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Article

Philippine Evacuation Center through the Children's Lens

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Abstract

Evacuation as a pre-disaster response necessitates safety in schools. Anchored to this need, this study was conducted to describe the experiences and feelings of 30 six-to-eight-year-old children in an evacuation center of a flood-prone barangay in the Philippines. The respondents were asked to draw their experiences inside the evacuation center and eventually interviewed on what they drew, what they felt during their stay inside the center, and what they expected to see to make their stay comfortable, happy, and meaningful. A frequency count was followed to tally and categorize the participants' responses according to their variables. Five categories emerged for children's experiences: sensory experiences, bio-physical experiences, family-related experiences, social activities, and rules imposed by the parents; seven arose for children's feelings, namely afraid, happy, sad, difficult, frustrated, and hungry; and the children provided two recommendations: material things and social relationships. The study proposes developing programs and interventions, designing evacuation centers, and food planning for young children.

Keywords
Early childhood, Experiences, Feelings, Evacuation Center, Flood, Children's drawings

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Introduction

The Philippines is visited by an average of 20 typhoons every year, more than anywhere else in the world (GOVPH, n.d.). To ensure survival in the event of a natural disaster, evacuation is a vital action that humans need to participate in (Nogami, 2022). Depending on its severity, families are sent to the nearest evacuation center during a flood, where they spend weeks or months. Public schools are commonly used as evacuation centers in the Philippines due to their number and accessibility. Furthermore, they are authorized by the Philippine government for that purpose (Department of Education, 2015).

With the highest risk of disasters in the world, the Philippines is now ranked first in the 2022 World Risk Index (Save the Children, Philippines, 2023). This conveys that poverty-stricken families are less protected from the effects of climate change and have less help and resources to adapt to it. From the many onslaughts of floods in the country, thousands of children have directly experienced its force and damage. Furthermore, according to Save the Children, Philippines (2023), children are the most affected since they stop going to school and seek work to supplement their daily needs. Moreover, Filipino female children are more likely to be molested, neglected, and exploited in the evacuation centers

Children are diverse, and their information and opinions about their experiences in evacuation centers vary. Considering their young age, six-toeight-year-old children may not readily engage with grown-ups, and some may not verbally express their feelings and experiences, especially when they feel anxious (Berk, 2022). There is a wealth of data on the experiences of families in evacuation centers (Tsioulou et al., 2020; Kako et al., 2020). However, very few have been published locally about children's experiences, feelings, and ideas in evacuation centers, specifically among six-to-eight-yearold children. Since some may not be able to express themselves verbally.

Their feelings and experiences; some, however, can convey them through illustrations (Berk, 2022). Hence, the researcher made use of children's drawings to identify six-to-eight-year-old children's experiences and feelings in the evacuation center. As Berk (2022) cited, children's drawings at six-to-eight years of age illustrate dramatic improvements in organization, detail, and representation. This implies that children at this age can convey their thoughts and ideas through drawings. By asking these children to draw on paper their experiences during their stay in the evacuation center, they can convey what they cannot verbally express.

Experiences of Children

Children shape their understanding of life through their own experiences, which may differ from adults. As supported by Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000), they attach their meanings to these experiences. Hearing directly from children is essential, as emphasized by Hogan (2012). Furthermore, Harcourt and Einarsdotirr (2011) argue that children can engage in research and share their views, providing valuable insights into their interpretations, negotiations, and emotions in their daily lives.

Greene and Hill (2005) have explained that children's views are often observed as merely learned or mimicked responses. It is perceived that when one listens to children's voices, one hears their parents' voices as well. Children in most societies are valued for their potential but devalued in their present perspectives and experiences. Adults rarely ask them for their

opinions because it is assumed that they cannot provide convincing and consistent information about events or experiences. Ceci and Bruck (2005) contended that researchers now find that young children can give accurate accounts of personally experienced events. They are seen as active participants in the construction and determination of their social lives, rather than as passive subjects in social structures and processes. Also, Hogan (2005) stated that children could remember more accurately when freely allowed to recall the details of events they have personally experienced.

Lev Vygotsky claims in his Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development that children's experiences and interactions with others and their environment are crucial in their cognitive development (Kurt, 2020). Thus, considering Vygotsky's insights on child development, exploring a child's experiences and feelings in an evacuation shelter after a flood could provide reflective measures to integrate accessible means of education for them under such circumstances.

Evacuation Centers

In the Philippines, school buildings are commonly used as vital protection against natural disasters because they are among the best-constructed buildings in the community. Moreover, the Philippine government has issued a directive for all public schools to function as evacuation centers in times of calamity due to their accessibility and quantity (DepEd, 2015).

According to an article written by Lozada (2013), during a typhoon, evacuees transformed classrooms into makeshift bedrooms. Typically, 12 families or 55 people crowd in a 7 x 7-meter classroom. Evacuees are cramped at a density of one person in less than one square meter of space, way below the recommended standard of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), which is 1.33 square meters per person based on the recommendation of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) standard of 40 square meters per six families of five persons per family (DILG, 2018). In line with Ortega's (2022) findings, evacuees have various concerns, including overcrowding, privacy issues, health and sanitation problems, limited food supply, unsafe water, and missed income opportunities. Additionally, there is an increased risk of

Communicable diseases were spreading, as well as heightened levels of stress and anxiety. DSWD observed that during disasters, children live in significantly different circumstances in the evacuation centers due to their associated problems.

Children's Drawings

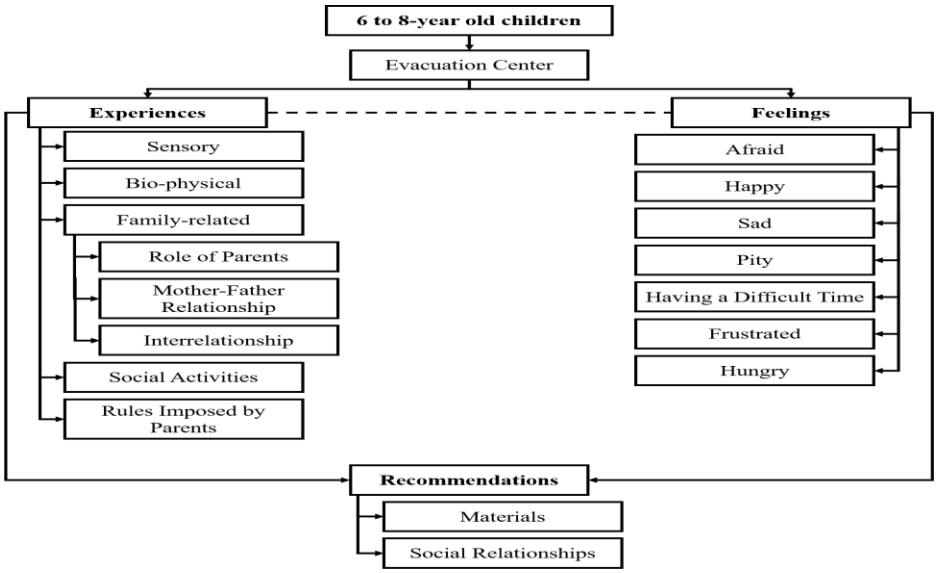
Researchers believe that drawing is a means to see how the child views the world as it captures the feelings, representation, and perception of the topic that is being probed (Fabris et al., 2023). Children's drawings are increasingly being used as a means of researching children's experiences (Sondegaard & Reventlow,2019). Drawing is instrumental in trauma intervention because it facilitates children's ability to verbalize their experiences and encourages the expression of emotionally laden events more successfully than talking alone. Children who were allowed to draw while talking about their experiences reported more information than the children who were merely asked to talk. Given that there is a dearth of research on six-to-eight-year-old experiences in evacuation centers during a disaster, by looking into their experiences, people will come to know more about how they interpret and understand their world, especially during disasters (Greene & Hill, 2005).

The study, therefore, aims to identify children's experiences, feelings in the evacuation centers, and expectations in response to these experiences. This study specifically aims to answer the following questions:

1. What do six-to-eight-year-old children experience and feel in evacuation centers in the event of a flood?
2. What expectations do six-to-eight-year-old children have in response to these experiences in the evacuation centers?

The framework shows that six-to-eight-year-old children encountered many experiences during their stay in the evacuation center. As a result of these experiences, the children felt various emotions. Moreover, the children gave their recommendations to make their stay comfortable and meaningful:

Figure 1.
Framework of Experiences and Feelings of Six-to-Eight-Year-Old Children in the Evacuation Center



Methodology

Qualitative research was utilized to uncover the experiences, feelings, and expectations of six- to eight-year-old children in the evacuation center. Qualitative research delves into real-world issues, offering in-depth insights (Tenny et al., 2022). Hence, this research is generally aimed at collecting and analyzing participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors in the evacuation center.

Barangay Tumana, Marikina City, served as the venue for this study. Marikina is particularly vulnerable to flooding, owing to its proximity to the Marikina River and housing areas built on slopes and in flood-prone locations. When Marikina River's water level reaches 16 meters above sea level, alarm level 2 is declared, and evacuation is enforced. When the water is 18 meters above sea level, "forced evacuation" is enforced (Serafica, 2017). Families affected by the flood seek shelter in H. Bautista Elementary School, a public school that serves as one of the evacuation centers located in Marikina City.

As this research is limited to children living in flood-prone areas in an urban city in the Philippines, the study does not include children who were also experiencing floods in rural areas. Many studies of this nature employ a quantitative approach. However, in this study, a qualitative approach was employed to illuminate a complete picture of children's experiences in the evacuation center, especially of children who are living in marginalized communities.

This study includes 30 six-to-eight-year-old children from Barangay Tumana, Marikina City. They were interviewed within three months of staying in the evacuation center. Interviews were used to gather detailed information about their experiences. Open-ended questions were asked to encourage personalized responses. According to Creswell (2012), a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions allows respondents to express themselves fully. The interview guide has three parts: warm-up questions to build rapport, drawing activity based on Malchiodi's suggestion that visual data can be complemented with verbal material (Malchiodi, 2015), and six open-ended questions that provide crucial data. The questions were translated into Filipino for easier understanding and response by the children.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Themes were identified and categorized based on the data. The researcher counted the frequency of each category for each question. The categories were organized based on the most common answer. The researcher also used drawings from the participants to support the findings. Thematic analysis was conducted following the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Ethical Considerations

The parents of the participants were given complete information about the research. Consent forms were given to and signed by the parents, indicating their approval that their children would be part of the study. They were given the assurance that their information would be handled with the utmost confidentiality as part of the ethical considerations.

Results and Discussions

Reasons why six–to-eight-year-old children go to evacuation centers.

Table 1:
Children's Report on Reasons Why They Need to Go to the Evacuation Center during Typhoon

Response Category	6 years old	7 years old	8 years old	Total Responses (F)	%
Safety Reasons					
We will not be flooded / we will not die	**F = 5**	**F = 38**	**F = 52**	**50**	**20%**
We will not drown	**F = 2**	**F = 15**	**F = 30**	**47**	**19%**
We will not get wet / we can evacuate / we will not be in danger	**F = 3**	**F = 23**	–	**26**	**10%**
When there is a typhoon	**F = 2**	**F = 11**	**F = 21**	**34**	**14%**

Prevent Repeat of Bad Experiences					
What happened during Ondoy will not happen again	**F = 8**	–	–	**9**	**4%**

The responses of children were categorized into two: Safety Reasons and Prevention of Bad Experiences.

Ackerman (2004) stated that at this stage, children can determine what will happen when a situation arises or its cause and effect. The children's responses on the reasons why they go to the evacuation centers validated NDRRMP 2020-2030's (2020) statement that evacuation centers are the primary choice for the temporary provision of protection and assistance to displaced populations during floods. In Table 1, the respondents understood that their lives would be in danger if the water level rose. They were receptive to the message that going to the evacuation center would keep them safe and prevent a recurrence of negative experiences.

Environmental signs and emotional prompts that signal six-to-eight-year-old children when to go to the evacuation center.

Table 2

Children's report on environmental signs and social prompts that tell when families need to go to the evacuation center.

Response Category	**6 years old (F, %)**	**7 years old (F, %)**	**8 years old (F, %)**	**Total Responses (F)**
Environmental Signs				
The rain is strong	10 (90.91%)	12 (92.30%)	8 (50%)	30
The rain won't stop	–	1 (9.69%)	4 (25%)	5
Social Prompts				
Mother says so	1 (9.09%)	–	1 (6.25%)	2
Announced on television	–	–	1 (6.25%)	1
Alarm rings	–	–	1 (6.25%)	1
Barangay Captain gives the signal	–	–	1 (6.25%)	1

The children's responses were categorized as follows: environmental signs and social prompts. The environmental signs are the strong typhoon and continuous rain that signal the families to go to the evacuation center. Social prompts are signals from the people who motion the families to go to the evacuation center.

Children's responses to storms or floods are influenced by information from parents, media, or authorities. They learn from their parents and imitate their views on safety (Green & Hill, 2005). They usually go to evacuation centers when heavy rain is observed or when prompted by others, showing their ability to recognize signs of danger.

Children's Experiences in the Evacuation Center

Table 3

Children's Report on their Experiences in the Evacuation Center

Response Category	**6 years old (F, %)**	**7 years old (F, %)**	**8 years old (F, %)**	**Total Responses (F)**
Environment – Sound				
Noisy	5 (10.8%)	6 (13.6%)	5 (13.1%)	16
People with food started to arrive	2 (4.35%)	2 (4.55%)	2 (5.26%)	6
Children are crying	1 (2.17%)	1 (2.27%)	–	2
Environment – Sight				
Crowded / naughty children	4 (8.70%)	4 (9.09%)	3 (7.89%)	11
Wet classrooms	2 (4.35%)	–	–	2
Children are fighting	–	1 (2.27%)	–	1
Dirty classrooms	1 (2.17%)	–	–	1
Many rats	–	1 (2.27%)	–	1
Environment – Feel				
Cold	4 (8.70%)	1 (2.27%)	1 (2.63%)	6
Environment – Smell				
Foul-smelling washrooms	–	–	1 (2.63%)	1
Environment – Space				
Space is too small	1 (2.17%)	2 (4.55%)	–	3
Biophysical				
Eating / sleeping on the floor	2 (4.35%)	4 (9.09%)	1 (2.63%)	7
Hungry	–	1 (2.27%)	1 (2.63%)	2

Watching television	1 (2.17%)	1 (2.27%)	–	2
Tired	–	–	1 (2.63%)	1
Family-related Experiences – Role of Parents				
Parents caring for children	1 (2.17%)	2 (4.55%)	2 (5.26%)	5
Lining up for relief goods	1 (2.17%)	1 (2.27%)	2 (5.26%)	4
Mothers cleaning	2 (4.35%)	–	–	2
Parents cooking	–	1 (2.27%)	1 (2.63%)	2
Fixing things	1 (2.17%)	–	–	1
Family-related Experiences – Mother-Father Relationship				
Not around	–	1 (2.27%)	1 (2.63%)	2
Burdened by problems	–	–	1 (2.63%)	1
Fighting	–	–	1 (2.63%)	1
Interrelationships				
Mothers/neighbors fighting	–	1 (2.27%)	2 (5.26%)	3
Mothers sharing stories	1 (2.17%)	–	–	1
Social Activities – Presence of Playmates				
Playing	9 (19.57%)	7 (15.9%)	7 (18.4%)	23
Writing on the blackboard	–	2 (4.55%)	–	2
I am with my friends	1 (2.17%)	–	–	1
Social Activities – Lack of Playmates				

Not allowed to play	–	–	2 (5.26%)	2
No playmates	–	–	1 (2.63%)	1
Rules Imposed by Parents				
Spanked when naughty	2 (2.17%)	3 (6.82%)	–	5
Told to sleep	–	–	1 (2.63%)	1
Not allowed to go out	–	1 (2.27%)	–	1

In the bio-physical category, the children described how they felt or what they were doing during their stay in the evacuation center. For the family-related experiences category, the responses were divided into three sub-categories: role of parents, mother-father relationship, and interrelationship. Under the role of parents, the children describe what their parents do while they are inside the evacuation center. The mother-father relationship describes how children observe their parents react to the circumstances inside the evacuation center. Under the sub-category of interrelationships, the children described the relationship between neighbors.

The social experiences describe the activities or play experiences the children engaged in during their stay inside the evacuation center. The rules imposed by the parent's category describe the rules that the children must follow while inside the evacuation center.

The children's detailed account of what happened to them and other people around them is made stronger by Lloyd-Smith and Tarr's (2012) statement that children have something to tell, which is only available through their voices. It is through social interaction that they learn and cultivate their ways of thinking and understanding based on the avenues that society has given them, and their mindset is fashioned by the culture where they live (Cole & Gajdamaschko, 2007; Holzman, 2008, as cited in Santrock, 2009).

The categories are described in the succeeding parts of this discussion. Their drawings supplemented every category that appeared among six-to-eight-year-old respondents

1. *Environment*

   In the theme "Environment," the children recounted their experiences using their senses. The respondents experienced chaos when they were in the evacuation center due to the presence of many families in one classroom. Most children reported that the evacuation center was "noisy" because the classroom was crowded with many children playing inside. The children described the space as "too small." This confirms the statement of Lozada (2013) in his article that, typically, 12 families or about 55 people crowd in a 7 x 7-meter classroom. The respondents also recalled that the place has foul-smelling comfort rooms lacking sufficient water since the

school has only one comfort room for every floor shared by many families. The respondents also described how cold it felt that they had to wear jackets to feel warm.

a. Biophysical Experience
In the category of bio-physical experiences, the children reported what they were doing and how their bodies felt during their stay in the evacuation centers. Most of the respondents recounted that they were either "eating" the food they brought or the relief goods they received from donors. "Sleeping on the floor" was also one of the respondents' experiences. They recounted that they "slept on the floors with boxes and blankets as their beds." Some respondents shared that they "watched television" inside the evacuation center. The families were allowed to use the television owned by the school by paying Php350.00 a day to amuse themselves and distract them from the negative situations that are presently occurring.

Some of the respondents narrated how their bodies felt during their stay in the evacuation center. Few respondents felt hungry since they could not bring enough food for their stay, and they had to line up for relief before they could eat.

It is also worthwhile to note that one eight-year-old respondent recalled that she was always "tired" before they went to the evacuation center since her parents always asked her to take care of the younger siblings or go to the nearest store to buy food while their parents prepared their things. The respondent felt that as the eldest of the siblings, she was given more tasks to accomplish

b. Family-related Experiences
Several responses of the children were categorized as family-related experiences. These experiences were grouped as follows:

1. Role of Parents Under this category, the respondents described what the parents were doing inside the evacuation center. Mostly, parents were busy taking care of their children. The mothers stayed close to their children to ensure their safety and protection. The Gabriela Party List group, a non-government organization that upholds violence against women and children, cited rape and sexual cases in evacuation centers where many women and girls were victimized (Salaverria, 2013). In the crowded condition of evacuation centers, women and children become vulnerable to rape, trafficking, prostitution, and other forms of exploitation.

2. Mother-Father Relationship - Under this category, the children described how their parents felt and reacted to their circumstances. An eight-year-old respondent mentioned that their parents were "burdened by problems" about their plight as "their parents fought." The children's statements regarding their parents' reactions indicated that they were aware of the dilemmas their parents were undergoing. Some respondents stated that their fathers were not in the evacuation center because they had to go back to their houses and watch for their belongings. If both parents had to leave, they left their children behind under the care of the older siblings for safety

3. Interrelationship - This category involves the relationship of neighbors with one another. "The neighbors were arguing" was the

experience of some of the respondents. The children narrated that neighbors argue because of the lack of space in the classroom. Moreover, when they queue for relief goods, stress and anxiety ar the typical reactions of people after a disastrous event. Congestion in the classrooms exacerbates anxiety and distress, leading to neighbors fighting with one another (CDC, 2017).

4. Social Activities In this category, the respondents gave an account of their activities while they were in the evacuation center. "Playing" was the response that prevailed as the highest among all the six-to-eight-year-old respondents.

5. Rules Imposed by Parents Parents impose rules for their children to follow while inside the evacuation centers. Children understand that they need to abide by their parents' rules to avoid being chastised. "I get spanked when I disobey" was the typical response of the respondents. They were disciplined if they were disobedient.

Children's Feelings in the Evacuation Center

Table 4

Children's Report on their Feelings in the Evacuation Center

Response Category	**6 years old (F, %)**	**7 years old (F, %)**	**8 years old (F, %)**	**Total Responses (F)**
Afraid – Seen Events				
Flooded	2 (8.69%)	1 (4.35%)	–	3
Storm	2 (8.69%)	–	–	2
Afraid – Unseen Events				
Flood might rise	1 (4.35%)	4 (17.39%)	3 (10.34%)	8
We might die	3 (13.0%)	2 (8.68%)	1 (3.45%)	6
We might drown	2 (8.69%)	3 (13.0%)	1 (3.45%)	6
We won't be able to return	–	–	2 (6.89%)	2
Afraid – Repeat of Bad Experience				
Things are wet again	1 (4.35%)	–	–	1
Leave the house	1 (4.35%)	1 (4.35%)	–	2
House will stink	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
"Ondoy" will happen again	1 (4.35%)	–	–	1
Hungry	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Line up for relief goods	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Retelling of Ondoy stories	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Afraid – Separation Anxiety				
Father is left at home	–	2 (8.69%)	1 (3.45%)	3

Parents leave us with older sister	2 (8.69%)	–	1 (3.45%)	3
Afraid parents will not be seen again	1 (4.35%)	–	–	1
Happy – Safety				
Out of danger	–	1 (4.35%)	1 (3.45%)	2
Happy – Presence of Playmates				
Many playmates	1 (4.35%)	–	–	1
Happy – Togetherness of Family				
I am with my family	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Sad – Seen Events				
It is flooded outside	1 (4.35%)	1 (4.35%)	2 (6.89%)	4
There is a typhoon	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
No classes	–	1 (4.35%)	–	1
Sad – Absence of Friends/Playmates				
No playmates	–	2 (8.69%)	–	2
Missing their friends	1 (4.35%)	–	1 (3.45%)	2
No friends	–	1 (4.35%)	–	1
Sad – Family-related Issues				
Mother is sad	–	1 (4.35%)	1 (3.45%)	2
Sad – Repeat of Bad Experience				
Things are wet again	1 (4.35%)	–	–	1
Going to evacuation center	–	1 (4.35%)	–	1
Sad – Rules Imposed by Parents				
Spanked when naughty	1 (4.35%)	1 (4.35%)	1 (3.45%)	3
Not allowed to play	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Pity				
Pity for parents	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Pity for other children	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Having a Difficult Time				
Always asked to do something	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Frustrated				
Discipline issues / always scolded	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1
Bad Experience				
Hand stepped on when sleeping	–	1 (4.35%)	–	1
Hungry				
Food was not enough	–	–	1 (3.45%)	1

Seven categories were generated from the respondents' answers. Varied responses of children show that children start to display an increasing awareness of their own and others' emotions. This is also validated by Ackermann (2004) when she stated that it is during these ages when children understand and empathize with others.

The categories derived from the respondents' answers are as follows:

1. Afraid

   This category was grouped into four. The respondents felt that they were afraid because of the events. Seen events are the tangible occurrences that children witness, either in their surroundings or on television. The events, such as heavy rains and rising floods, evoked a feeling of fear among the respondents. Aside from this, the respondents were also afraid of unseen events or the circumstances that they imagined. A high percentage of the respondents' statements show that dying made them feel scared because they thought they would not be able to go back to their houses and the water would rise and eventually drown them. Several respondents also felt afraid because they presumed that there would be a repeat of the bad experiences that occurred during the typhoons. Bad experiences such as "our house will stink" and "our things are wet again" also gave them fear. A six-year-old respondent narrated that she was afraid because her parents told her numerous times of their experiences during Typhoon Ketsana (locally known as Typhoon Ondoy) in 2009, where the flood displaced thousands of families, causing billions of damages and many fatalities. The child feared that the same event would happen once again. Separation anxiety was also one of the reasons the respondents felt afraid

   The children's parents had to leave them behind to check on their houses, and they were left in the care of their older siblings. Mostly, the fathers had to stay at home and protect the house from theft. They were afraid that their fathers would not be able to return to the evacuation center.

2. Happy

   Safety was the primary reason that made the children feel happy despite their circumstances. The thought that they were out of harm's way and inside the safety of the evacuation center brought them happiness. The presence of playmates and friends and the togetherness of the family were also the children's responses that gave them a sense of happiness and alleviated their fears.

3. Sad

   This category, caused by many factors, explains why the respondents were sad during their stay in the evacuation center.

   "It is flooded outside" was the response that generated the highest score among the respondents. Seen events such as floods and storms induce a feeling of sadness among the respondents.

   The absence of playmates and friends also evoked sadness among the respondents. "I miss my friends," "I do not have any playmates," and "I do not have any friends" were the responses that demonstrated how important friends and playmates were to them at this time. Despite being in a room full of children, the children preferred to play with their group of friends. Family-related experiences also made most of the respondents feel sad because they were aware of the emotions of their parents. The response "Mother is sad" shows how sensitive they were to what their parents were feeling. They have an increased awareness of their feelings as well as others.

   A repeat of bad experiences was also the reason that made some of the respondents feel sad. The thought of their things becoming wet again and

the disturbance of going to the evacuation center evokes sadness among the respondents.

Several respondents narrated that they were sad because of the rules that their parents imposed on them while they were inside the evacuation center. When rules were broken, they were scolded or spanked.

4. Pity
   "I feel pity for mommy and daddy" and "I feel pity for the other children" were also the responses of the eight-year-old respondents. Children at this age are responsive to other people's difficulties.

5. Having a difficult time
   It was worth noting that one eight-year-old respondent answered: "having a difficult time" when asked this question. As the eldest of the siblings, she was tasked to take care of them and buy food from the store.

6. Frustrated
   "I feel frustrated because I was always scolded" was the experience of one eight-year-old respondent. One eight-year-old respondent mentioned that she felt frustrated because her hand was always stepped on while sleeping.

7. Hungry
   An eight-year-old respondent shared his hunger experience while inside the evacuation center. This was because the food they brought was insufficient to sustain them for many days.

Children's recommendations during their stay in the evacuation center

Table 5
Children's Report on their Recommendations in the Evacuation Center

The children provided recommendations to improve their experience in evacuation centers during floods.

Response Category	**6 years old (F, %)**	**7 years old (F, %)**	**8 years old (F, %)**	**Total Responses (F)**
Material				
Toys	6 (23.07%)	7 (36.84%)	5 (23.81%)	18
Much food	2 (7.69%)	2 (10.52%)	6 (28.57%)	10
Bed	3 (11.54%)	2 (10.52%)	–	5
Books	1 (3.85%)	2 (10.52%)	–	3
TV	1 (3.85%)	–	1 (4.77%)	2
Curtain	–	1 (5.26%)	–	1
Social Relationships				
My family	7 (26.92%)	2 (10.52%)	4 (19.05%)	13
My friends and playmates	5 (19.23%)	3 (15.78%)	4 (19.04%)	12
None	1 (3.85%)	–	–	1

The children provided recommendations to improve their experience in evacuation centers during floods.

1. Material
   Most respondents answered "toys" as their best recommendation to make their stay in the evacuation center happy and as a means of coping with the negative feelings brought about by the disaster.

   Another response that garnered a high percentage was "much food." Families tend to line up for relief goods when they go to evacuation centers unprepared or with little food. The idea of having plenty of food to eat without them lining up for relief goods would make them happy during their stay. A "bed" was also one of the respondents' answers that received a high score. According to an article written by Lozada (2013), evacuees transform the classroom into makeshift bedrooms with flattened boxes covered with blankets as their mats. The researcher also deemed it worthy of mentioning that one seven-year-old female respondent answered "curtain" as her recommendation since she was concerned with their family's privacy. Reports on rape cases are not uncommon in the evacuation areas where many women and girls were victimized (Umil, 2013).

2. Social Relationships
   The responses that generated high scores for a happy stay, even during a difficult time in the evacuation center, were "family" and "friends." When the children are with them, they will feel happy no matter what circumstances or place they are in. However, some respondents prefer not to play with other children in the evacuation center. They would rather play with their group of friends, play alone, or not at all.

   Children in evacuation centers come up with ideas to make their stay more comfortable and happier during difficult times. These recommendations can help them feel better and more at ease the next time they need to seek refuge in the evacuation center in the event of a disastrous flood.

   It can be gleaned from the participants' responses on their experiences, feelings, and expectations in the evacuation center that there are power dynamics among the government, local authorities, and families in and out of the evacuation center. The decision of the government and local authorities in choosing public schools as locations for evacuation centers has a profound effect on the safety and well-being of children since public schools may be deemed safe during disasters but not comfortable for families. Coordination and allocation of resources among the local agencies affect the availability of food since, as shared by the participants, the relief goods were not enough to sustain them during their stay in the evacuation center. We could also see the power dynamics at play within the families. Mothers oversee the well-being of their families and discipline their children; fathers make sure that their properties are safe, even at the expense of their safety, and older siblings take care of their younger siblings. The family structure can be strained or strengthened in the evacuation center. Children's observation of how their parents negatively handle the problem causes them to feel unhappy. Moreover, children's well-being was affected by separation from their families, overcrowding, and lack of privacy.

   The results also reflect the social interconnection in the evacuation center. From the responses of the participants, it is understood that positive interaction with other families and children can mitigate stress and anxiety.

On the other hand, negative interaction with other families and other children can add to the stress that the children are already feeling. The situation in the evacuation shows the economic disparity in families. Economically disadvantaged families may need more resources to make their stay comfortable. Most of the children revealed that they were not prepared to bring food to last their entire stay in the evacuation center and the relief goods that they lined up for were not enough to appease their hunger during their stay. Finally, it can be gathered that political accountability during times of natural disasters is at work since policies are set in place to ensure that all families are in the evacuation center and protected from harm brought forth by the flood.

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Conclusion

Children's Experiences in the Evacuation Center

Six-to-eight-year respondents go and seek refuge in an evacuation center in times of a disastrous flood. They are fully aware that being in the evacuation center would save them from being flooded, drowning, or dying.

The respondents are mindful that heavy rains or typhoons prompt them to go to the evacuation center. Though the general answers of the respondents were environmental signs such as "when the rain is heavy" and "when there is a strong storm," some respondents were responsive to the social prompts given by their parents, media, or the authorities.

The diverse responses of children's experiences in the evacuation center were categorized into five themes. Their responses were drawn from their experiences in the environment, bio-physical experiences, social activities, family-related experiences, and rules imposed by parents.

Children's Feelings in the Evacuation Center

Numerous experiences evoked feelings that children had gone through during their stay in the evacuation center. These were categorized into seven themes.

While the respondents were in the evacuation center, the children felt afraid, happy, sad, pity, having a difficult time, frustrated, and hungry.

Children's Recommendations in the Evacuation Center

From the experiences of six-to-eight-year-old respondents, their recommendations for a happy stay in the evacuation center were based on material things such as toys, lots of food, a curtain for privacy, and a bed to sleep on. Other respondents' recommendations included social relationships such as their family, their group of playmates, and friends. They believe that the presence of these would alleviate their fears while they stay in the evacuation center.

Parents should acknowledge and understand that their children's feelings are real and must be addressed by the parents themselves. By understanding the results of this study, the parents can provide support to their children who experience difficulties during their stay in evacuation centers.

These results from this study can be helpful to teachers and administrators by embedding flood awareness and disaster preparedness in their curriculum, especially in those places frequently ravaged by floods. Classroom activities can help children overcome their hardships during the disaster. The health and social services sectors can propose programs for appropriate support, advice, and intervention to address children's negative feelings during their stay in evacuation centers.

The garnered data is also helpful in making policies regarding disaster preparedness. The policy will include the youngest sector of society and consider children's feelings while in the evacuation center. The results of this study can be used as a basis for program development for children zero to eight years of age. Teachers and other volunteers who are aware of the results of this study can be more effective at evacuation centers.

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