

# The Lived Experiences of Working Professionals Residing in Slum Areas

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## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## ABSTRACT

This study delves into the lived experiences of working professionals dwelling in slum areas within Taguig City and Pasig City, Philippines. Employing a qualitative phenomenological research design, the study utilizes semi-structured interviews, observations, and audio materials to garner profound insights from 7 participants. Thematic analysis reveals that participants articulate their life experiences through financial expectations, community cohesion, and safety concerns, showcasing adaptive resilience, emotional attachment, aspirational determination, and a positive outlook amidst challenges. The decision to remain in slum areas is influenced by strong community bonds, emotional connections, and practical considerations, despite facing various challenges like safety issues, health concerns, and poor sleep quality due to noise pollution. The study underscores the complex nature of life in slum areas, advocating for improved living conditions, addressing inadequate professional salaries, and encouraging a broader outlook beyond emotional attachments to enhance well-being. This research lays a foundation for future programs aimed at enhancing housing conditions, fostering economic growth, and positively impacting the well-being of professionals in such environments.

**Keywords:** *lived experiences, Quality of Life, slum area, slum dwellers, working professionals*

## 1. Introduction

Professionals, defined as individuals who earn through specialized tasks or activities, typically pursue extensive education and training to excel in their careers. Professionalism, as identified by the U.S. Department of Labor, is characterized by exhibiting responsibility, integrity, accountability, and excellence, transcending mere attire or outward appearances. This professionalism is not only a marker of one's education and behavior in business settings but also influences personal lives, including choices about residence. While professionals are often expected to live in certain types of housing that reflect their social and economic status, the reality can be starkly different. The rapid urbanization and inadequate infrastructure in large cities have led to the proliferation of slums and informal settlements, affecting professionals and non-professionals alike. Living in these conditions presents numerous challenges, including but not limited to, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and poor health outcomes, as highlighted by various studies including those by Ajlouni (2014) and UN-Habitat (2021).

Despite achieving professional status and the capacity for better living conditions, many individuals continue to reside in informal settlements, facing environmental factors that adversely affect their life experiences, well-being, and quality of life. This paradox raises questions about the lived experiences of professionals in slum areas, particularly in the context of Taguig City and Pasig City in the Philippines, where slum dwellings are prevalent despite the presence of a significant number of working professionals.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of working professionals residing in the slum areas of Taguig City and Pasig City. It aims to understand the reasons behind their choice

to stay in informal settlements despite having the means to move to better living conditions, and how the environmental factors of living in slums impact their perceptions, well-being, and quality of life.

Research Objectives:

1. To determine the reasons why working professionals choose to remain in slum areas despite their capacity to relocate.
2. To assess the impact of slum living conditions on the well-being and quality of life of these professionals.
3. To explore how environmental factors in slums affect the life experiences and perceptions of working professionals.

By focusing on the specific locales of Taguig City and Pasig City, this study seeks to fill the gaps left by previous research, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding professionals living in deprived areas. The findings may offer insights for policymakers, urban planners, and social workers to address the challenges faced by residents of slum areas, potentially guiding interventions aimed at improving their living conditions and overall well-being.

This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive investigation into the dynamics of professional life amidst the adversities of slum living, highlighting the study's contribution to the broader discourse on urban poverty, professional identity, and the quest for a better quality of life in the context of developing countries like the Philippines.

## **2. Methods**

The researchers employed a qualitative research method to explore the lived experiences of working professionals in slum areas. Specifically, a phenomenological research design was utilized to delve into the essence of participants' experiences and perceptions. Phenomenology seeks to describe and interpret the common meaning of lived experiences shared by individuals, offering insights into their subjective realities (Creswell, 2013). By employing this approach, the researchers aimed to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, reasons for residing in slum areas, and their overall quality of life. The qualitative method facilitated the exploration of complex phenomena and allowed for an in-depth examination of participants' perspectives (Moser & Korstjens, 2017; Teherani, 2015).

### *2.1 Respondents and Sampling*

The study targeted working professionals residing in slum areas within Taguig City and Pasig City, Philippines. The researchers utilized purposive sampling to intentionally select participants based on specific pre-determined criteria, such as being professionals, residing in designated slum areas, and holding a 4-year-degree. This method allowed for the selection of individuals particularly relevant to the study. Additionally, snowball sampling was employed to leverage social connections and networks among selected participants to identify additional qualified individuals, thus enhancing the sample size. Snowball sampling, also known as chain referral sampling, is particularly effective in qualitative research for accessing populations that may be challenging to locate. This approach ensured the inclusion of individuals with rare and specific traits that are difficult to find (Creswell, 2013; Parker & Scott, 2019; Johnson, 2014).

### *2.2 Research Instruments*

The research instruments utilized in the study included a semi-structured interview guide, observations, and audio materials. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the collection of detailed information and insights from participants regarding their experiences, beliefs, and perceptions. Open-ended questions facilitated a comprehensive exploration of participants' viewpoints, emotions, and ideas, while also ensuring flexibility in responses. Observations complemented the interview process by providing insights into participants' behaviors and interactions within their environments. Additionally, audio materials, such as voice recordings, were utilized to accurately capture participants' responses and facilitate data analysis. The interview questions were validated by psychology experts to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness in eliciting relevant information from participants (Busetto, 2020).

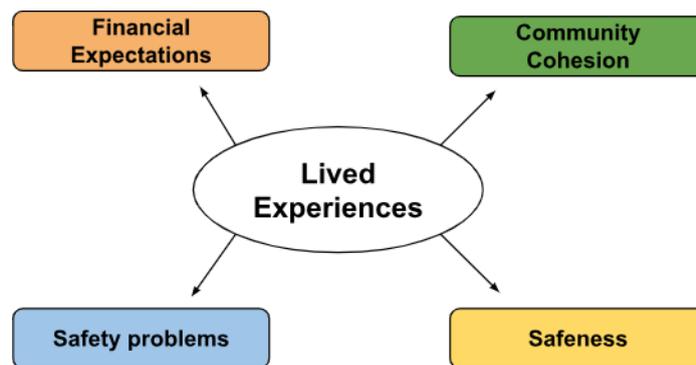
### 2.3 Data Gathering

The researchers obtained approval from the barangay captain to conduct the study within the targeted slum areas. Data gathering involved face-to-face interactions with participants, during which informed consent was obtained. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and audio recordings were utilized to collect data, with interview questions validated by psychology experts. The researchers employed Sikolohiyang Pilipino techniques, such as asking open-ended questions and engaging in storytelling, to facilitate communication and rapport-building with participants (Yacat, 2013).

### Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was employed to analyze the collected data, focusing on identifying common themes and patterns within participants' narratives. This method involved several phases, including familiarization with the data, identification of codes and themes, and refinement of themes through careful analysis and documentation. Thematic Analysis allowed for the systematic exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the research phenomena (Caulfield, 2022).

## 3. Results



*Figure 1: Description of the lived experiences of the participants*

The following themes in figure 1 were drawn to answer the research objective: How do the participants describe their life experiences living in the slum area?

### Financial expectations

There is a prevalent belief that obtaining higher education will automatically lead to a prosperous life. This conviction is easily captured by the notion that once you have acquired an education, your path to a good life is seemingly guaranteed.

*"Once na hindi kayo nakapagtapos hanggang diyan na lang kayo. Hindi na kayo aangat."*

*-Participant 2*

This perspective implies that those who haven't completed their education might be confined to a certain level of life, suggesting a perceived limitation on upward mobility. Education played a crucial role, especially for individuals who considered it essential for attaining their career objectives (Kabiru et al., 2013).

However, the reality faced by professionals residing in slum areas deviates from these conventional expectations. Their experiences challenge the simplistic assumption that securing employment immediately post-education equates to a secure and prosperous life.

*"Dati akala natin kapag magkawork na tayo ok na pero hindi, sa totoo lang reality talaga hindi naman sya talaga."*

*"ako yung nangungutang hahaha akala ko kasi pag magkakawork na ok na eh pero hindi fake news"*

*"oo nakakatulong sa family pero parang yung sahod kasi eh hindi enough, stable naman yung job mo ok naman feeling mo professional kana pero yung ano kasi eh salary hindi talaga."*

*-Participant 7*

This candid acknowledgment signifies a significant departure from the earlier belief. It unveils a deeper understanding that the professional journey extends beyond mere employment. The complexity of the real world, particularly evident in slum areas, reveals that a job alone doesn't guarantee the anticipated improvement in living conditions.

### **Community cohesion**

Within their neighborhood, residents share a positive and interconnected relationship, fostering a sense of community that extends beyond mere familiarity. This close-knit bond is evident in the way they actively look out for each other.

*"Halos kilala ko na yung mga nandito, sila pa mismo yung nagpoprotekta sa mga tao na kilala din nila which is totoo yan. Kapag may sunog, emergency, itatakbo ka sa ospital. Sila din yung kumukuha ng sasakyan."*

*-Participant 2*

This statement unveils a profound sense of community, where residents not only know each other personally but also actively engage in protective measures for the well-being of their neighbors. Whether it be responding to emergencies, rushing someone to the hospital, or providing transportation, the mutual support system within the community is a testament to the strength of their positive relationships.

Moreover, the residents acknowledge and embrace the noise from social gatherings, such as videoke sessions, as a manifestation of "pakikisama" or companionship in Filipino culture.

*"Yung ingay, hindi mo maiiwasan na may nagbivideoke sa araw ng pahinga pero okay lang yun kasi minsan kailangan mo ring makisama."*

*-Participant 2*

This acceptance of occasional disruptions reflects a communal understanding that fostering relationships and harmony is integral to the fabric of their neighborhood. It underscores the Filipino value of "pakikisama," emphasizing the importance of companionship even in the midst of daily challenges. However, despite this camaraderie, some residents express concerns, particularly regarding the safety implications of new individuals entering their community.

*"About the others na lalo na yung sa iba na di namin kakilala, medyo mag-aalala ka kasi hindi mo na rin alam ang panahon ngayon lalo na may mga anak din akong naiwan dito."*

-Participant 2

The worry shows that people in the community think a lot about trust and safety. The mix of good relationships and safety concerns in the neighborhood helps us see how residents manage a tricky balance, showing how their community works in a complicated way. The social interactions within urban neighborhoods are heavily influenced by the physical characteristics of the environment. Consequently, designing neighborhoods with specific patterns can be undertaken to minimize disparities and foster a sense of belonging among residents (Marzbali, Abdullah, Razak, & Tilaki, 2014).

### **Safeness**

Some participants expressed confidence in the safety of their neighborhood, citing instances where they return home even in the late hours without encountering any concerning incidents, others reveal a more uncertain side to the notion of safety within their community.

*"Sa area namin na 'to safe kami kahit umuwi ng madaling araw walang instances ng mga nag-aaway."*

-Participant 6

This positive sentiment highlights a perception of security in the neighborhood, especially during late-night returns, with no reported instances of altercations or conflicts. It reflects a sense of assurance that the community remains peaceful even in the quiet hours of the night.

*"Sa safety naman, okay naman kasi marami naman nag-iikot dito na tanod eh."*

-Participant 5

The presence of Barangay tanod(s) in the neighborhood instilled a sense of security among the residents. Despite residing in slums, often perceived by many as areas prone to troubles, the diligent efforts of the Barangay officials in upholding peace and order provided a reassuring environment for the participants.

*"May pag kakaisa, kunyari may mga birthday parang halos lahat is nagsasama-sama para mag diwang, kapag may handaan sila pede kang makisama"*

-Participant 2

The statement of participant 2 expresses a sense of positive interaction within the neighborhood that turns into a feeling of safeness. Having special events and letting the people around their neighborhood to belong brought joy and unity in their lives which made living in slums bearable and provided comfort atmosphere within the neighborhood.

### **Safety problems**

Professionals residing in slums encountered various difficulties, including not only the challenges within their homes and communities but also the heightened vulnerability to natural disasters and man-made incidents like theft and robberies.

*“Safety siguro hindi 100% actually nanakawan na kami dito eh, ako 'yung cellphone ko nanakawan ako, natutulog ako.”*

*-Participant 7*

This firsthand account introduces a layer of uncertainty and vulnerability, challenging the notion that safety is not guaranteed. The reported incident of theft, where the participant's cellphone was stolen while they were asleep, underscores the reality that despite an overall sense of safety, there are instances of security breaches. Tabiti (2018), utilized security indicators such as security incidents, environmental health cases, and the number of commercial outfits to investigate the potential of slum upgrading in addressing urban security challenges.

*“Sa baha, kapag umuulan ng malakas nagwoworry kasi kapag bumaha dito umaabot hanggang bubong”.*

*-Participant 6*

The participants expressed deep concerns about the occurrence of flooding in their area, highlighting how serious their situation is. Their accounts revealed that the floodwaters rose to the extent of reaching their rooftops, indicating the potential danger and threat to their lives. In slums, the substandard buildings are particularly susceptible to flooding due to the lack of proper infrastructure and services. This exacerbates the challenges faced by the residents (Adegun, 2020).

*“may mga case na minsan may hold up-an jan mismo sa gilid namin”*

*-Participant 3*

The presence of robbery incidents in their area further compounds the concerns and sense of insecurity among the residents in their neighborhood. This additional factor intensifies the worries about personal safety and overall well-being within the community. Tabiti (2018) utilized security indicators such as security incidents, environmental health cases, and the number of commercial outfits to investigate the potential of slum upgrading in addressing urban security challenges.

*“Health syempre maraming halo-halo. Ayon, di pa rin safe sa health.- Siguro, ayon yung health and stress”.*

*-Participant 1*

The health of professionals residing in slums is a significant concern, they have expressed. They attribute this concern to the diverse range of individuals in their neighborhood, which can potentially contribute to health issues. Dealing with this situation adds to their stress levels. Individuals residing in slums face an elevated risk of health problems in comparison to those living in rural areas. Specifically, children living in slum communities are more susceptible to childhood illnesses and malnutrition when compared to their counterparts in other regions (Mberu, et al, 2016).

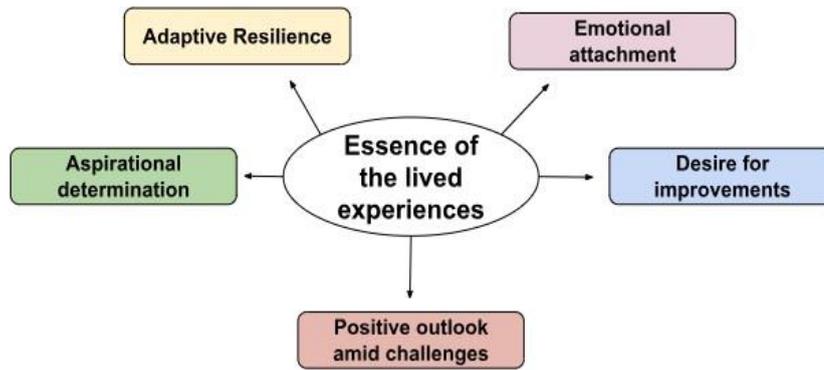


Figure 2: The essence of the participants' lived experiences

The following themes in Figure 3 were drawn to answer the research objective: How do the participants make sense of their life experiences in the slum area?

### Adaptive resilience

Adaptive resilience refers to the capacity to adjust to and rebound from challenging situations. This ability enables participants not only to cope with problems but also to thrive despite adversity. It is closely tied to their capability to navigate diverse challenges in living conditions.

These are some of the challenging situations the participants experienced and showcased the ability to be adaptive and resilient. As per the researchers' findings, they identified unforeseen events encountered by the participants and instead of being stuck in that situation, the participants developed the ability to adapt and become resilient.

*"nanakawan na kami dito eh, ako yung cellphone ko nanakawan ako, tinakpan namin yung bintana para hindi na maulit"*

-Participant 7

This statement describes the situation where the participant experienced an unfortunate event of theft in their neighborhood. Their response by covering the window demonstrates their ability to adapt to the situation and take steps to prevent further harm.

Living in a slum area comes with the constant worry of flooding, especially for those near the riverside. The folks here have learned to deal with this threat. When heavy rain comes, there's a concern that it might flood, and that's a big worry because the water can reach the rooftops.

*"Sa baha, kapag umuulan ng malakas nagwo-worry kasi kapag bumaha dito umaabot hanggang bubong. Noong bagyong Ondoy umabot 'yon hanggang diyan sa bubong."*

-Participant 6

The river nearby adds to the stress as it rises quickly, making it even more worrisome.

*"Yung ilog kasi mabilis tumaas kaya nakakaworry talaga."*

-Participant 6

The swift rise of the river is a constant concern as well, making residents always keep an eye out for potential dangers. Dealing with these floods isn't just about survival; it's a daily challenge that showcases the residents' strength and ability to adapt to the unpredictable nature of their surroundings.

*“kapag baha ayon masaya yun kasi kapag baha diba parang kahit binabaha na kayo masaya pa rin naman kayo, masaya yun kasi lalo na specially kapag may nagtutulungan then makikita mo kasi ganun yung pagtutulungan ng mga tao ganun”*

-Participant 7

And in times of natural disasters, the participant finds joy during the flood they experienced. This happiness seems to come from the shared experience of people coming together and helping each other during the flood. It highlights the positive side of community support and cooperation in challenging situations. Understanding the dynamic and adaptive nature of the overall system, particularly in the context of climate change and disaster risk, requires a comprehensive exploration of the interactions and feedback loops between the human condition and environmental conditions (Alcayna, T., 2015).

Participant's adaptive response to their environment were; being able to get along and build a strong relationship with their neighbors to prevent unnecessary arguments.

*“okay naman dito safe naman pakikisama lang talaga dapat meron kang sense of humor at magaling ka makisama oo”*

-Participant 4

The participant in the study demonstrates a charismatic personality that easily captures the interest of others, enabling them to form strong bonds and avoid conflicts more efficiently. Humor helps people cope by enabling them to emotionally remove themselves from a stressful situation. It has additionally been attributed to several favorable results, including well-being and resilience. As a result, the quality of life of the participant has significantly improved while residing in a slum area (Billig, M. 2018).

This is supported by the statement of participant 2 and participant 5 wherein the “pakikisama” is relevant to maintain good relationships within the community.

*“ayon nga sabi ko namn sa isang lugar o sa isang community kailangan mo lng makisama”*

-Participant 5

*“Yung ingay, hindi mo maiiwasan na may nagbivideoke sa araw ng pahinga pero okay lang yun kasi minsan kailangan mo ring makisama.”*

-Participant 2

This simplicity, however, unfolds within the unique context of their environment. The neighborhood emerges as a crucial factor influencing their adaptability, particularly among newcomers who initially take time to familiarize themselves with the surroundings and people. This initial adjustment period is essential for understanding the area and its residents. As expressed by one participant:

*“Pakikiramdaman mo. So, nagtagal naman after one year so, alam mo na 'yong mga kilos nila.”*

-Participant 1

This includes the physical surroundings and their impact on human behavior, as well as their effects on the well-being of individuals and other living organisms (Arianto, 2013).

### **Emotional attachment**

The central theme of this study revolves around the profound influence of evolving environments on individuals' personal experiences and emotions. Participants actively engage in reflective contemplation, delving into their past encounters and observing how these reflections are molded by the dynamic nature of their surroundings. This observation suggests a robust connection between the individuals in the study and the environments they inhabit. As one participant concisely expressed:

*“Kung may chance naman oo, gusto mo talagang umalis, gusto mo talagang pumunta sa mas ok na environment, although mas happy ka naman dito, masaya naman dito.”*

-Participant 7

The emotional attachment of the residents in the slum areas have in their homes, raises questions about the complex web of emotions, memories, and connections that individuals form with their immediate surroundings, contributing to a reluctance to leave. Understanding this emotional attachment becomes crucial in unraveling the deeper layers of why people in slum areas may resist the prospect of relocation, even when presented with the chance for a more favorable environment. When these two aspects of place attachment converge, they form a collective affective feeling towards the place of residence rooted in emotional and social dimensions (Samuel and Nisar, 2021).

### **Desire for improvements**

Residents in the slum area, actively yearn for improvements in their community, specifically addressing health and safety concerns. The proximity to the river introduces a heightened risk of mosquito-borne diseases, intensifying the collective desire for positive changes. Slums provide shelter and job proximity with social support, but their poor living conditions are closely tied to prevalent health issues. Common illnesses like diarrhoea, malaria, cholera, and respiratory diseases are widespread (Turley et al., 2013).

*“Iyon siguro yung macoconsider tapos sa health syempre maraming halo-halo. Ayon, di pa rin safe sa health.”*

- Participant 1

This statement not only sheds light on the diverse health challenges faced by residents but also emphasizes the need for comprehensive considerations and interventions to enhance the overall well-being of the community. The recognition of various health issues serves as a driving force for the shared aspiration for improvement.

Despite these challenges, residents remain resilient in their quest for improvement. To address safety concerns, some residents take proactive measures, advocating for additional security equipment like CCTV cameras to monitor and enhance the safety of their community. Slum upgrading involves improving the physical environment—water supply, sanitation, waste collection, electricity, drainage, road paving, and street lighting. It also includes strategies for better access to health, education, social services, increased income, and securing legal land rights (Turley et al., 2013).

*“Siguro, for the safety, siguro CCTV for the safety of the people here.”*

*-Participant 1*

This perspective not only reflects a proactive approach to safety but also signifies a tangible step toward desired improvements. The installation of CCTV cameras becomes a manifestation of the residents' collective effort to augment security within their community. The connection between these initiatives and the overarching desire for improvement underscores the residents' unwavering commitment to creating positive change in their living environment, despite the existing challenges.

Participant 6 revealed that the lack of government proximity is a challenge that affects the assistance leading to delays of support.

*“since malayo kami sa brgy mismo hindi kami naabot ng mga tulong. Kapag may mga emergency naman kapag need ng ambulance hindi kaagad nakakaresponde. Hindi ganon kabilis ang aksyon nila.”*

*-Participant 6*

This statement underscores the difficulties encountered by participants residing in slum distance from their local government or barangay centers. It shows the struggle in quickly obtaining help during emergencies. This suggests potential shortcomings in how well local government services can promptly and efficiently reach those in need, particularly in remote regions.

### **Aspirational determination**

Despite participants being seasoned professionals in the corporate world, there exists a general acceptance of the hard reality that simply entering the workforce does not guarantee success post-college.

*“Dati akala natin kapag magkawork na tayo, ok na pero hindi, sa totoo lang reality talaga hindi naman sya talaga.”*

*-Participant 7*

This candid observation underscores a shared realization among participants that the professional landscape is more complex than initially perceived. It challenges the conventional notion that securing a job equates to automatic success, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the multifaceted nature of real-world challenges.

*“We need to work hard for it, so kailangan mong mag-pursige sa buhay para maabot mo lahat ng gusto mo.”*

*-Participant 1*

The straightforward statement encapsulates the participants' perspective, highlighting the necessity of relentless pursuit in life to achieve all desired goals. It reflects the participants' commitment to continuous effort and dedication as key components in the ongoing journey toward personal and professional success. This aspirational determination serves as a driving force, connecting their acknowledgment of the challenging reality with a resilient commitment to surmount obstacles and achieve their envisioned aspirations.

The participants strongly endorse the value of education, considering it a pivotal step toward achieving their life goals. They view their degrees as tools that open doors to their dreams. However, there is a nuanced understanding that graduation alone is not the pinnacle of success; it signifies the commencement of a journey. To transform their aspirations into reality, hard work and dedication are deemed indispensable. Despite the challenges in urban slums, some youth exhibit high aspirations pursued through education, delinquency, residential mobility, and religion, while others adjust their aspirations due to limited opportunities. These findings emphasized positive youth agency and the imperative to enhance the quality of life in urban slums (Kalita, 2021).

### Positive outlook amid challenges

Maintaining a positive outlook amid challenges in the context of slum living signifies the resilience, gratitude, and contentment that participants draw from various aspects of their lives. These elements contribute to an overall positive perspective despite the adversities they face. Understanding these positive outlooks is crucial for developing holistic and community-centric interventions that recognize and build upon the strengths and resources within slum communities.

*“Dito? masaya! kahit normal na buhay lang. Kahit na 'di masyadong nakakaluwag.”*

*-Participant 1*

Participant 1 exemplifies a perspective that appreciates the simplicity of life in the slum and finds joy in it. Their subjective view centers on happiness derived from non-material aspects of life, indicating an appreciation for relationships, community bonds, and shared experiences that bring fulfillment even in the absence of material wealth. In the Philippines, a collectivist culture is prevalent, with people seeing themselves as integral members of a community. The group's well-being often takes precedence over individual interests. Filipinos express pride in their associations and share stories about their families, barangays, or towns. The core value of *kapwa*, or unity or fellowship, unites people despite diverse backgrounds. The collective aspect of Filipino society is connected to *kapwa*, and what benefits an individual benefits the group as a whole. Filipinos are known for their warmth, welcoming nature, and emotional nature. (Filipino Culture - Core Concepts, 2017).



*Figure 3: Reasons of the participants for staying in slum areas*

The following themes in figure 4 are drawn to answer the research objective: What are the reasons of the participants behind staying in the slum areas?

### Community Resilience and Belongingness

The participants' choice to live in the slum is greatly influenced by their sense of belongingness. The persistence of slum dwellers in their current living conditions can be attributed to several factors. The presence of mutual support and neighborly assistance during times of need significantly impacts their decision. This fosters a strong bond and a feeling of safety within the community.

*“Actually, ayokong malayo dito eh, since birth dito na ako, sanay na ako sa surroundings, kapag lumipat ka kasi panibagong pakikisama na naman eh, kaya ayon yung medyo pinag iisipan ko. Dito kasi sanay na yung tao sayo, kilala ka na nila kaya 50/50 pa ako.”*

- Participant 6

The participant's reluctance to relocate stems from the comfort they derive from being familiar with their surroundings. Starting anew in a different place can be overwhelming, and their strong connections within the current community make them hesitant to leave.

*“Living here, tuwing may mga occasion dito like may libreng ulam, nagtutulungan naman kayo. In case of emergency nandyan naman lang 'yong mga kapit-bahay mo. Ayon, one call away, ayon ang advantage ng mayro'n kang kapit-bahay.”*

-Participant 1

The unity and support shown by their neighbors, despite the challenges they face, contribute to their satisfaction with their present living situation. The shared experiences and sense of belonging within the community outweigh the difficulties of residing in a slum area.

Feeling a sense of belonging is a universal emotional experience that individuals generally find comforting. It shapes one's identity and establishes connections to specific places or groups. This sense of belonging contributes to a person's worth, and the lack of it can lead to insecurity, potentially causing adverse effects on both physical and psychological well-being (Allen 2019).

The close relationships and comfort they have established within the community are primary reasons for their continued residence. The prospect of adjusting to new individuals and environments, combined with the positive interactions among residents, makes them hesitant to depart. The strong sense of community and happiness their current environment provides, especially for their children, serves as a compelling reason to stay. The positive experiences and interactions within the neighborhood contribute to their contentment and overall satisfaction with their present living situation.

### **Accessibility and Convenience**

The participant values the convenience of having the accessibility of essential services, recreational options, and proximity within close reach, which contributes to their decision to stay in their current residence.

*“Sa current situation ko, naghihintay lang talaga ako na makatapos lahat yung mga bagets bago kami mag-momove out kasi hinahanap ko talaga ang province life” Kaya lang 'di rin kami makaalis dito which is because of my children nag-aaral sila near, dito sa lugar na 'to.”*

-Participant 2

The participants emphasized the importance of their children's education. They have chosen to remain in their current location to ensure that their children have easy access to their school or educational institutions. The proximity of their children's school is a crucial factor influencing

*their decision to stay in the slum area, as they prioritize their children's educational needs. They may have future intentions to transition to a different environment once those needs are met. This suggests that the participant is considering the long-term well-being and development of their children, and they believe that their current residence is suitable for their children's current stage of life.*

*“mas convenient sa kinung yung place ng trabaho kasi malapit lang, although minsan talaga matraffic din, mas okay sya kesa sa dati kong work sa ortigas kasi sobrang traffic don, so mas convenient to ngayon sa kinung”*

*-Participant 7*

The participant's decision to stay in their current residence was influenced by the proximity of their workplace, shorter commute time, and reduced traffic stress. Walkability, transit accessibility, and auto accessibility are important determinants of residential location decisions and influence the residential satisfaction (Yan, 2020). Living in a slum area may provide them with the advantage of being closer to their workplace, resulting in a shorter commute and less stress caused by traffic congestion. This convenience and reduced commuting time ultimately contribute to the participants' decision to continue residing in the slum area.

The participant's decision to live in a slum area is influenced by the convenience and accessibility of essential services, the proximity of their children's school, their children's needs or life stages, and the proximity of their workplace. These factors collectively contribute to their choice to stay in their current residence.

### **Familial Bonds**

*“ito kasi dati pa yung sila lola dito na talaga sila nakatira so dito na rin nagpatayo sila mama ng bahay para malapit. Ngayon wala patay na yung parents ni mama.”*

*-Participant 3*

Family recognition is rooted in a distinct understanding of identity, emphasizing a strong emotional connection that makes it challenging to separate oneself from others. This recognition operates on a subconscious level, with family members shaping each other's self-identities before fully comprehending the extent of their involvement (Ciavatta, 2014). The emotional bond and close connection with family often influence people to reside where their family lives. In a specific case, a participant's choice to live in a slum is influenced by their mother's deliberate decision to be near other family members, highlighting a strong desire for familial support. This intentional decision weaves a resilient fabric of interconnected lives, fostering communal strength and mutual assistance in navigating the challenges of their economically disadvantaged environment.

Despite the hardships, the participant's familial bonds anchored them in the slum. However, a hopeful note emerges as they express a genuine desire to relocate if given the opportunity, demonstrating an openness to change and a pursuit of better prospects beyond their current circumstances. In essence, the participant's dwelling in the slum is deeply tied to familial connections and historical choices, but the expressed aspiration for relocation indicates an acknowledgment of alternative possibilities and a commitment to a brighter future.

### **Rootedness**

Rootedness sheds light on the profound emotional ties that participants in the study have with their current residence in the slum area. The researchers found that the importance of family connections, memories, and the emotional anchors that make the slum more than just a physical

space. In particular, the role of deceased parents emerges as a significant factor influencing the participant's decision to stay in the slum despite its challenges.

*“Madami kasi yung hirap sa sarap diba syempre dito rin namatay yung mother at father ko kaya yung lungkot at saya maaalala mo parin.”*

*-Participant 4*

For some participants, their slum residence may be intricately linked to memories of their parents, who may have lived there, worked hard to provide for the family, or even passed away in the same space. The emotional resonance of these memories creates a sense of continuity and a strong connection to the place, turning the slum into more than just a dwelling but a repository of cherished family history. Participant 4 particularly displayed an expression of sentiment toward the hardships they faced growing up living in that area for 34 years along with the lingering memories of his late parents that makes him sad for being reminded.

*“Wala na kasi akong pamilya eh, (tumatawa). Ano, dalawa na lang kami nun oh. Kamamatay lang po kasi...”*

*-Participant 1*

The recent loss of a loved one, especially a parent, intensifies these emotions. The bittersweet nature of memories, which may include both joyful and challenging experiences shared with the deceased, becomes a powerful motivator for the participant to maintain their residence in the slum. The physical space becomes a tangible representation of the participant's familial history and a way to keep the memory of their loved ones alive.

The decision to stay in the slum, despite potential hardships, may be seen as an act of preserving a sense of continuity and honoring the legacy of their parents. The emotional ties to the residence may outweigh practical considerations, such as the desire for improved living conditions or safety. Participants may express a reluctance to sever these emotional connections, viewing the slum not only as a place of residence but as a significant part of their identity and personal history. The strong emotional bond people have with a particular place is known as place attachment. It includes both the more concrete features, like the goods and services the establishment provides, and the more abstract ones, like the symbolic and affective connections people have with it. Place attachment is a complex and deep bond with specific locations (Williams, Stewart, & Kruger, 2013)

The participants' decision to stay in their community, despite facing challenging conditions, is significantly influenced by their upbringing in Filipino collectivist culture. The values instilled in these individuals lead them to prioritize the familiarity of their existing community over practical considerations, such as pursuing improved living conditions or enhanced safety. They leverage the accessibility and convenience of their current residence to work towards goals of supporting their families and achieving financial stability. Slums significantly impact the mental health and well-being of professionals due to factors like poor environment such as noise pollution, which can affect both physical and psychological health. A person's ability to handle difficulties, especially those affecting their psychological well-being, is influenced by their attitude developed throughout their upbringing. Life stressors and challenges can impact mental health, emphasizing the importance of adaptation for a pleasant life in slums.

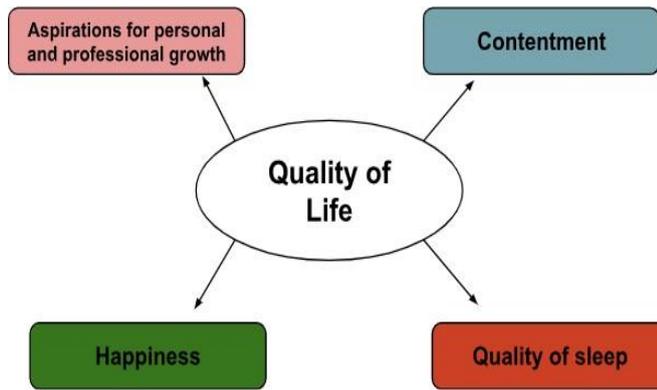


Figure 4: Quality of life of the participants

The following themes in figure 5 were drawn to answer the research objective: How do the participants' environment affect their quality of life?

### Aspirations for personal and professional growth

When people aim for personal and professional growth, it means they're motivated to shape their future and actively look for opportunities. It shows a strong drive to improve and make positive advancements in their lives. The time the participants were asked on how they define success as a professional worker who resides in slums, they answered;

*“Ngayon kasi 'di pa ako contented. May mga goals pa ako na kailangan kong i-achieve pa. Gusto ko sa government kasi mas maraming benefits so, ngayon, 'di pa ako kontento.”*

-Participant 1

*“dami ko pang pagdadaan ang dami ko pang gustong maabot totally”*

-Participant 5

The perception of success remains unfulfilled as they have yet to attain the certain goals for their desired life and profession which will affect their current quality of life. This view will differ from the other participant whose role is a mother while working as a professional. To feel like she's succeeded, her children must finish school with a degree like her despite her being a mother, she stated;

*“Sa akin, siguro masasabi ko success ako kapag makikita ko yung mga anak ko na graduated na sila lahat, kahit may anak ako nag-pursue pa din ako na na makapagtapos ng college.”*

-Participant 2

On the other hand, upon asking the question on whether they have plans on staying on their current place, the answers are;

*“Kung dumating yung point na nakakaluwag ka na, lilipat ka sa mas maayos na bahay siyempre.”*

-Participant 1

*“masaya kahit ganon pero gusto ko pa na mas ano mag level up kasi mahirap ung andito ka lang, tsaka ang hirap ng buhay rito sa pilipinas talagang hindi totoo konting kibot kailangan ng pera tsaka mahal mga bilihin kaya ayon.”*

*-Participant 3*

According to (Genicot & Ray, 2017) individuals adjust their aspirations to what is perceived to be possible, and these aspirations are drawn from their past experiences, and social environment.

There are also a number of factors have driven the trend of working abroad. These include such concerns as low salaries, lack of a benefit package, high patient – nurse ratios, lack of opportunities and professional growth, and poor enforcement of nursing laws (Labrague et al., 2018). Thus, the participants' current lifestyle pushed them to strive for a better quality of life. Recognizing that their current circumstances, while perhaps satisfactory, do not actually have the ability to fill their desire for improvements in their life, leading them on deciding to leave when given a chance and having the opportunity to choose for a better place.

### **Contentment**

Beyond the basic demands, slum dwellers deal with a range of other difficulties. But one thing that is certain is that they lack basic essentials for daily living. Thus, making the dwellers socioeconomically and politically deprived. In addition to attending to fundamental necessities, a holistic approach to enhancing quality of life addresses the social, psychological, and environmental elements that influence people's experiences in their communities. Seeking balance among these diverse components leads to a more contented and satisfying existence for people within a particular society. Considering their present situation in light of a positive outlook on life, wherein financial stability and, subsequently, an enhanced standard of living are facilitated by easy access to jobs, equitable compensation, and economic prospects, certainly, people's sources of contentment are diverse and can be deeply rooted in their individual preferences, values, and experiences.

*“In terms of financial, wala naman problema.”*

*-Participant 1*

Financial contentment is evident among participants. Despite residing in a slum area, participant 1 conveys contentment with their financial situation, demonstrating resilience and resourcefulness in making ends meet. This perspective suggests effective ways of navigating economic challenges and a positive attitude towards managing finances within the constraints of their living conditions.

*“kapag lumipat ka kasi panibagong pakikisama na naman”*

*-Participant 1*

The participant reveals the difficulties of adjustments and possibilities that come along when relocating, especially with regard to making new friends and adjusting to a new social setting. Enclose an understanding that moving involves a recurrent pattern of adapting to new social settings. The participant finds contentment in stable and established social connections, and the prospect of having to start anew with each move may be seen as a potential source of stress or difficulty. Life satisfaction judgments are believed to represent an individual's overall assessment of the quality of their entire life. Stability implies being content with what you have. While desiring more, you view your present circumstances as acceptable, functional, offering comfort, and bringing satisfaction. It brings a sense of fulfillment (Richard et al., 2017).

*“At least dito, kampante ka na sa mga nakakasama mo”*

-Participant 3

The statement "At least dito, kampante ka na sa mga nakakasama mo" translates to "At least here, you are at ease with the people around you" in English. The use of the term "kampante" suggests a sense of comfort, assurance, or peace of mind. Therefore, the participant expresses contentment or satisfaction with the current social environment or companionship in their present location. This denotes that a place that provides one with belongingness and a secure place to call home is essential. It doesn't have to be a fancy property. A home should make you feel safe, independent, and peaceful.

## Happiness

It is evident that living in the slum areas means living in an underprivileged living environment making it more prone for residents especially, the participants to be exposed to the harsher effects of environmental problems such as pollution, may it be air, water, soil and noise. Despite the given situation, hints of happiness are indicated in the participants' responses.

*"Living here, tuwing namang may mga occasion dito like may libreng ulam ka—ayon, nagtutulungan naman kayo".*

-Participant 1

*"Ok grateful naman happy naman sa life masaya"*

- Participant 7

*"Ang saya lang kasi nakikita mo na nagsasama-sama tapos lahat nagki- Christmas Party kahit simple lang pero ang saya. Makikita mo yung mga bata ang saya. dito bigyan mo lang yan ng panyo or ilang pirasong kendi natutuwa na sila tapos magpapasalamat sila."*

-Participant 2

*"may pag kakaisa sila totally halos like kunyari may mga birthday parang halos lahat sila is nagsasama sama para mag diwang parang ganon, parang kunwari may handaan sila pede kang makisama"*

-Participant 6

The participants' statements reveal that happiness is intricately connected to a sense of community, shared experiences, and mutual support within their respective living environments. Whether celebrating occasions, engaging in simple acts of giving, or navigating challenges like flooding. Despite potential difficulties or tight situations, there is a recurring sense of satisfaction, gratitude, and happiness derived from the simplicity of life and the support of the community. This suggests that, for these participants, happiness is not solely dependent on individual circumstances but is significantly influenced by a sense of belonging, shared joys, and the positive connections within their communities.

According to MSED (2022), Happiness is usually defined as an emotional state that is marked by joy, fullness, contentment, and satisfaction. Studies also suggest that subjective well-being, also referred to as happiness or satisfaction, is associated with positive outcomes in various aspects of life, including social relationships, marriage stability, work performance, organizational citizenship, and resilience. Higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction contribute to a range of positive effects across diverse aspects of individuals' lives. (Diener et al., 2018).

## Quality of Sleep

In the context of sleep, a noisy and crowded environment can also negatively impact the quality of sleep. Quality sleep is crucial for overall well-being, and disruptions during sleep, such as noise or stress, can lead to poor sleep quality. Consistently poor sleep quality can have a

cascading effect on various aspects of one's life, including physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life. A study reveals that sleep duration and quality significantly impact college students' academic performance, physical health, and psychological well-being, with mood playing a crucial role where it emphasizes the interconnectedness of sleep, mood, and daytime functioning in college students, emphasizing the importance of maintaining healthy sleep habits for successful college adjustment. (Gothe et al., 2019).

*“Noise pollution tapos crowded. Kung dumating yung point na nakakaluwag ka na, lilipat ka sa mas maayos na bahay syempre. 'Yong maayos na tulugan, na hindi crowded lalo na kung magwework ka ng work-from-home ”*

*-Participant 1*

*“First, ayan yung ingay, hindi mo maiiwasan na may nagbivideoke sa araw ng pahinga.”*

*-Participant 2*

The statements the participants provided suggest that the work-from-home setup may be challenging due to a crowded and noisy environment, which can potentially impact both health and stress levels. If the surroundings are not conducive to a peaceful and quiet work environment, it can contribute to stress and potentially affect overall health. Therefore, the statements suggest that the work-from-home conditions may be affecting both the physical and mental aspects of health, potentially leading to a lower quality of sleep and, consequently, a lower quality of life.

#### **4. Discussion**

Professionals residing in slum areas encounter financial challenges despite their qualifications, highlighting the importance of strong community bonds and positive relationships in overcoming challenges. Their ability to adapt and their emotional attachment to their homes challenge conventional notions of life satisfaction, demonstrating their capacity to find happiness despite adversity. The decision to stay in slum areas is influenced by a mix of community support, emotional connections, and practical factors, requiring a delicate balance between emotional attachment and practical needs.

Moreover, the study uncovers various factors affecting the well-being of these professionals, including safety concerns, health issues, and sleep quality, illustrating the complex realities of life in slum areas. It emphasizes the need for targeted interventions tailored to address these multifaceted challenges. By shedding light on the challenges, coping mechanisms, and motivations of professionals in slum areas, the research offers valuable insights for policymakers and communities.

In conclusion, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of professionals living in slum areas. It underscores the importance of addressing their unique needs through nuanced interventions that recognize the resilience and emotional connections of individuals in these environments. By fostering a more supportive and understanding society, policymakers and communities can better support professionals in slum areas and promote their well-being and growth.

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