



THE ART OF NOT STOPPING: GRIT AMONG THE BREADWINNER SENIOR CITIZENS IN PILAR, BATAAN

Jayvie Villazor

Bataan Peninsula State University, Capitol Dr, Balanga, 2100 Bataan, Philippines

jvillazor@bpsu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Approximately fifty percent of elderly individuals in the Philippines are currently employed. A significant number of them are exposed to health hazards and have a low socioeconomic level despite having worked for a considerable number of years. The current study aims to provide a detailed account and analysis of the core essence of the experience of breadwinner senior citizens as they strive to maintain their grit for numerous years. The findings revealed four themes, or 4K of grit, namely: keep on, keep at, keep up, and keep growing. Each theme generated subthemes that further elaborated on the experiences of breadwinner senior citizens. Keep on is divided into five subthemes: familial's sake, financial autonomy, fortitude in the past, and founding leisure. Keep at is divided into two themes, namely the personification of aging and perceived hardships. Meanwhile, the keep-up had four subthemes: guarding the mind, being God-centered, getting support, and having greater focus in the body. Lastly, the keep growing is composed of two themes the steadfastness in work and senescence's joy. While the participants have shown resilience in the face of several challenges, it is strongly recommended that local government agencies improve and closely supervise the current program and activities aimed at addressing the financial difficulties as well as the physical and mental difficulties of the breadwinner senior citizens. More so, the said research will add additional fund of knowledge in the field of gerontology and psychology in the Philippines.

Keywords: bataan; breadwinner senior citizens; descriptive phenomenology; grit; pilar

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INTRODUCTION

Old age is the last stage in a human life span. In the eight stages by Erikson (1946), late adulthood is the stage of reflection wherein they look back on their lives and deem them satisfactory or dissatisfactory. As emphasized by Dr. Sousa (2014), this is a "period of moving away from some previous and more desirable period—the prime of life or the years of usefulness." In the Philippines, a Filipino is categorized as a senior citizen if the individual is over 60 years old and is expected to retire from the employment sector because of their limited capabilities due to old age. It is accompanied by a decline in mental and physical physiology, such as vulnerability in physical and mental health and a decrease in energy levels, which has a direct impact on their ability to perform daily activities. The Philippine Statistics Authority said that as of May 2020, senior citizens made up 11.31 percent of the country's estimated total population. At present, 46%, or 9.2 million senior citizens aged 60 and up, continue to work in the Philippines (Philippine Population Institute, 2022). Because of poverty, they experienced difficulty in meeting their household expenses, which drove them to work and toil despite their physical disadvantage. As stated by the Asian Development Bank, 23.7% of the population lived below the national poverty line in 2021 in the Philippines. This is an obvious struggle as it is the main source of their economic challenges within the household. They continue to work to overcome their financial constraints. Regardless of their old age, they labor from day to night just to afford to put food on the table, pay their bills and daily expenses, and give their support through financial means. Being a

breadwinner, they carry the heavy burden as they bear to take responsibility of the welfare of their family as Filipinos place high regard and put importance on family above anything else especially in providing the needs of the family.

As of the moment, a vast number of studies have highlighted the negative impacts of aging on senior citizens. Singh and Misra (2009) conducted research on depression and loneliness among the elderly. Their research found that feeling lonely is affected not just by the number of relationships one has with people but also by whether or not one is pleased with his or her lifestyle. A strong predictor of loneliness is stated unhappiness with possible connections. Bu (2020) investigated the lives of the elderly and concluded that social isolation and loneliness are expected to become key risk factors affecting the health outcomes of older adults. Mobasser et al. (2020) investigated the physical and mental implications of self-isolation, neglect of older people, ageism and age discrimination, and access to needed supplies in self-isolation during the pandemic. According to the findings of the Maresova et al. (2019) study, various impairments constitute a serious difficulty connected with seniors' activities of daily life. They classified various conditions into seven categories: psychological issues, mobility issues, poor cognitive function, falls and events, wounds and injuries, undernutrition, and communication issues. Meanwhile, the present study highlights a positive layer of experience, which is grit. The breadwinner senior citizens have a clear manifestation that they have the grit over the years, as discussed by Duckworth (2007). They constantly strive and aim to earn and be the primary contributor within the household as their long-term commitment in life. Regardless of life's difficulties and challenges in their physical and mental health as they age, they work tirelessly with resilience and perseverance to sustain and afford to send their grandchildren to school and provide for the family's basic needs.

The present study is in line with the sustainable goals of the World Health Organization that deals with good health and well-being. The goal of this study was to start filling in the gaps in holistic aging by describing the parents' positive experiences, which were missing in some studies. Typically, grit research has been undertaken in the setting of school or in young people and early adulthood (Akos et al., 2017; Alan et al., 2020; Aparicio et al., 2017). Furthermore, little research has been undertaken in the context of older people. The study also reveals the essence of grit among the breadwinner senior citizens. This study may be used to develop or basis on the enhancement of policies (RA No. 9994) or programs to improve the quality of life and well-being of indigent breadwinner senior citizens. The aims of this study are to discern the essence of grit among breadwinner senior citizens and to present a simulacrum or diagram that captures the essence of community resilience within this demographic.

METHOD

Study Design

The purpose of the study was to demonstrate the essence of grit among breadwinner senior citizens in Pilar, Bataan. Consequently, a descriptive phenomenological design was deemed the most suitable study design. Phenomenology aimed to characterize specific phenomena or the appearance of objects as lived experiences (Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). It was everyone's lived experience that lent significance to their view of a particular phenomenon and therefore conveyed to the individual what was true or real in their life (Giorgi, 1997).

Selection

The researcher gathered data from twelve different individuals who resided in Pilar, Bataan. Participants were required to be between the ages of 60 and 70 and be the sole providers for

their families. They fell under the category of indigent based on DSWD, with salaries insufficient to provide for their families' needs. Purposive sampling was the sample technique used in the study. To fulfill the objectives of the investigation, the researcher recruited participants based on the features that distinguished them (Zulueta & Costales, 2005). Twelve older individuals who were still the breadwinners of their families and came from different barangays in Pilar, Bataan, were the study's participants. It was adequate to choose between 6 and 20 selections (Ellis, 2016). Meanwhile, senior citizens working for recreation and leisure were exempt. Senior citizens experiencing difficulty in speaking, hearing, or undergoing physical pain were also excluded from the study.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used to gather the necessary data. A robotfoto was utilized to determine the personal information of the participants, divided into two parts: the first concerned the participants' age, educational background, religion, civil status, gender, among other things; the second concerned the participants' employment history. Lastly, to understand the essence of grit among the respondents, semi-structured interviews were employed. The researcher asked for informed consent or permission from the potential participants of the study. Once approved, interviews were organized based on their preferred time and location.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher collaborated with the Local Government Unit of Pilar. After securing approval, qualified candidates were presented with informed consent forms and subsequently scheduled for interviews at their preferred time and location. Over the course of a month during the final quarter of 2023, face-to-face interviews were conducted in private outdoor settings such as terraces, farms, or other chosen locations. Each interview, lasting between 60 to 70 minutes, delved into the essence of the participants' experiences. Their precise verbalizations were captured via electronic voice recording devices, while significant observations and responses were also noted using the traditional "note and pen" method.

Ethics

The Research and Development Office of Bataan Peninsula State University approved all the procedures. The researcher rigorously followed the Code of Ethics of Psychologists in the Philippines, Section 10 (2008–2009), and the Research and Data Privacy Act of the Philippines.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for descriptive phenomenology followed Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process. Twelve parents' interviews were transcribed into field text. Each transcript was reread by researchers to guarantee clarity and familiarity. Grit-related quotes were extracted from each transcript, with each statement's page and line number noted on a separate sheet. After that, the key statements were evaluated to identify their meanings and sorted according to themes and subthemes. The findings were included in grit reports, removing unnecessary and misconstrued descriptions. Participants were given the research results and asked to discuss them to ensure accuracy (Villazor & De Guzman, 2022).

RESULT

This section presents the interview results from participants and further elaborates on them in the discussion section. Four themes emerged from the data, or the "4K" of grit: keep on, keep at, keep up, and keep growing. Each theme generated subthemes that further elaborated on the experiences of breadwinner senior citizens.

Keep on

The responsibility of senior citizens as the primary earners in meeting the financial demands of their family is tough and extensive. The Keep On theme refers to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive breadwinner senior citizens to complete their responsibilities. Personal considerations such as independence, leisure, and the dread of burdening his family are examples of intrinsic driving forces. In the meantime, extrinsic factors motivate them to meet their family's needs. The aforementioned theme is subdivided into four sub-themes.

Familial's Sake

For many years, the majority of senior citizens cited their family as the driving force behind their diligent efforts. Since their family members had no source of income or were limited in income, they made personal sacrifices in order to assist them. It is difficult for them, but it is their way of showing love to their family members. The researcher discovered similarities with other countries in terms of providing support to the family members of an elderly individual. According to Ingersoll-Dayton et al. (2020), there is a cultural norm in Thailand where grandparents are expected to offer care for their grandkids. Grandparents willingly devote their time, financial resources, attention, and even personal freedom to care for their grandchildren, without seeking any reciprocation. They exhibit greater consistency because to their unwavering morals, which prevents them from disregarding their grandchildren. Conversely, they deliberately opt to exhibit strength (Hongthai & Jongudomkarn, 2021).

As expressed verbally by the senior citizens:

"And even if they [child] get married, there will be no one to feed their child. That's what I'm worried about. As long as I'm not sick, I can be with my grandchildren." - Breadwinner #2

"I love my family. The ones I have regrets are that my parents didn't love us. That's why the first day I got married, I gave birth, I said to myself that 'I don't want to do what my parents did. I won't do it to my children and my family.' That was my first thought. I don't want what I will do to build my family now to become like my life then." - Breadwinner #9

"I believe, that's not what their life really is, they work hard, it's just that, there's really nothing. Now, if you don't help, you'll let it go. You will make yourself feel bad. For me, I don't want that. As long as I can help, I will help. That's my view-if I can." - Breadwinner #11

"That is the number 1 for us, our family, without any sickness. Even if you are slightly struggling, you are still joyful." - Breadwinner #13

Financial Autonomy

Being in the senescence period demands financial support since their health is vulnerable to sickness and they have their personal needs as well. They prefer to support themselves rather than rely on others. They do not like to be a burden or a liability to other people, particularly to members of their own family. The majority of senior citizens are working toward achieving financial independence by consistently working for numerous decades. The elderly breadwinner is empowering themselves to continue working in order to avoid being dependent on others (Halaweh et al., 2018). Furthermore, possessing independence was regarded as a key characteristic of successful aging. As uttered by some senior citizens:

"Like I said, so that we don't become a burden to our children. Isn't it, of course, when you don't have a job, you have nothing, you will have to rely on the children. So that we don't become too much of a burden on them." - Breadwinner #1

"I believe and do in my life that I need to save so that my children will not have to spend because of me. If the Lord takes me, then you have the money to spend for you." - Breadwinner #3

"Even you, we're already old. My husband and I put money in so that my children don't have to think about where to get the money for our burial, for the coffin--so my wife and I put

money in [funeral home]. So that when we die, our coffin will arrive. Even our burial place will be already paid for." - Breadwinner #8

Fortitude in the past

Some senior citizens mentioned that they have been working since elementary and high school days. They experienced poverty and financial challenges. Their past was one of the factors in working hard steadfastly. Similarly, Lee's (2015) research demonstrates that adults or primary earners in families exert continuous effort to alleviate poverty resulting from war and enhance the socioeconomic standing of their households. They are making use of their previous experiences as a point of reference in order to improve their situation in terms of their economic status.

As claimed by one of the senior citizens:

"At the time when I was just surviving in my life, there was no way I could help even my family, we were lacking. Well now, the days pass, the days pass until I reach adulthood, I became more complacent that I am now helping, I am building good things that I can leave with them if anything happens. It is more plentiful now compared to when my children were young. It is better now. Life is better now." - Breadwinner #9

Founding leisure

Founding leisure in their job is common to the majority of the breadwinner senior citizens. Physical activities, relating to others, and numerous adjustments are synonymous with a hobby. This is one of the factors that made the senior citizen continuously engage in their work. They can't find another activity that can replace their job as a form of leisure. As responded by some senior citizens:

"So my life was a bit sad--but it's okay. What I did to entertain myself, when I retired from Servicio Filipino, sometimes I just taught table tennis at school. I was able to go to BPSU, which is why I was able to meet... because he is a trainer. Then and ever since table tennis flourished in Bataan, I have been playing table tennis. Which is why my body has gotten stronger. I avoid cigarettes, alcohol--but, I still get a taste, sometimes when there is an occasion. I was entertained." - Breadwinner #11

"I prefer that I am entertained. Sometimes when I work until noon, I just go home. Sometimes I go home at one o'clock, noon. That's it. I prefer to sell because ever since I was young, that was the means of livelihood I grew up to." - Breadwinner #12

KEEP AT

Aging is an inevitable aspect of the lives of breadwinners, and it gradually causes their bodies to undergo changes that are detrimental to their health. In addition to this, they are confronted with difficulties that are directly related to the nature of their occupation. These difficulties were observed in the workloads and requirements that they are required to meet. The notion of "Keep At" pertains to the difficulties that elderly individuals who assume the primary financial responsibilities for their families encounter and manage to persevere through. The theme mentioned above can be divided into two distinct subthemes.

Personification of aging

Senior citizens who are the breadwinners go through a lot of changes. Primarily, they experience a progressive decline in the body's ability to function optimally. More so, they noted significant changes in their moods and temperaments. The following changes serve as one of the hindrances in their quest to work consistently for themselves and their family. Several participants reported experiencing physiological changes associated with the aging process, including the development of various medical conditions. This is analogous to the

research conducted by Hongthai and Jongudomkarn in 2021. Despite the presence of underlying conditions including diabetes, hypertension, and etc., they keep on fulfilling their roles. As shared by the senior citizens:

"Old already. As long as my decade continues, it has been like that since 50. It seems like your body is different, it's like it's hard for you to move. Whatever you want, you want it. Or when you're sixty, you now need to watch out for your stomach, your food. Your food intake will increase. The intestine needs to adjust." - Breadwinner #2

"I realized that when your age is beyond 60, you wake up easily, it's hard to sleep now. Especially if you have problems you are thinking about. It's hard to fall asleep, unlike when you were young you just lay down, you can fall asleep. Now, sometimes, if there's a problem, what I do is I watch TV." - Breadwinner #11

"It's just that the body really can't take it anymore. When you're of old age, when you hit the line of 60s, for sure you will find a lot of issues with your body. I will just endure instead of having my family feed me, I will just endure it. I will make a living." - Breadwinner #14

Perceived hardships

An additional obstacle encountered by the elderly is extrinsic factors in the workplace. Several of the senior citizens identified the most difficult aspects and frequent obstacles in their line of work. However, despite these obstacles, they continued to perform their responsibilities at work. More so, this sub-theme includes the inability of the breadwinner senior citizens to be employed in jobs with a higher income due to old age. As stated by the senior citizens:

"Sometimes it's even hard to get sick back then. Like now, my blood pressure is high so I couldn't get my goods." - Breadwinner #5

"The most difficult thing I experienced in my life back then, sometimes your will weakens, when you go [to work] you don't have fare, food. Then sometimes you buy bananas. We help each other." - Breadwinner #11

"The hardest part when you sell is when the sale is slow. It is very difficult. You can't really earn back what you have invested if your sale is slow." - Breadwinner #12

KEEP UP

Senior citizens who are the primary breadwinners for their families are expected to consistently meet their families' necessities. Over the course of thirty decades and counting, all of them have performed this role continually. Various ways of coping that enable individuals to continue performing or keeping up with their responsibilities are the subject of this theme. The day-to-day coping journey of breadwinner senior citizens was one of the important findings of the study. The following coping mechanisms help them to be grittier in continuing their roles. This theme is also validated and debunked by numerous studies. There are four subthemes that fall under this category.

Guarding the mind

Cognitive coping is a common strategy for older adults to deal with the many difficulties they face on their jobs. Not only did they challenge previously held views, but they additionally left out beliefs that are no longer adaptive. According to Komjakraphan and Chansawang (2015), they made a conscious decision to maintain a positive and strong attitude in the face of adversity. According to Halaweh (2018), one of the most essential characteristics of grit in old age is the ability to safeguard one's mental processes. Moreover, Palmes et al. (2021) identified cognitive coping techniques as one of the most popular coping mechanisms among older persons. Some of them highlighted that they can still dream in spite of old age and hopeful in fulfilling it. Nevertheless, Sigmundson's et al., (2021) study refutes this claim by

demonstrating that there is no substantial correlation between cognitive coping and grit. It is possible that these findings will demonstrate the significance of maintaining a significant activity aside from a job that they wish to engage in as they get older. It is essential to discover and cultivate the direction of the arrow as you get older (Sigmundsson et al., 2020). As claimed by some senior citizens:

"That's for my grandchildren. For my children. For my debts. For food. For dreams. Even when we're old, we still dream. We don't lose hope, like if someone says, 'He's dead, maybe it's too late.' I'm not like that. For me, I still have a lot of hope. I will live long because I have responsibilities, and my biggest dream is my children. I don't want them to get sick, and I want them to live every day." - Breadwinner #2

"Enjoy yourself. Don't dwell on those things. Just put them aside. What you should do in life is to be happy." - Breadwinner #3

"When I think about my family, it's like my burdens lighten, everything's fine, and nobody gets sick. I always pray for those things for them. I pray that they won't get sick." - Breadwinner #7

"I don't overthink. Even if I feel something, I don't think about it. You'll just get stressed if you keep overthinking." - Breadwinner #8

God-centered

The majority of breadwinner senior citizens express a strong inclination towards being focused on God. The research conducted by Hongthai and Jongudomkarn (2021) provides evidence that supports this claim. They have coping strategies by viewing the problem from a higher-being and religious perspective. They do not keep all the uncertainties and worries to themselves instead they lifting it to a higher-being. More so, they are employing different religious practices to cope with life's difficulties, like reading the Bible, praying, attending church services, and giving their offerings. As said by the senior citizens:

"I give everything and find it amusing, and I am able to donate to the missionaries. Because that's my commitment, that whenever there are missionaries, they say I should stop [working]. But I get everything from that, my tithes, love and faith, spurs-proof, I get everything there. But when it comes to, of course, when our bodies can't take it anymore, what will happen? We don't save. We really don't have, like what they call insurance, none. What we only have hope for are the benefits for senior citizens, but up to now I'm not receiving anything." - Breadwinner #1

"That's just how it is. You're still just the one working. We just hold on to that. We hope. Because it's better like that. It's better to have something to hold on to, something to rely on than none at all. Relying on your companions is wrong. That is wrong. Even if it's like that, we can't do anything about it. We're also like that. At least it's like we have someone to have fear together. That's how it is for me. It's like that's what you're all leaning on, but you're also struggling to move. Because no matter how much you pray, if you don't act, it's futile. You won't be listened to. You'll stay like that. You'll still go hungry." - Breadwinner #2

"Be happy with your life, because the Lord provides for all your needs. Everything you need is given. So, I have nothing more to say. Even if problems arise, you can tell Him and He will solve them. That's all I can say." - Breadwinner #3

"What I base it on is that I read the Bible. Because you always have to endure. Because what I base it on there is Jesus Christ. Ridiculed, spat upon, beaten, but always forgiving. The heaviest thing I read there is 'Love your enemy.' During the time of Moses, it was 'Kill your enemy.' When the New Testament came, with Jesus Christ, it became 'Love your enemy.' So it's okay. It's good... what I said there is that it was good, happy. There are many discussions in the Bible." - Breadwinner #11

Getting support

Getting support is an additional coping mechanism that helps maintain the resilience of the individuals in the long run. They were provided with assistance in the form of both emotional and financial support. The research conducted by Komjakraphan and Chansawang (2015) as well as Halaweh et al. (2018) provide evidence in favor of this claim. They cultivate emotionally nurturing relationships, desire companionship, and form strong bonds with their grandkids as an integral aspect of their lives. Additionally, they regarded support from others as crucial for successful aging. In addition, a high degree of stress is caused by a lack of social support (Ingersoll-Dayton et al., 2020). Thus, the breadwinner senior citizens cope through social support to manage their stress levels and continue to nurture their grit. As expressed verbally by some of the senior citizens:

"And selling as a livelihood, that's fun. You get many friends there. Your regular customers. Friendship. Wherever you go." - Breadwinner #3

"My goodness, with friends alone, they're delighted with me. Every day, I cook soup, sticky rice, chocolate porridge, and I make rice porridge. There, we're all here. I accommodate them. Yes. They are the ones who, there, fetch water, sometimes arrange the merchandise here. They deliver my food, cook food there. We help each other. Because they know I'm the only one earning, so they don't make it hard for me. Household chores, they take care of everything there. Yes. They are kind. They know how to get along, and we're like siblings here. No more petty grudges. They don't take it too seriously anymore. Our relationships here are good." - Breadwinner #9

"But because I have friends, they know my life is hard. In playing with them, they see me, I reach out. Somehow, I help. That's why I also have relatives that when they see, they give for me. That's why they give me help, they see I have no vices. Unlike others who are being helped already, but are into gambling." - Breadwinner #11

"When there's money, we sell merchandise. When there's none, my siblings and my nieces and nephews give us. They give me 100, 200. That's just how it is with us, we don't make big money. During Christmas, my nieces and nephews give us. Around 500. With the number of nieces and nephews I have, you can save up to 3,000. That's how our life as a couple is. That's why I pray to the heavens, it's okay if you don't have money, just don't let us get sick. That's it." - Breadwinner #12

Greater focus in the body

Lastly, the breadwinner senior citizens prioritize self-care, placing particular emphasis on physical well-being. This activity is crucial for maintaining their ability to perform their work. Physical activities like exercise, rest, and eating healthy foods are all beneficial to keeping the breadwinner senior citizens in shape (Halaweh et al., 2018; Yochim & Woodhead, 2018). While some responders experience ongoing maintenance for their chronic illness, they have effectively managed it. Significantly, several respondents perceive their employment not just as a means of earning money, but also as an important factor in maintaining good health. Contemporary investigations have also explored the link between grit and various indices of optimal physical health. Research suggests that grittier individuals are more likely to have a habitual exercise routine (Reed et al., 2013). As expressed in:

"In our daily routine, walking, exercising, my dad and I do that. Then we only eat vegetables." - Breadwinner #1

"So when I got sick, I felt sad. I thought, 'What now?' I couldn't sell. Because selling and earning, that brings joy to you. So when I consulted a doctor and asked if I could sell again, that's when I perked up." - Breadwinner #3

"Sometimes when you feel tired, I just go home and park my tricycle." - Breadwinner #5

"It's fine. I like vegetables." - Breadwinner #6

"Ah, I'm strong. I don't get sick. I don't take maintenance medication. I only take vitamins." - Breadwinner #7

"About health. You should also take the pandemic somewhat seriously, if it's really true or if the time comes when you get sick. Every year, the weather changes, like that. So, it's possible that it's not really a pandemic." - Breadwinner #9

KEEP GROWING

In spite of the difficulties, they have in working hard for their family consistently, senior citizens who are the primary breadwinners experience positive change. These positive transformations center on the individual's inner strength and integrity as evidenced by their huge range of experiences. More so, this theme embodies the exact concept of grit. Grit was defined as the enduring desire and commitment towards long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). It's also a noteworthy finding that an adult with an age of 60 or older and still working for numerous decades confirmed the experience of grit. The following mentioned demographic profiles are factors in increasing grit over time (Duckworth et al., 2007; Camp et al., 2018). The fourth theme is further broken down into two subthemes.

Steadfastness and strength in work

According to Duckworth et al. (2007), steadfastness in work is a key aspect of grit. This quality has been observed in the lives of senior citizens who are the main earners for their families. The importance of perseverance and effort in achieving positive outcomes in terms of performance, psychological well-being, and overall success has been highlighted by Datu et al., (2018). More so, it is supported by numerous studies that consistency in one's task or work has a positive beneficial outcome (Mueller et al., 2017; Suzuki et al., 2015). The breadwinner senior citizens have demonstrated impressive job performance, including building strong relationships with loyal customers, mastering their jobs, and finding enjoyment in their work. These achievements have also had positive psychological effects, such as a strong commitment to their job, taking personal responsibility instead of blaming others, maintaining focus on their goals, and refusing to give up in the face of challenges. As uttered by senior citizens:

"As long as I am strong, I will continue driving tricycles for a living for as long as I can." - Breadwinner #7

"At 70 or 70+, I feel like I can still do it. Because I see someone who's 73 still walking around. Surely, I will still walk then. Yes, I can still do it. Just don't give up, I can still do it." - Breadwinner #9

"Yes. I work out of necessity, especially for the needs of my children, grandchildren. There. Because I need to help, I don't want to rely on handouts. I need to take action. As long as I can still take action." - Breadwinner #11

Senescence's joy

Despite the challenges faced over the past several decades, the elderly breadwinners demonstrate grit. Their happiness in old age stems from their continued passion for their job, which they have been doing for most of their lives. Despite engaging in the same occupation as the majority of elderly individuals who financially support their families, it remains a source of passion for them. This is corroborated by the study conducted by Halaweh et al. (2018), which was regarded as a driving force for continuing one's journey in life: "happiness prolongs lifespan." The experience of joy invigorates senior citizens and enhances the quality of their life, regardless of the challenges they may face. This is reflected in the lives of the breadwinner senior citizens; This is seen in the lives of elderly individuals who have been the primary earners in their households. Their long-standing employment has imbued them with

vitality, a heightened sense of strength, and a greater sense of fulfillment. Despite facing difficulty, they tenaciously hold onto their employment as a wellspring of joy and an essential component of their being. As shared by the senior citizens:

"This, selling for a living. I am happy when selling. I feel complete when I'm selling." -

Breadwinner #2

"I'm happy because it's like I've extended my life instead of sulking at home. I've extended my life by being able to help them even though I'm already old. And it's also happy here as long as you're friendly, you'll have many people to talk to." - Breadwinner #9

"Selling because... I really enjoy selling. I don't want any other job. I just want to sell. That's it, I feel happy, I enjoy it. I really feel happy when selling. When I'm not selling, I feel sad." -

Breadwinner #12

Simulacrum

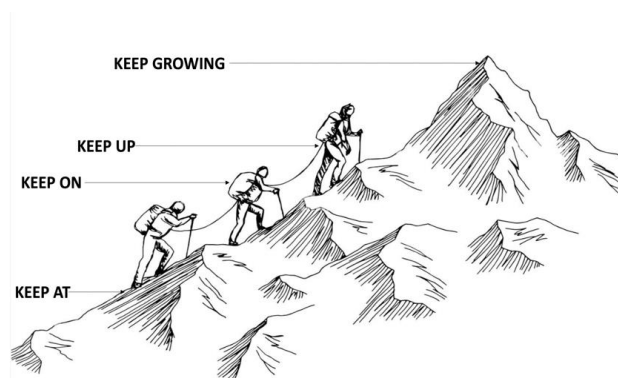


Figure 1

The essence of grit among the breadwinner senior citizens reflected in the aforementioned diagram. The steepness of the mountain represents the challenges that come with aging and maintaining a job, or the "keep at" theme. The mountain climber's bag (keep on theme) is a powerful symbol, standing for the motivating factors that drive them to work for many years. The rope, in turn, symbolizes the 'keep up' theme, acting as a coping mechanism helping the climber overcome obstacles and reach the mountain's peak. Lastly, the summit represents the 'keep growing' theme. Through working consistently in spite of hardship, it generates growth or positive transformation. It resembles the journey of mountain climbers, who generate positive transformation after reaching the pinnacle of the mountain.

CONCLUSION

This paper delves into the phenomenon of grit among breadwinner senior citizens in Pilar, Bataan, exploring the intricate interplay of positive and negative consequences arising from their extensive work experience. The "Keep On" theme uncovers that the driving force behind their enduring commitment is multifaceted, encompassing provision for the family, financial autonomy, a pursuit of leisure, and a desire to enhance their socioeconomic standing. More so, the "Keep At" theme reflected their difficulties at work and aging-related changes. The research also sheds light on the diverse coping mechanisms employed by these breadwinners, ranging from cognitive and spiritual strategies to social and physical approaches. The multifaceted nature of their growth is evident, as they not only experienced substantial development through the unwavering perseverance displayed in their job but also found joy in their personal lives through their work.

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