

Panglimbasog Taliwala Sa Kasakit: Coping Strategies of Cebuano Suicide-Bereaved Siblings

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ABSTRACT

Behind every loss to suicide lay a story left unfinished—and for siblings, the silence that followed often became too heavy to bear. This study explored the coping strategies along with support systems of siblings aged 18 and above who had lost a brother or sister to suicide five or more years ago. Using a qualitative case study design, the research focused on participants from Cebu, Philippines, to gain an in-depth understanding of their grief and recovery journey. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyzed using narrative inquiry and thematic analysis.

The findings of the study identified distinct themes in the coping strategies and support systems of Cebuano bereaved siblings. For coping strategies, the emerging themes included (1) active behavioral adaptation, (2) spiritual expression, and (3) continuing bonds. Regarding support systems, the themes encompassed (1) familial and peer support as the primary coping anchor, and (2) community-facilitated coping resources. These mechanisms helped them gradually adapt and find meaning after their loss. Despite the lingering pain of their grief, most participants were able to rebuild their sense of purpose and strengthen their emotional endurance.

Recognizing the need for practical application of the study's insights, the researchers designed an intervention plan titled "*Kakuyog sa Pagpanglimbasog: A Community-Based Psychosocial Counseling and Support Group for Suicide Bereaved Individuals*". This community-based mental health initiative aims to provide sustainable support for suicide-bereaved individuals through (1) Psychoeducational Seminar on Grief and Suicide Bereavement, (2) Building Social Support System, (3) Counseling Consultation, and (4) Reassessment and Follow-up. The intervention fosters collaboration among families, mental health professionals, and local organizations to strengthen community awareness and resilience.

The study also highlighted the need for continuous mental health support, awareness programs, and community-based interventions for suicide-bereaved families. Overall, this study contributed to the growing body of literature on post-suicide bereavement and emphasizing the importance of compassion, understanding, and structured support in the healing process of those left behind.

Keywords: suicide-bereaved siblings, bereavement experience, grief, coping strategies, support systems

INTRODUCTION

Suicide, defined as the intentional action of killing oneself (Mitra & Kodancha, 2021), remains one of the most significant public health concerns globally, being the third leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds in 2021 (WHO, 2025). Annually, approximately 726,000 people die by suicide. Although the Philippines has one of the lowest suicide rates in the world, it still poses significant concerns (Global Economy, 2024). A report by Statista Research Department (2024) estimated the country's suicide mortality rate at 2.2 deaths per 100,000 individuals in 2019, which surged to 4.42 thousand deaths in 2020. Another study found that young people comprised more than half of suicide fatalities from January to October 2020 (Ballesteros, 2024).

On a local scale, Cebu suicide rates also pose an alarming picture, with 155 deaths from Cebu City alone for the past 3 years (Ppiquero, 2025). The lack of data for the whole province was acknowledged by PSA, which stated that suicide mortality rate is one of the 74 Sustainable Goal indicators that do not yet have an established

compilation method (PSA, 2021) in the Philippines, posing the possibility of more unreported or uncounted cases.

While there is a wealth of recent and historic studies that centered on the bereavement experiences of spouses, parents, or children, very minimal research has been conducted particularly on suicide-bereaved siblings (Walker, 2017). Siblings bereaved through suicide or often referred to as the *forgotten mourners* (McIntosh, & Wroblewski, 1988), tend to encounter a variety of distressing and difficult experiences in their grieving process. Adams and colleagues (2019) imply that despite the significant distress caused by experiencing grief at a young age, individuals mourning the loss of their siblings often go unnoticed by the society. A study of Royden (2021) reveals that surviving siblings tend to isolate themselves from social interactions, which often leads to the omission of their viewpoints. Royden further added that in spite of acknowledging the common feelings of anger, guilt, and shame following the suicide of their brother or sister, siblings are often expected to support other family members. The overshadowed sorrow experienced by the surviving siblings may lead to a situation where they are compelled to cope independently, while the social environment to which they belong fails to acknowledge the severity that the loss of a sibling has on the survivors (Royden, 2021).

Despite the growing literature on family bereavement caused by suicide, noticeable gaps remains unexplored. The majority of the research centers on the significant facets of suicide bereavement — grief and stigma, while the coping of the survivors, especially the siblings are very sparsely studied area. For instance, Royden (2021) noted in his analysis that there were only nine records since the 1970s addressing this specific topic. Though limited in scientific knowledge, research has indicated that a sibling's suicide can lead to various effects on the surviving siblings including the reduced ability to work, sleep difficulties or concentration, mental health issues, and the tendency to avoid close relationships with others (Pettersen et al., 2015). Furthermore, a 2019 article of Royden states that sibling suicide survivors are at particular risk of taking their own lives and there is a notable insufficient access of support, which often frequently hinders them to cope (Krysinska et al., 2024). This gap necessitates the need to have an extensive exploration, as gaining more understanding of grief and how siblings cope after losing a brother or sister to suicide can aid in developing and offering support that targets their needs.

Thus, the current research aims to fill existing gaps by examining the unique challenges encountered by Cebuano siblings who have lost a brother or sister to suicide, especially given the rising suicide rates in the Philippines and the limited research on this topic. This study will mainly examine the ways in which these siblings cope with the loss and identify the outlets of support that assist them in their coping process. Importantly, the findings of this study will provide strategies to further enhance the support needed by those siblings who were bereaved by suicide, helping to avoid adverse life challenges.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive case study design, which aimed to explore the coping strategies of individuals who experienced the loss of their sibling due to suicide. This approach enabled the the researchers to have an in-depth exploration of the participants' personal strategies for managing grief and how the support system contributed to their coping process, while maintaining the participants' original perspectives without distorting their viewpoints through interpretative analysis (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, as cited in Meyers, 2019). Moreover, this also allowed the researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of how bereaved siblings perceived and applied coping strategies in response to their loss.

Participants

The study involved seven siblings from Cebuano contexts who had all suffered the loss of a brother or sister to suicide within their family unit. The participants were purposively selected to ensure that their lived experiences aligned with the study's emphasis on coping strategies in the aftermath of suicide bereavement. Specifically, the participants were individuals whose ages range from 25 to 40 who lost a sibling due to suicide at least five years prior to the study, and were willing to discuss their experiences in a research setting. The five-year period ensured

that the participants had sufficient time to reflect on their grief and reduced the risk of retraumatization associated with recent loss.

Research Setting

This study was conducted in Cebu, Philippines, a province chosen by the researchers due to its significant suicide mortality rate and the lack of studies focusing on the coping strategies of Cebuano siblings bereaved by suicide. Although there is an increased cases of suicides, there were only few studies that examined how these siblings who were left behind dealt with their loss, their coping strategies, and the specific support systems available for them after such tragedy. Thus, this study sought to bridge the gap, aimed to improve suicide prevention initiatives, and intended to provide psychological support for Cebuano siblings bereaved by suicide.

Measures/ Instruments

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire (see Appendix C) that focused on the coping strategies and support system in the aftermath of suicide loss. Through these dimensions, the researchers obtained an in-depth data surrounding the coping strategies of Cebuano individuals who experienced the loss of sibling due to suicide. The questionnaire was translated to Cebuano to ensure language accuracy and maintain the cultural nuances. This also enabled the participants to express their emotions and experiences in the native language, if they preferred to.

Procedure

This study utilized a qualitative case study approach, specifically in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of Cebuano siblings bereaved by suicide, employing Connelly and Clandinin (1990) framework for narrative inquiry. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), this process involved listening, observing, living alongside another, writing, and interpreting texts. The researcher's role is to help shape these stories by bringing their own experiences, organizing the narrative in a meaningful way, and analyzing the meanings within the stories' social, temporal, and spatial contexts. The research procedures were conducted in distinct stages to uphold ethical standards, systematic data gathering, and thorough analysis.

Initially, the researchers obtained an ethical approval from the ethics committee to ensure that the study adheres to ethical standards for research involving human participants. Subsequently, participant recruitment was carried out using purposive sampling, focusing on seven Cebuano siblings who fit the study's criteria, ensuring an in-depth exploration of their ability to cope after such tragedy. To ensure an ethical and sensitive approach in identifying potential participants, the researchers collaborated with the local mental health organizations and/or community support networks. Once identified, participants were presented with informed consent forms—offered in both English and Cebuano—that explained the study's purpose, potential risks and benefits, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses. A pre-interview session was also conducted to establish trust and provide safe space for participants to clarify questions and address any concern about the study, ensuring they felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

In the course of interviews, a questionnaire translated into Cebuano language was utilized to maintain cultural and linguistic accuracy, enabling the participants to express their emotions and experiences in their native language. This translation aided in minimizing language barriers and to avoid any potential loss of meaning or misinterpretation of their responses. All interviews were held in private, participant-chosen locations to ensure comfort and emotional safety. Each session began with open-ended, non-intrusive questions, and applied active listening and reflective questioning to foster in depth responses while reducing potential distress. In instances wherein a participant appeared emotionally overwhelmed, the interview was paused to offer emotional support and referrals to counseling services were provided when necessary. Furthermore, with the participant's consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

Following the transcription process, the data was analyzed through narrative inquiry and thematic analysis. Subsequently, the analysis advanced through Braun and Clarke's systematic six-step thematic analysis framework, which involved (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for

themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing up the results (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

All collected data were securely stored and remained accessible only to authorized researchers.

Data Collection

The data of this case study were collected through semi-structured interviews with Cebuano bereaved-siblings who experienced the loss of a brother or sister due to suicide. This method was flexible and well-suited for effectively obtaining in-depth insights particularly into the participants' perspectives, emotions, and contextual experiences. This approach allowed the researchers to explore the complex and varied experiences of the participants, leading to a deeper understanding.

To promote emotional safety, participants who experienced emotional distress during the course of the interview were provided with referrals to qualified grief counselors or mental health services for necessary support. These referrals helped maintain ethical research standards, ensuring that the study focuses on exploring lived experiences while prioritizing the psychological well-being of participants beyond the interview itself.

All interviews were audio recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accuracy in data collection and analysis. The collected data were subsequently transcribed to ensure that the participants' responses were accurately captured while upholding confidentiality and adhering to ethical standards throughout the procedure.

Data Analysis

This study employed a combined approach of narrative inquiry and thematic analysis in order to identify patterns across participants while examining individual experiences.

Narrative inquiry, as conceptualized by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) was used to explore the structure and meaning-making processes within each individual's account. Afterwards, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis provided a structured approach through the stages of getting familiar with the data, coding, developing themes, refining themes, defining themes, and the final write-up.

Data Management

The researchers' primary focus was to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' data. Given the sensitive nature of suicide bereavement, strict protocols were followed to ensure the participants' identities and personal experiences remained protected. Secondly, the data storage and security measures involved safeguarding all collected data by storing it securely on password-protected devices or servers to prevent unauthorized access. Anonymizing and de-identifying data were prioritized to protect the participants' confidentiality and privacy.

Furthermore, during data analysis, all information were handled with care, following thematic analysis techniques to ensure accuracy and credibility. Researchers exercised reflexivity to minimize bias and uphold the reliability of findings. Transparency in coding and interpretation was maintained, adhering to ethical standards.

Lastly, data retention and disposal served as the guidelines for the researchers in compliance with data protection regulations to prevent data breaches or misuse. Data was retained only for the necessary duration required by institutional and ethical regulations. Any unnecessary data was safely disposed of after completion of the study to maintain data integrity.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to the proper considerations of conduct to ensure ethical standards were upheld throughout the research process. In the work of Sullivan et al. (2021) in the social sciences, obtaining an informed consent from the participants was regarded as essential to ethical research practice. Thus, informed consent was obtained from the participants before data collection, ensuring they understood the purpose, procedures, and potential

risks involved in the study. A translated Cebuano version of the informed consent was also provided and further explained to the participants.

The participants were clearly informed of the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. The participants' confidentiality and anonymity were protected by using pseudonyms, purposefully hiding information that might harm their identity, as noted in the report of Petrova et al. (2016). Sensitive information was safeguarded to prevent breaches of privacy and maintain trust between researchers and participants.

Additionally, researchers ensured that any shared stories were presented with dignity and free from unnecessary details that might trigger participants and readers with their trauma. This study also upheld neutrality, objectivity, and fairness in data collection and analysis to avoid bias throughout the research process. Discriminatory practices were avoided and regardless of their background or personal beliefs, all bereaved siblings were treated with respect and sensitivity. This approach ensured that the findings accurately reflect the diverse experiences of Cebuano siblings coping with suicide loss. Given the delicate nature of suicide bereavement, participants may experienced distress while sharing their experience (Epp et al., 2022). In order to reduce harm, the researchers conducted interviews in a non-intrusive, compassionate manner, while keeping an eye to signs of emotional discomfort. Contact with a registered counselor was maintained during the interview. If necessary, referrals to professional counseling services were provided, along with immediate psychological support.

Moreover, Cebuano's coping practices from suicide loss were deeply embedded in cultural context. Participants' coping strategies were respected as researchers approached them with cultural humility. The study focused on understanding coping strategies from the participants' lived experiences rather than imposing external perspectives on grief, ensuring that their voices and experiences were authentically represented with empathy and integrity.

Reflexivity

As the current study sought to explore the lived experiences of Cebuano siblings who experienced the loss of a brother or sister due to suicide, the researchers recognized the importance of reflexivity in understanding how the backgrounds, assumptions, and positionality may influence the research process. Reflexivity allowed the researchers to critically analyze how they shaped and was shaped by this study, ensuring that the findings are as genuine, ethical, and culturally sensitive as possible.

Coming from a Filipino cultural context where family, religion, and mourning practices shaped grief, the researchers acknowledged that each of their viewpoints may influence how they perceived various coping strategies. While cultural familiarity fostered rapport and trust, it also posed the risk of bias in interpretation and framing of questions. Additionally, the researchers' personal experience with loss and coping may unconsciously shape how they interact with the participants' narratives.

In conducting semi-structured interviews, the researchers were mindful of their positionality as a researcher, which may have pressured the participants to provide responses they believed the researchers expected and to conform to societal expectations of grief. To mitigate this, the researchers ensured a supportive and non-judgemental setting that allowed the participants to set the pace of the interview and can pause or withdraw if they felt overwhelmed. Importantly, the utilization of thematic and narrative inquiry aimed to balance shared patterns and individual experiences, while being cautious of potential overgeneralization and neglecting significant personal insights.

Given the sensitive nature of the study, the researchers adapted a compassionate and comprehensive approach, ensuring that participants felt comfortable and respected throughout the process. This reflective stance helped the researchers to critically assess their biases, ensuring that the voices of bereaved Cebuano siblings were accurately and respectfully represented. Moreover, the researchers maintained an active contact with a licensed counselor whenever referral was deemed necessary. Recommendations to psychotherapy were also encouraged by the researchers. Through deliberate critical reflection, this study aimed to contribute meaningful insights into

the suicide awareness, provide bereavement support, and to foster a compassionate and culturally appropriate approaches in understanding the various perspectives of grieving Cebuano siblings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the data gathered from suicide-bereaved siblings through semi-structured interviews. The study involved seven participants from various areas in Cebu. The findings are organized and discussed based on the participants’ narratives and the emerging themes aligned with the study’s statement of the problem.

Coping Strategies of Bereaved Siblings

Upon analyzing the responses of participants through narrative inquiry and thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006), the table below presents the distinct themes and subthemes that pertain to and discuss the personal experiences of the participants with regards to their coping strategies after the loss of a sibling to suicide.

Multiple similarities and comparisons can be gleaned from the data as shown. Emerging themes may vary, but also show interconnectedness in the coping process. The recurring patterns reveal how coping is facilitated by overt behavior, intrapersonal contemplation, as well as social extensions, including maintaining the relationship with the deceased. Variations in coping responses reflect individual differences in emotional readiness, available support, and personal worldview. Despite these differences, shared expressions of resilience, adjustment, and remembrance consistently emerged across narratives.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis for Coping Strategies of Bereaved Siblings to Suicide

Themes	Subthemes
Active Behavioral Adaptation	Engagement in routines for distraction Physical and recreational activities Emotion regulation practices
Spiritual Expression	Seeking salvation for the deceased through religious practices Faith as a source of strength
Continuing Bonds	Remembrance in cemetery visits Sustained memorial expressions

Based on the narratives provided by the participants, four overarching themes emerged. The first theme, Active Behavioral Adaptation, captures the diverse coping strategies that are centered around structured daily activities to regain stability and manage emotional distress. This theme encompasses three significant subthemes: *engagement in routines*, *physical and recreational activities*, and *emotion regulation practices*.

Theme 1. Active Behavioral Adaptation

Following the loss of their sibling, some participants engaged in adaptive ways of coping to positively deal with the emotional difficulties. Instead of yielding to the extended periods of distress, participants employed diverse coping strategies including particular activities, habits, or routines that help them deal with their loss.

Engagement in routines for distraction

In the aftermath of their sibling’s death, the participants turned to routine-oriented activities as a constructive means of distraction to cope with their grief and uphold psychological stability. Immersing themselves in work, academics, and leisure pursuits allowed them to momentarily detach from distressing emotions and overwhelming thoughts, implying both a protective and retroactive approach in dealing with the loss.

As attested by the participants:

(P1) *Siguro routines kay nibalik kog trabaho. Makaingon gyud ko kaning pagkabusy sa trabaho ba kay makalimot ka sa imong for the meantime ba sa kasakit nga imong gibati. (Maybe my routines because I went back to work. I can really say that being busy with work helps you forget, even just for a while, the pain you're feeling.)*

(P3) *Akoang usual ra nga trabaho—maghayopan ug mananom, nga routine nako daan. (Just my usual farming work routine—tending to animals and plants, which I've been doing ever since.)*

(P4) *Tingklase pa man gud to so makalimtan ra siya ba. (The school year was ongoing so it was easier to divert my attention.)*

(P6) *Always gyud kong naa sa balay walay lakaw-lakaw, manglalog ra kog baboy. Routine ra ba, everyday, mao rana akong ginabuhat. Rotation na na ko, wala pa siya nawala. (I'm always just at home, rarely going out—just feeding the pigs. I just do my usual daily rotation, even before he passed.)*

(P7) *Akong skwela then pag[kuan] ato kay murag nasabay na, skwela ug katong other hobbies nako na makadistract lang gyud. Dili siya kalimtan like mangita lang gyud ug laing way nga di mahunahunaan ang nahitabo. Sayun siya nagkadugay. (During that time, I got caught up with school and my other hobbies that really helped distract me. I don't intend to forget, but you just find other ways so you don't keep thinking about what happened. It becomes easier over time.)*

Across these accounts, it was revealed that the bereaved siblings' often indulge themselves in familiar routine tasks such as work, academics, and mundane activities as their effective methods for navigating grief. This engagement not only provided structure and continuity but also allowed temporary detachment from grief, showing how routine-oriented behaviors can serve as both protective and retroactive coping strategies. Although it is a disengagement coping strategy, which have been historically viewed as maladaptive (e.g., avoidance), positive distraction can be an adaptive version that predicts positive outcomes (Waugh et al., 2020). Notably, while the participants acknowledge the loss, they do not describe behaviors such as denial, social withdrawal, or rumination, which characterize maladaptive coping (Smith et al., 2024).

Mundane tasks such as farming, household chores, or academic obligations were particularly valued for offering a sense of control and continuity in life. This finding is congruent to that of Mehlhausen-Hassoen and Cohen's (2024), which revealed the complex cognitive and emotional challenges of the bereaved individuals who lost their siblings before they reached the age of 21. As in the current study, participants in Mehlhausen-Hassoen and Cohen's (2024) also disclosed in this study that they have various coping strategies — maintaining routines to avoid grief-related interactions.

Physical and Recreational Activities

For many people, engaging in physical activities such as sports, exercise, and outdoor recreation provides a constructive way to channel their emotions, ease tension, and momentarily detach from painful memories. This subtheme shows how participants turned to movement-based and leisure pursuits as outlets in the aftermath of loss

As they have quoted:

(P2) *Ihandle nako through physical activities. idagan na lang sa Abellana. Or sa gym, magboxing-boxing kay at least ma divert imong huna-huna. Bahalag mubalik siya [ang memory], at least gamay na lang ang time nga magahin para hunahunaon gyud siya.*

(I handle it through physical activities—running in the oval, or do boxing at the gym. Because at least it diverts my mind. Even if the memories come back, at least I spend less time really dwelling on them.)

(P4) *Kanang moapil ganig activities kanang mga fun run. Inter-barangay sad, mga volleyball.*

(Join inter-barangay physical activities like fun run and volleyball.)

(P6) *Akong lingaw, basket, bisan gabie or buntag.*

(Play basketball, whether it's day or night.)

(P7) *Work out then laag-laag slight.*

(I work out then go out sometimes.)

Activities such as basketball, boxing, exercise, fun runs, and inter-community sports allowed them to channel emotional energy, reduce physiological tension, and maintain social connectedness. These pursuits functioned as embodied coping strategies, emphasizing the role of movement and leisure in regulating grief nonverbally. Such findings align with the study of Williams and co-researchers (2021) who noted that physical activities can be both beneficial to the physical health and psychological well-being of individuals who have experienced bereavement, whilst also fostering a sense of freedom, facilitate emotional expression, providing a distraction, and an escape from grief.

Emotion Regulation Practices

When emotions became too heavy to bear, the participants turned to various ways of releasing their emotional tension. These practices served as healthy outlets that allowed them to ease the burden of grief and regain a sense of calm. By finding moments to let go of what they felt, they were able to cope better and keep themselves from being overwhelmed by the pain of losing their sibling.

As revealed by the participants:

(P1) *Ihilak dayon choose people nga kana bitaw imong istoryahan nga fully sincere nimo kay dili ka nila e-judge ba kung unsa imong gibati.* (I cry it out and then choose people who are sincere to talk to, the kind of people who won't judge how I feel.)

(P3) *Ihilak na lang gyud. Kung di na mada, mosulti kos akoang mga kauban sa baol, adtu ko didtu mosulti.* (I just cry it out. If it becomes too much, I talk to my friends at the farm.)

Reflected on the narratives above, the bereaved siblings described how these practices provided them relief and a way to control whenever the intensity of grief became too difficult to manage, making these behaviors fall under emotion-focused coping (Carver et al., 1989). Some of the bereaved siblings complemented this with outdoor or social engagement, indicating that combining emotional expression with physical or social activity enhanced coping effectiveness. Existing studies imply that engaging in physical activities along with others can enhance grief outcomes by providing distractions from overwhelming emotions and strengthens bonds with others (Williams et al., 2021; Zavrou et al., 2023). Thus, this suggests that these strategies helped manage overwhelming emotions, provided relief, and reinforced a sense of control over grief.

Theme 2. Spiritual Expression

The second theme Spiritual Expression illustrates how faith and religious involvement acted as an anchor during the most difficult periods of grieving. Two subthemes were identified: *seeking salvation from the deceased through religious practices* and *faith as a source of strength*, all of which reflects faith-based actions that guide the bereaved individuals in navigating grief and finding gradual acceptance following the unsettling loss of their sibling.

In times of deep sorrow, many individuals turn to their faith as a source of comfort and understanding—and this was evident among the participants. This theme highlights how faith and religious practices served as an anchor during their most difficult moments, offering a sense of comfort, strength, and hope amid emotional agony. It can be understood that turning to spirituality was not only a form of emotional release but also a pathway to renewal and salvation for the deceased, allowing them to face loss with acceptance and resilience. Research

shows that spirituality and faith/belief in a higher being are essential components for coping and healing for family members who experience loss to suicide (Alfaro et al., 2025), confirming the results of this study. Faith shaped how the participants understood the event, how they regulated intense emotion, and how they enacted ongoing care for the deceased.

Prayer and Faith as a Source of Strength

For the bereaved siblings, their faith played a significant role in how they handle the challenges of grief. Many participants emphasized that trusting in a higher power provided them with comfort and guidance, allowing them to cope with the emotional weight of their sibling's death.

(P1) *Ako lang jud e-ampo nga unta ang kasakit nga gibati nako kay kaya ra jud, nga makasurvive rajud ko.* (I just really pray that I can handle the pain I'm feeling, that I can survive it.)

(P3) *Number one gyud salig sa Ginoo unsay angayng buhaton para malig-on ka".* (First of all, is to trust God on what should be done so you can be strong.)

(P4) *Di lang kayo dibdibon kay, mao na nga ibutang nalang na Ginoo na ang mag igo niya.* (I don't hold it in my heart and just trust God to take care of my sibling.)

(P5) *Mag ampo lang, ingana ra. Kanang mura lang kag naay kaistoryahan ba. Isalig nalang gyud ug mosampit ko sa Ginoo nga kanang maingon ko ba na mangayo kog sign unsay angay nakong buhaton.* " (I just pray. It's like you have someone to talk to. I just entrust everything to God and call on Him, asking for a sign about what I should do.)

From these narratives, it is evident that faith and prayer served as the participants' foremost sources of strength in coping with the emotional aftermath of their sibling's suicide. This is validated by Noreen and Anis ul Haque's (2024) findings, that spirituality and religious practices often serve as vital sources of comfort and strength. In this study, prayer functioned as their primary mechanism for emotional regulation and endurance. By entrusting their pain to God, they found a sense of comfort and control amid an otherwise uncontrollable loss.

Significantly, this reliance on faith, however, did not equate to passive acceptance; rather, it represented an active form of surrender that alleviated internal turmoil. The bereaved siblings described prayer as a personal dialogue with God—an intimate and relational process that offered reassurance, clarity, and companionship in moments of solitude. Through prayer, they not only sought divine guidance but also restructured their grief into a spiritually meaningful experience. This practice transformed despair into acceptance by reframing the loss through the lens of divine purpose. In doing so, they reclaimed a sense of agency, recognizing that while they could not alter the event, they could choose to endure it with faith.

This finding validates a previous literature to that of Mastrocinque et al., (2020), who found that spirituality, being the personal understanding of the transcended or sacred (Dykstra, 1986), may be a way for suicide-bereaved individuals to individually heal in their grieving.

Seeking Salvation for the Deceased

Alongside personal faith, the bereaved siblings aided their coping strategies through religious acts centered on praying for the soul of their departed sibling. These faith-based practices served as both a means of emotional release and spiritual intercession, reflecting a certain belief that continued prayer could aid the deceased in finding peace.

As exemplified by one of the participants:

(P5) *Moadto'g minteryo kay mokuan jud every Monday man to namo sya pamisahan gyud. Moingon sila nga talabangon jud kay di pa ingon nga mahalangit gyud kay sala man gud, kay dili man kabubut-on sa Ginoo nga*

kuhaon gyud siya. (We visit the cemetery every Monday so we can have pamisa, since it was really an immortal sin. People say that her soul needs a lot of help because it was a sin—it wasn't God's will to take their life.)

This narrative reveals how coping was intertwined with spiritual responsibility and hope for redemption. The consistent observance of *pamisa* reflects a belief that religious devotion could aid in the sibling's salvation, offering comfort through the sense of doing something meaningful for the deceased despite and because of the moral weight attached to suicide. This finding contradicts to Potter (2021), who stated that the internalized moral weight of suicide being a mortal sin easily push bereaved loved ones away from God. Instead of moving away from the higher being, participants leaned more towards for salvation. For the bereaved siblings, these practices represented both an offering of love and a means of reconciling the moral complexities surrounding suicide within their faith tradition.

Theme 3. Continuing Bonds

Lastly, the third theme which is the Continuing Bonds as a Coping Strategies denotes how the participants continued to carry out, maintaining the connection between the bereaved and their departed siblings, expressed through subthemes *sustained memorial expressions* and *remembrance in cemetery visits* that keep the memory of their loved one alive.

Sustained Memorial Expressions

Shared rituals and symbolic practices emerged as a meaningful avenue through which the bereaved siblings sustained their emotional connection with their departed sibling. These practices—often embedded in cultural, familial, or personal practices—provided means to honor the memory of the deceased and express continuing relationship with the deceased. This is attested by the participants through the following accounts:

(P3) *Bisan pag wala na siya diri, makahuna-huna gihapon mi nga naa siya, kauban namo siya kay sauna kuyog man jud mi ato sa mga buhat.* \

(Even if they're not here anymore, we still think he's around since we used to do these things together before.)

(P7) *Pinakafeel connected gyud is simang sya kay tagay gyud, which is one way pud I distract myself magtagay gyud. Pero at the same time mao pu'y bonding namong mag-igsuon kay tagay tagay. Usahay kay magtagay mi kay trip lang namo.*

(The thing that makes me feel most connected to them is drinking, which now, is also one of the ways I distract myself. We used to drink a lot, it was our bonding as siblings. We even used to do it when we had nothing else to do.)

(P2) *Iyahang mga favorite music, akong balikon ug paminaw.*

(I keep listening to his favorite music on repeat.)

Across accounts, participants engaged in tasks once shared with the deceased or recreated familiar bonding moments, allowing them to sustain a sense of emotional proximity despite physical absence. This finding aligns with Gorospe (2020), who stated that in the Filipino context, siblings may preserve the memory of the deceased through personal rituals, such as visiting the gravesite, displaying photographs, or engaging in activities that remind them of their sibling. This is also further validated how envisioning the deceased in specific places is an adaptive way to continuing bonds with the deceased (Jonsson and Walter, 2017).

Alongside these behavioral rituals, others also relied on symbolic reminders, most notably music and other sensory cues that carried emotional significance tied to their siblings. These symbolic elements functioned as intimate conduits for recalling memories and reaffirming relational ties, helping the bereaved bridge the gap between past togetherness and present loss. Such practices exemplify the findings of Stengs (2018), implying that music serves as a powerful symbolic medium through which mourners negotiate grief and maintain relational bonds, since songs evoke emotional and social memories linked to the deceased. By engaging with

songs that once resonated with the deceased, the respondent not only re-experienced moments of shared enjoyment but also transformed listening into a ritual of remembrance.

Remembrance in Cemetery Visits

For one participant, maintaining a connection with a deceased sibling extended beyond memory into tangible acts, such as visiting the cemetery. These visits served as a way to sustain an ongoing bond with the lost sibling, providing a space to express longing, preserve shared memories, and reinforce the emotional connection that persists despite death.

(P6) *Nistorya ko nga gimingaw ko, nya nangagda ko nga 'tana managkot ta' bisan walay kwarta. Mura kog gimingaw sa bonding, inana ba.* (I said I missed him, and I invited them to visit the cemetery even though we didn't have money. I just really missed the bonding.)

This account highlights how cemetery visits functioned as a symbolic continuation of the sibling relationship, allowing the participant to recreate moments of connection and togetherness (Gilvin, 2018). Further, Castillo (2024) in their study on funerals, memorialization, and bereavement, emphasize cemeteries as sites for ritual and continued social bonds with the deceased, facilitating grief processing by allowing mourners to maintain relational ties through physical and symbolic presence.

Support Systems of the Bereaved Siblings

Support systems play a central role in shaping how bereaved siblings cope with the loss of a sibling to suicide. They function as sources of emotional security, guidance, and shared understanding that help individuals endure the aftermath of loss. These systems influence how grief is processed, expressed, and managed over time. As reflected in Table 2, the nature of support available to the participants emerges from both interpersonal and community-based relationships.

The presence of others during bereavement provides a framework through which individuals interpret and respond to their loss. Support systems assist in buffering emotional distress and in maintaining daily functioning following the death of a sibling. They also influence help-seeking behavior and the willingness of individuals to express vulnerability. The themes presented in Table 2 reflect how these sources of support operate within the lived experiences of Cebuano suicide-bereaved siblings.

In the context of sibling bereavement, access to support extends beyond individual coping efforts and is embedded within relational and social structures. Family members, peers, and community groups play distinct roles in shaping the bereavement experience. These relationships offer both stability and change following the loss. The succeeding themes in Table 2 outline how support systems are structured and perceived by the participants after their sibling's death.

Table 2. Support Systems in Going Through the Grief

Themes	Subthemes
Familial and Peer Support as Primary Coping Anchor	Maternal support Partner and children Changes in parental attitude Heightened Familial Attentiveness Peer companionship
Community-Facilitated Coping Resources	Provider of guidance and learning

	<p>Safe space for emotional outlet</p> <p>Call for stronger community involvement</p>
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The table presents the identified themes and subthemes related to the participants’ experiences and perspectives on the support system that influenced their coping process after the loss of a sibling to suicide. From their shared accounts, two major themes were identified: Familial and Peer Support as Coping Anchor and Community-Facilitated Coping Resources.

Under the first major theme, familial and peer support as primary coping anchor, underscores the participants’ reliance on family and peers as their foundation—offering comfort and companionship that mitigated the psychological instability often linked to bereavement from suicide. This theme includes five subthemes: *maternal support, partner and children, changes in parental attitude after the loss, heightened familial attentiveness, and peer companionship.*

Theme 1. Familial and Peer Support as Primary Coping Anchor

Amid the disorienting experience of loss, participants found their emotional footing through the relationships that anchored them. A recurring finding in participants’ stories is that family—especially mothers, partners, and children, served as their most consistent and meaningful source of support in coping with the loss of a sibling.

Parallel to familial support, peer relationships also emerged as a critical buffer against distress, especially for participants who found it difficult to fully express their emotions at home. These relational resources signifies that the way siblings cope after a suicide is fundamentally relational, influenced by the quality of their interpersonal surroundings. Significantly, these networks play an essential role in providing emotional validation, encouragement, and a sense of belonging that helps suicide-bereaved individuals avoid feelings of isolation, directly supporting Bowen’s Family Systems Theory (1966).

Maternal Support

Mothers, despite their personal grief in losing their child, never ceased their role as caregivers, providing emotional stability and guidance to the surviving children. Their support ranged from active listening and shared reflection to encouragement and presence during small but meaningful milestones. These are expressed through the following accounts of participants:

(P7) *Si mama ra gyud ang support system ato. Magsturya-sturya ra mi about sa nahitabo ana like kadugayan manormalize nalang like ingnan “dawaton nalang nato.”* (My mom was my only support system that time... we would talk about what happened and over time it became normalized and accepted what happened.)

(P1) *Main source of support nako husband, mama... Ilang presence nagsupport sila [kana] bitaw, bisan nalag small wins nimo naa sila, ingon ana, words of encouragement nga magpadayon ta* (My main source of support was my husband and my mom... Their presence really supported me like, even for my small wins, they were there. Things like giving words of encouragement and reminding me that I need to keep going.)

(P3) *Amiga, silingan, akong ginikanan, sila mama. Magtinabangay jud mi sa mga problema, share-share.* (My friend, my neighbors, and my parents. We really help each other with problems, sharing with one another.)

Maternal support emerged as a crucial source of emotional stability and guidance for individuals coping with the loss of a sibling to suicide. Mothers provided a safe space for open conversations, offered reassurance, and encouraged resilience, gradually accepting the loss. This support was expressed not only through dialogue but also through shared experiences, presence, and emotional availability, reinforcing the participants’ ability to cope with grief and navigate challenging moments in their daily lives. This findings aligns with Guanga et al. (2025), who emphasized that families bereaved by suicide often foster healing by strengthening emotional connections through open communication. Their study highlighted how mothers who prioritize open dialogue

create a supportive environment where children feel safe to express their emotions—reflecting a form of family resilience and collective determination to recover despite the enduring pain of loss.

Partner and Children

Within the bond bound not directly by blood, but by built family found through significant others and the joy their children bring, participants found solace and comfort in their presence.

As exemplified by the participants:

(P4) *Uyab nami ato niya (bana) kato na time. Mostorya ra sad ko niya.* (At that time, he was already my boyfriend. I would just talk to him.)

(P5) *Akoa rang anak unya akong pares [bana]. Moingon siya (bana) nga “sagdi lang kay makalingkawas lage ta ana puhon” moana ra gani. Murag gicomfort gani ko nila (anak) ug unsay kanang mga problema gani nako.* (He [partner] would say, “It’s okay, we’ll get through this someday,” something like that. My partner and my children comfort me whenever I’m facing problems.)

The aforementioned accounts show how partners and children played an active role in helping them cope. Such forms of relational support functioned not merely as emotional relief but as grounding mechanisms that sustained the grieving individuals in times of overwhelming circumstances. These results align with those of Luna (2023), who found that the social network in which the bereaved often turn to are their closest family members including spouses, children, and extended families. According to the results of this study, intimate partners are their primary confidants and providers of practical and emotional support, whereas the children enable them to move forward after such tragedy.

Changes in Parental Attitude

The loss of a sibling to suicide inevitably restructured family relationships, altering patterns of interaction, emotional expression, and caregiving within the household. Čepukienė & Neophytou (2024) noted that a family’s emotional reactivity and communication patterns can either support or hinder a sibling’s ability to process their grief and maintain a healthy emotional balance (Čepukienė & Neophytou, 2024; Creuzé et al., 2022).

In this study, participants recounted noticeable shifts in their parents’ behavior following the loss, particularly in how they expressed care, discipline, and fairness. The tragedy appeared to soften once-strict parental approaches, fostering a more balanced or compassionate family environment, though at times, increased control or protectiveness also emerged as a response to fear and loss.

As the participants attested:

(P2) *Sa akoang mama siguro nausab, akoang mama baya sauna kay dili fair. Nya pagkahitabo ato, naa juy kausaban, ni patas-patas na siya.* (Something changed with my Mama. Before, she wasn’t really fair. But after that happened, there was a change—she became more fair.)

(P7) *Murag mas nistikta siya sukad atong hitabua ni kuya. Nisamot kaprotective.* (After what happened to my brother, she became even stricter and more protective.)

These accounts reveal that the loss prompted parents to reevaluate their relationships with their children, leading to emotional and behavioral adjustments within the household. In one case, the experience brought about a positive transformation, as the mother became more understanding and equitable—replacing her former sense of unfairness with a more compassionate and balanced approach. Conversely, another instance reflected a more restrictive outcome wherein maternal grief led into heightened strictness and protectiveness, reflecting a deep fear of losing another child. These insights correspond closely to the findings of De Guzman and Villazor (2022), indicating that parents reconstructed their parenting style into a more proactive and preventive style, as they do not wish to repeat the experience with their remaining children.

These differing responses illustrate how parental coping can take divergent forms—either softening through empathy or tightening through control, as parents navigate their own grief while striving to protect what remains of their family.

Heightened Familial Attentiveness

Following the loss, participants reported a renewed sense of concern and emotional awareness toward their remaining family members. What once felt like routine or distant relationships evolved into more mindful and affectionate connections, as family members became more attentive to each other's well-being. These are characterized by the following accounts of participants:

(P1) *After sa nahitabo kay concern na ko nila. Mas naconcern ko sa akong family ug unsay ilahang mga gibati.*
(After what happened, I became more concerned about my family and how they were feeling.)

(P3) *Kanang moshare naka sa imong pamilya. Niya imong mga anak imo nang atimanon ug pangumustaon pud.*
(I started opening up to my family, I checked on my children and took care of them more.)

(P5) *Sauna kay masuko siya (sibling) pero karon kay mokalma na siya ba kay murag napokus na gani nako sila.*
(Before, my sibling used to get angry, but now they've become calmer because I've started giving them more attention.)

These statements are indicative of a meaningful transformation in familial empathy and emotional reciprocity following the loss. As reflected, the tragedy fostered a deeper awareness of the bereaved family's emotional states, shifting their focus from their own pain toward shared understanding and care. Additionally, such tragedy led to an increased attention toward a surviving sibling which in turn helped ease tension and develop calmness in their relationship, suggesting that grief can reorient priorities toward nurturing closeness. These findings supported the notion of evolving family dynamics, specifically highlighting the grief interactions within families fosters better communication and mutual understanding (Adams et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, the finding of the current study directly opposes the findings of Terkamo-Moisioo et al.'s (2025) study, which revealed that changes in family ties following a suicide loss often alter how survivors perceive their family relationships sometimes leading to emotional detachment rather than closeness. In the current study, the accounts of the participants indicated improvement with the concern and relationship with the family after the loss, instead of detachment.

Peer Companionship

In addition to familial support, relationships with peers have also proven to be a significant protective factor against psychological distress, particularly for those who struggled to express their emotions openly within their home. Close friends offered nonjudgmental listening, practical guidance, and safety spaces where participants freely express their fears, loneliness, and unresolved inquiries related to suicide.

As shared by the participants:

(P3) *Magtinabangay jud mi [amiga] sa mga problema, share-share.* (We really help each other with problems, sharing with one another.)

(P6) *Sa akoang mga amigo, makasulti ra ko usahay. Suporta dala bugal-bugal man gud. Unya mataod-taoran, muana nga tinuod bitaw na akong ingon nimo bai. Ipaagi ra namog katawa aron di pud maguol. Ilang pagjoke-joke maoy nakatabang jud nako.*

(Sometimes, I can open up to my friends. Their support sometimes comes with teasing. But after a while, they'll say, "What you said was actually true, bro." We just use laughter so I won't feel too sad. Their teasing really helped me a lot.)

The shared accounts illustrate the significant role of friendship as a stabilizing force in the coping processes of the bereaved siblings. For some who found it difficult to confront their emotions within their family, friends emerged as accessible and emotionally attuned support figures who supplemented the limitations of familial communication. This finding is validated by the study of Bartone et al. (2017) who assert that peer support offers a shared experience for both the bereaved and peer supporter, indicating that this shared experience can help alleviate grief symptoms, such as diminished feelings of isolation and depression. Further studies have substantiated that through peer-led social support groups enable individuals to normalize the grieving process, improve their coping mechanisms, and reduce negative effects related to suicide bereavement (Ali & Lucock, 2020; Cipolletta et al., 2022).

In addition, peer relationships also provided an environment where grief could be articulated more openly through shared conversations, emotional validation, and subtle forms of reassurance such as humor and daily companionship. These insights complement the study of O'Connell and co-researchers in 2023, indicating that peers provide the opportunity to share experiences, increase connection and belongingness, gain perspective through comparison with others, and collectively process grief.

Theme 2. Community-Facilitated Coping Resources

The second theme, community-facilitated coping resources, highlights the essential role of structured community-based support in shaping how the Cebuano bereaved siblings navigated their grief after the tragedy. Its subthemes: *provider of guidance and learning, safe space for emotional outlet, and call for stronger community involvement*, elucidate how spiritual gatherings, shared practices, and customary practices contributed to an individual sense of belonging and emotional expression.

Provider of Guidance and Learning

Through participating in support groups and open conversations, the participants received both practical and emotional advice that guided them toward recovery. Sharing their own experiences allowed them to feel understood and supported, while also gaining useful strategies to manage their grief.

As quoted by the participants:

(P3) *Dakog natabang ang group sa akong pamilya, isip inahan, isip igsuong babae, nga naay hunahunaon gyud ba nga unsay padulngan kung asa ka magbuhay og maayo ug dili maayo. Naa kay mashare shareran sa imong problema niya motambag pud sila unsay buhaton niya maminaw pud sila unsay problema. Dako silag natabang sa akoa para maka move on sa mga panghitabo. Moshare man jud sila unsay angayng buhaton sa pagmove-on, nga dili lang gyud padala sa gibati ug kasakit.* (The women's group really helped my family, as a mother and as a sister, giving guidance on what's right and wrong, and where your actions could lead. You can have someone to share your problems with, and they also give advice on what to do. They listen to what you're going through, and they've helped me a lot in moving on from what happened.)

(P5) *Moadvice sad nimo sila nga mao nalang na, mao nalang ni buhata.* (They'll give you advice, like this is what you should do.)

The guidance provided in these group settings offers actionable steps to handle their grief and make sense of their emotions. This finding is supported by the study of Feigelman et al. (2019), which found that frequent participation in bereavement support groups is linked to greater personal growth among suicide-bereaved survivors. Their results suggest that support groups may serve as one of the most effective forms of intervention, even more beneficial than formal mental health services, as they allow individuals to share experiences, receive advice, and gain emotional strength from others who understand their loss.

Safe Space for Emotional Outlet

Within group settings, participants were able to safely express their grief without fear of judgment or misunderstanding. Such environments allowed them to confront and release their distressing emotions, providing

a sense of relief and emotional lightness.

As indicated by the participants:

(P2) *Open man gud sya, pwede ka mohilak, unya naa kay 10-minute hug sa strangers, makagaan sya sa imong gibati.*

(It's open, you can cry and there's also a 10-minute hug from strangers, which helps lighten your feelings.)

(P5) *Murag mogaan gani imong pamati nga nishare ka nila.*

(It's like you feel lighter after sharing with them.)

These narratives convey that being part in a supportive and understanding group provides a safe emotional outlet where suicide-bereaved individuals can express their grief freely. The ability to share emotions in a nonjudgmental space promotes emotional release, which helps in reducing feelings of isolation and heaviness associated with grief. This is consistent with the findings of O'Connell et al. (2023), who noted that one of the main benefits of peer support meetings is the freedom to speak openly about emotions and experiences, which helps individuals feel validated by others. Similarly, White (2023) emphasized that Christian-oriented and secular groups attributed their coping to either a sense of connection with a higher power or the support of a compassionate community, particularly in this case. Together, these studies highlight that peer support environments not only provide comfort but also create a sense of belonging and mutual understanding that aids in emotional healing.

Call for Stronger Community Involvement

While participants identified some existing community structures, they also emphasized the limited availability of formal support services within the community—particularly counseling and mental health programs. This perceived gap reflects a need to strengthen community-based support systems to better assist individuals coping with the loss of a sibling to suicide. The following responses illustrate the participants' expressed need for counseling and structured support during their grieving process:

(P1) *I wish nga nay mga counseling or any activities bitaw nga pwede makapadivert bitaw sa huna-huna sa mga nahitabuan.* (I wish there were counseling services or any activities that could help divert their thoughts from what happened.)

(P7) *I think mas na'y murag counseling for awareness lang mga ing-ana. At least, if ever nay kaduulan ang mga tao samot tong mauwaw moshare sa mga ingon ana.* (I think there should be something like counseling for awareness. At least that way, people especially those who feel shy to share about things like that.)

These accounts emphasized the importance of having structured programs or activities that could provide emotional guidance and a safe space for releasing emotions. Their reflections underscore the need for accessible counseling services that not only offer practical support but also encourage individuals especially those who may feel hesitant or shy to share their feelings. These results are in strong alignment with existing studies that indicate many bereaved siblings seek support outside the family unit (Macor, 2018; Arizona et al., 2019), implying that interventions can play a crucial role in alleviating emotional burdens and promoting healthier coping strategies during bereavement.

Ultimately, the findings of this study underscore the pivotal interaction between familial, social, spiritual dimensions, and structured institutions in shaping the coping strategies of individuals bereaved by a sibling's suicide. The themes that emerged illustrate that coping is not a singular or linear process but one that is deeply embedded in the quality and availability of one's support systems.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study holds considerable relevant implications across various fields: mental health professionals, family dynamics, community support structure, and future research, particularly in understanding suicide bereavement within the Cebuano cultural context. The experiences of Cebuano suicide-bereaved siblings as reflected on the findings of this study, implies that familial and peer-led support group act as an essential coping methods, reinforcing the necessity for family-inclusive and culturally appropriate interventions within clinical and environmental settings. Hence, mental health professionals—including psychologists, guidance counselors, social workers, and healthcare providers—are encouraged to develop therapeutic programs that incorporate family members to facilitate shared mourning, strengthen emotional bonds, and foster collective resilience.

Significantly, the present study reveals the participants' reliance on religious and informal support systems. These findings foreground the need for community-based postvention initiatives, wherein the local governments, schools, and religious organizations can collaborate to establish accessible grief counseling programs, educational campaigns, and mental health awareness programs that centers on suicide cases. The aim of these initiatives is to lessen the stigma surrounding suicide and encourage individuals to seek professional support.

Theoretically, this research supports and expands beyond practical understanding of coping within the context of suicide bereavement. Grounded by Lazarus and Folkman's Theory of Stress and Coping (1984), the findings affirm that coping is a dynamic, context-dependent process where the bereaved individuals assess their loss and handle distress through the utilization of both emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies. Participants in this study demonstrated adaptive coping methods like seeking emotional support and practicing spirituality, which aligns with the theory's conceptualization of coping as a balance between internal regulation and solving external conflicts.

Furthermore, this also reinforces Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978) by asserting that suicide loss disrupts the equilibrium within the family unit and necessitates a reconfiguration of relationships among surviving members. The experiences described by the grieving siblings in this study on how personal emotional reactions are deeply connected to family dynamics, clearly aligns to the perspectives of the aforementioned theory. Thus, it can be inferred that coping with suicide bereavement among Cebuano siblings is a complex journey that is shaped by both individual and systemic factors.

Lastly, the findings of this study indicated a lack of or restricted availability of formal professional postvention services, reinforcing that suicide bereavement continues to be inadequately addressed in both institutional and community settings. Future studies can therefore assess the efficacy of organized support interventions, such as counseling programs, grief support groups, and community-driven initiatives, including those modeled after the intervention plan proposed in this study. Such assessments would contribute to the development of evidence-based practices and guide policies aimed at fostering sustainable, culturally relevant postvention systems.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recruitment of participants for the current study and the difficulties with acquiring the sample size became a noteworthy part of the overall research process and likely highlights other areas suitable for future consideration while working with the population of sibling survivors of suicide. Since this study employed a combination of purposive and convenience sampling, most participants who consented are female. It is a recommendation for future studies to have an equal number of male and female participants, so as to gather equal and rich amount of data, and amply compare and contrast the experiences.

Moreover, the majority of the respondents were from the southern part of Cebu, which may limit the representation of experiences among suicide-bereaved siblings from the northern region or other areas of the province. Hence, the findings of this study may not fully capture the diversity of grief experiences across Cebu and should not be generalized to reflect the average Cebuano experience.

Notably, the recognition of restricted access to professional mental health services, along with the insufficient evidence regarding the efficacy of the established suicide-bereavement interventions, remains a significant aspect of the findings in this study. Thus, future research should aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing programs as well as the proposed intervention plan outlined in this study.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the coping patterns and support systems of siblings bereaved by suicide through narrative inquiry and thematic analysis. This study found that behavioral, familial, social, and spiritual factors interact in shaping how individuals cope with the suicide of a sibling. Coping with this loss is not a simple or one-time process but an ongoing adjustment that depends on available support systems and the individual's ability to adapt and find meaning.

Engaging in routines, recreational activities, and other structured tasks helped participants regain stability and manage distress. Family support, especially from mothers, spouses, and children, played a key role in easing emotional strain and promoting adjustment.

Religious involvement also provided comfort and reassurance through prayer, worship, and remembrance activities, helping participants process their grief and strengthen resilience. In contrast, those with limited support experienced isolation and emotional suppression, showing how the absence of social connection can worsen psychological distress.

Changes in family roles and relationships were observed as families worked to maintain stability after the loss. Many participants continued to honor their deceased siblings through shared rituals and memories, which helped them stay emotionally connected.

Finally, the participants' call for counseling and stronger community support highlights the need for better postvention care. Overall, coping with sibling loss by suicide involves multiple, interconnected dimensions—behavioral, familial, spiritual, and social, that must be considered in developing supportive and culturally appropriate interventions.

Based on these findings, specifically anchoring on the lack of support systems and desire for counselling, the researchers propose *Kakuyog sa Pagpanglimbasog*, a psychosocial intervention program for individuals bereaved by suicide.

All in all, coping with sibling suicide involves an interaction between emotional regulation, spiritual grounding, relational bonds, and available social support. Healing is achieved not by eliminating grief but by integrating it into daily life through supportive and meaning-making strategies. The findings underscore the importance of reinforcing familial communication, culturally grounded counseling, and community sensitivity. Future research should explore long-term adjustments and evaluate postvention strategies that consider both individual and systemic processes of grief adaptation.

Intervention Plan

Program Title: *Kakuyog sa Pagpanglimbasog*: A Psychosocial Intervention Program

I. Introduction

Kakuyog sa Pagpanglimbasog, which translates to “Companion in Earnest Striving” in English, reflects the need for shared healing and mutual support among individuals navigating the aftermath of suicide loss. It is a one-day psychosocial intervention program that aims to benchmark psychosocial support groups and be an avenue for professional mental health counseling and support group check-ins and reassessment.

The findings of the study *Coping Strategies of Cebuano Suicide-Bereaved Siblings* revealed that coping with such a profound loss is neither singular nor linear but rather a dynamic process deeply rooted in the availability

and quality of one’s support systems, as well as in the individual’s capacity for active adaptation and meaning-making. While the suicide-bereaved siblings managed to develop adaptive coping strategies, two findings in the study highlighted the absence of adequate support systems and the expressed desire for professional counseling, as well as for the community to be more compassionate to families bereaved of suicide. These gaps underscore the urgent need for a structured, community-based intervention that provides both psychosocial support and accessible mental health guidance.

II. Objectives

- Enhance awareness and understanding of grief, loss, and mental health by offering psychoeducational sessions on healthy coping strategies, and stigma reduction.
- Provide a safe and supportive space for suicide-bereaved individuals to openly express emotions, share experiences, and find understanding within a compassionate community.
- Strengthen community-based support systems by fostering peer companionship, solidarity, and collaboration among bereaved individuals, local leaders, and mental health professionals.
- Encourage help-seeking behavior by providing information on when and how to access professional counseling and mental health services.
- Promote sustainability and local capacity by maintaining partnerships between LGU and mental health organizations and professionals post-program.

IV. Target Participants

The target participants of the program will be individuals bereaved to suicide.

V. Evaluation

Evaluation of the overall program will be conducted using a short post-program evaluation form accomplished by participants at the end of the final session (see Appendix D), which will gather feedback on their satisfaction, perceived relevance, and personal learning from the sessions. In addition, facilitators will document observations on participant engagement and emotional responses throughout the program. These inputs will be reviewed to assess whether the objectives were met and to guide necessary improvements for future runs of the support program.

KRA	Session/Phase	Objectives	Target Population	Strategies/Activities	Time and Duration	Person(s) Responsible	Expected Outcome	Remarks
Participant Well-being and Adjustment	Session 1: Panaghimamatay	Build rapport, set group norms, and establish psychological safety.	Suicide Bereaved Individuals	Icebreaker “ <i>The Circle of Shared Strengths</i> ”, discussion of expectations and safe-space guidelines.	1 hr	Facilitators, Psych Interns	Participants develop a sense of connection, fostering a sense of trust and openness for succeeding sessions.	
Knowledge and Awareness	Session 2: Psychoeducational Seminar on Grief and Suicide Bereavement	1) Increase participants’ awareness and understanding of grief and bereavement, 2) Enhance participants’ knowledge of healthy coping strategies, 3) Encourage help-seeking behavior	Suicide Bereaved Individuals	Interactive seminar with visual aids; discussion on stages and variations of grief; myths and stigma about suicide; coping strategies and mental health resources	1.5 hrs	Registered Psychologist, Psych Interns, Organizing committee	Participants gain awareness, emotional regulation, and adaptive adjustment to the loss.	
Social Support and Connectedness Development	Session 3: Pagtambayayong : Building Social Support System	1) Acknowledge the roles of other individuals beyond the family unit. 2) Encourage participants to build connections through shared feelings and experiences 3) Empower participants to actively engage in community-	Suicide-Bereaved Individuals	Support Network Mapping: recognizing connections through an interactive and inclusive activity; active sharing of coping experiences	2 hrs	Facilitators, Psych Interns, RPsy	Reduced feelings of isolation Enhanced knowledge and skills in building supportive relationships. Gain greater sense of mutual emotional support and normalize relational dependence during grief. Strengthen the	

		based support networks					social support networks and apply practical coping strategies	
Help-Seeking and Utilization of Professional Support	Session 4: Counseling Consultation (optional per participant)	(1) Provide participants with a safe space to discuss their personal grief. (2) Identify individualized triggers, maladaptive coping patterns, and areas of emotional vulnerability for further assistance.	Suicide-Bereaved Individuals	<i>Pagsandig</i> : Counseling Session: One-on-one consultation with mental health professional; Referral and Crisis Pathway Orientation	3 hrs	Registered Psychologist, Psych Interns	Increased self-awareness Improved emotional regulation	
	Reassessment and Follow Up	(1) Assess participants' current emotional state and adjustment after the main intervention. (2) Provide maintenance check-ins for built support group.	Participants from the main intervention program	Conduct a brief group sharing circle titled " <i>How Have You Been?</i> " to check emotional progress and coping. Pair members for "buddy check-ins," encouraging short chats or messages of support between sessions.	1.5 hrs	Counselor, Facilitator		

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