

Untold Stories of the Bereaved Relatives of Victims by Covid-19 Virus in Echague, Isabela, Philippines

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Abstract: *Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the Philippines, grieving practices included a usual 9 to 10 days wake at home where all relatives and friends of the dead visits the wake. In some areas of the Philippines, wake includes feasting, gambling, partying, prayer service and social gathering. In their culture, the wake for the dead seems like an invitation to gather and remember all their memories together. When the pandemic was declared, the Philippine government prohibited social gatherings in an effort to prevent transmission of the virus in the community. One policy that arose includes an immediate burying of a person if that person died with COVID virus. Another option was to cremate the person if the family wishes to hold a wake for up to 5 days. This was a significant change in the culture of grieving and bereavement in the Philippine community. In this study the researchers wish to understand what are the untold stories by the grieving family with a relative who died with COVID 19. The study used Qualitative-Descriptive and Thematic Analysis to be able to describe the phenomena. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents. The researchers selected a person with a member who died from COVID-19 in Echague, Isabela, to be the respondents of this study. The researchers conducted an interview with the respondents until data saturation was reached. Questions included their experiences upon diagnosis of COVID and upon Death of the relative. A total of five respondents were interviewed. Results of the study indicated that most participants agreed that having a Covid-19 sufferer in their family increased their worries about contracting the disease and infecting other family members, as well as their fixation with getting sick. Indeed, because of the prevalence of Covid-19, having a patient has caused stress and anxiety in the life of every family member. Many families were unable to visit the patients and say their final goodbyes due to the circumstances that emerged after the deaths of COVID-19 patients. The families were upset with it because they believed they had given the dead relatives an incomplete farewell. The study's findings indicate that the COVID-19 victims' kin suffered a variety of difficulties, including doubts and worries and rejection. The patients' challenges lasted even after they passed away, and incomplete goodbye to the deceased person, lonely funeral, dispute during the interment procedure, and the deaths unbelievable reality made them worse.*

Keywords: COVID-19; Lived experiences; incomplete goodbyes; untold stories

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