

Exploring the Lived Experienced of Young Motorcycle Drivers from Motor Vehicular Accidents (MVAs)

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ABSTRACT

Road crashes are leading causes of traumatic injury in the world and the motorcyclists are always the most endangered. MVAs have been found to be the single leading cause of posttraumatic stress disorder in the general population. Encountering an accident can have profound effects on a young person's life. Understanding the meaning of the accident among young adults is vital, so as to fully extrapolate the significance of the experience and the lessons they learned from this fall. This study utilized the Hermeneutic Phenomenology to explore the meaning of the experience. Five (5) male young adults who encountered a motor vehicular accident within the localities of Cebu, identified after data saturation was reached, were the participants of the study. After consent was signed a recorded interview was done to explore the experience of these informants. Subsequently, transcription were made by each researcher, the data were then compared and condensed to draw a common ground. Using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), three themes emerged from the 35 significant statements of the informants. The first theme, "*The Red Light*", talks about the trauma that caused a standstill. "*The Yellow Light*", the second theme, refers to proceeding with caution; this has two subthemes namely, "*Blind Curve*" which gives significance to being focused and "*Slippery When Wet*" which entails the avoiding distractions. The third and last theme, "*The Green Light*", refers to moving on. These inspired the creation of the poem entitled "Dust After the Fall". The study gave light for the need of holistic care for these victims, that however minimal the injuries may be, trauma can still be experienced. This will also assist in reshaping the driver's mindset when driving and additional measures may be implemented to ensure road safety.

Keywords: *Motor vehicular accident, traumatic experience, lived experience, traffic light*

INTRODUCTION

Motor vehicles have been the primary mode of transportation over the past decades hence, the increase in its number worldwide. The US publisher Ward's estimate that as of 2010 there were 1.015 billion motor vehicles in use in the world. With the trend of motor vehicles, comes the rise of road traffic accidents worldwide (Worley, 2016). Motor vehicular accident is an unintended traffic collision wherein one vehicle would collide into another vehicle, person, animal, tree, pole, or other stationary block. This would usually result to

injuries, death, and destruction of property (Segen, 2011).

Road crashes are leading causes of traumatic injury in the world. In the 2015 report on road safety by the World Health Organization (WHO), 1.25 million people worldwide have died because of road accidents and 23% is attributed alone to fatalities caused by motorcyclists. The reported figures of road fatalities worldwide remained unchanged and the motorcyclists are always the most endangered constituting 23% of fatalities. Furthermore, the Philippine's Department

of Public Work and Highways-Traffic Accident Recording and Analysis System data of 2013, reported 1,513 individuals lost their lives to traffic road accidents while the WHO has estimated deaths much higher at 10,379 (Francisco, 2015). In addition, it has been reported that motorcycle riders in the Philippines comprised more than half in road accident deaths. Moreover, in Cebu, road accident is among the top ten causes of mortality in 2015 and was confirmed by the data reported by the Cebu City Transportation Office that six accidents happened every day (Cuizon, 2016).

In line with these statistics, researchers around the globe have begun to explore the effect of being in a motor vehicular accident to help survivors deal with the aftermath of the crash. The specific role that an MVA survivor had in a crash may impact that individual's stress reaction. Furthermore, MVAs have been found to be the single leading cause of posttraumatic stress disorder in the general population. They are the most frequent, directly experienced trauma for men and the second most frequent trauma for women (Galovski & Veazey, 2016).

Encountering an accident can have profound effects on a young person's life. Exploring the lived experiences of young adults in Cebu captured the group's interest to further understand the reality of such accidents before, during, and after it happened. Understanding the meaning of the accident among young adults is vital, so as to fully extrapolate the significance of the experience and the lessons they learned from this fall.

The study was conducted to explore the experiences of young adults who encountered vehicular accidents. By

understanding the lived experiences of the informants, this study further broadened up the minds and hearts of the researchers in caring for these victims. This would also enable the nurses to provide holistic care and more effective approach which is not limited to physical assessment but also addressing their psychological well-being, as well. Lastly, the findings of this study provided the community, especially the young adults, understanding on the importance of identifying the effects of disabling memories and anxiety in relation to the traumatic events since every accident, regardless of severity and impact would have an effect on their lives.

METHODOLOGY

The research study used the phenomenological research design since it aimed to reveal the true meaning of the lived experiences of young adults who have gone a motor vehicular accident. It was confined within the localities of Cebu to known individuals who have experienced injuries related to vehicular accident whether admitted or sought consultation in nearby health institutions. Cebu was chosen by the researches since road accidents is among the top ten causes of mortality in 2015 and was confirmed by the data reported by the Cebu City Traffic Office that six accidents happened every single day. The researchers selected young male adults, who have experienced vehicular accident in Cebu in the year 2016. The informants were selected based on the following criteria: they (1) must be a motorcycle driver, (2) male, (3) aging from 20-35, (4) have gone through vehicular accident in their lives who had minimal injuries and sought medical attention but were not admitted; medical certificate of consultation must be checked, and (5) voluntarily consented to

be part of the study. The number of respondents was based upon the attainment of the data saturation. The instrument utilized for the data gathering was a semi-structured key informant interview guide to explore the lived experience of the victims of the vehicular accidents.

Upon the approval of the proposed study, the researchers looked for individuals who qualified in the inclusive criteria set. A signed informed consent prepared by the researchers was secured from the informants after thorough reinforcement as to the purpose of the study and what to expect during the interview reassuring them that their names were to be withheld to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

The study was grounded on the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which focuses on the rigorous approach to psychological qualitative research with an idiographic subjective focus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the profile of the key informants and the results of the thematic analysis of their interviews.

Profile of the Respondents

The informants involved in the study are five young male adults who encountered a motor vehicular accident. They ranged from 20-35 years old. The description of the informants is based on the interviews as they described themselves as such. The following are brief description of the five informants who had been part of the study.

Ronil

A 26 year old motorcycle driver from B. Rodriguez Street, Cebu city. He is a regular employee in one of the manpower services company in Cebu. He is a native of Lapu Lapu City where his parents and the rest of his family are still residing. He has been driving for the past six years now and his being young, free and single attitude made him drive after having few shots of alcohol after attending a relative's birthday party.

Jude

This thirty-one year old man from Yati Liloan is a motorcycle driver for almost seven years now. Anxiety and fear was what he felt during his road accident. He was drunk and tired while driving when he encountered the accident. The wet and slippery road was also cited as a contributing factor of this incident. He filed a two week leave of absence from a work in one of the government hospitals in Cebu.

Albert

He was rushing for work, when he and his family met an accident in the mountainous area of Cebu. The story of this 35 year old husband considered the reason for their accident was driving with two passengers on a two wheel motorcycle traveling to the city. Despite the injuries he, his wife and his daughter sustained, he still had his presence of mind that night and he was able to rush in to the hospital with some good bystanders assisting them along the way. He had been working as an auxiliary for thirteen years and is a father of two.

Andrei

A single father to three children from two different mothers. Presently, he

has been living with his current girlfriend for three years now where he has two children with her. This computer graduate has been driving his motorcycle since high school. He and his girlfriend were on their way home to Talisay City when he bumped another motorcycle along SM seaside using his cellular phone while the red light was on. To his surprise, the green light was turned on and that he must be ready to go. The vehicles behind and beside him were rushing resulting to the bumping incident. Both motorcycles lost their balance leaving the drivers and passengers with multiple abrasions.

Jake

A twenty-one year old call center agent from Cebu city is the youngest among 4 siblings and had not graduated from college because he opted to work rather than finish college, where according to him, made his mother unhappy. He was forced to follow his father's footprint of being a ship captain but he refused because he wanted to find his own identity. His siblings were all at the peak of their careers, two of them are nurses working abroad while he is still at the mercy of his parents. Luckily, his parents never left him unaided. He was driving his motorcycle with his friend early morning, from graveyard when he met a road accident. After series of examination, he was discharged from the hospital away from danger.

Thematic Analysis

"Everything happens for a reason", a common saying yet still something to ponder upon especially when accidents, which put your life at risk occur. Nobody wants to be a victim of vehicle accidents but, they are unpredictable. This situation is surely uncertain and whenever it happens, we may be able to stand again but

we have to keep this in mind that there is always dust after the fall – trauma after an accident. After exploring the different MVA experiences of the informants, 35 significant statements from them arose. From those statements, the researchers were able to formulate nine meanings of the experience, four sub themes came up from those formulated meanings and finally, three themes emerged. The first theme, "*The Red Light*", talks about the fear felt right after the accident which could not be easily overcome thus, they stop driving due trauma. "*The Yellow Light*", the second theme, refers to proceeding with caution, that is, continuing to drive even after the accident but is more careful this time. This theme has two subthemes namely, "*Blind Curve*" which gives significance to being focused because we'll never see what's up ahead, and "*Slippery When Wet*" which entails the avoiding unnecessary distractions. The third and last theme, "*The Green Light*", contains moving on and moving forward; it is true that accidents are inevitable but after the experience, lessons were learned and life must go on.

Theme 1 - "The Red light"

Encountering an accident is a traumatic experience which can cause a feeling of fear and anxiety. Right after the impact, physical injuries, although may be minimal can still halt activities that can be previously done easily.

Jude vented the painful injury he had, "*Sakit kaayo akong samad maglisud pajud kog drive balik, hapdos paman gud*" [The wound is still painful that makes it difficult for me to drive for now].

Just as Ronil narrated the incident, he verbalized:

“Nakuyawan ug nabalaka basin nabalian kay kusog kaayo ang pagkabangga pero nakabarog na dayon ko. Ang samad sa akong tuhod and dugay nakong giantos”
 [I was so afraid that I could have a broken bone bone since the impact was so strong, but I was still able to stand up. The wound in my knees was the worst injury that I had].

The physical pain even how minor it may be can still have an impact. He then added:

“Wala pa ko ni drive balik kay tungod sa trauma makuyawan pa gihapon ko”
 [I still do not drive my motorcycle because of the trauma, I still have that fear].

Albert’s physical pain was also minimal as he cited:

“Naa koy pangos sa tuhod nya gatakiang jud ko tungod ato”
 [I have a laceration in my knees and I was limping because of that].

Bu there may also be psychological effects of the trauma caused by the accident. As Albert expressed:

“Kalma ra ko katong pagkadisgrasyaha pero kulba kaayo”
 [I was calm but I was so terrified].

While for Jude, he said:

“Nakuyawan uy na trauma jud ko ato, ikaduha naman nuon to nakong pagka disgrasyaha pero kulbaan gihapon ko”
 [I was so anxious, I was in trauma, this was my second accident but the feeling of trauma is still there.]

While Jake depicted his feelings as he said:

“Na trauma jud ko ato, ma imagine gihapon nako ang nahitabo samot nga bag.o pa kaayo to. Naay trauma man jud nya dili pa ko sure kanus.a mawala ang trauma kay ma witness man gihapon nako, ma imagine gihapon nako ang impact ba. Like kita ko...ma slow mo jud nako sa ako memory. So naa juy trauma.”

[I was really traumatized, I can still imagine what happened especially that it is still very recent. There’s really trauma and I don’t know when this will be gone, I can still witness and imagine the impact. Like I can see it in slow motion in my memory. So there is really trauma.]

As Andrew described his injury, *“Naa koy lacerated wound sa akong left ankle”* [I had a lacerated wound on my left ankle]. He then added,

“Wala pa ko ni drive ug motor ug balik tungod sa trauma”
 [Because of the trauma, I still do not drive my motorcycle].

The informants had to stop driving because of the pain and fear they felt after the accident. They had to take a break from the road to give time to recuperate physically and emotionally and get back to safety.

Theme 2 - “The Yellow Light”

As the cliché goes, experience is the best teacher, that is, encountering an accident could be a transformative experience especially to the young adults. Each informant experienced trauma yet they still gradually returned to or thought about driving their motorcycles again even with the unfortunate incident, but this time

they have with them the lesson they learned - "proceed with caution".

Subtheme 1 – Blind Curve

Accidents are inevitable, thus what happens in the road cannot be forecasted. Everytime motorcyclists start their engine, the chances of possible mishaps are endless. The road may be wide but circumstances that may surround a hazard is unforeseeable. The informants expressed the importance of ensuring that full attention should be present when driving.

Jake had a passenger with him during the accident and he realized it is tougher to ensure other people's safety than just thinking of his own.

"Mas nakuyawan ko paras akong kuyog ug akong motor kaysa para nako" [I was more concerned for my passenger and my motorcycle than for myself]. He then verbalized his learning from the accident as, *"Drive carefully and maghinay samot na kung naay kuyog"* [Drive carefully and don't rush especially when you have a passenger with you].

Making sure that both driver and the passenger is safe during the drive is difficult that is why presence of mind is vital and unnecessary distraction should be avoided.

As Andrei stated:

"Dapat focus rajud sa pagdrive" [If you drive, you should focus only in driving].

He then added,

"Basta mag drive dapat dili mag text text" [You should not text when driving].

While Jude also confessed as he said:

"Murag nakatog ko maong na disgrasya ko ato" [I guess I fell asleep that was why I had the accident]. He then added, *"Maong dapat magmatngon jud para di madigrasya"* [That's why we should be careful to prevent any accidents].

Albert expressed his thoughts about the incident as he cited:

"Kay di man jud malikayan ang disgrasya kung mag motor mag amping lang jud" [Since accidents are inevitable, just be more cautious when driving].

Like a blind curve, what's coming your way is unseen therefore, more caution should be practiced by the drivers and focus is the key in ensuring a safe drive through the blind curve.

Alike Albert's, Ronill's thought was *"Amping lang jud kung mag drive"* [Be careful when driving].

Subtheme 2 - Slippery When Wet

The danger in driving a motorcycle is a given, adding alcohol in the equation is even a worse idea. Roads are slippery when wet, suchlike there is a greater risk of accidents when driving intoxicated.

As Ronil stated:

"Di na jud ko magdrive kung makainom o kung naay hangover kay dili dayun makabantay samot na nga naa pay alcohol"

[I will not drive when drunk or if I have a hangover again because when there is still the influence of alcohol it is hard to focus in driving].

Andrei described the accident he encountered as, “*Nakainom ko ato nya ga text pajud pastilan jud tong hitabua*” [I was drunk and I was texting, that was really awful.] He then added, “*Mas kuyaw najud mag drive kung nakainom pa ka*” [Driving while intoxicated is even more dangerous].

Jude expressed his learning as he stated:

“*Ayaw ug drive kung makainom kay duol kaayo sa disgrasya ung makainom*” [Do not drive when intoxicated with alcohol because it makes you more prone to accidents].

All other informants’ learning was “Do not drink and drive” in general. Driving a motorcycle is difficult per se, as Andrei portrayed:

“*Lisud mag drive ug motor kay kailangan ka mu balance*” [Driving a motorcycle is difficult since you have to maintain balance].

Thus, driving with the influence of alcohol makes it more dangerous.

Theme 3: “The Green Light”

Convenience is what everyone wants, the choice of transportation is not an exception. True, driving a motorcycle is risky but for some it is the most preferred transportation because it is cheaper than a car and it can easily pass through the pile of cars in a traffic jam. Hence, equipped with the lessons brought about by the experiences, driving a motorcycle even after an accident is still a go.

The informants grasp the idea that motorcycles are perilous, as Jake stated:

“*Ang motor man gud mag balance man gud ka kay duha ray ligid, exhibition na daan wa pa ka mabangga.i nag exhibition na ka.* [Motorcycles are dangerous since it’s two-wheeled, driving it is an exhibition].

Albert expressed his thoughts about how unpredictable accidents can be, as he said:

“*Ang disgrasya dili malikayan, usahay ikaw makabangga o ikaw ang mabangga’an.*” [Accidents are inevitable in the road; it’s either you cause the accident or be a victim of the accident].

But even with the fact that driving a two-wheeled vehicle such as a motorcycle is hazardous, when the informants were asked to choose between a car and a motorcycle, they still preferred to continue driving their motorcycles although they all agree that four-wheeled vehicles are safer. Ronil explained:

“*Para nako, mas okayhan ko sa duha ray ligid. Hasul mangud ang upat ka ligid kay kung magdali ka nya makasugat pajud og traffic pero mas dali jud ang disgrasya sa duha rai ligid. Mas nindot jud ang motor labi na og mag apas ka sa oras.*” [For me, it is much better to drive a two-wheeled vehicle especially when you’re in a hurry and you can pass through the heavy traffic congestion but your life is also at stake compared to driving a four-wheeled vehicle. Driving a motorcycle is still better when you have a short time.]

Jake still prefers to drive his motorcycle as well, as he stated:

“Nag drive man gihapon kos akong motor pero sa mga dug.ol pa lang”

[I still drive my motorcycle but in short distances only].

Driving their motorcycles was still their choice since beforehand they already know that accidents are unpredictable. Albert like Jake still drives his motorcycle, he cited:

“Drive gihapon, naa man jud koy motor nya kabahin naman ana ang disgrasya, mag amping lang jud pirme”

[I still drive my motorcycle. Part of owning it is the risk of accidents, I just drive more carefully].

Jude also had the same thoughts as he said:

“Aw, drive gihapon kung maayo nani akong samad, naa raman nang motor diha”

[I will still drive if my wounds are healed since the motorcycle is just there.]

Alike the other informants,

Andrei stated:

“Drive gihapon pero mas matngon najud ron kanang focus jud prime ba.” [I will still drive my motorcycle but this time with more caution]

Continuing to drive was their common trail as they would still abide with driving their motorcycles after the accident.

DISCUSSION

A motor vehicular accident causes both physical and psychological effects especially to young adults. According to a book published by Judith Herman (1992; as cited in Fisher 2011), the recovery process from a traumatic experience follows a common pathway. First, is the *Safety and stabilization: Overcoming Dysregulation*, which includes establishing bodily safety, a safe environment, and an emotional stability. The second stage is *Coming to Term with the Traumatic Experience*, that talks about overcoming the fear of the traumatic memory and allowing appreciation to what was learned as a result of the trauma. Lastly, the final stage is *Integration and Moving On*, entails beginning to work on developing goals that reflect the meaning of the trauma and continuing life with a healthy present and a healed self.

The human nervous system, like an electrical system, shuts down to its basic when there is too much stimulation, as in trauma. People describe it as feeling numb, in shock or dead inside (McGrath, 2001). The informants described the motor vehicular accident they had, as a standstill. The physical injuries they got from the accident albeit minimal hindered them from driving. Not only the pain from the injuries but most importantly the trauma and fear they had after the accident caused them to lay off driving for a while; just like when the traffic light turns red, they stopped.

People need to take action and make a difference even in the smallest ways. Taking action restores a sense of control and directly counteracts the sense of powerlessness that is the identifying mark

of trauma (McGrath, 2001). After every traumatic experience, the struggle in overcoming the fear is for certain. The informants expressed the lessons they learned from the accident, it created a new and better versions of themselves as drivers. The understanding that accidents are unpredictable made them realize that focus is very important since you'll never know what's coming. Any needless distractions should also be avoided as it can increase the risk of accidents. Moreover, after the experience, they made sure that when they drive again, they will proceed with caution.

Furthermore, even if the danger in driving motorcycles are well known to the informants, they still chose to continue driving for the reason that it gives them more convenience. As soon as the physical injuries and trauma have resolved and their selves have recovered, they brought with them the lessons they have learned from the experience and moved on to a go. As McGrath (2001) stated in her article, "Recovering from Trauma", in the wake of crisis it is possible to learn and grow at rates 100 times faster than at any other time, because there is a door of opportunity. You can learn much that is deep and profound. You do this by integrating a stronger self as you continue with life bringing with you the meaning of the difficult experience.

CREATIVE SYNTHESIS

DUST AFTER THE FALL

Red, yellow, green
 Three easy colors it seems
 But when one is heedless and blithe
 Though the road may seem wide
 It would end up hard tonight

The path is slippery and winding,
 Nauseous intoxicated melancholy; my heart
 beats

My friends dissuade me from driving,
 But what can I do, the sun threatens as it's
 rising

Past the trees a blind curve lies in wait
 What's up ahead, I heard not a sound
 All comfort, mindlessness and utter
 carelessness
 Thinking I alone have time to spare

Smooth as the wind, I glide
 Fast as the gale I ride
 And with a blinding flash so bright
 Never did I notice the red light!

screeeeech everything went so slow
 *boom! I crashed into a truck, with a speed of
 bolt

Falling to the ground,
 Only the dust I see
 And with a glimpse of my future all gone
 Not a doubt, what's done could never be
 undone

No u-turn as what the sign says
 No turning back, must my life have to end
 this way?

I close my eyes, ready to let go
 But how about my family?
 Could they hold on without anything
 bestowed?

For goodness sake it's just a scratch
 Yet my mind was blown, my heart seemed
 crushed
 The red light: dead end my driving path
 should be
 Doom and darkness, wish I couldn't see

Time flies by so fast
 Now I'm back on track
 This time, it is different because of fright
 Never have I considered
 that I would always see the yellow light

every time I move in motion
 I always do it with great caution

Tragedy of the past still lingers in my mind
 Keeping my heart in a strong bind

But once I though the misery has ended
 Calm before the storm, my mind and heart
 still not mended

It was not the end, this is just the beginning
 Red and yellow, now green,
 It's where I'm going

Seeing the green light, I must move on
 The road is rough, everything is not gone
 They say there is always a light at the end of
 the tunnel
 Must I stay in darkness, cowering with fear as
 a mantle?

A choice it is, one must not make
 For there is only one course to take
 I must be strong and learn from my mistake
 For life so dear and wise for me to stake

In every turmoil, there's enlightenment
 We just have to stand up and face every
 sentiment
 'cause no matter how simple, no matter how
 small
 Let's instill in our minds
 That there's always dust after the fall

CONCLUSION

In the light of the results of this study, the physical injuries are not enough to determine a trauma. More often than not, the psychological aspects of these trauma have deeper effect on young adults who had experienced a motor vehicular accident. The predicaments they stumbled upon caused them physical pain, anxiety and fear. However, even with the substantial impact of these encounters, young adults still have the capability to move forward and proceed with caution, life must go on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The government of Cebu City merely focused on making sure that the motorcycle drivers must wear their helmets and follow the traffic rules and regulations. However, with the increasing number of motor vehicular accidents (MVA), these measures are not highly efficient in preventing MVAs. Grounded on the study findings and conclusion, the government should give importance on not just following the traffic rules and regulations but also through reshaping the driver's mentality or mindset when driving. One way to achieve it is by educating them the possibilities of the events that might occur when they ignore the risks of driving. Moreover, providing psychological therapies to the victims of MVAs should be given importance since no matter how minimal the physical injury is, psychological trauma can still be experienced. With these additional measures, the government and the motorcycle drivers should work hand-in-hand to minimize the risks and unwanted events.

In light of the research study, future researchers should explore more meaningful experiences not just from the victims themselves but also from their families and the significant others. There was gender and vehicle type preference set by the researchers, it is highly recommended that they would consider no gender and no vehicle type specifications in their study.

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