

SAKUNA SA MATA NG BATA: UNDERSTANDING DISASTERS THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

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Abstract

The use of drawings as method on Social Science re- search has been found highly appropriate for children. The reason for this is attributed to the difficulty of the children to articulate their thoughts and feelings using spoken or written words. The use of visual research method explored both the multiplicities and complexities of human experi- ence in the ways in which children come to understand calamities in their tender years. Using constructivists' Grounded theory, significant meanings in the various im- agery and narratives of children - participants of the pro- gram Sunshine after the Rain: A Climate Change Response and Empowerment Program for Women & Children of the Coastal Communities of Bgy. Sabang, Calabanga, Cama- rines Sur were analyzed. It revealed four (4) thematic themes: (1) Environmental Symbolisms and Meanings (2) Socio- Emotional Expressions (3) Disaster Adaptation Mechanism and (4) Communal Behavior & Response. These themes become central in generating the Playground Theory, a new way to understand disasters using the child's lens to create his own happiness. This has a significant contribution in policy making and governance, program development, mental health and in disaster risk & man- agement.

Keywords: Children, Drawings, Disasters, Grounded The- ory

INTRODUCTION

Every Bicolano in his or her lifetime, shall go through ty- phoon experiences for at least 20 times in a year. This can be attributed to the geographical location of the region, yet this is home. The most common calamity and disaster Bi- col region always face is typhoon, yet it may leave effects through continued and repetitive experience. Calabanga, a first class municipality composed of 28 barangays with a total population of 73,333 (2007 Census) has agriculture and fisheries as its main sources of income. Its geograph- ical location and topography makes Calabanga vulnerable to typhoon while its' low-lying and coastal areas are also prone to floods; its 11 coastal barangays are most vulnera- ble to floods and storm surges. It experiences 3 to 5 strong typhoons annually. During the formulation of the recent Ambisyon Natin 2040, natural disasters were identified as one of the three factors causing instability. In other words, natural disasters were recognized as an issue that has to be prioritized by the Phil- ippine Government in order to ensure Filipinos' safety and prosperity. JICA (2017) According to World Risk Report 2014 formulated by UN-University, the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries to natural disasters in the World and ranked as the 2nd worst out of 171 countries. The child's vulnerability is the core of all biblical, philo- sophical and psychological and legal discourses for protec- tion. Its views commonly agree that a child is dependent to an adult in order to survive. Each individual has his own life's journey, and regardless of age, everyone has experi- enced how to be a child. A helpless state of dependence and state of confused values which are adherent to what is strongly valued by the strongest influence of significant others and peers. This research study is a qualitative type of inquiry which intends to discover how a child perceives and understands his/her surroundings especially the natural disasters and calamities using colors and images. Accord- ing to Freud, childhood experiences pose influence on a child's later behavior and even during his adult life. This behavior is attributed to some unwanted emotions and tendencies. Using his view, drawings are an important part of a child's life. Children can describe their happiness, sad- ness, grief, future dreams, past lives and continuing lives as much as they want through their drawings. it is important to point that these experiences can possibly create connec- tions with latter adult behavior. This behavior is an im- portant social component in addressing global problems. The cultivation of culture from shared experiences and be- havior can change human actions which can either be fa- vorable or undesirable. Rose (2001) reminded us that "visual imagery" is never innocent; it is always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges". According to Lowenfeld, children begin their drawing pro- cess as early as they can physically hold a drawing utensil. From their first attempts to draw consisting of random marks and lines, to their first representational drawing, children are making efforts to communicate to the world around them and establish meaning through the images they create. It is through their drawings that children ex- press the views and interpretations of their experiences. Farokhi, Hashemi (2012).

The researcher believes that drawings can reveal potential- ly valuable output or product noteworthy for the attainment of the program goals especially along disaster management policy and practice and to mental health. Specifically, it aims to attain the following objectives. 1. To determine children's understanding of the natural

disasters using visu- al images. 2. To establish meanings of objects and images based from children's lens 3. To determine the implication of drawings to the children and his community.

METHODOLOGY

This research study is a qualitative type of inquiry which place emphasis on the support evidences drawn, written and spoken by the pupil participants of CBSUA's Extension Activity "Sunshine after the Rain: a Climate Change Response and Empowerment Program for Women & Children of the Coastal Communities". Out of the 150 participants, six (6) were pre-selected based content, mean- ing expressed to self and the meaning to the community. For ethical consideration, all participants were asked for written consents from the parents in order to participate in the proceedings. Facilitation of the activity were done un- der the supervision of Brgy Health Worker, Faculty propo- nent specializing in Behavioral Management, trainer from Disaster Risk Management Department of the university and volunteer student leaders. Venue of the activity were subjected to health and hazard inspection by the LGU counterpart. Food was provided for the children and includ- ing the staff. Imperative data were gathered from images of drawings and paintings from the four-day session and analyzed and compared through interviews, focused group discussion, observation and in-depth interviews. This ap- proach focuses on an individual's subjective view of events, perceptions, and difficulties. According to this approach, clients must be considered the main source to help the ther- apist attain valid, reliable assessment information in terms of understanding how a particular individual perceives and conceives his or her own world. Hamama (2012)

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

This study applied a modification of Rose's (2001) critical visual methodology framework and grounded theory. As a means of eliciting themes from the images produced, the- matic analysis was applied in the light of the three sites. **The Child** -The image was produced using a supervised drawing activity which core theme is to put into a visual imagery their life experiences during disasters and calami- ties. Purposely, not just for self-expression but as a means of identifying the needs of the children. Rose further cited "How children develop and achieve their emotional knowledge can help professionals understand how children perceive and interpret their environment and how they re- spond, manage, and organize their own feelings in emotive situations. **The Image Itself**- the componential aspect of the drawing is one of the highly focused sites in this study. It is the expressed concept, feelings and even emotions which the research can derive the core understanding of calamities using the lens of the children. The choice of objects, lines and colors are generally potential source of information. It is important to note the inclusion and non- inclusion which may have significant reasons and meaning for comparative analysis. As stated by Karczmarzyk (2012), "Communication and its effect, taking form of a drawing given to others, constitute a drawing message". **The Image and Others**-This site shows the distinctness of the image and how it is understood by others. The study believes that the drawings are communication between the child and the one who sees it. There are emotional, social, economic, and political relations and practices that are em- bedded in an image and through which it is produced and viewed. Karczmarzyk (2012) stated that "artistic activity performs a role of a drawing-text, by which a child can communicate with the outside world and to overcome the culture of silence which is imposed on him/her by the adults.

Visual and oral commentary data were analyzed using open coding, followed by the axial and selective coding

Table 1. The coded themes that identifies the basis of Childs understanding of Disasters

Environmental Symbolism & Messages	Disaster Experiences	Socio-Emotional expressions	Community - Adaptation Patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image & Symbols Destroyed houses Houses assailed by surge School bags submerged in water Damaged roads Destroyed Roof Boats broken, Sailed Off Drown people Trees fall Accidents Big Waves Strong Winds Rising water surge Floods Lightning Black/Dark clouds Roaring Sounds Thunder Teens Salt faces Magn Aka Amn Am Amn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soaked, Chilling People Magnifier Magnifying glass May not be safe Holding my hands in front Howling my voice Evacuate Walking (feeling cold) Escape Magnifying (to cover oneself) Afraid of snakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear (Big may magnifier) Address grief (I want to know my house) Pity sympathy, despair (Nakalanti po kami) Fathers are sad Admission po Kya (Comfort) Fear that someone is dead Have to clean up and start again (Disaster) Clustering (Conservation) Evacuation (No Classes) Happiness (Amn) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong others Help Mother Crying Father Neighbors help each other Keep school things Family stays together disaster keeps family intact and at help with each other Food from fallen trees No classes Get food from fallen trees Enjoying with friends at evacuation center Expected to stay at someone else's house

processes used to refine emerging and define the core categories (Flick, 2002). The main themes and patterns of the visual data which emerged were Environmental Symbolisms and meanings, Disaster Experiences, Socio-Emotional Expressions and Community Adaptation Patterns. The oral comments contributed significantly to the interpretation process.

Environmental Symbolism & Meanings

The Environmental Symbolism & Meanings refers to the objects depicted and analyzed based from the image itself and the testimonies and verbal attributions of the participants.

- a. Atmospheric Images – scrolls for typhoons, zig-zag patterns for lightning, enlarged blue sea waves, Dark Clouds
- b. Agricultural/Vegetative Damage – fallen trees, floating debris, logs in the sea, trees uprooted;
- c. Structural Damage – Wrecked Houses, Houses submerged in water, boats sailed away to the sea, Roofs thrown in the air
- d. Damage to Life – drowned people, men on top of the rooftops, children locked inside the house, Fishermen drifted into the sea;
- e. Colors – Black for grief and danger, green for vegetation, blue for the sea, brown for stress are dominant
- f. Human Faces- Crying, Sad, Anger
- g. Animal Life- Curves for Snakes

The meanings and symbols of disasters are common to children who are exposed to the same landscape hence, they are able to identify these symbols based on their lived experiences. Therefore, children were not able to fully express meanings on others symbolisms associated with other form of disasters such as earthquake, tsunami, wild fires and others because it is not familiar to them.

In the study of Ainsworth, she stressed that drawings are an explicit way to make knowledge and feelings be externalized through visual representation of thoughts and meanings of different life events. Six participants in this research, Gian, Mariane, Joyce, Christian, Erich and Rico depicted these symbols with similarities and common experiences. It was noted that their fear of death are not based on actual life experiences but were taken from non-realistic exposure brought about by media exposure. These influenced projected fears, possibilities and probable risks.



Fig. 1, Gian interpretation of Disaster

Gian sadly said, “grabe po tong Yolanda” (Yolanda was indeed devastating). Consequently, Yolanda was not experienced in Calabanga, but Gian’s drawing showed the emotion based on visual imagery provided by the media. Children are able to relate when confronted and identifies himself in the same environment and understands the possible emotion attached therein.

From Destruction to Excitation. One of the interesting findings in this query is the other meaning found in these symbols. For a child, these symbols and meanings do not embody destruction and devastation alone, children expressed in their own narratives how this seemingly chaotic environment are turned to playgrounds. That these fallen trees, fruits, logs and metal scraps become toys and provides opportunities to get them for free. The fear of a disaster is coupled with a feeling of anticipation for possible toys that we will be made available the following day. Gian, smiled and uttered. “Pagkaaga, dakulon po kaming napupurot na niyog” (the following day, there’s plenty of coconut to pick up for free)

Fig. 2 image of children anticipating for fruits/yields



Fig 3 Extent of Damage to Vegetation



When one participant was asked, "Takot ka ba sa dagat (Are you afraid of the sea?)", he replied, "Dae Po"(No, I'm not). He added "pag may bagyo lang po" (Only when there is a typhoon). The sea as relayed by this participant is not frightening, but the typhoon is. The association of the typhoon and possible storm surge is a cause & effect phenomenon known to the participant.

Fallen trees are common image of destruction. In one group sharing, a participant relayed that the fallen "buko o niyog" are good for food. The way it was relayed elicited a joyful expression which for the researcher is interpreted as "disguised opportunity". When fallen trees with fruits become "public" during typhoons, it becomes food. Houses, visited by the researcher are mostly within the 200 meters proximal distance from the shore. The materials used are light like wood, plywoods, nipa, galvanized sheets and bamboos. Some houses are partially concrete. The overall structure is considered vulnerable to damage and is risky during strong typhoons. One question asked of them was, "where do you go during strong typhoon?", "Kina Auntie po sa Quipayo? (At our Aunts' in Qipayo) Other replied "Sa eskwelahan po" (in school). Usually, families seek refuge to relatives with steady and concrete structures, others go into nearby public schools or barangay halls which are declared as evacuation centers.

1. Socio - Emotional Expressions

According to the Center for Applied Jungian Studies (2018), "art can be used to alleviate or contain feelings of trauma, fear, or anxiety and also to repair, restore and heal. Jung wrote that art expression and images found in dreams could be helpful in recovering from trauma and emotional distress. Jung often drew, painted or made objects and constructions at times of emotional distress, which he recognized as more than recreational.

Fig 4. Shows emotions from mothers and female children



Fear - Older children, intermediate age has deeper understanding of risk and its effect to the family. Fear is represented by tears or crying. Statements of Fear are “naka- katakot ang duros” (the wind is frightening), “baka may magadan” (someone might get killed), magagaba na ang harong mi (our house is almost fallen), baka kami malamos (we might be drowned) baka may halas (there might be snakes).

Rage – “Baroto na lang ngani pigkukuanan ming kakanon, pigraot pa kan bagyo” (it’s only the boat which provides us food and yet it was broken by the typhoon.) “Barasa naman ang gamit ko” (Our school things are soiled again); “mapagalon maglinig” (it’s exhausting to do the cleaning). Effects are blamed to the typhoon when exhaustion takes over.

Fig 5. Althea’s depiction of his intent to save proper-

ties



Althea, 12 speaks about his experience during typhoons and said, “Baroto na Lang ngani ang pigkukuanan mi nin pagkakan, niraot pa kan bagyo”. (“The fishing boat remains our sole source of food, yet the typhoon takes it away. The image below shows how tears represent sadness or disgust. While the boat is not so much of importance to some, but for this young girl it is her source of living. She shares the same value and attribution for life treasures which are deemed important for survival.

Contrary to hypothetical belief of this study, disasters do not bring grief or sadness alone. It also poses happiness and excitement which was narrated by children-participants to explain faces of joy in some drawings. The following are positive emotions experienced by the children.

Joy – some children find the typhoon as opportune time to stay together inside with the family members. For safety reasons, fishermen are not allowed to sail on certain typhoon signals, keeping them at home with the kids. The evacuation center also provides social opportunity where children get to play, sleep and eat with others. Fellowship is more intimate because of emotions common to all. Suspension of Classes is considered good news for children. A grand vacation when there’s so much toys around and adventures to enjoy.

Love - Children, even they are young are sympathetic to the plight of others. Pity for others is a form of Love. “Herak man kan iba” (Pity for others). Pre-Disaster Preparation is a familial thing. Members of the family help one another. Spirit of bayanihan in a form of clustering a new system of survival. Families, neighbors and Relatives offer their houses which they deemed strong and steady to accommodate others. They cook together, comfort each other until the storm is over. Children get to enjoy chatting with other relatives and considers power shutdown as exciting moment to tell stories about creepy folklores and stories from the old. They look forward to it and considers this as part of every typhoon experience.

Comfort- Children maintain emotional well-being in the presence of friends and others during disasters. Participants experienced relief in the presence of other people. Evacuation centers are common alternative for shelter during calamities. Families who stayed at home finds comfort in being together.

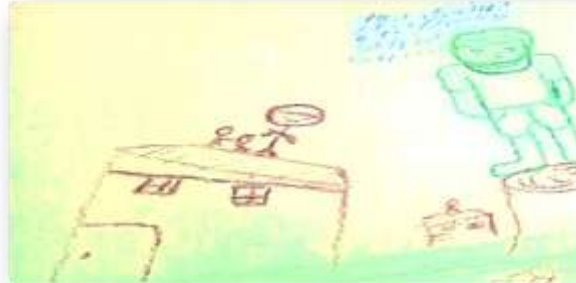
From Anxiety to Sympathy. Their concept of death is always associated with drowning and considers destruction of properties specifically their houses as the primary threat. Symbolism for gender roles has been emphasized, with male characters dominating the drawings. This implies the responsibility attached to fathers to protect the family and their homes. On the other hand, sad faces, fear and sadness dominates female images. Children look at their mothers as one of the characters vulnerable to the effect of disasters.

In this study however, it limits itself to the understanding of disasters or calamities but not on its therapeutic components. But for the purpose of eliciting initial response, drawings are said to work from a theoretical tradition that espouses that knowledge is produced through practices, interactions, and experiences. From this perspective, Rose (2013) believed that drawings are visual products and, at the same time produce meaning which may be utilized for therapy. Art as communication (rather than as therapy) can be defined as the association between words,

behavior, and drawing created in a group setting. Huss, 2005

2. Disaster – Adaptation Pattern

Fig. 4 shows father as the head leads the act to protect the family



From Passive to Pro-active Behavior. Pre-Disaster Preparation becomes a familial thing. Members perform their responsibilities accordingly. While preparation and management are represented dominantly by male characters, female presentations are also present alongside. Barangay based DRRM units assist in the pre disaster preparation. Since the implementation of the Philippines Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (RA10121) was enacted in May 2010 replacing the PD.1566, municipalities have emphasized the need for a coherent, comprehensive, integrated and proactive approach to DRRM across levels and sectors of government and among Communities. The present Mayor of the municipality of Calabanga, Eduardo

A. Severo has continued and innovated programs for a more resilient community, beginning with his Green advocacy which focus on waste management and control program. Other projects include construction of Gabion to protect and reinforce the shoreline and mitigate flooding, Desilting of creeks, Integration of disaster risk reduction in school curricula, Capacitating the municipal disaster risk reduction management council and the community through contingency planning workshops, disaster preparedness activities – formation and training of basic life support team, conduct of evacuation, fire suppression, and earthquake drills, installation and maintenance of early warning system – CBDRM, construction and improvement of evacuation center facilities. Suspension of classes is first issued to disaster prone areas like the community involved in this study.

by disaster is balanced by the calming presence of others. The system adopted by the community which children observed is Clustering. They group themselves in evacuation center and take turns in guarding their valuables and belongings, cook the food and taking care of the children.

Older brothers and sisters look after their young siblings. Children understand that they have a role to play. This way, work is systematic and management of the situation becomes easy. This step is highly significant against probable violations as relayed by the Commission on Human Rights which reported the rape of a nine-year old girl at an evacuation center in Zamboanga City. Mateo (2022)

Children finds comfort in the same scenario that cause them to snug together. The anxious feeling brought



Figure 2 Joyce's drawing depicts family keeps their house ready

For others, disaster is an extraordinary phenomenon but for someone like the nine-year old Daniela, the experience of a disaster or calamity has been a "natural occurrence" for her. In fact, an announcement of a typhoon has established a pattern of routine for them. She would see her mother keeping the clothes in plastic bags and big

containers. She, as a daughter played part in the preparation by keeping her school things covered and in safe places. The preparation, however gives a glimpse of excitement for an expectation of a “No Classes” announcement.

For another participant, typhoon as the most experienced calamity can be frightening. The fear was seen and observed on her facial expressions as she relates her experience one stormy morning when they all look for safety under a table along with her siblings because the whole house is dripped with water. When the researcher asked how she felt, “Nalilipot po” (It was very cold) was his remark.

Situations seen and witnessed in the community, among neighbors and friends leave a feeling of sadness and pity, but at the same time elicits feelings of sympathy and compassion. “naheherak po kami sa iba” (We pity other people). The situation lifts spirit of compassion from helpless and equally affected victims. The children learned to differentiate extent of effect from one situation to the other. One participant claimed that, during disasters or calamities, she and her siblings sits close together, “Iribanan po kami sa sarong gilid” (We are seated together in one corner). When asked why, “natatakot po kami, baka kaya po may magadan”, (We are afraid that someone may be dead)

Death, according to children is real and could possibly happen to their families. Jung’s in his theory relayed that this children can adopt the archetype of a hero whose personality aims at saving his people and the quest to get rid of the land of dangers. In another narratives, some children find comfort from the presence of others, “gusto mi ngani bagyo ta gabos kami nagdadalan TV sa harong”, (We actually like typhoon because we get to watch the TV together at home). The children see the opportunity for recreation and the comfort of family during these times.

Fig. 8 Male characters are mostly depicted on the rooftop



Disaster Destroys Home and build People

A pre-calamity scheme is unique to Filipino families. Every member of the family holds a particular duty to do. The father is expected to keep the security of the house, adopting traditional means for scaffold like tying the four posts of the house to a concrete, a tree or strong foundation. They also climb up the roof and put banana trees as support to the roof structure. The children can see, the drawings however are dominated by male human characters.

In this figure, a pupil participant draws a person on top of the rooftop. He was asked by the researcher, what is he doing on top of the roof. He said, “nagsasasakat po si papa ta pig aayos ang atop” (Father climb up the roof to fix it). The attribution of gender roles is clear in this scenario. In addition, Mothers are keeping the things on safe place. Children, specifically females are required to help. “Nag- titipig po kami nin gamit. (we keep things orderly). “Pigsasaray mi po ang mga bag mi tanging dae mabasa” (We keep our school things to a dry place). This conscious cooperation elicits individual and collective desire for safety and protection.

Philippine is located along the Pacific typhoon belt. It is visited by an average of 20 typhoons a year. As a result, the neighborhood has adopted measures to keep their families safe. The heads of the families group their together wives and children together as a cluster during evacuation. Fathers bring their wives and children to evacuation area where the other families of their groups are. The males look for wooden chairs, tables or boards to create a protective fence for the group. The mothers also group together and keep their children supervised and manage food distribution along with other mothers until the typhoon is over. Children, see this experience as a social opportunity. They enjoy the grouping together and turn the evacuation centers into playgrounds. The researchers asked one of the parents in the audience the purpose for the “clustering”, they replied that family members are priority, including extended families.

The presence of the LGU through the barangay council and its staff are managed by the municipal DRRM unit which focus on warning, information updates and evacuation of the community. An old woman, who serves the researchers with Ginatan for snacks shared her story. The coastal community of Sabang in the past has been bombarded with several typhoons and some are hard and life threatening. She remembers crawling with her siblings from their house around 200 meters away from the elementary school, because each time they stand up, they are being blown away by strong wind. But according to her, at present life is better for the new generation, “mas maray na ngonian sa mga bagong tubo”(Life is better now for the new generation). The program of the local government unit has increased awareness and disaster risk behavior among the constituents. People begun to believe in radio announcements, satellite gathered reports which are more scientific and objective. The Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (PDRRMC) has continued to conduct mitigation like trainings

and drills like on Basic Incident Command System Course, Integrated Planning Course, Position Course and All Hazard Incident Management Team. To various municipalities of Camarines Sur. Makatangay (2018)

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This research being qualitative is non representational of the whole phenomena. But this finds the conclusive theoretical concept on the duality of children's understanding of disasters, herein labeled as **Playground Theory**. This postulates, that the child has the ability to see positivity amidst disastrous and chaotic situations, being able to create his own playground built and designed to create his own happiness. As applied to mental health, this theory is highly valuable in teaching children and adults on coping and resiliency. indeed, there is a climate change to combat, but the self is the worst enemy to conquer. Here are the recommendations:

Education

1. Use the research as basis in designing interventive programs for children or families who are constantly exposed to disasters through the Guidance & Counseling Office.
2. Integrate Art as one of the methods for self-expression and intervention to address suppressed emotion which might lead to overt and undesirable behavior and tendencies.
3. Empower communities by enhancing community resiliency mechanism by providing trainings on Health and Safety, Food Preservation, Environmental Care and Waste Management. The inclusion of other disasters not familiar to a child is a preparatory and conditioning scheme which might help in coping and adjustment.
4. Instill values of cooperation and participation among communities for proper dissimulation and implementations of government programs related to Disaster Risk Reduction Management.
5. Instill sense of responsibility through proper application of gender roles during calamities to optimize help and collaborative tasks in the family and the community.
6. Climate Change & Awareness for children through age-appropriate lectures to familiarize with other forms of calamities and mitigations.
7. Design Instructional Materials to understand environmental care and mitigating practices and free expression of ideas, release of suppressed thoughts and creativity.
8. Introduce conduct of behavior as part of Values Education for children enforcing proper behavior during calamities.

LGU

1. Initiate programs through the DSWD to check and monitor children who are affected by post calamity traumas and needing assistance & help.
2. Provide health staff in evacuation centers for emotional debriefing and recreational therapies during disasters and calamities.
3. Pass legislation, establishing a DRRMC Program for Children's Care during calamities and disasters.
4. Relief goods and services should directly address the children's health and well-being.
5. Make all information available to far flung communities through proper channeling of information and improved media facilities.

The theory may be applied to therapy and behavioral management in different institutions.

Social & other forms of Media Communication

1. Make use of the data as basis for Children's Program relating to Climate Change and environmental awareness. Make use of graphics, colors and designs to elicit visual interest while learning is working in progress.
2. Increase media promotion for children relief and services during calamities

Spiritual Development

The potential contribution of spirituality to children does not only shape desirable values and behavior but also increases resiliency. The researcher recommends the inclusion of spiritual development at home in school and in the community.

Establish partnership with agencies and organizations to optimize use of facilities and manpower sources for medical, academic and emotional interventions for holistic development of the children.

Research & Extension

1. Utilize results as basis for continuing research on human behavior to solve mental health problems and depression among the children.
2. Adopt coastal communities and introduce technology that will optimize use of natural resources in the community for other sustainable human development other than fish production.
3. Collaborate with institutions to set a standard tool for measuring children's responses to negative phenomenon as basis for the provision of mental and emotional debriefing and treatment.

Mental Health & Rehabilitation

1. Drawings can be used by in instruction and consultation to out reveal suppressed feelings among children who has trauma and were abused.

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