

FIRE INCIDENT SURVIVORS' RECOVERY: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Urban fires pose complex challenges, particularly in densely populated areas where recovery processes involve not only rebuilding physical infrastructure but also addressing emotional, social, and psychological impacts. This qualitative case study explores the recovery experiences of fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City, focusing on coping mechanisms, the role of community support, and long-term recovery challenges. Guided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Resilience Theory, and Collective Trauma Theory, the study identifies five key themes: Coping with the Aftermath, Role of Community Support, Ongoing Challenges and Long-Term Recovery, Resilience and Adaptability, and Desire for Long-Term Stability. Data collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys reveal that survivors prioritized immediate needs, such as shelter and safety, before addressing emotional recovery. Community support emerged as vital for both practical and emotional needs, while financial barriers and psychological trauma remained significant obstacles. Survivors demonstrated resilience through personal strength, faith, and community solidarity, but expressed a need for sustained support, including permanent housing and livelihood programs. The findings highlight the necessity of tailored disaster recovery strategies for urban settings, offering insights to policymakers and practitioners on fostering resilience and stability in disaster-affected communities.

Keywords: Urban fire recovery, Disaster resilience, Community support, Psychological trauma, Urban disaster response, Case study, Davao City, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Resilience Theory, Collective Trauma Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Urban fires present significant challenges, particularly in densely populated communities such as a barangay in Davao City. These disasters lead to widespread destruction, resulting in the loss of homes, livelihoods, and emotional well-being of affected individuals (Fothergill, 2004; Norris et al., 2008). The recovery process for survivors is multifaceted, encompassing more than just physical reconstruction, but also involving emotional, social, and psychological aspects (Bonanno et al., 2010). Survivors of fire incidents must navigate the complexities of rebuilding their lives amid trauma, loss, and uncertainty. Various factors, including the availability of resources, the strength of community networks, and the resilience of both individuals and communities, influence this recovery process (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Masten, 2001).

While resilience, social capital, and community support systems play crucial roles in helping survivors rebuild their lives, much of the existing literature on disaster recovery focuses on rural settings or natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes (Heath et al., 2014; Berkes et al., 2003). This leaves a gap in understanding how urban fire survivors experience and navigate the recovery process. In densely populated urban areas like a barangay in Davao City, a combination of high population density, limited physical space, and constrained resources increases the challenges survivors face (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). Urban fire incidents differ from those in rural or less populated areas not only because of the larger number of affected individuals but also due to the complexities of urban planning, the scarcity of available housing, and the difficulties in rebuilding social networks (Cutter et al., 2008).

These urban-specific vulnerabilities necessitate a focused understanding of recovery processes tailored to fire incidents in such settings (Cutter et al., 2008). As Aldrich and Meyer (2015) note, the unique challenges posed by urban environments require new strategies for disaster preparedness and response, particularly in areas like a barangay in Davao City. Urban environments are particularly vulnerable to disasters due to complex socio-economic, physical, and cultural factors that demand tailored recovery strategies (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Fothergill, 2004).

This study aims to explore the recovery experiences of fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City by applying three key theoretical frameworks: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which offers insight into how survivors prioritize their needs from basic survival needs to self-actualization (Maslow, 1943; Prilleltensky et al., 2001); Resilience Theory, which emphasizes how individuals and communities demonstrate adaptability and recoverability in the face of adversity (Masten, 2001; Cutter et al., 2008); and Collective Trauma Theory, which examines how trauma affects communities and the role of collective resilience in the recovery process (Alexander, 2004; Hirschberger, 2018). These theories will

guide the analysis of survivors' coping mechanisms, the role of community support, and the long-term recovery efforts required to rebuild their lives.

Additionally, this study seeks to address a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the specific challenges fire survivors face in urban settings like a barangay in Davao City. By conducting a localized case study, this research will provide valuable insights into the psychological, social, and emotional aspects of recovery and the critical role of community resilience in the healing process (Berkes et al., 2003). The study will examine the coping strategies employed by survivors, the role of social networks in their recovery, and the ongoing challenges they face in rebuilding their homes, livelihoods, and emotional well-being. The findings of this study will contribute to developing more effective disaster preparedness and response strategies, especially for urban communities (Norris et al., 2008). By offering an in-depth understanding of the survivors' experiences, this research will assist policymakers, practitioners, and community leaders in identifying the most effective support systems and strategies to aid in the recovery process.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the recovery experiences of fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City, following a devastating urban fire. Specifically, the study addresses the following:

1. How did the fire survivors cope with the aftermath of the fire incident?
2. What role did community support play in the recovery process of the fire survivors?
3. What challenges do the survivors continue to face in rebuilding their lives, and what lessons have been learned for future recovery efforts?

This study aims to understand the multifaceted recovery process, including the coping mechanisms, the importance of social support, and the ongoing barriers that fire survivors encounter. The findings will provide insights that can help improve disaster preparedness and response strategies in urban settings, particularly in communities similar to a barangay in Davao City.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Disaster Recovery. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a foundational framework for understanding human motivation and recovery processes, particularly in the context of disasters like urban fires. According to Maslow (1943), human needs can be categorized into five stages, ranging from basic physiological needs to self-actualization. These needs are typically presented in a hierarchical, rigid order: physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and finally, self-actualization. This framework has been widely applied across various fields, including organizational psychology, religious counseling, and disaster recovery, as it helps understand how individuals prioritize needs and navigate recovery after traumatic events (Mustofa, 2022; Bagas, 2020).

In the context of fire recovery, Maslow's theory is particularly relevant as survivors must first address their basic needs—food, shelter, and safety—before they can begin to heal emotionally and psychologically. The loss of homes and livelihoods in a fire disaster forces individuals to focus initially on securing shelter and essential resources, which is in line with Maslow's assertion that basic needs must be met before higher-level needs such as emotional support and self-esteem can be pursued (Prilleltensky et al., 2001). While Maslow's theory has been critiqued for presenting needs in a rigid hierarchy and for overlooking socio-cultural influences (Ghaleb, 2024), it still offers valuable insights into how fire survivors' needs evolve as they recover. For example, after the immediate survival needs are met, the next stage of recovery involves social support, emotional healing, and the restoration of community ties, reflecting the second and third levels of Maslow's hierarchy—safety and love/belonging (Cui, 2023).

Despite its limitations, Maslow's framework provides a valuable perspective in understanding the recovery process of fire survivors. As survivors address basic survival needs, they can begin to restore emotional balance and pursue self-actualization, particularly when their emotional and social needs are supported by their community networks.

Resilience Theory and Fire Survivor Recovery. Resilience Theory offers a critical lens for understanding how individuals and communities adapt to adversity, particularly in the aftermath of disasters like urban fires. Resilience refers to the ability to recover from traumatic events and to adapt positively despite hardship. According to Masten (2001) and Southwick et al. (2014), resilience is characterized by factors such as positive self-esteem, strong coping skills, and the capacity for adaptation. This framework is particularly relevant for fire survivors, focusing on the dynamic process of returning and growing from adversity.

In the context of fire recovery, resilience manifests in various ways, including the rebuilding of homes, restoring livelihoods, and emotional healing. Survivors who demonstrate higher levels of resilience can better manage the emotional and psychological challenges of the disaster, navigate uncertainty, and engage in proactive recovery behaviors. As Breda (2018) notes, resilience is not a static trait but a process that unfolds over time, with individuals

and communities drawing on both internal resources and external support systems to overcome challenges. Aldrich and Meyer (2015) emphasize that resilience in urban settings requires strong community networks, as these networks provide essential support, resources, and emotional validation during the recovery process.

However, challenges in defining resilience consistently remain, particularly in the context of urban fire recovery. Resilience is influenced by various factors, including individual agency, community support, and temporal dynamics (Lade et al., 2019). For example, fire survivors may exhibit resilience through emotional strength, but long-term recovery requires sustained support and the rebuilding of community infrastructure. As such, resilience theory informs the study of fire survivors by highlighting how they demonstrate adaptability and recovery over time, helping them rebuild their lives (Cutter et al., 2008).

Collective Trauma Theory in Fire Recovery. Collective Trauma Theory, as proposed by Alexander (2004), provides valuable insights into the shared psychological impact of catastrophic events on communities. According to Hirschberger (2018), collective trauma refers to the emotional, psychological, and social scars left on communities by large-scale disasters, such as urban fires. In the aftermath of such events, communities experience not only individual trauma but also a collective sense of loss, grief, and disruption of normalcy. This theory underscores how the collective nature of trauma can affect community identity, values, and the social fabric, influencing the recovery process.

In urban fire settings, collective trauma can be particularly profound, as entire communities are affected by the loss of homes, livelihoods, and social networks. The shared experience of trauma can lead to a sense of solidarity and collective resilience, but it can also create divisions or hinder recovery efforts if not properly addressed (Abrutyn, 2023). As Gornostai (2022) notes, the transmission of trauma across generations, as seen in cases like the Holocaust and slavery, can have long-lasting effects on community healing. In the case of fire survivors, the collective nature of trauma means that recovery is not only about individual healing but also about rebuilding the community's emotional well-being and social cohesion.

Healing from collective trauma requires a safe environment where individuals can process their grief and loss, as well as a "collective thinking apparatus" that enables communities to come together and support one another (Koh, 2021). Coping strategies can vary, from progressive methods of collective healing to regressive responses that may hinder recovery. For fire survivors, the process of collective healing involves reconnecting with others in the community, restoring social networks, and finding ways to share resources and support (Irit & Keynan, 2016). Effective interventions and support systems are essential for facilitating both individual and collective recovery, making Collective Trauma Theory an important framework for understanding the challenges faced by fire survivors (Cypress, 2021).

Gaps in the Literature on Urban Fire Recovery. While much of the disaster recovery literature focuses on rural settings or natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes (Heath et al., 2014; Berkes et al., 2003), there is a significant gap in understanding the recovery experiences of urban fire survivors. Urban fire disasters, particularly in densely populated areas like a barangay in Davao City, pose unique challenges due to high population density, limited resources, and the complexities of urban infrastructure. Studies have primarily focused on the physical rebuilding of homes and infrastructure, often overlooking the emotional, social, and psychological dimensions of recovery.

Existing research on resilience, collective trauma, and recovery has largely concentrated on rural settings or natural disasters, leaving a void in our understanding of how fire survivors in urban environments experience and navigate recovery. This study addresses this gap by focusing on the psychological, social, and emotional challenges fire survivors face in a barangay in Davao City, providing insights into how social networks, resilience, and community support influence recovery. By applying frameworks like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Resilience Theory, and Collective Trauma Theory, this research aims to offer a deeper understanding of the multifaceted recovery process in urban fire contexts and inform disaster recovery strategies tailored to urban communities.

Literature review conclusion. This review of related literature highlights the complexity of recovery from urban fires, focusing on the psychological, emotional, and social dimensions of recovery. The theories of Maslow, resilience, and collective trauma provide valuable frameworks for understanding how fire survivors cope with loss and rebuild their lives. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding urban fire recovery, particularly in densely populated areas like a barangay in Davao City. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the recovery experiences of fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City, contributing to developing more effective, community-centered disaster recovery strategies for urban environments.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the recovery experiences of fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City. A case study methodology is particularly well-suited for investigating complex phenomena in their real-life context, where the boundaries between the phenomenon (fire recovery) and its context (urban setting) are not clearly

defined (Yin, 2014). This approach provides a deep understanding of survivors' coping mechanisms, the role of community support in recovery, and the long-term challenges survivors face in rebuilding their lives (Stake, 1995). By focusing on individual and community recovery experiences, this methodology allows for a rich exploration of emotional, social, and psychological dimensions, which are often underrepresented in disaster recovery studies (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Research Design. The research follows a qualitative design utilizing a case study approach. Case studies allow for in-depth exploration of the phenomenon in its real-world context, making it ideal for studying the recovery of fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City. This approach helps uncover the intricate dynamics of individual and collective recovery experiences, offering insights into both personal coping strategies and the community's role in the recovery process. Case studies are particularly useful when the phenomenon being studied is complex and cannot be separated from its context (Yin, 2014).

Participants and Sampling. The study will use purposive sampling to select participants who have directly experienced the fire disaster in a barangay in Davao City. Purposive sampling is ideal for selecting participants with specific characteristics relevant to the research questions, ensuring the data collected is rich and pertinent to the study's objectives (Creswell, 2013). A sample of 10 fire survivors will be selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Survivors of the fire incident in a barangay in Davao City.
2. Individuals who were directly affected by the fire through the loss of homes, and livelihoods, or experiencing psychological or social impacts.
3. Willingness to share their recovery experiences, coping strategies, and perspectives.

This sample size is appropriate for qualitative research, as it allows for in-depth exploration and provides a nuanced understanding of survivors' experiences (Guest et al., 2006).

Data Collection. Data will be collected using a combination of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), complemented by online surveys to ensure inclusivity and reach. This mixed-method approach will ensure a comprehensive understanding of both individual and collective recovery experiences.

1. In-Depth Interviews: In-depth, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the fire survivors to capture detailed personal accounts of their recovery experiences. These interviews will be conducted face-to-face for participants who can attend in person, while online interviews will be offered to those who cannot attend physically (Evans & Mathur, 2005).

The interviews will cover topics such as coping mechanisms, the role of community support, and long-term recovery challenges. Open-ended questions will allow participants to provide detailed insights into their experiences.

2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): A subset of survivors will participate in FGDs to explore shared experiences and the collective role of the community in recovery. FGDs provide a platform for participants to discuss their experiences and validate each other's perceptions of recovery (Evans & Mathur, 2005). These discussions will be recorded and analyzed for common themes related to community support and collective recovery.
3. Online Surveys: Online surveys will be offered to participants who cannot attend in-person interviews. These surveys will include both structured and open-ended questions. The structured questions will gather open-ended questions that will explore survivors' coping strategies, emotional recovery, and ongoing challenges.

Data Analysis. Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis will follow these stages:

1. Familiarization with the Data: The researcher will transcribe all interviews, FGDs, and surveys verbatim to ensure accuracy in capturing participants' responses. The researcher will then read through the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the content and nuances of the data.
2. Coding: The data will be coded both inductively and deductively. Inductive coding will capture themes emerging directly from the data, while deductive coding will align responses with theoretical frameworks such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Resilience Theory, and Collective Trauma Theory (Maslow, 1943; Masten, 2001; Alexander, 2004).

For example, responses related to meeting basic needs like shelter and food will be coded under Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, while responses related to recovery and resilience will be analyzed through Resilience Theory and Collective Trauma Theory.

3. Theme Development: The researcher will group the initial codes into broader themes representing key aspects of survivors' recovery processes. These themes may include topics such as emotional healing, community support, resilience, and the ongoing challenges of rebuilding homes and livelihoods.
4. Analysis: The identified themes will be analyzed in relation to the research questions. The researcher will interpret the themes to understand how survivors' coping mechanisms, community support, and long-term recovery challenges align with the concepts of resilience, trauma, and recovery outlined in the theoretical frameworks.

Ethical Considerations. The study will adhere to ethical guidelines to ensure the protection and well-being of participants:

1. Informed Consent: All participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Written informed consent will be obtained from all participants before data collection (Creswell, 2013).
2. Confidentiality and Anonymity: Participants' identities will be protected by using pseudonyms and securely storing data in encrypted files. The confidentiality of participants will be maintained throughout the study (Creswell, 2013).
3. Emotional Well-being: Given the sensitive nature of the topic, participants may experience emotional distress when recalling traumatic events. The researcher will provide support resources and referrals to counseling services if necessary (Mertens, 2014). Participants will be reassured that they can skip any question or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.
4. Voluntary Participation and Right to Exclusion: Participation in the study will be voluntary, and participants will have the right to withdraw at any time. The researcher retains the right to exclude participants who do not meet the criteria or who provide unreliable data, ensuring the study's credibility.

This qualitative case study approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of fire survivors' recovery experiences in a barangay in Davao City, focusing on their coping mechanisms, the role of community support, and the ongoing challenges they face. Through thematic analysis and a multi-method approach to data collection, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the complexities of disaster recovery and inform the development of effective recovery strategies for urban communities.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from the data collected through in-person and online surveys with fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns within the responses, focusing on the survivors' coping mechanisms, the role of community support, and the ongoing challenges they face as they rebuild their lives. The analysis draws upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Resilience Theory, and Collective Trauma Theory to provide context and guide the interpretation of the findings.

With data gathered from the interview, the transcripts were used for the extraction of major themes. Five central themes emerged from the interview: Coping with the Aftermath, Role of Community Support, Ongoing Challenges and Long-Term Recovery, Resilience and Adaptability, and Desire for Long-Term Stability. Each theme is explored in detail below.

Theme 1: Coping with the Aftermath

After the fire, survivors' immediate concerns were focused on securing their survival, primarily ensuring that basic needs like shelter, food, and safety were met. This theme emphasizes how the priority for survivors was simply regaining their sense of security and stability in the aftermath. As the survivors began their recovery journey, they confronted both physical and emotional challenges, with an initial focus on addressing immediate needs. This reflects the foundational principles of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, where physiological needs must be addressed before higher needs can be pursued.

Immediate Needs and Safety

The survivors' primary concern after the fire was finding a safe place to stay and acquiring food, water, and clothing. They were all deeply focused on addressing their immediate survival needs, as their basic needs had been disrupted by the fire. This sub-theme sheds light on how survival and security became paramount as they navigated through the early stages of their recovery.

Participant 1: "Finding a place to stay was our biggest challenge.

We lost everything."

Participant 2: "We struggled to find food, water, and clothing.

It was overwhelming."

Participant 3: "Nag-ask ko og tabang sa akong mga silingan ug pamilya, nag-inquire ko sa mga relief centers, ug nag-focus ko sa pag-settle sa immediate needs." (I have asked for help from my neighbors and relatives. I have inquired in relief centers and I have focused on settling the immediate needs.)

Participant 4: "Nag-utang ko para makapalit ug ginagmay nga paninda para makasugod ug balik. Nakapanghuwam pud ko sa mga silingan og gamay nga puhunan." (I borrowed money so I could buy some merchandise to sell and restart. I have also borrowed money from neighbors as small capital.)

These responses affirm that survivors' primary focus was securing basic survival needs such as food, shelter, and security. The priority for many survivors was ensuring their physical safety and securing essential resources, which is consistent with Maslow's physiological needs tier (Maslow, 1943). Fulfilling these foundational needs was essential before higher-level recovery or psychological healing could begin. This finding supports previous studies that show survivors of natural disasters often prioritize basic survival needs before addressing more abstract aspects of recovery (Norris et al., 2008; Fothergill, 2004).

Table 1. Theme and sub-themes that emerged in fire incident survivors' recovery case study

Theme	Sub-theme	Supporting Statements
Coping with the Aftermath	Immediate Needs and Safety	Participant 1: "Finding a place to stay was our biggest challenge. We lost everything."
		Participant 2: "We struggled to find food, water, and clothing. It was overwhelming."
		Participant 3: "Nag-ask ko og tabang sa akong mga silingan ug pamilya,nag-inquire ko sa mga relief centers, ug nag-focus ko sa pag-settle sa immediate needs." (I have asked for help from my neighbors and relatives. I have inquired in relief centers and I have focused on settling the immediate needs.)
		Participant 4: "Nag-utang ko para makapalit ug ginagmay nga paninda para makasugod ug balik. Nakapanghuwam pud ko sa mga silingan og gamay nga puhunan." (I borrowed money so I could buy some merchandise to sell and restart. I have also borrowed money from neighbors as small capital.)

Theme 2: Role of Community Support

Community support emerged as a significant theme in the recovery process. Survivors described the essential role of neighbors, family, and local organizations in both practical and emotional recovery. This theme emphasizes how the solidarity of those around them provided the emotional and material resources needed to rebuild their lives. The role of community support is crucial in the recovery journey, offering both immediate and ongoing assistance to help survivors regain stability.

Practical Assistance and Emotional Support

This sub-theme focuses on the direct help provided by neighbors, family, and community organizations. Survivors expressed how they received essential goods, temporary shelter, and emotional support from their local community. It highlights the emotional value of the support they received, which contributed significantly to their ability to move forward.

Participant 5: "Neighbors helped us salvage what little we could from the ruins."

Participant 6: "The community helped with emotional support and by providing food and shelter."

Participant 7: "Donations from neighbors, family members, and some local organizations really helped."

Participant 8: "Food donations, temporary shelters, and financial help from friends and family were a big help."

Participant 9: "The community provided food, clothes, and temporary shelter.

Government aid was helpful too."

Participant 10: "When some neighbors and friends gave donations and moral support, it gave me hope to start over."

These responses attest to the importance of community support in both practical and emotional terms. The food, clothing, shelter, and emotional support provided by the community helped survivors regain a sense of security, aligning with Maslow's safety needs (Maslow, 1943). This finding supports the significance of local institutions, such as churches and NGOs, in offering immediate aid and continued support for the survivors' recovery.

Support from Local Institutions

In addition to direct community support, survivors also highlighted the importance of institutional aid. Local organizations, such as religious groups and government agencies, played a critical role in organizing relief efforts. These institutions were vital in providing structured support, although some survivors noted areas for improvement in coordination and sustainability of aid.

Participant 5: "The church organized fundraisers to support families like ours."

Participant 3: "Immediate relief goods and financial aid could have been better coordinated."

Participant 6: "Mas maayo unta kung naa'y dugay nga tabang sama sa trabaho ug housing programs." (It would be better if there'll be Additional help like jobs and housing programs.)

These responses affirm that local institutions were instrumental in the recovery process, though some survivors pointed out that more sustained efforts could have been made. This is consistent with Resilience Theory, which emphasizes the role of external support systems in helping individuals and communities adapt and persevere in the face of adversity (Masten, 2001; Cutter et al., 2008).

Table 2. Theme and sub-themes that emerged in fire incident survivors' recovery case study

Theme	Sub-theme	Supporting Statements
Role of Community Support	Practical Assistance and Emotional Support	<p>Participant 5: "Neighbors helped us salvage what little we could from the ruins."</p> <p>Participant 6: "The community helped with emotional support and by providing food and shelter."</p> <p>Participant 7: "Donations from neighbors, family members, and some local organizations really helped."</p> <p>Participant 8: "Food donations, temporary shelters, and financial help from friends and family were a big help."</p> <p>Participant 9: "The community provided food, clothes, and temporary shelter. Government aid was helpful too."</p> <p>Participant 10: "When some neighbors and friends gave donations and moral support, it gave me hope to start over."</p>
	Support from Local Institutions	<p>Participant 5: "The church organized fundraisers to support families like ours."</p> <p>Participant 3: "Immediate relief goods and financial aid could have been better coordinated."</p> <p>Participant 6: "Mas maayo unta kung naa'y dugay nga tabang sama sa trabaho ug housing programs." (It would be better if there'll be additional help like jobs and housing programs.)</p>

Theme 3: Ongoing Challenges and Long-Term Recovery

Despite the initial relief, survivors faced long-term challenges, particularly in securing permanent housing and financial stability. This theme emphasizes the complexity of long-term recovery, which often involves ongoing barriers to rebuilding homes, securing jobs, and managing psychological stress. The challenges faced by survivors highlight that recovery is a gradual process that requires sustained support.

Financial Barriers

This sub-theme focuses on the financial obstacles that survivors faced in rebuilding their lives. Survivors expressed how the lack of financial resources slowed their recovery process, making it difficult to restart their businesses, secure

permanent housing, and meet everyday needs. These financial barriers posed significant challenges in the aftermath of the fire.

Participant 1: "Rebuilding has been slow because funds are limited."

Participant 2: "There are still moments when I feel overwhelmed thinking about the fire."

Participant 3: "The lack of a permanent home and basic resources made it slower to recover, and I struggled to focus on work and family needs."

Participant 4: "I still worry about money and finding a permanent place to live."

These responses affirm that financial instability was a significant barrier to long-term recovery. Survivors faced challenges in rebuilding their homes and businesses without consistent financial support. These findings support the need for continued financial assistance to enable survivors to regain financial independence and stability.

Psychological Trauma

The psychological trauma caused by the fire remained a significant issue for many survivors. This sub-theme focuses on the emotional impact the disaster had on the survivors and how it influenced their recovery. Survivors described feelings of anxiety, stress, and fear of recurrence, all of which made it harder to focus on the practical aspects of rebuilding.

Participant 5: "Yes, I felt very stressed and anxious. It's hard to get over the fear of losing everything again."

Participant 6: "Oo, na-trauma gyud mi sa sunog, mahadlok mi matulog Usahay." (Yes, we were really traumatized by the fire. Sometimes, we're scared to sleep.)

Participant 7: "Yes, ang stress ug kahadlok nga basin magbalik ang sunog, pero nakatabang ang suporta sa pamilya ug komunidad para maka-move on." (Yes, the stress and fear that there will be another fire incident. But the support of the family and community has helped me to move-on.)

Participant 8: "Yes, I felt a lot of sadness and stress, especially thinking about how to rebuild everything."

These responses affirm the ongoing emotional challenges survivors faced. The psychological trauma remained a substantial barrier to full recovery. These findings support Collective Trauma Theory, which highlights the lasting emotional and psychological scars left by traumatic events and the difficulty of overcoming them (Erikson, 1976; Hirschberger, 2018).

Table 3. Theme and sub-themes that emerged in fire incident survivors' recovery case study

Theme	Sub-theme	Supporting Statements
Ongoing Challenges and Long-Term Recovery	Financial Barriers	Participant 1: "Rebuilding has been slow because funds are limited." Participant 2: "There are still moments when I feel overwhelmed thinking about the fire." Participant 3: "The lack of a permanent home and basic resources made it slower to recover, and I struggled to focus on work and family needs." Participant 4: "I still worry about money and finding a permanent place to live."
	Psychological Trauma	Participant 5: "Yes, I felt very stressed and anxious. It's hard to get over the fear of losing everything again." Participant 6: "Oo, na-trauma gyud mi sa sunog, mahadlok mi Matulog. Usahay." (Yes, we were really traumatized by the fire. Sometimes, we're scared to sleep.) Participant 7: "Yes, ang stress ug kahadlok nga basin magbalik ang sunog, pero nakatabang ang suporta sa pamilya ug komunidad para maka-move on." (Yes, the stress and fear that there will be another fire incident. But the support of the family and community has helped me to move-on.) Participant 8: "Yes, I felt a lot of sadness and stress, especially thinking about how to rebuild everything."

Theme 4: Resilience and Adaptability

Resilience and adaptability were crucial factors in the survivors' recovery process. Despite their challenges, many survivors demonstrated remarkable inner strength and perseverance. This theme focuses on the survivors' ability to adapt and keep moving forward, often with the support of family and faith. Resilience, as explained by Resilience

Theory, is the ability to recover and thrive despite adversity, and many survivors embody this resilience through their actions and attitudes.

Inner Strength and Faith

This subtheme emphasizes the role of personal qualities such as faith, patience, and resourcefulness in helping survivors recover. Many survivors highlighted how their inner strength and faith played a key role in their ability to persevere through adversity.

Participant 1: "Always stay hopeful, accept help when needed, and start small but steady in rebuilding."

Participant 2: "Ayaw gyud kawad-i ug paglaom. Sugod lang sa ginagmay ug hinay-hinay nga makabangon." (Never lose hope. Start small and little by little, you can get up.)

Participant 3: "Don't lose hope. Stay connected with your community, and take things one step at a time."

Participant 4: "Naa... Kay nisalig ko sa ginoo nga masulbad nku Ang tanan sa hinayhinay." (There is because I trusted God that He would help me solve everything slowly.)

Participant 5: "My patience, perseverance, and resourcefulness helped me move forward."

Participant 6: "My strength to keep going and the support from my family kept me going."

These responses attest to the survivors' inner strength and adaptability in the face of adversity. The survivors demonstrated resilience by relying on their personal qualities and faith to keep moving forward. These findings support Resilience Theory, which emphasizes the importance of inner strength and external support in overcoming challenges (Masten, 2001; Norris et al., 2008).

Table 4. Theme and sub-themes that emerged in fire incident survivors' recovery case study

Theme	Sub-theme	Supporting Statements
Resilience and Adaptability	Inner Strength and Faith	<p>Participant 1: "Always stay hopeful, accept help when needed, and start small but steady in rebuilding."</p> <p>Participant 2: "Ayaw gyud kawad-i ug paglaom. Sugod lang sa ginagmay ug hinay-hinay nga makabangon." (Never lose hope. Start small and little by little, you can get up.)</p> <p>Participant 3: "Don't lose hope. Stay connected with your community, and take things one step at a time."</p> <p>Participant 4: "Naa... Kay nisalig ko sa ginoo nga masulbad nku Ang tanan sa hinayhinay." (There is because I trusted God that He would help me solve everything slowly.)</p> <p>Participant 5: "My patience, perseverance, and resourcefulness helped me move forward."</p> <p>Participant 6: "My strength to keep going and the support from my family kept me going."</p>

Theme 5: Desire for Long-Term Stability

Survivors expressed a strong desire for long-term stability, particularly in securing permanent housing and stable employment. This theme reflects the survivors' aspirations for a secure future and their challenges in achieving lasting recovery. While short-term relief efforts were helpful, survivors emphasized the need for sustained support to ensure long-term financial stability and permanent housing.

Permanent Housing and Employment

This sub-theme focuses on the survivors' desire for long-term stability in terms of housing and employment. Many survivors recognized the importance of securing permanent housing and stable income to ensure that their recovery could continue.

Participant 7: "Mas maayo unta kung naa'y dugay nga tabang sama sa trabaho ug housing programs." (It would be better if there'll be additional help like jobs and housing programs.)

Participant 8: "Mas maayo unta kung naa'y dugay nga housing projects ug livelihood programs." (It would be better if there were additional housing projects and livelihood programs.)

Participant 9: "My family's situation is better now, but we still need more support to get back on our feet."

Participant 10: "We need more help, especially in terms of job opportunities and permanent housing."

These responses underline the survivors' desire for long-term solutions, particularly permanent housing and job stability. While initial relief efforts were helpful, survivors recognized the importance of continued support to secure a stable future. This finding supports Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as survivors moved from addressing immediate survival needs to striving for long-term goals like stable housing and employment (Maslow, 1943).

Table 5. Theme and sub-themes that emerged in fire incident survivors' recovery case study

Theme	Sub-theme	Supporting Statements
Desire for Long-Term Stability	Permanent Housing and Employment	<p>Participant 7: "Mas maayo unta kung naa'y dugay nga tabang sama sa trabaho ug housing programs." (It would be better if there'll be additional help like jobs and housing programs.)</p> <p>Participant 8: "Mas maayo unta kung naa'y dugay nga housing projects ug livelihood programs." (It would be better if there were additional housing projects and livelihood programs.)</p> <p>Participant 9: "My family's situation is better now, but we still need more support to get back on our feet."</p> <p>Participant 10: "We need more help, especially in terms of job opportunities and permanent housing."</p>

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the recovery experiences of fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City, shedding light on their coping mechanisms, the critical role of community support, and the ongoing challenges they face in rebuilding their lives. The analysis, guided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Resilience Theory, and Collective Trauma Theory, revealed key themes central to the recovery process in urban fire disasters. These themes—Coping with the Aftermath, Role of Community Support, Ongoing Challenges and Long-Term Recovery, Resilience and Adaptability, and Desire for Long-Term Stability—provided a comprehensive understanding of the survivors' experiences.

Survivors' primary concern was addressing immediate survival needs such as shelter, food, and safety, in line with Maslow's physiological needs. As they began the rebuilding process, the emotional and psychological impacts of the disaster remained a significant hurdle, demonstrating the importance of continued support in the recovery phase. The study affirms that community support—both practical and emotional—was instrumental in helping survivors navigate these early challenges. Neighbors, local organizations, and government aid provided essential resources that helped survivors regain a sense of security and hope, reinforcing the role of the community in fostering resilience.

Despite initial relief efforts, financial instability and psychological trauma posed substantial long-term barriers to recovery. The survivors desired sustainable solutions, particularly for permanent housing and stable employment. These findings support the notion that long-term recovery is not only about addressing material needs but also about providing emotional support and fostering a sense of stability, as survivors strive for self-actualization and lasting security, aligning with Maslow's higher levels of need. The study attests to the resilience and adaptability exhibited by survivors, as they demonstrated remarkable perseverance through personal strength and faith. This adaptability, coupled with strong community networks, is central to their ongoing recovery, consistent with Resilience Theory. Additionally, the collective trauma experienced by the community reinforced the importance of social networks and collective healing, as outlined by Collective Trauma Theory. Ultimately, the findings underscore the need for disaster recovery strategies tailored to urban environments, where high population density, limited resources, and complex infrastructure add layers of difficulty to the recovery process. This study contributes to filling a significant gap in disaster recovery literature by focusing on the unique challenges fire survivors face in urban settings. The insights gained here can help policymakers, community leaders, and practitioners develop more effective and holistic recovery strategies that address both the material and emotional needs of survivors, ensuring a more resilient and sustainable recovery process for communities like a barangay in Davao City.

Appendix 1. Letter of Consent

December 9, 2024

Hon. Gilbert P. Mata, Sr.
Punong Barangay
Barangay 5-A
Davao City

Dear Punong Barangay Mata,

Greeting!

We are a dedicated team of graduate school students currently enrolled in Qualitative Methods of Research (RM200) at the University of Southeastern Philippines (USEP) – College of Development Management, Minal Campus. We seek permission to conduct a study entitled "Fire Incident Survivors' Recovery: A Case Study" in your barangay.

The success of this study offers valuable insights into survivors' challenges, the processes they undertook during recovery, and the insights they gained from the experience. By documenting these narratives, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of post-disaster recovery dynamics in urban settings, offering valuable lessons for improving preparedness and response strategies in similar communities. We understand the sensitivity of the information we seek. Please be assured that all data collected during our study will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and used exclusively for study purposes.

We look forward to your positive response and cooperation, which significantly contribute to this study's success.

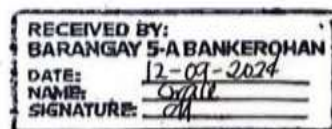
Thank you very much!

Respectfully yours,


Joan M. Alcachopas
Graduate School Student


Mary Lizbeth M. Singco
Graduate School Student


Jessa Grace W. Manayan
Graduate School Student



Appendix 2. Informed Consent Form

Title of the Study: **Fire Incident Survivors' Recovery: A Case Study**

Principal Investigator: Joan M. Alcachopas, Jessa Grace W. Manayan, Mary Lizbeth M. Singco

Institution: University of Southeastern Philippines

Email Address: jmalcachopas00385@usep.edu.ph, jwmanayan00300@usep.edu.ph, mmsingco00352@usep.edu.ph

Purpose of the Study:

This study explores the recovery experiences of fire survivors in a barangay in Davao City, focusing on coping strategies, community support, and challenges in rebuilding lives. Your participation will help improve understanding and support programs for recovery.

Study Procedures:

If you agree, you will:

- Participate in a 30-45 minute interview.
- Share your experiences and coping strategies.
- Allow follow-up questions, if needed.
- Interviews can be in-person or online, and sessions may be recorded with your consent.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You may skip questions or withdraw at any time without penalty.

Risks and Benefits:

- Risks: Sharing your story may cause emotional distress. Support referrals are available upon request.
- Benefits: Your input can help improve recovery programs for fire survivors.

Confidentiality: Your information will be kept confidential. Identifying details will not appear in any reports or publications. Anonymized quotes may be used.

Right to Withdraw: You may withdraw at any time without explanation. Your data will be excluded upon request.

Contact Information: For questions, contact the researcher at the details above.

Participant's Consent: By signing below, you confirm you understand the study and agree to participate voluntarily.

Participant's Name(optional):

Participant's Signature:

Date:

Researcher's Name:

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3. Survey Form on Fire Incident Survivors' Recovery: A Case Study

Instructions: Please answer the questions honestly and to the best of your ability. Your responses will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes. If you are unsure about a question, feel free to provide the response that best reflects your experience or perspective. Thank you for your participation. (Palihug sa pagtubag sa mga pangutana sa tinuod ug pinakamaayo nga imong makaya. Ang imong mga tubag magpabilin nga konfidential ug gamiton lamang alang sa mga katuyoan sa panukiduki. Kung dili ka sigurado sa usa ka pangutana, palihug ihatag ang tubag nga labing nagapakita sa imong kasinatian o panan-aw. Salamat sa imong pag-apil.)

Survey Questions:

I. How did the fire survivors cope with the aftermath? (Giunsa pag-atubang sa mga nakaluwas sa sunog ang mga epekto niini?)

1. What immediate challenges did you encounter after the fire? (Unsa ang inyong nasinati nga mga unang hagit human sa sunog?)
 - 1.a. Can you describe how you addressed these challenges? (Mamahimo ba nimo nga isaysay kung giunsa nimo pag-atubang niini nga mga hagit?)
 - 1.b. Were there specific moments or turning points that helped you move forward? (Aduna bay mga partikular nga higayon o punto nga naka-tabang kanimo nga makapadayon?)
2. How did these challenges affect your ability to recover? (Unsa ang epekto niini sa imong abilidad sa pagbangon?)
 - 2.a. Did these challenges change over time? If so, how? (Nausab ba kini nga mga hagit sa paglabay sa panahon? Kung oo, giunsa?)
 - 2.b. Were there emotional or psychological effects that impacted your recovery? (Aduna bay emosyonal o sikolohikal nga epekto nga nakaapekto sa imong pagbangon?)
3. What resources or forms of assistance were most helpful during the early stages of recovery? (Unsa nga mga kapanguhaan o tabang ang labing nakatabang sa sayo nga yugto sa pagbangon?)
 - 3.a. How did you learn about or access these resources? (Giunsa nimo pagkahibalo o pag-access niini nga mga kapanguhaan?)

II. What role did community support play in survivors' recovery? (Unsa ang papel sa suporta sa komunidad sa pagbangon sa mga nakaluwas?)

4. How did community support, such as neighbors or local organizations, contribute to your recovery? (Giunsa nga ang mga suporta sa komunidad, sama sa mga silingan o lokal nga organisasyon, nakatampo sa imong pagbangon?)
 - 4.a. Can you give specific examples of how community members helped you? (Mahimo ba nimo mahatag ang partikular nga mga pananglitan kung giunsa ka natabangan sa mga miyembro sa komunidad?)
 - 4.b. Were there any challenges in seeking or receiving community support? (Aduna bay mga kalisdanan sa pagpangayo o pagdawat sa suporta sa komunidad?)
5. Were there specific instances where community efforts significantly impacted your recovery process? (Aduna bay partikular nga mga higayon diin ang mga paningkamot sa komunidad dako kaayo ang natabang sa imong pagbangon?)
 - 5.a. What kind of support made the biggest difference for you? (Unsa nga klase sa suporta ang labing nakaapekto kanimo?)
 - 5.b. Did this support come consistently or only at certain stages? (Kanunay ba kining suporta o sa pila lang ka Yugto?)
6. What aspects of community support could have been improved to better aid in recovery? (Unsa nga aspeto sa suporta sa komunidad ang mahimo untang maayohon aron mas mapaayo ang pagtabang sa pagbangon?)

6.a. Were there any missed opportunities where the community could have stepped in? (Aduna bay mga higayon nga wala mahatagi og atensyon nga ang komunidad unta makatabang?)

6.b. What would you suggest for future recovery efforts in similar situations? (Unsa ang imong ika-sugyot alang sa mga umaabot nga paningkamot sa pagbangon sa parehas nga mga sitwasyon?)

III. What challenges do survivors continue to face in rebuilding their lives, and what lessons have been learned for the future? (Unsa ang mga hagit nga gipadayon nga giatubang sa mga nakaluwas sa ilang pagbangon, ug unsa nga mga leksyon ang nasabtan alang sa umaabot?)

7. What ongoing challenges have you experienced since the fire? (Unsa ang mga nagapadayon nga hagit nga imong nasinati sukad sa sunog?)

7.a. Have these challenges changed as time passed? (Nausab ba kini nga mga hagit sa paglabay sa panahon?)

7.b. What steps have you taken to address these continuing issues? (Unsa ang imong gibuhat aron atubangon kining nagapadayon nga mga isyu?)

8. How do you believe recovery efforts could be improved for individuals in similar situations in the future? (Unsa imong panglantaw nga mapaayo ang mga paningkamot sa pagbangon alang sa mga indibidwal sa parehas nga sitwasyon sa umaabot?)

8.a. Are there policies or systems you think should be introduced or improved? (Aduna bay mga polisiya o sistema nga imong nakita nga kinahanglan nga ma-introduce o mapaayo?)

8.b. Can you think of examples from other communities or experiences that could serve as models? (Aduna ka bay mahatag nga mga pananglitan gikan sa uban nga komunidad o kasinatian nga mamahimong modelo?)

9. What lessons have you learned from your recovery journey that you would like to share with others? (Unsa ang mga leksyon nga imong natun-an gikan sa imong pagbangon nga gusto nimo ipaambit sa uban?)

9.a. Were there personal strengths or qualities that helped you recover? (Aduna bay personal nga kusog o mga kalidad nga naka-tabang kanimo sa pagbangon?)

9.b. What advice would you give to someone experiencing a similar disaster? (Unsa ang imong tambag alang sa usa ka tawo nga nakasinati sa parehas nga katalagman?)

Appendix 4. PHOTO DOCUMENTATION





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