

Lived experiences of a *Tagasalo* having siblings with special needs: An educational implication

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the lived experiences of individuals with siblings with special needs as their tagasalo. It is deeply rooted in Filipino culture and refers to an individual who selflessly takes on the role of a caregiver. This role involves providing support to the family. This study utilized a phenomenological study. An interview guide question was used to gather data. The result of the study showed that the experiences of individuals as tagasalo are challenging. The themes that emerged were Responsibilities of Individuals to their Siblings with Special Needs with the subthemes (1) Assuming the Parental Responsibility from the parents (2) Taking care of their sibling with special needs. Participants' Support to their Siblings with Special Needs with subthemes (1) Being there for their sibling, (2) Serving as a Defender for their sibling with special needs, (3) Providing Financial Support, (4) Offering Educational Support, Challenges Encountered as Tagasalo of their Sibling with Special Needs with the subthemes (1) Feeling overwhelmed leading to burnout, (2) Facing Additional Financial burden, Managing the encountered challenge with the subthemes (1) Resilience and Spiritual Guidance, (2) Initiative and Proactive Thinking, and Participants insights of Having Siblings with Special Needs were the subtheme such as (11) Developing Self-awareness of Personal growth, (12) Experiencing the Ripple Effects of Personal Development. The tagasalo used their experiences to become better people and responsible individuals. These can provide a safe space to share experiences and emotions.

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Introduction

A good relationship is like creating a lasting connection; ending it is like breaking that connection. Positive sibling relationships were more likely to protect against externalizing and internalizing problems (Mohamad et al., 2021). With close sibling relationships being characterized as a source of emotional support and warmth, it is essential to understand them as a unique context for positive development during critical developmental transitions (LeBouef & Dworkin, 2021). Sibling relationships are complicated, and all other relationships are different. Some siblings are close, while others are not (Morton, 2020). While siblings can be close allies, they can also be significant

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competitors (Salmon & Hehman, 2021). Siblings of children with special needs might find themselves advocating for their sibling, describing their situation to others, or even experiencing teasing because of it.

In childhood, environmental and economic conditions appear to have a more significant impact on the quality of life than the physical or psychological condition of the subject (Quatrosi et al., 2023). The relationship quality with siblings also seems to affect the individual's personality traits (Longobardi et al., 2019). Also, siblings might be called upon to help take care of their brother or sister to relieve some of the responsibilities on their parents. They could also serve as a supportive partner to their parents when dealing with their siblings. Alternatively, siblings may support each other to make up for any deficiencies in their relationships with their parents (Drzymala et al., 2022). Siblings play an important role in one another's life; Siblings of special needs children also have special needs. Children and adolescents go through similar transformations, going through periods of confusion and acceptance. It is necessary to include them in care so that they can have support to understand the person with a disability and deal with their feelings (Freitag et al., 2021). Siblings with special needs may become more important in the lives of their siblings. Improvements in the health and life expectancies of disabled people and decreases in state welfare have highlighted uncertainties about future care and support for people with disabilities (Power & Bartlett, 2018).

The birth of a child with special needs is challenging for parents and healthy siblings. Healthy siblings frequently have an ambivalent relationship with their siblings with special needs. The siblings feel more responsible than their peers and are deeply attached to them or, on the other hand, feel neglected and jealous of their siblings (Schmidtová, 2018). Siblings of special needs children are often overlooked, especially when they need more attention from their parents (Victor et al., 2021).

Having a child with special needs can profoundly affect living conditions and the mental health of the family. Siblings of children with special needs play an essential role in their care. As a result, their living conditions and standard of living should be improved. (Hou et al., 2022). Having a family member with a disability impacts the family's ability to do things, resulting in the siblings missing many opportunities that may have been possible to arrange otherwise (Sciberras, 2018).

Typical developing adult siblings reported more positive effects in their sibling relationships when they had more tangible and emotional support from parents (Jones et al., 2019). Sibling relationships serve as the foundation for cognitive and emotional development and provide a context for social development. Older siblings provide more nurturing for younger siblings; Yet, they also sense increased competition and a desire for control in relation to their siblings, particularly in the case of same-sex individuals. Young people look up to their siblings more and believe their parents prefer them. Despite this, older siblings characterize their relationships with their brothers and sisters as less peaceful when compared to their relationships with their parents (Krejčová et al., 2023).

Sibling relationships typically begin to develop shortly after birth. They would be significantly impacted once they discovered that their siblings have special abilities. They have difficulty interacting with their siblings and may misinterpret their siblings' reactions and feelings in certain situations. Having a special sibling can be advantageous to the siblings. Despite the challenges they experienced throughout their lives, brothers and sisters of exceptional siblings increased awareness, and they became more concerned about their siblings' conditions, needs, and responsibilities as their siblings' guides (Catungal et al., 2021). Sometimes, older siblings are responsible for looking after their younger brothers and sisters. Apart from potentially assuming the important responsibility of a protector in the future, siblings mention that they fulfill various roles aside from being siblings throughout their lives.

In the Philippines, the family members coping with a special child depends largely on the family mythology, i.e., their values and belief systems. Capuno et al. (2013)

mentioned that some basic elements of families in the Philippines were family-centered, child-centric, having close ties, and large family size. Their way of coping is also influenced by their perception of the child's self-image. Siblings are referred to as "fellow travelers" in the life cycle. This phenomenon is frequent in Asian countries, notably in the Philippine context, where siblings tend to carry the burden for the family known as "Tagasalo" (Carandang, 1981). Older brothers and sisters feel they must help family members financially when they are in need.

Pagsalo (catch or catching) is the action of the tagasalo (catcher) to describe adolescents' adaptation to adult family roles in providing emotional support for their families. In addition, Andres (1989) stated that in the Philippine setting, Family ties are stronger than anything else, underscoring the deep connections within every Filipino family and the intense care for family members and relatives. It is commonly believed that tagasalo is practiced in Filipino households (Ampong et al., 2018). It is part of the Filipino tradition to assign obligations to every child in the family (Atenas et al., 2018). With this kind of tradition, many Filipino individuals go abroad to provide for the needs of their families.

Children who have disabilities often face difficulties in managing their daily lives and usually need extra care and help. Life in families with a child with special needs generally centers on the bond between the parents and the child, according to Kyrkou (2018). It fails to appreciate the importance of the sibling bond. Most research concentrates on the relationship between the parents, particularly the mother, and the special-needs child. When one sibling has a disability, the opportunity for this kind of mutual support may be reduced, and the parental decline and death likely have caregiving implications for the sibling without a disability (Orsmond & Fulford, 2018).

The study explores the lived experiences of individuals who take on the role of tagasalo for their siblings with special needs. The researcher aims to understand the responsibilities, challenges, coping mechanisms, and overall impact on the lives of these siblings. The gap in previous research regarding the tagasalo role and the experiences of siblings with special needs motivates this study, offering a voice to their unique experiences and shedding light on this less-explored aspect of caregiving within families.

This study aimed to answer the following queries: How would individuals having a sibling with special needs describe their experiences as Tagasalo? What are the responsibilities of individuals with special needs to their siblings? How do they support brothers/sisters with special needs? What challenges have they encountered as tagasalo of their sibling with special needs? How did they manage these encountered challenges? What are the life insights of individuals with siblings with special needs?

Method

This research adopts a phenomenological research design, drawing on the philosophy of Husserl to describe the relationship of the sibling with a brother or sister with special needs. Phenomenology, influenced by Husserl, focuses on understanding consciousness and experiences without preconceptions. Transcendental Phenomenology, a qualitative research methodology, seeks reality from individuals' narratives and emotions within a specific group. The research involved interviews with individuals who had relevant experiences, employing phenomenological questions to explore and reflect on their unique perspectives. The transcendental phenomenological research design was chosen to investigate how siblings without special needs support the development of children with special needs.

Findings and Discussion

Experiences of Individuals as Tagasalo to their Siblings with Special Needs

This study about being a tagasalo to the sibling with special needs have identified five themes: Responsibilities of Individuals to their Siblings with Special Needs, Participants' Support to their Siblings with Special Needs, Challenges Encountered as Tagasalo of their Sibling with Special Needs, Managing the encountered challenge, and Participants insights of Having Siblings with Special Needs.

There are twelve subthemes emerged from the themes such as (1) Assuming the Parental Responsibility from the parents (2) Taking care of their sibling with special needs (3) Being there for their sibling, (4) Serving as a Defender for Their Sibling with Special Needs, (5) Providing Financial Support, (6) Offering Educational Support, (7) Feeling overwhelmed leading to burnout, (8) Facing Additional Financial burden, (9) Resilience and Spiritual Guidance, (10) Initiative and Proactive Thinking, such as (11) Developing Self-awareness of Personal growth and (12) Experiencing the Ripple Effects of Personal Development.

Responsibilities of Individuals to their Siblings with Special Needs

Assuming Parental Responsibility from Parents. One of the responsibilities of the tagasalo is to act as the parent of their sibling with disability. Responsibility involves fulfilling your obligations and duties within your family. Thinking of being a tagasalo to their siblings with special needs would be challenging. This is evident in the following statement:

"I act as her mother. I also have worries because maybe I cannot give her the things that she needs." – Sibling Participant (SP) 1

"At times, I sense the weight of my responsibilities can be burdensome, but I am able to handle it by ensuring he's fed, clothed, and bathed". – SP2

"Taking care of my brother, feeding him, Also, I take care of my child and father." – SP3.

"I take care of him the same way our parents take care of us. I provided him food, sent him to school, and bought his needed things". – SP4

The participant's sibling also concurs with this sentiment, stating, "My brother takes care of me" - SP3 Sibling.

The phenomenon of parentification among "tagasalos" involves siblings assuming parental responsibilities for various reasons, such as the death of parents or family members pursuing new life paths. This role shift requires them to provide care, support, and guidance, especially for siblings with special needs. The participants in this study, SP1, SP2, SP3, and SP4, each take on parental roles due to significant life events. They navigate challenges such as caring for siblings with disabilities and attending to the needs of elderly family members. This structural analysis reveals the complexity of familial restructuring, highlighting the diverse responsibilities and circumstances under which participants assume parental roles. Parentification emerges as a coping mechanism in response to life-changing events, allowing siblings to support one another without traditional parental figures.

Taking care of their sibling with special needs.

Caring for a sibling with special needs goes beyond basic tasks like bathing and preparing meals; it involves providing emotional support and understanding their unique challenges. Siblings taking on this responsibility, called tagasalos, ensure their younger siblings' overall well-being. This includes managing daily routines, handling tasks beyond their siblings' abilities, and being there for them emotionally. The tagasalo role requires genuine commitment to the welfare of their sibling with special needs. Because of disabilities, there are restrictions that the individual with special needs is not able to perform life roles normally expected for his age, consequently affecting his life (Gomez et al., 2013). In this time, the tagasalo sibling will perform the things that their siblings cannot do for themselves.

Responsibility is a core concept that forms the foundation of individual and societal welfare. It is essential in personal growth, relationships, and other aspects of our lives. Accepting and taking on responsibility is crucial in contributing to one's personal life. Responsibility toward one's siblings is an important aspect of family life and personal development. It involves taking care of and looking out for your brothers and sisters, and it carries several significant benefits and implication. Being a sibling with a special need especially if you are the tagasalo is a big responsibility.

Udarbe (2001) theory says that being tagasalo is being responsible and caring to their siblings. In tagasalo, being responsible means doing things like housework, looking after siblings, and taking care of family needs, similar to what a mother usually does. The Participants are describing actions that go beyond the usual tasks. They are taking on responsibilities that their sibling with special needs cannot do on their own. This aligns with the concept of 'tagasalo,' where the caretaker assumes tasks and responsibilities to support and assist the individual with special needs.

As per participant most of them stand as the parent of their sibling due to different reason. Participant 3 is due the absence of mother because of work and participant 1 and 2 due to death. As participant 4, she never discusses why she become the tagasalo of her sibling. Taking on a parental role for a sibling, especially when there are special needs involved, can have various implications like caregiving responsibilities, and commitment. The tagasalo care for their sibling's daily needs, including physical care, and advocating for them. Young people who take care of others often say they feel more grown-up, like they have a purpose, and that they are valuable and helpful. Tagsalo always ensure they can provide for their sibling's basic needs. Families and teachers need to establish suitable and ambitious goals for both children with disabilities and those without.

Participants' Support to their Siblings with Special Needs

Being there for their sibling. Being with their sibling with special needs means providing support, and companionship to one's brother or sister. This is evident in the following statement:

"Until she still needs my care and as a defender" – SP01

"I have lot to care take with, but it's okay, it's my sister and there is no one else will do" – SP04

The siblings taking on parental roles for their brothers with special needs not only provide essential care but also defend against discrimination, demonstrating deep commitment and love. Despite facing challenges, these tagasalos express unwavering loyalty and dedication, emphasizing their irreplaceable role in practical and emotional caregiving. This underscores the importance of sibling support and their unique

responsibility within their families. The responses highlight a societal structure where familial duty is highly valued, emphasizing personal commitment and a belief that family members, especially siblings, are uniquely equipped to fulfill essential caregiving roles.

Having a special sibling can be advantageous to the siblings. Even though the challenges they experienced throughout their lives, brothers and sisters of exceptional siblings increased awareness, and they became more concerned about their siblings' conditions, needs, and responsibilities as their siblings' guides (Catungal et al., 2021).

Defender to their sibling with special needs.

This refers to someone who protects, supports, or stands up for their sibling with special needs. This individual advocates for their sibling's well-being, rights, and interests, ensuring they are treated fairly and respectfully in various situations.

"I will defend them to those people who wants to bully them or discriminate.] – SP 1

SP1's statement emphasizes a crucial role as being a defender against bullying and discrimination. This stance signifies a commitment to stand up for individuals facing unfair treatment due to their differences, particularly those with special needs.

SP1 expresses a clear intention or commitment to defend their siblings against individuals who aim to bully or discriminate against them. The statement specifies the targeted individuals who want to belittle the siblings. It emphasizes the proactive stance of SP1 in protecting their siblings. SP1's statement directly declares their commitment to stand up against bullying and discrimination targeted at their siblings. It reflects a sense of protective responsibility and a readiness to confront negative behaviors to ensure the well-being of their family members.

Aside from providing the needs of their siblings, tagasalo sibling acts also a defender to their sibling with special needs which we believe that some of them cannot defend their self from discrimination. Siblings may fight at home, but almost all siblings will be their brother's or sister's defender and protector against others (Morrow-Kondos, 2019).

Financial Support.

As tagasalo in the family, he/she provides everything that their brother or sister needs. It's typically based on the tagasalo's willingness and capacity to assist. This is evident in the following statements:

"I purchase the school supplies and food she requires] – SP1

"I buy his needs and his meal." – SP 2

"I'm responsible for buying what he needs." – SP 4

The transcripts consistently highlight the siblings' commitment to fulfilling the basic needs of their siblings with special needs. Participants express active involvement in providing essentials such as school supplies and food, reflecting a deep sense of duty and care towards their siblings' well-being. Their actions demonstrate a hands-on approach, with the phrase "I purchase what they need" emphasizing direct involvement in identifying and procuring specific necessities. These transcripts convey a strong sense of responsibility, love, support, and dedication within family relationships. Overall, they illustrate a cultural norm where older siblings believe it is their responsibility to provide financial assistance to family.

Educational Support.

This support aims to contribute to their educational development and success. This is evident in the following statements:

"I ensure she goes to school" – SP1

"I send him to school" – SP3

"Like our parents, I sent her to school". – SP 4

The responses from the siblings reflect a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to ensuring the education of their brothers and sisters. Each statement indicates direct involvement in supporting their sibling's attendance at school, demonstrating a hands-on approach. Sibling Participants 1, 3, and 4 emphasize their commitment to ensuring their siblings receive an education, with Sibling Participant 4 even comparing their role to that of parents. These statements convey a profound dedication to their sibling's education, highlighting the tagasalos' role in providing crucial support. The responses suggest that taking responsibility for a sibling's education is essential, potentially reflecting broader societal values. The belief that siblings, especially the tagasalo, should support their siblings' education is evident, aligning with the values instilled within the family and society at large.

Assisting siblings with educational needs, such as school assignments, supports their academic progress and boosts their morale. The responsibility assumed by older siblings in studying together is seen as a significant contribution. This collaborative approach allows younger siblings to benefit from the experiences of their older counterparts. For children with special needs, having a supportive sibling is particularly reassuring, helping when needed and contributing significantly to their overall well-being.

[Carandang \(1987\)](#) Theory describes tagasalo as a certain syndrome among Filipino children who occupies the role of caretaker or one who comes to rescue the family. The sibling (tagasalo) supports their siblings with their education. They send them to academic and support the activities they have. Studying is the most significant support that older siblings can give to their younger brothers and sisters. Positive sibling relationships characterized by cooperation and shared learning experiences can enhance academic engagement and performance ([Aguboshim et al., 2023](#)).

The role of a tagasalo is pivotal in ensuring that siblings with special needs have access to education, social connections, and the opportunity to experience the world without feeling judged or excluded. Tagasalo's prioritize their siblings' education and social interactions, even requiring extra effort or resources. This level of dedicated support is essential for children with special needs as it enables them to thrive in various aspects of their lives, fostering their learning, social development, and overall well-being.

Challenges Encountered as Tagasalo of their Sibling with Special Needs

Challenges are an integral part of our lives, constantly presenting challenges that demand our attention and solutions. As individuals, we face different challenges such as exhaustion and most especially financial challenge. The tagasalo also encounter these problems.

Feeling overwhelmed leading to burnout.

It refers to a condition of profound physical or mental weariness. It is a condition where a person feels completely drained of energy, often due to physical exertion, lack of rest, or prolonged stress. This is evident in the following statements:

“One of the challenges that I encountered is I feel burn out, because I feel too much responsibility, I have lots of plans but I can’t do it”. - SP1

“There are times that I feel burn out, because of too much responsibility”. - SP2.

“Sometimes I felt tired, but I am able to manage it because he is my sibling”- SP3

“There are times that I felt tired because of course of too much obligation.” - SP4

The responses from tagasalos collectively reveal emotional strain and exhaustion due to the weight of responsibilities for siblings with special needs. SP1 and SP2 express feeling burned out and unable to fulfill plans and duties, while SP3 and SP4 acknowledge fatigue but find strength in familial bonds. The traditional family structure, where older siblings often care for younger ones, contributes to this strain, creating a hierarchy and expectation. These structural elements intersect to form a societal structure where familial obligations are crucial. The responses highlight the toll on siblings facing overwhelming pressure and societal expectations, leading to burnout despite their commitment to familial duties.

Brothers and sisters can impact each other throughout life, from growing up together to old age (Hayden et al., 2023). Looking after someone, you care about brings joy, but it comes with its own pressures. Because it's usually a long-term commitment, the emotional toll can build up gradually. You might find yourself shouldering caregiving duties for many years, perhaps even decades (Smith, 2019).

Additional Financial burden.

It indicates facing hardships related to money matters, such as economic difficulties, financial setbacks or struggles to meet financial obligations due to various circumstances like unexpected expenses, or economic downturns. This is evident in the following statements:

“One of the challenges is the financial, because instead of having only one child or a small family, I have my responsibility to her, so I need more income”.- SP1

“It can affect my daily life, as I may need to seek additional income. However, it could be challenging to do so immediately due to his presence and other priorities”.- SP2

“I need to secure a job for my child as well, but I'm facing difficulties in finding one because there's no one available to look after them. My father had a stroke, my mother is in Manila and my other siblings are already married”.- SP3

“One of the challenges is financial. There are times when I'm tired, and it's hard because I have a lot of obligations. But I can handle it. I will take care of him while I am still around”. - SP4

The responses from Tagasalos underscore the challenges arising from financial constraints, impacting their ability to fulfill responsibilities towards their own families and siblings with special needs. These accounts depict individuals' struggles when balancing the necessity to earn more for their families with the limitations imposed by existing responsibilities. The complexities of choices and sacrifices made under financial constraints are evident. Tagasalos expresses the desire to find employment but encounters obstacles such as the absence of someone to care for their siblings. These

challenges reflect broader structural societal issues, including economic conditions contributing to financial strain and the need for extra income due to larger-than-norm family responsibilities. Overall, the responses highlight the intricacies of addressing these complexities of family dynamics and economic realities many individuals face.

Siblings may also face objective and subjective burdens in their current life (Smith et al., 2016). Siblings can encounter both concrete, practical challenges (objective burdens) and emotional, psychological struggles (subjective burdens) because of their familial roles and relationships. These burdens can vary widely depending on the specific circumstances and dynamics within the family. Even though the challenges they experienced throughout their lives, brothers and sisters of exceptional siblings increased awareness, and they became more concerned about their siblings' conditions, needs, and responsibilities as their siblings' guides (Catungal et al., 2021).

As the tagasalo characteristics that Carandang (1987) enumerated in his theory include: the behavior's compulsive character-the person feels driven to take care of others and come to their rescue as if it were her duty and obligation to do so; its unconscious aspect-the person cannot seem to understand why she feels driven nor why she feels guilty when she says "no"; and, its overgeneralized and indiscriminate stance-the need does not appear to be delimited to family members alone. The role of the tagasalo sibling comes with its own set of unique challenges.

They might experience significant pressure, a lack of motivation, fatigue from the responsibilities they shoulder, and financial strain due to the additional demands on their resources. These challenges are common and can be relatable to many individuals who take on caretaking roles. The initial view of tagasalo leans toward the negative as the tagasalo might be a dependent person needing to be taken care of. Their pananalo is a subtle cry for help, and that they too need pananalo from other people (Carandang, 2001; Udarbe, 2001).

Managing the encountered challenges

Managing the encountered challenges refers to effectively dealing with or handling the specific difficulty or obstacle that someone is currently experiencing. The siblings without special needs find their ways to manage the day-to-day challenges that they face as the tagasalo to their sibling.

Resilience and Spiritual Guidance.

Resilience and spiritual guidance relate to one's ability to bounce back from challenges and adversities and seek support and direction from spiritual or religious beliefs. The tagasalo are enlightened on what they will do to overcome the challenges they face in daily life, especially in taking care of their sibling with special needs. Participants shared:

"I pray to the Lord, find an advice from an elder who are mature so that I have an idea of what to do when I am down and when things are difficult. Every time I overcome the trials, I feel relief as if I am stronger because I have overcome challenges, I feel proud of myself because I was able to can do it" – SP1

"Through prayers and adjustment to the situation" – SP4

The two statements showcase different approaches to facing challenges, with the first (SP1) emphasizing seeking guidance from spiritual sources and elders for personal growth. This involves reliance on divine intervention and the wisdom of experienced individuals. The second statement (SP4) focuses on a more straightforward approach,

primarily relying on prayer and adapting to the situation. This suggests an internally focused coping mechanism where prayer is the primary tool for dealing with challenges. Both approaches complement each other, highlighting the importance of seeking guidance and strength from spiritual sources and wise counsel while emphasizing adaptability as a comprehensive way of dealing with life's difficulties.

Spirituality is a dimension of life and the human being (Tavares et al., 2022). Religion plays a crucial role in many peoples' lives, shaping the way they interact with the world and react to stressors (Mitchell, 2023). We often seek advice from others to enhance decision quality.

Initiative and Proactive Thinking.

It suggests a mindset and approach where individuals take independent action and engage in forward-thinking and problem-prevention. This combination implies a proactive and self-driven approach to managing challenges and achieving goals. Participants shared:

"Based on experiences, time management especially if I have to go somewhere, I need to make sure he is settled. I feel fulfilled and happy every time I overcome those challenges."
– SP 2.

"I just wait for my siblings. I will think initiative. I am happy every time I succeed in challenges". – SP 3

SP2 underscores the importance of effective time management to handle a busy schedule and commitments, aiming to maintain a balanced and manageable lifestyle. This proactive approach involves preemptively scheduling and organizing to prevent disruptions. On the other hand, SP3 emphasizes the significance of taking initiative and thinking ahead, showcasing an aggressive mindset in problem-solving. SP2 and SP3 express fulfillment and happiness in overcoming challenges, with SP2 finding accomplishment in time management and SP3 deriving joy from proactively addressing hurdles. As tagasalos responsible for their siblings with special needs, father, and children, they navigate the complex task of balancing these roles, requiring initiative and effective time management for the well-being of both their families and siblings..

Participants' insights of Having Siblings with Special Needs

Personal development is a continuous journey of self-improvement in different aspects of life. As tagasalo, caring for a sibling with special needs contributes to their personal growth. Participants commonly express that being tagasalo makes them more responsible.

Developing Self-awareness of Personal Growth.

It involves being aware of one's strengths, skills, knowledge, and emotional well-being that have evolved. This self-awareness often arises from reflection on past experiences, challenges faced, and the lessons learned.

"I became a family-oriented person, I experienced significant growth and gained valuable knowledge". – SP 1

"I can apply these experiences in my personal life, Being a tagasalo, become more responsible". – SP2

“Even I wanted to go back to work, I can’t leave my father and brother” – SP 3

“I have become more responsible, and I’ve learned how to adapt more effectively”.- SP4

The statements from Sibling Participants (SP) 1, 2, 3, and 4 highlight how their family-oriented experiences have shaped their personal growth, responsibilities, and decision-making. SP1 attributes their personal development to a focus on family, seeing familial connections as a source of valuable life lessons. SP2 underscores the transferability of family experiences to personal responsibilities. SP3 struggles with the conflict between personal ambitions and familial duties, ultimately prioritizing family. SP4 emphasizes becoming more responsible due to family situations, demonstrating adaptability. These responses illustrate how familial experiences influence values, professional conduct, and priorities, leading to decisions that prioritize family commitments over personal aspirations.

The responses also reveal the impact of societal structures and cultural expectations on familial roles. SP1's emphasis on being family-oriented aligns with societal values prioritizing family bonds. SP2's role as a "tagasalo" reflects societal expectations for individuals to assume caregiving or responsible roles within families. SP3's dilemma of choosing family over work aligns with cultural norms of duty and caregiving. SP4's adaptability speaks to societal pressure to balance evolving responsibilities within the family unit. These responses reflect societal structures prioritizing familial responsibilities, underscoring individuals' significant roles in their families.

Understanding the tagasalo role within families is crucial for educators and professionals in special education. Recognizing and supporting the experiences of tagasalo siblings can lead to more effective strategies in providing comprehensive support to the sibling with special needs and the entire family. This involves creating inclusive environments that consider the needs and experiences of tagasalos, offering resources, guidance, and support systems to help them navigate their roles while pursuing their own educational and personal development. Personal growth, encompassing self-discovery and striving for one's best, extends to all aspects of life, including work. Enhancing personal growth positively impacts how individuals view their jobs, creating new opportunities for advancement. Furthermore, personal growth contributes to emotional and mental strength, fostering kindness, love, and happiness.

In [Udarbe \(2001\)](#) proposed that rather than a syndrome, tagasalo is a personality as it develops over time and dictates the actions of individuals. With this, the tagasalo become family-oriented individuals prioritized the needs of their siblings than theirs. Being a tagasalo developed them to be matured person. The tagasalo shows traits like being responsible, understanding others' feelings, being loving, and having the ability to care for others.

Experiencing the Ripple Effects of Personal Development.

This refers to the idea that when an individual undergoes personal growth, improvement, or positive changes in various aspects of their life, these improvements have a broader impact beyond the individual. This is evident to their statements:

“I became a better person. I applied it to my job”. SP 1

“I can apply it to my work, knowing how to allocate my time”. SP 2

“I become more responsible, I also think about my child, my father and my sibling”. SP 3

"I am able to understand others because we all have different struggles". SP4

The statements from SP1 to SP4 reflect personal growth and development across work, family, and interpersonal relationships. SP1 indicates the initial stages of personal development, leading to becoming a better person with positive effects observed in the professional realm. SP2 demonstrates how personal development influences work habits, particularly in time management, resulting in enhanced efficiency and organization that can impact colleagues and the workplace environment. SP3's personal development contributes to heightened responsibility within the family, positively influencing family dynamics. Lastly, SP4's personal growth has broader societal implications, fostering an enhanced understanding and empathy towards others and contributing positively to the wider community. Collectively, these statements emphasize the far-reaching impact of personal development across various aspects of an individual's life.

Self-improvement extends beyond personal growth, positively influencing individuals and their surroundings. Personal development enhances one's life and contributes positively to various aspects, including relationships. Environmental factors like critical life event often shape personality changes.

Carandang's (1987) assumption about the development of the tagasalo syndrome was confined to a particular norm found in the setting of the Filipino families. The tagasalo Theory, as a Filipino cultural concept, often involves care for family members, especially those with special needs. Becoming a better person aligns with the tagasalo role, where personal development may enhance one's capacity to fulfill caregiving responsibilities. Applying personal growth to the job demonstrates a sense of responsibility beyond personal goals.

The individual undergoes positive personal development, actively applied to enhance their professional life, indicating an improved work ethic and dedication. This growth is further demonstrated through efficient time management at work, contributing to increased productivity and a balanced work-life integration. The deepened sense of responsibility extends to family members—child, father, and sibling—reflecting a broader application of personal development in the familial context, leading to improved family dynamics.

Conclusion

The experiences of individuals with a sibling with special needs and as their tagasalo are challenging. They carry a big responsibility—a lifelong duty or commitment. But despite those challenges, they were able to cope with and make it their inspiration to do more in work, school, and how to see other people's well-being. It requires someone with a compassionate heart to support their sibling with special needs and carry the burdens willingly. These individuals make significant sacrifices to ensure their special-needs siblings have a good life. It is a unique quality to Filipino children which is rooted in their culture and family system. The siblings without special needs or the tagasalo used their experiences to become better people and responsible individuals.

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