became challenging for me. Supposedly I had plenty of time because I don't commute anymore. But it seems like it's hard to divide it because my time is as confused as the functions of my room...why is it that I have time because I am just at home but why can't I submit my requirements? Why can't I do them on time?)."*

During the member check with P1 this is what she confirmed.

*"Metaphorically, kung gagawin kong may buhay yung room, siya yung nagkaroon ng confusion kasi hindi na niya alam kung church ba siya, office ba siya, school ba siya. So, parang nahawa ako duon sa confusion (Metaphorically, if I could give life to my room, it became confused because it does not know if it's a church, or office, or school. So, it was like I was confused also)."*

**Personal loss.** Aside from “productivity loss”, the students also experienced “personal loss” pertaining to “grief”, “sickness of family members and relatives”, “death of family members, relatives and close friends” and getting “infected with Covid-19” (Table 20 below). Seven students grieved the loss of family members and relatives who got sick and then died like P9, P6, and P3 who lost their fathers, P1 who lost a grandparent, friends, relatives, and co-ministers, and P11 who lost her godparent and best friend. In this study, P9, P10, and P11 were infected with Covid-19.

P12 to P18 did not suffer any “personal losses.” Their “losses” were of a different nature and were coded under “productivity loss” (Table 19 above).

**Table 20 Indicators of Personal Loss**

Participant	Grief	Sickness of family and relatives	Death of family, relatives, and friends	Infected with Covid-19
1	1x	1x	1x	
2				
3	1x	1x	1x	
4				
5				
6	1x	1x	1x	
7	1x			
8				
9	1x	1x	1x	1x
10	1x	1x		1x
11	1x	1x	1x	1x
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
<b>Total</b>	<b>7x</b>	<b>6x</b>	<b>5x</b>	<b>3x</b>

*Social loss.* “Social loss” pertains to challenges and difficulties related to “family”, “church”, “friends”, and “spiritual life” resulting in separations, withdrawals, strained, tensed, and broken relationships (Table 21 below). “Family” was mentioned by P10 who could not visit her sick mother in the province and P1 who could not attend the funeral wake of her grandmother and other friends due to the travel restrictions. P11 could not attend the wake of her godparent because her husband had Covid-19. Likewise, P14 could not take care of his wife who had Covid-19 and was in the hospital because he and his son were also quarantined at home due to the virus, and P9 was sick with Covid-19 and could not be with her family too. Loss of “friends” was shared by P2, P7, and P14. Loss of “church” was mentioned by P1, P4 and P14. For P4, “*Nahirapan ako spiritually*

*kasi hindi makapag-church* (I struggled spiritually because I could not go to church).”

For P14, loss of her church membership affected her spiritual life. She expressed that she had lost not only her home church but friends as well because relationships were strained due to the conflict with leaders. For P1, her spiritual life was affected because physical gatherings were restricted, and several people stopped going to church. As a church worker, she also felt discouraged by people quitting and leaving. Eventually, these losses were resolved as the students relied on their Christian understanding to make sense of what was happening to them, and which is discussed in how they responded and coped.

**Table 21 Indicators of Social Loss**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Loss of Friends</b>	<b>Spiritual Life</b>	<b>Loss of Church</b>
1	1x		1x	
2		1x		
3				
4			1x	1x
5	1x			
6				
7		1x		
8				
9	1x			
10	1x			
11	1x			
12				
13				
14	1x	1x	1x	1x
15				
16				
17	1x			
18				
<b>Total</b>	<b>7x</b>	<b>3x</b>	<b>3x</b>	<b>2x</b>

### Sub-theme: Powerlessness

“Powerlessness” means loss of control over circumstances due to “helplessness” and “loss of mobility” (Table 22 below).

**Table 22 Sub-theme of Powerlessness and its Indicators**

Participant	Helplessness	Loss of Mobility
1	1x	1x
2	1x	1x
3	1x	
4	1x	
5	1x	1x
6	1x	
7	1x	
8		
9	1x	
10	1x	1x
11	1x	
12	1x	
13		
14	1x	1x
15		
16		
17		
18		
<b>Total</b>	<b>12x</b>	<b>5x</b>

The “helplessness” was expressed by the students as:

**P1:** *"Ganun na lang talaga (It's just like that)"*

**P2:** *"Hindi ko alam gagawin ko (I don't know what to do)"*

**P3:** *"Anytime soon mawawala na... (Anytime soon, [he] will be gone...)"*

**P4:** *"Gusto ko sumuko, wala nangyayari... (I want to give up, nothing is happening...)"*

**P5:** *"Nagkaroon ng challenge kung makakapagpatuloy... (There came a challenge whether I would be able to continue)"*

**P6:** *"Wala akong makapitan (I cannot hold on to anything)"*

**P7:** *"Nakikita ko lang sila sa online... (I just see them online...)"*

**P9:** *"Kung time ko na, time ko na... (If it's my time, it's my time...)"*

**P10:** *"Kahit nasabi ko na I'm healthy, there's weakness pa rin sa kin na hindi ako powerful na hindi ako matatablan ng mga sakit...it's not by my strength...Siya"*

*pala* (Even when I said I'm healthy, there's still weakness, that I'm not powerful enough that I will not get sick...it's not by my strength...It's Him)."

**P11:** "*Gusto ko pumunta, umalis...pero pano* (I want to go, leave...but how)"

**P12:** "*Wala na akong care noon...* (I did not have any care then...)"

**P14:** "*Have done my part, bahala na si Lord...* (Have done my part, it's up to God...)"

“Loss of mobility” was experienced by P10 who said “*Hindi ako makalabas*” (I cannot go out)”, by P14 who could not visit her parent in the province due to travel restrictions, by P1 who could not attend the wake of deceased relatives and friends, by P2 who was afraid of going out and catching Covid-19, and P5 who could not attend church.

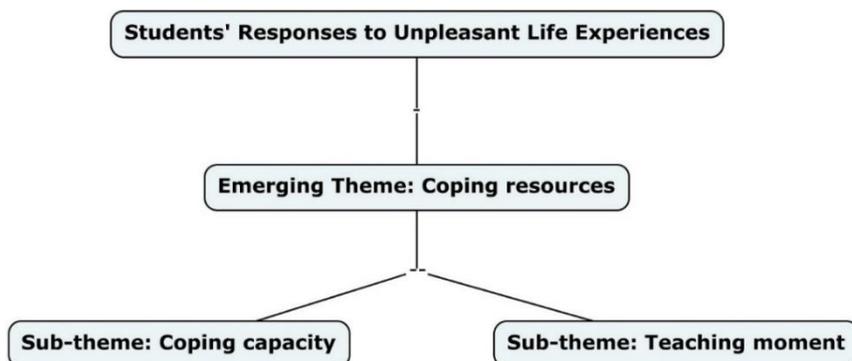
In summary, the “loss” and “powerlessness” drove the students to recognize that they were immersed in a precarious dilemma, an “emotional crisis” which they could not make sense of, nor get around it, to overcome it.

### **Category Three: Filipino Students’ Responses to Unpleasant Life Experiences**

The fourth sub-research question of this study aims to shed light on the responses of the students to unpleasant life experiences. Earlier, it has been shown that the students were caught in an “emotional crisis” which they could not understand nor handle. When they were asked how they responded to the crisis, their responses showed that their cognition was not functioning well, and they turned to various coping strategies. Although they were able to access resources available to them and resort to some helpful coping strategies, these did not enable them to gain some leverage over their circumstances.

Monat and Lazarus (1991, 5) defined coping as “an individual’s efforts to master demands (conditions of harm, threat, or challenge) that are appraised (or perceived) as exceeding or taxing his or her resources.” Using this definition, I decided to use the term

“coping resources” as the emerging theme under this category and its’ related sub-themes are illustrated in Figure 17 below.

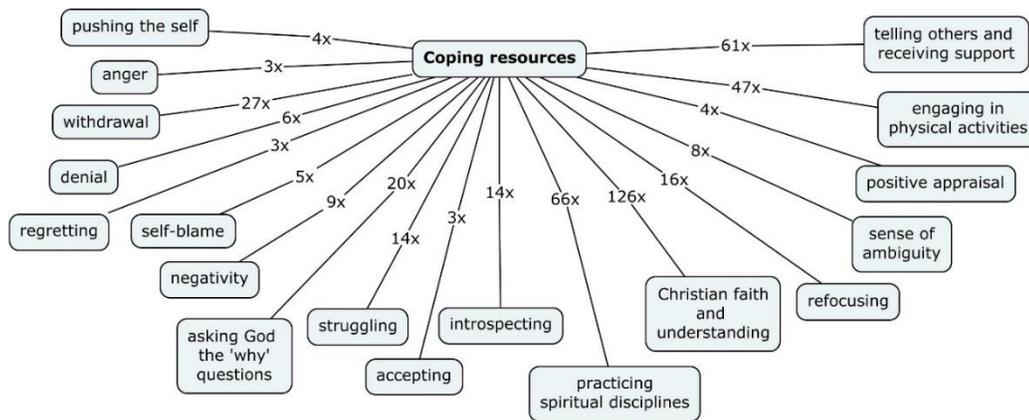


**Figure 17 Emerging Theme of Coping Resources and Sub-themes**

### **Emerging Theme: Coping Resources**

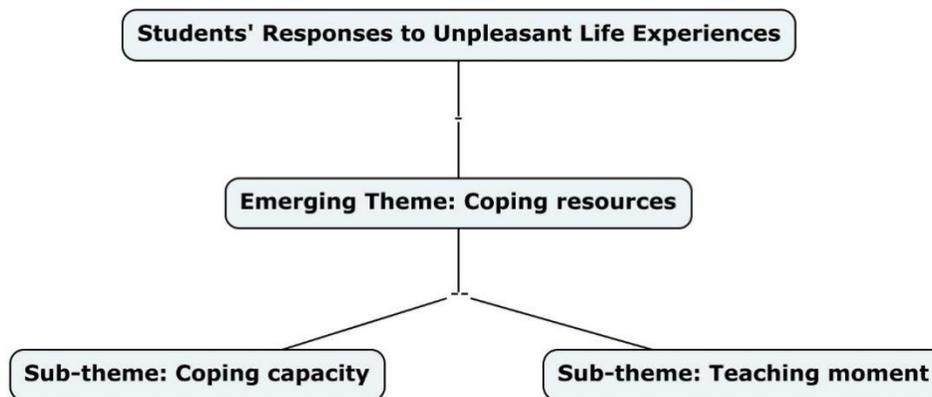
“Cope” and its Tagalog variations (*pag-cope*, *maka-cope*, and *mag-cope*) emerged from the data 11 times. Another related term in Tagalog is *kayanin* from the root *kaya* (ability or able to) and its modifications such as *kakayanin*, *ma-kaya*, and *kinakaya* which were used 42 times by the participants. The term “resource” was implied by P5, “*Alam ko na ang pinagdadaanan ko may support and alam ko naman na mao-overcome ko yon, kailangan ko lang tatagan ang sarili ko* (I know that whatever I am going through, there is support and I know that I will be able to overcome, I just need to strengthen myself).”

The support P5 mentioned referred to the “resources” available to him which helped him to recognize that he would eventually rise above his life circumstances. A total of 436 coded segments emerged from the interviews and FGDs. Thus, the initial coding of these segments led to 18 codes as visualized in Figure 18 below.



**Figure 18 Initial Coding of Coping Resources**

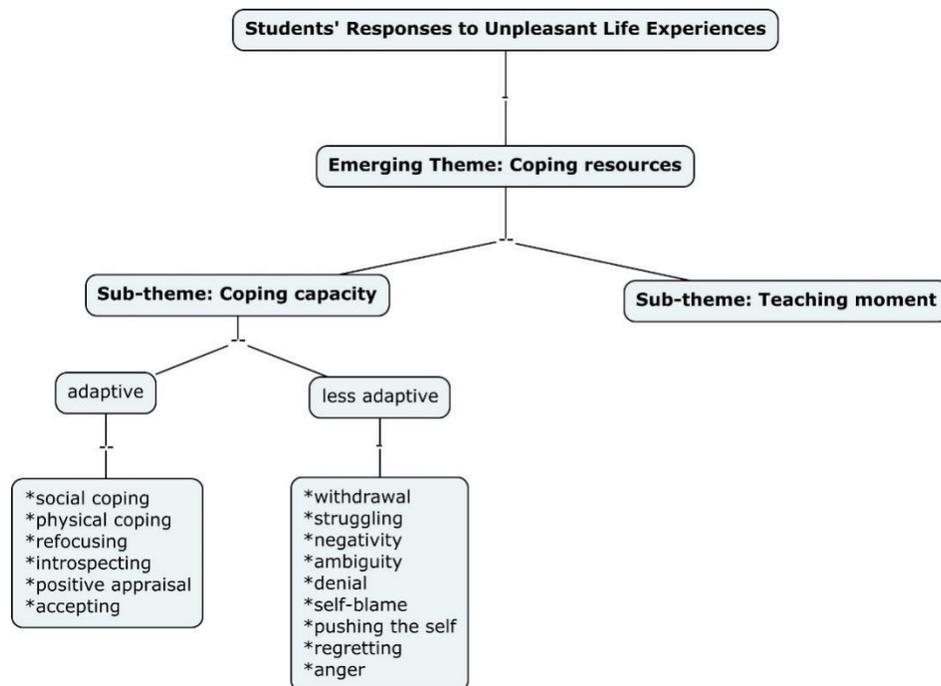
Further analysis of these 18 codes' properties in the second cycle of coding led to the identification of two codes. These are "coping capacity" and "teaching moment." The students' responses also showed a variety of skills which they used, and which were either "adaptive" and "less adaptive" until they reached a point where nothing still made sense to them. It was at this point when they turned to God. Their responses were categorized as "teaching moment" which is an *in vivo* code. Figure 19 below is the visualization of the emerging theme and sub-themes.



**Figure 19 Sub-themes of Coping Resources**

### Sub-theme: Coping Capacity

There were 224 coded segments categorized as “coping capacity.” Out of these, 145 segments were categorized as “adaptive coping” and 79 segments were categorized as “less adaptive coping” and this is shown in Figure 20 below with the related terms under each kind of coping.



**Figure 20 Indicators of Coping Capacity**

An individual’s effort to cope may be considered a form of emotion regulation (Garnefski, Kraaij, and Spinhoven 2001, 1312). Furthermore, these regulated responses are always aimed at addressing a problem and the emotions triggered by the problem. This supports the theoretical model of this study. In Chapter I, I suggested that the unpleasant life experiences of the students might be ideal situations for them to apply helpful coping behaviors as a form of emotion regulation based on the theory of James Gross (1998) since it explains how people modulate their responses to emotionally

charged events. In this study, the students showed varying degrees of regulating or modulating their reactions and responses to the “emotional crisis” and they included “adaptive” and “less adaptive” coping.

*Adaptive coping.* Emotions are displayed in a broad variety of forms (Holodynski and Friedlmeier 2006, 15). To know whether an emotion has occurred, there needs to be a stimulus event or an emotional elicitor that triggers a reaction. The elicitor can either be an internal or external stimulus (Lewis 2008, 305). When it comes to unpleasant life experiences, people have been known to elicit either positive and life-giving emotional responses or negative and life-limiting emotional responses (McClure 2019, 176).

The broaden-and-build theory by Fredrickson (1998) states that positive emotions of joy, interest, contentment, and love broaden an individual’s momentary thought–action repertoire and lead to actions that build an individual’s enduring personal resources (Fredrickson 1998, 8-9). Emotions can protect and lead to healing. They can help people think more deeply and more clearly and be physically secure and aware. They can also aid in survival by enabling people to find ways to navigate life’s challenges (McLaren 2010, 21).

Studies suggest that practicing self-compassion is correlated with more adaptive coping and greater self-improvement intentions when responding to emotional challenges (Leary et al. 2007; Brienes and Chen 2012). Even in hypothetical negative situations, self-compassion predicted adaptive coping strategies and self-improvement intentions (Chwyl, Chen, and Zaki 2021, 1331). Javed and Parveen (2021) stated that people around the world have used different coping strategies to deal with Covid-19 and maintaining positivity was considered an adaptive strategy.

In this memo I was exploring the relationship between helpful coping strategies and negative life experiences, and I made the following observations and insights.

It may seem that suffering, and pain inhibit the growth of prosocial behavior due to its adverse effects. However, based on stories shared by the participants, especially P14 who underwent a difficult church conflict, and which was still unresolved when I interviewed her on May 3, 2022, she was able to carry on with her life despite the unresolved issue. Based on her experience, she sought positive ways of coping like pursuing theological studies and continuing with her involvement in missions. When asked why she did this, she said she did not want to wallow in self-pity and bitterness as these would only affect her negatively. Studying helped her to channel her energies into something more productive. Being involved in missions also allowed her to use her time and energy in fulfilling endeavors. Though she admits that she still sometimes thinks about the incident, she believes that because of the unwillingness of the church leaders to reconcile with her, there was nothing she could do to remedy the situation. But she remains hopeful that an opportunity for reconciliation may still happen in the future. So, she keeps the door open for possibilities. How does one remain hopeful amid unsettled issues and conflicts? Is this a defeatist attitude and an act of surrender? My Christian understanding leads me to discern that in surrendering our difficult and complicated circumstances to God, we do not take a posture of defeat but the opposite of confidence, that is why we have hope. In relinquishing our hold on things that we are unable to understand (make sense of), and in turning over the reins to God by acknowledging His wisdom, provision, and power, we become hopeful and victorious instead of being defeated. Hence, the relationship between coping and unpleasant conditions may be a positive one.

Researcher, May 21, 2022

In this study, “adaptive coping” is related to “social coping,” “physical coping,” “refocusing,” “introspecting,” “positive appraisal,” and “accepting.” This may reflect emotional resilience maintained by Neff and Knox (2017) as well as by Neff and McGehee (2010). Self-compassion may provide an alternative model of thinking about the self that may promote resilience (Neff and McGehee 2010, 226). Filipinos are often associated with being resilient especially since the Philippines is a hotspot for natural disasters and economic woes (Nicomedes et al. 2020). Given these challenging experiences, Filipinos seem to manage by cultivating their coping mechanism by confronting and engaging the struggles perceived to be stressful or highly problematic

and that which exceeds their capacity to cope and expends community resources (Ladrido-Ignacio 2011). These catastrophic challenges urge Filipinos to be more proactively resistant to difficulties and tragedies that have shaped the Filipino psyche (Kalmanowits, Potash and Chan, 2012). Study findings among Filipino adults during the enhanced community quarantine period showed that positive feelings of interest, joy, contentment, finding purpose in daily activities, and achieving a sense of accomplishment are essential because these facilitates resilience (Camitan, Bajin 2021, 9). It may be said that Filipinos are resilient because they are constantly tried and tested by life's adversities (Nicomedes et al. 2020, 3). In this study, the Filipino students seem to have exhibited resilience in the face of their emotional struggles by finding various ways of coping with their losses.

“Social coping” means seeking out trusted people like friends and leaders that students can talk to and share their burdens with. This kind of social coping was shared by P13 who explained that,

*“Marami akong taong kinakausap. Nagtatanong ako sa kanila kung ano dapat gawin. Syempre pag nandyan ang problema, halu-halo eh. Hindi mo alam kung ano ang dapat gawin, mga desisyon na dapat gawin kaya hinahanap ko or nagtatanong-tanong ako sa mga taong malapit sakin, who are ahead of me katulad ng mga pastor, pastora, mga teacher para masolusyunan ko ang mga problems (I talk to a lot of people. I ask them what ought to be done. Of course, when there are problems, they're all mixed up. You do not know what to do, what decisions to make that's why I look or ask people who are close to me, who are more mature like pastors, teachers so I can find a solution to the problems).”*

For P7, “social coping” means talking to her network of online friends, *“Para malagpasan ko yung anxiety ko, quiet time ko malaking epekto... nakakausap ko Panginoon, pwede ako umiyak. At yung community group ko though online (To overcome my anxiety, my quiet time has a big effect...I can talk to God, I can cry. And my*

community group though it's online)." "Social coping" also entails spending time to bond with family and receiving support from them.

"Physical coping" responses of the students pertain to engaging in physical activities for rest and renewal such as sleeping, eating, relaxing, engaging in sports, mobile games, pursuing creative interests, exercising, and taking a walk.

"Refocusing" means shifting attention or changing one's focus to avoid being overwhelmed by the problematic situation. For P4, this meant focusing on her goal of becoming a teacher. This enabled her to continue with online studies despite the difficulties. For P14 this meant not wallowing in the hurt to avoid becoming bitter and finding ways to recover by enrolling in courses. P12 claimed, "*I stop and refocus ang self and ask saan ko ba dapat i-fix ang eyes ko* (I stop and refocus myself and ask where I need to fix my eyes)."

"Introspecting" means giving oneself the time to think, reflect, and process things to understand the situation before responding. P3 mentioned thinking about and reflecting on what he is facing, "*pina-process ko kung ano magiging reaction ko* (I process what will be my reaction)", and "*hindi nagre-react, pina-process muna* (not reacting but processing it first)" or "*ina-analyze ang problema* (I try to analyze the problem)." Seeking understanding implies "*try ko unawain ang situation* (Trying to understand the situation)." To be objective means weighing options or pros and cons such as "*ine-evaluate, tignan pros and cons* (evaluating, looking at the pros and cons)." To maintain objectivity, "*umaatras ako ng konti then move forward doon sa dapat ko puntahan* (stepping back a little and then moving forward where I need to go)."

“Positive appraisal” entails being optimistic and hopeful while facing a difficult situation like P2 and P7. Having an optimistic outlook, P13 said, “*Kaya ko pa lang lagpasan sa tulong ng Diyos ang challenges ng pandemic. Nakita ko na may katatagan ako* (I realized that I could overcome the challenges of the pandemic by the help of God. I found out that I am steady).” In appraising situations positively, there is an acknowledgement of negative thoughts and reframing them to positive ones rather than simply ignoring them. This includes attaching a positive meaning to the event (Garnefski, Kraaij, and Spinhoven 2001, 1315).

Lastly, “accepting” means accepting reality and facing problems squarely like P3 and P6 who both had to accept the reality that their sick fathers will not make it through.

Not everyone who needs help, asks for help. This was how I entitled a memo when I thought about help-seeking behavior.

What makes us hesitant to ask help from others? What causes us to seek help when we need it? Usually, we approach people whom we trust when we need help. This implies that a relationship exists between the one who needs help and the one giving help. The participants of the study told trusted individuals about their problems and difficulties. Therefore, individuals whom we expect to help us must first be people whom we trust. Perhaps this helps in self-disclosure especially concerning sensitive issues. Another observation from the data is that the people whom the students identified as among those they trust are those in leadership like their pastors and teachers. Since they are all students, they consider their teachers as trustworthy people. This shows the crucial role of teachers in helping students respond positively to adversities and in resorting to healthy coping strategies.

Researcher, November 23, 2022

***Less adaptive coping.*** At certain times, emotions can prevent growth and curtail one’s creativity and freedom. So, when emotions prevent the meaningful engagement of people, they limit flourishing (McClure 2019, 175). Furthermore, not flourishing has something to do with what one believes and how one acts on those beliefs as if he/she

were disconnected from oneself, others, or from God (2019, 176). In this study, “less adaptive coping” referred to the students’ incapacity to cope well and related words included “withdrawal,” “struggling,” “negativity,” “ambiguity,” “denial,” “self-blame,” “pushing the self,” “regretting,” and “anger.”

“Withdrawal” responses of the students included “letting go”, “shutting down the system,” “keeping things to oneself,” “not showing one’s true feelings,” and “isolating oneself.” These may not be advantageous since they encourage disconnecting from people which may only aggravate the situation. The umbrella term for an individual’s voluntary self-isolation from both familiar and unfamiliar people is social withdrawal (Rubin, Koplun, and Bowker 2009). The underlying reasons are shyness, unsociability, and social avoidance which could either be considered normative behavior or considered at-risk behavior. Nevertheless, Rubin, Koplun, and Bowker (2009) also claimed that underlying motivations to withdrawal may contribute to different types of maladjustment. Detaching oneself from social activities and avoiding other people in general are also forms of isolation (Tamres, Janicki, and Helgesen 2002, 14) and a negative dimension of self-compassion since they indicate disconnecting from people and wallowing in self-pity or ruminative behavior (Neff 2003).

“Struggling” describes the difficulty experienced by the students in trying to achieve something. They struggled because they had become overwhelmed and were unable to do anything like P3 who described his thinking as “*magulo* (disordered).”

Lee (2020, 98) posited that overthinking is a kind of “negative” thinking which may lead to maladaptive functioning and is associated with alcohol, drugs, and suicidal

issues. In this study, overthinking the problematic situation indicated an unhealthy thinking pattern. P14 claimed that,

*“Minsan sinasabi ko din na wag mo i-overthink baka naman hindi pa siya nangyayari, iniisip mo na so mas lalu na-stress ka lang. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom kasi made-drain ang isip mo kakaisip (Sometimes I also say don’t overthink since it has not happened yet and you keep thinking about it, so it will only stress you out. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom because you will be drained in thinking about it).”*

Overthinking is a ruminative behavior where one repeatedly thinks about what happened. Rumination involves focusing on one’s problems and their implications. Individuals who ruminate tend to dwell on their problems excessively. Although people may believe that thinking about a problem will lead to solving it, there is also evidence showing that ruminating or overthinking a problem does not facilitate problem solving (Nolen-Hoeksema 1991, 569).

Feeling a sense of “ambiguity” during the pandemic was P11 who referred to it as “not being normal” and “having nothing to hold on to.” P14 also felt this ambiguity because she did not receive any clear direction regarding the church discipline she was made to undergo. For P1, this meant being disoriented and uncertain of what would happen next.

“Denial” was another “less adaptive coping” for both P3 and P6 who tried to convince themselves that they will make it through no matter how different the reality was. This pertained to the conditions of their fathers who were both gravely ill. When “denial” no longer worked for them, both resorted to “accepting” the reality that the sick parent might not actually recover.

“Self-blame” occurs when one blames the self for what one has experienced (Garnefski, Kraaij, and Spinhoven 2001, 1314). This kind of behavior has been shown to

lead to depression and ill health (Anderson et al. 1994). In this study, a couple of students blamed themselves for what has happened to them and attributed it to having done something that may have displeased God.

“Pushing the self” is a “less adaptive coping” because the students pushed themselves despite their limitations. They ended up “struggling” to overcome like P4 who said, “*Pinilit ko sarili ko kahit nahhirapan na ako* (I pushed myself even when I was struggling).”

“Regretting” means feeling sorry about their situation like P9 who regretted her present circumstances which made it harder for her to cope and help her family.

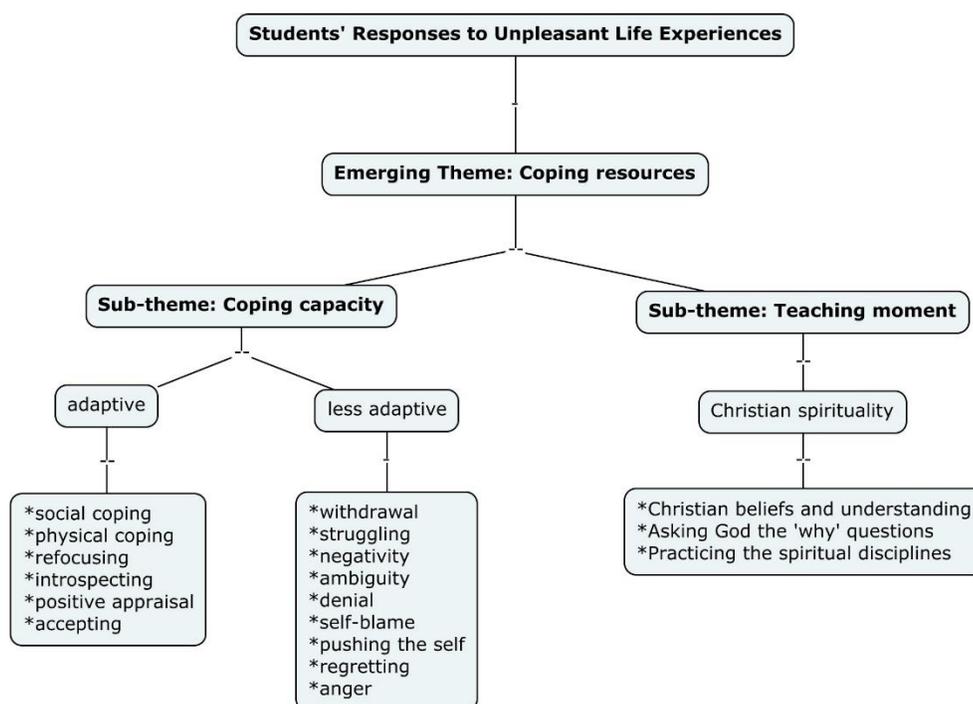
“Anger” as expressed by P11 and P12 includes “*getting angry*” and “*fighting or resisting*.” Anger is an emotional reaction to frustration but may also be detrimental than helpful.

Based on these responses, it appeared that students tried to understand and overcome what was happening to them by using both “adaptive” and “less adaptive” coping given the resources available to them. However, at this juncture, they were unsuccessful in negotiating the pandemic and it had affected their productivity and exposed their inability to cope well. When the students could no longer deal with the problems, they turned to God and experienced a “teaching moment.”

### **Sub-theme: Teaching Moment**

While it is true that the pandemic brought forth many problems, the students also characterized the problems as “giving motivation to continue, persevere, and endure,” “hurdles to overcome,” “room for improvement,” “teaching moments,” “learning,” “every moment counts,” “big picture,” “there is hope,” “steps,” “part of life,” and

“turning negative into something positive” when they turned to God to comprehend what was happening to them. There were 212 coded segments categorized as “teaching moment.” The 212 were further analyzed and categorized as “Christian faith and understanding” (126 codes), “practicing spiritual disciplines” (66 codes), and “asking God ‘why’” (20 codes). Analysis of these words and phrases led me to use “teaching moment” as an *in vivo* code since it best characterizes the significance of the students’ spirituality expressed in their responses. This sub-theme and its related words are visualized in Figure 21 below.



**Figure 21 Indicators of Sub-theme Teaching Moment**

The concept of teachable moment was popularized by Robert Havighurst in his 1952 book, *Human Development and Education*. In the context of education, Havighurst explained,

A developmental task is a task which is learned at a specific point, and which makes achievement of succeeding tasks possible. When the timing is right, the ability to learn a particular task will be possible. This is referred to as a 'teachable moment.' It is important to keep in mind that unless the time is right, learning will not occur. Hence, it is important to repeat important points whenever possible so that when a student's teachable moment occurs, s/he can benefit from the knowledge (Havighurst 1952, 5).

Regarding the “teaching moment”, I asked these questions regarding its’

significance to the study in this memo.

What characterizes a teaching moment? First, it is often unexpected. Second, timing is crucial for learning to occur. The students did not expect the pandemic, nor did they expect that it will last this long. Being able to navigate the pandemic was a learning experience for them although they had a difficult time adjusting and making transitions. However, what is interesting is the occurrence of the teaching moment for students. Their initial responses to their unpleasant experiences were both positive and negative. It was only when they had reached the end of their ropes that they turned to God. In other words, they viewed their circumstances as problems they thought they could solve. This is called a problem-focused coping strategy. However, when they were unable to find a way around their problems, they focused on managing the emotions triggered by these problem areas. When these also failed to help them cope, they acknowledged their helplessness and asked God to bring some sense into their chaotic world.

The students’ transformation process began during a teaching moment. In this study, the teaching moment is an *in vivo* code. This was the term used by P12 to describe an unpleasant life experience when he shared, “Negative life experiences are teaching moments that I can use to tell others how I was able to overcome them.” This indicates an optimistic attitude in adversities. When one keeps an open mind about adversities, one can rise above them. But I wonder if this is also due to the individual’s resilience. In this study, all the students looked at the pandemic with some positivity but after they had been able to navigate it successfully. This positive or optimistic attitude may be due to their strong Christian beliefs. So, is it resilience that enables them to transcend these negative life experiences? Or is it the influence of their spirituality, their faith in God?

Researcher, October 12, 2022

When the students experienced a “teaching moment,” it was when they reached the point where they could no longer think straight since they were so immersed in their “emotional crisis.” It was as if they were in survival mode and could hardly rise above their circumstances. Since nothing was making sense, they turned to their spirituality

(Figure 20 above). In doing so, they experienced a “teaching moment” and were able to find stability that launched them toward transformation. Once the students were able to interpret their circumstances by recognizing God’s purpose and by acknowledging that God can bring something good out of the challenges, they felt empowered to confront their “loss” and their “powerlessness.” In this study, I used the code “Christian spirituality.”

*Christian spirituality.* Spirituality is a very significant part of life because it provides meaning, purpose, and a sense of interconnectedness (English, Fenwick, and Parsons 2003; Delgado 2005). It proves the presence of a higher Power or Being that affects the way in which we live (Fry 2003). Mayhew (2004) conducted a phenomenological study to explore the meaning of spirituality to students who professed diverse belief systems ranging from agnosticism, atheism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Muslim, Protestantism, to Roman Catholicism. The results of the study showed that the students perceived spirituality as a human attempt to make meaning of the self in connection to and with the outside world. In this study, spirituality had personal meaning for the students since they possessed spiritual experiences that expressed a relationship with a higher Power who enabled them to view and interpret their unpleasant circumstances as purposeful in strengthening their faith and character.

This memo sheds light on how the students were predisposed to view things in the light of their Christian faith and understanding in this memo.

Being born again Christians, the students saw unpleasant life experiences as “teaching moments” they can learn from. P12 said, *“I do not allow failures to put me down; I try to rise above them because I am a persistent person. I strive to learn what I can and give time for learning.”* They viewed these experiences by recognizing that *“God has a purpose for suffering”* (P2 and P6), and so, it is better to *“see the big picture”* (P2 and P6), and *“not give up”* (P4 and P12) but to

*“trust in God”* (P4) because *“problems will always be present”* (P3) so it is better to *“think that every problem has a solution”* (P14). Their Christian beliefs strongly influenced their views based on their responses regarding unpleasant life experiences. Thus, spirituality plays a role in transforming ways of seeing and thinking which impacts one’s behavior. In this study, spirituality is a powerful force that brings clarity out of chaos in one’s thinking, calmness in one’s entangled emotions, and kindness in one’s behavior toward the self.

As an observer at a school’s anniversary program last March, the same views were shared by the faculty and students as they were reminiscing the challenges brought by the pandemic. I heard statements like *“finding strength in God thru each other,” “our strength comes from God and in recognizing He is in control,” “through the years, God continued to strengthen our hearts using our experiences of His faithfulness in our brokenness.”* At a church workers’ retreat last June 2022 where I was also observing, pastors were sharing ministry challenges and one said, *“Wala tayong nahihingahan pero we have a God and pwede tayong dumaing at magpasalamat na ‘His love endures forever’* (We do not have anyone to unload [burdens] but we have a God to whom we can lament and express our thanksgiving for ‘His love endures forever’).” These were the same sentiments of the students as I was interviewing them. Although the pandemic was unexpected and led to many problems resulting in so much loss, the students were assisted in finding their way through it because of their belief in God though they wavered in this.

Researcher, October 7, 2022

The 212 coded segments were further categorized into “Christian faith and understanding,” “practicing the spiritual disciplines,” and “asking God ‘why’.” “Christian faith and understanding” is related to “Christian spirituality” and this pertain to the students’ views and beliefs as born again Christians. Their perspective may have been influenced highly by their Christian views and beliefs. As such, their responses to the “loss” show a strong trust in God and his will like P12 who claimed,

*“Nauunawaan ko na parte ng buhay ang mga negative experiences...sometimes ina-allow ni Lord pero under pa rin siya ng pagtuon nya. Nasa loob pa rin ng will niya, he's under control sa mga nangyayari. (I understand that negative experiences are part of life...sometimes God allows them, but they are still under His guidance. It’s still within His will, He’s in control of what is happening).”*

Using their Christian lens, they were able to accept reality and entrust their circumstances to God. One of them was P3 who declared,

*“Totoo si Lord, nauunawaan niya sitwasyon ko. Lalu na nung na-diagnose papa ko. Nakita ko ang Panginoon, tayo limited ang kaalaman natin, hindi natin kayang kontrolin ang circumstances, pero may Panginoon na tumitingin at nakakaunawa sa circumstances natin sa mga nararanasan natin (God is real, he understands my situation. Even when my father was diagnosed. Given our limited knowledge and our inability to control our circumstances, I recognized that God sees and understands our circumstances from what we are going through).”*

They were able to acknowledge God’s higher purpose and plans like P6 who said,

*“Siguro may plano siya kung bakit niya kinuha yung father ko ng ganun-ganon, siguro may plano sya kaya sabi ko ‘Lord, ikaw na bahala kung anuman man yung mangyayari samin, anuman ang nangyari samin ngayon, alam ko may plano ka, alam ko kung bakit nangyari yon’ (Maybe He has a plan why He took my father just like that. Maybe He has a plan that’s why I said, ‘Lord, it’s up to You, whatever happens to us now, I know You have a plan, I know why it happened).”*

This was also expressed by P5 who admitted that,

*“Mas natututo po akong magtiwala sa Lord na ipagkatiwala ang mga problems na pinagdadaanan ko kasi alam ko naman sa sarili ko na yung mga problemang pinagdadaanan ko po, may dahilan kung bakit ko siya pinagdadaanan...puro trials na para mas lalu pang matuto magtiwala sa Lord o mas lalung lumago sa pananampalataya kaya nilalapat ko sa Lord yung mga problems ko, ino-open up ko po sa kanya, mas lalu po akong natututong magtiwala sa kanya at mas lalu ko po siyang nakikilala. Tumitibay ang pananampalataya sa Diyos, mas nagkakaroon ng tiwala sa Diyos (I learned to entrust to God the problems I am going through because I know there is a reason why I am going through them...all trials so that I will trust God more or so that I will grow in my faith that’s why I give my problems to God, I open them up to Him, I learned to trust Him more and grew to know Him more. My faith in Him is strengthened).”*

They also viewed their problematic circumstances as testing of one’s faith in God like P9 who said, *“Tingin ko sa mga problema, para sakin mga pagsubok lang yon. Pagsubok lang na lahat tayo dumadaan, para mas tumibay, mas maging matatag tayo tsaka mas magtiwala kay Lord (For me, I see problems as tests only. They are trials which we all go through to be stronger, steadier and to trust the Lord more).”*

As a result, the students were able to find comfort in knowing that God could be trusted and that He knows best like P10, “*Na-comfort ako ng Panginoon. Pero ang kagandahan doon, yung pandemic, ang covid, medyo mild, hindi ako masyado bedridden. So, bait ng Panginoon* (I was comforted by God. The good thing is I had mild Covid, I was not totally bedridden. So, God is good).”

For P4, being able to tell God lightened her burdens:

“*Kapag nailapit ko sa Diyos ang problema, nakakagaan ng pakiramdam. Nasasabi mo yung gusto sabihin. Lahat nailalabas na walang filter. Kahit walang sagot, basta nasabi ko na sa Diyos, magaan pa rin pakiramdam kais nasabi na lahat lahat* (When I bring the problem to God, I feel better. I can tell God what I want to tell him. I can release everything without filter. Even if there is no answer, for as long as I can tell God, I feel better because I can tell him everything).”

Turning to God gave them clarity and confidence like P4 who said, “*Kahit walang sagot, basta nasabi ko na sa Diyos, magaan pa rin pakiramdam kasi nasabi na lahat lahat* (Even if there is no answer, for as long as I am able to tell God, I still feel lighter because I was able to tell everything).”

P6 expressed the same sentiment. “*Sobrang laki ng impact ng pagiging Christian ko kung bakit ako ganito ngayon* (Being a Christian has made a big impact on who I am this today).” For P10, this was his realization: “*Ang naging epekto sakin nung na-comfort ako ng Panginoon at tinulungan ng mga tao...pinakita ng Panginoon, it's not my might or by power sa sarili ko* (The effect on me was that I was comforted by God and people helped me...God showed me, it's not by my might or by my power).”

“Practicing the spiritual disciplines” is another term related to “Christian spirituality.” Praying, involving in religious activities, and other expressions of spirituality are forms of religious coping (Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson 2002).

Individuals may see this method of coping as a form of solution seeking by praying for

guidance or for a way to manage distress since religion and/or spirituality may be considered an instrumental emotional support (Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson 2002, 15). In this study, the students mentioned practicing the spiritual disciplines of praying to God and reading the Bible like P13 who said, “*Meditate on the word of God...ginagawa ko yon...meditate and always pray to God. Lagi naman nakakatulong sakin ang mga yon* (Meditate on God’s word...I do that...meditate and always pray to God. These always help me).”

For P6, “*Ang pagiging positive ay kung paano haharapin problema, at syempre po sa tulong ng prayers, word ni Lord* (To be positive is to know how to face problems, and of course through the help of prayers and the word of the Lord).”

The phrase “asking God the ‘why’ questions” is related to “Christian spirituality.” Being honest about their true feelings helped the students to feel a sense of relief. In their desperate cries to God, they were not ashamed of asking God the ‘why’ questions such as “*Bakit hindi mo sinagot?* (Why did you not answer?)”, “*Ano na nga ba gagawin ko?* (What am I going to do?)”, “*Bakit nangyari?* (Why did this happen?)”, “*Bakit ganito?* (Why this?)”, “*Bakit ito nangyari?* (Why did it happen?)”, “*Lord ano na nga ba?* (Lord, what now?)”, “*Bakit ako?* (Why me?)”, “*Bakit hindi niya ako tinulungan?* (Why did he not help me?)”, “*Bakit andito?* (Why is it here?)”, and “*May Lord ba talaga?* (Is there really a God?).” This was validated by P10 who said, “*Una ako nag-question sa Panginoon, ‘Bakit ito nangyari sakin’* (First I questioned God, ‘Why did this happen to me?).” Aside from questioning God, students were not ashamed to admit that they cried out to God in desperation. P4 said, “*Nagpe-pray din...si Lord ang kinakausap ko like umiiyak ako sa kanya* (I pray also...I talk to God like crying out to him).”

Scripture encourages honesty before God. The Psalms include songs of lament that record authentic human responses to pain and suffering. “The predominance of laments at the very heart of Israel’s prayers means that the problems that give rise to lament are not something marginal or unusual but rather are central to the life of faith.... Moreover, they show that the experience of anguish and puzzlement in the life of faith is not a sign of deficient faith, something to be outgrown or put behind one, but rather is intrinsic to the very nature of faith” (Moberly 1997, 879). Lament may sound accusatory to God when reaching out desperately to him (Waltke, Moore, and Houston 2014, 13). But in lamenting and crying out to God, this expresses our humanity, and our faith and dependence on God (2014, 13-14).

These were the different ways in which the students coped by relying on their Christian understanding to figure out what was happening to them. Coping acts bring stability which enable individuals to adjust and adapt in stressful events (Javed and Parveen 2021, 2). For P14, the emotional stability brought about by her spirituality strengthened her to face challenges: “*Lalu nung mangyari na siya, glory to God kasi binigyan niya ako ng strength talaga para makatayo at harapin mga malalaking problema* (Especially when it happened, glory to God because He gave me strength to stand and face the big problems).” Thus, this study has shown how students differed in their capacities to cope with stressful or unpleasant experiences.

In summary, Filipino students responded to the emotional crisis brought about by the pandemic by relying on available coping resources. Their capacity to cope showed that some strategies were more adaptive than others and resulted in greater understanding

and satisfaction while some were less adaptive. In viewing the crisis through their Christian lens, they experienced a teaching moment.

#### **Category Four: Unpleasant Life Experiences and Self-Compassion**

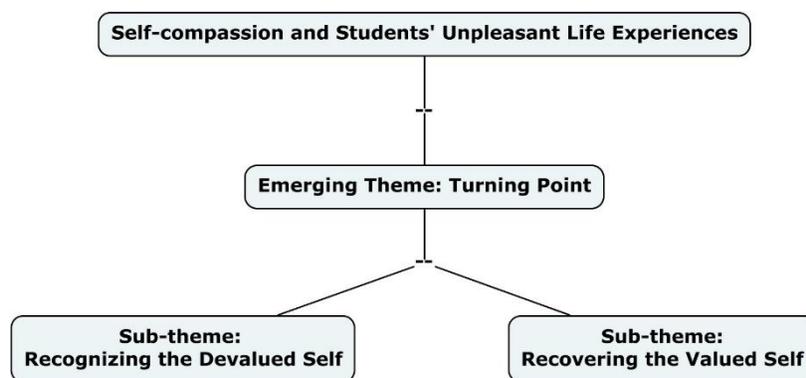
The fifth sub-research question of this study aims to determine how students were affected after treating themselves with compassion in dealing with their unpleasant life experiences. The responses of the students indicated that a change took place in terms of how they viewed themselves and their circumstances.

In the words of majority of the participants, “transformation” is *pagbabago* and *nagbago* both mentioned 6 times, and *nagbabago* mentioned twice while the words *binago* and *pinagbago* were both mentioned once. These nuances in the Tagalog language implies a certain quality of change happening to the organism. One, it is change that is definite and something that happened in the past as in *pagbabago*, *nagbago*, *pinagbago*, and *binago*. It also denotes an ongoing change in the present as in *nagbabago*.

Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference (Mezirow 1991). Adults have acquired set ways of looking at life through their experiences and these frames of reference comprise assumptions that have influenced how people understand and interpret experiences (Mezirow 1997, 5). As Mezirow (1991) pointed out, a frame of reference is made up of habits of mind which are habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving influenced by assumptions that influence how people interpret a particular experience. Since habits of mind are expressed through points of view, they are more modifiable because people often adjust and accommodate other people’s views when reflecting on both the content and process of an experience

(Mezirow 1997, 6). In simple language, transformative learning happens when learners acquire new information and evaluate their past ideas and understanding, and shift how they view or perceive the world through critical reflection. This kind of learning entails a fundamental change in their perceptions such as when learners begin to question prior knowledge and how they came to believe what they believe and examine them from their new perspectives to make room for the new insights and information.

The transformation that was evident in the students' powerful emotional stories was in "recognizing a devalued self" and in "recovering the valued self" which was the "turning point" in their journey. Figure 22 below illustrates this relationship and process.



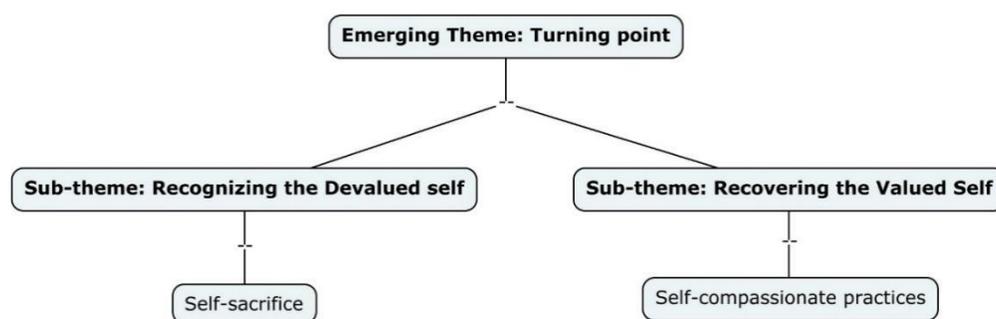
**Figure 22 Emerging Theme of Turning Point and its Sub-themes**

### **Emerging Theme: Turning Point**

There were 184 coded segments categorized as "turning point" which is an *in vivo* code for transformation after P14 used this to describe her transformation when she was invited to preach in another church after three years: "*Nandun yung battle na baka may ano na naman...pero dahil ibang church naman siya, hindi naman siya naging ganun ka komplikado...pero parang dun yung turning point* (The battle was there that it might be

another...but since this is a different church, it did not become complicated. But it seems that this was the turning point).”

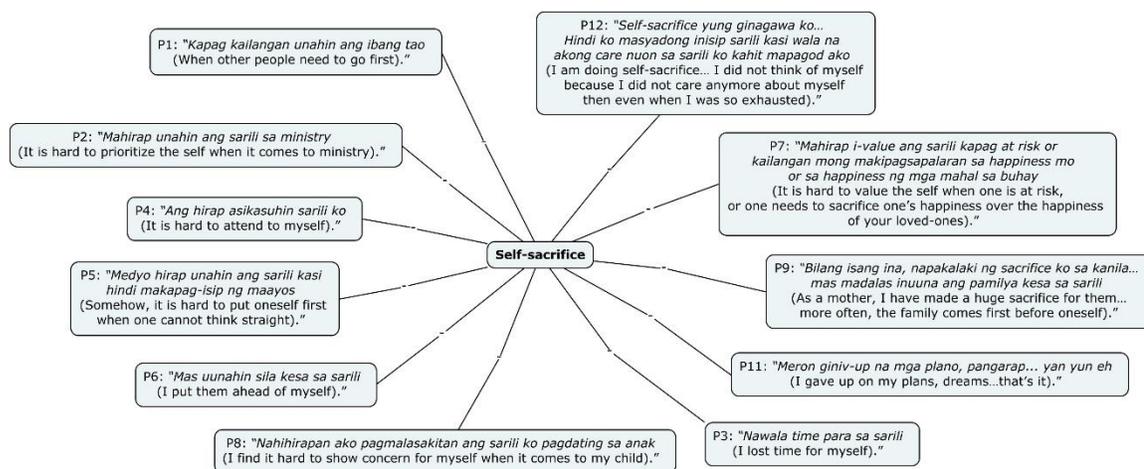
The Oxford English Dictionary defined “turning point” as a time at which a decisive change in a situation occurs, especially one with beneficial results (OED n.d.). Using “turning point” as an *in vivo* code is an appropriate label for the decisive change that transpired at a critical moment in the students’ lives. This resulted in “recognizing a devalued self” through “self-sacrifice” and moving toward “recovering the valued self” through “self-compassionate practices” as shown in Figure 23 below.



**Figure 23 Indicators of Sub-themes**

### **Sub-theme: Recognizing the Devalued Self**

In this study, the “turning point” was reached when the students came to the realization that in the process of trying to understand what was happening to them, they shifted their attention away from themselves to other significant people in their lives. When they shifted or redirected their attention away from the self to others as a form of “self-sacrifice”, they regained some form of control over their circumstances. There were 182 coded segments categorized as “self-sacrifice.” I paid attention to the word “sacrifice” and to the instances when the behavior of “self-sacrifice” was expressed. The statements below (Figure 24) reflected the students’ understanding of self-sacrifice.



**Figure 24 Students' Understanding of Self-sacrifice**

There were 33 coded segments indicating the students' conscious choice to shift attention away from the self to other people who were deemed more significant and this was coded as "redirecting attention." For most of them, this was the family who was also, in a way, suffering like them. This was the decisive change that took place and which was common in the students' experiences. By setting aside themselves and their own needs to focus on other people, this gave them a semblance of order in the chaotic environment.

This kind of behavior persisted through "justifying behavior" based on 26 coded segments. The students continued to justify the self-sacrificial behavior by claiming that other people are the priority. Erin Lothes Biviano who wrote *The Paradox of Christian Sacrifice* unpacked the tension of Christian self-sacrifice resulting in what she called a self-loss. For Biviano (2007, 2) the ambiguity of the term 'sacrifice' creates the tension which leads to a reduced self and a damaged self by self-giving, self-emptying, loss of self, self-denial, and self-abnegation. Each of these terms have positive and negative connotations and the hazy distinctions between what may be considered healthy and destructive sacrifice only complicates the matter (Biviano 2007, 3).

At a glance, the general Christian understanding of sacrifice is one of offering something to God. This offering can be something quite valuable say for instance the dedication of one's life to the pastorate or to the Catholic religious life which includes the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (Daly 2009, 3). The belief and understanding behind sacrifice are traceable to Ancient Israel from the Old Testament sacrifices and offerings. In the New Testament, Christ's sacrificial offering of himself is the perfect symbolism (Biviano 2007, 13). This is what Daly (2009) called the authentic Christian sacrifice wherein God offers Himself through the gift of His Son and the self-offering response of the Son through His humanity in the power of the Holy Spirit. However, this sacrificial understanding continues when we respond to Jesus Christ by entering a mutually enriching and Spirit-empowered relationship with the Triune God (Daly 2009, 5). In sacrifice, there is something of value that is being given up and in the Christian life, sacrifice is fundamental because Scripture is replete with language and images of sacrifice (Biviano 2007, 13). This was expressed by P12 who said, "*Less priority yung sa self since naintindihan ko yung discipleship na about giving your life to God* (The self has less priority since my understanding of discipleship is about giving your life to God)."

The belief in "self-sacrifice" only resulted in growing pains for the students because it brought to their attention their own suffering due to their devalued selves. After "redirecting attention" to other significant people and "justifying behavior", it became inevitable to continue disregarding their own needs. Thus leading the students to "realizing consequences" based on 23 coded segments indicating that the students finally

acknowledged their own suffering and pain. Figure 25 below depicts the phenomenon of self-sacrifice based on students' responses.



**Figure 25 Phenomenon of Self-sacrifice**

Their responses were labelled as a form of “recognizing the devalued self” because they had turned inward and recognized that in sacrificing themselves and attending to other people, they were not recognizing their own needs and as a result, they had not valued themselves. The following are extracts from some of the students whose stories portrayed the devalued self which contributed to their suffering. Verbatim statements by these students were quoted in presenting each unique experience and so that their voices may be heard.

**P1:** *“Maraming may kailangan sakin (A lot of people need me).”* P1’s devaluation of the self is the consequence of putting the needs of the family first. In prioritizing the needs of the family, she let go of her personal goals and replaced them with that of her family’s needs. *“Opo, ang pamilya. Ganun nga nauuna sila bago ang sarili (Yes, the family. That’s how it is; the family comes first before oneself).”*

And sacrificing the self is justified by, “*Maraming may kailangan sa akin* (A lot of people need me).”

This was exacerbated by the belief of providing “a better life” for her mother and sibling such that, “*So, I think yung mga panahon na mahirap na kahit exhausted ka na, hindi ka pwedeng magpahinga...kaya I think parang siguro nandun din lang yung mga...ano hard times maaawa ka sa sarili mo.* (So, I think the hard times are when you’re exhausted, you cannot rest...that’s why I think those are the times when I begin to pity myself).”

P1 also shared about a disorientation and confusion stemming from the work/study/minister from home set-up because of the restrictions on physical gatherings at work, school, and the church.

*“Parang yung room ko hindi na niya alam kung church ba siya kasi dun ako nag-online ministry, di na niya alam kung school ba siya kasi dun ako nagka-klase. Tapos at the same time hindi niya alam kung office siya kasi I need to work din. Yun pa...may isa pa siyang role, kasi nga bahay siya, kwarto ko nga siya... parang na-confuse siya dun sa functions* (It’s like my room does not know if it’s a church because that’s where I go online to do ministry, it does not know if it’s a school because that’s where I do my studies. Then at the same time, it does not know if it’s an office because that’s where I work too. There’s another... it has another role because it’s our house, so it’s my room. It’s as confused as its’ functions).”

As I mentioned earlier, this was a metaphor she used to point to and describe her own confusion and helplessness.

**P6: “*Sila kesa sa sarili (Them before me).*”** P6’s self-devaluation was also because of putting other people first.

*“Nahihirapan ako unahin ang sarili ko sa mga tao na kailangan ng tulong ko. Minsan kasi inuuna sila, kahit may gagawin ako, kahit may mga bagay na kailangan kong tapusin, kailangan gawin, pero once lumapit sa akin, parang ang hirap...parang sa akin ang hirap tanggihan. Mas unahin sila kesa sa sarili* (I find

it hard to put myself first over the people who need my help. Sometimes I put them first even when I need to do something, even when there are things I need to finish or I need to do, but once they come to me, it's hard...for me it's hard to refuse. I will put them first before myself).”

P6's father died of Covid-19. She was left to look after her father because her mother also suffered a stroke and had to be confined as well. These things proved to be very challenging and as a result, she was unable to attend to herself and her needs.

**P3: “*Nawala time ko para sa sarili (I lost time for myself).*”** During the pandemic, P3's father was diagnosed with a terminal illness. His death had a big impact.

*“Affected na yung health ko. Stressful ang epekto sa akin. Apektado na yung health ko. Apektado din yung ginagawa ko sa mga task. Nung nagkasakit papa ko, tapos covid, yun yung nawala time ko para sa sarili. Kasi ang daming problema. Babangon ako, ganun uli. Kasi nung buhay si papa, ang araw ko umiikot sa kanya, sa pamilya ko, sa pag-aaral ko (My health was affected. The effect was stressful. My health was affected. The tasks I was doing were also affected. When my father got sick, it was Covid then, I lost time for myself. Because there were so many problems. I would get up, and it's the same thing. Because when my father was still alive, my world revolved around him, my family, and my studies).”*

In essence, P3 spent his time and energy caring for others while neglecting himself. During the interview, P3 mentioned “time” 10 times and stressed the need for it and the lack of it. It is therefore worth mentioning that after the interview, P3 expressed how much the “time” spent listening to him meant, “*Salamat po sa time na binigay niyo sakin...naging way ito na makapagreflect ako...na hindi ako nag rereflect mag-isa (Thank you for the time you gave me...this became a way for me to reflect...and I was not reflecting by myself).*”

What P3 meant was that he was helped in processing his experiences by being in a dialogue with the researcher. This supports that transformative learning happens

through meaningful conversations especially those which touch the hearts of the students (Webster-Smith, Albritton, and Kohler-Evans 2012, 5).

**P7: “*Kailangan mong makipagsapalaran sa happiness mo (You must put your happiness at stake).*”** P7 talked about the unavoidable consequence of sacrificing one’s own happiness to benefit another and in her case, it meant giving up on her studies because the family takes precedence.

*“Mahirap i-value ang sarili kapag at risk or kailangan mong makipagsapalaran sa happiness mo or sa happiness ng mga mahal sa buhay. Pag family ang involved, mas mahirap maging self-compassionate. Kailangan mong mag work, uunahin ang family. Yung happiness mo, kailangan mo itigil gaya ng pag-aaral (It is hard to value the self when there is a risk or that you need to give up your own happiness for your loved-ones. When the family is involved, it is hard to be self-compassionate. You need to work, put your family first. You must give up your happiness like your studies).”*

This, of course, led to the devaluation of the self because according to P7, the self is valuable and yet, she found it hard to value herself or prioritize her own needs. In this study, I categorized this as devaluation because P7 had to sacrifice her own happiness. In this study, devaluation is akin to not recognizing the suffering that one is undergoing due to self-sacrificial behavior wherein the self and the self’s needs are set aside to cater to the suffering of other significant people. In a sense, the self loses value or worth because one does not see or recognize the self as important.

Asis (1994, 16) reported that the family is the most cherished and durable institution in the Filipino society. Filipinos have been known to be family-centered, and families have been observed to be closely-knit (Tarroja 2010, 177; Gozum 2019, 58). This is why Filipino adult children are so attached to parents even when separated geographically for economic reasons. “Before anything else, the family commands the Filipino’s loyalty and is considered to be the wellspring of a meaningful existence, of

identity and fulfilment” (Mulder 1997, 27). Cabalquinto (2018, 4014) reported that overseas Filipino adults provided emotional care to their left-behind parents in the Philippines by exploring various ways “to do things together at a distance.” This shows the extent that Filipino adult children undertake to provide for the family’s needs.

**P9:** “*Almost naibigay ko na lahat sa kanila (I have given them everything).*” P9 echoed the same sentiment as P7. “*Mahirap unahin ang sarili kasi nakikita ko yung pangangailangan ng pamilya (It is hard to prioritize the self because I see the needs of the family).*”

There is no other social institution in the Philippines aside from the family that commands as much loyalty, sacrifice and affection (Miralao 1997, 193). This kind of self-devaluation due to self-sacrifice was experienced by P9 who mentioned “sacrifice” 5 times in alluding to the kind of selfless service she gave to her family.

*“Mula bata, kasi panganay po ako so parang hindi ko naramdaman na inuna ko yung sarili ko, lagi yung family ko. Mas madalas inuuna ang pamilya kesa sa sarili. Nung bata pa kasi ako, maliit pa lang namulat na ako sa ganyang situation tsaka bata pa lang matured na. Nung grade 5 ako at pwede na mangamuhan, nagtrabaho ako until mag graduate ako ng high school. At the same time, nakakapag-aral ako at the same time natutulungan ko yung parents ko kasi 8 po kami magkakapatid. Parang every two years nanganganak po ang nanay ko. Ang hirap...sobrang hirap ng responsibility na nasa akin at di ako nakapag-college kasi pagkatapos ko mag graduate ng high school, work na ako para yung mga kapatid kong maliliit makapagtapos kahit man lang high school (Since I was small, because I was the eldest, I don’t think I made time for myself. It’s always for my family. Often, I would put my family first before myself. I was exposed to this kind of situation when I was still very young; even as a small child, I was already matured for my age. When I was in grade 5 and they thought that I was capable, I started working already until I graduated from high school. I was studying and helping my parents at the same time because there were 8 of us children in the family. It’s like my mother gave birth every two years. It’s difficult...a very difficult responsibility that was placed on me and I was not able to go to college because after I graduated from high school, I worked so that my smaller siblings could also finish high school at least).”*

*“So ganun yung ginagawa ko kasi until now tinutulungan ko yung family ko kasi yung papa ko namatay 2 years ago so wala po talagang...may maliit pa kaming kapatid tapos may mga kapatid na pasaway na nagkaanak tapos walang tatay. So yun hanggang ngayon, sobrang sacrifice (So that’s what I’ve been doing because until now I am still helping my family because my father passed away 2 years ago so there’s really nothing... we still have a younger sibling and some of my siblings are stubborn because they had children without fathers. So there, until now, it’s a lot of sacrifice).”*

P9’s self-kindness level in the SCS was low (1.8) and her self-judgment was high (3.6). This was somehow validated by P9 when she shared her pain arising from her circumstances. Somehow, in the process of giving up on ourselves and putting others first, we end up losing something that might potentially be of value to us and to our growth. Therefore, the idea of self-sacrifice becomes distorted when it is overemphasized to the point of denying the self (Biviano 2007, 3).

*“Ang parents ko gusto wag muna magtapos ng college para tulungan sila so, giniv-up ko yung personal dreams ko para tulungan sila para makatulong sa mga kapatid ko na makatapos naman sila ng high school (My parents did not want me to go to college so I could help them. I gave up my personal dreams to help them, to help my siblings to finish high school).”*

At this point in the conversation, P9 expressed feelings of shame because she works as a house cleaner and does menial jobs for others which she attributes to her lack of college education. P9 also expressed feelings of regret though she also said that she finds fulfillment in serving her family, never mind her personal goals and dreams.

*“Yung life ko ngayon hindi ganon kaganda kasi hindi ako nakapagtapos, hindi ganon kaganda yung trabaho ko mula maliit hanggang ngayon. Actually, hanggang ngayon, nagtatrabaho sa mga boss ko ang naglilinis ng bahay nila, namamalengke... sideline ko pag walang pasok sa school (My life today is not so grand because I did not finish school, my work is not that great from when I was young until now. Actually, until now, I work for my bosses like cleaning their homes, going to the market...that’s my side hustle when I do not have any class).”*

Carandang (1987) theorized that the female eldest child often took the role of a *tagasalo* (caretaker) in the family by taking on the household role which eventually

evolved into the emotional care of the family members. *Tagasalo* comes from the root word *salo*, which literally means "to catch." With the prefix *taga* it means "one who catches." Used colloquially, the word refers to one who "takes care", or "one who comes to the rescue." *Mananalo* is a synonym of *tagasalo* (Carandang 1987, 47). Carandang believes there is one in every Filipino family and the role can go on indefinitely or indiscriminately. There seems to be a basic need on the part of the *tagasalo* to literally "catch" other people's problems and making them one's own and endeavoring to solve these problems him/herself (Carandang 1987). To a large degree, such behavior may be considered commendable and perhaps, socially acceptable. Yet many fail to see the flip side of this phenomenon which is the "burning out" phenomenon that happens to people who overextend themselves in the guise of "reaching out" (Udarbe 2001, 45).

Asis, Huang, and Yeoh (2004, 203) explained that "the individual-family nexus is theoretically seamless: the family is a source of emotional, economic, material and social support for the individual; in return, individual members strive to promote the interests of the family." This holds true for P9 who said,

*"Mahirap, pero nakita ko naman na worth it ang pagtulong sa family ko. Tsaka masaya na ako pag-serve. Kinalulungkot ko pag di ko sila ma-serve o matulungan. Malungkot lang na wala na akong time sa sarili ko. Almost naibigay ko na lahat sa kanila pero sabi ko nga mawala man ako sa mundo, at least di ba, hindi sila mag-aano sa akin ng sama ng loob dahil naibigay ko sa kanila hanggang sa makakaya ko (It's difficult but I can see that helping my family is worth it. Besides, I am happy to serve them. I will be unhappy if I will not be able to serve or help them. The sad thing though is I do not have time for myself. I have given them almost everything and if I am no longer around, at least they won't hold grudges against me because I've given them everything I could)."*

Sacrificing oneself for the benefit of the family may be detrimental to the point where we accept suffering, exploitation, and abuse believing that in enduring these, we exemplify Christian virtues. This devaluation of the self is the overemphasis of self-

denial which denigrates the self and the full expression of the gifts and contributions that the self may offer to society (Biviano 2007, 210).

In one of my memos dated July 21, 2022 on putting the family first, I made the statement, “The family is both a facilitator and inhibitor of self-compassion.” While the family may be a source of emotional strength, it also becomes the cause for inhibiting the expression of self-compassion when the family becomes the overarching goal. This may be due to values such as respect for elders and faithfulness to the family which are very much entrenched among Filipinos (Gozum 2019, 59). Parents sacrifice many things for their children’s future. Parents value their children because they expect their children to help them financially, take care of them and assist them in housework when they get old (Gozum 2019, 63).

**P14: “*Hindi ko na maramdaman na belong ako (I can’t feel that I belong).*”**

P14’s sad experience was the result of a conflict involving her and the church leadership. She was placed on discipline the year before Covid-19 struck and despite not having any concrete restoration program, she complied and submitted to leadership.

*“So, since nababaan ako ng disciplinary action, for 6 months wala pong ganung proseso. Iniisip ko noon, kung wala silang gagawin, I might as well restore myself. Kasi kung malulunod ako sa galit o sama ng loob ko sa kanila ay mamamatay ako spiritually. Yun ang nasa isip ko. Sabi ko, tutal wala naman akong gagawin sa ministry, so I might as well, study na lang (So, since I was put on disciplinary action, for 6 months there was no process. I was thinking back then, if they are not going to do anything, I might as well restore myself. Because if I drown in anger or hold a grudge against them, I will die spiritually. That’s what was going on in my mind. I said, since I do not have any ministry, I might as well study).”*

Her studies kept her busy although she admitted to being affected by the incident.

*“Parang wala na akong home church kasi hindi ko na maramdaman na belong ako sa church pero nagch-church pa rin ako doon (It’s like I do not have a home church*

anymore because I don't feel that I belong in that church even when I continue to attend there).”

P9's devaluation of the self was the result of her full compliance to the church's requirements despite not having a clear restoration program. Though she reached out to the leadership regarding this, her questions were not addressed and was rejected many times. In the process, she lost her standing and membership in her home church. Her SCS revealed a moderate self-compassion level (2.73) although her self-kindness component was low (1.8) and mindfulness was likewise low (2.25) which might be due to these recent emotional upheavals in her life.

**P12: “*Marunong akong mag sacrifice ng sarili ko (I know how to sacrifice myself).*”** For P12, self-sacrifice came easy. He claimed that he often put other people first because he thought that was expected of him as a Christ follower. So, for P12, he “recognized the devalued self” through an unrealistic view of himself where he must sacrifice himself and put others first. It was something he believed was what discipleship or following Jesus was all about. “*Marunong akong mag sacrifice sa sarili ko. Pagdating sa sarili ko, unahin ko ibang tao pero wala akong dahilan hindi ko alam kung ito ba pinapagawa ni Lord (I know how to sacrifice myself. When it comes to myself, I put other people first and I don't know if this is what God is asking me to do).*”

He eventually recognized his faulty frame of reference and his worth and value.

*“Sacrifice dapat it's all about your obedience. Hindi mo siya ginagawa dahil gusto mo lang na magsacrifice na ito yung way of following the Lord. Ang naging mas madali lang ay nung narealize ko siya; naging madali na maging positive ako sa sarili ko. Hindi na ako nagiging harsh sa sarili ko (Sacrifice should be all about obedience. You are not doing it because you want to sacrifice yourself to follow the Lord. It became easier when I realized that; it became easy for me to be positive about myself. I am no longer harsh toward myself).”*

**P10: “*Hindi lahat makakaya ko (I cannot handle everything).*”** P10 is a pastor and tentmaker. He was unable to do ministry and became jobless because the pandemic prevented him from going out. He tested positive for Covid-19. His wife developed an illness and had to be hospitalized while P10 was quarantined at home. While on quarantine, his son was exposed to the virus and eventually tested positive. These circumstances worried P10. He took pity on their conditions especially since he was prevented from taking care of his wife and could not look after her in the hospital. He also blamed himself for infecting his son.

*“Nagpositive ako kaya hindi ako pwede mag-care sa asawa ko kaya siya lang naiwan doon. So, lahat kami ng family nagkasakit at tsaka nalaman ng LGU kaya na-lockdown kami. First time nangyari. Umiyak talaga ako sa Panginoon. Bakit nangyari ito sa akin, sa amin? Naawa ako sa sarili ko, naawa ako sa anak ko na na-influence (nahawa) ko. (I tested positive that’s why I cannot take care of my wife, so she was alone there. So, all of us in the family got sick and the local government unit found out and so we were locked in. This was the first time this happened. I cried out to God. Why did this happen to me, to us? I took pity on myself; I took pity on my son because I infected him).”*

P10’s over-identification level was high (5.0) which might explain why he was in this state of mind. However, this experience led him to realize that engaging in self-pity was not helpful, and it did not solve their problems. At this point, he accepted his limitations and that he had to look after himself also: *“I have to take care of myself na wala yung asawa ko na hindi ako mag-worry (I have to take care of myself without my wife and that I do not have to worry).”*

These stories showed how these students came face to face with the devalued self by setting aside their own suffering through “self-sacrifice.” In doing this, they each came to recognize how they neglected their own needs in trying to cope with the crisis they were in.

### Sub-theme: Recovering the Valued Self

In “recognizing the devalued self” through “self-sacrifice,” the students now moved toward “recovering the valued self.” In this study, the transformation that the participants resurfaced was within the context of the “self” or *sarili*. Eleven students kept alluding to the “self” as the recipient of change ( $n = 11$ ) indicating where the transformation happened. The following were their statements regarding the self.

- P1:** “*Yung impact nito sa aking sarili, sobrang laki* (The impact of this to myself is so big).”
- P2:** “*Nakita ko yung pagbabago sa sarili ko* (I saw the change in myself).”
- P3:** “*Nagbago pananaw ko sa sarili, mas devoted sa sarili* (My view of myself changed, more devoted to the self).”
- P5:** “*Nag-iba rin pananaw ko sa ibang bagay* (My view of things also changed).”
- P7:** “*Lumawak ang pananaw ko* (My perspective widened).”
- P9:** “*Nag-iba pagtingin ko sa sarili ko...nakikita kong malaking pagbabago sa sarili ko dahil inuna ko sarili ko* (How I see myself changed...I saw the big change in myself because I made time for myself).”
- P10:** “*May nagbago sakin after ng Covid* (There was some change in me after Covid).”
- P11:** “*Magbabago pananaw sa sarili...pag nagbago sa sarili, mararamdaman din ng mga tao sa paligid niya* (The view of the self will change...if the self had changed, people around him/her will feel the change).”
- P12:** “*Malaki naging pagbabago sakin...magkaroon ng bigger perspective* (There was a big change in me...to have a bigger perspective).”
- P13:** “*Nakikita ko yung improvement sa sarili ko* (I can the improvement in myself).”
- P14:** “*May nagbago, ang pananaw o pagtingin sa sarili* (There was a change, the view or perspective of the self).”

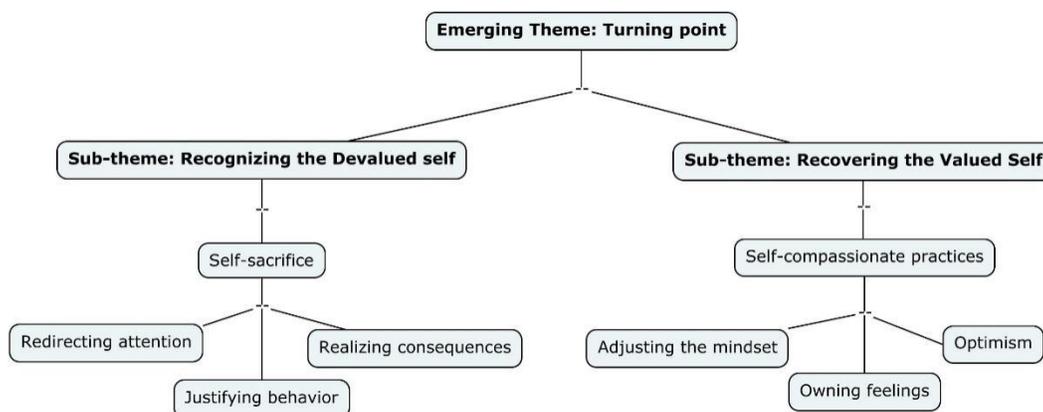
Miranda’s (1988) reflexive concept of *sarili* was supported by these verbatim comments of the students. The change in self or *sarili* points back to the self like *impact sa aking sarili, pagbabago sa sarili, nagbago sa akin, nagbago sa sarili, pagbabago sakin, improvement sa sarili ko, and pagtingin sa sarili*. The students were able to pinpoint that the change happened in the self or *sarili*. The transformation was not superficial since it took place in the inner self or *loob* (Mercado 1974). Mercado (1972)

held the view that *loob* is interior and holistic. The Filipino is non-compartmentalized in his/her worldview and *loob* as an ethical reality cannot be separated from the Filipino way of thinking, feeling, and willing (Mercado 1972, 598, 601).

The students put in plain words that the resulting change transpired within them which resonates with the reflexive self of Miranda (1988, 42). It can also be said that the students may have considered *sarili* as an expression of *loob*. *Loob* cannot be separated when referred to at the personal level because *loob* has a “holistic concept of the body and spirit” (Mercado 1974, 37). This is why the students identified the change not on the outside but on the inside as *pananaw* or *pagtingin sa sarili*. Seeing themselves from their own perspective makes it an internal viewpoint. The change or transformation in terms of a broadened perspective which translated into being devoted to the self or seeing improvement in oneself clearly supports Mezirow’s claims.

The recovery of the self’s worth or value came about through “self-compassionate practices” of “adjusting the mindset,” “optimism,” and “owning feelings.”

***Self-compassionate practices.*** The “self-compassionate practices” from 102 coded segments in this study were the responses of the students categorized as “adjusting the mindset” (74 coded segments), “optimism” (17 coded segments), and “owning feelings” (11 coded segments) as illustrated in Figure 26 below.



**Figure 26 Indicators of Self-compassionate Practices**

The students recognized the “self” as valuable, and the self’s needs were equally important. Valuing or giving importance to the self or *pagpapahalaga sa sarili* garnered 12 mentions. P4 said, “*Ang self-compassion ay kapag bina-value mo yung sarili mo. Kapag pinahahalagahan ang sarili. Kapareho ng inuuna ang sarili. Yan ang self-compassion* (Self-compassion is valuing yourself. When you give importance to yourself. It is like putting oneself first. That is self-compassion).”

This was restated by P9 who said, “*Ang self-compassion parang pagpapahalaga sa sarili. Parang pinahahalagahan ang sarili...yung pag-galang ay pagpapahalaga sakin yon* (Self-compassion is like giving importance for the self. It’s like valuing the self...for me, respecting is valuing the self).”

P1 interpreted it as protecting the self because one needs to “*preserve something sa sarili mo... nahuli niya yung sarili niya na valuable siya, na mahalaga siya* (preserve something of yourself...one discovered that one is valuable, that one is important).”

It was P11 who highlighted the significance of the valued self when she said,

“*Very basic pero ang laking tulong ng self-compassion. Nakikita ko siya na red carpet, parang maintenance ng mental health. It’s deeper than taking time to drink coffee, it’s deeper than having a book, it’s deeper than doing something*

*good to your kapwa...it's finding value...at yun ibibigay mo muna. At isu-surface mo kasi hindi nila makita* (It's very basic but self-compassion is a big help. I see it like a red carpet in maintaining mental health. It's deeper than taking time to drink coffee, it's deeper than having a book, it's deeper than doing something good to your neighbor...it's finding value...and that's what you give first. You surface it because they can't see it)."

This process of "recovering the valued self" compelled the students to confront a personal loss, the "devaluation of the self" because of "self-sacrifice." The "recovering the valued self" happened as the students started looking inward and reflecting and realizing that they were also suffering and that they needed to attend to their own needs as well. Consequently, they learned to be self-compassionate and be kind to themselves because they now recognized that the self was worthy of attention (Neff 2003a).

Self-compassion, therefore, involves being touched by and open to one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal oneself with kindness. Self-compassion also involves offering nonjudgmental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies, and failures, so that one's experience is seen as part of the larger human experience (Neff 2003a, 87).

One of the "self-compassionate practices" was "adjusting the mindset." Viewing problems as common to everyone means accepting that negative experiences are part of life and acknowledging their temporal role as well. Aside from these, students also admitted their limitations once they were unable to find solutions. This affirms the common humanity component of self-compassion (Neff 2003a). In adjusting their mindsets, the students were able to see the positive side of their circumstances. They gained clarity and understanding regarding what was happening to them and saw the purpose and lessons they could gain from the experience. In other words, this was like fixing or adjusting their frames of reference in order not to panic, worry, be harsh toward the self, self-blame, pity oneself, or give in to negativity. For P2, when she adjusted her

mindset by stopping herself from indulging in self-pity, she was able to resume her studies and get back into ministry. This led her to recognize a bigger calling in life for which she was prepared to give her best. P7 struggled with her online classes but this was how she framed her thinking: “*Mahirap yung online talaga pero in-enjoy namin* (Online is really hard but we tried to enjoy it).”

For P13, he gained clarity by changing how he viewed his suffering during the pandemic: “*Nakita ko yung sarili ko parang mas naging independent ako kasi mahirap ang pandemya, kailangan kumilos, kailangan gumawa ng paraan para ikaw ay makakain o pagpatuloy sa buhay* (I saw myself become more independent because the pandemic was difficult; you have to do something, to find ways so you can eat and go on in life).” P9 acknowledged the fleeting nature of problems, “*Mga problema, dadaan lang yan* (Problems, these will eventually pass).”

Others cited “not panicking,” “seeing that one can overcome,” “realizing that everyone faces problems,” “recognizing what one can learn from problems in life,” and “recognizing God loves me.” In adjusting how they viewed themselves and their circumstances, the students acknowledged the challenges they faced and became more determined to overcome them. In fine-tuning how they perceived the unpleasant experiences, they were also helped in recognizing that God loves them, and they had a responsibility of loving themselves in return to be capable of loving others as well.

Another related term to “self-compassionate practices” was “optimism.” Nurturing an optimistic view in life helps in being able to see the good that can come out of a problematic situation. This is a type of positive reappraisal wherein one tries to grow, learn, or derive some benefit from the problem or difficulty (Tamres, Janicki, and

Helgeson 2002, 15). Striving hard to study and finish studies, not wallowing in the problem but doing something constructive, applying learning from studies, working hard, being resourceful, and taking steps to thresh out the issues and talk about the problem were all proactive ways that students undertook to cope. Another helpful coping strategy is the use of self-talk (Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson 2002). Although social-contextual factors may directly affect the content or type of self-talk, it is also possible that self-talk may be actively used as a mechanism by which individuals make sense of and process their environment (Oliver et al. 2010). This is because positive self-talk entails making self-statements that encourage oneself to feel better or that reassure oneself that he or she can handle the stressor (Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson 2002, 15).

In this study, “optimism” implies thinking positively and engaging in positive self-talk such as *“kaya mo yan (you can do it),” “hindi ka pababayaan ni Lord (the Lord will not abandon you),”* and *“gagaan din ang pakiramdam mo (you will feel lighter).”* P5 added, *“yung mga times na tingin ko kaya ko, ine-encourage ko sarili ko na kakayanin ko (the times when I see that I can do it, I encourage myself).”* It also implies thinking that problems have solutions and that the students can be resourceful in finding ways to overcome their dilemmas.

Finally, “owning feelings” refers to acknowledging what one is feeling now and accepting them. When one is owning up to what one is experiencing in terms of emotions, one is practicing mindfulness (Neff 2003a). This was expressed by the students as “being in the ‘now’ moment,” “allowing oneself to feel the range of emotions,” “owning one's feelings,” “it is like opening the door to embrace the emotions,” and “it's okay to be vulnerable.” Mindfulness is a balanced awareness that neither avoids nor

exaggerates the discomfort of our present-moment experience (Shapiro et al. 2006). A mindful attitude may help individuals avoid being entangled in ruminative thoughts about negative events and respond in a more self-compassionate manner by directing attention and kindness toward the feelings of being hurt (Svendsen et al. 2016, 8). This level of mindfulness was expressed by P11 who said, “allowing oneself to grieve and feel the sadness.” It also means staying calm and quiet by “*hindi nagpa-panic* (not panicking),” “*hindi muna nagre-react* (not reacting),” and “*tumatahimik muna ako* (I keep quiet first).”

The following extracts from the students’ stories highlight the transformation toward “recovering the valued self” through “self-compassionate practices.” These are the sequels to the same stories of the participants I presented earlier.

**P1: “*Maraming may kailangan sakin (A lot of people need me).*”** She claims that she resorted to self-compassion when she reached the point of exhaustion and that was when P1 recognized her worth and value. “*Kapag exhausted na po ako, narealize ko po na kailangan ko ng habag sa sarili ko. Kailangan ko ng maawa sa sarili ko kasi medyo napapagod nako* (When I am exhausted, I realized that I needed to be concerned for myself. I must sympathize with myself because I am getting tired).”

P1 also mentioned how engaging in physical activity helps her shift attention away from the emotionally charged situation and pay more attention to her body.

*“Posible na maisip ko pa yung bagay na yon, yung pressure or stimulus na yon. Di naman siya mawawala. Pero at least masu-suppress niya yung feelings mo na hindi na siya ganun kalala... Kung hindi naman po tinutulog at nasa labas ako at na-encounter ko yung ganito, I take a walk. Hindi ko po iniisip yung situation. Basta I take a walk. At dahil I took a walk, nae-exhaust yung physical...nako-convert yung negative. I mean yung energy na na-waste mo parang imbes na isipin mo yun, imbes na magdwell ka sa ganun, naka focus ka sa sarili mo...ay masakit yung paa ko. Parang gumagaan, parang nawawala yung attention ko*

*kesa maisip ko mga paghihirap, nararamdaman ko na masakit yung paa ko, or nauuhaw ako or gusto ko ng ganito or nagugutom pala ako, kasi naglakad ako.* (It's possible that I still think about it, the pressure or stimulus. It will not go away. But at least the feelings will be suppressed, and it is not going to be that severe. If not, I sleep or if I am outside and I encounter those things, I take a walk. I don't think about the situation. I just take a walk. And because I took a walk, I exerted energy [physical activity], the negativity is converted. Instead of wasting your energy on thinking, instead of dwelling on it, you focus on yourself...it's like, 'oh my feet are hurting.' I feel lighter, instead of thinking about the difficulties, I would feel the pain in my feet, or the thirst, or the hunger because I took a walk)."

P1's SCS results also revealed high levels of self-kindness (4.75) and mindfulness (4.0) which reflects her attitudes in the extracted narrative above. In changing how she viewed the unpleasantness of her experiences she perceived sacrifices as temporary hurdles to overcome by being steady or consistent. This was her way of turning the situation into a positive one. She knows that she must learn to balance things so that she does not get totally burned out.

*"Yung thought na siguro naman lahat ng ito, lilipas din, matatapos din. May ganon din mga thoughts kaya yun din siguro yung naging drive ko din, na maging steadfast. Kasi parang nakita ko na maraming may kailangan sakin, so kailangan ko maging steady. So, na-take ko naman siya na positive. Na hindi naman yung tipo na 'ubos na ubos na ako.' Kung paano mo iba-value yung sarili mo, si self-compassion ang nakita ko, kahit na yung love ay towards you, wala kang kinukuha o wini-withhold na love sa iba. May balance siya para sakin (The thought probably that all of this will pass, will come to an end. These are the thoughts that drive me to be steadfast. Because I can see that many need me, so I need to be steady. I was able to look at it positively. Not that I am totally burned out. How I value myself with self-compassion, I see it as being loved and not hoarding or withholding this love from others. For me, there is a balance)."*

In choosing to be optimistic or to have a positive attitude, she was able to rise above the disorientation, confusion, and exhaustion that was leading to self-devaluation and realized that she needed to love herself, recognize her worth, and be capable of



“*Kasi kung meron tayong tiwala sa sarili na kaya nating gawin lahat at kaya natin lagpasan, talagang malalampasan natin* (Because when we are confident that we can do everything and overcome, then we will really overcome).”

P6 also said that it was her Christian upbringing which contributed to having this kind of positive outlook in life: “*Natutunan ko sya dito sa church namin. Ang dami ko pong natutunan, pagiging positive kung paano haharapin, hanggang syempre po sa tulong ng prayers, word ni Lord* (I learned that from our church. I learned many things, being optimistic in your outlook, and with the help of prayers and God’s word).”

In addition, when her father passed away early in 2021, she said this:

“*Nagugulat ako kasi iiyak na lang ako kasi miss ko yung father ko. Pero in that time in that situation, iniisip ko na lang na merong pang natitira...meron pa akong pamilyang naiwan na kumbaga ayun naman ang tututukan ko sa ngayon. May isa pa kaming naiwan na parent yung mother ko na kumbaga, kailangan namin magsikap at ibigay kung ano ang pangangailangan niya.* (I get surprised because I find myself in tears whenever I am missing my father. But in that time in that situation, I just think about another family member left that we need to focus on. We have one more parent left, my mother, so we need to work hard to provide for her needs).”

This change was notable because she acknowledged that she is not the only person who can meet the needs of her surviving parent because she now referred to an “us” by using the words “*kami* (we)” and “*namin* (we)” from “*akong pamilya* (my family)” and “*tutukan ko* (I will focus).” With a moderate level of self-compassion (2.56), this may explain for this kind of attitude in P6 which affirms that maintaining a balanced view gave her the confidence to face them. P6’s word cloud (Figure 28 below) depicts a heart formed by hands.



*“Nakakatulong sakin yung pag-quiet down ng sarili. Binibigyan ko ng time ang sarili ko na makapag-isip paano ko anuhin yung situation. Tapos nakakabigay din ako ng time sa sarili ko na ipagkatiwala ang bagay na hindi ko kayang kontrolin kay Lord. Binibigyan ko ang sarili ng oras para maintindihan ko ang pinagdadaanan ko (It helps when I quiet myself down. I give myself time to think about how I will deal with the situation. I can entrust to God what I cannot control. I give myself time to understand what I am going through).”*

When I asked what happened after he responded in this manner, he claimed to have experienced a change in the way he viewed himself and his situation. *“Nagbago pananaw ko sa situation, sa sarili...mas devoted na sa sarili. Ngayon every moment counts. Mahalaga na sakin ngayon (My perspective of the situation and myself have changed...I am more devoted to myself. Now, every moment counts. It’s important to me now).”*

P3’s SCS results revealed high level of self-kindness (3.8) and high level of mindfulness (4.25) even though overall SCS level is moderate at 3.25. I followed him up after three weeks and this is what he said: *“Natagpuan ko na kasi ang sarili ko. Na burnout ako at ayaw ko ng maulit yun, dahil nakaka-drain (I finally found myself. I was burned out and I don’t want that to happen again because it is draining).”* This burn out phenomenon is often experienced by those engaged in helping professions such as the findings of Barnard and Curry (2012) and Lee and Rosales (2020) about pastors experiencing emotional exhaustion while in ministry.

When I conducted a member check with P3 this January, he said that he now has a better understanding when his body sends stress signals. *“Hindi na ganon ka-stress. Peaceful naman na ang mind ko ngayon. Nababalanse ko na ngayon (It’s no longer that stressful. My mind is at peace now. I can balance things now).”*

In addition, he said,





**P9:** *“Almost naibigay ko na lahat sa kanila (I have given them everything).”* In pursuing a college education, P9 encouraged herself and took the time to prioritize her life goals. When I asked her (now in her mid-30s) about her studies, she remarked, *“konting-konti na lang makakapagtapos na (I will be able to finish, it’s only a matter of time).”* She arrived at this realization near the end of our conversation and acknowledged that she was able to reach her lifelong dream of finishing college with God’s help. This also made her realize that she does not need to live in shame.

*“May napatunayan ako sa sarili ko. Kasi sobrang liit ng tingin ko sa sarili ko before. Ngayon may konting confidence kahit huli na kasi nanay na ako. Pero ang sarap sa pakiramdam na kahit nanay na ako, kahit mahirap dinanas ko, nagkaroon ako ng confidence kasi wala ako noon eh...wala akong confidence, sobrang mahiyain ako kasi katulong lang ako. Kaya ko na patunayan ang sarili na kaya ko pala...kaya ko ng humarap sa tao, hindi na ako mahihiya (I was able to prove something to myself. Because I had a low view of myself before. Now I have gained some confidence even if it’s almost too late because I am now a mother. But it feels good that even if I am a mother, even if I went through difficulties, I gained confidence because I didn’t have that before...I didn’t have confidence, I was so shy because I am just a maid. I can now prove to myself that I can do it...I can face people, I will no longer be ashamed).”*

When I asked P9 what she would say to her younger self, she said,

*“Congratulations, you made it! (Shedding tears of joy.) Magpatuloy lang, magpakatag...laging tumawag kay Lord, walang imposible. Wag bibitaw sa mga pangarap. Mangarap kahit gaano kahirap, magpatuloy, magtiwala sa Lord kasi siya lang gagawa ng way para sa bawat isa sa atin (Congratulations, you made it! Just carry on, be firm...always call on the Lord, nothing is impossible. Do not give up on your dreams. Dream big even if it’s difficult, go on, trust in the Lord because he is the only one who will make a way for each of us).”*

P9 finally experienced a different perspective of herself. Whereas before, she had a low opinion of herself, she now came to realize that she had accomplished something by pursuing college even as a married woman. She could now look at herself no longer with shame but with pride having gained a level of confidence.

P9's word cloud (Figure 31) through a graduation cap symbolizing her highest accomplishment despite her many sacrifices.



**Figure 31 P9's Word cloud**

Tangney and Dearing (2002, 83) claimed that “shame is an acutely painful experience” accompanied by a sense of powerlessness of not being able to do anything about one’s situation. In shame, the sense of self is threatened, and it is no wonder then, that shame is known to impede learning and transformation (Walker 2017, 8). Overcoming the shame and becoming aware of what she can accomplish in life, P9’s experience is not different from the perspective transformation of the women in Mezirow’s study (1978, 8). As a result of these women’s choice to re-enter college, they became aware of the cultural assumptions placed on them which they have come to internalize and embrace as a part of their identity. In recognizing these stereotypes that have shaped their beliefs and views and in questioning them, the women gained an awareness that they have allowed these assumptions to limit and define who they were (Mezirow 1978, 14-15).

**P14: “Hindi ko na maramdaman na belong ako (I can’t feel that I belong).”**

P14 initiated reconciliation with the leadership, but she was rejected twice which left her with no other option but to leave. When she finally left in 2022, she said this:

*“Masaya pala...bakit ko ba pinahirapan ang sarili ko for 3 years pwede naman pala ako na umalis ng mas maaga? Kaya lang syempre sa isip ko rin, may process pa rin talaga na dadaanan na hindi basta-basta siya pwede kong talikuran. After noon, wala na ako nakikitang hope or chance na magre-reconcile, so there's no use for me to stay. Ngayong nandito na ako sa bagong church, ayon mas lighter, mas magaan na yung feeling kasama ang kapatiran. Hindi ko na ramdam ang tension, mas nakaka fellowship na ako ng malaya (It’s joyful...why did I make it difficult for myself these past 3 years when I could have left earlier? However, I also thought that there is a process that I must undergo, and I could not turn my back easily. After that, I did not see any hope or chance for us to be reconciled, so there’s no use in remaining there. Now that I am in this new church, I feel lighter being with the brethren. I do not feel the tension, I can freely fellowship with others).”*

When I asked her what happened after this, she replied,

*“Pananaw o pagtingin sa sarili ko...may nagbago. Kasi nagpe-preach na ako sa church, then parang na ano ako dun na hindi ako qualified to be a preacher, questionable ako. So, parang bumabalik-balik siya sakin... Nung after 3 years, just this recently, may nag invite sakin magpreach, yung parang I have to overcome, kailangan ko siya tanggapin na makakatayo ako dahil may grasya o biyaya ang Diyos. Nandoon yung battle na baka may ano na naman. Pero dahil ibang church naman siya, hindi naman siya naging komplikado. Pero parang ito yung turning point (My view or how I see myself... something has changed. Because I used to preach in church, then I was caught off-guard when I was told I am not qualified to be a preacher, that I was questionable. So, that kept coming back to me... After 3 years, just this recently, I was invited to preach, it was like I must overcome it, I must accept that I will be able to stand because of God’s grace. The battle was there, that there might be an issue again. But because it was a different church, it did not become complicated. But this was like the turning point).”*

P14 was able to experience a changed perspective and the “recovery of her valued self” by engaging in self-compassionate practices aside from her strong belief in God’s enabling grace and called it a “turning point.” She said,

*“Inalis ko ang sarili ko doon sa awa sa sarili ko. Yung nahahabag ka na sa sarili mo, hindi naman yung habag na malulunod ka na sa self-pity. Pero dahil mahal*



*pinakikita mo sa kanila, most likely yun din yung magiging sila. I want to be a role model to those I disciple. Pinakikita ko sa pagtrato sa sarili ko, sa pagtanggap sa sarili ko, yun yung nais kong matutunan nila. They have their own strengths and weaknesses and yung weaknesses na yun ang dapat ginagamit na para mas lalu pang mag-grow at gumaling sa ginagawa (How I treat myself, that's what my disciple will catch. That's the example they will learn from me. Managing time or treating yourself with kindness will serve as examples to them. Every time you think about who you are, what you teach, what you show them, most likely that's how they will also turn out. I want to be a role model to those I disciple. I show by how I treat myself, in accepting myself, that's what I want them to learn. They have their own strengths and weaknesses, and those weaknesses are what they need to work on to grow more and excel in what they do)."*

P12's self-compassion level was high (3.66) which may support his perceptions of himself, especially in terms of how he views his effect on other people. Although I mentioned in the demographic data that in this study, age, gender, and educational level did not have any connection with self-compassion, it may seem that P12's high self-compassion may be due to his family upbringing.

*"Yung pagpapalaki sakin ay tamang pagpapalaki ng magulang. Kungdi dahil sa kanila hindi ako ganito. Most of my traits and attitudes ay nadevelop kasi kasama ko sila. Hindi sila mahigpit or harsh sakin while growing up (My parents raised me well. I will not be this kind of person were it not for them. Most of my traits and attitudes were developed because they were constantly with me. They were not strict or harsh toward me while growing up)."*

Hence, in discipling people, he tells them not to be hard on themselves because they can turn to other people for help. His view of self-compassion is having a balanced view of the self and the world.

*"Balanse siya, not only concerning oneself, nandun ka sa gitna. Hindi mo dapat pabayaang ang sarili mo dahil meron kang mission, meron kang purpose, meron kang gagawin. At the same time, hindi ka naman masyadong sobra na parang it's all about you. Nasa middle siya. Hindi ko iisipin na kaya ko lahat on my own. Hindi ko rin iisipin na kawawa naman ako. Kasi nga balanse siya (It's balanced, not only concerning oneself, but it's also being in the center. You do not have to neglect yourself because you have a mission, you have a purpose, you have something to do. At the same time, you do not only think it's all about you. It's in*



that I will not be affected. And I also learned that I do not need to be the one taking care of people. I do not have to serve the community always and that I need the help of other people).”

As a pastor, we sometimes think we have to do all the ministry by ourselves.

There will come a time when we need to be at the receiving end. This was another learning for P10 when he said,

*“Pinakita ng Diyos pwede pala kahit ganon. At nakita ko ang provision ng Panginoon and it’s not by my strength na lahat mai-provide ko. Mga 2 weeks din kami na-sinustain kami ng Panginoon. Itong mga dinaanan na pagsubok gaya ng Covid, na ospital asawa, inalagaan ko sarili ko at minahal ko sarili ko, na-experience ko na pwede pala mag relax (God showed me that this is also possible. I saw God’s provisions and it’s not by my strength that I will be able to provide for everything. God sustained us for two weeks. The challenges I went through like Covid, the hospitalization of my wife, I learned to care for myself, and I loved myself, I learned that I could relax).”*

P10 realized that as a pastor, he can relax from ministry when his circumstances prevent him from serving like getting sick. He realized that he has limitations and as a minister, he is not expected to serve people all the time. P10’s word cloud (Figure 34) depicted by a person with outstretched arms because he was liberated from his distorted perception of a pastor.



### **Emerging Theory: The Recovery of the Valued Self**

The central research question of this study asks, “Do Filipino Bible college students undergo perspective transformation when practicing self-compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences?” The Theoretical Model of Recovering the Valued Self that emerged from this data answered the question by illustrating and explaining how the transformation occurred. Select Filipino Bible college students experienced transformation when facing emotionally charged situations by recognizing the self’s devaluation leading to the recovery of the self’s value through self-compassionate practices. The emerging themes that led to the development of the theoretical model include “emotional crisis,” “coping resources,” “turning point,” “self,” and “holistic self-compassion.”

*Emotional crisis.* This is the disorienting dilemma that the students struggled with and set off the transformation process. In this study, the crisis was a result of the pandemic or Covid-19 which resulted in several losses rendering the students powerless. This was a highly charged emotional dilemma for the students when their cognition was not functioning well, and they were overwhelmed with the surge of emotions.

*Coping resources.* The surge of emotions pushed the students to figure out and understand what was happening to them. Being on survival mode, the students made use of several “coping resources” available to them. However, their “coping capacity” brought them to a point where they either coped well through “adaptive coping” involving physical, social, and other means. Or they did not cope well enough through “less adaptive coping” by resorting to withdrawal, anger, self-blame, negativity, denial, ambiguity, regretting, pushing the self, and by struggling. When the students could not

understand nor resolve their dilemmas, they moved on to spiritualizing their experiences. Their emotions moved them to a point of surrender when they acknowledged that there was nothing they could do and so they left their circumstances to God and experienced a “teaching moment.” Being born again Christians, they used their Christian faith and understanding to make sense of their experiences and understand what was happening to them.

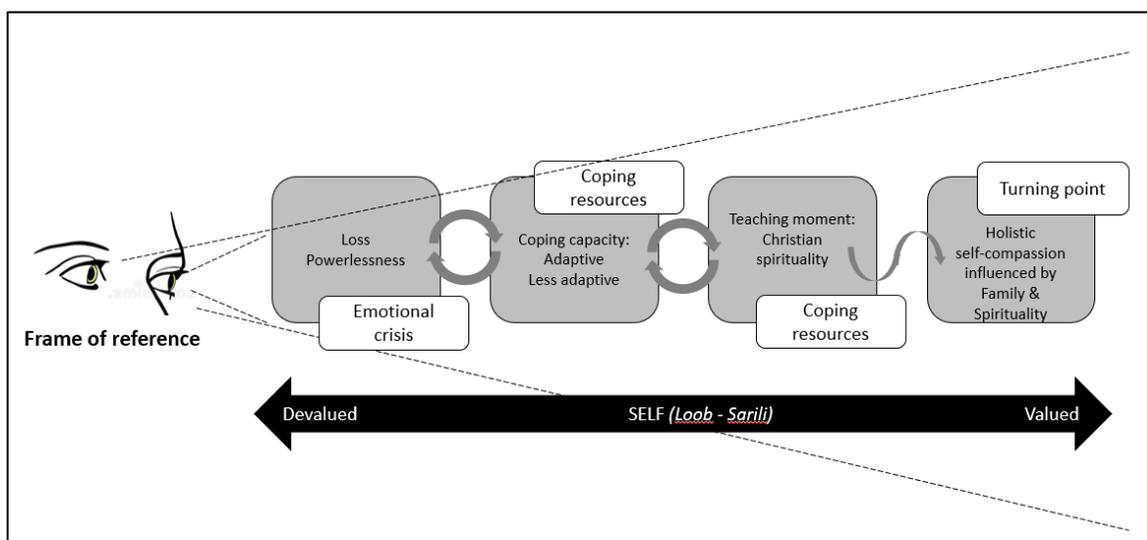
***Turning point.*** This crucial point transpired when the students realized that they had set aside their own suffering and attended and responded to the suffering of other people around them. Acknowledging the “self-sacrifice” led to experiencing transformation by “recognizing the devalued self.” To “recover the valued self”, the students had to engage in “self-compassionate practices.” This resulted in holistic ways of “thinking”, “feeling”, and “behaving” about themselves.

***Self.*** The context of transformation was within the inner self or *loob* or *sarili*. Students recognized that in neglecting the self, they continued to suffer. Thus, the greatest transformation happened in recognizing the self as valuable. This increased awareness of the self was evident in the experiences of the students.

***Holistic self-compassion.*** Self-compassion is a holistic embodiment of what it means to show compassion or kindness to oneself manifesting in transformed ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. In recognizing the valued self, the students practiced self-compassionate ways of valuing the self and therefore increasing their awareness.

## Theoretical Model

As the categories, themes, and sub-themes emerged from the data, the resulting outcome was the Theoretical Model of Recovering the Valued Self as shown in Figure 35 below. Extracted statements from the students' stories presented earlier demonstrated how the theoretical model was grounded in the data.



**Figure 35 Theoretical Model of Recovering the Valued Self**

In this illustration, the eyes represent the students' frame of reference through which they interpreted and made sense of the same situation they were all in. The parallel broken lines represent the extent or reach of the frame of reference. The lines are broken to signify the progress or growth toward a wider frame of reference. The widening signifies the transformation that transpired from a narrow point of view or a faulty frame from the start. The rectangles (small) and squares (big) are the phases involved in the transformational learning process the students underwent. The solid gray arrows going downward and upward in an almost cyclical movement show the non-linear process of transformation. According to Mezirow, transformation is not a strictly a linear process

even though it happens in predictable stages. “Perspective transformation are typically difficult negotiation, compromise, stalling, backsliding, self-deception, and failure” (Mezirow 1991, 100). A learner acquiring a new insight may feel overwhelmed by it since it causes tension between one’s established perspective and the new meaning being negotiated (Mezirow 1991, 100). The success of transformation depends upon obstacles overcome in the process of integrating the new meaning scheme (Taylor 1989, 157). These gray arrows going downward and upward also reflect the Filipino cyclical thinking in this current study. This kind of reasoning was evident in the way the students vacillated between the self and others. They were torn between putting the family first before themselves. They found it *mahirap* or difficult to prioritize the self. The black double-headed arrow represents the context of the students’ transformation which occurred in the self (*loob o sarili*) from “recognizing the devalued self” to “recovering the valued self.”

The students used their frame of reference to understand the “emotional crisis” they were facing during the pandemic. The students wrestled with issues of “loss” and their “powerlessness” over the circumstances. In trying to make sense of these, the students’ relied on “coping resources” to deal with the challenges. This led them to experience a “teaching moment” as the students turned to God for help. Influenced and guided by their “Christian spirituality” led to a “turning point” wherein the students recognized that they had set aside their own needs to meet the needs of other people around them. This form of “self-sacrifice” helped in “recognizing the devalued self.” In acknowledging their own suffering, the students learned to engage in “self-compassionate

practices” that led to “recovering the valued self.” Christian spirituality and family were both instrumental in the development of self-compassion within the students.

Table 23 below shows the initial (open), intermediate (axial), and advance (selective) codes or sub-themes and emerging themes resulting in the theoretical model illustrated above.

**Table 23 Initial, Intermediate and Advance Coding**

<b>Initial (Open) Codes / Sub-themes</b>	<b>Intermediate (Axial) Codes / Emerging Themes</b>	<b>Advance (Selective) Codes / Emerging Theory</b>
Thinking	Emerging Theme: Holistic Self-compassion	Emerging Theory Theoretical Model of Recovering the Valued Self  Explanation Filipino Bible college students experienced transformation when facing emotionally charged situations by recognizing the self’s devaluation leading to the recovery of the self’s value through self-compassionate practices.
Feeling		
Behaving	Students perceived self-compassion holistically as it involved one’s cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions influenced by Christian spirituality and family.	
Loss	Emerging Theme: Emotional Crisis	
Powerlessness	The pandemic led the students to experience an emotional crisis resulting in various losses rendering them powerless.	
Coping capacity	Emerging Theme: Coping Resources	
Teaching moment	The students relied on various coping resources to manage during the crisis leading them to rely strongly on their Christian spirituality via the teaching moment.	
Recognizing the Devalued self	Emerging Theme: Turning Point	
Recovery of the Valued self	The students experienced a turning point in the	

	transformational process leading to a heightened sense of self.	
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Theory is created from data. If done correctly, the participants speak in voices that are clearly understood and representative (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 56). This study may not provide the only explanation into the role of emotions in transforming perspectives. However, this study endeavored to provide an understanding of the significance of the affective dimension of learning. In presenting the students' unique stories, "even a small amount of understanding can make a difference" (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

### **Summary**

Mezirow views transformation as non-linear but moving through somewhat predictable stages. The process begins with the disruption of a previous way of looking at the world, typically an uncomfortable experience (Johansson and Felten 2014, 14). This disorienting process calls into question the learners' prevailing views about themselves or the world, priming them to challenge the assumptions that have previously supported that view (Mezirow 1991, 98). Critical thinking, dialogue, and self-reflection leads to the examination of assumptions and opens the learner to other ways of seeing the world around them and their place in it (Mezirow 1991, 98-99). To ensure lasting transformation or change, learners must then act on these new learnings by weaving them into the fabric of their very own lives (Mezirow 1991, 99).

These various stages in Mezirow's theory bear a resemblance to the emotional journeys of the students in this study. The questioning of assumptions, critical thinking, and dialogue transpired as the students were reflecting on their experiences and narrating their stories. In responding to the questions, the students themselves recognized their

faulty frames of reference. By accommodating their new learning and testing them against their ongoing experiences, it resulted in greater self-awareness, in building confidence, and in gaining responsibility.

Scholars of transformative education (Taylor 2001; Merriam 2004; Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007; Dirkx 2008; Kokkos and Tsimboukli 2011; Taylor and Cranton 2013; McCormack 2018) have highlighted the powerful role that emotions play in learning as presented in Chapter I. This research aimed to investigate whether emotions are instrumental in bringing about transformation and it has done that. The powerful emotional experiences of the students became the seedbed for transformation in terms of how they saw themselves and interpreted their circumstances leading to significant learning and finding new ways of dealing with unpleasant life experiences.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Overview**

This study examined the role of emotions in the transformative learning process. The central research question was, “Do Filipino Bible college students undergo perspective transformation when practicing self-compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences?” The central and sub-research questions were designed to be open to multiple perspectives and allowed a grounded Filipino theory to emerge in the process. This study is significant as it connected with the ongoing debate regarding the transformative process and the affective aspect of learning.

This chapter presents a concise summary of the findings and conclusions on the interplay of self-compassion, an emotion-focused coping strategy, and transformation. Before presenting the theoretical and practical implications as well as recommendations for future research, a review of this study’s purposes is given below.

1. Understand how Filipino Bible college students perceive self-compassion.
2. Generate a working theory grounded in the lived experiences of select Filipino Bible college students that will expand the current literature base in transformative learning in terms of whether emotions affect transformation.
3. Present theoretical and practical ways of fostering transformation in learning environments.

The summary of findings is discussed in the succeeding paragraphs vis-a-vis the research questions of this study.

### **Summary of Findings**

The first sub-research question asked who were the select Filipino Bible college students in this study. Eighteen select Filipino Bible College students participated in this study. They were selected through purposive sampling based on the selection criteria. At the time of the interviews, these 18 students were studying in different Bible Colleges within the National Capital and Calabarzon Regions. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 54. In this study, age did not have any connection with self-compassion. In terms of gender, more than half of the participants were females and the rest were males. Similarly, gender did not have any connection with self-compassion. The students were also at different levels of their program of study and in this current study, it was not possible to conclude that educational level was connected with self-compassion since studies have yet to be conducted to explore this connection. In terms of status, 60 percent of the participants were single, and the rest were married. Likewise, it was not possible to conclude that status had any connection with self-compassion due to lack of research exploring the connection between these two concepts. Lastly, the participants' emotional wellbeing was assessed using the PTSD Checklist. All participants were cooperative and friendly during the interviews and FGDs. They volunteered to share their personal stories freely and were not coerced to share more than what they wanted to.

The second sub-research question asked the students' perceptions of self-compassion. Although studies have been conducted among Filipinos on the phenomenon of self-compassion, this pales in comparison to the number of studies conducted among

Westerners, not to mention other Asians. Most of the students of this study were not familiar with the moniker because self-compassion is in English. However, when students were asked how they perceived self-compassion, they were quick to conceptualize it by describing how it might look like in terms of thinking, feeling, and behaving. These three domains interacted to produce a self-compassionate person exhibiting holism in thinking, feeling, and behaving. This perception aligns well with the holistic understanding that is unique to Asians like Filipinos in the sense that knowledge and understanding are not compartmentalized. Alejo (1990, 57) stated “*hindi magkakahiwalay ang isip, salita at pagkilos*” which means Filipinos are not fragmented in their thinking, feeling, and behaving. In other words, the *loob* (self) of a self-compassionate person is the totality of the person’s thinking, feeling, and behaving demonstrated by *positibong pag-iisip* (positive in thinking), *balanse sa pag-iisip* (balanced in thinking), *may malasakit sa sarili* (concern for the self), *may tiwala sa sarili* (confident of oneself), *mapagmahal sa sarili* (loving oneself), *mabuti sa sarili* (kind toward the self), *inaalagaan ang sarili* (cares for the self), *naglalaan ng oras sa sarili* (takes time for the self), *inaayos ang sarili* (improves the self), and *tinatanggap ang sarili* (accepts the self). This was also emphasized by Ramos (2020) who conceptualized *loob* as holistic in the sense that *loob* is non-dualistic. There is emotional-rational and body-soul harmony which aspired unity with God” (Ramos 2020, 300). Christian spirituality and family emerged also from this current study which contributed to the development of self-compassion. The students shared that they developed a loving and caring attitude toward themselves based on biblical teachings amplified by their pastors. Since Filipinos share a strong bond with the family it also showed that parental support helped in the

development of self-compassion. In this current study, holistic self-compassion agrees with the explanations of Alejo (1990) and Ramos (2020) which entails a non-dualistic and non-compartmentalized person. Moreso, in this current study, holistic self-compassion is also affirmed by the influence of Christian spirituality and family. Hence, self-compassion as perceived by select Filipino Bible college students is holistic since it involves the cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), behavioral (behaving), spiritual (Christian spirituality), and personal historical (family) domains.

The third sub-research question asked what unpleasant life experiences the students underwent during the pandemic. The students shared their difficulties and challenges, and these were categorized as losses at the productivity, personal, and social levels. These losses took an emotional toll on the students which rendered them powerless since they were not functioning well cognitively. Hence, the emerging theme of emotional crisis fit the students' experiences because they were dealing with their own emotional states as they lost jobs, ministries, educational opportunities, finances, connectivity, time, including illnesses and deaths due to Covid-19 involving family members, relatives, and friends. These unpleasant experiences caused the students to feel powerless over their circumstances because they were helpless. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, they felt limited in their movements which also prevented them from being able to address and alleviate their suffering.

The fourth sub-research question asked how the students responded to the emotional crisis they underwent. Results showed that the students had various coping resources which they accessed. Their capacities to cope included both adaptive and less adaptive coping. Adaptive coping entailed social and physical coping, refocusing,

introspecting, positive appraisal, and an accepting attitude. Less adaptive capacities included withdrawal, struggling, negativity, ambiguity, denial, self-blame, pushing oneself, regretting, and anger. After having reached a point where they were unable to successfully navigate the emotional crisis, the students turned to God for help and eventually experienced a teaching moment. This enabled the students to interpret their circumstances through their Christian beliefs and understanding, to ask God the “why” questions, and to practice the spiritual disciplines.

The fifth sub-research question asked how the students were affected after treating themselves with compassion. Since they are Bible college students who are born-again Christians, their spirituality was instrumental in bringing them to a turning point when they recognized that they had devalued themselves through self-sacrificial behavior. Their faulty understanding of self-sacrifice had affected their coping responses in the sense that they felt that they had to sacrifice themselves and put others’ needs before their own. Hence, they set aside their own suffering and sought ways to relieve the suffering of the family. The realization that the self was also suffering and needed care and attention enabled them to enact self-compassion, and to recover the value of the self. This made it possible for the students to experience a transformed frame of reference or a transformed way of viewing the self and their circumstances. The transformation that the students spoke of happened within the *sarili o loob* which refer to an interior or inner self.

### **Theoretical Model of Transformation and Emotions**

The purpose of this study was to generate a theoretical model of transformation based on the lived experiences of Filipino Bible college students by determining whether

emotions play a role in transformation. In generating the theory, I maintained an open stance and a sensitivity to the respondents' perspectives. As such, supporting questions were necessary and this allowed for a Filipino grounded theory to emerge.

The theoretical model that emerged from the themes and sub-themes addressed the central research question of “Do Filipino Bible college students undergo perspective transformation when practicing self-compassion in dealing with unpleasant life experiences?” The Theoretical Model of Recovering the Valued Self was presented in Chapter IV, and it showed the connection between transformative learning and emotions through the construct of self-compassion.

The transformative process was triggered by an emotional crisis brought about by the pandemic based on the students' experiences and this was the disorienting dilemma. This crisis caused them to experience various kinds of losses rendering them powerless. In their attempts to make sense of what was happening to them, they employed different coping resources. When these did not help, they turned to God and experienced a teaching moment. In doing so, the students reached a turning point causing them to acknowledge that they turned to self-sacrificial behavior to meet the needs of significant people such as the family. In setting the self and their own suffering aside, they had devalued themselves. Despite their best efforts to help their families, they continued to suffer and were unable to make sense of what was happening to them and relieve themselves of their own suffering. When they started acknowledging their personal pain and suffering through mindful self-compassion, they began the recovery of the valued self. Transformation happened within the context of the self or *loob (sarili)* where the powerful changes took place.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study supported the cognitive aspects of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Mezirow's theory identified life-changing crisis events as disorienting dilemmas because these are dramatic changes that open avenues for questioning beliefs and assumptions which were not questioned before. Disorientation begins with a dilemma which triggers changes either gradually or abruptly (Taylor 1998). "Perspective transformation is most often explained as being triggered by a significant personal event" (Taylor 2000). This disorienting dilemma may be an acute internal and personal crisis and most of the studies that explored the process of perspective transformation agree with this (Taylor 2000, 298). The transformative learning model of Jane Taylor (1989) classified trigger events into social events (external factors) and psychological events (internal factors). These trigger events require attention from the learners to pave the way toward a direct confrontation of their reality. They also prepare learners to expect, anticipate, accept, and seek change (Taylor 1989, 198). "In the light of Covid-19, pre-pandemic mindsets are dysfunctional" (Eschenbacher and Fleming 2020). Everyone was caught unaware and unprepared for it. This was also verbalized by the students of this study. As a result, they were embroiled in their own emotional struggles during the pandemic which they described as challenging, difficult, and anxiety-causing. Their entangled emotions were very raw and powerful enough to cause confusion, disequilibrium, and chaos. As a result, the emotional struggles of the students in this current study paved the way for meaning-making since these acted as impetus for learning. They were compelled to confront the disturbing issues they were experiencing

(Taylor 1989, 198) and in their emotional struggle for survival, it paved the way for adjusting and reframing their mindsets.

Mezirow posited that one's problem and transformation are shared experiences in nature because others have negotiated the same challenges and changes (1991, 98; Taylor 1989, 156). We locate ourselves within a shared reality (Taylor 1989, 71) and the pandemic was a common experience for the students of this study because this was the shared reality in which they all found themselves. While the experiences of each student were unique, these bore striking similarities in terms of the challenges they faced. They expressed similar frustrations in their studies, ministries, work, finances, health, and time which affected their productivity levels. Other than themselves, the students recognized that other people were suffering during the pandemic. They also recognized that this was a novel situation and the experience of not knowing what to do added to fears, discontentment, disorientation, and inability to cope during a crisis (Mezirow 1991).

Ambiguity contributes to not knowing how to cope especially in emotionally charged situations. This was specifically evident in this study. Due to the unprecedented nature of the trigger event, the students were oblivious to it when it occurred. Hence, they were caught unprepared resulting in disruptions to their ministries, studies, and work. Being prevented from going outside added to the severity of their dilemma because they were restricted from visiting their own family members, relatives, and friends. Illnesses and deaths aggravated their circumstances and led to further ambiguity, frustration, and grief.

The students engaged in critical self-reflection as they examined themselves and assessed their assumptions, beliefs, values, and meaning perspectives or frame of

reference. Brookfield (2000, 125) asserted that critical reflection is "an ineradicable element of transformative learning" meaning, transformation cannot happen without critical reflection. This study found that all participants engaged in critical self-reflection. The respondents were Bible college students who were in the different stages of adulthood with developed cognitive abilities (Piaget 1929) enabling them to be critical by questioning and evaluating many things.

Perspective transformation as "the process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better understood" (Mezirow 1991, 98) was affirmed by the results of this current study. The students' faulty frame of reference about the self was adjusted and this paved the way for them to integrate new realizations. The students had gained a more inclusive and open perspective about themselves and others and had come to appreciate the self.

The results of this study did not only support the transformative learning theory, but it also expanded the theory. This study sought to establish the connection between emotions and perspective transformation through the lived experiences of students who negotiated unpleasant life experiences. This study has shown that transformative learning is not purely a rational enterprise. As the students engaged in the phases of Mezirow's theory from the disorienting dilemma to critical self-reflection, they relied on their cognitive as well as their affective capabilities. As Taylor and Cranton (2013, 37) posited, emotions are inherently linked to critical reflection. Moreover, Mezirow stressed that the conative plays a specific role in that "it is not enough to understand intellectually the need to change the way one acts; one requires emotional strength and an act of will in

order to move forward” (Mezirow 1991, 100). In emotionally charged situations that do not fit our expectations, and which lack any coherent meaning for us, they cause disruptions and tensions in our thinking (Mezirow 1991, 61). Hoggan, Malkki, and Finnegan (2017) were correct in pointing out that the transformative learning theory is “undertheorized.” The theory recognizes that cognitive interpretation of an experience results in “appreciation, inspiration, amusement, or some other emotional reaction” (Mezirow 1991, 30). In fact, Mezirow claimed that transformation of meaning schemes such as specific beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions through reflection is an everyday occurrence (1991, 98). Furthermore, he cited that perspective transformation can occur when faced with dilemmas such as death, illness, separation or divorce, children leaving home, being passed over for promotion or gaining a promotion, failing an important examination, or retirement which have the potential of triggering an avalanche of emotions. Mezirow may continue to push for the cognitive aspect of his theory, but it cannot be denied that there is an emotive aspect to transformation.

The emotional challenges the students faced compelled them to try and make sense of their experiences. In recognizing that their frame of reference was faulty, they were able to acknowledge their own suffering and address it by turning to self-compassionate behaviors. Self-compassion as perceived by the students is the interaction of the cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions. These three components or dimensions work together in a self-compassionate individual. Self-compassion enabled them to recover the valued self which was devalued through self-sacrificial behavior of setting aside personal suffering to alleviate the suffering of others who were deemed more important. Transformation happened by thinking, feeling, and behaving

compassionately toward the self. Hence, in this study, emotions served as gateways to a deeper understanding of the self and the world. This is why the process of transformation relies on the exploration and resolution of emotions (Taylor 1998, 34; 2001, 219). As could be gleaned from the study findings, emotions have a substantial role in Mezirow's transformation process. Hence, it is arguable that the validity of the emotional aspect of transformation be given renewed and equal emphasis as well.

The study also showed that self-compassion provided people with the needed emotional resources for regulating emotions (Neely et al. 2009). Self-compassion helps one to be mindful of present emotions and accept vulnerability. In doing so, one can respond through healthy and adaptive coping ways. As a growth-oriented approach (Neff 2003a), self-compassion enables individuals to choose what to attend to and how to attend to them that would promote growth and transformation which is aligned with the emotion regulation theory of James Gross (1978). The usefulness of self-compassion is very evident in that it creates a level of mindfulness and awareness of what one is feeling at the moment. In this study, the students were able to develop a self-compassionate frame of mind by recognizing that they needed care and attention and by attending to themselves with kindness and love and by accepting the self as valuable. They paid attention to their own suffering by owning their feelings which indicated mindfulness. As a transformative intervention, self-compassion aided in transforming negative perspectives into positive ones thereby leading to a balanced and healthy understanding of the self or *loob*. In reducing the negative impact of emotionally charged situations, this led to a healthier way of relating to oneself (Neff 2009) leading to the recovery of the value of the self.

### **Practical Implications**

An ethical issue that has been raised many times about transformative learning which has not been fully addressed is whether educators have the right to intervene to bring about transformation in learners (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007, 154). This issue impacts the role of educators. It is true that educators are expected to be experts, resource persons, and authorities in the courses they teach (Cranton 2006, 103) and this accords them the autonomy in designing learning so that learners are transformed. If so, this raises the issue of the imbalance of power in the learning environment or classroom since it contradicts the goal of transformative learning which is the empowerment of learners (Cranton 2006, 59). “When the educator’s role is to set up an environment and learning context in which people critically question their habits of mind in order to become open to alternatives, it is emancipatory learning that he or she is fostering” (Cranton 2006, 106). Thus, the educator promoting transformative learning is a provocateur or one who challenges and provokes critical thinking in learners (2006, 107). But this goes back to the issue whether educators have the right to interfere deliberately in the learning process so that perspective transformation happens or if this is even an ethical educational practice.

To these issues, Merriam et al. (2007, 155) gives credit to Cranton’s work (2006). If educators are to have democratic classrooms based on trust and respectful relationships, they may need to reflect on and examine their own teaching practice. Cranton called this “unmasking” which means that educators themselves question their understanding of power (2006, 110). Being conscious of the power relations in the teaching practice as adult educators may pave the way for transformation to happen first

from within the person of the teacher. This is supportive of this study's finding that transformation transpired within the interior self or *loob*. Thus, Brookfield (2000) stated, becoming aware of the power dynamics in adult education brings realization to educators that classrooms are not tranquil and neutral spaces. When educators become aware of the pervasiveness of power, then they begin to realize the oppressive aspects of learning that were thought or assumed to be good and advantageous for learners. By transforming power, the teaching-learning process shifts from power over learners to power with learners (Brookfield 2000, 137).

As the researcher of this study, I was introduced by the school administrators as a graduate student pursuing doctoral studies. They also selected students to participate. I recognized that power may have been exerted so that I could be accommodated. However, I had to respect the student's willingness to participate and so, it became necessary to seek their permission. As a result, there were 10 students from the different research locales who refused to take part and I respected them for their choices, and they were not forced to participate. Among those who participated, I made appointments on days that were convenient to them, and I was mindful of their time. The students were free to share their stories and experiences. They were not forced to say more than what they wanted to share. Seeking their permission, assigning codes, using pseudonyms, and assuring them repeatedly that they will not be identified in any way in the research, nor their school were the ways in which they were protected. I tried to establish rapport with the participants and made sure to express my thanks for their time and for entrusting their stories with me. The interviews were helpful to them because it gave them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and talk about them in the open with a neutral

party. One participant affirmed this saying that it made a big impact on him. Before asking the research questions, I saw to it that I explained the results of the instruments to them. The participants affirmed and appreciated the results.

Apparently, she had received negative news about her work months prior to the interview and it affected her such that she started questioning God. So, hearing the good results of the questionnaires brought so much relief. During the member checks, the participants expressed gratefulness for being able to voice out how they felt. They expressed that the interviews and FGDs were helpful to them.

Stress is nothing new to students. Educators and administrators must recognize students' vulnerability to stress and aim toward helping them achieve work-life balance. As an emotion-focused coping strategy, self-compassion helps in evoking positive emotional responses to challenging and emotionally laden situations. Schools and educators can work together in creating learning spaces where students are able to express emotions in healthy ways and develop resilience in suffering to avoid its debilitating effects on their mental and emotional wellbeing. Students may also need assistance in developing healthy ways of coping which is a form of emotion regulation (Garnefski, Kraaij, and Spinhoven 2001, 1312). In regulating responses, they can address the emotions that are triggered by the problem.

The students also mentioned social coping ways such as seeking out trusted people like teachers. This says a lot about the role of educators in being role models and persons of trust whom students should be able to approach when they need help and guidance. This implies establishing safe spaces of trust and openness so that students are encouraged to speak up and be transparent. Transformative and authentic educators

explore all possibilities by fostering trust until it outweighs fear such that learners begin to experience and discover their hidden potentials (Cranton and Wright 2008, 101). Trust takes time to build, and educators must be patient. These safe spaces of trust allow students to explore and discover with courage the great possibilities that are open to them (Cranton and Wright 2008, 102).

An understanding of healthy spirituality is needed if we desire longevity in the ministry since studies have made associations between emotional labor and the service profession (Hochschild 1983). Emotional labor is the process of managing feelings by workers according to organizationally defined and accepted rules and guidelines. Arlie Hochschild in her seminal work *The Managed Heart* (1983) claimed that people manage their emotions by directing what and how they ought to feel due to the constraints imposed by social structures and institutions on these efforts. Hochschild identified “feeling rules” which societal norms dictate are the appropriate type and amount of feeling that should be expressed in a particular situation. This keeps privately felt emotions in check so that they fall within expected norms of behavior and so that acceptable outward emotional expressions are aligned (Hochschild 1983). Emotional labor is therefore “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display,” calling attention to how people manage their own feelings to create a particular emotional state (Hochschild 1983, 7). This results in what Hochschild called “emotive dissonance” (1983, 90).

Workers who are required to display emotions regardless of whether these are congruent with their feelings may over time develop a sense of self-estrangement or distress. More generally, because of the deep connection between emotion and the self, Hochschild suggests that those who perform emotional labor are susceptible to a range of identity-related issues that impinge upon their psychological well-being (Wharton 2009, 149).

Pastors are expected to meet a variety of needs including people's spiritual as well as emotional needs. This places a huge burden on pastors especially when the congregation perceives the pastor as invincible and always ready to serve and minister 24/7. Hence, this may require theological institutions and churches to work together in helping pastors and students training for the pastorate to nurture and develop healthy spiritual and emotional practices without sacrificing the self. This implies revisiting the message of selflessness and dying to the self and questioning how this is communicated so that the self is not eliminated in discipleship. This also suggests that theological institutions self-reflect in the spirit of humility and strive to be open to new learning.

The sense of self among the students was also a tremendous breakthrough. Developing this sense of self, or becoming authentic, is in itself a transformative experience. This has the potential of leading to further transformation and further authenticity in a kind of spiral of learning (Cranton and Wright 2008, 104). Educators may need to foster unique ways by which students can discover themselves by knowing their interests and learning preferences (Cranton 2006).

We live in a broken world where suffering and pain are never absent. In affirming self-compassionate attitudes within the tenets of Christian spirituality, students may be assisted in developing a healthy acceptance of the self, one's limitations, and of suffering as part of the human condition.

### **Recommendations for Future Inquiry**

The interviews and FGDs were valuable to the students because in narrating their experiences, they found their voices and felt empowered. In sharing their stories, they were able to self-reflect and enter into dialogue which helped them to make sense of the

challenges they were facing and emerge from them with a sense of hope of better things to come.

Future studies may want to consider enlarging the research population and diversifying research locales by including both secular and liberal colleges to generalize the results. Other factors within the affective dimension as well as other ways of knowing may also be explored to determine how these aid in transformation and thus further expand the transformative learning theory. The role of spirituality in transformative learning is another area that may be explored since it seems to play a significant role in changing mindsets. The participants of this study relied on their Christian spirituality to make sense of what was happening, and this enabled them to move forward in the transformation process and make progress.

Biles and Knight (2014, 10) stated that Christian education is a high calling from the Lord which demands only the best. For this reason, theological institutions may need to look into their practices whereby the message of Christ concerning selfless service is presented in a balanced manner so that the emphasis of denying oneself and carrying one's cross is not misconstrued. In many Christian contexts, the theme of self-denial is heavily emphasized (Brodar, Crosskey, and Thompson 2015, 231). Jesus claimed that those who wanted to become his followers should deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him (Luke 9:23-24). This is how we have learned self-sacrificial behavior as part and parcel of living out our faith. This needs to be balanced so that it does not lead to a harsh stance toward one's self.

Seminaries and Bible colleges can also encourage a healthy acceptance of suffering without denying it as natural to the human condition. We live in a world marred

and broken by sin (Gen. 3; 1 John 1:8) and suffering and pain are consequences of sin (Isaiah 1:1-9; Romans 2:9; 3:9-20; 5:12; 8:22). But as image bearers of Christ, we can live in a sin-filled world and yet be victorious and hopeful as we look forward to a renewed earth where Christ reigns (Wright 2022).

Theological institutions may need to recognize the amount of stress students face and identify ways they can help them achieve balance in life. In the recently concluded Lausanne Asia 2022 Congress in Thailand with the theme “Rethinking Church and Mission, God’s Agenda for Today”, Dr. Edmund Ng called for Asian churches to talk about mental health issues. A meta-analysis of studies conducted during Covid-19 revealed a high 34% incidence for depression and 41% for anxiety in Asia alone. With the current total population of Asia at 4.75 billion, this means that close to 1.5 to 2 billion people in Asia are struggling with depression and anxiety (Ng 2022). Other factors aside from the post-pandemic issues will surely bring about more mental and emotional health problems for which we may not be prepared and competent to handle. “South Asian countries have high prevalence rates of anxiety and depression, suggesting a heavy psychosocial burden during this pandemic. Clinical and public mental health interventions should be prioritized alongside improving the social determinants of mental health in these countries” (Hossain et al. 2021). This is also a call not only to Christian churches but to theological institutions to work together to develop mental literacy for an informed response to this post-pandemic new normal as committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

Mezirow (1991) emphasized that transformation must happen at the individual level before any kind of change at the societal level can happen. Hence, future studies

may want to explore the relationship between emotions and social action. Aside from self-compassion, other factors that contribute to mental and emotional health that may lead to a transformed way of looking at life and the world are also possible areas of research.

Covid-19 has resulted in significant damage to individuals, families, workers, and the economy. What further aggravates the problem is that there is still much that we do not know about the virus (Eschenbacher and Fleming 2020). We need to constantly question our assumptions about what we know at present as we continue to face disorientation and disequilibrium. In view of this, perhaps we should continue asking how can we live “transformatively” in this new normal? Hopefully, transformative learning will help us gain a better perspective of the unknown aspect in our new normal especially how it impacts life at present and in the future.

## APPENDIX A

## PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

November 3, 2021

Bishop ██████████  
President

████████ Bible College

████████████████████  
Quezon City

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Bishop ██████████:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at ██████████ Bible College. I am currently enrolled in the Doctor of Philosophy–Transformational Learning Program at Asia Graduate School of Theology–Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in Antipolo City and I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study is entitled “*Perspective Transformation via Self-Compassion Among Selected Bible College Students.*”

I hope you will allow me to recruit 4 students (2 males and 2 females) to anonymously complete a questionnaire and to participate in one-on-one interviews lasting about an hour depending on how much the student is willing to share with me as the main researcher. They may also be asked to participate in a focus group discussion together with other student participants. Students will be given a consent form to be signed by them before any interviews are conducted.

If you grant approval to this research study, student participants will complete a questionnaire survey in Google Form (<https://forms.gle/QJtnTz7S7Ua2RdK56>) and the survey process should take no longer than five (5) minutes. Their responses will be treated confidentially and identities (their names and the name of the school/organization) will be anonymous unless otherwise expressly indicated. No costs will be incurred by either your college or the individual participants.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study. All research data will be stored for a period of three (3) years, after which, all data will then be deleted. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

I hope to follow up thru email next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. I may also be reached at my email address: [phoenicia.datu@apnts.edu.ph](mailto:phoenicia.datu@apnts.edu.ph).

If you agree, I would appreciate an email reply from you. In addition, a signed letter of permission on your institution’s letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study at ██████████ Bible College will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Phoenicia S. Datu, PhD student  
AGST-APNTS

**APPENDIX B****PERMISSION GRANTED BY COLLEGE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**KAINOS BIBLE COLLEGE**  
#20 KJ St. cor. K-8th St. Brgy. East Kamias, Quezon City  
0936-960-5421

---

December 20, 2021

**Phoenicia S. Datu**

Asia Graduate School of Theology-Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary  
Antipolo City

**Re: Permission to Conduct Research Study**

Dear Ms. Datu:

I am pleased to inform you that your request to conduct a research study at Kainos Bible College has been approved.

Best wishes for success in this research.

Sincerely,

Registrar  
Kainos Bible College

## APPENDIX C

### INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

#### **What is the research about?**

I am interested in talking to people from Bible colleges on their perceptions and experiences on compassion toward oneself when dealing with unpleasant life experiences during the pandemic and what effects this might have on the self and one's circumstances.

#### **Why is this important?**

Self-compassion is an important area of research because previous studies have shown that cultivating a compassionate or kind attitude toward the self helps people face problems and difficulties.

Finding out what students think about self-compassion and how they experience this in life might help me recommend strategies that would help people develop compassion for themselves especially when facing problems and difficulties.

#### **What do I have to do?**

If you would like to participate in this study, I will ask you to answer this questionnaire. After which, I will arrange to meet with you so we can talk about your thoughts and experiences involving self-compassion. We will meet for up to about an hour, depending on how much you want to share.

If you are not aware of what self-compassion means and what it entails, it does not matter. We will explore it together when we sit down and talk.

I am interested in what you have to say and there are no right or wrong answers.

#### **Other things you need to know:**

I will record our discussions so that I will be able to remember everything you share. The recording will be stored and secured for five years and then deleted.

If you prefer not to be recorded, we can talk about other ways to help me remember what you have to say.

Aside from the one-on-one interview, you may also be asked to join a group discussion together with other participants of this study and which will also be recorded. As the main researcher, I have measures in place to maintain confidentiality. I will change any names and places you mention. You will also choose a pseudonym for yourself so we can maintain your anonymity. If what you share suggests that you or someone else is at risk of harm, I will need to pass on this information to the appropriate school authorities to help you.

You can also choose to withdraw from this study by letting me know. You will also be able to view the summary of the findings of this study by March 2023, should you choose to receive a copy.

There would be no risk or harm to you or your studies by participating in this research. However, you will gain knowledge on self-compassion and ways in which you would be able to access this inner resource to help you in your studies.

If you have any concerns about any aspect of this study, you will need to inform me as the main researcher, and I will do my best to respond to your questions. Should you have any complaints about this study, please contact AGST-APNTS, PhD Department thru (02) 658-5872.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this and find out about the study. Please feel free to get in touch with me should you have other questions.

Researcher details:  
Phoenicia Datu, PhD Student  
AGST-APNTS  
Kaytikling, Antipolo City

Email: [phoenicia.datu@apnts.edu.ph](mailto:phoenicia.datu@apnts.edu.ph)

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Please encircle 'Yes' or 'No' to indicate your consent.

1. I have read or discussed and understood the information on this study and agree to participate.  

Yes	No
-----	----
  
2. I understand that I will take part in a one-on-one interview lasting about an hour (or a number of short interviews that add up to about an hour), where I will be asked about my understanding, perspective, and experiences on "compassion for oneself" (self-compassion).  

Yes	No
-----	----
  
3. I understand that I may be asked to take part in a group interview lasting about an hour, where I will be asked to share about my understanding, perspective, and experiences on "compassion for oneself" (self-compassion) together with other participants of this study.  

Yes	No
-----	----
  
4. I know and understand that the one-on-one interview and group interview will be recorded.  

Yes	No
-----	----
  
5. I agree to have the one-on-one interview and group interview recorded.  

Yes	No
-----	----
  
6. I can stop the one-on-one interview at any time I want to.  

Yes	No
-----	----
  
7. I understand that should I decide not to continue with the interview and withdraw from the study, I can do so and that I need to communicate this to the main researcher.  

Yes	No
-----	----
  
8. I understand that I will use a pseudonym instead of my real name to keep my anonymity.  

Yes	No
-----	----
  
9. I understand that if what I say may be harmful to me and/or to others, the main researcher can pass this on to school authorities who would be able to help me.  

Yes	No
-----	----

10. I understand that taking part in this research will not affect my involvement with the school or seminary.

Yes

No

11. I have had the chance to ask questions about the study from the main researcher.

Yes

No

A summary of the findings from this research will be made available around April 2023. If you would like to receive a summary, please indicate here.

\_\_\_ Yes, I wish to receive a copy.

\_\_\_ No, I do not wish to receive a copy.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E

### AGREEMENT TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

As the principal researcher of this study, I understand that I may have access to confidential information about participants. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about participants are completely confidential.
- I agree not to divulge, publish, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information obtained in the course of this research project that could identify the persons who participated in the study.
- I understand that all information about participants obtained by me in the course of my study is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information.
- I will hold in the strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the videotaped interviews and focus group discussions.
- I will not make copies of any videotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interviews.
- I will store all study related videotapes and materials in a safe and secure location as long as they are in my possession.
- I will delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer and any back-up devices after the completion of this study.



Phoenicia S. Datu  
**Signature of Principal Researcher**

February 9, 2022  
**Date**

As a participant of this study, I understand that I may have access to confidential information about other participants. By signing this agreement, I am indicating my understanding of my responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about participants are completely confidential. I will not divulge names and other identifying information about participants of this study to unauthorized persons.
- I understand that all information shared by me and by other participants is confidential. I agree not to divulge or share any of this information to unauthorized persons.
- I will hold in the strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the videotaped focus group discussions.

**Participants/Date**

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**Participants/Date**

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## APPENDIX F

### ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1 of 7

## Survey Questionnaire

Research Project

After section 1 [Continue to next section](#)

Section 2 of 7

### Information for Potential Participants

What is the research about?  
I am interested in talking to people from Bible colleges on their perceptions and experiences on compassion toward oneself when dealing with unpleasant life experiences during the pandemic and what effects this might have on the self and one's circumstances.

Why is this important?  
Self-compassion is an important area of research because previous studies have shown that cultivating a compassionate or kind attitude toward the self helps people face problems and difficulties.

Section 3 of 7

### Interview Consent Form for Participants

Please select 'Yes' or 'No' to indicate your consent.

Section 4 of 7

### Personal Information

Description (optional)

## Section 5 of 7

## Confidentiality Agreement



As a participant of this study, I understand that I may have access to confidential information about other participants especially in a group interview. I am indicating my understanding of my responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

## Section 6 of 7

## PTSD CHECKLIST-Civilian Version



Weathers, F. Litz, B., Huska, J. & Keane, T.  
National Center for PTSD - Behavioral Science Division

## Section 7 of 7

## SELF-COMPASSION SCALE: How I typically act towards myself in difficult times



Kristin D. Neff, Ph. D.  
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology  
University of Texas

**APPENDIX G**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

Pseudonym \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Year level \_\_\_\_\_

Degree of concentration \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number \_\_\_\_\_(mobile)

## APPENDIX H

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### Introduction

*“I wanted to ask your thoughts and experiences on a particular topic today. There are no right or wrong answers. I am most interested in your thoughts and experiences. I will probably ask you at different times to explain or clarify to me in more detail about what you have said because I am interested in what you have to say, and I want to understand it better (Gusto kong marinig ang mga nasa isip mo at karansan mo tungkol sa topik natin ngayon. Walang tama at maling sagot. Interesado ako sa iyong mga naiisip at karansan. Magtatanong ako kapag nais kong malinawan sa iyong mga sinabi dahil interesado ako sa iyong sasabihin at gusto kong maunawaan ito ng mabuti).”*

#### **RQ 1: How do you perceive self-compassion? (Ano ang pagkakaunawa mo sa salitang self-compassion?)**

- Have you heard about self-compassion before? (*Narinig mo na ba ang self-compassion dati?*)
- Is there an image or word from your native language that comes to mind? (*Mayroon bang imahe o salita sa inyong lenguahe na sumasagi sa isip mo tungkol sa salitang ito?*)
- How did you learn about treating yourself with kindness? (*Paano mo natutunan na pakitunguhan ng may compassion ang iyong sarili?*)
- How did feelings of being kind to yourself develop over time? (*Paano na-develop ang mga feelings mong ito sa iyong sarili?*)

#### **RQ 2: What unpleasant life experiences did you encounter during the pandemic? (Ano ang mga hindi kasiya-siyang mga karansan ang hinarap mo noong panahon ng pandemya?)**

- Can you tell me about problems you encountered or difficulties you experienced? (*Maari mo bang ibahagi ang mga problema o paghihirap na naranasan mo?*)

#### **RQ 3: How did you respond to these unpleasant experiences? (Paano ka tumugon sa mga hindi kasiya-siyang mga karanasan na ito?)**

- How did you react and respond to these experiences? (*Paano ka nag-react o tumugon sa mga karanasang ito?*)

#### **RQ 4: How were you affected when you treated yourself with compassion in dealing with these unpleasant experiences? (Paano ka naapektuhan nang pinakitunguhan mo ang iyong sarili habang humaharap sa mga hindi kasiya-siyang mga karanasang ito?)**

- What effect did treating yourself with kindness have on you? (*Ano epekto sa iyo ng pagtrato ng ganito sa iyong sarili?*)

Do you have any other thoughts or comments you would like to share? (*Mayroon bang mga palaisipan o komento na nais mong ibahagi?*)

*Give me one moment to check just to make sure if I was able to ask you the questions on my list. (After going over your list and you think that everything was covered, thank the participant, and give the token for his/her cooperation.)*

## APPENDIX I

### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### Introduction

*“Thank you all for coming today. I wanted to ask further about your thoughts and views on self-compassion and how this has led to a transformed understanding and perspective. Your stories provided great insight.*

*Again, there are no right or wrong answers. I expect you to have different points of view so feel free to share even if you disagree with what others have said. I am most interested in your thoughts and views. Do not feel that you have to respond to me all the time. I encourage you to talk with each other. Also, with your permission, this session will be recorded for my personal use only in line with my research.”*

#### Opening question

1. *“I did an analysis of the interviews to find themes that are common. These are the common themes, and I would like your feedback.” (Show the common themes.) Do these themes reflect your experience? (Gumawa ako ng pagsusuri ng mga magkakatulad na tema. Ito ang mga tema at nais kong makuha ang inyong palagay.)”*

#### Key questions

2. *When is it easy to be compassionate to yourself? (Kailan madali ang maging compassionate sa sarili?)*
3. *When is it hard to be compassionate to yourself? (Kailan naman mahirap maging compassionate sa sarili?)*

#### Concluding question

4. *Is there anything you did not get a chance to share? (Mayroon ka pa bang nais ibahagi?)*

**APPENDIX J****INSTRITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**

Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary  
Ortigas Avenue Extension, Kaytikling  
Taytay 1920, Rizal, Philippines

**NOTIFICATION OF REVIEW APPROVAL**

February 10, 2022

Datu, Phoenicia  
[phoenicia.datu@apnts.edu.ph](mailto:phoenicia.datu@apnts.edu.ph)

**Protocol Title: “DOES KINDNESS MATTER? SELF-COMPASSION AND PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION AMONG SELECTED UNDERGRADUATE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN MANILA: A GROUNDED THEORY”**

**Protocol#: AR-016**  
**IRB Review Date: February 10, 2022**  
**Effective Date: February 10, 2022**  
**Expiration Date: February 10, 2023**  
**Review Type: Exempt Review**  
**Review Action: Approved**

The IRB made the following determinations:

- Waivers: Waiver of informed consent documentation
- Other Documentations: All necessary attachments submitted
- Risk Determination: No greater than minimal risk

Please contact me at [cingsian.thawn@apnts.edu.ph](mailto:cingsian.thawn@apnts.edu.ph) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Miss Cing Sian Thawn  
Director of Research  
Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

## APPENDIX K

### SELF-COMPASSION SCALE

#### HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

- |           | <b>Almost<br/>never</b>  |          |          |          | <b>Almost<br/>always</b> |
|-----------|--|----------|----------|----------|--------------------------|
|           | <b>1</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b>                 |
| _____ 1.  | I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.   |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 2.  | When I'm feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.                                     |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 3.  | When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.             |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 4.  | When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world. |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 5.  | I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.   |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 6.  | When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.                             |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 7.  | When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.         |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 8.  | When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.   |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 9.  | When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance.  |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 10. | When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.  |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 11. | I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.                                 |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 12. | When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.                           |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 13. | When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.                       |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 14. | When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.                                    |          |          |          |                          |
| _____ 15. | I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.   |          |          |          |                          |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. When I fail at something important to me, I try to keep things in perspective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. When something upsets me, I get carried away with my feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. When I'm feeling down, I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. When something painful happens, I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

## APPENDIX L

### PERMISSION GRANTED BY AUTHOR

To Whom it May Concern:

Please feel free to use the Self-Compassion Scale in your research. Masters and dissertation students also have my permission to use and publish the Self-Compassion Scale in their theses. The appropriate reference is listed below.

Best,

Kristin Neff, Ph. D. Associate Professor Educational Psychology Dept. University of Texas at Austin

e-mail: [kneff@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:kneff@austin.utexas.edu)

Reference: Neff, K. D. (2003). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.

Coding Key: Self-Kindness Items: 5, 12, 19, 23, 26 Self-Judgment Items: 1, 8, 11, 16, 21  
Common Humanity Items: 3, 7, 10, 15 Isolation Items: 4, 13, 18, 25 Mindfulness Items:  
9, 14, 17, 22 Over-identified Items: 2, 6, 20, 24

Subscale scores are computed by calculating the mean of subscale item responses. To compute a total self-compassion score, reverse score the negative subscale items before calculating subscale means - self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification (i.e., 1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, 5 = 1) - then compute a grand mean of all six subscale means. Researchers can choose to analyze their data either by using individual sub-scale scores or by using a total score.

(This method of calculating the total score is slightly different than that used in the article referenced above, in which each subscale was added together. However, I find it is easier to interpret the total score if a mean is used.)

## APPENDIX M

### PTSD CHECKLIST

#### PTSD CheckList – Civilian Version (PCL-C)

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instruction to patient: Below is a list of problems and complaints that veterans sometimes have in response to stressful life experiences. Please read each one carefully, put an "X" in the box to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem *in the last month*.

No.	Response	Not at all (1)	A little bit (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a bit (4)	Extremely (5)
1.	Repeated, disturbing <i>memories, thoughts, or images</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
2.	Repeated, disturbing <i>dreams</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
3.	Suddenly <i>acting or feeling</i> as if a stressful experience <i>were happening again</i> (as if you were reliving it)?					
4.	Feeling <i>very upset</i> when <i>something reminded</i> you of a stressful experience from the past?					
5.	Having <i>physical reactions</i> (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when <i>something reminded</i> you of a stressful experience from the past?					
6.	Avoid <i>thinking about or talking about</i> a stressful experience from the past or avoid <i>having feelings</i> related to it?					
7.	Avoid <i>activities or situations</i> because they <i>remind you</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
8.	Trouble <i>remembering important parts</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
9.	Loss of <i>interest in things that you used to enjoy</i> ?					
10.	Feeling <i>distant or cut off</i> from other people?					
11.	Feeling <i>emotionally numb</i> or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?					
12.	Feeling as if your <i>future</i> will somehow be <i>cut short</i> ?					
13.	Trouble <i>falling or staying asleep</i> ?					
14.	Feeling <i>irritable</i> or having <i>angry outbursts</i> ?					
15.	Having <i>difficulty concentrating</i> ?					
16.	Being <i>"super alert"</i> or watchful on guard?					
17.	Feeling <i>jumpy</i> or easily startled?					

PCL-M for DSM-IV (11/1/94) Weathers, Litz, Huska, & Keane National Center for PTSD - Behavioral Science Division

**APPENDIX N**  
**RESEARCH LOCALE**



**APPENDIX O****CONFIDENTIALITY COMMITMENT FOR PEER DEBRIEFER****Confidentiality Commitment for Peer Debriefers**

20 November 2022

**Boundaries for Peer Debriefers:**

The peer debriefer is expected to maintain confidentiality by not revealing the identities of the research participants or any of their personal data. As peer debriefer, you should not disclose the stories, research data, or discuss the project to others. You are expected to maintain integrity and honesty in dealing with the research data including the stories, codes, categories, memos, and observation insights.

Please bear in mind that we must treat each other with love by ensuring confidentiality and privacy. If you agree with the above statements, please sign on this form.



Peer Debriefers



Phoenicia S. Datu, *Researcher*

## APPENDIX P

## WORD FOR WORD CODING

Mas mahirap sakin kasi kahit hag-aaral ako, kahit hagmi-ministry ako I need to work kasi breadwinner ako. Ang difficulties ko po sa studies. Actually, madami aspect po lalo na itong pandemic. Siguro yung time management because sa room ko po, I need to...parang yung room ko hindi na niya alam kung church ba siya kasi dun ako hango-online ministry, di na niya alam kung school ba siya kasi dun ako hagka-klase...parang dun nga sa isa pang school...tapos at the same time hindi niya alam kung office sya kasi I need to work din. Yun pa...may isa pa siyang role, kasi nga bahay sya...kwarto ko nga siya. So parang naisip ko na isa yon sa naging challenging for me is yung time...supposedly mas madami nga sana akong bras kasi hindi ako nagta-travel. Pero parang ang hirap niya hati-hatiin because kahit yung bras ko parang naconfuse siya dun sa functions ko. Sa particular na time na yon. Isa yon sa difficulties.

**Commented [M31]:** Finding it more difficult

**Commented [M32]:** Identifying role as student

**Commented [M33]:** Identifying role as minister

**Commented [M34]:** Identifying role as breadwinner

**Commented [M35]:** Identifying role as breadwinner

**Commented [M36]:** Finding it difficult

**Commented [M37]:** Having many, several problems

**Commented [M38]:** Managing time

**Commented [M39]:** Feeling confused about function of bedroom

**Commented [M310]:** Feeling confused about function of room as church

**Commented [M311]:** Feeling confused about function of room as church

**Commented [M312]:** Feeling confused about function of room as school

**Commented [M313]:** Feeling confused about function of room as school

**Commented [M314]:** Feeling confused about role

**Commented [M315]:** Bedroom

**Commented [M316]:** Challenging difficulty, problem

**Commented [M317]:** Managing time

**Commented [M318]:** Finding it difficult

**Commented [M319]:** Managing time

**Commented [M320]:** Managing time

**Commented [M321]:** Feeling confused

**Commented [M322]:** Feeling confused about her role

**Commented [M323]:** Time

**Commented [M324]:** Difficulty

## APPENDIX Q

## LINE BY LINE CODING

being intentional about being aware about giving	13	Sinasadya ko bigyan ng oras sarili ko. Aware ako kung kailangan ko bigyan ng oras ang sarili ko.
being diagnosed with his being overwhelmed by getting sick while father being affected by father being stressed by father's ill	14	Kapag unang-una, mabigat ang puso ko...nadiagnose ako na mataas na ---...kaya alam ko na malapit na ako ma-overwhelm ng problema ko. Nagka --- ako nung unang year na na-diagnose si papa. In relation with that...connected yung stress, diet ko...kaya magulo isip ko that time, chaotic. Pag ganun na yung nararamdaman ko, kailangan ko na ng time mag-isip-isip sa sarili ko.
being chaotic in one's needing time to being stressed being affected her	15	Affected na yung health ko. Stressful ang epekto sa akin. Binago ko po yung diet ko. Ang problems kasi laging nandyan eh. Sa pag cope up sa ganung situation, lalu akong naging diligent, consistent sa pagbibigay ng time sa sarili, pag-aalaga sa sarili ko.
changing diet problems are part of life giving time for the self taking care of the self as giving time for the self due	16	Pinili ko bigyan ng consistent time ang sarili kasi apektado na yung health ko. Apektado din yung ginagawa ko sa mga tasks na meron ako. Para mas maging productive...ang naisip ko agalagaan sarili, reflect yung time saakin...para tama ang pagtugon ko sa bawat situation.
being affected in daily taking care of the self reflecting to respond being overwhelmed by	17	Nahihirapan maging self-compassionate kapag overwhelmed na. Halimbawa sabay-sabay ang problema, mahirap intindihin. Madali unahin ang sarili, pag kaya-kaya ang situation. Parang natatantsa ko yung situation.
sabay-sabay ang mahirap intindihin putting self ahead losing time for the self due finding it routine dami problema	18	nung nagkasakit papa ko, tapos covid, yun yung nawala time sa sarili. Kasi ang dami problema. Babangon ako, ganun uli. Bawal kasi yung lumabas-labas non. kaya nakakapag reflect lang ako kung malapit na matulog o nagigising ako ng madaling araw. Pero bihira yon...kasi nung buhay si papa, ang araw ko umiikot sa kanya, sa pamilya ko, sa pag-aaral ko.
being prevented from going out waking up in the early morning his life revolved around his father looking for easy way out being transformed in per every moment counts	19	Nag-aaral ako sa --- para makapaglingkod sa Panginoon. Nasanay po kasi ako ng ok lang buhay, lalu na yung elementary at high school days ko... dumating yung tinawag ako ng Lord, para magserve sa kanya. Pangarap ko maging successful teacher or lawyer ako. Tapos academe po kasi ako mula elementary hanggang high school. Nakita po nila yung skillful ako...yung senior high school yung moment na yon. dati easy go lucky ako. magkaroon ng panandalian solusyon sa mga sitwasyon para mag cope up. Pero ngayon iba na. Nagbago pananaw sa situation, sa sarili...mas devoted sa sarili. Ngayon every moment counts...mahalaga na saakin ngayon. Maging teacher...pwede ko pa rin ituloy.

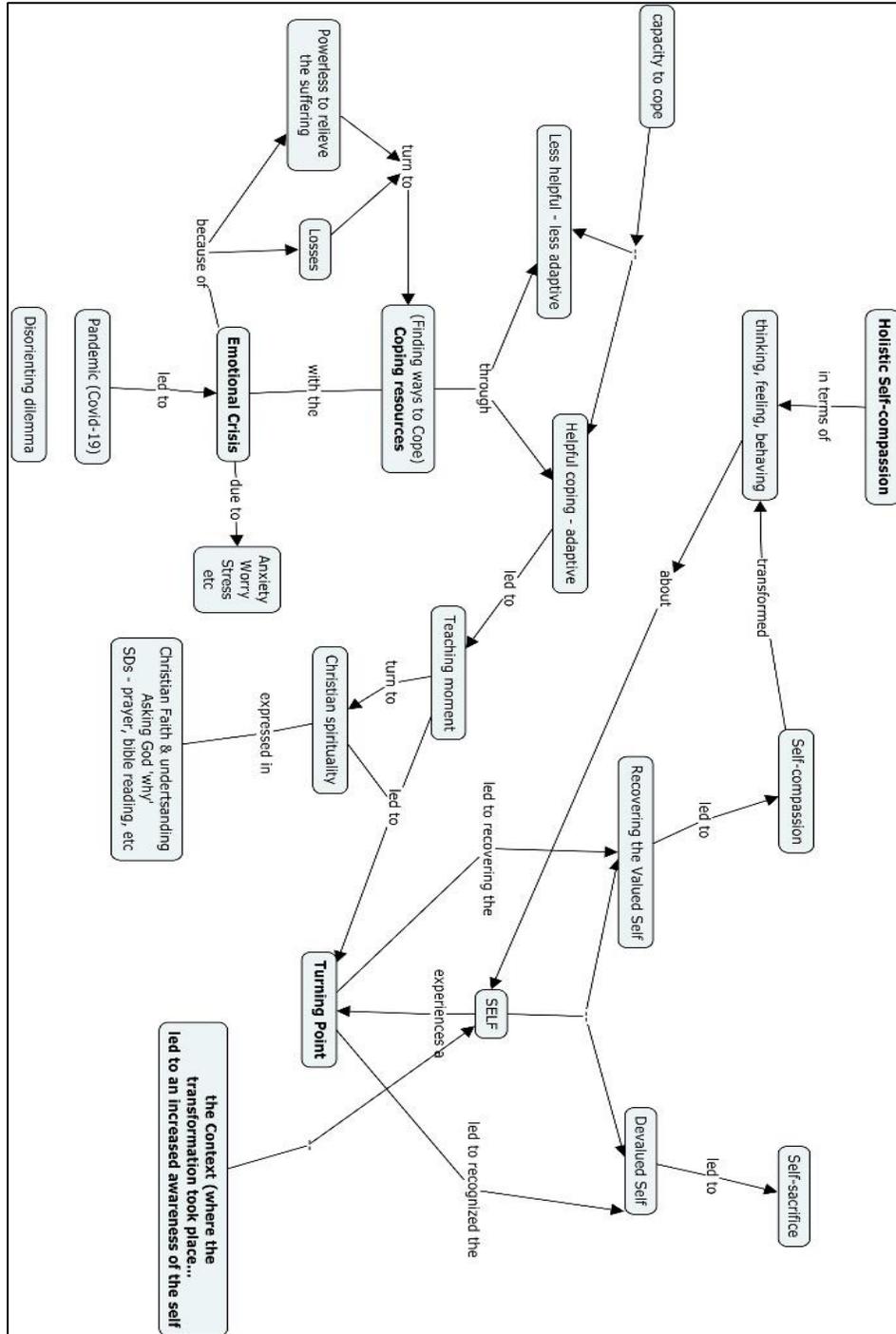
## APPENDIX R

## INCIDENT TO INCIDENT CODING

<p>P3</p> <p>Sobra po ang effect ng covid. Unang pagpatak ng covid, nadala ang tatay ko sa ospital, nakita yung stage 5 ---- kaya bukod po na stop yung kinabibi-busyhan ko, or ginagawa ko or nakasanayan ko, na-stop kasi sa problema natin.</p> <p>Vulnerable ako at that time. Pero ginawa ko, tinanggap ko yung realidad. Tanging nakakatulong na lang sa tatay ko yung dialysis. Naisip ko na rin na darating sa point na anytime soon, mawawala na samin ang papa ko. Kaya ginawa ko, every moment kasama ko po siya. Sinusulit ko yung pag-aalaga ko sa kanya. Kasama din sa pag-cope sa situation namin, kahit na wala pa akong financial...kumuha akong part-time, sa ganon lang.</p> <p>3rd among siblings. Kaso ako na lang ang lalaki kasama ko bunsong kapatid kasi yung 2 siblings have their own families. My father passed away nung --- 2021.</p>	<p><b>Commented [M31]:</b> Describing severe effect of Covid-19</p> <p><b>Commented [M32]:</b> Interrupting his routine due to father's sudden severe illness</p> <p><b>Commented [M33]:</b> Feeling vulnerable</p> <p><b>Commented [M34]:</b> Accepting reality</p> <p><b>Commented [M35]:</b> Accepting eventual death of father</p> <p><b>Commented [M36]:</b> Coping by caring for sick father</p> <p><b>Commented [M37]:</b> Spending time with sick father</p> <p><b>Commented [M38]:</b> Coping by working</p> <p><b>Commented [M39]:</b> Feeling burdened to care for family</p> <p><b>Commented [M310]:</b> Death of father in 2021</p>
<p>P6</p> <p>2021 po namatay ang father ko. And then I just want to share din na at that time po na mild stroke ang mother ko...nagkasabay po sila. Nung una, nung 2020, naospital po father ko covid din, sobrang mahigpit po sobra and then nung that time po non, mga --- naconfine po father ko sa ---- then bawal ang bantay, sya lang talaga mag-isa sa isang room and then sumunod naman po yung mother ko, mga ---- naman po sya and then after nun, nakalabas na father ko and then nakalabas ang mother ko. And then nung makalabas mother ko, binalik ko yung father ko nung ---- 2020 kasi nga lalong lumala. And then yung mother ko nagrecovery pa rin and until now, dun naman kinuha yung father ko. Kumbaga hindi pa fully recovered yung mother ko, sumunod naman na kinuha yung father ko.</p> <p>Labas pasok kami sa ospital. And then nung mga panahon na yon bawal po talaga...isa lang ang bantay...bale sa mother ko po ang bantay yung ate ko po and then ako yung naghahatid ng pagkain dyan sa labas ng ospital kasi at that time bawal po talaga ang bisita, bawal maglabas pasok. Then dun naman sa father ko nung naconfine sya, ako naman yung pinadala sa ----yung last na confinement nya kung saan dun na sya binawian ng buhay.</p>	<p><b>Commented [M311]:</b> Death of father in 2021</p> <p><b>Commented [M312]:</b> Mother getting sick at the same time</p> <p><b>Commented [M313]:</b> Being confined in hospital in 2020</p> <p><b>Commented [M314]:</b> Feelings of helplessness; could not be with sick father due to restrictions</p> <p><b>Commented [M315]:</b> Alternating sick conditions of parents</p> <p><b>Commented [M316]:</b> Losing a parent</p> <p><b>Commented [M317]:</b> Finding it hard to attend to both sick parents due to restrictions</p> <p><b>Commented [M318]:</b> Having both parents getting sick at the same time</p> <p><b>Commented [M319]:</b> Finding it hard to attend to sick parent due to restrictions</p>

## APPENDIX S

### THEORY GENERATION



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### **Work Experiences**

FAITH BIBLE COLLEGE - Quezon City, Philippines

Academic Dean (2011 – Present)

Dean of Students (2009-2011)

Adjunct Faculty (2004-2009)

IGSL-Foundations for Christian Leadership – Quezon City, Philippines

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FECPI Faith Fellowship Aurora - Quezon City, Philippines

Children's Pastor / Training Pastor (2004 – 2015)

RCBC SAVINGS BANK – Ortigas City, Philippines

Human Resources Manager (1994-2000)

MONDRAGON INTERNATIONAL PHILS. – Makati City, Philippines

Human Resources Officer (1990-1994)

BROOKS PHILS. – Makati City, Philippines

Recruitment Officer (1988-1990)

### **Educational History**

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PhD in Transformational Learning

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ATENEO DE MANILA UNIVERSITY

Masteral Units in Industrial Organizational Psychology

1997 - 1999

MIRIAM COLLEGE  
Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Science  
June 1981-April 1985

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**Awards & Recognition**

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Visiting Scholar, Asbury Theological Seminary  
September – November 2022

Responder, “Voice of Reason: The Body of Christ and the Issues We Face Today”  
APNTS 36<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Research Conference  
November 2019

Floyd T. Cunningham Academic Excellence Award  
APNTS  
May 2007

Summa Cum Laude  
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