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RESILIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FEMALE LEARNERS IN GRANDPARENT-HEADED HOMES

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated the resilience and psychological well-being of female learners residing in grandparent-headed households in Jose Abad Santos 1 District, Davao Occidental. Using a single case study approach, five purposively selected female learners were interviewed through in-depth interviews (IDIs) to determine how their resilience is shaped by personal strengths, family support, and external relationships. Guided by Garmezy's (1991) Resilience Theory, four main themes emerged: inner strength and motivation, emotional pain and longing, supporting relationships, and reciprocal gratitude. Despite the emotional difficulties brought about by parental absence and financial limitations, the learners demonstrated assertiveness, self-discipline, and optimism about their education. In addition to teachers, friends, and community members, grandparents emerged as key providers of both material and emotional support. Importantly, the learners demonstrated maturity by helping one another and by frequently sharing their resources with younger siblings. These findings highlight the importance of a multi-systemic support framework that incorporates personal autonomy, familial caregiving, and community-level involvement in promoting the resilience and psychological well-being of female learners in non-traditional family situations.

Keywords: *Resiliency, Psychological Well-being, Female Learners, Grandparent-Headed Households, Support Systems, Inclusive Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Children are most often raised by their parents; however, for a variety of reasons, many do not have such a childhood. Some are raised by their grandparents, who become their custodians from birth or early childhood. Saxena et al. (2026) state that this arrangement arises for numerous reasons, including parental illness, abuse, abandonment, teenage pregnancy, military deployment, an unstable household environment, or incarceration. Grandparents who act as custodians encounter new challenges, yet they are also given precious time with their grandchildren. Smith and Segal (2020) likewise describe raising grandchildren as challenging but potentially rewarding, noting that it can bring grandparent and grandchild closer together.

Research on learners in these arrangements remains limited. Edwards (2009) observed that empirical studies describing the functioning of children raised by grandparents are noticeably limited, even though custodial grandparenting has become a prominent alternative family structure, and Dunifon and Bajracharya (2012) similarly described the role of grandparents in the lives of youth as an understudied topic. It is important for teachers and policymakers to be aware of the difficulties these learners face so that they can support them and make education inclusive. Studies from China show that outcomes vary with the household arrangement: Zhang and Wu (2021) examined how living with grandparents relates to the academic performance of junior high school students, and Tang et al. (2024) found that three-generation co-residence had positive effects on adolescents' emotional stability, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, whereas skip-generation co-residence had negative effects on emotional stability and agreeableness. Downie et al. (2010) specifically explored the resilience and wellbeing of children living with their grandparents.

Resilience is commonly understood as the capacity to adapt successfully despite threats to development. Masten (2001) concluded that resilience arises from ordinary rather than extraordinary processes, such as supportive relationships and effective schools, which makes it a more hopeful and actionable concept than one that assumes special qualities in a few individuals. Sivakumar et al. (2022) observe that resilient individuals perceive adverse situations realistically, without blame or rumination. They perceive adversity as manageable and try to make small changes to solve problems. Resilience facilitates adaptation to stress and coping with adversity, reduces anxiety levels, and promotes psychological well-being.

Adolescents and young adults now form the largest generation in human history and, as Patton et al. (2016) point out, they have until recently been overlooked in global health and social policy. Children in grandparent-headed families may function well; Downie et al. (2010), for example, found the self-worth and emotional health of Australian children in full-time grandparent care to be within expected ranges. Others, however, show more behavioral problems than their peers, as teachers rated them in Edwards (2009). The amount of care that grandparents provide also matters, because periodic care can be less stressful than routine caregiving; the literature therefore distinguishes regular caregivers (more than 10 hours a week) from occasional caregivers (fewer than 10 hours a week) (Wellard, 2011; Noriega et al., 2022).

In the Philippines, people are characterized by strong family ties, and it is uncommon for a person to be single or to live alone. Co-residing and caring for each other show the robustness of Filipino intergenerational family relationships. In the Longitudinal Study of Aging and Health in the Philippines, 24.9% of older Filipinos in the second wave were involved in caring for grandchildren; of these caregivers, 87.4% lived with a grandchild, and 28.7% were solely in charge. The reasons given for being solely in charge included separated parents (25.9%), a parent working elsewhere in the Philippines (21.8%), a parent working abroad (17.1%), and orphaned grandchildren (10.3%) (Cruz & Paguirigan, 2025). In a multiple-case study of seven Filipino grandparents, Uy and Sadang (2020) likewise identified parental employment, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, parental imprisonment, and financial incapacity as reasons for taking custody. Strong grandparent–grandchild ties are not unique to the Philippines; Chen et al. (2011), using data from the China Health and Nutrition Survey, documented a high level of structural and functional solidarity in grandparent–grandchild relationships in a society with strong traditions regarding extended kin. Filipinos seek help and advice from relatives because of strong filial piety,

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lending a helping hand in times of both good fortune and adversity. The same longitudinal data do not show grandparent care itself rising (24% in the first wave and 24.9% in the second), but the share of older persons' households with a member working overseas rose from 4% to 9.5% (Cruz & Paguirigan, 2025), a context in which grandparents often assume childcare. This has implications for the psychological well-being and resilience of the younger generation, particularly female learners.

This study investigated the resilience and psychological well-being of female learners in grandparent-headed homes. Specifically, it aimed to explore how personal strengths, family support, and external support systems contribute to the development of resilience and psychological well-being among female learners living in grandparent households.

Theoretical Lens

The key component in building resilience is the individual's intelligence and character, with resilient youth having above-average intelligence. The second aspect in developing resilience is familial support in dealing with challenging situations. External institutional support is the third most common factor among resilient youth (Garmezy, 1991).

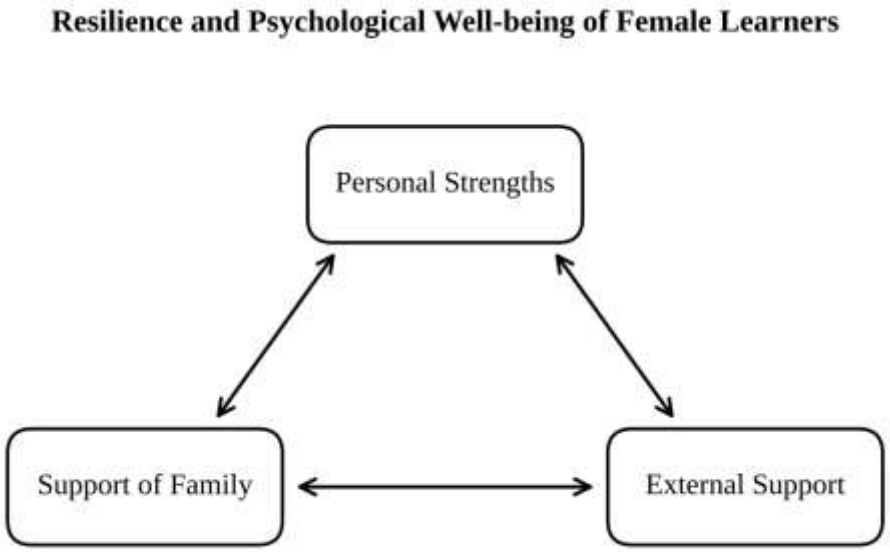
This theoretical perspective is consistent with resilience theory, which emphasizes the interaction of individual and environmental elements in building resilience. Based on Garmezy's (1991) work, the study paradigm proposes that resilience is influenced by intelligence and character, both of which play important roles in resilience development, with resilient youth frequently possessing above-average intelligence. Individuals who have supportive family relationships find it easier to deal with difficult circumstances. External assistance, such as that from schools or community organizations, also helps build resilience. The research paradigm of the study is presented in Figure 1.

Contemporary work extends this view by treating resilience not only as an individual trait but as a process that emerges from interactions across several systems (Ungar & Theron, 2020; Masten et al., 2021). Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) similarly frame adolescent resilience as healthy development in the face of risk, in which assets and resources help young people avoid or overcome adversity, and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model locates the child within nested systems that run from the family to the wider community. These perspectives are consistent with the paradigm of this study, which examines the learner, the family, and the school and community together.

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Figure 1. The Research Paradigm



Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the effect of grandparenting on the resilience and psychological well-being of female learners. Specifically, it aimed to determine the female learners' personal strengths, family support, and external support based on Resilience Theory (Garmezy, 1991). The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What personal strengths, such as intelligence and character, help female learners in grandparent-headed homes develop resilience?
2. How does family support influence the resilience and psychological well-being of female learners?
3. How do the school and the community affect the resilience and mental health of female learners living with grandparents?

Research Assumptions

This study was premised on the assumption that female learners in grandparent-headed homes can develop resilience through interactions with their environment and support systems. Factors such as supportive grandparents, positive relationships, and community resources are assumed to promote resilience and psychological well-being, while challenges such as poverty, parental absence, and caregiving responsibilities can affect them. Each female learner's experience of, and response to, challenges is assumed to be unique, influenced by personal characteristics, coping strategies, and support systems. Resilience theory resonates with the researcher because it highlights the human capacity to navigate adversity and to thrive despite challenges. Resilience is further assumed to involve a continuous process of growth, learning, and adjustment that can be fostered through experiences, skills, and mindset shifts. The researcher trusts that recognizing the potential for resilience can empower individuals to take control of their lives and build their capacity to cope with challenges. Through this study, the researcher hopes to affirm that supportive relationships and environments are crucial in promoting resilience among female learners in grandparent-headed homes.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study may offer valuable insights to various groups. For female learners in grandparent-headed homes, the study may provide a more profound understanding of their experiences and challenges. For grandparents raising grandchildren, it may inform strategies to support their grandchildren's resilience and psychological well-being. Educators and school administrators may be guided in developing targeted support services and interventions. Mental health professionals may use the findings as a basis for therapeutic approaches and interventions, and policymakers may draw on them for evidence-based recommendations for policies and

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programs. Future researchers may derive from this study an understanding of resilience and psychological well-being. Families and communities are indirect beneficiaries, as the study directs attention to the importance of promoting supportive environments; so is society at large, as the study underscores the importance of contributing to the well-being and development of individuals. Ultimately, the findings can inform strategies to support the well-being and resilience of female learners in grandparent-headed homes.

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METHODS

Research Design

Case study is an increasingly popular approach among qualitative researchers and is designed to suit the case and the research question (Hyett et al., 2014). Accordingly, this study employed a single case study design in which the five learners served as embedded units of analysis, and which does not seek statistical results that can be applied to all populations. A single case study involves a thorough study of a group, person, or occurrence, using data collected from multiple sources; Yin (2018) describes the resulting generalization as analytic, that is, extended to theory rather than to populations. Qualitative research allows for a rich comprehension of the complexities of human experience, motives, and cultural settings. A case study is a research approach used to obtain detailed, contextualized, and tangible information on a particular real-world phenomenon. It allows for the investigation of the main characteristics, importance, and implications of the case and, through an exploration of the causes of important concepts, behaviors, or results, offers insight into the subtleties of the phenomenon being studied. This approach allows researchers to capture a wide range of characteristics and interactions that could be lost through other methods, such as surveys or tests. Because qualitative research is characterized by flexibility, openness, and responsiveness to context, data collection and analysis do not follow a strictly separate and sequential process, as is the case in quantitative research, and the quality of such a study is judged against criteria suited to qualitative work rather than quantitative ones (Russell & Gregory, 2003).

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants were five (5) female learners from grandparent-headed homes in the public schools of Jose Abad Santos 1 District, Division of Davao Occidental. Using the purposive sampling technique, the participants were chosen to take part in in-depth interviews (IDIs). Purposive sampling provides researchers with the opportunity to choose participants deliberately, selecting those who best represent the research topic; matching the sample to the aims of the study in this way improves the rigor of the study and the trustworthiness of its data and results (Campbell et al., 2020). In line with the specific objectives of the study, the researcher therefore chose a sample that offered access to a subset of the population that best addressed the predetermined criteria. Five participants is a small sample, which is consistent with the depth sought in case study inquiry. Malterud et al. (2016) propose that the sample size needed depends on the information power of the sample: the more relevant information the sample holds, the fewer participants are needed, depending on the aim of the study, the specificity of the sample, the use of established theory, the quality of the dialogue, and the analysis strategy. A narrowly defined sample, an established theoretical framework (Garmezy, 1991), and an in-depth interview format are consistent with this reasoning.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation. The purpose of this research was to gain insight into the views and lived experiences of female learners in grandparent-headed homes by generating meaningful dialogue through guided interviews. In conducting the study, the researcher adhered to objectivity, empathy, and ethical sensitivity. Through attentive listening and careful consideration of the participants' contributions, the researcher upheld their confidentiality and ensured that their voices were genuinely reflected in the research.

Data-Gathering Procedure

This case study ensured the validity, accuracy, and rigor of the data collected by employing a systematic approach to data collection. Informed consent was sought from all participants in accordance with the ethical guidelines for qualitative research advised by Creswell (2013). Schoch (2020) treats sample size as one of the design considerations of case study research, alongside data collection and data analysis; in this study, a small number of information-rich participants was retained so that each could be interviewed in depth. Consistent with the research principle that requires documentation of all stages of the data-collection process, the interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and the resulting transcripts were then analyzed. Audio recording has become a widely used way of generating transcripts of in-depth interviews (Rutakumwa et al.,

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2020). The validity and dependability of the study were ensured by securing a certificate of member-checking, which confirmed the participants' approval of the findings and that the data were not misinterpreted during analysis. Member checking is commonly used in qualitative research as a means of maintaining validity (Candela, 2019).

Ethical Considerations

This qualitative study investigated the impact of grandparenting on the resilience and psychological well-being of female learners and adhered to established ethical principles that safeguard the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants. The researcher upheld ethical principles that guarantee the dignity, rights, and interests of all individuals involved in the research. Prior to data gathering, a pre-consent process was implemented in which the purpose, methodologies, potential risks, and potential benefits of the study were clearly explained. This process ensured that participants were well informed and could make voluntary choices regarding their participation. Only then was written informed consent requested. Participation was voluntary, and participants were at liberty to withdraw at any moment or to decline to answer any question they found uncomfortable. Interviews were arranged in private, comfortable settings, face-to-face or through secure online platforms, to provide an open and respectful exchange. Furthermore, participants were engaged in a culturally and professionally sensitive manner, thereby creating trust and eliciting honest answers. These practices are consistent with the necessity of obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality, particularly when working with vulnerable populations, where maintaining trust and safeguarding participants are central concerns (Yu et al., 2023).

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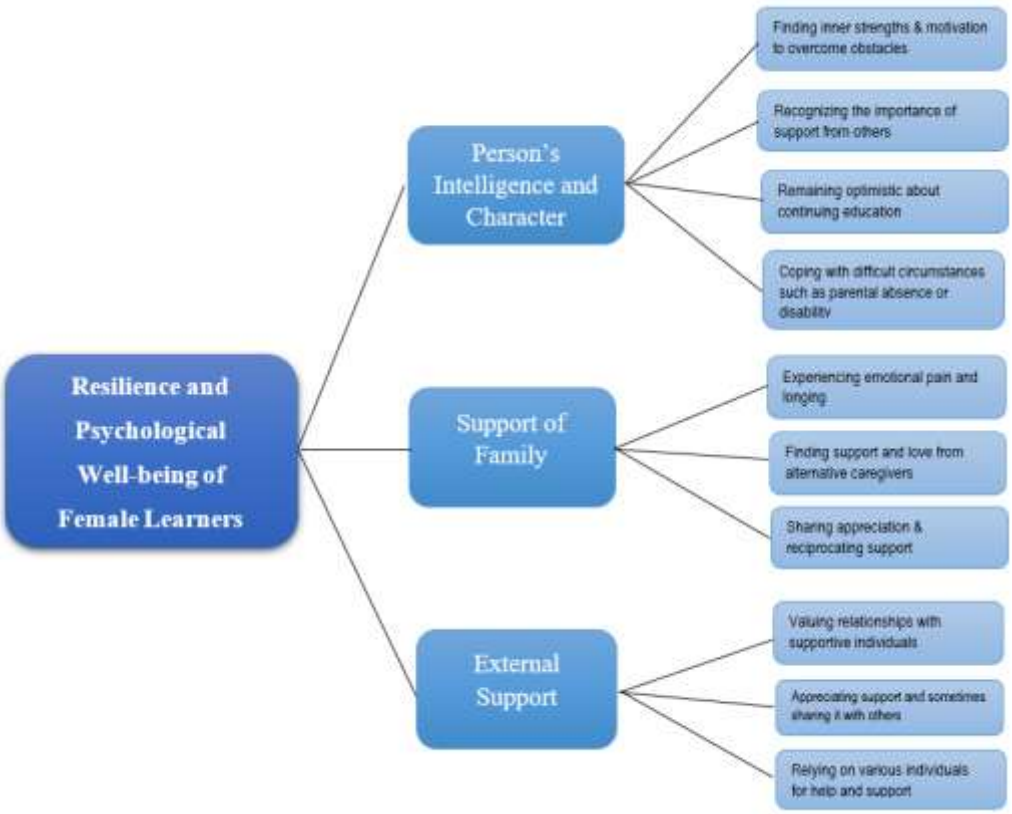
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 2 illustrates the key themes and interrelationships that emerged from the qualitative data concerning the resilience and psychological well-being of female learners in grandparent-headed homes. The learner's intelligence and character are at the heart of this framework because they serve as a fundamental internal motivator that helps learners deal with difficult emotional and social situations. To promote resilience, the model shows how individual traits such as drive and optimism work in concert with support from family and outside networks.

In addition to fostering a sense of stability and belonging, family support, especially from grandparents and other caregivers, helps lessen the emotional toll of parental absence. External support, obtained through relationships with classmates, teachers, and community members, strengthens the learner's capacity for coping and persistence. These elements work together to create a dynamic system in which the learner's psychological health and educational goals are mutually reinforced by internal characteristics and external relationships.

This thematic map demonstrates the holistic nature of resilience, in which personal attributes, familial relationships, and community networks work in tandem to support female learners facing adversity.

Figure 2. Emerging Themes Based on the Theoretical Framework



Personal Strengths That Help Female Learners Develop Resilience

This key concept emphasizes the inner qualities and strengths that female learners cultivate to stay strong in the face of the difficulties associated with growing up in households headed by grandparents. These include their optimism, sense of accountability, and capacity to overcome hardship by drawing on their own drive and moral fiber, as described in Figure 2.

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Finding Inner Strengths and Motivation to Overcome Obstacles

This theme reflects the learners' internal drive and belief in their capacity to persevere through hardship. Participants emphasized their courage, confidence, and mental fortitude as vital tools in handling daily difficulties. Many learners displayed assertiveness and a strong sense of self. IDI#1 emphasized obedience and diligence, IDI#3 emphasized bravery, and IDI#5 spoke of striving to be strong despite being far from her family.

> **IDI#3:** *"Isog ko Ma'am... Dili ko gusto daug-daugon,"*
> "I'm brave Ma'am. I don't want to be beaten"

> **IDI#1:** *"Mosunod kanunay sa sugo ug dili magtinapulan, dili magsige og sukol-sukol"*
> "Always follows orders and is not lazy, does not keep resisting, saying she avoids laziness and disobedience to maintain household harmony"

> **IDI#5:** *"Akong gina lig-on akong kaugalingon bisag layo ko sa akong pamilya."*
> "I am trying to be strong even though I am far from my family"

These findings suggest that, despite their youth, the learners have cultivated strong self-regulatory behaviors. Motivation is internally driven by a desire to avoid conflict and meet expectations, and their resilience is anchored in discipline and courage. Masten et al. (2021) describe resilience as arising from multisystem processes in which individual capacities operate alongside family and community resources. Bandura (2001) likewise described people as agentic, that is, as intentional, forward-looking, and self-regulating, a view that helps interpret the learners' self-directed persistence.

Coping with Difficult Circumstances

This theme captures the learners' capacity to adjust to life without their biological parents and to face difficult experiences such as grief, poverty, or bullying. These adversities often become sources of personal growth and resilience. Participants shared stories of losing parents or being separated from them. IDI#1 expressed hardship after her father's death and the burden of caring for younger siblings, yet praised her grandmother's support.

> **IDI#1:** *"Lisura jud ning wala na kay papa noh… Pasalamat nalang jud mi naa si maming."*
> "It's hard that my dad is gone. We're just thankful that grandma is there"

> **IDI#2:** *"Dili ko dayon dapat mawad an ug paglaum unya nagsalig ko kay naa akong lolo ug lola."*
> "I shouldn't lose hope right away, I'm confident because I have my grandparents."

> **IDI#4:** *"Ang kalisod ang nahatag nako ug kalig-on aron makahuman."*
> "The hardship gave me the strength to finish study."

These narratives highlight the profound impact of parental absence, yet also illustrate the adaptive mechanisms the learners employ. Their ability to draw strength from hardship reflects high emotional resilience. Bethell et al. (2019) found that positive childhood experiences were associated with better adult mental and relational health across levels of adverse childhood experiences, which is consistent with the stabilizing role the participants attribute to their grandparents. McLaughlin and Lambert (2017) examined the mechanisms of risk and resilience that follow child trauma exposure.

Recognizing the Importance of Support from Others

Learners acknowledged that, while they strive independently, the support of family members such as grandparents is crucial.

> **IDI#3:** *"Ako kay tabangan nako sila."*
> "I will help them."

> **IDI#2:** *"Nagsalig ko kay naa akong lolo ug lola."*
> "I trust them because I have grandparents."

> **IDI#5:** *"Basi mag ALS ko Sir."*
> "Maybe I will get ALS, Sir."

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Recognition of interdependence strengthens the learners' resilience. This theme shows that their emotional well-being is bolstered by a strong sense of connection and gratitude. Ungar and Theron (2020) highlight that resilience is fostered not just by individual traits but also by multisystemic processes, including interactions with supportive social systems. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model similarly stresses the significance of close family relationships within the child's wider environment.

Remaining Optimistic About Continuing Education

This theme reveals how participants maintain a hopeful perspective regarding their schooling, even when facing delays or age-grade mismatches. Education is often seen as a pathway to a better future, reinforcing resilience. Despite academic delays, such as being older for their grade, the learners remained hopeful.

> **IDI#1:** *"Ginaisip nalang nako pirme nga makaya ra lagi ni. Kinahanglan nako moeskwela."*
> "I always thought I could handle it. I need to go to school."

> **IDI#2:** *"Magpadayon gihapon ko sa akong pag eskwela."*
> "I will continue my schooling."

> **IDI#4:** *"Nag pabilin kong lig-on pina agi sa tambag ni lola Alma ug Sir Dat."*
> "I stayed strong through the advice of Grandma Alma and Sir Dat."

Education serves as a central pillar of hope and motivation. The participants' belief in the value of schooling contributes significantly to their psychological well-being. Zhang et al. (2023) found, among left-behind adolescents in rural China, that hope and gratitude mediated the association between negative life events and school adjustment. Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) frame adolescent resilience as healthy development in the face of risk, in which assets and resources of this kind can promote positive outcomes.

Influence of Family Support on the Resilience and Psychological Well-being of Female Learners

This section explores the emotional, material, and psychological support provided by grandparents and extended family members. It includes experiences of love, protection, trauma, and, at times, complex emotions about substitute caregivers. Family support is a critical foundation in the lives of these learners. Their grandparents often fulfill both emotional and material roles, offering guidance, care, and stability.

Experiencing Emotional Pain and Longing Due to Family Circumstances

Participants expressed deep emotional struggles, often marked by feelings of abandonment, loss, or longing for parental presence. Several learners shared experiences of sadness due to absent parents.

> **IDI#3:** *"Usahay magselos ko kay ang uban nakong ig-agaw og friends naa man mama."*
> "Sometimes I get jealous because some of my cousins and friends have their moms."

> **IDI#5:** *"Usay bation ko ug kakapoy sa hunahuna nga layo ko sa akong parents."*
> "Sometimes I feel tired thinking about being away from my parents."

> **IDI#4:** *"Nakaapekto jud nko... mag kiang-kiang ko usay ma bully ko sa akong classmate."*
> "It really affects me... I get cranky and get bullied by my classmates."

Emotional longing is a consistent undercurrent in the learners' lives. It presents both a vulnerability and a source of inner strength, as many learn to cope and mature emotionally. Ren et al. (2025) found that different forms of parental absence were associated with depression, anxiety, and stress among middle school students in rural western China, and they suggest that stronger parent–child bonds and targeted emotional support may mitigate these effects. Edwards and Ray (2008) propose that attachment and school satisfaction are important to understanding the school-related functioning of children raised by grandparents.

Finding Support and Love from Alternative Caregivers, Such as Grandparents or Other Family Members

Learners highlighted the vital emotional and practical support received from grandparents and extended family, which helped them feel cared for and valued.

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IDI#5: *"Maulaw ko labi na sa akong personal na panihanglan."*
"I feel ashamed especially for my personal needs."

IDI#3: *"Usahay maulaw ko kay wala koy mama… busy akong Lolo og Lola."*
"Sometimes I feel ashamed because I don't have a mother… my grandparents are busy."

IDI#4: *"Pero naa man si lola Alma ug Sir Dat2x."*
"But grandma Alma and Sir Dat2x are there."

This complexity is important. Feelings of embarrassment or awkwardness coexist with love and appreciation, reflecting the nuanced nature of surrogate parenting. In an earlier grandfamily case study, Edwards (2003) described both the grandson and the grandmother as experiencing difficulty functioning under the pressure of stressors and proposed an integrated approach based in the home, the school, and the family's faith organization.

Sharing Appreciation and Reciprocating Support Even in Small Ways

Gratitude was a common sentiment, with learners finding ways to give back to their caregivers through kind gestures or acts of responsibility.

IDI#3: *"Gihatag nako ang 500 sa ila."*
"I gave 500 to them."

IDI#4: *"Mag hatag pud ko sa akong manghud para naa pud siya baon."*
"I'll give it to my younger brother so he can have an allowance."

IDI#5: *"Si Ma'am BB naga puno sa akong mga kakulangan."*
"Ma'am BB fills what's lacking in me."

Gratitude nurtures motivation. Learners often feel a moral responsibility to give back, reinforcing their drive to persist academically and emotionally. Experimental work indicates that a gratitude exercise can enhance subjective well-being (Watkins et al., 2015), and among Chinese adolescents gratitude has been found to mediate the link between school climate and prosocial behavior (Li et al., 2023).

Effect of School and Community on the Resilience and Mental Health of Female Learners Living with Grandparents

This section explores how social interactions in school and in the community contribute to the learners' psychological resilience.

Relying on Various Individuals, Such as Friends, Teachers, Family Members, and Neighbors

Participants built networks of support beyond the home, relying on a variety of people to meet their social and emotional needs. They named teachers, classmates, and friends as key figures. IDI#3 mentioned her teachers and Vanessa, who made her feel seen and supported.

IDI#3: *"Si Vanessa Opong… magkatawa ko usahay mangutana siya sa ako."*
Vanessa Opong… I laugh sometimes when she asks me questions.

IDI#4: *"Si Sir Dat-Dat akong duolon dayon para magtug-an."*
I immediately approach Sir Dat-Dat to tell him.

IDI#5: *"Kung maglisod ko, si Ma'am BB akong pangayuan ug tabang."*
When I'm in trouble, I ask Ma'am BB for help.

Relationships outside the home expand the learners' emotional support network, reducing the burden on the family unit and contributing to self-worth. Guo et al. (2020) found, in a sample of Chinese adolescents, that teacher support was linked to mental well-being partly through resilience.

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Valuing Relationships with Supportive Individuals, Such as Teachers or Grandparents and Others

Strong emotional bonds with key figures in their lives were a source of encouragement and validation for the learners. Learners selectively turned to different people for different issues; for example, IDI#1 might approach a cousin, a friend, or a teacher depending on the problem.

> **IDI#1:** *"Ganahan ko kay daghan kog amiga, magduwa mi pirmi."*
> I like it because I have a lot of friends, we play together all the time.
>
> **IDI#3:** *"Ang akong amiga kasabot jud sa akong sitwasyon."*
> My friend understands my situation.
>
> **IDI#5:** *"Kung naa koy problema, akong bestfriend akong kasandigan."*
> When I have a problem, my best friend is my confidant.

This ability to assess and access varied sources of support suggests advanced emotional and social navigation skills, although this interpretation rests on the participants' own accounts.

Appreciating Support and Sometimes Sharing It with Others, Like Younger Siblings

Some learners not only benefited from support but also passed it on, often acting as mentors or caregivers for younger family members. The learners appreciated the help they received and shared it.

> **IDI#4:** *"Mag hatag pud ko sa akong manghud para naa pud siya baon."*
> I'll give it to my younger brother so he can have allowance.
>
> **IDI#3:** *"Gihatag nako ang 500 sa ila."*
> I gave 500 to them.
>
> **IDI#5:** *"Kung naay koy extra maghatag ko sa akong manghud."*
> If I have any extra, I'll give it to my younger brother.

This theme illustrates how emotional and material reciprocity is central to the learners' experience of resilience. Even with scarce resources, participants find meaning and strength in giving back, showing that gratitude becomes a motivational force. This is consistent with research indicating that gratitude is linked to well-being and prosocial behavior (Watkins et al., 2015; Li et al., 2023). In this study, sharing even small resources with siblings reveals a capacity for empathy, responsibility, and a deeply relational understanding of care.

Integrated Discussion of the Findings

Taken together, the findings illustrate how the interplay of internal traits, family dynamics, and external networks shapes the resilience and well-being of female learners in grandparent-headed homes. Each theme reveals unique insights into how these young women navigate life with strength, gratitude, and determination.

Read against Garmezy's (1991) three domains, the themes line up as follows. For personal strengths, the learners described courage, obedience and diligence, perseverance, and hope about schooling; the excerpts speak chiefly to character-related strengths, and intelligence, the other component of the framework, was not assessed directly in the interviews. For family support, grandparents were described as the emotional and material anchors of the household, and yet the same learners spoke of longing for absent parents and of embarrassment about asking for personal needs, so that care and ambivalence coexisted. For external support, teachers, friends, and community members extended the learners' networks beyond the home, and the learners not only received support but passed it on to younger siblings. Across the three domains, reciprocity and gratitude appeared to connect the learners' inner strengths with the support they received.

These patterns are consistent with a multisystemic view of resilience (Ungar & Theron, 2020; Masten et al., 2021) and with Masten's (2001) argument that resilience is built from ordinary protective systems such as caring relationships and effective schools. They also suggest that the learners' well-being does not rest on any single source of support, but on the combination of personal agency, grandparental care, and the school and community relationships around them.

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Implications

For schools, the findings point to the value of teachers and counselors who are approachable to learners from non-traditional homes, because participants named specific teachers as people they turn to when they face difficulty. For grandparents, they suggest that engagement with the school and with community programs may help sustain the care that learners identified as central to their stability. For future programs, they suggest building on learners' existing strengths, including hope about schooling and the habit of sharing with siblings, rather than treating these learners only as a group at risk.

Limitations

This study is a single case of five female learners from one school district, so its findings are not intended to be generalized statistically; any transfer to other settings is analytic and depends on the similarity of context (Yin, 2018). The data are the participants' own accounts, gathered through interviews conducted in Cebuano and reported in English translation, and the interpretation reflects the researcher's role as the primary instrument of the study. The study did not include learners from two-parent homes, male learners, or the grandparents themselves, and it captured experiences at one point in time. Future studies may address these gaps, as noted in the recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study investigated the resilience and psychological well-being of female learners residing in households headed by grandparents and found a complex interaction among individual willpower, family support, and external social networks. The results indicate that many of the female learners possess considerable inner fortitude and drive to overcome barriers, even in the face of emotional difficulties such as parental absence and financial hardship. Their capacity to remain optimistic about their schooling and their future is central to maintaining their psychological health. The supportive role of grandparents, who frequently act as both emotional pillars and caregivers, is essential to this resilience. These learners also benefit greatly from external sources of support, such as friends, neighbors, and teachers, which boost their drive and sense of self-worth. Crucially, the practice of giving back to others, even through small gestures of gratitude or by caring for younger siblings, strengthens their emotional resilience and gives them a sense of direction in life.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Schools may strengthen psychosocial support networks by training educators and counselors to recognize and address the special needs of learners from non-traditional homes.
2. Grandparents who are primary caregivers should be included in school engagement activities and community-based parenting programs to improve their ability to offer both intellectual and emotional support.
3. Structured peer support and community mentorship initiatives ought to be put into place to give learners more emotional moorings.
4. Schools should include life skills and emotional literacy instruction in their curricula to give learners useful coping mechanisms.
5. The learners' efforts and accomplishments should be acknowledged and applauded, as this can further strengthen their resilience and sense of self-worth.
6. Further studies are recommended to examine comparable dynamics in different care arrangements and to assess the long-term efficacy of support measures.

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